

# The Gospel of John

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## Author

The author, like the author of the other gospel accounts, doesn't identify himself directly in the text. Early church fathers such as Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian of Carthage, and Tatian all quoted from the gospel and attributed it to the Apostle John. Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons (130 – 200 AD), wrote that he had heard Polycarp (69 – 155 AD), a disciple of John, say that, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, had himself published a gospel during his residence in Ephesus in Asia." (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1) And Eusebius, the fourth century church historian, specifically mentions that Matthew and John, from among the apostles, wrote the gospel accounts that bear their names. Eusebius also wrote that John composed his gospel when he was at Ephesus. (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 3.24.3-8)

With the assumption that the early church fathers were correct, the following is what is known about the life of the Apostle John. He and his younger brother, James, were sons of Zebedee who ran a fishing business on the Sea of Galilee. His mother, Salome, is mentioned by the gospel writers as being present at the crucifixion.

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. – Matt 27:55-56

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome. – Mark 15:40

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb ... When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. – Luke 23:55 – 24:2, 9-10

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. – John 19:25

These references would indicate that Salome was Mary's sister and thus John and James were cousins of Jesus just as John the Baptist was. (see Matt 1) John and James were fishing partners of Simon Peter and called along with Simon and his brother, Andrew, to be disciples (followers) of Jesus and eventually the first apostles. (Matt 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11) John and James were referred to as "Boanerges" or "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17) because when their patience was pushed to its limit their anger erupted fierce and thunderous so that they spoke like an untamed storm. Evidence of this was their desire to call down fire on a Samaritan town and being rebuked by Jesus. (Luke 9:51-56) While James was the first of the apostles to die a martyr's death (Acts 12:2), John lived to die of old age around 100 AD.

John, James and Peter were the only witnesses when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56), when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), and when Jesus went a distance from them to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matt 26:36-39; Mark 14:32-35) John was sent with Peter to make preparations for Jesus to eat the Passover meal with his disciples. (Luke 22:7-14; Mark 14:12-17; Matt 26:17-20)

In his gospel account, John doesn't refer to himself by name, but only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20) According to tradition, John is the "other disciple" who followed Jesus as he was taken to the High Priest's courtyard, but only the "other disciple" was at first allowed to enter because he was known by the person on duty at the door. Peter was allowed to enter only when the "other disciple" came back to the door to bring him in. (John 18:15-16)

John is the only one of the Eleven disciples to be with Mary at the foot of the cross. As the eldest of Mary's children (she had other boys and at least one girl), Jesus commended his mother into John's care after his death. (John 19:25-27) John was with Peter when he healed the crippled man at the gate of the Temple. (Acts 3:1-11) John, along with Peter, were put in jail overnight and then questioned by the High Priest and Sanhedrin about this healing. (Acts 4:1-23) John and Peter were sent by the apostles to Samaria after they heard of many Samaritans responding to Philip's testimony and believing in Jesus. They laid their hands on the new believers and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:4-17)

Paul refers to John, along with Peter and James, as pillars of the church when he tells the Galatians about his visit to the council of apostles in Jerusalem who looked into his work reaching out to the Gentiles and leading them to believe in Jesus. (Gal 2:1-10; Acts 15)

Eusebius (early church historian) quotes Polycarp, Papias and Irenaeus (early church fathers) to say that John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus and died there. (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.18.6-8) Catholic and Orthodox tradition says he moved to Ephesus with Mary and that they both died there. Some other traditions say he moved after Mary died. The early church father, Tertullian, writes that the authorities tried to kill John by putting him in boiling oil, but he lived and therefore they banished him to the Island of Patmos. Eventually he was released and allowed to return to Ephesus where he lived until he died.

Justin Martyr, early Christian writer and apologist, referred to John as an eyewitness of Jesus' life who had lived "with us" at Ephesus. (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 81.4) Irenaeus says John wrote his gospel account at while he lived at Ephesus. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1) Jerome says John was the teacher of Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis in Syria. It is also reported by Clement of Alexandria that John trained Polycarp, the future Bishop of Smyrna who was burned at the stake for his witness that Jesus is Lord and Savior of those who believe in him and trust his death.

## **Date**

Some scholars want to place the writing this gospel as early as 45 AD when Saul's persecutions drove many Christians out of Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1-4) That is possible but not very likely since John appears to have assumed his readers had access to the other gospels which were written after that date and thus included material that he knew which they did not include.

Some scholars date the writing to slightly before 70 AD because John described Palestine and Jerusalem as they were before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and never mentions the destruction. There could be many reasons why he might not mention the destruction so that is not a strong argument.

Early church tradition says that the gospel account was written when John was an older man living at Ephesus, that the Revelation of Jesus was written last, and John died in 100 AD. The Egerton papyrus, which is dated from about 150 AD, contains unmistakable allusions to John's Gospel, and the Rylands papyrus is dated from about 100 AD so they would point to a writing of the gospel no later than the late 90s AD. The three letters of John were probably written shortly after Paul's and Peter's deaths (64 AD & 67 AD) and after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD so they have more emphasis on the end times. The gospel appears to have been written after them, so it was probably written between 80 and 85 AD.

## **Audience**

Some scholars, such as Merrill C. Tenney and Stephen S. Smalley, in their commentaries on the Gospel of John, think that John wrote primarily to believers to remind the Jewish believers, who may be emphasizing Jesus' humanity and Messiahship, that Jesus was deity, and to insist for the non-Jewish believers, who may be emphasizing his deity and spiritual message, that Jesus was fully human. John, himself, gives the purpose of his writing "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah – human], the Son of God [deity], and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31) So John apparently sees his audience as all people, Jews and non-Jews, believers and non-believers, so that all may believe, be firmly grounded in their belief, and have eternal life with Jesus. (John 3:16)

## **Differences from the Synoptic Gospels**

About 93% of the Gospel according to John does not appear in any of the other three gospel accounts. John does not include any story parables of Jesus but does include long talks of Jesus and personal conversations that the other writers don't. John selected seven "sign" miracles that clearly demonstrate Jesus was the divine Messiah, and records Jesus' talks following these "signs" that explain their significance. He also records seven "I AM" statements Jesus made using the emphatic Greek construct "ego eime" (I – I am) which is the equivalent of writing something in bold print or saying it loudly. This was done to connect each of these statements with the Old Testament statement of God to Moses that his name is "I AM." John completely omits any genealogy of Jesus while Matthew and Luke give extensive genealogies. He also omits Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, exorcizing of demons, transfiguration, institution of the Lord's Supper, agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and ascension after his resurrection.

John does not focus on the future, messianic kingdom like the other gospel writers, but stresses the present aspects of kingdom like that believers enjoy as a benefit of the new covenant begun with Jesus' death, such as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This difference is understandable since John is the last Apostle living who walked with Jesus and it is clear that the messianic kingdom may not be starting as soon as everyone first expected.

John explains Jewish customs, translates Jewish names, and locates the sites where things are happening, probably so some of his readers who are not Jewish, nor have lived in the area, can understand the significance of what is being written. Matthew's account appears to have been written primarily for Jewish people to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah and probably the first written in the 40s AD. Luke's account appears to have been written to Greek people to emphasize that Jesus was fully human and was probably written in the 50s AD. Mark's account appears to have been written to Roman people to emphasize that Jesus was a servant, thus fulfilling the suffering servant prophecy of Isaiah. It was probably written in the 60s AD and likely was from the preaching of Peter. John's account appears to have been written more to proclaim to everyone that Jesus is God, the Creator of the universe, and that believing in and trusting his death is the only way to have a right relationship with God.

## **The First Century World**

The First Century way of thinking was a mixture of different religious thinking. The older Greek and Roman gods and goddesses were still followed but waning in importance. The mystery religions from other parts of the realm were gaining influence through their emphasis on a personal relationship with deity and the secret knowledge they professed would save a person. This secret knowledge would allow a person's soul to pass through the "aeons" (levels) up to God and result in salvation. Philosophical thought, like the dualism of Plato (matter is evil and spiritual is good) still had a great influence on the way people lived. Secular materialism also had a major influence on life.

We see this same influence of mystery religions, dualism, and secular materialism greatly influencing our way of life today, especially the resurgence of Gnostic writings such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, and the Acts of Paul and Thecla, all written in the 400s to 500s AD. Along with those Gnostic writings, many people are reading and following the Jewish Kabbalah which is said to open up followers to the secrets of the Old Testament and Rabbinic writings. The New Age thought being followed by so many people today is a mixture of current Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism with Gnosticism, Kabbalism, and Wiccan.

## Chapter 1

Verses 1 – 5. John begins his account about Jesus' life much differently than the other three gospel accounts. Matthew begins with his genealogy to show that he was descended from Abraham through King David and thus the rightful heir of David's throne. Luke begins by describing the unique birth of John the Baptist and the angel Gabriel's announcement of Jesus' unique birth to Mary. Then he describes Jesus' birth and growth before telling about John the Baptist preparing the way and baptizing Jesus. Finally he get around to giving Jesus' genealogy and takes it all the way back to Adam to show that he is the descendant of the first human. Mark jumps over all that Matthew and Luke wrote to begin with John the Baptist preparing the way and then quickly gets to his calling of the first disciples and showing he has authority over evil spirits. John begins his account the same way the Genesis account of the creation of the universe begins. He uses the same Greek phrase that the Hebrew scholars used to translate Genesis into Greek. He writes *εν αρχη* just as Genesis begins with *εν αρχη*. *εν αρχη* means "in the beginning."

John doesn't focus on Jesus as human or as rightful king or his authority over evil spirits. He focuses on the fact that Jesus existed before the beginning of the universe. He goes on to write the following in Greek.

*εν αρχη η̂ν ο̂ λογος και̂ ο̂ λογος η̂ν προς̂ τον̂ θεον̂ και̂ θεος̂ η̂ν ο̂ λογος*

(*en arche en ho logos kai ho logos en pros ton theon and theos en ho logos*)

The direct translation of this is:

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and God was the word.

There are some groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, who translate the last part of the statement in their *New World Translation* as "the word was a god" because they don't believe Jesus was God incarnate (in the flesh) but simply the highest created being. But the Greek construct and Greek grammar rules do not point to adding the indefinite article "a" to the translation.

The word, "logos" is derived from the Greek word "lego λέγω" which means "I say, speak, or tell." Its original usage was as a plea, an opinion, or an expectation because it refers to speech, words, or reason. Although today it is usually translated as "word," when the Greeks wished to refer to a "word" they used the term *lexis*, from which we get terms like lexicon. *Lexis* is also derived from the verb *lego* but is specifically a grammatical usage.

Beginning with the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus (535 – 475 BC), "logos" became a technical term in philosophy to refer to a principle of order and knowledge. Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) used it to refer to reasoned discourse (an argument) in the field of rhetoric (study of principles and rules of composition). The Stoic philosophy, which was founded in the early 300 BC, identified the word with the divine principle (*logos spermatikos*) which pervaded and animated the universe and taught that a person needed to live in accord with it to be free from errors in judgment that result in destructive emotions.

The Jewish philosopher, Philo (20 BC – 50 AD) adopted the term into Jewish philosophy but distinguished between *logos prophorikos* (the uttered word) and *logos endiathetos* (the word remaining within). He used *logos* to mean an intermediary divine being (demiurge). He followed the thinking of Plato who held that there was a difference between imperfect matter and the perfect idea. Therefore, intermediate beings were necessary to bridge the gap between God and the material world. The *Logos* was the highest of these intermediate beings which Philo identified as “the first-born of God.” Philo wrote that “the Logos of the living God is the bond of everything, holding all things together and binding all the parts, and prevents them from being dissolved and separated.” (Philo, *De Profugis*, cited by Gerald Friedlander, *Hellenism and Christianity*, pp. 114–115) The idea was that the *Logos* acted on behalf of God in the physical world. Thus, Philo, would identify “the Angel of the Lord” (Ex 3:2) who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush as the “*Logos*.” In the Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek by 70 (or 72) Jews in 132 BC, *logos* is used for the word of God in the creation of heaven in Psalm 33:6.

### Psalm 33:6

NAS – By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

### Hebrew

יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹ כָל-צַבָּאָם  
בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹ כָל-צַבָּאָם  
בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹ כָל-צַבָּאָם

### Septuagint (LXX) –

ὁ λόγος ὁ κύριος ὁ οὐρανός στερεώω καὶ ὁ πνεῦμα ὁ στόμα αὐτός πᾶς ὁ δύνამις αὐτός

(ho logos ho kurios ho ouranos stereoo kai ho pneuma ho stoma autos pas ho dunamis autos)

(By) the word (of) the Lord the heavens were made, and the breath (of) the mouth of him all the hosts of him.

John took the idea of the “logos” which was common in the philosophical thinking of his time and used it like the translators of the Septuagint to show that the “logos” not only existed before the creation of the universe. John explicitly said what the Hebrew scriptures implied – that the “logos” was God and was the creative thought and force of the universe. That’s why he wrote that everything was made by him and just in case you didn’t catch the positive statement he also states it negatively – “without him nothing was made that has been made.” He also says “in him was life.” Since life is in God, that means God can and does give life to everything that has life. The idea that the life of the “logos” was the light of men spoke to the philosophical concept that God enlightens men and gives them insight into the working of the world. Since the “logos” created the universe, his presence dispels the darkness of ignorance and gives understanding about God and his working in the world. The light shining in the darkness but the darkness not understanding it shows the human nature that prefers to live without understanding rather than accept that God created everything and thus has the authority to say how everything should live. As the “logos” brought light and understanding into the universe by creating it, so the “logos” coming into the world brought light and understanding into the darkness of the thinking of mankind that chose to follow the thinking of Satan to disobey God as revealed in Genesis.

When John writes in verse 14 that the “logos” became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, it becomes clear that he means Jesus is the “logos” and therefore God incarnate. This sets up the theme of the gospel that what Jesus did physically in the creation of the universe he also did spiritually in his incarnation and death. In his gospel account, light represents revelation and salvation while darkness represents ignorance and sin (disobedience – trying to be God for yourself).

Verses 6 – 13. After saying that the light shines in the darkness, John says that a man was sent from God to be a witness to testify concerning the light. He proclaims that the man, himself, was not the light but was only a witness to the light. He says the man's name is John but doesn't give us any background about him. One might think he is talking about himself, but the other gospel accounts make it clear that the man was John, the Baptist. Luke describes the announcement that John would be born of Zechariah and Elizabeth, an old couple who were barren. Zechariah was performing his priestly duties in the Holy Place of the temple when the angel Gabriel told him that he and his wife would have a baby boy and that he was to name him John. Gabriel tells him that the boy will be great in the sight of the Lord, that he is never to take wine or other fermented drink, that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth, and that he will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the people for the Lord. When Zechariah questioned how that could be, Gabriel announces that Zechariah will not be able to talk until the boy is born and named John. Then Luke tells about the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary and that when Mary went to visit her relative, Elizabeth's baby leaped for joy within her womb. This means John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus. Matthew and Mark tell more about the message that John the Baptist was preaching out in the desert area of the Jordan River and that people throughout the Judean countryside were going out to hear him.

John simply says that the true light was coming into the world. Then he says he was in the world and even though the world was made by him, it did not know (recognize) him. Then John announces that to all who received him (true light), to those who believed on his name (not yet told to the readers) he (true light) gave the right to become children of God, not born by natural means but born of (by) God.

Verse 14: Then John finally fits the pieces together to proclaim that the Word (who is God) became flesh and lived for a while among us so that we have seen his glory (light) that is the glory of God and that the Word is the only Son of God, the Father, full of grace and truth.

Verses 15 – 28. Now the Apostle John describes the testimony of John the Baptist. The first of his testimony is that he (John the Baptist) is not the important one – that the one coming after him was before him. He says the law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ and from the fullness of his grace we have received many blessings. Then he announces that no one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side and he has made him known. When priests and Levites came from Jerusalem to find out who John the Baptist was, John freely confessed that he was not the Christ. "Christ" is a title in Greek that expresses the Hebrew title of "Messiah," the one promised by God beginning in the Garden of Eden who would restore man to a right relationship with God, himself. The priests and Levites were seeking to find out by what authority John was preaching and baptizing in God's name. So if he wasn't the Messiah, was he Elijah. Elijah was taken up in a fiery chariot to be with God without dying physically. Elijah was expected to return before the Messiah and that's why they sat a place for him at every Passover celebration, so that when he came he could participate in the celebration. When John the Baptist said he wasn't Elijah, they asked if he was the Prophet. This referred back to Deuteronomy 18:18 where God told Moses that he would raise up a prophet for the people from among them who, like Moses would have God's words and speak in his name. John the Baptist declares that he is not the Prophet but quotes Isaiah (40:3) "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" When they ask by what authority he baptizes if he is not the Christ (Messiah), nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, John replies that he only baptizes with water but that there is one among them whom they do not know whose sandals he (John) is not worthy to untie. The Apostle John says that all this happened on the other side of the Jordan at a place called Bethabara where John the Baptist was baptizing people. Some translations show the place as Bethany and that has caused some confusion with the town of Bethany near Jerusalem where Lazarus lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha. That confusion could exist may well be why the apostle wrote that it was on the other side of the Jordan.

Verses 29 – 34. Now, the apostle continues with John the Baptist's testimony about the Word that is God in the flesh who is the light of the world. But now, when he sees Jesus coming toward him, John says to those around him, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" This is a direct reference to the Passover Feast where an unblemished, pure lamb was slain so his blood would allow the Death Angel to pass

over the houses on which the lamb's blood had been smeared during the 10<sup>th</sup> plague in Egypt just prior to the Hebrews beginning their exodus. It is also a connection to Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah coming as a suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Notice that he says that he takes away the sin of the world and not sins plural. All sins (disobedience of God) originate from one disobedience and that is not allowing God to be in control as he deserves as Creator but trying to be god for yourself and deciding what is right and wrong (good and evil) just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. (Gen 3) Jesus came to be the pure, unblemished lamb depicted in the annual Passover ceremony and in every temple sacrifice for sin discussed in Leviticus so that he could take away the penalty of sin and thus restore mankind to a right relationship with their Creator as God had promised would happen in Genesis 3:15. The Jews of the First Century thought the Messiah that was promised to come would be a political savior to remove them from control by any other nation (especially Rome) and establish once again the kingdom of David to prominence. But John the Baptist's testimony that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world shows that he wasn't coming at that time to re-establish the rule of David's kingdom.

Apparently, those with whom John is speaking were with him the previous day when he was being questioned by the priests and Levites because he references what he had told them about the one who would come after him that was more important than him. And John identifies for them that Jesus is that man. Then John reveals that he didn't know who the man would be but that the reason he came baptizing was so that he might be revealed to Israel. John further reveals that God told him to watch for someone upon whom he would see the Holy Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and rest upon. That would identify the person as the one to come after John and be more important. Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism indicate that John tried to avoid doing it because he needed to be baptized by Jesus, but that Jesus said it was proper to do it to fulfill all righteousness. All the other accounts indicate Jesus saw the dove descend on himself and heard God say "This is my Son ... with whom I am well pleased." Only the Apostle John records that John the Baptist saw the dove and was told by God to look for that sign to point to the Messiah. The purpose of baptisms was to indicate a cleansing from something, but the purpose of Jesus' baptism was to indicate a new life and beginning of Jesus' ministry. It was also proper to do so John would recognize him as the Messiah and announce it to his disciples. Then John ends his testimony by saying, "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

Verses 35 – 42. Now the Apostle John turns from the witness to John the Baptist that Jesus is the Messiah and to showing how others responded to John's testimony. What the Apostle John omits is that after his baptism, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert for forty days of fasting and a temptation by Satan to disobey God's will for the Messiah and accomplish everything by following Satan's way of thinking. If Jesus had done that it would mean he was putting Satan's way of thinking and doing things was more important than God's.

Again, the next day, John was with two of his disciples, saw Jesus passing by, and tells them to "Look, the Lamb of God." When the apostle says the next day, he doesn't mean literally the day after Jesus' baptism or even the day after John had identified Jesus as the Lamb of God to some hearers, but another day following those events. When those disciples of John hear Jesus is the Lamb of God (Messiah), they start following Jesus. Now, the Apostle John tells us that Jesus noticed the two disciples were following him so he turns and asks them "What do you want?" The Greek literally says, "what are you seeking." This is an indication that Jesus wants them to consider their reason for wanting to follow him. They reply by calling him Rabbi, which means teacher, and asking him where he is staying. They are not just curious about his living arrangements but are indicating they wish to accompany him as his disciples. Jesus acknowledges that by telling them to "come and they will see." That means they can become his disciples by following him and if they do they will discover his teaching and mission. The two follow Jesus and spend the day with him. The tenth hour would be 4 p.m.

Now the Apostle John identifies for us that one of the two men who heard John's testimony and followed Jesus was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Simon has not been called Peter yet, but the Apostle John calls him that because he is writing after the death of all the disciples and people would know Simon as Peter. Then we are told that the first thing Andrew does that evening is to find his brother and tell him that the Messiah (Christ) has been located. The hope of all Israelites was to find the Messiah in their lifetime. So, when Andrew knows

that Jesus is the Messiah and knows where he is staying, he is anxious to tell his brother so he can come see the Messiah for himself. The Apostle John says that when Andrew brings Simon to Jesus, it is then that Jesus tells Simon that he will be called Cephas which is translated as Peter.

In his account, Matthew indicates that after his baptism and temptation, Jesus had returned to Nazareth and that during the forty days of Jesus' temptation, John the Baptist had been put in prison. After hearing about John's imprisonment, Jesus goes to Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee, and began to preach, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near." Then Matthew describes the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John as his first disciples as they were fishing along the Sea of Galilee. Mark also indicates that Jesus was tempted after his baptism and that after John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee and began preaching before calling his first disciples. Luke also indicates Jesus was tempted and then returned to Nazareth where he announced in a synagogue service that the prophecy of Isaiah about the Messiah preaching good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind was being fulfilled in their hearing that day. Then he explains that the people of the town were so furious that the carpenter's son would say he was the Messiah that they took him to a cliff with the intent of throwing him over the edge to his death. But that Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on his way to Capernaum. There, on another Sabbath after teaching in another synagogue, he drives an evil spirit out of a man and the news about him and his authority spread throughout the area. Then Luke tells about Jesus healing Simon Peter's mother-in-law before the calling of Simon, James, and John as disciples.

The differences between the three synoptic gospel accounts and John's account of the calling of the first disciples means John was not interested in providing a historically correct account of the events but only giving his readers the important information to identify Jesus as the Messiah, that his mission was to provide the way for people to be restored to a right relationship with God, and that he called disciples to follow him so that they would later spread to people in the rest of the world the good news of what he did.

Verses 43 – 51. Again, the Apostle John begins a new piece of information by writing "the next day" and says Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Then he recounts the calling of Philip as a disciple and that Philip goes and tells Nathaniel the good news so he too can come and see the Messiah. The prophecies that he mentions may well be Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Isaiah 53; Daniel 7:13; and Zechariah 9:9. When Nathaniel approaches, Jesus announces that Nathaniel is a true Israelite in whom there is nothing false. Nathaniel wants to know how Jesus knows him so Jesus tells him that he saw him while he was still under the fig tree before Philip called to him. Nathaniel is amazed by what Jesus can do and know and declares that Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel. That is his recognition and affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah and the descendant of David. Jesus tells Nathaniel that even though he believed just because of what Jesus told him, that he would see even great thing than that because he would see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. In this statement, Jesus acknowledges his identification as the Son of God but also identifies himself as fully human by calling himself "the Son of Man."

## **Chapter 2**

Everything that John wrote in chapter 1 was meant to identify Jesus as God, come to earth in flesh, identified to the Jews as the Messiah who, as announced by God in the Garden of Eden, would restore people to a right relationship with him and for whom the Jews were looking and expecting, and point out that he (Jesus) was the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Lamb of God who would fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial system and take away the sin of the world. This was all to announce who he was and what his ministry was to be. It also provided a framework to counter the false gnostic teaching that was beginning to pervade the Church and said Jesus was either fully God and only appeared to be a man or fully man that had Messiahship thrust upon him, but that he couldn't be God in the flesh. Now as John begins chapter 2 he begins to describe the public ministry of Jesus.

Verses 1 – 11. John tells us that Jesus' mother (Mary) was attending a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee and that Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. Some people think Jesus might have been invited because one of his disciples (Nathanael) was from Cana in Galilee as John tells us in chapter 21 verse 2 and they think that there were probably only the five disciples previously mentioned with him. I believe they arrive at that conclusion because they are looking at John's gospel in a time-line manner and thus because he doesn't mention the calling of the other disciples before this event they conclude they hadn't been called yet. But that is not a valid argument. The Gospel of Luke only describes that Simon, James, and John were called from fishing on the Sea of Galilee and then shortly thereafter the calling of Levi (Matthew) a tax collector. He never describes the calling of the other disciples. The Gospel of Mark describes the calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John beside the Sea of Galilee and then sometime later, the calling of Levi. He also doesn't describe the calling of the other disciples. The Gospel of Matthew describes the calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John beside the Sea of Galilee and then four chapters later describes the calling of Matthew, the tax collector (himself). He never describes the calling of the other disciples but in the next chapter says Jesus sent the twelve disciples out and then names them. So, just like the other accounts, the fact that John doesn't describe the calling of all the disciples doesn't mean they weren't called sometime near the calling of the first four and then Matthew.

It was typical for a wedding celebration to last for seven days and be a community wide party. Cana is located only 9 miles north of Nazareth so it is quite possible that Mary and Jesus knew the families of the marriage partners and for that reason were invited to attend. Mary seems to have some kind of connection with at least one of the families because she is concerned when the wine for the party runs out before the festivities have ended. For the party to run out of wine would not only have been a social disgrace for the groom as he began his new marriage, but could also result in financial hardship for him to find some way of providing drink for the rest of the festival. And if he didn't, the people of the town might hold it against him and not do business with him. It is also possible that his family and Mary's were related so she was very concerned that everything went well for the new couple. So, she mentions it to Jesus with the implication of a mother that he should do something about it. Jesus gives her a mild rebuke for presuming to indicate that it is his responsibility to do something about the situation. His mother accepts the rebuke and responds to him in faith by telling the servants to do whatever he tells them. This affords Jesus his right to decide if he is going to do something, what he would do, and when and how he would do it.

Jesus decides to use the situation to demonstrate his authority over nature and the natural order of things. So he tells the servants to fill some nearby stone water jars which were used for ceremonial washings. After they do that, he tells them to draw out some and take it to the master of the banquet. When what they have drawn reaches the master of the banquet, he tastes it and find that it is better wine than what had previously been served. We are told he didn't know where the wine came from even though the servants did. So he calls the groom and praises him for saving the best wine for the last rather than serving the lesser wine as the party is winding down.

As we note from Luke Gospel, Jesus had already driven a demon from a man, healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever, and healed many other people in the area of Capernaum of sicknesses and demons and the news about him spread throughout the area. The distance from Capernaum to Cana is about 16 miles so it is quite likely that people in Cana had heard about the miraculous healings that Jesus had previously done. So this is not the first miracle that Jesus did. But John says it is the first of his miraculous signs and by it he revealed his glory to his disciples and they put their faith in him. A sign is a miracle that has a significant meaning other than just the miracle that occurs. The sign of this miracle is not only that Jesus has the ability to turn water into wine but that he has the ability to create like God created the universe with the appearance of age. The wine was not "new" wine which would be like grape juice, but "choice" wine which means it was recognized as "aged." The only way for water to become "aged" wine is through the same miracle that created the universe with age. Thus, Jesus is specifically identifying for his disciples that he is God, the Creator of the universe. And this is exactly what John has presented in chapter 1.

Some people see in this miraculous turning of water into wine the portraying of the coming of the new kingdom and the joy that he brings to it. That is probably more eisegesis (reading into scripture what you want to find there) rather than exegesis (reading out of scripture the principles that are there so they can be applied to a current situation).

Verses 12 – 25. From Cana, Jesus, Mary and the disciples travel to Capernaum for a few days. When it was almost time for the Passover celebration, they journeyed on to Jerusalem. The distance from Capernaum to Jerusalem is about 90 miles if you travel direct, but that would take you through the area of Samaria which Jews avoided at that time to avoid having any contact with the Samaritan half-breed Jews. So Jews would travel over to the west of the Jordan River, then south, and finally passed Samaria, cross over again and climb the mountains to Jerusalem. This was about 120 miles. That it was almost time for the Passover celebration means the date is near the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan which would occur in our Gregorian calendar shifting anywhere from late in March through April just as we see the date of Easter shifting. When they arrived there and went to the temple courts, Jesus found merchants selling cattle, sheep and doves that were approved for sacrifices and others exchanging money so people could turn their ordinary money into the special temple coins that were the only thing acceptable in the temple. This selling would have been in the outer court of the temple complex which was known as the Court of the Gentiles. The practice had probably begun as a service for all the pilgrims coming from countries far away who wouldn't have been able to bring an unblemished lamb for the Passover sacrifice because it would get blemished on the trip. Also, the various currency that they would have brought from their country would not have been easily used by the priests so it was best to exchange it for a coin they could easily use. But by Jesus' time, it had become a business where the pilgrims were overcharged for the animals and given poor rates of exchange for their currency. Being upset by what he saw, Jesus made a whip out of cords that were there and drove all the animals from the temple courts, turned the tables of the money changers over and scattered their coins, and told the merchants to get out because they dared to turn his Father's house into a market. Saying that the temple was his Father's house announced to everyone that heard him that he was claiming to be the Son of God (deity) – that was his authority for cleansing the outer court grounds. Obviously Jesus didn't really harm anyone with the whip because if the Roman soldiers who were always present at the Fortress of Antonia at the edge of the outer court to keep peace in the city didn't come out and arrest Jesus for causing a riot and hurting people.

There is a similar event recounted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-16; Luke 19:45-46), but it occurs after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before his crucifixion. Only John records this cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Because the events are so similar, some people want to believe there was only one event and John just put it out of sequence. We'll see when we get to the end of this passage why that idea is probably wrong.

When Jesus cleansed the temple his disciples remembered Psalm 69:9 where it is written, "zeal for your house consumes me." The Jews that observed what he had done asked for a miraculous sign to prove he had authority (God's) to do what he did. Jesus wouldn't perform any miracle for them but replied, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews, of course, are astonished because as they said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?" But John tells us that the temple Jesus had spoken of was his body and that after he was raised from the dead his disciples recalled what he had said and they believed the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken. This begins to show us that this cleansing is different from the later one.

Herod the Great ruled the area for the Romans from 37 BC until his death in 4 BC. He began a renovation and expansion of the temple complex in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (17 BC) so 46 years later puts the date of this cleansing as 30 AD. According to Matthew, when the Magi from the east came looking for the one who the heavenly signs said was born king of the Jews, it was Herod the Great who tried to kill that possible threat to his rule by having all the babies in Bethlehem who were two years old and under killed. Just before the killing, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt until an angel revealed to them that it was safe to return because Herod had died. So Jesus was born about 5 BC and that would make him 34 years old at this time.

There is a prophecy in Malachi 3:1-3 which says God will send his messenger to prepare the way for him and then suddenly the Lord the people are seeking will come to his temple. Some people would like to see this or the second cleansing of the temple to fulfill that prophecy, but it seems unlikely. Malachi 3:2 indicates that when the Lord appears he will be like a refiners' fire and will purify the priests so that pure offerings will be brought. Jesus obviously didn't purify anyone by either of the temple cleansings, but when he returns after the Tribulation, it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords to purify the whole world and establish his kingdom rule for the Millennium (1000 years). So that prophecy wasn't fulfilled during Jesus' first coming.

Now John tells us that while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. That is John's way of saying that they believed he was the promised Messiah but it doesn't mean they believed he was God in the flesh. They expected the Messiah to be a conqueror so they would have been willing to follow him because they expected the Messiah to free them from Roman rule and re-establish the Davidic kingdom. So, John says Jesus would not entrust himself to them because he knew all men and what was in a man. This shows that this event was different from the later cleansing because in the later one the Jews are looking for a way to get rid of him (killing) because they didn't want to follow him.

It appears that John chose to recount this cleansing of the temple because it showed from the beginning of Jesus' ministry that he had a zeal for people to properly honor God and his house rather than just follow traditions and ritual by rote without any meaningful involvement in them. It also shows that people recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the one who would set the people free to have a right relationship with God, and that Jesus knew from the beginning that his mission from the Father was to die for the sin of the people as John the Baptist proclaimed in chapter 1.

### **Chapter 3**

At the end of chapter 2 John wrote (vs 23) that "many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name." He also wrote (vs 25) that Jesus "knew what was in a man." Beginning with this chapter, John shows Jesus' interaction with several people which shows he knew what was in people and that people responded with belief in him.

Verses 1 – 21. John introduces Nicodemus and identifies him as a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin). Pharisees had a great respect for the Jewish Scriptures (Tanakh).

Tanakh is a word formed from the first letters of the names of the three divisions of the Jewish Scriptures – T N K. "T" stands for the first division which is called the Torah (also called the Five Books of Moses). "N" stands for the second division which is called the Nevi'im (the books of the prophets). "K" stands for the third division which is called the Ketuvim (the other books which are the other writings). Together, they form what New Testament believers call the Old Testament.

Pharisees studied the Tanakh to determine how to live life as closely as possible to what was taught. Thus many people see them as legalistic. That might not be a good description because legalistic generally has come to be a negative term. A better description could be that they tried to follow what they found taught in the Scriptures so they would be living a pure life that would be rewarded for all their good works when they were resurrected. But they would also interpret what was written so they could accommodate practices that they desired to keep. Any person could be a Pharisee if they studied the Scriptures and lived by the rules found there. Pharisees thought everyone should live as they did and thus would readily share what they saw another person was doing improperly. That Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin means that he was recognized as a scholar of the Scriptures (a rabbi – teacher) and had high standing among other Pharisees and other Jews like the Sadducees and priests.

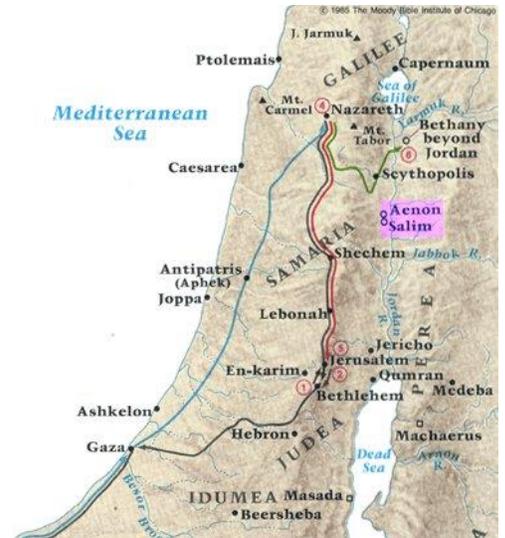
The Pharisees generally opposed Jesus because he didn't follow what they interpreted as rules for daily living in the Scriptures. So the fact that Nicodemus visited Jesus at night is important because it shows he was concerned about what other Pharisees would say about him seeking Jesus' interpretation about anything. When he addresses Jesus as "Rabbi" that is a recognition that he considered Jesus as a teacher just as he was. So the visit was one rabbi meeting another rabbi for a discussion. His statement that Jesus was a teacher from God, followed by the statement that no one could perform the miraculous signs that people had seen and obviously talking about "if God were not with him." This is quite a statement coming from a Pharisee and shows at least a beginning belief in Jesus' actions as being approved by God.

Jesus' reply shows that he knew what Nicodemus really needed to discuss – living a life that was worthy of being rewarded after resurrection. So, he tells him that being born again is the only way of being part of the kingdom of God. When Jesus talks about the kingdom of God he is talking about the Millennial kingdom over which he will rule and not some kingdom that would start during his life or immediately afterward. By the time John was writing this gospel, it was clear that neither of those options had happened, so the only option left was a future kingdom. Jesus' statement immediately opposes the idea of having to live a pure life to be rewarded after resurrection (the reward is to be living in God's kingdom). Immediately, Nicodemus responds to what he sees as an impossibility in Jesus' statement. Surely a man can't be born when he is old because he can't enter his mother's womb a second time to be born again. The Greek word translated as "born again" is *ανωθεν* (anōthen) which can be translated as "up-place," "anew," or "again." Nicodemus took the word to be being born physically a second time (again) so Jesus clears up his misunderstanding. He says a man must be born of water (meaning physical birth) and also of the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Then he further clarifies that flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. Then Jesus says that Nicodemus shouldn't be surprised by what he just said and compares the work of the Spirit to the unseen coming and going of the wind which cannot be seen but the effects of it can be seen.

Nicodemus still doesn't understand so Jesus gently rebukes him for being Israel's teacher and not understanding. That tells us the idea of being regenerated spiritually is clear from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, water is often used to symbolize spiritual cleansing and renewal (see Num 19:17-19; Isa 55:1-3; Psalm 51:10; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8). Also, the Old Testament uses the Spirit to represent God's life (Gen 1:2; 2:7; 6:3; Job 34:14). God also promises that he will pour out his Spirit on people like water (Isa 32:15-16; Joel 2:28-29). The result of that outpouring is to be a new heart for those people (Jer 31:31-34). The Old Testament speaks of both spiritual birth and physical birth (Psalm 87:5-6; Ezek 36:25-28). So, cleansing or renewal by means of or affected by God's Spirit and spiritual birth should have been clear to Nicodemus. Jesus' statement obviously means that unless a person has received spiritual cleansing and renewal from God's Spirit (a spiritual rebirth), he or she can't enter the kingdom.

Then Jesus tells Nicodemus, "I tell **you** (singular) the truth, **we** (plural) speak of what **we** (plural) know, and **we** (plural) testify to what **we** (plural) have seen, but still **you** (plural) people do not accept **our** (plural) testimony." Jesus' use of the plural here indicates that the Trinity is in view. Remember that the Father and the Spirit testified to the deity of Jesus and the work that he would do when he was baptized. Jesus says that if Nicodemus doesn't believe when he talks to him about earthly things how will he believe if he talks about heavenly things. Then he proclaims his deity by saying "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man." His use of "the Son of Man" reflects back on Daniel 7:13-14 in which God revealed to Daniel that the Son of Man would be given all authority and an eternal kingdom. Then he reveals that his mission is to die so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. His mission wasn't to condemn the world but save the world. So everyone who believes in Jesus is not condemned but whoever does not believe already is condemned because they have not believed in Jesus. Then, using the image of darkness and light, he proclaims that light has come into the world but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds (way of living) are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light because it will reveal their deeds. Everyone who lives by the truth (and Jesus will proclaim in John 14:6 that he is the truth) will come into the light because it will reveal that what has been done was through God. Verses 16 to 21 are the heart of John's message about Jesus.

Verses 22 – 30. The meeting with Nicodemus obviously took place in Jerusalem because Jesus now leaves and goes into the Judean countryside where he spends time with his disciples. In verse 22 and also in verse 26 John appears to say that Jesus was baptizing people, but in chapter 4 verse 2 John clarifies that it wasn't Jesus but the disciples that were baptizing people. Then the Apostle John tells that John the Baptist and some of his disciples were also baptizing at Aenon near Salim because there was plenty of water there and many people were coming to him to be baptized. Aenon is a transliterated Greek word that comes from the Hebrew "ay-yin" which means spring or natural fountain. According to ancient maps, like the Madaba map, Salim appears to be 8 miles south of the town of Scythopolis (modern day Beit She'an), on the west side of the Jordan River. That would place it at the site of present day Tell Ridghah where there is a shrine on the northern side known as Sheikh Selim. And not far off are the ruins of Umm el-'Amdan where there are seven fountains which could have been known as Aenon (place of springs). This place would have been 52 miles north of Jerusalem straight through the land of Samaria, but was still in the area governed by Herod Antipas and not his brother Philip. It would be in the southern area of Galilee. The Apostle John notes that this event happened before John the Baptist was imprisoned (by Herod). Obviously, John the Baptist continued his ministry until Herod imprisoned and beheaded him. In their gospel accounts, Matthew and Mark begin to tell about Jesus' ministry after John the Baptist was imprisoned saying that Jesus returned to Galilee. Luke doesn't talk about the beginning of John the Baptist's imprisonment, but does discuss Jesus beginning his ministry in Galilee immediately after his temptation in the wilderness. Only John's gospel discusses that Jesus was ministering and his disciples baptizing in Judea while John the Baptist was still baptizing in the southern area of Galilee.



There was an argument between John's disciples and some Jew about ceremonial washing. This is not the baptism described later in the New Testament. John's baptism was a ritual cleansing to show a change from an old way of living while baptism by the church after Jesus' resurrection was a symbol of a regenerated life. The regenerated new life comes from believing and trusting Jesus as Savior and having the Holy Spirit sent in to renew the dead spirit. John's disciples came to him with the complaint that the man (Jesus) who was with him on the other side of the Jordan (at Bethabara) is baptizing also and everyone is going to him. The fact that they are at least 52 miles away from where Jesus is shows that it was jealousy that motivated their statement. John answers his disciples, telling them that a man can only receive what is given to him from heaven. That tells the disciples that Jesus' popularity with the people is given to him by God. And John reminds them that he has testified that he is not the Christ (Messiah) [John 1:20] but was sent before the Messiah to point people to him. When John the Baptist tells his disciples that "the bride belongs to the bridegroom" he probably means the nation of Israel which is intimated in the Old Testament has a relationship with God like a wife (Isa 54:5; 62:4-5; Jer 2:2; 3:20; Ezek 16:8; Hos 2:16-20). At this point the Church is not in existence so that should not be presumed to be implied by John's statement although John's readers would have been familiar with Paul's writings concerning the "bride of Christ" (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27, 32. Israel rejected her bridegroom when he came for her so he took a different bride for himself. Later, God the Father will restore Israel to her relationship with him as his wife. What is he saying is that it is the job of the friend (best man) who attends the bridegroom to prepare everything so that when the bridegroom arrives to get his bride all will be ready. John says that joy is his. So when the bridegroom arrives, he is the object of greater importance and the best man becomes of less importance. John the Baptist had pointed his disciples to Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (1:29) but some of them continued to follow him and baptized in his name long after his death (Acts 18:24-26; 19:1-7)

Verses 31 – 36. Then we find a description of the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus. This could be either the Apostle John's commentary or John the Baptist's. The one from above (Jesus) is above (over) all things and speaks of heavenly things while the one from the earth (John) can only speak of earthly things. The

one from above (Jesus) testifies about what he has seen and heard (God and heavenly things) but people don't accept (believe) it. Everyone who does believe and accept it proclaims that God is truthful. Then John testifies that Jesus speaks the words of God (the Father) and God has given him the Spirit (power) without limit and has placed everything in his hands. The Spirit only came upon the Old Testament prophets a limited time and for specific purposes, but Jesus received the Spirit without limit and he stayed with him (John 1:32-33 foretold by Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). Then John testifies that everyone who believes in the Son has eternal life but whoever rejects the Son will not see life because God's wrath remains on him. This is the same thing that Jesus told Nicodemus in 3:16.

## Chapter 4

Verses 1 – 3. Now John shows Jesus moving north from Judea toward Galilee. This event is a continuation of John showing that Jesus was revealing that he is the fulfillment of what the prophecies in the Old Testament anticipated. Once again John shows that Jesus was aware of the timing of his ministry. Since the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was gaining popularity, it would bring a confrontation with them. Since that later would lead to his death on the cross, to have that happen this early in his ministry must have been at least part of the motivation behind heading to Galilee.

Verses 4 – 6. The most direct route to Galilee from Judea was through Samaria and would be about three days travel. Most Judean Jews would rather cross the Jordan River and travel on the east side of it to go back and forth from Judea to Galilee while some Galilean Jews would travel through the land even though they didn't like the Samaritans. Samaria was politically a part of Judea according to Rome and administered by a Roman governor rather than by Herod Antipas who governed the areas of Galilee and Perea (east of Jordan River). There was an ancient animosity that divided the Jews and Samaritans. After the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria in 722 BC, many of the Israelites were taken captive into other parts of the Assyrian kingdom while Assyrians came to live in the area and intermarried with the Israelites. They also brought the worship of pagan gods (2 Kings 17 – 18). When Israelites of the southern kingdom were taken captive into Babylon, they kept themselves separate from the foreigners and maintained their Jewish bloodlines. Thus when they were released from captivity and returned to the land to rebuild the temple, they spurned the assistance of the Samaritan because they were considered half-breeds and unworthy of being a part of that godly undertaking. So a deep hatred developed between the two peoples. The northern kingdom had started to worship on Mt Gerizim rather than at the temple in Jerusalem and continued that during the captivity of the southern kingdom and especially after being rebuffed in their offer to help rebuild the temple. Jesus came to the town of Sychar which was near the plot of land Jacob had bought from the Shechemites (Gen 33:18-20). Jacob's well is not mentioned in the Old Testament but John identifies that it was located here. In 1886, it was estimated that the well was originally dug 150 feet deep and that it was fed by an underground spring. The "sixth" hour that Jesus arrived would have been "noon" in our present annotation of time.

Verses 7 – 26. For a woman to be coming to draw water from the well at this time of day was highly out of the ordinary and indicated that she was considered to be an outcast to the people of the town. Thus she had to get water when the other women wouldn't be there drawing water for their daily activities. Jesus asked the woman to give him a drink. Since Jesus was fully human, his body tired and needed food and water just like everyone else. John adds a side note to tell us that all the disciples had gone into town to purchase food. Since Jews would not typically buy food from the "unclean" Samaritans, it may indicate that Jesus sent them into town so that he could be alone to confront the woman he knew would be coming. The fact that they weren't present means John had to learn what words had been spoken between Jesus and the woman from Jesus after he and the other disciples returned and the meeting had ended. Jesus could have drawn water for himself if he had a bucket and rope, but since she was there to draw water, he took the opportunity to engage the woman in conversation. The Samaritan woman obviously could tell that Jesus was a Jew and not a Samaritan for she asked how he could ask her for a drink. Then John notes that Jews don't associate with Samaritans (or use dishes Samaritans have used). The woman's comment carries a bit of sarcasm and insult and implies that Jews considered Samaritans unclean like dirt and she was just a lowly woman besides that.

Jesus ignores any possible sarcasm or insult and uses the fact that she recognizes him to be a Jew to help her discover a greater truth. He tells her that if she really knew the gift of God and who was asking her for a drink and what he could offer that she would be asking him for a drink of living water. The writings of Ezekiel and Zechariah spoke of water flowing from Jerusalem in the future when the Messiah was ruling there and that water would even make salt water fresh and give life everywhere it flows (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8). Jesus' method in discussing spiritual things with this woman was to begin with earthly things they had in common (desire for water), capture her curiosity by implying he was not just whom he seemed to be and that he could offer her something very valuable and free.

The woman responds by trying to find out how he can give her water since he has nothing from which to draw water and the well is deep. She asks if he is really greater than Jacob who gave them to well and drank from it himself. Jesus replies that everyone drinking this water will be thirsty again but everyone drinking the water he offers will have a spring of water giving eternal life so they won't thirst again. The Old Testament spoke of salvation pouring forth like satisfying water (Isa 12:3; 44:3; 49:10; 55:1-7; Jer 31:29-34; Ezek 36:25-27; and Joel 2:28-32). What Jesus promised what the Holy Spirit would do for believers because he would dwell within them and provide for all their needs.

The woman didn't pretend to understand what he was saying but she wanted what he was offering so she wouldn't have to come back and draw more water. Now Jesus took the conversation in a different direction and once again showed that he knew what was in people. He tells her to go and call her husband and then come back. It was proper for Jesus to speak to her husband and not just to her, but he also knew that she didn't have a husband as she clearly states. Jesus further reveals his knowledge of people as he explains her present situation of having had five husbands and that the man she is living with now is not her husband. The fact that she is not living according to the commands of the Torah but in recognized sin (disobedience) is probably the reason she has to come to draw water at noon when no one else would be around. Many people when confronted by someone who knew their sin would probably walk away, but she was likely accustomed to the people of the town. But this Jewish man knew her private life and she recognized that must make him a prophet. Now she tries to divert the attention from her sin by bringing up an old controversy between the Jews and Samaritans, probably hoping he would be sidetracked. The Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim, near Shechem, during the divided kingdom and after, but the Jews said the only place to truly worship God was at the temple in Jerusalem. Shechem had a long history of God meeting and dealing with people. It was there that God revealed himself to Abram and where Abram first built an altar to worship God after entering the promised land (Gen 12:6-7). It was where Jacob had chosen to live and where he buried the idols after returning from Paddan Aram (Gen 33:18-20; 35:4). The Samaritans said that Abraham offered Isaac on this mountain and met Melchizedek here. Genesis 14 tells the story of Abram (Abraham) meeting Melchizedek, the King of Salem (Jerusalem) in the Valley of Sheveh after returning from Dan (95 miles north of Jerusalem). Since Shechem is 30 miles north of Jerusalem, it is unlikely that the King of Salem would travel that far to bless Abram with bread and wine since Abram would have to travel by Salem to return to his home near the trees of Mamre, near Hebron and about 15 miles south of Jerusalem.

Jesus avoids her attempt to divert his attention and tells her that a time is coming when people will worship God, the Father, neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem. He tells her the real issue is not where but how people would worship God in the future. He tells her that you (Samaritans) worship a God you (they) don't really know. That was because the Samaritans didn't accept anything other than the Torah as authoritative and had added pagan practices to their worship. On the other hand, the Jew worship what they do know (God's revelation in the writing and prophets) and that salvation comes from the Jews (because the Messiah was promised to come from the tribe of Judah). Jesus didn't take sides on what should be the place of worship but clarified that the proper authority of what to believe was from the entire Old Testament and not just what they had accepted and what they had added to it. When Jesus says a time is coming and is now here that true worshippers will worship God in spirit and truth, he is saying the old worship ways of the Samaritan and Jews would both give way to a new way of worship. The phrase "in spirit and truth" doesn't indicate two separate

characteristics of worship but that the worship will be truly spiritual – not just ritual but arising from the person’s spirit (which will have been regenerated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) and thus transcends time and place. She says that the Messiah will explain everything when he comes and Jesus says “I am he.”

Verses 27 – 42. Just after Jesus declares to the Samaritan woman that he is the Messiah, his disciples return from seeking food in Sychar. They find him talking with the woman, but John tells us none of them asked why he was talking with her or what he wanted. The fact that John mentions what they didn’t ask shows the prevailing attitude toward a Jew and especially a rabbi (teacher) toward any contact with Samaritans or talking with women. But the woman quickly departs leaving her water jar that she had brought to get water and take back to her home and went to tell the people of the town that she had met a man who told her everything she ever did and wonders if he could be the Christ (Messiah). Remember, Jesus has just declared to her that he is the Messiah so why doesn’t she just run into town shouting that she has met the Messiah? Because of her reputation and because she was a woman nobody would probably believe her. Only the witness of men was considered acceptable. So by telling them that a stranger knew her past and asking if he could be the Messiah, the men would be wondering how a stranger could do this. And her tactic worked because the many of the people (especially men but possibly some women as well) came out to see who this man was.

Meanwhile, the disciples urged Jesus to eat something of what they had brought back. But Jesus takes the opportunity to explain that his food is to do the will of God and finish the work given to him. Then he points out that people can look at their fields and tell how long until the field will be ready to harvest. So he urges the disciples to open their eyes and look at the fields. Very probably, when Jesus said this he pointed to the people coming across the field from the town to the well. He says the fields are ripe for harvest right now and in fact, the reaper is drawing his wages and reaping the crop for eternal life. And he says the reaper and the sower (of the seed) will rejoice together over the harvest. John tells us in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter that Jesus told his disciples on his last night with them that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people of their sin and righteousness. So the Holy Spirit is the reaper since he is the one who enters a believer’s life and applies the benefit of the death that Jesus paid for us to our lives. Then Jesus reminds them of a saying that “one sows and another reaps” and tells them it is true. He also tells them that he has sent them to reap what they have not worked for. He says other have done the hard work and they have reaped the benefits of their labor. The reaper in a harvest has people working for him to reap or bring in the harvest, but he is still the reaper. In the same way, the Holy Spirit uses the efforts of believers to share what has happened in their lives (just like the Samaritan woman did) to bring people to hear about and believe and then he actually makes them part of the harvest as he indwells them and changes their lives for eternity. All believers are to be sowers, telling what Jesus has done in their lives. Some of them may get to help with the reaping as they lead someone in a prayer asking Jesus to take control of and change their life. Then the Holy Spirit enters the person’s life and performs the actual reaping by making the person a member of the family of God.

Many of the people who came from the town believed Jesus was the Messiah because of the woman’s testimony of what he did when talking with her. So they urged him to stay with them and Jesus obliged by staying for two days. Then, as a result of his words to them (which are recorded by anyone for us) many more become believers. The new believers tell the woman that now they believe not just because of what she said but because of what they have heard and that they know he is really the Savior of the world (Messiah).

Verses 43 – 54. After staying with the Samaritans in Sychar for two days, Jesus resumes his journey from Judea to Galilee. It seems at odds that John would say Jesus had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country and then says the Galileans welcomed him. Matthew, Mark, and Luke clarify this for us. They tell us that Jesus said this of his hometown of Nazareth. (See Matt 13:57, Mark 6:4, and Luke 4:24) We learn that the Galileans who welcomed Jesus had been in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and so had seen or heard about Jesus overturning the money changing tables and running the money changers out with a whip. Jesus’ destination in Galilee seems to have been Cana where he had turned ordinary water into the best of wine.

Now John tells us that there was a royal official there in Cana that had a son who was sick at Capernaum. We aren't told whether this man had other business in Cana when he heard that Jesus was there or that he had heard Jesus was headed to Cana and decided to travel from Capernaum (18 miles away) to find Jesus. Either way, the official went to Jesus and begged him to come to Capernaum and heal his son. Obviously he had heard about the miracles Jesus had previously done as told by Luke (chapter 4) and believed Jesus could heal his son if only he would go and touch him. He must have believed Jesus was a healer but that like other healers (doctors) he had to be present with the patient. He didn't believe that Jesus could create or cause something to happen just by speaking it no matter where he was located.

Jesus' reply that "you people" (plural) won't believe unless you see miraculous signs and wonders is not a put down of the man's faith that Jesus could heal. It is setting the stage for the official and all those around to learn a deeper truth – that believing (true faith in Jesus as the Messiah) does not come from seeing (signs and wonders) but that seeing (signs and wonders) comes from believing (true faith in Jesus as the Messiah). The official doesn't seem to be offended by Jesus' remarks but only pleads again for Jesus to come to Capernaum with him before his son dies. And Jesus simply replies, "You may go. Your son will live." This meant that the official would have to place his trust in Jesus and what he had said and return home by himself.

So, John says the official took Jesus at his word and started back to Capernaum. On his way home, some of his servants met him with the news that his son was living. So the official asked the servants when his son got better and they replied the previous day at the seventh hour (1 pm). The official immediately realized that this was the very time Jesus had said his son would live. So now the official not only believes Jesus is a healer but he knows that Jesus is the Messiah, who can speak and whatever he says will happen just like God spoke and the universe came into existence from nothing. And when the official returns home and tells everyone what Jesus did, the whole family believes (puts their faith in Jesus as the Messiah).

John closes this part of the story by saying this was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed. As Luke has recorded for us (chapter 4) these were not the first two miracles that Jesus had done. He had driven a demon from a man and healed many in Capernaum, including Simon Peter's mother-in-law, when he first came there after announcing in his hometown synagogue that he was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy concerning the work of the Messiah. The first miracle was performed as a sign for his disciples so that they would put their faith in him as God because he did what only God can do – create something that was the best and that showed the apparent passage of time because it was aged. This proved his power over time. The second miracle was performed as a sign so that common people would put their faith in him as God because again he did what only God can do – speak and cause healing at a distance just because of his spoken command. This proved his power over space/distance. So why does John mention only these two miracles? The answer may be found in the structure of what John has written from the first to the second miracle. Literary scholars call what he has written a "chiastic" structure. This device is used by writers to highlight or point to something of importance that the writer wants the reader to understand. Looking at the chiastic structure of John writing from the first to second miraculous signs, we find the following:

- A** Jesus' first sign in Cana 2:1-11
  - B** A reference to Capernaum, Jesus' headquarters 2:12
  - C** Hostility toward Jesus in Jerusalem 2:13-25
  - D** Nicodemus' response to Jesus 3:1-15
  - E** The importance of Jesus' mission 3:16-36
  - D'** The Samaritan woman's response to Jesus 4:1-38
  - C'** Acceptance of Jesus in Samaria 4:39-42
  - B'** A reference to Galilee, Jesus' major ministry arena 4:43-45
- A'** Jesus' second sign in Cana 4:46-54

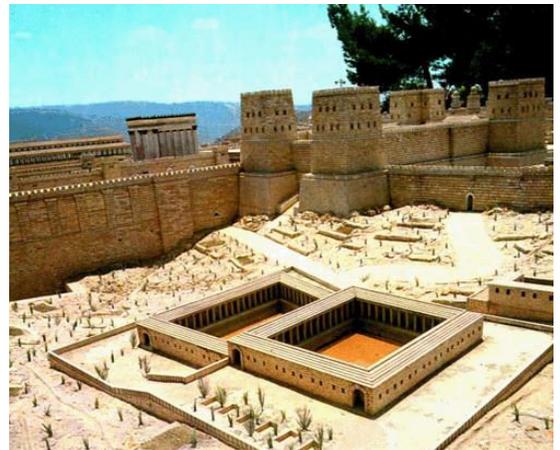
We see the important thing to learn is Jesus' mission, especially John 3:16, that came from heaven to earth to die for mankind so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life with God.

## Chapter 5

Verses 1 – 15. John informs us that he is changing thoughts from what he was saying in chapters 2 through 4 by saying “some time later.” This also helps us remember that John is not giving a chronological account of Jesus’ ministry and trying to tell us everything that happened. He is selecting events out of what would be a chronological account to tell us about Jesus, his ministry, and how people responded to Jesus. In chapters 2 through 4, John shows us two miraculous signs that Jesus did for the faith of his disciples and to show he had creative power over time and space. John also shows us in those chapters how Jesus interacted with some individuals in Jerusalem, Samaria, and Galilee. Now John changes to telling how Jesus showed himself publically to be the Messiah and because of that how the Pharisees began to oppose him.

John tells us that Jesus went to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. He doesn’t tell us the particular feast as he does in later events. He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover (Mar/Apr) in chapter 2 and in chapter 6 John tells us that the Passover was near again when Jesus sat on a hillside in Galilee and fed 5,000 men with two small fish and five small barley loaves. There are six feasts in the Jewish year – the Feast of Lots (Purim), the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah – New Year), the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). There is also a fast on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). With a whole year in between, it is impossible to determine which feast this is and it isn’t necessary for the understanding of what John tells us happened.

The important point is that Jesus is in Jerusalem and approaches a gate known as the Sheep Gate which has a pool nearby which John says in Aramaic is called Bethesda (Bethsaida). The Sheep Gate is first mentioned in Nehemiah 3:1 as the first gate that he rebuilt as he began to rebuild the city walls. This gate is thought to be the way that sheep to be sacrificed at the temple were brought into the city. Our spelling of the pool’s name is a conjoining of the Aramaic words “beth” and “hesda” which means “house of grace/mercy”. Until they unearthed a pool at the site in 1956, many archaeologists thought that John was referring symbolically to the five books of Moses when he said there were five colonnades. What they unearthed was a rectangular pool with a portico on each side and a fifth one that divided the pool into two sections. (See picture of what it is thought to have looked like in Jesus’ day at the right.)



The picture at the left depicts what Jerusalem might have looked like in Jesus’ day. The pool of Bethesda is located at the bottom, to the right of the temple mount. John informs us that a great number of disabled people would lie there near the pool. Some more modern translations omit the last part of verse 3 and all of verse 4 which tells that the people were waiting there for the water to be disturbed by an angel and that the first person into the water after that would be healed. Many biblical scholars don’t like those parts of the story because they feel it gives some credence to a superstition that the people had. And they claim it is not in the best of ancient manuscripts. But Tertullian, an early Christian author, when writing about the necessity of baptism refers to this passage as showing what was to come in spiritual healing. So

those parts that have been questioned just might have been in the original works and somehow omitted in the copies that we now have. Those statements show the reason the disabled people were waiting there and explain what the crippled man meant when he referred to the water being stirred (vs 7). Without the statements we have no way of understanding why the man wanted to get into the water. They do not give any credence to the

superstition, but they do help us understand the situation into which Jesus was going to do a public miracle that would upset the Pharisees and bring persecution on him from the Jews.

The man whom Jesus approaches had been an invalid for thirty-eight years (longer than Jesus had lived at this time). We are not told whether it was some of the man's family or friends that carried him to the pool each day so he could be nearby if the water was stirred. But they apparently didn't stay with him to help him get in the water according to the man's statement in verse 7. When Jesus learns the man has been in this condition for a long time, he asks him if he wants to get well (be healed). The man doesn't know who Jesus is as John tells us in verse 13. So, the man has no reason to seek healing from Jesus. Jesus' question might seem to some people to be a little insensitive. Why else would the man be waiting by the pool except to be healed? The question is really an offer to provide healing and the man simply explains that he has no one to help him into the pool. So, he would see Jesus as someone offering to get him into the pool when the water is stirred. But instead of taking him to the pool, Jesus simply tells him to get up, pick up his mat, and walk. By telling him that, Jesus is saying you don't have to wait for the water to be stirred and be the first in the water to be healed. Healing is available right now. At once means immediately, the man was healed and he obeyed what Jesus said. This healing was a direct, public claim that Jesus is the Messiah because he was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 35:1-7 that the Messiah would heal the lame.

The man picked up his mat and walked away. If the man was older than 38, then his legs and muscles would have grown as he matured and his brain would have developed the pathways for him to balance and walk. But then some disease or accident had left him unable to walk. But if he was only 38, then he was born an invalid, his bones would have been weak, his muscles would have never matured and his brain would not have developed the pathways for him to balance so he could walk. In either case, the miracle of Jesus was that he gave this man strong bones, muscles and the pathways in the brain to allow all of that to work so the man could immediately walk just as if he had always been able.

As the man carried the mat and walked some Jews noticed and confronted him about doing work on the Sabbath by carrying his mat. The law to which they referred was what the Pharisees taught people to do to keep God's commandment to "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates." (Ex 20:8-10) The man replies to them that the man who healed me told me to pick up my mat and walk. John informs us that while this was taking place Jesus slipped away into the crowd and that the man didn't know who had healed him. John probably says that because the Jews would have naturally asked who had done the healing because that also was considered work and they would want to confront him for that.

John says that later Jesus found the man at the temple and told him that now he was healed he should stop sinning or something worse may happen to him. Many people want to see that this means his sickness was a result of some sin, but there is nothing here in the story to imply that connection. In another healing of a man born blind, the disciples asked Jesus who sinned, the man or his parents. And Jesus replied that neither had sinned but that the blindness happened so that God's work could be shown in his life. (John 9:2-3) So Jesus seems to have picked this man out of all the sick people that would have been waiting at the pool and healed him just to show that he is the Messiah. The fact that the man didn't know who Jesus was means he could not have had faith in Jesus before his healing and thus his healing wasn't based on his faith as we find on other occasions when Jesus healed. Jesus healed the man because he needed it and Jesus knew it was the right time for him to be healed. Faith in Jesus as Lord of your life is not necessary for physical healing but it is for spiritual healing. Jesus didn't want the man to continue in whatever sins he was doing, so he looked for the man and found him at the temple. That was an appropriate place for him to be after his healing because he would have to show himself to the priest and be proclaimed as healed so that he would be considered clean and able to participate in temple activities such as bringing a thank offering (which he should do for his healing) or a sacrifice for his sin. Then the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who healed him.

Verses 16 – 30. Because Jesus was healing on the Sabbath and telling the man to pick up his mat and walk, both actions that the Pharisees considered breaking the command to keep the Sabbath holy by working on it, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus replies to them that “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” That statement is a direct claim to being deity and the Jews recognized it as blasphemy. So they tried all the harder to kill him for both. But Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them about his relationship with the Father.

He says he can't do anything by himself but only what he sees the Father doing because what the Father does he does. He says the Father loves him and shows him what he is doing. He says they will be amazed because they will see him do even greater things, including raising the dead and giving them life, because that is what the Father does. Then he says the Father judges no one but entrusts all judgment to the Son (himself) so that everyone will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. And he warns that the person who doesn't honor the Son doesn't honor the Father because the Father sent him. Then Jesus tells them the time is coming, and in fact is already here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and will live. This could be a reference to his bringing dead believers back to life at the rapture, but it is more likely a reference to people who are dead spiritually hearing his teaching, putting their faith in him, and being given new spiritual life. He says that just as the Father has life in him (remember him breathing life into Adam, Gen 2:7) the Father has granted the Son to have life in himself and thus give it to others. The Father has given the Son the authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Here Jesus is claiming to be both deity and human. Then Jesus says the time is coming when everyone in their grave will hear his voice and come out, those having done good to receive life and those having done evil to be condemned. This obviously refers to death and Hades giving up all those bound in them to present themselves at the Great White Throne for judgment according to Revelation 20:11-15. Then Jesus says he judges only as he hears and not to please himself but the Father.

Verses 31 – 46. Now Jesus continues to teach them by telling them why they should believe he is the Messiah. First he says if all that testifies to his being the Messiah is only his own words, then it is false (that would be a biased testimony). But another testifies that he is the Messiah and that was John the Baptist. Remember in chapter 1, John called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” And he said that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. And he testified that Jesus is the Son of God (deity). All of these point to Jesus being the Messiah. Jesus continues by saying that he has testimony even more important than that of John. The work the Father has given Jesus to do and that he is doing, miraculously healing the lame man, testifies that God, the Father, has sent him. Thus God, the Father is testifying by those works that Jesus is the Messiah. Then he says they have never heard God's voice nor seen his form (body) and that God's word doesn't even live in them because they don't believe what Jesus is saying. He tells them that they obey the Scriptures (Torah, prophets, writings) because they think obeying them will give them eternal life. But those very Scriptures testify about Jesus and yet they refuse to come to him and receive life.

Jesus tells them that he doesn't accept praise from men because he knows them. He knows that they don't have the love of God in their hearts. Even though Jesus has come in his Father's name, they don't accept him. But if someone else comes in their own name they would accept that person. So he asks how they can accept praise from each other and not seek the praise that comes from the only God. Then he says they shouldn't think that he is accusing them before the Father. Their accuser is Moses, the one in whom they put their hopes because they believe what he has written. But Moses wrote about the Messiah (who Jesus has demonstrated he is), so if they really believed Moses they would believe Jesus is the Messiah. But since they won't accept what he wrote about Jesus how are they going to accept what Jesus says.

Jesus has revealed in this teaching that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that his power comes from his deity and the fact that everything he does is just what the Father does and what the Father wants him to do. He also revealed that he is fully human and that because of his humanity, the Father has given all judgment to him, but that he only judges according to what he hears from the Father and not according to whether his pride has been wounded by their disbelief or persecution. Also, one day everyone will stand before him to be judged according to whether they have believed that he is the Messiah and followed what he is teaching.

## Chapter 6

Verses 1 – 15. Again John starts the information about this event with “some time later” to indicate that it didn’t happen immediately following the previous account. In fact, it may have been almost 2 years later. We also find this event recorded for us in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, and Luke 9:10-17. John tells us Jesus traveled to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (also known by the Gentiles as the Sea of Tiberias). Tiberias was founded by Herod Antipas, who ruled the area of Galilee and Perea from 6 BC to 34 AD. Herod Antipas founded the city of Tiberias in 20 AD on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee and named it Tiberias in honor of the Roman Emperor Tiberus. The east side of the Sea of Galilee was under the rule of Philip, Herod Antipas’ half brother. That side of the sea was less populated than the west side. We know that by “far shore” John means the east side of the Sea (in Philip’s territory) because in verse 16 John tells us that the disciples got into a boat to travel across the Sea to Capernaum. We also know from the other gospel accounts that John the Baptist had recently beheaded by Herod Antipas and this was the reason Jesus was taking his disciples away to a remote area.



John says a great number of people followed Jesus because they had seen the miraculous signs he had done healing the sick. John also tells us this happened shortly before the Feast of Passover which occurs around late March and early to mid April. So the weather would be pleasant for the disciple to sit on a hillside and talk with Jesus about what had happened to John the Baptist. As Jesus was sitting on the hillside with his disciples, he looked and saw all the people coming to them. The other gospel accounts tell us that Jesus had compassion on them and healed many. They also say the disciples recommended to Jesus that he send the people away so they could get something to eat. But John tell us that Jesus Philip where they shall buy bread for the people to eat. John clarifies that this was only a test because he already know what he was going to do. Philip doesn’t know that and responds that it would take eight months wages for all of the people to each have only a bite of bread. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, notices and points out that there is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but wonders how far that would go among so many people. Luke and John tell us that there were about 5,000 men. If you consider that there were probably also women and children with the men, that could mean there were 15,000 to 20,000 people to be fed.

Jesus tells the disciples to have the people sit down (the other accounts tell us he said in groups of about 50). Then Jesus took the bread and gave thanks to God, the Father, for it. The other accounts tell us that Jesus gave it to the disciples to distribute to the people. And he did the same with the fish. When everyone had eaten their fill, Jesus tells the disciples to gather what was left over so that nothing would be wasted. When they finished, they had collected 12 baskets full of pieces. When the people recognized this miraculous sign that Jesus had done with the loaves and fish, they began to say, “surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” The Prophet to which they refer is the Messiah who was to be from David’s lineage and whom they expected to take control of the land and reestablish the kingdom rule of David’s line. Jesus knew that the people intended to try and make him king by force, so he withdrew into the hills by himself. This is the fourth miracle that John tells us about and it shows that Jesus is God because he has the creative power that God displayed in the Old Testament and that he is the Provider of people’s needs.

Verses 16 – 24 This event is also recorded by Matthew (14:22-36) and Mark (6:45-56). When evening arrived and Jesus has not returned from withdrawing into the hills, the disciples go down to the Sea, get into a boat, and

set sail for Capernaum on the west side of the Sea. By this time the sun had set and it was night time. As they rowed across the water, the wind grew stronger and the waves made the water rough. After they had rowed 3 ½ miles (somewhere in the middle of the Sea) they saw Jesus walking across the water, approaching the boat, and they were terrified. According to the other accounts they even thought what they saw could be a ghost. Jesus tells them not to be afraid because it is him. In the Greek manuscript John says his first words to them were “ego eime” which means “I AM.” That is the same thing God told Moses from the burning bush when Moses asked what to know his name. Once the disciples knew it was Jesus and not a ghost they were willing to let him get in the boat. The amazing thing that happened was that immediately the boat was at the shore where they were heading (Capernaum) instead of the middle of the Sea. This is the fifth miracle that John tells us about and walking on water shows Jesus’ authority and power over the physical world and that he is the Protector of those who trust him.

Verses 22 – 59. When daylight came, the people on the other side of the Sea noticed that Jesus and the disciples were gone because there had only been one boat on the shore and it was gone. When some boats arrive from Tiberias, the people get in them and go to Capernaum to search for Jesus and the disciples. These were obviously the same people who had witnessed the miraculous feeding of 5,000 men plus women and children on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee because when they found him they asked when he had arrived. What they really were asking was “how” since the only boat that had been on the shore the night before had been the one they saw the disciples leave in without Jesus. And the people had to wait for boats to arrive from Tiberias the next morning so Jesus how did Jesus get to Capernaum. Jesus doesn’t bother to answer their question but speaks to the reason they were seeking him. After they experienced his miraculous feeding he knew they intended to try and force him to be king. So he tells them that they are looking for him because they had their fill of bread, but that they shouldn’t work for food that spoils but food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give them. And he says that God, the Father, had put his seal of approval on him. The food Jesus is speaking about that endures to eternal life is what he is teaching them and his death which will give them eternal life if they believe that he is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah come to die so that everyone who believes can have a right relationship with God, the Father. The miraculous feeding they had experienced was God’s seal of approval on Jesus as his Son, the Messiah, and also the Son of Man (born of the virgin Mary).

When the people hear that something “endures to eternal life” they immediately think of works that must be done to keep the Law so they would be “righteous” according to the Law. So they ask what works must they do so they can have this food. They are thinking physically while Jesus is speaking about spiritual things. And Jesus replies that the work is to believe in the one God has sent (the Messiah) which he has demonstrated and declared that he is.

The people then turn to asking for a miraculous sign so they can believe in him just as Moses showed he was God’s leader for the people by giving them bread (manna) in the wilderness (Ex 16). And they even quote Psalm 78:24, where the psalmist wrote “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” They are still thinking physically of the Manna that God provided which spoiled after one day and the promise that Moses told them the Lord would raise up after him (Deut 18:15-19). Jesus replies that it wasn’t Moses who gave them bread from heaven and the people would have known that from their study of the Torah. Jesus goes on to say that “my Father” will give the true bread from heaven. Then he says that the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world is the bread of God. With what he has said before, that is a direct claim by Jesus to be the Bread from God that endures to eternal life. The response of the people is to ask him to give them that bread because they completely miss that he had just claimed to be the Bread that gives eternal life. So Jesus answers them so plainly that they can’t miss his meaning and says “I AM (Greek “ego eime”) the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” This is the first of seven “I AM” statements that John records Jesus saying to show that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the One whom God, the Father, has sent to do his work on earth. Then Jesus proclaims that whoever the Father gives him will come to him and he will never drive them away. This is an explanation of the statement that Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:16, that whoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life. How is it that the Father gives people to the Son and that none of those will be lost (not endure to eternal life)? Later, in John 16:5-11,

John records that Jesus explained the work of the Counselor (Holy Spirit) was to convict people of their need to believe and follow Jesus. So once the Holy Spirit convicts a person of their need to believe and the person comes to Jesus in belief and trust that he is the Messiah and Lord of everything, then Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to reside in the person, giving new life to their dead spirit, making the person a child of God, and covering them with the righteousness of Jesus so that God only sees his Son's righteousness when he looks at the person. So a person's coming to Jesus for salvation is the work of God convicting them and their own decision to believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (deity) and the Son of Man (human). This shoots down the hardcore Calvinist view that salvation is only God's work and the hardcore Armenian view that salvation is only a decision by man. What John records Jesus saying in these verses is that it is a combination of both God's work and man's decision to believe.

Jesus continues to say that he has come down from heaven (another claim to deity) but he didn't come to do his own will but the will of God who sent him. Then he says that it is God's will that he should not lose any who come to him but raise them up at the last day. This affirms the idea that once a person is saved (comes to Jesus in belief) they remain saved throughout eternity. For Jesus to lose even one of those that God has brought to him through his work and their belief, would mean that Jesus was unable or unwilling to do the Father's will. The people should have recognized the resurrection at the last day as life after death, something that the Sadducees did not believe but the Pharisees did.

After Jesus' statement, some of the people grumbling about him saying he is the bread that came down from heaven. The people knew who Jesus' mother and father were, so they questioned how he could say he came down from heaven because that would make him deity since he called God his Father. Jesus tells them to stop grumbling and reiterates that no one can come to him unless the Father has drawn the person, and that he will raise the person up at the last day. Jesus says it is written in the Prophets (actually Isaiah 54:13) that "they will be taught by the Lord." So, the teaching by Isaiah means that those who come to Jesus have been taught by the Lord (through the work of the Holy Spirit convicting them). Jesus continues to explain that no one has seen the Father except the one who is from him (which he has claimed). Only that one (himself) has seen the Father. Then he declares that the person who believes will have eternal life. Jesus says again that he is the bread of life and explains that those who ate the manna in the desert died, but that since he is the living bread from heaven, if anyone eats of him they will live forever (eternity). Then he proclaims that the bread is his flesh which he will give for the life of the world. In this statement we see that Jesus knew he was going to the cross to die for the sin of the world so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

So, then some of the Jews began to argue among themselves about how Jesus can give them his flesh to eat. So Jesus responds to their hardheaded refusal to accept what he was saying by using the terms they are using. He says that unless they eat his flesh which is real food, and drink his blood which has eternal life, they have no life in them. It is the truth of the story in Genesis about Adam and Eve that their disobedience brought their spiritual death and became the inheritance of all of their descendants. That's why Paul wrote to the Romans (3:23) that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But Jesus says that whoever eats his flesh and drinks his blood has eternal life and remains in him. Since God sent Jesus and he lives that means whoever feeds on him will also live. This, he says, is the bread that came down from heaven. He reiterates that their forefathers ate manna in the desert and died (physically), but whoever feeds on this bread (that came down from heaven) will live forever.

Finally John lets us know that the people who had come from the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee looking for Jesus had found him in a synagogue in Capernaum. And all this teaching that Jesus was doing in the synagogue.

Verses 60 – 71. When the disciples heard Jesus' teaching, they said it was hard and wondered who can accept it. Aware of what his disciples were wondering, Jesus asked them if the teaching offended them. Then he asks them what will they think if they see him ascend to where he was before (in heaven). Jesus knows that after his death, burial and resurrection he is going to return to heaven as Luke records in Acts 1:9. And Jesus tells them the Spirit gives life and that the words he has spoken are spirit and life. Then he says that some of them do not

believe. John gives us the information that Jesus knew from the beginning which of the disciples did not believe and would betray him (meaning Judas Iscariot). And Jesus says that is why he had said that no one could come to him unless the Father has enabled them. John tells us that from this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him (not the ones Jesus individually called but those who heard him teach and wanted to follow him). Jesus asks the Twelve Disciples if they also wanted to leave him. Peter speaks up for the group and asks to whom would they go since he has the words of eternal life. Then he proclaims that they believe and know Jesus is the Holy One of God (Messiah). Jesus responds that he has chosen them yet one of them is a devil (Judas).

## Chapter 7

Verses 1 – 13. When John writes “after this” it is his way of saying this is the next event he wants to tell about that show Jesus is God, the Messiah. It should not be considered an indication that this event happened immediately after the previous events. John says Jesus moved around Galilee ministering and stayed away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to kill him. But when the Feast of Tabernacles was near his brothers (half-brothers) urged him to go to Judea so that his disciples (other followers, not the Twelve) could see the miracles he was doing. Their reasoning was that anyone wanting to be a public figure could not do things in secret. To be a public figure a person had to be in the public view doing things that would gather a strong following around them. John says that even Jesus’ own brother didn’t believe in him (that he was God in the flesh and the Messiah that was promised). Two of those brothers that we know later became believers were James (later leaders of the believers in Jerusalem) and Jude (letter/book that bears his name). The brothers were thinking the way people think and act in worldly terms. Jesus responded to their urgings saying that the time was not right for him to go to the Feast. Jesus wasn’t necessarily speaking of the time of his death because John uses the Greek word “kairos” which means the opportune time for something to happen instead of the word “chronos” which implies a chronological time. Another Greek word, “hora”, refers to a specific time like the seasons or Feasts that is set by God. This was the Greek word Jesus used when referring to the time of his death because it was set by God and not by chronology or opportunity. So Jesus stayed in Galilee while his brothers went to Jerusalem because they could leave and go at any time (kairos) but it wasn’t the opportune time for him to go.

The next timed event that John gives us is in chapter 10 verse 22 when he mentions the Feast of Dedication (Hanukah) that occurs in the winter (late Nov to Dec). Since the event John discusses after his mention of the Feast of Dedication is the death and resurrection of Lazarus, and that leads to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem one week before his death, this event happening at the Feast of Tabernacles must have occurred in mid-Sep (15 – 22 of Tishri). Since Jesus’ death occurred in 33 AD, that would make the calculation of this Feast of Tabernacles to have been Sep 10 – 17 of 32 AD.

After his brothers left, Jesus secretly left for the Feast. The Jews in Jerusalem were watching for him to attend and were asking people where he was. The people in the crowds attending the Feast were whispering that Jesus is a good man but others replied that he deceives the people. No one would say anything openly about him because they feared the Jews who wanted to kill him.

Verses 14 – 24. Jesus waited until halfway through the days of the Feast (15 – 22 Tishri) to appear in the temple courts and teach. Those hearing him were amazed how he could have such learning without having studied (with those like Gamaliel or Nicodemus who were the recognized, leading Jewish teachers or that time). Jesus answers them that his teaching is not his own but comes from the one who sent him. Then he says that anyone who chooses to do God’s will enables them to find out whether his teaching comes from God or is his own. This means faith leads to knowledge of the truth and not the other way. Anyone who speaks on his own does it to gain honor for himself and even if he doesn’t do it for that reason it is what happens, but anyone who works for the honor of the one who sent him (God) speaks the truth and there is nothing false about him. Then he confronts them about not keeping the Law that Moses gave them from God because they are trying to kill him which was forbidden by the Law.

The crowd answered that Jesus is demon-possessed and ask who is trying to kill him. Paranoia (fear that people are out to get you) was commonly thought in that day to be caused by demon possession. They weren't accusing Jesus of getting his power from Satan. Jesus' reply refers back to the healing of the invalid at the Bethesda pool that was reported by John back in chapter 5. For that healing on the Sabbath that was probably two years earlier, the Jews of Jerusalem were seeking to kill him. Although he mentions doing a miracle and that they were all astonished by it, he reminds them that circumcision was given to them from God through Moses, not by Moses. They considered that they were following the Law of Moses, yet by circumcision they were following what was given by God to Abraham and just incorporated by Moses into what he instructed the people to do. So, they could circumcise a baby on the Sabbath and not consider it breaking the Sabbath yet his miraculous healing of the whole person on the Sabbath meant he was breaking the Sabbath and for that they were willing to break the 10 Commandments by killing him. So, he tells them to stop making judgments by mere appearance and make a right judgment (to obey God's higher law of love for which they were willing to circumcise on the Sabbath).

Verses 25 – 36. Sometime during the last half of the Feast days, some of the people from Jerusalem began wondering if the religious leaders actually knew that Jesus was the Messiah. They thought this way because they knew that they had been trying to kill him and yet here he was teaching openly. So why hadn't they captured him. All of the pilgrims from other areas and lands wouldn't have known that the religious leaders were trying to kill Jesus. The people from Jerusalem knew where Jesus had been raised and they expected that no one would know where the Messiah is from. Even though they knew the Messiah would be from the lineage of David and thus be a Judean, he could be from descendants that had moved out of the Judean territory.

Jesus knew what they were asking and thinking so he cries out to them that they know him and where he is from. But he says he is not here on his own and that the one who sent him is true. He says that the one who sent him is true, but they don't know him. Jesus says he knows him because he is from him and was sent by him. That one obviously was understood to be God because the people tried to seize him. John tells us that no one laid a hand on Jesus because his time (Greek *hora* the time set by God) had not yet come. Even though the local Jews were questioning and trying to seize him, many of the pilgrims in the crowd put their faith in Jesus because they reasoned that the Messiah couldn't do more miracles that Jesus was doing. The Pharisees heard the things the people in the crowd were saying and sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus. But since it was not his time as set by the Father, they obviously could not arrest him. Jesus told the crowd that he was only with them for a short time and then he would go to the one who sent him (God). He tells them that they will look for him but not find him and that he will be in a place where they cannot come. At this, the people wonder where he could go that they couldn't find him even if it was among the Greeks, figuring that he might be going to teach them.

Verses 37 – 44. On the last, greatest day of the Feast, Jesus made another great pronouncement. He said that if a man were thirsty he should come to him (believe in him) and he would give him living water which will flow from within him. Just in case his readers might mistake what Jesus said, John tells us that Jesus meant he would give the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus. And he adds that up to this time the Holy Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not been glorified. This tells us that the giving of the Holy Spirit to believers is different than the empowering of Old Testament people by having the Spirit rest upon them. When the people heard Jesus' words, some exclaimed that he must be the Prophet (told to Moses by God that would come after him). Others said he was the Christ (Messiah). Still others asked how the Messiah could come from Galilee because the Scriptures say he would come from David's family and from Bethlehem. So we see a division of the people concerning who Jesus really is. Some even wanted to seize him (like the temple guards), but no one laid a hand on him (it was not the hour, *hora*, that had been set by God). When the temple guards return to the chief priests and Pharisees, their answer to why they didn't bring him in is that "No one ever spoke the way this man does." The Pharisees ask if Jesus has deceived them also. They ask if any of the rulers (religious) believe in him and exclaim that it is only the people who don't know the law and that a curse is on them. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus secretly to ask how a person can be saved, asks them if the law condemns a man without first hearing him to discover what he is doing. Their reply is to ask if Nicodemus is also from Galilee because no prophet comes

from there. Of course they are conveniently overlooking the prophet Jonah who is from Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1) which is on the other side of the hill from Nazareth and thus in Galilee.

Verse 53 and the first eleven verses of chapter 8 are generally considered a single event and that it was included in later copies of John's gospel but not in the original. Its style is more like the synoptic gospels and not like John's style. The passage doesn't appear in any copy of John's gospel dated from before 600 AD. It also is not discussed by any early church fathers and their commentaries on John's gospel. But that doesn't mean the event didn't really happen exactly as it is described in verses 1 through 11. "Everyone" could refer to the people in the temple area or it could refer to the people present at another time and another place where the following event occurred.

## Chapter 8

Verses 1 – 11. Opening with the mild Greek conjunctive "*de*" which is translated "but" shows that Jesus' action is not like that of the other people. We know from Luke's account of Jesus' last Passover celebration (Lk 21:37) that he spent nights on the Mount of Olives. We don't know that he did that at other times but it is possible. Jesus returns to the temple courts to teach as he did on many occasions and people gathered around as he sat down to teach. Then the teachers of the law (scribes) and Pharisees brought before him a woman whom they "claimed" was caught in the act of adultery. This is the only place in John's gospel that mentions the scribes and Pharisees at the same time and that is another reason some scholars believe John did not write about this event. They make the woman stand before the people gathered around Jesus and ask him what the Law Moses commanded them to follow concerning someone caught in the act of adultery. A side note is made to confirm that they were using this situation and the answer they expected him to give as a basis of accusing him of breaking the Law. The Law required both parties caught in the act of adultery to be stoned to death (Lev 20:10 and Deut 22:22). But in this case only the woman is brought before Jesus and nothing is said about the man. We can only speculate whether he escaped, died at the scene, or that the authorities released him because they were only interested in using her to trap Jesus. The accusers correctly interpreted that the Law demanded stoning to death but wanted to know what Jesus would say. Jesus didn't challenge the fact that the man was not present and perhaps the entire charge was unjust. Instead, he bends down and begins writing on the ground with his finger. There is nothing to tell what Jesus wrote so all of these are just guesses. He could have written the words of Jeremiah 17:13b "those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water." Or he could have written Exodus 23:1b "Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness." The fact that we are not told what he wrote probably means the words what he wrote are not as important to the story as the fact that he wrote instead of immediately answering them. Perhaps he was giving them an opportunity to consider what they were doing. And their response was to keep asking him for what he would say. If he just forgave her then he would be opposing the Law and make the Jews angry with him. If he condemned her and agreed with the stoning, then he would be acting contrary to his mission to forgive all sin and it might have made the Romans angry with him. So what he did was stand up and told them that any one of them who is without sin should be the first to throw a stone at her. The Law required at least two witnesses of a sin, who had not participated in it, should be the first to throw the stones (Deut 17:6-7; Lev 24:14). Then he bent down and began writing on the ground again. Perhaps at this time he wrote of their participation in the sin of bringing only the woman and not the man so they would recognize they could not throw the first stone. Instead of judging the woman, Jesus began by judging the accusers. And one by one, beginning with the older men, they left until only the woman was left standing before Jesus and the crowd of people. When the accusers were all gone, Jesus stood up and asked the woman where the accusers were and if anyone was there to condemn her. At her reply that no one was there to accuse her, Jesus told her that neither did he and told her to go and leave her life of sin. Thus he gave her the opportunity to repent of her sin which he would later pay the penalty of death for her.

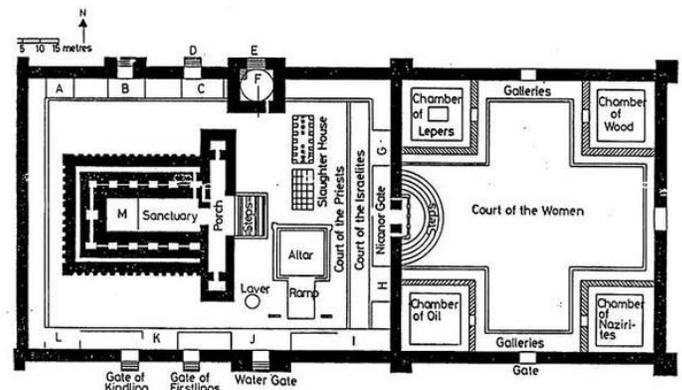
Verses 12 -20. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles when the priests would be parading around the temple carrying pots of water, Jesus made a claim to be the source of living water (7:37-38). That caused some of his hearers to want to seize and kill him. Now Jesus is going to make another claim that will further that. On

the first evening of the Feast of Tabernacles, a lamp lighting ceremony was held when a priest would light three large lampstands erected in the women's court of the temple which was also used as the treasury for collecting gifts. The lampstands would provide light for the entire temple area all night long. After the lampstands were lit, people would bring torches, light them, and sing and dance joyously in celebration of the fact that God had tabernacle with his people beginning in the wilderness. There is some disagreement by scholars whether the lampstands were lit on other nights, but definitely not on the last night of the Feast.

Jesus tells the people that he is the light of the world and whoever follows him will never walk in darkness but have the light of life. This is the second of Jesus' "I AM" claims that indicates he is God in the flesh. The first was "I AM the bread of life" (6:35). Here he claimed "I AM" the light of the world. The Jews connected light with God's presence because he created light on the fourth day of creation; he revealed himself in the light of the burning bush to Moses; he protected them at the Red Sea and led them through the wilderness as a pillar of light each night; and he appeared to the freed captives on Mt. Sinai with fire and light. Isaiah prophesied that the Servant of the Lord (Messiah) would be a "light for the nations (Gentiles) that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6). God also said he, himself, would be the light for his people in the age of the Messiah (Millennium) (Isa 60:19-22; Zech 14:5b-7).

So his claim to be the light of the world was clearly understood by the people to be a claim that he was the Messiah, God in the flesh. For this the Pharisees challenged that he was being his own witness and thus his testimony was not valid. It is interesting that we don't accept the witness of a people about themselves because we know that by nature a person will give a glowing if not entirely truthful account of their actions. But consider the physical case of light. The presence of light bears witness to itself and the source of the light is another witness to it. That is the same argument that Jesus puts forth as a reply to the Pharisees. He says his testimony is valid because he knows where he came from and where he is going while they have no idea. He says that they judge by human standards but that he doesn't judge anyone. Even at the Great White Throne judgment the people who are condemned to the second death of separation from God for eternity in the Lake of Fire are judged not by Jesus but by their own works which show their disobedience of God. But Jesus claims that if he did judge it would be a right (correct) decision because he is not alone but has the Father who sent him with him. According to the Law given by Moses, the testimony (witness) of two men is valid (Deut 17:6). Jesus says he is one witness and the Father who sent him is the other. Of course the entire Old Testament is a witness about Jesus as well as John the Baptist and the miracles Jesus did. So there are way more than just two witnesses that Jesus is the Messiah, God in the flesh. At this statement, the Pharisees ask where his father is. Of course they fully know what he means and are only saying it to argue with him. So Jesus replies that if they knew him they would know his Father. And the reverse would also be true that if they knew the Father they would know and accept Jesus.

Now John gives us the setting of this teaching. Jesus was in the temple area near where the offerings were given. As the temple diagram shows, that would be near the women's court where the three large lampstands were lit at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews had apparently begun calling the Court of the Women "the treasury" because they had placed 13 receptacles with tops shaped like a ram's horn in the court so people could lace their monetary offerings there. Each receptacle had an inscription stating how the money deposited there would be used. John ends his description of Jesus' teaching with the fact that although the leaders wanted to seize Jesus and he was openly teaching in the temple, no one did because his time (hora – as time set by God) had not yet come.



Verses 21 – 30. Jesus again speaks to the crowd and tells them he is going away and although they will look for him they will die in their sin and they cannot go where he is going. The Greek construction of this opening

sentence indicates it is a pause in the story and not a new story that happened at another time. By “going away” Jesus was referring to his death, burial, resurrection, and return to sit at the side of his Father in Heaven, not that he was going to leave the city. That they will look for him doesn’t mean the religious leaders would be looking throughout the city to find Jesus, but that they would continue to look for the Messiah after he, the Messiah, had gone away. Thus they would die in their sin of disbelief and would get to spend eternity in Heaven with God because they rejected him as Messiah when he came to them. Of course anyone hearing this and later before they death accepted that Jesus was the Messiah and gave their life to him would be saved by his death and spend eternity with him in Heaven. Only those who continue to reject that he is the Messiah, God in the flesh, and thus refuse to accept his sacrifice as restoring them to a right relationship with God are the ones who will die in their sin and not be able to go where he is going. Some in the crowd wonder if he is going to kill himself. Obviously, some do not understand what he is saying. So Jesus tell them he is from above (deity – not of this world) while they are from below (fallen humanity – of this world). And he tells them that if they don’t believe he is who he claims to be that they will die in their sins. In a further show that they don’t understand him, they ask who he is. So Jesus replies that he is what he has been claiming, namely the Messiah, God in the flesh, the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world by his death. Jesus has much he could say in judgment of them but says what he has heard from the one who sent him. They still don’t understand that he is talking about God, his Father, so Jesus tells them that when they have lifted up the Son of Man then they will know who he is and that he does nothing of his own but says only what the Father has taught him and that he always does what pleases God, his Father. As Jesus was saying all these things, many believed and put their faith in him.

Verses 31 – 59. To those who believed in him he said that if they continued in his teaching they would be his disciples and they would know the truth and that truth would set them free. Some answered that they are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone so how can they be set free. Obviously, they don’t remember their Torah and that their ancestors were slaves in Egypt before Moses led them out at God’s command and with his help and guidance. Jesus replies that anyone who sins is a slave to sin and points out that a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to his family forever, no matter what happens. Then he tells them that if the Son (himself) set them free they will really be free. He acknowledges that they are Abraham’s descendants but that they are ready to kill him because they have no room (do not accept) his word. He says he tells what he has seen in the Father’s presence but that they do what they have heard from their father (meaning Satan, the father of lies). They exclaim that Abraham is their father and Jesus replies that if they really were Abraham’s children then they would do what Abraham did (faithfully obey God’s commands). Again he says they are trying to kill him who has only told them the truth that he heard from God and Abraham did not do that. And again he says they are doing the things their own father (Satan) does (oppose God’s will at every opportunity). Then they exclaim that the only father they have is God. And Jesus replies that if God really were their Father then they would love him (Jesus) because he came from God, not on his own but because God sent him. They are unable to hear what he is saying, not because his language is unclear, but because they belong to their father, the devil, and they do what he desires. Then he proclaims that Satan is a murderer from the beginning (Garden of Eden), not holding to the truth (that God is in control and the only being to be worshipped), and that there is no truth in him for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, Jesus says, they don’t believe him even though he is telling the truth and asks if any of them can prove that he is guilty of sin. Anyone who belongs to God hears what God says, but they do not hear because they do not belong to God.

So some of the people exclaim that Jesus is demon-possessed because Abraham and the prophets died, yet Jesus says that if anyone keeps his word they will never taste death. They ask if he is greater than Abraham and the prophets so who does he think he is. Jesus replies that if he glorifies himself then it means nothing but God, his Father whom they claim to be their father, is the one who glorifies. Jesus tells them that if he claimed not to know God then he would be lying like them, but he does know God and keep his word (commands). Then Jesus says Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the time of the Messiah’s (Jesus’) coming, did see it, and was glad. The disbelievers pick up on that statement and say that Jesus is not yet fifty years old and yet claims to have seen Abraham. Jesus replies, “before Abraham was born, I AM (Greek, *ego eime* – the name God told

Moses was his at the burning bush). At this statement of Jesus' claiming to be God, some of the crowd pick up stones to stone him to death for blasphemy. But Jesus hid himself and slipped away from the temple grounds.

## Chapter 9

Verses 1 – 12. By saying “as he went along” John is indicating that this event happened after the event where Jesus claimed to be the “Light of the world” and it possibly happened that same day. As Jesus and the disciples were leaving the temple area they passed a man who was blind. John points out that the man was born blind because the disciples asked who sinned, the man or his parents that caused the man to be born blind. We know that sin has consequences and the general thought of many people is that if something bad has happened to someone, then it must be the result of the person's sin. But that thinking overlooks the fact that the whole world and all living creatures were cursed by decay, destruction and physical death as a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve. So, all bad things are indirectly a result of their sin but not directly the result of the sin of a person or anyone alive at the same time as them. That's why Jesus replied that neither the man nor his parents sinned. He didn't mean they were sinless, but only that the man's blindness was not the result of any of their sins. Jesus proclaims that the blindness happened so that the work of God could be displayed in the man's life. That doesn't mean God caused the blindness, but only that it would be used for God's glory. It also doesn't mean that every instance of suffering is permitted so that God can miraculously deal with it.

Then Jesus tells the disciples that he must do the work of the one who send him (meaning God) while there is still light (day and not darkness) because the time is coming when it will be dark and no one can work. Some translations (like NIV) read that Jesus said “we must do the work” but that is incorrect because the Greek wording is in the singular implying that Jesus must do his Father's work while he is still there to do it. Later, he will tell his disciples that they will continue his work (Jn 14:12; 20:21). And again Jesus says that he is the light of the world which the healing of the man's sight, moving the man from darkness into light, will show. Then Jesus preforms a miracle in the man's life by making mud from the dirt and his saliva, putting it on the man's eyes, and telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. As John has pointed out by the story of the healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (chap 5), Jesus can heal by simply speaking. But here he uses another way that requires the man to participate in the healing by obediently doing what he is told to do. Sometimes God heals without any action on the part of the one being healed (raising the widow's son or Lazarus from death) but sometimes he requires faithful action (as in this healing). The choice is always his and not ours.

“Siloam,” the name of the pool, means sent. Since the man was blind, it may have been necessary for him to have friends guide him to the pool. After the man followed Jesus' instructions, he was healed and was able to see his way going home. His neighbors and other who knew him asked if he wasn't the man they knew sitting and begging. Some said yes, other said no, only a look-alike, but the man insisted it was he. So they demanded to know how his eyes were opened and he told them what Jesus had done and told him to do and what had happened when he obeyed. When asked where the man (Jesus) was, he replied that he didn't know because Jesus had not accompanied him to the pool. This shows Jesus wasn't doing miracles to gain a reputation but to do the work of God as God directed him to do it.

Verses 13 – 34. The man's friends and neighbors brought him to the Pharisees because the healing had been done on a Sabbath. When the Pharisees asked him about his healing, he recounted what Jesus had done and that he had been healed when he washed. Some of the Pharisees proclaimed that this man (Jesus) is not from God because he doesn't keep the Sabbath (the rules they had devised to keep a person from breaking the Sabbath – not God's rules). But other Pharisees asked how a sinner could do such miraculous signs. So they ask the man what he says about the man since it was his eyes that were opened. The man replies that he (Jesus) is a prophet (one speaking for God). Some individuals still didn't believe the man was the same one born blind so they sent for his parents and asked if he is the one and how is it that he can now see. The parents confirm he is their son and was born blind but don't know how or who opened his eyes to see. They were afraid of being banned from any synagogue if they acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) so they said that the man is of age and can speak for himself.

So, the Pharisees tell the man to give glory to God since they know the man who healed him is a sinner. In other words they want the man to deny that Jesus had any part in the healing. But the man says that he doesn't know whether the man (Jesus) is a sinner or not but that he knows one thing - he was blind and now he can see. The Pharisees ask him to tell them what was done to him to heal his eyes, but the man replies that he has already told them and they didn't listen. So he asks if they want to hear it again and if they want to become his disciples. For this they hurl insults at him and call him a disciple of the man (Jesus).

Then, in their anger, they go farther and say that they are disciples of Moses and they know Moses talked to God but they don't even know where this man (Jesus) comes from. That is a lie for they know that Jesus is from Nazareth and that his lineage goes back to King David. So they are obviously talking about from where his authority comes. So the healed man replies that it is remarkable that they don't know where his healer comes from, yet he opened his eyes. And he goes on to explain that everyone knows that God doesn't listen to sinners but only the godly who do his will and, since he opened the eyes of a man born blind, that he (Jesus) must be from God or he couldn't do it. The Pharisees are so enraged that they tell the man he was steeped in sin at birth and therefore he has no business lecturing them. In saying this they admit that the man was born blind and that Jesus has miraculously healed him – the very thing they were trying to disprove. So they throw the healed man out of where they are meeting. Although the man was born blind he was no fool and was quite adept in logic and debate because he was able to answer their questions without allowing them to corner him into saying anything he didn't want to say and yet he still showed that Jesus was a miracle worker doing God's will. So the healed man has shown a great deal of spiritual insight and faith.

Verses 35 – 41. When Jesus learns that the man has been thrown out by the Pharisees, he goes to find him and asks if the man believes (puts his trust) in the Son of Man. (Some manuscripts and modern translations use Son of God, but according to some scholars the better translation would be Son of Man. I concur with this because it was Son of Man which Jesus used to indicate that he came as the Messiah described in Daniel 7:13-14.) The man wants to know who is the Son of Man so he can believe in him. He has not seen Jesus with his eyes because he didn't receive his sight until he left Jesus and went to wash in the pool of Siloam. So he could not recognize Jesus as his healer whom he has shown he believed was from God. Jesus' reply is the same as saying "I am he." When the man calls him "Lord" and worships him, that indicates that he believes Jesus is the Messiah, God in the flesh, and therefore deserving of only what is reserved for God – worship.

Jesus tells the man that he has come into this world for judgment so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. Jesus didn't come to judge but his coming brought judgment on those who wouldn't accept him as Messiah. Jesus is not speaking of physical, but spiritual blindness and seeing. Some Pharisees are present to hear what Jesus tells the man and ask if they are also blind. Jesus tells them that if they were blind they wouldn't be guilty of sin, but since they claim to be able to see, they are guilty. The Pharisees claimed to know God's word and be able to accurately interpret it to guide others. But they were guilty of overlooking or misinterpreting the parts they didn't want to see because it didn't fit their preconceived ideas and thus they were guilty of disobedience of God's will because they didn't recognize the Messiah when he came fulfilling the prophecies God had given concerning him.

This miracle shows that Jesus can open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind so that they receive the sight (understanding) of who Jesus is and thus can put their faith (trust) in him and what he has done. This is a passing from spiritual darkness to spiritual light since Jesus is the Light of the world.

## **Chapter 10**

Verses 1 – 6. This is a continuation of the story of the healing of the man born blind. Because of the man's continued insistence that Jesus had performed a miraculous healing of his blindness which showed Jesus was the Messiah, and that was counter to what the Pharisees wanted to prove, he would therefore have been banned from his synagogue (as he parents had feared in verse 22) and the normal Jewish religious life. While he was blind he could be part of the Pharisee's flock, but now that he had his sight and understanding of who Jesus is,

he would be without a flock and a shepherd. Jesus continues to talk to the Pharisees who had asked if they were blind also and received Jesus' condemnation that since they claim to see (and yet deny the truth) they are guilty of sin. He uses the image of sheep and their shepherd to explain his relationship with those who believe the Prophets and Jesus' fulfillment of the prophecies that he is the Messiah. This imagery should have been readily understood by his hearers since they regularly saw shepherds with their sheep. When a shepherd was not able to be with his sheep, he could leave them penned up with a man who would stand watch at the only gate into the pen to keep them safe. If a thief wanted to steal the sheep he would have to climb over the retaining wall or find some way in and out of the pen other than through the gate. When the shepherd came for his sheep, he would come to the gate and the gate keeper would open the gate so the shepherd could go in to get his sheep. There might be flocks from several shepherds being watched in a pen at the same time. The shepherd would only have to speak to his sheep, and because they recognized his voice, they would follow him through the gate to wherever the shepherd wanted to take them. But all of the sheep belonging to another shepherd would not just ignore the voice of the shepherd they didn't know, they would move away from him. John says Jesus used this imagery to explain that those who recognized him as Messiah would be part of his flock and would respond to his call for them to follow him. That is what the blind man had done when Jesus found him after he had been thrown out of the presence of the Pharisees. He said, "I believe Lord" and he worshipped Jesus (indicating he accepted that Jesus was the Messiah, God in the flesh). While the Pharisees should have understood Jesus' imagery, John says they didn't understand.

Verses 7 – 21. Because the Pharisees didn't understand what Jesus had said, he tells them the truth in another way. He begins with another "I AM" (Greek *ego eime*) statement which automatically claimed deity for himself. He says I AM the gate for the sheep (like the blind man) who accept that Jesus is the Messiah (Isaiah's Suffering Servant) who John the Baptist declared was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Then he says that all who came before him (meaning the Pharisees and others who refused to accept God's word) were thieves and the sheep didn't listen to them. He calls himself the gate through which all who believe in him will enter and be saved. Later, during his last supper with his disciples, Jesus will explain again to them that he is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him (14:6). Then he says the thief come to destroy while he comes to give life to the fullest.

Then Jesus uses the "I AM" statement to show that he is the Good Shepherd that will lay down his life for the sheep and not a hired hand who runs away in the face of danger because he doesn't care for the sheep. Then Jesus says that he knows his sheep and his sheep know him and the Father. And again he says he lays down his life for the sheep. When he says he has other sheep that are not of this pen that he must also bring into the flock, his listeners would have automatically known that he was referring to people who were not Jews (the Jews were considered to be God's flock). He says they will listen to his voice (accept him as Messiah and follow him) and together all who respond will be one flock.

Then Jesus tells them that not only does he lay down his life but that he has authority to take it up again. He clarifies that no one will take his life from him but that he will willingly lay it down and take it up and that he has the authority from God, the Father, as a command to do this.

Again the people hearing Jesus were divided with some saying he is demon-possessed and raving mad while others exclaim that a demon-possessed man couldn't speak such words or, especially, heal the eyes of a blind man.

Verses 22 – 42. Now John indicates that the follow story happened at a later time. What he had been describing all apparently happened during and at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) which occurs from the 15 – 22 Tishri (first to middle of Oct). Now John says it is the time of the Feast of Dedication (Chanukkah / Hanukkah) which occurs for 8 days beginning in late Nov or early Dec. This was not one of the festivals God gave to the people through Moses. It began to be celebrated as a way to remember and commemorate the purification and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus on the 25<sup>th</sup> Chislev, 164 BC. The king of the Syrians, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), had desecrated the temple by offering a pig on an altar as a

sacrifice to the god Jupiter. Judas led a guerilla revolt for three years that finally defeated the Syrians and freed the Jews. In purifying and rededicating the desecrated temple, they only had enough holy oil for one day's lighting of the lampstand in the Holy Place, but God provided that the one day's supply lasted for eight days which gave the priests time to produce more holy oil.

So 1 ½ to 2 months have passed since he told the Pharisees that he is the gate and the Good Shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep and that they (both Jews and Gentiles) will recognize his voice and follow him. Once again Jesus comes to the temple from wherever he has been staying and Jews gathered around him. They want him to plainly tell them if he is the Messiah. Jesus answers that he has told them and they didn't believe. He tells them that the miracles he has done in the Father's name speak that he is the Messiah but that they have not believed because they are not his sheep. Then he once again says that his sheep listen to his voice and follow him. He tells his hearers that he gives them (his sheep) eternal life and they shall never perish. And he also says no one can snatch them out of his hand because his Father has given them to him and he is greater than everyone. Then he announces that he and the Father (God) are one. Because he claimed to be one (equal) with God, the Jews picked up stones to kill him for blasphemy. But Jesus asks them for which of his miracles from the Father that they are stoning him. They reply that they are not stoning him for any of those miracles but because he has claimed to be God.

Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 to them where God says: "I said, 'You are 'gods'; you are all sons of the Most High.'" Then he asks if he (God) called them 'gods' to whom the word of God came, then what about the one God set apart and sent into the world? And he asks why they accuse him of blasphemy for saying he is God's Son. Then he tells them not to believe him unless he does what the Father does, so they should believe he is God's Son because of the miracles he does by God's power and understand that the father is in him and he is in the Father (they are one). So again they try to seize him, but Jesus just walks away from them and goes across the Jordan River to the place where John the Baptist had been baptizing people when Jesus came to him to be baptized. John says many people came to Jesus while he was there. They recognized that John the Baptist had never performed any miraculous signs (like Jesus did) but that everything that John had said about Jesus was true. (John 1:29 "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"; John 1:34 "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."; John 1:36 "Look, the Lamb of God!")

## **Chapter 11**

Verses 1 – 16. The events of the last half of chapter 10 occurred in the winter, at the Feast of Dedication (Chanukkah / Hanukkah), which would be around December in our calendar. The events of chapter 11 happen about 12 days before Passover according to the times John lists in chapters 12 to 13. So the length of time Jesus and the disciples spent on the other side of the Jordan River in the wilderness across from Jericho would have been about four months. Close to the end of this time, Jesus' friend, Lazarus, became sick and his sisters, Mary and Martha, send Jesus a message about the sickness thinking that he will come quickly and heal Lazarus. John makes a point of telling us that Mary is the same woman who poured perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. He will tell us more about this event in chapter 12. This is the first time John has mentioned the sisters while Luke mentions (chapter 10) that Jesus stopped at their house and that Martha was upset with her sister, Mary, for not helping her with preparing the food.

When Jesus gets the message about Lazarus' sickness he tells his disciples that the sickness will not end in death, but that it is for God's glory and so that God's Son (himself) may be glorified. Jesus doesn't elaborate on how or why the sickness won't end in death. And in a short while we discover that Lazarus is dead, so Jesus means the death is not final. John says that Jesus loved (Greek form of the verb *agapao* – sacrificial love) Lazarus and his sisters, but, instead of heading to Bethany where they lived just 2 miles ESE of Jerusalem, he stays in the wilderness for two more days. His delay is not disinterest but shows a divine purpose for waiting.

Then he tells the disciples they will now go to Judea (really to Bethany). To which the disciples remind him that a short while before (4 months) Jews tried to stone him. Their question is why he would go back there.

And Jesus answers with a riddle about 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. Regardless of the fact that the length of daylight and darkness changes throughout the year, it was and is a common way of speaking about a day. Jesus' reference to this is probably his way of saying that anyone who walks by the spiritual light of doing God's will won't stumble while those who walk in the darkness of disobedience will stumble.

After saying this, Jesus tells the disciples that Lazarus has fallen asleep but he is going there to wake him up. Jesus means that Lazarus is dead and he is going to raise him from death, but the disciples think he means natural sleep so they suggest Lazarus will get better (wake up by himself). While "sleep" was a common way to refer to death, it was not considered that a person could awake from this sleep. In Mark 5:39 – 40, when Jesus told onlookers that the synagogue ruler's daughter was not dead but only asleep, the people laughed at him because they knew she was dead. Some people want to take Jesus' words as meaning he taught "soul sleep," but that is incorrect. "Soul sleep" is the idea that at death a person's soul would enter an unconscious state until the time of resurrection. Jesus' teaching about the death of a rich man and a beggar (also named Lazarus but not the same) completely negates this idea because both the beggar and the rich man are conscious of their condition and even feeling comfort or pain and suffering.

So Jesus tells them plainly that Lazarus is dead, meaning the breath of life has left him and not that he is in natural sleep. Then he says he is glad he wasn't there because now they will get a chance to believe. The belief Jesus is he talking about is for them to really believe he is the Messiah, God in the flesh, with authority from God, the Father, over the entire physical realm. When he says, "Let us go," Thomas (also called Didymus and the one who later would not believe Jesus was resurrected until he personally saw him) encourages the disciples that they should all go so that they may die with him.

Verses 17 – 37. John proceeds to give us the events beginning with their arrival in Bethany. He omits what Luke tells (Luke 18:35 – 19:10) about Jesus healing a blind beggar as he approached Jericho and calling Zacchaeus down from a tree so that he could have a meal with him (probably a noon meal). John records that when they arrived outside of Bethany they heard that Lazarus had been dead four days. The significance of this information appears to be due to the evidence we have later discovered that some of the Jews believed a person's spirit remained near the dead body for three days or until the body had begun to decompose because all hope of resuscitation at that time. That shows when Jesus later resurrects Lazarus that there is no question that he is raising him from the dead and not resuscitating him. Since Bethany is only 2 miles from Jerusalem, John tells us that many Jews from Jerusalem had come to help the sisters mourn the death of Lazarus. In the ancient Near East, it was customary (and to some extent even today) to mourn a death for several days or weeks. The people would have sat with the sisters in their house and even brought or prepared food during this time. Some rich families would even hire people to come, sit in their house, and wail to help show their grief. That was probably not the case with Martha and Mary. These were most likely friends of theirs that lived in Jerusalem along with friends from Bethany and the surrounding area.

When Martha hears that Jesus has arrived, she quickly goes out to meet him while Mary stays at home. This picture of Martha as the more active of the sisters agrees with the account Luke wrote of her being busy and upset with Mary when Jesus was at their house at an earlier occasion. (Luke 10) When Martha gets to where Jesus is, she confronts him about not arriving before Lazarus died so he could heal him. This is not necessarily a rebuke but simply a display of her grief and her belief that Jesus could heal people. But she acknowledges that even now if Jesus asks God for anything, he will receive it. Jesus responds that her brother will rise again. Martha agrees that he will rise at the resurrection at the last day, but doesn't think it will be anytime soon. She is upset that he is gone right now. Jesus tells her that he is the resurrection and life and anyone who believes in him will never die. This is another "I AM" statement showing his claim to be God in the flesh. It is also a statement that belief in Jesus (God in flesh & death pays penalty of sin) will receive eternal life, not separation from God. Then Jesus asks if Martha believes this. Martha acknowledges her belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (deity) who was to come into the world (fulfillment of prophecy). This belief is exactly what John says in chapter 20:31 that he is trying to accomplish with his book.

After this, Martha returns home, takes Mary aside from the mourners and quietly tells her that the Master has arrived and is asking for her. So Mary quickly leaves to go to him outside of the town where he is waiting. The mourners see her leave quickly and they presume she is going to the tomb to mourn so they follow her. When Mary reaches where Jesus is, she falls at his feet and says if he had been here her brother would not have died. Again, this is not an accusation but only her grief speaking.

When Jesus sees her weeping and the weeping of the friends who had accompanied her, John says Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” This phrase translates a couple of Greek words (*enebrimesato* and *etaraxen*) which are both strong verbs showing anger and troubling in himself. This doesn’t mean Jesus was upset or angry with the people who were mourning or with the words of Martha or Mary. His anger and troubling would seem to be with the misery that death causes to humanity and the loved ones of those who die. So Jesus asks where Lazarus has been laid (where is his tomb). As they lead him there, Jesus weeps, and some of the Jewish mourners remark at how much Jesus loved Lazarus while others ask if he had been able to open the eyes of a blind man (that event happened several months earlier but made a significant impression on people) couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying. Jesus wasn’t weeping because Lazarus was dead or because people didn’t believe in him, but because he emphasized with the grief of the sisters and mourners and their loss.

Verses 38 – 44. When they arrived at the tomb, John again says Jesus was “deeply moved” and uses a form of the same Greek verb he used previously. Some people want to say Jesus was angry here because he was being forced to do a miracle. But that can’t be correct because while Jesus was still in the wilderness with the disciples he said that Lazarus’ death was to provide glory to God and so he could be glorified. So he knew at that time he was going to raise Lazarus from death. And that’s why he told Martha that Lazarus will rise again.

It was typical for burials in that day, that the body of the dead before sunset would be anointed with spices, wrapped in linen cloth, laid in a tomb carved out of rock in a hill, and then the tomb would have a stone rolled over the entrance to keep wild animals out. So when Jesus was at the tomb he told the people to take the stone away. But Martha responded that there would be a bad odor because Lazarus had been dead four days. Jesus responds by asking if he had not told them that if they believed they would see the glory of God. That would seem to be a reference to his statement to the disciples in verse 4 and possibly to Martha that anyone who believes in him will never die which would show the glory of God. So, the people remove the stone from the entrance and Jesus looks up to heaven, thanks God for always hearing him, but acknowledges that he is saying this so the people may believe that God has sent him. At this point every eye must have been on Jesus to see what he would do. Some modern movies depict Jesus entering the tomb, standing at Lazarus’ head with his hands on it, and breathing on him so that Lazarus suddenly takes a breath and comes to life. But that could easily be interpreted by onlookers as Jesus resuscitating Lazarus and not necessarily resurrecting him from death. But Jesus doesn’t go anywhere near the body. He simply calls out in a loud voice, commanding Lazarus by name to come out of the tomb. And to the amazement of everyone watching, Lazarus comes out (apparently stumbling because his hands and feet are still wrapped with strips of cloth). Jesus tells the people to take the grave clothes off of Lazarus so that he is free to move. This miracle shows Jesus’ authority and power to restore a body that is decaying and give life back to it. This means he has the authority and power to call anyone from the grave after any length of time, giving them a new body and new life. The body that Lazarus had after his resurrection was just like what he had when he died. It was not like the body Jesus had after his resurrection (Jesus’ body was glorified and could appear and disappear at his will because it was no longer subject to the limitations of the physical universe. What Jesus did for Lazarus he will do for others in future resurrections – his Bride (the Church) at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:16), Old Testament and Tribulation saints at his second coming to earth (Dan 12:2; Rev 20:4, 6), and unbelievers at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:5).

Verses 45 – 57. Many of the people standing there put their faith in Jesus (believed he was the Messiah), but some when to the Pharisees and told them what had happened. We’re not told whether they did not because they didn’t believe or because they wanted the Pharisees to know that the Messiah had come. The chief priests and Pharisees call a meeting of the entire Sanhedrin, the ruling religious body. They question what will happen

if they continue to let Jesus go around performing miraculous signs. That would show they know his ministry is anointed by God or else what he was doing would not have been miraculous signs (which point to his authority being from God). They are afraid that too many people will believe in what he is doing and that it will result in the Romans coming down hard on them, removing them from power and ceasing to allow them to be a nation. Caiaphas, who was the high priest, says it is better for one person to die than for the whole nation to perish. The Romans had agreed to let Caiaphas be the high priest in 18 AD, succeeding his father-in-law, Annas. As we will see, Annas continued to have considerable influence and power even though he was not officially the high priest. Either a member of the Sanhedrin, possibly Nicodemus, told John what happened as the ruling council met, or the Holy Spirit told him and interpreted what Caiaphas said about Jesus' death being for the whole nation and for the bringing together of the scattered children of God as being a prophecy. From that day on they plotted to take Jesus' life like a scapegoat.

So Jesus didn't move about publicly but stayed at a village called Ephraim that was near the desert. John doesn't specify the location any better than this which would probably be sufficient for his readers to know where it was, but we don't know the exact location. The closest desert would be the wilderness east of the Jordan River where Jesus had been with his disciples when he heard about Lazarus. Obviously it was close enough for Jesus to return easily to be with Lazarus and his sisters six days before the Passover celebration. The time of the Passover Feast was near enough that people were looking for Jesus and asking if he would come to the Feast. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that anyone finding out where Jesus was should report it to them so they could arrest him. It is obvious that the Jewish religious leaders have rejected Jesus as the Messiah even though they recognize his miraculous signs as showing his authority from God.

## Chapter 12

Verses 1 – 11. The timing of this event is difficult to establish. Matthew and Mark both say there was an anointing of Jesus two days before the Passover and after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. John says there was an anointing six days before the Passover and the day before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Luke, the most conscientious in providing details of the sequence and timing of events, doesn't mention the anointing and doesn't give anything to indicate the time of the triumphal entry. That leaves us wondering if there were two different anointings. The descriptions of the anointing recorded by Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:1-11) and here by John are so similar that it is difficult to imagine that Jesus was anointed two times in one week with such similar details. So that would mean either Matthew and Mark have recorded the time it happened in error or else John did or that we don't have enough facts to know how whether there were two or one anointing. For the sake of discussion, I will presume that there was only one anointing.

John says it happened at a dinner given in Jesus' honor in the town of Bethany where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from death. Matthew and Mark both say the dinner was at the house of a man known as Simon the Leper. Then they both tell of an unnamed woman taking an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume (pure nard), breaking the jar and pouring the perfume on his head while he was lying at the table. John tells us that Martha was served the meal and that Mary took a *litran* (Greek measure of about 12 oz) of pure nard (which is an expensive perfume), poured it on Jesus' feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. It is probable that the nard was poured on both his head and feet – that amount would have been sufficient for both.

Spikenard, also known as Nard, can refer to several different plants, the common of which grows naturally in Mediterranean and Near East countries. Parts of the plant were widely used for medicinal purposes, but the root was pulverized and squeezed to produce an oil which was used as a perfume and as incense. It is still used commercially today in air fresheners and insecticides. The Talmud lists it, along with ten other spices, as part of the recipe for the Holy incense used in the Temple. Mark and John both indicate that a *litran* (nearly 12 oz) would have cost about a year's wages (about 300 denarii). The alabaster flask that contained the nard would also have been expensive, so this act by Mary was a demonstration of her great love and high regard for Jesus. She also demonstrated her humility by undoing her hair which was considered a sign of a woman with loose morals.

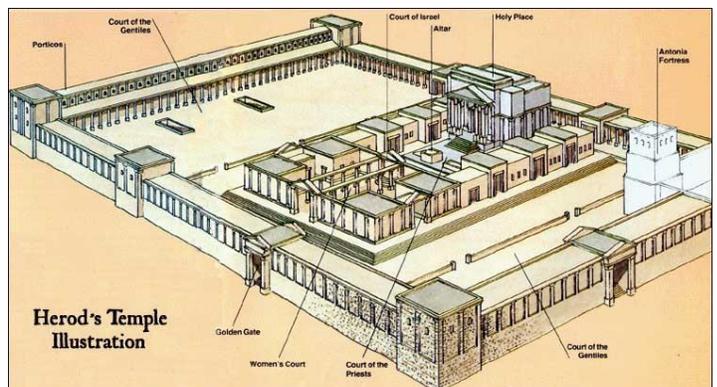
Most scholars think that since John said Martha served the meal that the dinner was held in the house she shared with Mary and Lazarus. If this is their house and Matthew's and Mark's naming it as the house of Simon the Leper that would indicate that Lazarus was also known as Simon and that he was a Leper. Speculation only, leads one to wonder if that was the cause of Lazarus' death from which Jesus raised him.

As Mary broke the neck of the alabaster jar and poured the nard on Jesus, the aroma immediately filled the entire house. This caused some of the disciples (Matt. 26:8; Mark 14:4), especially Judas the keeper of the money bag, to question why this was done. Surely, the nard could have been sold and the money given to the poor. John explains that Judas' real reason was not to help the poor but to help himself as he helped himself to the funds in the money bag. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus told the disciples to leave Mary alone because what she did was a beautiful thing and prepared his body beforehand for his burial. They also say that they will always have the poor with them, but what she has done will be told in her memory wherever the gospel is preached. John records that Jesus said it was meant for her to save this perfume for the day of his burial. John also reports that Jesus said they will always have the poor with them but they would not always have him with them. This doesn't mean he was encouraging the disciples to overlook helping the poor but that it was appropriate to honor him in this lavish way at this time.

Meanwhile, the Jews heard that Jesus was at Lazarus' house and came to see him and also Lazarus because he had been raised from death. Because Lazarus was proof of Jesus' authority and because so many people were putting their faith in Jesus, the chief priests planned not only to kill Jesus but also Lazarus.

Verses 12 – 19. John says that the next day the great crowd of people who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to the city. So they picked up palm branches and went out to meet him. The waving of Palm fronds (branches) had become a symbol of nationalism at the festivals because palm fronds were used in numerous ways to symbolize the nation of Israel. As the people went to where Jesus was entering the city, they shouted "Hosanna" which in Hebrew means "save." They also quoted Psalm 118:26 which says "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." John says Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it while Matthew and Mark record that Jesus sent two disciples out to find a colt and bring it back so that he could enter the city riding on it. Zechariah 9:9 says "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The crowd obviously recognized Jesus was entering as the Messiah even though they didn't fully understand (or remember) Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would die (Isa 52:13 – 53:12). Zechariah says more than just that the Messiah would come riding on a donkey. He also describes that the Messiah's reign would not begin at that point because Israel would reject her king. John acknowledges that the disciples didn't understand until after Jesus was glorified (that would be after his resurrection) that all these things had been written about him. John records that the crowd spread the word that Jesus who had raised Lazarus from the dead was here and many more people went out to meet him. The Pharisees, on the other hand, said to each other that they were getting nowhere and that this whole thing was getting so far out of hand that it was like the whole world was going after him.

Verses 20 – 36. Now John changes the scene to another event that happened after the triumphal entry. He records that there were some Greeks who were going to the temple to worship. Being Greeks implies that they weren't Jews so they were considered Gentiles. They were at least God fearing people or else they wouldn't be going to the temple to worship. And when they worshiped they could only do so from the Court of the Gentiles (See diagram at right).



These Gentiles, whether they were from out of Jerusalem or from outside of Israel, had heard about Jesus, probably from all the excitement of people and news about him coming to the temple, and they wanted to see him. So they found Philip and told him their request. Philip told Andrew and together they went to Jesus and told him. Jesus doesn't answer the request but takes the opportunity to announce that it is the time (*hora* – God appointed) for the Son of Man (Messianic title) to be glorified. He uses the example of a seed that has to be planted in the ground before it will produce a harvest to indicate his coming death. Then he says: “the man who loves his life (physical) will lose it (eternal life in heaven with God), while the man who hates his life in this world (physical) will keep it for eternal life (in heaven with God).” And he goes on to say that anyone who serves him must follow him and the Father will honor that one. Then he asked a rhetorical question about whether he should ask the Father to save him from this hour (*hora*) and answers no, because it is for this reason (death like the seed) that he came to this hour (*hora*). Then he asks the Father to glorify him and immediately a voice came from heaven answers “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.” Jesus has been glorified by all the miraculous signs that John has reported in his account of Jesus' ministry. And Jesus will be glorified again by his resurrection from death. All the crowd heard was a noise like thunder and some thought an angel had spoken to Jesus. Jesus replies that the voice was for their benefit, not his, and that it is time for the judgment of the world and that the prince of this world will be driven out. Then, to show the kind of death that would be his, he said, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth (hung suspended from cross), will draw all men to myself.” Now the crowd of Jews reply that they have heard from the Law (possibly 2 Sam 7:12-13, 16; Ps 89:26-29, 35-37; Dan 7:13-14) that the Christ (Messiah – descendant of David) will remain forever (sit on the throne of David forever), so how can he say the Son of Man (messianic title – Dan 7:13) will be lifted up (killed). And they ask who is the Son of Man. They should have understood from what Jesus previously said, but what they expected and wanted in a messiah did not fit with what Jesus was saying. Then Jesus refers to light and darkness and tells them to walk in the light while they still have it for a while (meaning himself as he has at other times called himself the light of the world). And he urges them to put their trust in him so they can become sons of the light. When Jesus had finished speaking he hid himself from them.

Verses 37 – 50. John declares that even after all these miraculous signs that he has recorded Jesus did in the presence of people, the Jews still didn't believe in him (believe that he was the Messiah, God in the flesh). Then John explains that Isaiah had seen the glory of Jesus and had prophesied that this would happen (Isa 6:10 and 53:1). Even though the Jews as a nation did not accept and believe in Jesus, some of the leadership (more than just Nicodemus of the Sanhedrin) believed in Jesus but would not openly recognize him because they feared the Pharisees would put them out (ban them) from entering the synagogue and because they loved the praise of men more than praise from God.

Now John records that Jesus cried out some teaching. It appears that when John said in verse 36 that Jesus hid himself, that it was a comment about what Jesus did after he finished teaching, but that what Jesus says in verses 44 to 50 are part of the teaching that he did before he actually left the area. This continues what Jesus had been saying about walking in the light. He says that anyone who believes in him also believes in the one who sent him (God, the Father), and when they see him (Jesus) they have seen the one who sent him (God, the Father). Here, again, Jesus is saying that he is God. Again he says he is the light and anyone who believes in him will not walk in darkness. But those who hear what he has taught and will not follow it will be judged, not by him (Jesus) because he came into the world to save it, but by the very words he has spoken because those words were what the Father commanded him to say. Then he says that his command (the Father's) leads to eternal life. The command which Jesus implies is what he told Nicodemus: “whoever believes in him (the Son) shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

## Chapter 13

Verses 1 – 20. With these verses John begins to describe the last events of Jesus' life. He provides more information about what Jesus said to his disciples at his last supper with them than any other writer, yet he omits Jesus' instruction about the elements of the supper representing his body and blood and telling them that as often as they took of the elements they should remember his death until he returns. John probably omits it

because the other accounts covered it adequately. This agrees with his omitting a lot of the details of Jesus' ministry that the other accounts describe because they covered it adequately and it wasn't necessary for his purpose of showing that Jesus is the Messiah, God in the flesh, and the sacrifice that makes it possible for anyone who believes it to be restored to a right relationship with God and live with him for eternity.

The other gospel accounts and the Jewish calendar dating of the Passover celebration in 33 AD show that the Passover meal would have been eaten on Thursday. That would put the crucifixion on Friday and we'll see when we look at chapter 19 that Friday would have been the preparation day for a special Sabbath celebration on Saturday because that Sabbath fell within the Passover celebration.

John doesn't begin with describing the meal but with what happened as the disciples arrived in the room where they would eat the meal. John informs us that Jesus knew the time (*hora* – time / event determined by God) had come for him to leave this world and return to the Father (death – burial – resurrection). Since Jesus loved his own (disciples) who were in this world, John explains that now he showed them the full extent of his love. As the meal is being set on the table and the disciples are gathering around the table, Jesus got up, took off his outer cloak, wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water in a basin and prepared to wash his disciples' feet. When people entered a house for a meal, it was usual for one of the household servants (usually the lowest in status) to wash the dirt from the guests' feet. This obviously had not been done for Jesus and the disciples, so the fact that Jesus would garb himself like the lowliest of servants and do this for the disciples showed his humble, servant attitude. John tells us that Jesus knew as he began to do this service that God had already put all things under his power so that knowledge intensifies the act of humility.

As Jesus washed their feet and dried them with the towel around his waist, he eventually came to Peter to wash his feet. Peter asks if he is going to wash his feet and Jesus replies that "You" (which also includes the rest of the disciples) "do not realize what I am doing but later you will understand." Peter objects and says Jesus shall never wash his feet. Peter can't stand the idea of his Teacher (Rabbi) acting like a lowly servant. But Jesus replies that unless he washes him he will have no part with Jesus. Peter realizes that means he would have not part of the Kingdom that was to be Jesus' to rule. So Peter asks Jesus to wash his hands and head as well. But Jesus tells him anyone who has had a bath only needs his feet wash for his whole body to be clean and you (the disciples) are clean although not every one of them. John tells us that Jesus already knew that Judas had been prompted by Satan to betray Jesus to the religious leaders, so we know that Jesus served Judas with his act of love along with the other disciples.

When he finished washing all the disciples' feet, Jesus put his cloak back on and returned to his place at the table. Then he asked if they understood what he had done. And without waiting for them to reply that they didn't understand, he explains that as their Lord and Teacher he has set them an example that they should do for each other what he has done for them – serve each other with humility – because no servant (or messenger) is greater than his master (or the one who sent him). All disciples are messengers and servants of Jesus, so no one should be considered greater or more important than another.

Some Christians believe that what Jesus told his disciples was another ordinance like water baptism and the Lord's Supper that is binding upon all believers to do. Thus they regularly hold foot washing ceremonies. Rather than an ordinance for the Church, this should be understood as the attitude that all believers should have toward one another. Evidence of this was provided by Paul when he wrote to Timothy with advice about widows. In 1 Timothy 5 verses 9 and 10, Paul indicates that foot washing was a good deed just like bringing up children, showing hospitality, and helping those in trouble. If Jesus had intended foot washing to be an ordinance for the Church then the disciples and Paul would have written believers to perform it just as they wrote about water baptism and the Lord's Supper and it would be found in the Didache (an instruction manual for early churches) but it isn't.

Jesus promised a blessing from God if the disciples lived the example of humility that he had given them. Then he tells them he is not referring to all of them but only those who truly believe and he quotes Psalm 41:9 about

one who shares the bread lifting up his heel against him. In the ancient Near East, it was considered especially terrible for someone to receive hospitality and then betray the one who gave it. "Lifting up the heel against" may have been a way of saying the person was walking out on his friend. Or it could be an expression from the lifting up of a horse's hoof just before it kicks. Many Near East and Asian countries today still consider someone lifting their foot so that the bottom of it points toward someone is an insult like this. This whole statement is a reference to Judas who would shortly betray him to the chief priests and Romans and Jesus said he was saying it so that when it happened they would believe that he was God – "I AM" (*ego eime*).

Then Jesus tells them that those who accept anyone he sends accepts him and also accepts the one who sent him (God). This is a preview of the fact that Jesus is going to tell the disciples that he is sending them (Jn 20:21).

Verses 21 – 30. Jesus has briefly mentioned his betrayal but now he gets more specific and says one of them is going to betray him. If they hadn't understood that from what he said previously, they now begin to wonder which one is going to do such a terrible thing.

The custom of the time when eating a special meal like the Passover was to recline at the table. Each person would lie on their left side with their left elbow on the table and their feet extended away from the table. In this way, their right hand was free for passing and eating food. Just as is the practice today in Near East and some Asian countries, the left hand is considered to be unclean because it is used to clean oneself after a bowel movement. So it is an insult, like pointing the bottom of the foot at someone, to reach out to someone or pass them something with the left hand. John records that the disciple whom Jesus loved (beloved disciple) was reclining next to Jesus. This is John's first of four references to himself as the "beloved disciple." This should not be seen as John claiming that Jesus loved him more than the other disciples. It is John's way of diverting attention from himself and focusing on what Jesus is doing or saying.

Peter was obviously not reclining next to Jesus because he motions to the "beloved disciple" for him to ask Jesus which disciple he means. So the beloved disciple leans back against Jesus to ask him "Who is it?" Since he leaned back, this shows John was reclining on the right side of Jesus. We are not told explicitly who was reclining to the left of Jesus, but because he takes a piece of bread that he has dipped (probably in the bitter herbs mixture that was part of the meal) and gives it to Judas, that is a hint that Judas was reclining on the left of Jesus. Scholars tell us that being on the left side of the host at a meal was the place of honor. This is the opposite of the custom of today which is for the honored guest or the most important person to sit, stand, or walk to the right of other individuals.

Jesus answers John's question (which was probably only heard by John), saying it is the one he will give a piece of bread after dipping it. Then he dips and gives the bread to Judas and tells him to quickly do what he is going to do. John interprets for us that no one at the meal, him included, understood why Jesus said this to Judas. John would have known by Jesus' answer to his question that Judas was going to be the betrayer but he didn't understand that Jesus' comment to Judas meant for him to go out and complete the betrayal. John records that since Judas was the one in charge of their money they thought it possible that Jesus had meant for him to go buy something or give something to the poor. As soon as Judas receives the bread and hears Jesus' statement, he gets up and leaves.

In the second verse of this chapter John says that the devil (Greek *diabolou*) had already prompted Judas to betray Jesus. Now when Jesus gives him the piece of bread, John says Satan entered Judas. This is John's only mention of Satan by name in his book. John doesn't use the term "possession" when describing what happened to Judas, so rather than having control of what Judas was doing it implies that his influence on Judas was even stronger after that.

John's statement that it was night must have more significance than just a time reference because the Passover meal wasn't begun until the sun had set, so obviously it was night time. Considering that John has used the image of light and dark to refer to spiritual knowledge or lack of it would indicate that John meant they were in a period of spiritual darkness.

Verses 31 – 38. With the departure of Judas, Jesus is free to prepare his true disciples for what was going to happen in the next few hours and in the future. Jesus begins by saying that now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. Then he calls the disciples his “children” (Greek *teknia* is an affectionate term of a parent for their children) and says that he will only be with them a little longer. He reminds them of what he has said to the Jews and now says to them, that they will look for him but that where he is going they cannot come. This is his way of saying that he is going to be separated from them and that they will not be able to follow him like they have been doing. Having said this, Jesus continues to explain what he expected of them – that they would love each other as he has loved them. They had seen his love in the washing of their feet but soon they would experience his love as he died for them. But they won’t fully understand this until after his resurrection and appearance to them and his 40 days of additional teaching. None of the disciples reveal what Jesus taught them during those 40 days. Perhaps he revealed things to them that was too wonderful and impossible for them to explain just as he did for Paul (2 Cor 12:2-5).

In saying this was a “new” command, John uses the Greek word “*kainen*” which can also mean fresh rather than different. Loving other as yourself was not new/different. It was part of the Mosaic Law (Lev 19:18) and what Jesus told the Pharisee (lawyer) who asked Jesus what was the greatest command (Matt 22:35-39; Mk 12:28-31) – love your neighbor as yourself. This command was fresh (new) in the fact that it expanded the idea of loving someone beyond just as you love yourself but as Jesus was going to sacrificially demonstrate his love by his death. The disciples demonstrating this type of love for each other would mark them to the world (unbelievers) that they were really his disciples.

Peter then asks Jesus where he is going. He doesn’t understand why they won’t be able to continue following Jesus wherever he was going to go. So Jesus again says that where he is going Peter can’t follow right now but that later he will follow. Peter still doesn’t understand that Jesus is referring to his death the next day so he asks why he can’t follow him right now and even says he will lay down his life for Jesus. He does this as a profession of this loyalty to Jesus. Peter grossly underestimates his own weakness and what Jesus’ death would entail. Jesus questions whether he will really lay down his life and tells Peter that he will deny him three times before the rooster crows (which would occur at twilight the next morning).

## Chapter 14

Verses 1 – 14. Peter’s question was one of several that the disciples would ask Jesus in a few short minutes and showed their confusion about where he was going and what was happening. Jesus indicated to them that one of them would betray him and then after Judas left he told them that it was now God’s appointed time for him to be glorified and that he will not be with them much longer. Earlier he had told a crowd of Jews the “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know who I am.” (John 8:28) So the disciples should have understood that betrayal would have led to Jesus being lifted up (crucified) and thus he wouldn’t be with them much longer. Because they were troubled about not being able to do with him, Jesus proceeded to teach them some things that would eventually comfort them even if it didn’t right at the moment. Jesus told them not to be troubled because they trusted in God so they should also trust in him. They had heard him say: “before Abraham was born, I AM (*ego eime*).” That was a way of saying Jesus was God so Jesus is telling them to trust him because he is God. Then he tells them that in the Father’s house (which would be in the spiritual universe – the third heaven) there are many rooms and he is going there to prepare a place for them. Since he is going there to prepare for them, that means he will return to get them so they can be with him and be where he is going. He says that if it were not so he would have told them.

The phrase “the Father’s house” is never used anywhere in Scripture as a reference to the Church although some commentators think it does here. The rooms can’t be in the messianic kingdom because that occurs during the Millennium and won’t exist until Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation to assume control of the universe that is his to rule. And Jesus has just said he is going to the Father’s house in a short time. So the Father’s house must be in the third heaven where the Father’s throne is located and that is the spiritual universe that is the normal abode of the angels and the Holy Spirit. His return is when he will rapture his Church and take

believers to heaven to be with him.

Then Jesus says they know the way to the place where he is going, and that brings a comment and question from Thomas that they don't know where he is going so how can they know the way. Thomas was voicing what the rest of the disciples were thinking. They wanted to know where Jesus was going and how to get there because they figured he would be establishing his kingdom rule and they expected to be sub-rulers with him. So they wanted to know where he would be establishing his rule so they could go there, if not with him as he went but after he got there. Jesus gives another enigmatic answer as he did throughout his ministry – and answer that would give people some information that they could understand and follow immediately but would not be completely understood until much later, sometimes not until after Jesus actually returns to earth. Jesus tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to God (Father) except through him (faith that he is God and that he will restore / has restored a way to have a right relationship with God). Jesus is the way to God because he is the true revelation of God (John 1:18; 5:19; 8:29) and is the one who imparts life (John 1:4; 5:26; 11:25). This was a summary of what Jesus had previously revealed to the disciples. In the next two days, it would take a lot of faith for the disciples to accept and follow Jesus as the way to God as they would hear lies about him rather than the truth and watch or hear about him hanging on a cross until life left his body and it was laid in a tomb.

Then Jesus goes on to say that if they really knew him they would know the father and from now on they would know him because they have seen him. This is not so much of a rebuke of the disciples as Jesus' recognition that, even though they had heard him claim to be God and seen the miracles that he did which showed he was God, still they weren't getting their minds around the idea that standing before them was the most accurate picture of God that can be seen in the physical universe. He is the most accurate picture of God because he is God, himself, interacting with the physical universe.

Philip's request for Jesus to show them the Father is proof that they didn't really understand at that time that Jesus is God in the flesh. They would later understand this better and perhaps Jesus taught them more about this during the 40 days he spent with them after his resurrection (Acts 1:3) and that is why John wrote the beginning of this account the way he did (1:1-4, 14). So Jesus again explains that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father. Then he encourages them to believe that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. Thus, the words he says are the Father living in him saying them. He also says it is the Father living in him that is doing the work that he has done (miracles) so if it is hard for anyone to believe that he is God they should accept it based on the miracles he has done. Then Jesus goes on to say that anyone who believes (has faith in him) will do what he has been doing (miracles). This is exactly what happens after the disciples have been empowered by the Holy Spirit – Acts 3 Peter heals a man crippled from birth.

After saying that anyone who has faith in him (Jesus) will do what he has done, Jesus goes on to say that anyone with that faith will do even greater things than these because he (Jesus) is going to the Father. He says that those who have faith may ask him anything and he will do it to bring glory to the Father. Some people think Jesus means that believers will do greater miracles than Jesus did, but that is hard to accept. The book of Acts shows that the original apostles did miracles like Jesus (healing the sick and disabled, casting out demons, and even raising an individual from death), but church history shows that miraculous powers almost entirely ended after those apostles died. There are still some examples of miraculous things happening as a result of prayer by believers, but most of it happens in undeveloped countries and among tribal peoples with little to no access to the Bible and knowledge of Jesus. Like Jesus' miracles authenticated that Jesus was God in the flesh so people could have faith in him, the miracles done by the apostles authenticated them as followers of Jesus and their message about Jesus as true. Where there are miracles today, it appears that they also authenticate the believers as followers of Jesus and their message about him as true. Miracles like that are not needed in most of the world where there is access to the Bible and the truth about Jesus. The greater things that Jesus is saying believers would do may be a reference to bringing people to salvation by helping them to know about Jesus so that they accept him as Lord and Savior and thus have the Holy Spirit bring new life to their dead spiritual bodies. That is greater than any of the miraculous signs that Jesus did during his early ministry and we get to

have a small part in the accomplishing of that miracle by helping people know about Jesus and what he did for all mankind.

Many people get into trouble over Jesus saying that believers can ask for anything in his name and he will do it. So they ask for things that will bring glory (honor, recognition) to themselves like an important job, flashy car, etc. And they don't understand why they don't get those things. They forget the rest of Scripture that says that everything we do should be for the glory of God – not anyone else's glory (honor, recognition). (1 Cor 10:31) Jesus said that he could only do what he saw the Father do (John 5:19) so he only did what was the will of the Father. For a believer to ask for anything that is not in the Father's will means it is something that Jesus will not do because he only does what is in the Father's will.

Verses 15 – 21. In chapter 13:36, Peter asked where Jesus was going that they could not go. So Jesus began to answer where he was going (which we understand was back to heaven, the spiritual universe where God's throne exists) and then Thomas said they didn't know where he was going so they couldn't know the way. So Jesus said he was the way to get to the Father (where he was going). Then Phillip says show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus replies that seeing him they have seen the Father because he is in the Father and the Father is in him and that it is the Father in him doing his work. So he promises that if they ask anything of him (that anything would have to be in the Father's will to do) then he will do it. Love of God and the desire to do his will is the prerequisite for receiving answers to our prayers. Now Jesus returns to preparing the disciples for his completion of the Father's will for sending him to earth and his soon return to be with the Father at his throne in his house.

Jesus now gives the first reference in John's writing to the believer's love for himself. If believers love him they will do what he commands. The idea is that love for Jesus will motivate the believer to obey what Jesus has taught. He also says he will ask the Father to give them another Counselor to be with them forever. The Greek word translated "Counselor" or "Helper" or "Comforter" is "*parakletos*." A counselor can bring forth the idea of a marriage counselor or a financial counselor who gives guidance about a subject. But the Greek idea of a paraclete was a person who came along side of someone as an advocate (like in a legal setting) to encourage, strengthen, train, and help the person with whatever was happening to them. Until now, Jesus had been the disciples' paraclete to train, encourage, and strengthen them to prepare them for the work they would do after he returned to the Father. Jesus says this paraclete would be the Spirit of truth (Holy Spirit). So he has referred to the Trinity, even though he doesn't specifically use that word, because he says he (the Son) will ask the Father to send the Spirit (Holy Spirit) to be the paraclete for every believer. It must have difficult for these Jewish believers (who had learned that there is only one God) to grasp the idea that Jesus was God and that the Holy Spirit was also God (a person) and not just the influence of God on a person. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon those who had faith in God to empower and / or guide them for a period of time so that they could do what God wanted them to do. But the Holy Spirit didn't remain with them for the rest of their lives as is indicated in Psalm 51:11 where it is written "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." Jesus is promising the believers that they will have a new relationship with God identified by the Holy Spirit being with them, not just for a little time, but forever (eternity) – a permanent relationship. And in a few verses Jesus will say that they would understand that in this new relationship Jesus would be in them and they would be in him just as he was in the Father and the Father was in him. So he is describing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer.

Jesus says the world (those who don't believe Jesus is God in the flesh) cannot accept (receive) the Holy Spirit because those of the world do not see or know him (Holy Spirit). No one can know the Holy Spirit either as an influencer (as in the Old Testament) or as their paraclete (as in the New Testament) unless they have faith in God and desire to do his will. Jesus says the disciples will know the paraclete (Holy Spirit) because he will not only be with them but live in them. He says that whoever has his commands and obeys them is the one who loves him and that person will be loved by the Father and Jesus and that he (Jesus) will show himself to that person. This doesn't mean God or Jesus love people more because of their obedience. He loves all people (believers and unbelievers) as fully as he can love. It was because of God's love for all of mankind that Jesus

came to earth to die on a cross as punishment for mankind's disobedience of God (John 3:16). But he reveals himself more to those who show their love by obedience than he does to those who don't believe and obey because he is disciplining them to draw them into a closer relationship with himself. Those who obey more have a closer, more intimate relationship with Jesus and he gives them a greater understanding of himself and his Word.

We will see in chapter 20 that on the first night after Jesus' resurrection, when he appeared to the disciples in the locked room, that he sent the Holy Spirit into their lives. Then in Acts 2 we learn that the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to do miraculous signs. The first sign was in Acts 2 as the disciples spoke in languages that they didn't know to tell the news of what Jesus had done for people to all the people present for the Passover celebration. Then in Acts 3 we find Peter healing a man crippled from birth so that he not only could walk but immediately was able to jump while he was praising God. In Acts 5, we learn that the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. In Acts 14, after Saul has become a believer and became known as Paul, we learn that he and Barnabas had their message about Jesus confirmed by many miraculous signs and wonders and that Paul healed a man crippled from birth. And in Acts 20, Paul raises a young man to life after he had fallen out of a second story window and died.

Verses 22 -24. Then one of the disciples identified as Judas (but not Iscariot) asked why Jesus intended to show himself to them and not the world. This man named Judas would be the disciple who was the son of a man named James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13) and was probably also known as Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18. Judas' question reflects an understanding that Jesus would reveal himself publically as people saw him returning on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory (Matt 24:30) but it does not indicate an understanding that Jesus would reveal himself privately to the disciples 3 days after his crucifixion. Jesus doesn't directly answer the question but reiterates that if anyone obeys his teaching that "we" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) will come and make "our" home with the believer. Those who do not love Jesus will not obey his teaching. Then Jesus proclaims that those words are not his own but the words of the Father who sent him.

Verses 25 – 31. Jesus then says, "All this I have spoken while still with you." What he has said is that he would shortly leave them and go prepare a place for those who believe in him so they can be with him forever (eternity). He will prepare for them by dying on a cross (to pay the penalty for the disobedience that separates them from God), rising from death (to prove that he is God and that what he has said is truth), and ascending to heaven from which he would return and take them to be with him. In the meantime, he would dwell with them by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit after he appeared to them for a short while after his resurrection. He knows that they do not fully understand all of this at this time so he encourages them with the knowledge that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, will teach them all things and remind them of everything he has said to them. This promise of remembrance of Jesus' words and a complete understanding of what it meant was specifically for the original disciples who heard him teach. But the Holy Spirit continues to teach subsequent believers as they read the writings of the disciples as they tell us what Jesus said.

Jesus realizes the uneasiness of the disciples at the prospect of Jesus leaving them without completely clarifying what they didn't presently understand. So he gives them a word of comfort which could be called his "Last Will and Testament." He says he gives them peace, but not as the world gives. The world gives peace through understanding but he gives peace through a relationship. The world cannot give peace because it does not understand the fundamental nature of the problem that brings uneasiness in people's lives – namely the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden which every person follows when he / or she learns the difference between obedience and disobedience. True peace, a restored relationship with God, can only be obtained from the Prince of Peace, a title Isaiah used to refer to the Messiah in Isa 9:6-7, which Jesus showed is him through the miraculous signs John has recorded for us. Jesus will establish universal peace when he comes at the end of the Tribulation to reign as Messiah on the earth. But until that time, he establishes that peace in the hearts and lives of those who believe and obey in faith. This peace is not an absence of difficulties, troubles, or persecution. Jesus has the peace of a perfect relationship with the Father but he is troubled and will be greatly troubled by what is going to happen to him in the coming hours. At the end of chapter 16 we will see that Jesus

tells the disciples “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” So the peace Jesus gives to every believer is the peace of knowing that they have a right relationship with God and that they will live with Jesus for eternity.

Jesus tells his disciples that although they have heard him say he is going away and then coming back, they should be glad that he is going to the Father because the Father is greater than he is. Jesus is not saying that he is in any way inferior to God because he has repeatedly said he and the Father are one (the same). That Jesus is somehow inferior to God, the Father, is the heresy of a man named Arius, a member of the early church in Alexandria. He denied Jesus’ full deity, that Jesus was God in the flesh, and taught that Jesus was created by God and therefore distinct from God. Arius taught this using this verse in John (14:28), Galatians 1:15 of Paul’s writings which says “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” Revelation 3:14 which says “These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of creation by God,” and Proverbs 8:22-23 which says “The Lord possessed me (brought me forth) at the beginning of his work, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.” What this teaching misses is that when Jesus’s physical body was created in Mary by the Holy Spirit and his mind, will and emotions took up residence in that physical body, Jesus laid aside the glory, power, and majesty that he had with the Father in heaven. So, in this way, God is greater than Jesus because the Father has not laid aside his glory, power and majesty. But that doesn’t mean Jesus is inferior to or not God in the flesh as he has taught and shown by miraculous signs.

Jesus says he has told these things to the disciples before they happened so that when they do they will believe what he has said. This will be a strengthening of their faith after they experience his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Then he says he won’t speak with them about this much longer because the prince of this world (Satan) is coming. That doesn’t mean his teaching is completed. We will see him teaching more in chapters 15 and 16, and for 40 days after his resurrection (Acts 1:3). But, he reminds them, that he (Satan, the prince of this world) has no power over him (Jesus). Then Jesus ends this part of his teaching by saying the world must learn that he loves the Father and always does exactly what the Father has commanded him to do.

When he says let us leave, he may be indicating it is time for them to leave the room and go to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives where he will pray as recorded in Matt 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 22:39; and John 17. But it may only mean that the time for leaving the upper room is near. That would mean the actual departure happened after he finished the teaching in chapters 15 and 16. If it means they immediately left the upper room, then the teaching in chapters 15 and 16 occurred on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane or after they arrived there. Nothing indicates which interpretation is more likely.

## **Chapter 15**

Verses 1 – 17. Jesus now continues to prepare the Eleven disciples who are still with him for his departure that would happen before sunset the following day. He teaches about their relationship with him and their relationship with each other. God described the nation of Israel as a grape vine in his vineyard in Ps 80:8; Isa 5:1-5; Jer 2:21, 12:10; Ezek 17:1-21, 19:10-14; Hos 10:1-2; and Joel 1:7. Here Jesus uses the analogy of a vine and the fruit on it to describe their relationship with him. This is not a parable but more of an extended metaphor. This is the last of the “I AM” statements of Jesus. Even while proclaiming by the “I AM” that he is God, he calls himself the “true” vine and the Father the gardener. His reference to himself as the “true” vine compares himself to the nation of Israel. As God’s vine Israel was intended to be fruitful and produce fruit by pointing the people of the world to the way to have a right relationship with their Creator. But Israel is shown in the Old Testament passages as an unfaithful vine which didn’t produce good fruit. Israel failed to display to the world the correct way to have a right relationship with God by obeying his commands and so they didn’t produce good fruit. As the “true” vine, Jesus will produce good fruit. A gardener “dresses” or “prunes” or “trims” the branches of a vine that don’t produce good fruit so they can produce fruit that is good. That doesn’t necessarily mean the gardener removes the branches but he “trims” or “cleans” them of the worthless fruit so they have the opportunity to bear good fruit.

Then Jesus tells the disciples that they are clean because of the word that he has spoken to them. That indicates the “pruning” of the disciples’ lives that has prepared them to produce good fruit. The faith they have in Jesus is giving them a right relationship with God just as the faith of the Old Testament saints gave them a right relationship with God. (See Heb 11:6) Then Jesus tells them to remain in him and he will remain in them. They are to maintain their relationship with him by continuing to do what he has commanded. In doing this, they will be able to do what Jesus has and will command them to do. Then he reminds them that a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains attached to the vine. The vine is the source of nourishment that enables a branch to produce fruit. Any branch that is not attached to the vine will not receive nourishment and thus cannot produce the fruit that it is expected to produce. And he compares the disciples to branches that must remain attached to him to be effective branches. He has already said that when he leaves he will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to indwell the disciples to encourage and teach them everything. That means the Holy Spirit is the nourishment for the disciples that will enable them to produce good fruit. But, to receive that nourishment, the disciples must remain in Jesus (obey what he taught). This clarifies what it means to remain in him and he will remain in them. So that we will not have the wrong understanding of what the fruit is that believers will produce, God had Paul write to the Galatians (5:22): “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control.” These character traits produced in a believer’s life show that the Holy Spirit is living within them. Jesus also says that anyone who doesn’t remain in him would be like a branch that doesn’t remain attached to the vine. That branch is worthless, is thrown away, withers, and is finally thrown in the fire and burned. Fire refers to judgment but not necessarily the Lake of Fire which is the final judgment and is eternal separation from God. This statement should not be used to say a believer can lose their salvation or that difficulties in a believer’s life is an indication that they aren’t saved as some people do. Some people who have not truly accepted Jesus to be their Lord and Master may appear to be a believer, but they are not really saved. They are like a branch that has become “stuck” in a grapevine but is not really part of the vine. It becomes evident after a while that the “false” branch is not attached to the vine and it is “removed” and thrown away. True believers who have trust Jesus to be their Lord and Master can fail to produce the fruit of the Spirit in their life by not obeying what Jesus has taught. In that case, God will “prune” their lives with difficulties that are intended to bring them back to obedience so that the Holy Spirit can produce his fruit in their lives. But if a believer refuses to produce the fruit of the Spirit in his life, then he is committing a sin that leads to death (physical not spiritual) and God will take him home to heaven early because he will not lose to Satan and the “second death” (eternal separation from God) anyone who has truly accepted Jesus as their Lord and Master. In Chapter 6:39, John quoted Jesus as saying: “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” Also in Chapter 10:28-29, John quotes Jesus saying: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” This is what John indicated in his first letter when he wrote about a sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16-17).

Then Jesus tells the disciples again (as he did in 14:14) that they can ask whatever they wish and it will be given to them. If the disciples remain in Jesus (obey his commands), then the he (Holy Spirit) will remain in them so that they will receive guidance from the Spirit to know what God’s will is and they can ask for that to be done and it will happen. And Jesus says it is the Father’s will that they produce much fruit and thus show themselves to be his disciples.

Jesus turns to speaking about his love for the disciples and says he has loved them as the Father has loved him. So he encourages them to remain in his love by obeying his commands just as he has obeyed his Father’s commands and remained in his love. Love for Jesus is what leads a believer to obey what Jesus has commanded – not fear of punishment. Jesus says he has told them this so that they may have the joy that he has in remaining in the Father’s love and thus their joy will be complete (filled to the maximum). Then he commands the disciples to love each other as he has loved them. So that no one may misunderstand that the love he is describing is a “warm, friendly” feeling (brotherly love as described by the Greek verb *philo*), he says that no one can have a greater love than laying down his life for his friends. The Greek words translated “love” in this passage are forms of the verb, *agapao*, which describes a sacrificial love.

Jesus says the disciples are his friends if they do what he commands and he says he no longer calls them servants because a servant does not know his master's business. A servant (Greek *doulos* – slave) doesn't have to know his master's reasons for the orders (commands) that are given. He just has to obey them. But the relationship between friends is much more intimate and a person will tell his friend the reason for what he is asking the friend to do for him. The fact that he "no longer" calls them servants indicates that he has done that in the past. A common title in the Old Testament for anyone who put their faith in God and obeyed his commands was a servant. (See Ex 14:31; 1 Sam 3:10; Job 1:8; Isa 49:1-3) He continues to say he has called them friends because everything he has learned from the Father he has revealed to them. We must remember that when Jesus left heaven and became a man he gave up the glory and power he had in heaven. He was no longer all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient). The Holy Spirit descended and rested on him as it did for people in the Old Testament to give him the knowledge and power he needed to fulfill the Father's will. So, by this point in his ministry, he says he has revealed all that he learned from the Father (through the Holy Spirit). We learn in Acts 1:3 that after his resurrection and temporary return to heaven Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples and spoke more things to them about the Kingdom of God. Because he had been raised in a glorified body and returned to the Father, he then was again omniscient and could reveal more to the disciples than he had previously revealed. In his first letter (1 Pet 1:10-12), Peter helps us understand that in former times (Old Testament) God did not reveal his mind fully to his people (servants), but now he has revealed his plans to his friends. That doesn't mean he has revealed everything but he has revealed what we need to know. Sometimes what he has revealed is not clearly understood until the right time when the Holy Spirit will make the meaning more clear.

Then Jesus says that the disciples didn't choose him but he chose them to go and bear fruit (character from the Holy Spirit) that will last. By producing the fruit of the Spirit and thus showing they remain in Jesus and Jesus in them, the disciples may ask for anything in Jesus' name and it will be done for them. We have to remember that asking anything in Jesus' name is not just a statement to be added to the end of a prayer but refers to asking for the Father's will to be done because Jesus said he only does what he sees the Father do (the Father's will). Then Jesus restates his command that the disciples should love one another.

Verses 18 – 27. Jesus had taught the Eleven about their relationship with him and with each other. Love (agape – sacrificial love) is what underscores the relationships. "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and **we** will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching." (John 14:23-24) Love is the reason for obeying Jesus' teaching – our love for him and his love for us. "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." (John 15:10) "Remain in me and I will remain in you." (John 15:4) Obedience due to our love of Jesus is what assures us of the relationship that we remain in Jesus and he in us. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." (John 15:7) The basis for knowing God's will and knowing how to ask for his will to be done (The Model Prayer – "your will be done") is remaining in Jesus by obeying what he taught. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." (John 15:13-14) Sacrificing yourself out of love for a friend is the height of demonstrating love for that person. That's the relationship the Eleven (and by implication, all believers) would have with each other – willingness to sacrifice their own wants, desires, material things, and even life itself if necessary, for each other. But the greatest demonstration of love is God's love for mankind shown by his coming in the flesh to accept the punishment of death for man's disobedience of God's commands (John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."), even though mankind hadn't demonstrated any love of God or obedience of his commands (Rom 5:8 – "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."). Dying for an enemy just for the possibility of winning him to friendship is the supreme example of sacrificial (agape) love. That was Jesus' reason for coming to earth and living as a man and what he was trying to get the Eleven to understand before he went to die on a cross in just a few hours.

But now Jesus teaches them about what their relationship would be with the rest of the world. He says if the world hates them it is because it has hated him first and therefore they shouldn't be surprised by the hatred. In fact, if the world loves them it means they are part of the world and not part of him. He reminds them that he told them no servant is greater than their master (John 13:16) so if they persecute Jesus the world will also persecute them. He continues to explain that the world will treat them this way because of his name for they don't know the One who sent him. But, because they have heard what Jesus taught and seen his miraculous signs they know better and hate him and God, the Father. Then he says this is to fulfill what is written in their law that "They hated me without reason." This is a reference to Psalm 69:4.

Then Jesus tells them some more about the work of the Counselor, (Holy Spirit), calling him the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father. The Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus, who he is and what he did by dying on the cross. But Jesus says the Eleven must also testify because they have been with him since the beginning. This statement only applies to the Eleven remaining disciples to whom he is speaking because only they have been with him since the beginning. Their testimony, therefore, is great because they are eyewitnesses to everything that Jesus said and did. Just because this statement can't apply to anyone but the Eleven doesn't mean that all other believers through the ages aren't supposed to testify about Jesus. We can testify to what Jesus has done in our lives, but we can't testify like the Eleven and our testimony is not as great as theirs.

## **Chapter 16**

Verses 1 – 4. These verses should really be a part of the previous chapter because they complete what Jesus was teaching the Eleven about their relationship with the world. He tells them that he has told them this (that the world will hate them) so that they will not go astray – they will not stray from following the truth he taught them. Not only will the world hate them but they will be put out of the synagogue (religious centers). He even says a time will come when anyone who kills them will think he is offering a service to God. That is exactly what will happen when Saul of Tarsus, who is at that time studying under the teachings of Gamaliel, begins to persecute the followers of Jesus and brings them to trial and death. Jesus says they will do such things because they don't know the Father or Jesus, himself. He says the reason for telling them this is so when the time comes that it happens, they will remember that he had warned them of the hatred, persecution, and even death. He ends this discussion by saying he didn't tell them at first (when he first called them) because he was with them. They would need to see how some people loved and wanted to follow him while others hated and wanted to persecute him before they would be ready to understand what their relationship with the world would be.

Verses 5 – 16. Now he returns to teaching them more about the work of the Holy Spirit. He begins by saying he is going back to him who sent me (God the Father), but that none of them asks "Where are you going." Remember that Peter has asked that very thing back at the end of Chapter 13 (verse 36) just after Judas Iscariot left from their Passover meal before Jesus began to teach and prepare them for his death. But since they have been hearing his teaching after that, no one is asking that question because they know he is going to his death. They are grieved about his impending death and Jesus says that is why he has said these things to them. Then he wants them to know that it is for their good that he leave (die) because unless he goes away, the Counselor (Holy Spirit) will not come to them. When he (Holy Spirit) does come, he will convict the world of their guilt in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. Their conviction in regard to sin is that they do not believe in him (don't believe that he is God in the flesh even though he has done miraculous signs among them). Their conviction in regard to righteousness is that Jesus is going to return to the Father and they will not see him any longer. Their conviction in regard to judgment is that the prince (ruler) of this world (Satan) now stands condemned (judged) for what he has done to the race of mankind.

Jesus says he has much more to say to them but they can't bear it right now. After he is resurrected and returns from presenting his shed blood as the payment for the sin of the world on the Father's altar in heaven, Jesus will stay with the disciples for 40 days and teach them much more about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3) This would seem to be the much more that he has to say to the Eleven that he can't say at this time because it is too much for them to bear. He says that when the Spirit comes, he will guide them into all truth. The Spirit won't

He speaks on his own but only reveals what he hears (from the Father) and he will tell them about things that are yet to happen. The Spirit will bring glory to Jesus by doing this because everything that belongs to the Father belongs to Jesus and thus the Spirit will be taking from what belongs to Jesus and making it known to them. Then Jesus ends by telling them that in a little while they will see him no more and then after a little while they will see him again. On the “after the fact” side of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, it is clear to us that he means his death will soon take him from their sight, but that shortly after that (three days) he will be resurrected and appear to them.

Verses 17 – 35. But we see that the disciples didn’t understand what Jesus meant that in “a little while” they would see him no more and then after “a little while” they would see him. And they also didn’t understand what he meant about “going to the Father.” So Jesus begins to tell them more. He says they will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. This is exactly what takes place during the crucifixion and his time in the tomb. The disciples weep while those who wanted Jesus gone rejoice. He tells the disciples that they will grieve but their grief will turn to joy. Then, to help them understand he uses the example of a woman about to give birth. She has pain because the time has come for her to birth the child, but after the baby is born her anguish turns to joy that her child is now birthed. Jesus says it will be the same way with the disciples. They will grieve but when they see him again they will rejoice and no one will take their joy away. Then he says that in that day they will no longer ask him for anything but that his Father will give them anything that they ask in his name. (We have already determined that Jesus only does what is the Father’s will and the Father only does what is in his will, so if we ask anything that is not in the Father’s will then it will not be done even though we tag “in Jesus’ name” at the end of the request. Asking in Jesus’ name means asking for the will of God, the Father, as in the model prayer – “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Matt 6:10)

Then Jesus says that he has been speaking to them figuratively, but a time is coming when he will tell them plainly about his Father. He says that asking in his name doesn’t mean he will ask the Father for them because they are asking him, but that they will be asking the Father directly and the Father will answer them because he loves them. He says that the Father loves them because they have loved him (Jesus) and believed that he has come from God. Then he says plainly that he came from the Father and entered the world and now he is leaving the world and going back to the Father. Hearing this, the disciples declare that Jesus is now speaking plainly, that he knows all things and does not even need anyone to ask him questions (he knows what they are thinking). They declare that this makes them believe that Jesus came from God.

Jesus affirms their statement of faith with “You believe at last!” But then he goes on to warn them that a time is coming and has come that they will be scattered and leave him alone. But, yet, he is not alone because the Father is with him. He says that he has told them these things so they will have peace because in this world they will have trouble. But he encourages them with the statement, “I have overcome the world.”

## **Chapter 17**

Verses 1 – 5. Now Jesus looks up to heaven and begins to communicate with his Father in prayer. He acknowledges that the time has come (for him to fulfill the Father’s will) and asks God to glorify the Son so that he may glorify the Father. He proclaims that God has given him authority over all people so that he might give eternal life to those the Father has given him. Then he defines eternal life as knowing God the Father as the only true God and Jesus the Messiah whom he has sent. He states that he has brought glory to God by completing the work he was given. He looks at the work as begun completed even though it won’t really be complete until he dies on the cross and rises from the dead in victory. And so he asks the Father to glorify him in his presence with the glory he had with the Father before the world began. The Father will do this as Jesus is resurrected from death in a glorified body. Here, again, Jesus is proclaiming his complete deity and countering the idea that he had divinity conferred upon him at his baptism. By reporting what Jesus prayed, John is effectively countering all the gnostic claims against Jesus’ deity being from before the creation of the world.

Verses 6 – 19. Then Jesus turns from glorifying God to praying for the disciples standing with him in the room. Jesus says he has revealed the Father to those whom the Father has given him out of the world. He says they were God's, God has given them to him, and they have obeyed God's word. He even says that they know everything Jesus has given to him by the Father. The words that Jesus has given to the disciples, they know have come from God, the Father, and they accepted them (in faith believed them). He says the disciples knew with certainty that Jesus came from the Father and that the Father had sent him. He says he is praying for them, not the world, but for those God has given him. Again, he proclaims that all he has is the Father's and all the Father has is his. Then he says that glory has come to him through them (meaning the disciples and their faith in him). Then he clearly says that he will remain in the world no longer but come back to the Father even though the disciples must remain in the world. So he asks the Father to protect the disciples by the power of his own name, that this name is the one God gave Jesus (so it must be the "I AM"), and to do this so that the disciples may be one just as the Father and Son are one. This is referring not to being one in purpose but the Father being in the Son and the Son being in the Father and also the disciples being in Jesus and Jesus being in them. He claims that he has protected the disciples while he was with them, kept them safe, and lost none except the one doomed to destruction (because he refused to accept Jesus but betrayed [will betray] him) so that prophecy from the Old Scriptures would be fulfilled.

Jesus again says he is coming to the Father, but that he is saying these things so that the disciples may have the full measure of his joy in them. He declares that he has given them the Father's word and that the world hates them because they are not of the world (following the world's [Satan's] ways) any longer just as he (Jesus) is not of the world. He says that he is not asking in his prayer that the disciples be taken out of the world but that God will protect them from the evil one [Satan who is the temporary ruler of this world]. Again, he says the disciples are not of the world just as he is not of the world and asks that God will sanctify them by the truth which is God's Word. The Greek word translated as sanctify is "*hagiazō*" which means to be set apart for sacred use or to make holy. Then he announces that as God has sent him into this world he has sent them and that he sanctifies himself so that they also may be sanctified. This makes sense when you remember that Jesus claims to be in the disciples and they in him, so for them to be sanctified Jesus must be sanctified – set apart for God's use.

Verses 20 – 26. Now Jesus changes from praying for the disciples who are with him to praying for all who will believe (have faith in Jesus as the Messiah) from what the disciple proclaim (their message). He asks that all believers may be one just as he and the Father are one so that the world may believe that God has sent him. Then he says that he has given them (all believers) the glory that he (God) has given him (Jesus) and asks that they may be brought into complete unity (all believers in the Trinity Godhead and the Godhead in them) to let the world know that God sent him (Jesus) and that he (Jesus) has loved them (all believers) just as God has loved him (Jesus). He says that he wants all believers to be with him and see the glory God had given him since before the creation of the world.

He acknowledges that although the world does not know him (God) that he (Jesus) does know and has made him known to them (all believers) and will continue to make him (God) known so that the love God has for him (Jesus) may be in them (all believers) and that he (Jesus) may be in them (all believers).

## **Chapter 18**

Verses 1 – 11. Now John says that when Jesus finished praying he left with the disciples to cross the Kidron Valley to an olive grove on the other side. This would be the Garden of Gethsemane where the other gospel accounts record that they went to pray before Judas came to betray Jesus to the crowd of people sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. (Matt 26: 36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:39-53) This garden had been a favorite place for Jesus to spend time with the disciples during the three years he taught them. So Judas knew it was where Jesus and the disciples would go after finishing the Passover meal together. John doesn't describe Jesus' agony and praying in the garden as the other gospel writer did. He probably omits it because the other writer have adequately described it and it doesn't add to his purpose in writing his account. (John 20:31)

John records for us something that the other writers didn't, namely that Judas brought Roman soldiers along with the officials (temple guards) sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. And he doesn't say anything about Judas identifying Jesus with a kiss. It was late at night, but Passover occurs when the moon is full, so the officials carrying torches and lanterns probably means they were ready to look for him if he was hiding. The weapons the Roman soldiers and the temple guards had were probably swords that they would use to restrain anyone who tried to keep them from arresting Jesus. Jesus knows why they have come to the garden but he confronts them with the question of who they seek. When they reply Jesus of Nazareth, he answers: "I AM" (ego eime). Here Jesus is probably not stressing his deity as he did when using the phrase previously. When the Jewish temple guards hear him say this they drew back and fell on the ground. Although the temple guards may have fallen on the ground because they heard Jesus say "I AM," that would not have shocked the Roman soldiers. But the soldiers were probably stunned that the person whom they thought they might have to hunt down would just stand up and readily confront them boldly. So Jesus asks them again whom they seek and they again reply Jesus of Nazareth. This time Jesus replies: "I told you I AM. If you are looking for me let these other men go." At this point, Jesus appears to be concerned for the safety of the disciples because he is obviously offering to be taken away by the officials and soldiers. Previously when people attempted to stone Jesus for claiming he was God, Jesus would quietly slip away because it was not the right time "hora" set by God for the completion of his work, but now it was the right time and Jesus freely and willingly allowed them to take him.

At this point, all the gospel accounts record that one of the disciples near Jesus took out a sword (probably a small dagger) and thrust it at one of the guards, cutting off his ear. Only John records that it was Peter who wielded the dagger and names the guard as Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus rebukes Peter even though he has shown him great loyalty even though his action was foolish. It also showed that he still failed to recognize, even though Jesus has said it several times, that he must be handed over to those who would hang him on a cross to die. John's account makes it a point to show that Jesus willingly allowed himself to be taken captive, not that he was captured by force. This also fulfilled the prophesy of Isaiah (53:7) that Messiah's enemies would lead him as a lamb to the slaughter.

Verses 12 – 27. Now Jesus is bound, even though he is not resisting arrest, and taken to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas who is the high priest that year. John is the only writer to record that Jesus was taken first to Annas before he was taken to Caiaphas. And he tells us that it was Caiaphas who had advised the Sanhedrin that it would be good if one man died for the people. Of course, when he said that he did not understand the real truth of his statement and how Jesus' death really was for all people and not just the "good" of the Jewish nation so they could maintain peace with Rome. It appears that Caiaphas and Annas lived in the same building since John doesn't record him being taken to another house to be questioned by Caiaphas. That Caiaphas was high priest that year doesn't mean a different person served as high priest every year. The official record of the individuals who served as high priest from 6 AD to 36 AD are as follows. Annas served from 6 to 15 AD when he was deposed by the Roman procurator. Ishmael, the son of Annas, served for one year, 15 to 16 AD. Eleazar, the son of Annas, served for one year, 16 to 17 D. Simon, another son of Annas, served for one year, 17 to 18 AD. Caiaphas served from 18 to 36 AD so he was the high priest during all of Jesus' earthly ministry. He is also the one who tries Peter and John in Acts 4:6 after Jesus has ascended back to his Father in heaven. Even though Caiaphas was the official high priest, Annas, as patriarch of the family, was still considered by most to be the true high priest and thus held much power behind the scenes.

Although the other gospel writers say that all the disciples fled from the garden, John records that Peter and another disciple followed as Jesus was taken to the house of Annas. John notes that because this other disciple was known to the high priest (and thus to his servants) he was allowed to enter the courtyard while Peter was made to wait at the door. Traditionally, scholars have believed this "other disciple" to be John, the author of this gospel, but, because the "other disciple" has some kind of relationship with the high priest to be known by him, some recent scholars question that a fisherman from Galilee could have such a relationship. But John's mother (Salome) was a sister of Jesus' mother (Mary) and thus would have been equally related to Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, who was a priest and the father of John the Baptizer. So it would not be inconceivable

that John's father, as the owner of a prosperous fishing business and related to a priest, would not have had a relationship with the high priestly family and thus John would have been recognized by the servants.

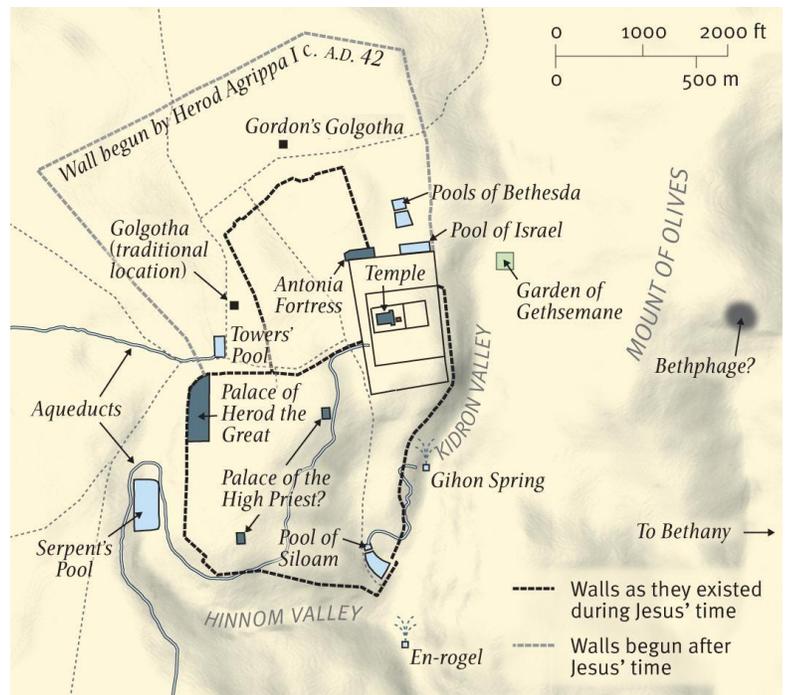
But the other disciple came back to the door and, after speaking to the servant girl on duty, brought Peter into the courtyard. The servant girl must have recognized John as one of Jesus' followers because she asked Peter if he was a follower also. Peter denies that he is, which is the first of his three denials. It was cold so the officials and servants stood around a fire to keep warm and Peter stood with them.

Now John shifts to telling us what happens inside of the house which mean either he was allowed to enter the house or Jesus revealed what was said during the 40 days he spent with the disciples after his resurrection. Since none of the other disciples tell about Annas' questioning, it would seem that Jesus didn't tell the events to all the disciples and that would mean John was in the room at the time. When the high priest (Annas) questions Jesus about his disciples and his teaching, Jesus replies that he has taught openly in synagogues and the temple area and has said nothing in secret so Annas should ask those who heard him because they know what he said. One of the officials (guards of the high priest), when he heard Jesus say this, struck Jesus on the face and asked if that was any way to answer the high priest. Jesus replies that if he has said anything wrong the man should tell him and questions why he should strike him for telling the truth. Annas then says to take Jesus to Caiaphas (he must have been in another part of the high priest's residence), but John doesn't tell us about Caiaphas' questioning.

Now John shifts back to what was happening in the courtyard while the previous was happening inside the house. While Peter is warming himself near the fire, someone asks "surely you are not another of his disciples?" Again Peter denies it which is the second of his three denials. Immediately another servant who was a relative of Malchus (the man whom Peter had cut off his ear) says he thinks he saw Peter with Jesus in the olive grove. When Peter denies this (his third denial), a rooster crows.

Verses 28 – 40. Why John doesn't tell us about Jesus being questioned by Caiaphas and being sent to Herod to be questioned is not known. Perhaps he just didn't feel it was necessary since the other gospel writers had covered it and it wasn't needed to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, as his purpose statement says (John 20:30-31). But John gives us much more information about Jesus' trial before Pilate and the questions and answers between Pilate, Jesus, and the Jewish people present (Sanhedrin, priests, and common people).

John says "they," the Jewish religious leaders, took Jesus to the "praetorium" which is the Roman term for the headquarters of the commanding officer of a military camp or the military governor of an area. Pilate was like a military governor for the area of Judea. Tacitus, who was a senator and historian of the Roman Empire, identifies Pilate as the "procurator" of Judea and that he had his normal headquarters in the city of Caesarea. But, during times like feasts when there would be a lot of people present, he would go to Jerusalem so his presence with Roman troops would discourage any disturbances. While staying in Jerusalem, Pilate would have stayed at the Fortress of Antonia, located on the north side of the temple mount. Some scholars say they think Pilate was staying at the palace that Herod kept in Jerusalem, but since Herod was in town, it is unlikely that Pilate would be staying with Herod.



John says the time was early (*proia*). This could be a reference to the Roman night watch that began at 3 a.m. and ended at 6 a.m. Roman officials usually began their “official” business day at sunrise which at this time of the year would have been at 6 a.m. It is highly unlikely that Pilate would have allowed a delegation of Jews to interrupt his night, and the Jews would have known this, so it was probably right after 6 a.m. When they arrived at the Fortress of Antonia to present Jesus, they accused him of criminal activity which we later learn is that he claimed to be the Son of God. Since it was Passover Day, they Jews couldn’t enter any house that was not Jewish or they would be unclean and unable to participate in the Passover Feast. So Pilate came out into an open area to receive them and discover what they wanted. He asks them what charges they bring against the one whom they have bound and brought before him. The religious leaders say that he is a criminal or they wouldn’t have brought him to Pilate. Pilate wants them to judge him by their own laws but they object because they have no right to execute “crucify” anyone. By Roman decree only the Romans could crucify someone. The Jews obviously could stone someone to death because that is what they intended to do to the woman caught in adultery and that is what they did to Stephen just a short time later. So the Jews were seeking to have Jesus crucified, perhaps because, according to the Mosaic Law, anyone hung on a tree was under the curse of God (Deut 21:22-23). Crucifixion was how Jesus predicted he would die and not by stoning. (John 12:32-33)

Pilate goes inside his palace and has Jesus brought to him. He asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews so the Jews may have already told Pilate that was one of their charges against Jesus or else Pilate has heard that the people were saying that since Jesus had entered the city four days previously. Jesus asks Pilate if that is his own idea or did others tell him that. Pilate responds that he is not a Jew, indicating that Jewish matters are of no concern to him (as long as it didn’t affect the Roman peace).. He indicates it was the Jewish people and chief priests who handed Jesus over to him and he wants to know what Jesus has done. Jesus replies that his kingdom is not of this world or else his followers would fight to prevent his arrest. This implies that his kingship is not something that would threaten the rule of Rome. So Pilate declares that Jesus is a king. Jesus agrees that he is a king and says for that reason he was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth will listen to him. Pilate was not really interested in truth or he would have listened to what Jesus had to say, but instead he asks what truth is. Then he goes out to speak with the Jews and says he finds no basis for the charge against but since it is the custom to release a prisoner at the Passover would they want him to release the King of the Jews. They shout for him to give them Barabbas, and individual known to have taken part in a rebellion and also known to be a murderer. The other gospel accounts tell us that they shouted for Pilate to crucify Jesus and that Pilate told them Jesus’ blood would be on them. In this act, Pilate shows that he is not really concerned with true justice but only what was expedient to keep from having an uprising begin. His decision would not have been favorably received by Caesar since he was releasing a known revolutionary and murderer.

## Chapter 19

Verses 1 – 16. After Pilate turned Jesus over to his soldiers to be flogged, they made a “crown” of thorns and pushed it on his head. Then they clothed him in a purple robe, mocked him as the King of the Jews, and struck him in the face. Scholars explain that the Romans had three degrees of flogging. The lightest was called *fustigatio* and was a light whipping of people to make them change their actions (like a hooligan). The next was called *flagellatio* and was more a more severe beating for people guilty of more serious crimes. The last was called *verberatio* and was the most severe beating of people that were going to be crucified. Apparently, Jesus was flogged by one of the first two types since he was brought out before the people to show that Pilate had punished him. Pilate again tried to get the Jews to agree that Jesus should be released now that he had been punished, but the Jews only cried for his crucifixion. Pilate knows that the Jews don’t have any “right” to crucify anyone so he derisively tells them to crucify him themselves because he finds no basis for the charge against him. The Jews respond that according to their law Jesus must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.

Pilate is afraid because of the vehemence of the people so he takes Jesus back in his palace and asks him where he comes from. When Jesus doesn’t give him any answer, Pilate asks if Jesus knows that he has the power to

free or crucify him. Now Jesus responds that Pilate would not have any power over him if it had not been given to him from above. Therefore the one who handed him over to Pilate was guilty of a greater sin. That “one” is Caiaphas who, as the high priest, had sentenced Jesus to death for blasphemy. Pilate continues to try to set Jesus free but the people keep shouting for his crucifixion and accuse Pilate of not being a friend of Caesar if he frees someone who claims to be a king. That is a threat to “tattle” to Caesar and make life difficult for Pilate if he doesn’t do what they want. So Pilate goes out and sits on the judgment seat, presents Jesus before the people, and announces here is your king. Again the people shout for his crucifixion. Pilate asks if he shall crucify their king and the people reply that they have no king but Caesar. So Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified. John says this happened about the sixth hour and this would seem to be a conflict with the account of Mark who says Jesus was crucified at the third hour and both Matthew and Mark who write that as Jesus hung on the cross it became dark like night from the sixth to ninth hours. By the common practice, the third hour would be 9 a.m. and the sixth to ninth hours would be noon to 3 p.m. Some scholars maintain that an individual copying John’s manuscript miscopied the letter gamma (straight line on the left with a bar on the top), which was used to indicate three, with a similar mark, (a straight line on the left with a bar on the top and with an additional bar slightly below the top bar) which was used to indicate six. This could possibly be the case or it could be that John was using some other system of designating time that was used by the people to whom he was writing. Scholars don’t really know which, but both Matthew and Mark use the same and their timing would agree with Pilate beginning his day and receiving delegations at 6 a.m.

Verses 17 – 27. John doesn’t tell us, but since Jesus has now been condemned to die by crucifixion, the Roman practice would be for the soldiers to flog him by the most severe beating to weaken his body before they actually nailed him to the cross. Another practice of the Romans was to make the condemned carry the cross beam on which they would be nailed on a parade anyone through the streets of the city with a sign going before them announcing their crime as a warning to others what would happen to them for doing the same thing. Along with Jesus, two other prisoners were to be crucified, so they made Jesus carry his cross beam and for the sign to go before him Pilate ordered it to say “Jesus the Nazarean the King of the Jews.” It upset the Jews for the sign to proclaim that Jesus was the King of the Jews but Pilate declares that is what it will say. The sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek so everyone would be able to read it.

John doesn’t describe the trip through the streets to Golgotha, also known as The Place of the Skull, but says that is where they crucified him between the two others. The soldiers stripped the clothes off of Jesus and divided them in four shares. But his undergarment was woven in one piece so they cast lots to see who would get it. This fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. John records that Jesus’ mother, Mary, along with her sister (Salome, John’s mother), Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary of Magdala were present at the crucifixion. Of course they weren’t right at the foot (base) of the cross because the Roman soldiers kept everyone away so no one could help or try to rescue the one being crucified. Also, it made the agony of the victim and that of their relatives and friends greater. Only Luke, of the gospel writers, does not list women at the crucifixion. Matthew and Mark list three, although Mark says more were present, and John lists four. Matthew lists Mary Magdalene (of Magdala), Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons (Matt 27:56). Mark lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses (Joseph), and Salome. By comparing these lists combined with the following: Jesus’ half-brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (Matt 13:55); Salome was the mother of John and James (both younger than Jesus and thus James may be younger than Jesus’ half-brother James); one of the apostles was known as James, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18) and scholars think Clopas was another way of referring to Alphaeus; we can put together the following identities of the women who were at the crucifixion. Mary, Jesus’ mother, who was also the mother of James and Joses (the younger); Mary of Magdala also known as the Magdalene; Salome, the mother of John and James; and Mary the wife of Clopas, the mother of Alphaeus.

John tells us that from the cross Jesus indicated to his mother and John that John should now be in the place of the eldest son taking care of his mother since his father was dead. Since John is Jesus’ cousin and a believer, he was the appropriate person to be given this responsibility. It may also indicate that Jesus’ half-brothers didn’t become believers and followers until after his resurrection. James, in fact, becomes the leader of the believers

in Jerusalem and Jude (Judas) writes a letter later on identifying himself as a follower of Jesus and brother of James.

Verses 28 – 37. John does not mention that it became dark like night during the height of the day (noon) like the other gospel writers did (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23-44-45). He also did not include Jesus' cry: "*Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani*" (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me) or Jesus' conversation with the one thief who believed in Jesus, telling him he would be in Paradise with him that day. Why he chose not to include these among all he told is up for debate by scholars. John does tell us that, when Jesus knew that all of the things of prophecy that needed to happen had been fulfilled, he said "I am thirsty." So the soldiers took a sponge, soaked it in vinegar (sour wine) that was present, and lifted it up to his lips on a stalk of hyssop. Since the vinegar was readily available, it must have been customary to offer it to crucifixion victims. Some scholars see a connection between the soldiers using a hyssop branch to the fact that hyssop was used to smear the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the door frame of the obedient people in Egypt before the death angel came that night. The connection being that Jesus is the sacrificial lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world by the shedding of his blood and protects believers from death just like the blood of the sacrificial lamb in Egypt protected the believing people in Egypt from death. The sour wine wouldn't ease Jesus' suffering but it would allow his parched, dehydrated throat to clearly speak his final words. Having a sip of sour wine didn't negate his statement during the last Passover supper that he would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom comes. The reason it is not negated is because he has now fulfilled all of prophecy pointing to his death and establishing the kingdom of God on earth and the kingdom is now established. And immediately after taking the sip of sour wine he said "*tetelestai*" (it is finished) confirming that everything was completed and the kingdom established. And immediately he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John doesn't include what he or other witnesses must have told Luke – that Jesus said: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46) All four gospel accounts show that Jesus voluntarily, and in harmony with the Father's will, gave up his life and that no one took it from him. Remember, as the Creator of everything in the universe by simply speaking it into existence, he could have spoken a word to remove himself from the cross and heal his body. But if he had done that, then he would not have been willingly following the Father's will; payment for sin would not have been made; and all of God's promises (prophecies) would have been false.

John informs us that Jesus' death occurred on a day when the Jews prepared for the coming Sabbath. They didn't just prepare for a special Sabbath that would occur in conjunction with a feast or fast, but every Friday they had to prepare for the Sabbath that would begin at sunset that day because they could do no work on the Sabbath. So, this indicates Jesus' death was on a Friday. Normally, Romans left people hanging on a cross until they died, even if it took several days. But they could, if they had some reason, break the victim's legs so they couldn't push up and get a breath. This would cause the victim to die quickly of suffocation. For a Jew to hang on a tree (cross) mean he was cursed by God and for a Jew to remain on a cross on the Sabbath would have defiled the entire land. This would have caused the people to riot, so the Romans broke the legs of the two thieves so they would die quickly and could be removed from the cross before sunset. But when the soldiers were going to break Jesus' legs, they recognized that he was already dead. The proof of this was the soldier plunging his spear into Jesus' side and having blood and water flow from the hole. This indicates Jesus really was human which the Gnostics of John's day were claiming was not true. John says this action by the soldiers fulfilled two prophecies – that "not one of his bones will be broken" (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Psalm 34:20) and that "they will look on the one they have pierced" (Zech 12:10).

Verses 38 – 42. All of the gospel accounts mention Jesus being buried in the unused tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but only John mentions that he was a "secret disciple" of Jesus because he feared the Jews. And only John mentions that Nicodemus, who had come to talk with Jesus late one evening, accompanied Joseph. Since Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and Joseph had to be a wealthy, prominent individual, it may indicate that Joseph was also a member of the Sanhedrin. Joseph had requested from Pilate to be allowed to take Jesus' body and bury it. That was not the normal Roman procedure. They would take the bodies of crucifixion victims (if they did not allow them to rot on their cross) and put them in a cemetery for criminals outside of the city. And they wouldn't let family members have access to the body which was humiliating.

Since Pilate allowed Joseph and Nicodemus have Jesus' body and prepare it for burial would indicate he considered it a way to humiliate the Jewish leaders and, perhaps, repay them for putting him in the position of crucifying an individual he could find no reason to crucify.

John tell us that they quickly prepared Jesus' body before sunset and laid it in Joseph's unused tomb which was near to the place of crucifixion (Golgotha). John says they wrapped the body in "strips of linen cloth." There is considerable differences of opinions about whether this was a long strip, like the Shroud of Turin, or many smaller strips that would have to be wrapped around the body from side to side. Since Joseph and Nicodemus openly took Jesus' body, it would no longer be possible for either of them to be "secret disciples" any longer and Nicodemus would not have been allowed to be a member of the Sanhedrin in the future.

John doesn't mention that some women also went to the tomb on Friday before sunset as the other gospel writers did (Matt 27:61-66; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56). He also doesn't mention a stone being rolled over the tomb entrance (Matt 27:60; Mark 15:46) or that Pilate was requested to put his seal on the tomb and place Romans soldiers there to guard it so no one would be able to steal the body (Matt 27:62-66). When we wonder why he didn't mention these things, we have to remember that John is not trying to give a complete account of everything that Jesus said or did, but only what he thought would be enough so that his readers would believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and by believing have life (spiritual, eternal) in his name. (John 20:31)

## **Chapter 20**

Verses 1 – 9. Now John skips over all the waiting, crying and discussions that the disciples must have had during the Sabbath and the night preceding sunrise on the first day of the week when the women could return and finish preparing Jesus' body. John doesn't mention the earthquake that occurred as the women went to the tomb and which caused the stone to roll away from the entrance and the Roman soldiers to "faint" like dead men. (Matt 28:2-4) He also doesn't mention that two angels appeared to the women as they arrived at the tomb or the women's reactions. (Matt 28:5-8; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:4-8) John only mentions Mary of Magdala and that she ran back to the house where the disciples were staying to tell them that someone has taken the body and they don't know where it has been placed. Here, John doesn't even refer to himself as the disciple that Jesus loved or the beloved disciple, but only the other disciple. When the disciples heard Mary's report, "the other disciple" (John) and Peter begin running to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. John outruns Peter and arrives at the tomb first but only looks in without entering the tomb. He says he saw the strips of linen. After Peter arrives and enters the tomb, John also enters and they look at the linen cloths and John sees a cloth that had been placed around Jesus' head lying separately and neatly folded or rolled. Then John says that he believed but doesn't indicate whether that meant he believed Jesus was alive or simply that Jesus' body was not there. He does say that they (the disciples) still didn't understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. If someone had stolen Jesus' body as is sometimes claimed, they would have had to overcome the Roman soldiers or disable them as well as roll the heavy stone from the entrance and then grab the body. It is highly unlikely they would have taken the time to remove the burial cloths and especially fold the face cloth, since the Roman soldiers might have regained strength or a replacement set of Roman guards might have come and captured them.

Verses 10 – 18. According to John, even though the disciples went back to the house, Mary stayed outside the tomb crying, which means she had ran back to the tomb with Peter and John. When she bent over and looked into the tomb she saw two angels seated at the head and foot of where Jesus had been laid, and they asked her why she was crying. She replied that they (someone) had taken her Lord's body and she didn't know where they have put him. Then, as she turns around from looking in the tomb, she sees a man standing nearby and doesn't recognize that it is Jesus. Jesus asks her why she is crying and for whom she is looking. Mary thinks Jesus is a gardener so she asks that is he has carried the body away, would he please tell her where he put him. When Jesus speaks her name, Mary recognizes it is Jesus and calls him "Rabboni" which means "Teacher." She must have moved forward to embrace him in some way (like grabbing ahold of his feet) because Jesus says, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father."

There is some debate among scholars as to why Jesus told Mary not to hold on to him. Some say it was because he wanted her to go tell the disciples that he was alive. Others think it indicates that now the disciples should not have physical contact with him as they had while he was living among them. Other think it means that the disciples should not hold on to him as their “Teacher” like they had when he walked with them. Others think it means Jesus had to ascend to God and then would return for his later appearances to the disciples, but they don’t know why. The most probable reason for his need to ascend to the Father before staying any longer with the disciples was that he needed to present his blood in the heavenly temple and sprinkle it on the mercy seat as the atonement for sin. This would complete what the sacrificial system had foretold since it was first begun when the tabernacle had first been built in the wilderness.

Then Jesus tells Mary to go and tell the disciples that he is alive and that he is “returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” This statement indicates that the disciples’ relationship with God had now changed from simply followers and worshippers to family members. God is now their Father just as he is Jesus’ Father. Mary immediately goes to the disciples and tells them what she has seen (Jesus alive) and the words that he had told her (they were now members of God’s family). The fact that a woman is the first to see Jesus and be a witness to the fact that he had risen from the dead is significant because Jews did not recognize the witness of a woman. Only the witness of a man was accepted. But here, it is a woman who gives the first witness and that gives authenticity to the account.

Verses 19 – 23. John doesn’t tell us about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus meeting Jesus (Luke 24:13-32) but he does say that on the evening of the first day of the week (Sunday) the disciples were together in a room with the doors locked because they feared what the Jews might do. Suddenly Jesus appeared among them and said, “Peace be with you.” That probably mean he gave the typical one word greeting “Shalom.” Jesus was not just wishing that the disciples would not be afraid, but that he was imparting the fullness of God’s blessing on them. Then Jesus shows them his hands, feet and side so they can see the crucifixion marks and believe that he is not just an apparition or spirit (ghost). This causes the disciples to be overjoyed because Jesus has obviously risen from death. Although his resurrected body still bore the marks of his crucifixion, he was now recognizable (unlike after his flogging) and he possessed spiritual abilities that went beyond the physical and allowed him to appear in their midst without entering through physical doors.

Again Jesus says “Shalom” and then tells them that he is sending them as the Father has sent him. That means they are being sent into the rest of the world to tell people about God’s love and that Jesus has fulfilled what God had promised beginning in Genesis 3 about crushing Satan’s head. That message means everyone can once again have a right relationship with God like Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden. And right after Jesus said he was sending them, he breathed on them and gave them the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is what John wrote about in chapter 7:38-39 when Jesus says streams of living water will flow from believers. Then Jesus tells the disciples that if they forgive the sins of anyone that they will be forgiven. This could be a specific gift given to the first disciples and not something that is something that every believer can or should expect to do. And even for those disciples, it is God who really forgives the person’s sin and not the disciple. The disciple is only the vehicle for the forgiveness, especially as they lead a person to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing have new spiritual life in him. It seems more likely that what Jesus means here is that, when a disciple tells someone about Jesus and what he did for mankind and that person believes, then the disciple can proclaim to the person that his sins are forgiven. But if the person doesn’t believe what they have been told, then the disciple can proclaim that their sin remains with them.

Verses 24 – 31. John tells us that one of the original twelve disciples was not present when Jesus first appeared to the other disciples on the evening of the resurrection. He doesn’t say where Thomas (or Didymus) was or why he wasn’t present, only that he wasn’t and consequently, when told by the others that Jesus was risen he said he wouldn’t believe unless he could see the nail prints and put his hand into Jesus’ side. John records that Jesus appeared to all the disciples, including Thomas, one week after his first appearance to them. So, the next Sunday evening, when they were all together with the doors locked, Jesus appeared suddenly in their midst like he had the previous Sunday. Again, Jesus tells them “Shalom,” then he invites Thomas to put his finger on the

nail holes and his hand into his side. And he tells Thomas to stop doubting and believe. Jesus telling Thomas to do exactly what he said he needed to do to believe indicates that Jesus again had the omniscience that he had before he gave up his power and glory to be born as a man. John doesn't tell us that Thomas actually touched Jesus but only that he said: "My Lord and my God." His statement shows he accepted Jesus as his Master but also that he believed Jesus was God in the flesh when he walked with the disciples. Jesus' reply to Thomas' statement can be translated from the Greek as either a question or a statement and there is no indication which would be more probable. But either way, Jesus continues to say that those who have not had the opportunity to see like the disciples have seen and yet believe are blessed.

John then tells us that Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples which he hasn't recorded in his writing. But that the things he chose were written so that his readers and hearers may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and that by believing they may have life (new spiritual life as he told Nicodemus) in Jesus' name. This is John's purpose statement for why he wrote this account, but it isn't the last that he has to tell us.

## Chapter 21

Verses 1 – 14. This resurrection appearance to the disciple is only recorded by John. It would have happened sometime during the 32 days after he appeared to them including Thomas eight days after his resurrection. According to Luke in Acts 1:3, Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days after his resurrection. No one tells us how many times he appeared to them during that time or what he taught them during those experiences except for this one event and John says it was the third time Jesus had appeared to them (21:14).

Peter and other disciples who probably had experience fishing like Peter, James, and John, decided to go fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). After casting nets and trying to catch fish all night and having no success, the morning came. They saw Jesus on the shore but didn't recognize him. Jesus called out to them as "Friends" and asked, "Haven't you any fish?" When they answered "No," he told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat and they would find some. The disciples do what he said and were unable to haul the net in because there were so many fish in it. At this point, the disciple whom Jesus loved (John) recognizes that the person was Jesus and says so. It could be that John remembered when Jesus had first called them from fishing and that in that event Jesus had also told them where to put out their nets and that they would catch fish. Peter hears John's comment and immediately wraps his outer garment around him, climbs over the edge of the boat, jumps into the water and heads for the shore. John does not say Peter walked upon the water as Matthew records in a previous event (Matt 14:29). So, since they were only about 200 cubits (100 yards or 300 feet) from the shore, it would appear that Peter swam and walked to the shore. While Peter was doing this, the other disciples rowed the boat and towed the full net to shore. As they approached the shore they saw a fire (coals) and smelled bread and fish (singular) cooking on the coals. Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish (plural) they have caught, so Peter climbs aboard and helps them drag the net ashore. When they counted the fish in the net they found 153, but the net was not torn. Jesus tells them to come and have breakfast and gave them some bread and fish to eat. Recalling that Jesus had feed a multitude using only bread and fish (6:1-15), and that Peter had denied Jesus while warming himself at a fire of coals (18:17-18), we can see that Jesus is setting the stage to teach a lesson or lessons to the disciples, and specifically Peter.

Verses 15 – 25. When they have finished eating, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him more than these. John doesn't clearly identify who or what "these" are. It could be the fish and the occupation of fishing or it could be the other disciples. John also doesn't make it clear whether he is asking if Peter loved Jesus more than those things or more than the other disciples did. The point of the question doesn't seem to be either of these, but what is the type (depth) of love Peter has for Jesus. Remember that Peter had claimed that even if all the other disciples deserted Jesus, he would not but would give his life for him (Matt 26:33; mark 14:29; Luke 22:33, John 13:37). We see that Jesus had more in mind than just Peter's feelings for him, because the Greek word Jesus used when asking if he loved him was a form of *agapao* (sacrificial – the highest form of love). When Peter responds that he loves him, Peter uses a form of the Greek word *phileo* (brotherly love). Then Jesus tells him, "Feed my

lambs.” Again Jesus asks if Peter loves (*agapao*) him and Peter responds that he loves (*phileo*) him. Jesus tells him, “Shepherd my sheep.” And for the third time Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, but this time Jesus uses a form of the Greek (*phileo*). This grieves Peter that Jesus has asked him if he loves him a third time and exclaims that Jesus knows all things so he knows he loves him, but Peter still uses a form of *phileo*. This final time, Jesus tells Peter to “Feed my sheep.” It is possible that this three-fold question of Peter’s love was meant as forgiveness for the three denials Peter had made. It also shows that love for Jesus’ flock (believers) is a prerequisite for teaching and leading them. Jesus is indicating what Peter’s future ministry was to be. It consisted of acts of love to teach and lead believers. It was not necessarily the laying on of hands to install him to a specific office, like Chief Apostle or Pope. The other disciples and believers did see Peter as a leader, especially in the early Church, but not the final authority. We know this because Paul opposed Peter when he acted inappropriately toward some Gentile believers in Galatians 2:11-14, and also because James was recognized as the leader of the Jews in Jerusalem when the elders met with Paul in Acts 15.

After the final statement to Peter to “feed my sheep,” Jesus gave a prediction (prophecy) concerning the kind of death which Peter would experience. In Peter’s youth he was free to take care of himself and go where he wanted, but when he was old, Peter would stretch out his hands (like on a cross) and someone else would dress (undress) him and lead him where he did not want to go (to his death). By the time that John wrote this, Peter had been crucified and John says Jesus’ statement showed the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then John says Jesus told Peter, “Follow me.” When Jesus says that, Peter turns and sees John was following them (apparently as they walked). John identifies that he means the same one who leaned back on Jesus at the last supper to ask who was going to betray him. So Peter asks Jesus, “What about him?” John doesn’t tell us specifically what Peter’s question was about. But he records that Jesus replied that if he wanted him to remain alive until he returned as he had said during the last supper, what business was that of Peter’s. Peter’s only concern should be to follow Jesus. His chief aim and that of all shepherds of Jesus’ flock should be to follow Jesus and by showing such love (as mentioned in chapter 14 and 15). John does record that because of Jesus’ statement a rumor spread that he would not die and he denies that is what Jesus meant. John is old by this time and sees his death approaching. The final words John records Jesus saying to his disciples was about his return in the future.

John ends his writing by proclaiming that he is the disciple that saw these things and wrote them down and thus his testimony is true (eyewitness). Then he again says Jesus did many other things and remarks that if all of them were written down that he doesn’t think the whole world would have room for the books that would be written.