

The Bible Notebook

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

That you may know Him

(John 20:31)

Volume 4

Chapters 10-12

By

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DEDICATION

To

Dr. Paul Brown

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*My mother thought you were a good role model
for her son when he was called to preach the Gospel
(She was a wise woman!)*

*What a joy is to share memories of our friends
from Sledge, Mississippi!*

Why I Love John, Chapter Ten

For years, as I studied, wrote, and re-wrote verse by verse studies on one book of the Bible after another, I held one book in the back of my mind, promising myself that if the Lord gave me the time and the Holy Spirit led in that direction, I would one day write a verse by verse study on the Gospel According to John. We call it the Gospel of John, but in reality it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ According to John. Over the years, when someone asked, “What is your favorite book of the Bible?”, I probably said, “Whatever I am working on at the time.” I might have mentioned Romans, First John, Luke, Revelation, Genesis, Joshua, Isaiah, or Jeremiah. However, without a doubt, the one I am always drawn back to is The Gospel According to John. If I had to give one reason, I might quote John 3:16, but there is more to it than that.

In **Chapter One**, there is the Prologue, in which we find a statement about Jesus that destroys all cults, all false religions, and heresies, as well as atheism and agnosticism. Yes, this Gospel has been around two thousand years and we still have cults, false religions, heresies, atheism and agnosticism, but their demise has been assured, as has the reward of all who embrace them. John begins this Gospel with the words, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were created by Him, and without Him was not anything created that was created” (KJV). The first chapter proclaims Jesus to be life, light, Savior, the Lamb of God, the Messiah.

In **Chapter Two**, Jesus, through **the First Sign**, declares Himself to be the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. In **Chapter Three**, we read: “For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life” (my paraphrase). In **Chapter Four**, He says to the woman at the well in Samaria, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life”(John 4:13-14, HCSB). Also, in **Chapter Four**, we have **the Second Sign**, the healing of an official’s son from a distance.

In **Chapter Five**, we find **the Third Sign**, the healing of a man who had been sick for 38 years (on the Sabbath), as well His declaration about His relationship with His Father. He also offers witnesses who support His claim to be the Son of God. In **Chapter Six**, He feeds five thousand men, plus women and children with a child’s lunch (**the Fourth Sign**). That evening His disciples were caught in a violent storm in the middle of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus came to them, walking on the water (**the Fifth Sign**). The next day, He declared, “**I am the bread of life**” (bold added by this writer).

In **Chapter Seven**, Jesus went to the Temple privately, but in the middle of the Festival of Tabernacles, He stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him” (7:37-38). Without saying it in so many words, He is saying that He is water of life. He continues to make statements that support the great claims set forth in the Prologue.

In **Chapter Eight**, Jesus masterfully deals with a crowd bent on trapping him by forcefully dragging into His presence a woman caught in the act of adultery. When the scribes and Pharisees sought to paint Him into a corner from which there was no escape, He brilliantly put the ball back in their court. When they gave up and left, He dismissed the woman with an order for her to “Go, and from now on do not sin any more” (8:11).

In **Chapter Nine**, Jesus gives **the sixth sign**, the healing of a man born blind, after He had dealt with the question: whose sins caused his blindness, his or his parents’? The Jewish religious authorities were enraged that Jesus made a paste of spittle and placed on the eyes of the blind man on the Sabbath Day. They questioned the man about the One who had healed him and “He answered, **‘Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see.’**” (9:25, bold added by this writer). Wow! What a testimony.

Now we come to **Chapter Ten**. I have looked forward to Chapter Ten for months as I worked on earlier chapters in this study of John’s Gospel. Volume I covers Chapters 1-3; Volume II, Chapters 4-6; and Volume III, Chapters 7-9. Volume IV focuses on Chapters 10 - 12. Chapter 10, to me, is very special for a number of reasons. First, Jesus makes two unforgettable “I AM” statements in this passage. Second, this chapter reveals that Jesus fulfills the hopes and promises of Psalm 23. Third, Jesus offers assurance of eternal security to every single person to whom He gives eternal life, whether they understand it or not (whether they believe it or not!). The Savior never announces anywhere that He will grant temporary life to anyone who believes in Him.

Dr. Mike Minnix, Editor of PastorLife.Com for the Georgia Baptist Convention, lists almost all of my studies under “Commentaries”, but as I have pointed out in other volumes, I have placed all these studies in what I call **The Bible Notebook**. A few volumes are documented formally as commentaries, but many of the more than 40 volumes are not formally documented with chapter notes, end notes, and bibliography. Instead, I identify the source at the end of a quote. For example, I will list the New American Commentary and note that it was published by the B&H Publishing Group, found now in The Bible Navigator, an electronic library created by the Technology Division of LifeWay Christian Resources under the guidance of Vice President Tim Vineyard. After that, I simply use the abbreviation, NAC, to indicate the New American Commentary. That way when you are reading it you can identify the source without having to leave the screen or the site to go elsewhere to find the source of the quote. I might add that it was my privilege as a member of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources at the time, to vote to create the Technology Division and name Tim Vineyard as the Vice President over that division. His competence, dedication, and unique gifts have more than justified our confidence in him. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the **Holman Christian Standard Bible** (HCSB). At the time I rotated off the board of trustees for LifeWay I was chairman of the Broadman and Holman Committee, which was responsible for the publication of the new translation.

One reason I have prepared these many volumes in this format and designated the studies as **The Bible Notebook** (my Bible Notebook) is that each needs more work, and when I go back over any of them I see a lot of improvements I would like to make. Years ago, Dr. Charles Williams told a group

of his students, “There is no such thing as good writing, there is only re-writing.” I appreciate that more all the time. Nevertheless, as I am make these studies available, it is my prayer that others will take them, study them, and improve on them for their own use.

Note of Appreciation

No serious book is written in a vacuum. As there are many factors that must come together to produce a result, there are many factors that must come together to produce a Bible study like this one. First, I can do nothing apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Then there are the resources one normally uses in writing any Bible study. After that, one’s family must make certain sacrifices, and at one time that involved sons, John and Mark, but today my wife Rebecca (Becky) is the one who must put up with all of this. Encouragement comes from my brothers James and Mike, and my sister Linda, as well as lay individuals who say the right things to encourage me (friends Bill Pace, Julia Bain, and Helen Craig, and other friends, as well as current and former church members).

Encouragement from other ministers is always appreciated, and I would never try to list them (I forgot my wife’s name one time!). However, recent words of encouragement and criticism have come from respected friends, including Brother Charles Roberts, Dr. Gene Jeffries, Dr. William R. Cooper, Dr. Leon Hyatt, Dr. Paul Brown, Dr. Connie Ward, and Dr. Lonnie Wascom; Dr. Mike Holloway, and my brother-in-law, Jimmy Furr. In addition to encouragement, General Dutch Shoffner (retired three star) has edited materials and converted my work into a format that is needed for the PastorLife.Com web site. Dr. Minnix, Editor of PastorLife, has been a consistent source of help and encouragement. For these and so many others, I praise the Lord.

The True Shepherd

10:1 - I ASSURE YOU. *“I assure you: Anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the door but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber.”* Rendered , “Verily, verily” in the KJV, this attention-getter is used often in this Gospel. **“The formula never begins anything quite new, but connects what follows with what precedes.** This discourse grows out of the assumption of the Pharisees to be the only authoritative guides of the people (9:24, 29). *They have already been described as blind and sinful’ [Vincent’s Word Studies, Vol. 2, The Gospel of John, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library, Parsons Technology, after this VINCENT, bold added by this writer].*

As noted in the introduction, the tenth chapter of John is one of my favorite chapters in the entire Bible. Jesus begins this chapter with the now familiar phrase designed both to capture the attention of the listener and to connect that which came before with that which follows. He uses an allegory to communicate His next message to His audience. We are familiar with the numerous parables Jesus used, but we need to understand the difference between a parable and an allegory. In an allegory each

item has a corresponding significance, or point; in a parable the story produces one important message. Each detail in a parable may not have an equivalent signification. Most of the elements in this allegory can be readily assigned a corresponding antitype. One commentary explains that

“The good Shepherd is Christ, the sheep are the believers, the sheepfold is Judaism, the doorkeeper is God, and the stranger is a false Christ. But what is **the door into the sheepfold**? It would seem that the door is the “Messiahship” — i.e., the office of the Messiah. Only one person could qualify for entering into that position. Jesus was the one. Since he was the true Messiah, God the Father opened the door to him. He had the legitimate access into the sheepfold of Judaism. Anyone else who tried to enter that fold had to do so by some other means, for no one else was qualified to be the Christ” [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, NT, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library - after this, NCWB, bold added by this writer].

For the modern reader, I would stress that Jesus is the door to the sheepfold. I believe that will become clear as we observe the difference between the communal sheep pen and the individual sheepfold.

THE SHEEP PEN. Vincent points out that this is literally, “fold of the sheep” and stresses that Jesus, in this passage, presents “the two ideas of *the flock and the fold* are treated distinctly. Compare v. 16” [VINCENT]. This is not the same as the distinction between the feed lot and a pasture today. One was a communal sheepfold and the other was the individual’s own flock. We need to keep in mind the difference in this chapter. We also need to bear in mind that verses 1-5 describe “a morning shepherding scene. A **shepherd enters through a gate into a walled enclosure which has several flocks in one sheep pen**. The enclosure, with stone walls, is guarded at night by a doorkeeper to prevent thieves and beasts of prey from entering. Anyone who would climb the wall would do it for no good purpose” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library, Parsons Technology - after this, BKC, bold in the original].

Jesus had just healed a blind man on the Sabbath Day, which led to a major confrontation between the man and the Jewish religious authorities who were not at all impressed that a man who had been born

blind could now see. All they could see was that Jesus had made a paste and spread it over his eyes on the Sabbath day. This led to another confrontation with the religious authorities, who insisted that they were the true teachers of the Law, the true followers of Moses. The question had been raised: who is the true shepherd of the Chosen People, the Pharisees and Sadducees or Jesus?

Early on (7:1ff), Jesus traveled only in Galilee for a period of time to avoid another confrontation with the Jewish leaders, but then when His time came (7:6ff) He went to Jerusalem where He remained quiet until midway through the Festival of Tabernacles when He began teaching the people. He had avoided any intensification in the conflict with the Pharisees until His time came. Now, He fearlessly challenges them: “Anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the door but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber.” The Jewish authorities zealously assumed the position of shepherds of the flock of God, but Jesus here declares that He is the only true Shepherd of the people, and they were thieves and robbers. He came to die for the sins of the world, and a statement like this in the face of these religious zealots would incite them to plot his murder.

BY THE DOOR. The idea here is that every morning each shepherd would leave his home and walk down a well traveled road or path to the sheep pen, a secure pen with rock walls, with a guard at the door. All other shepherds, and probably most neighbors, would recognize each the legitimate shepherd as he walked directly to the door of the sheep pen. Those who heard Jesus speak would picture the scene.

Jesus made a statement that the people of His day would understand. It was a scene played out before the people every day. During the Old West, a man might be accused of re-working the brand of a steer. If he was found guilty he would probably hang. But how could they prove his guilt? Someone could skin the steer and check the inside of the skin. The original brand would be clear from the inside. This was common knowledge, according to the late Louis L’Amour, who often added historical notes to his short stories. What Jesus says here was something with which these people could identify.

My great grandmother heard a noise in her hen house late one night and she took her shotgun and slipped outside in time to see two men running out of her hen house with chickens under their arms. She cut down on them with her shotgun, but had no idea what effect the shot had until she heard later that the next morning two men failed to show up for work on a railroad construction gang. They had to visit the local doctor. Good farmers are keenly aware of signs that a thief has broken into their barn, and they would certainly check on anyone who climbed over a fence without permission.

I once bought an English Shepherd from a man who told me to pull into his yard and park, “but stay in your car.” My brother-in-law, who was with me, and I complied, but watched the dogs. The man squatted down near the car and talked a few minutes while two English Shepherd dogs looked us over until they were satisfied that we were no threat. Then the man said, “You can get out now.” As we talked about his dogs, he pointed to a pasture across the road from his house and then to a gate about one hundred yards from his driveway. He said, “If anyone parks near that gate those dogs will be there inside the fence before they can get out of the car and they will guard that gate.” We can be

sure shepherds knew thieves and robbers when they saw them. Has Jesus just called the Pharisees thieves and robbers?

SOME OTHER WAY. Contrast here, the door and “some other way.” This difference is significant, “because, in the previous discourses, Jesus has laid great stress on the source from which He proceeded, and has made the difference in character between Himself and His opposers turn upon difference of *origin*. See 8:23, 42, 44. In the latter part of this chapter He brings out the same thought (vv. 30, 32, 33, 36)” [VINCENT].

A THIEF AND A ROBBER. One’s approach to the sheep pen would signal to anyone living in an area whether or not he was one of the shepherds who kept his flock in sheep pen, which, as already noted, was an enclosure, with stone walls, “guarded at night by a doorkeeper to prevent thieves and beasts of prey from entering. Anyone who would climb the wall would do it for no good purpose” [Bible Knowledge Commentary, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library - after this, BKC]. Today, surveillance cameras may pick up any number of people waking by a store, but experts can look at the monitor and pick out one who looks suspicious, one who is “checking out” the business. Of course, the very act of breaking into the building may also be caught on tape.

My brother-in-law received a call in the middle of the night a number of years ago from the police department. Someone had broken into his store. He was told, “Don’t worry, we have caught the burglar.” When he arrived on the scene, he could see what they meant. The thief had broken through the roof and gotten himself hopelessly entangled in wires, rafters, and other materials. In addition, his leg had broken through a place in the ceiling and he was trapped. All he could do was wait for someone to rescue him. No investigation was needed. The clever thief, a regular customer, had looked the store over and noted all the cameras, or so he thought. He assumed he had figured out a way to beat the system. Thieves often think they are smarter than law abiding citizens, business owners, and the police.

If there had ever been any doubt about the determination of the religious leaders to have Jesus put to death, this challenge would cause them to intensify their efforts. **In the name of God they would murder the Son of God.** In the name of Abraham they would kill the One who had said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” In the name of Moses they would crucify the One of whom Moses prophesied. In defense of the Sabbath they would destroy the Lord of the Sabbath. In the name of their religion they would kill the One who fulfilled every aspect of the sacrificial system. Of course, church leaders would never do anything like that, right? There was a time when people who professed to serve God would condemn others to death for worshiping God differently. In the Middle Ages, a church leader had Richard Hunne arrested and thrown into jail, and then he sent two religious leaders to his cell to murder him. What was Hunne’s crime? He owned a copy of the Bible in English, and read it in his shop to people who wanted to hear it. Hunne’s life was brutally ended, but that Bible continued to be used by his descendants, one of whom contributed stories to Foxe for *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*. A great grandson would bring that Bible to America, where it was on display a few years ago in Houston, according to Dr. William R. Cooper of England.

10:2 - THE SHEPHERD. *“The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”* As the shepherds approached the sheep pen, they all recognized each other as a shepherd of one of the flocks inclosed in the sheep pen, and the gatekeeper knew them all. In fact, the entire village probably knew them and saw the same shepherds walking to and from the sheep pen each day. The shepherd, walking right up to the door, would raise no suspicions. Remember that Jesus is drawing an undeniable contrast between Himself and the religious authorities of the Jews. We can be sure the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and rabbis understood the comparison.

10:3 - THE DOOR KEEPER. *“The doorkeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”* Remember that we are looking at an agricultural Co-Op, or communal sheep pen in this allegory. The true shepherd walks directly up to the door and the doorkeeper, recognizing him, opens the door and the shepherd calls out his own sheep by name and they moved to the gate so he can lead them out to graze. He identifies his sheep by name, but they follow him because they recognize his voice. A false shepherd might call them by name, but they would run from him (10:5). The author of the material in the NAC makes an interesting application here:

“To know the name of God was thought by the ancients to be a way of controlling one’s relationship with God (cf. Exod 3:13–14). So ancient people wore amulets with the name of their gods inscribed or etched on them. But God’s response to Moses’ question in Exodus 3 meant that it was not humanity’s role to know the personal specifications of God. Mortals merely needed to know that God is or will be, depending on how one interprets the “I am” statement of God in Exodus. But knowing the nature of God is God’s prerogative alone. The Johannine message, however, is that the logos has made him known (John 1:18)” [NAC].

Robertson points out that there is no article with shepherd, so literally, it is, “a shepherd to the sheep.” The shepherd leads his sheep into the sheep pen at night and the next morning he leads them out through the door. He never comes in any other way. The root meaning of the word shepherd is to protect, but I have often stressed in preaching from Psalm 23 that the true shepherd provides three things for his sheep: relation, protection and provisions. In fact, the relationship demands protection and provisions. Jesus applies the term shepherd to Himself in 10:16, as He implies it here.

“It is used of Christ in 1Pe 2:25; Heb 13:20. Paul applies it to ministers in Eph 4:11. Jesus uses the verb *poimainô*, to shepherd, to Peter (John 21:16) and Peter uses it to other preachers (1Pe 5:2) and Paul uses it for bishops (elders) in Acts 20:28. Our word pastor is simply Latin for shepherd. Christ is drawing a sharp contrast after the conduct of the Pharisees towards the blind man between himself and them” [A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources, created by Vice President Tim Vineyard and his staff - after this, ATR].

10:4 - HE GOES AHEAD. *“When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice.”* Those familiar with Israel tell us that a shepherd will call out to his sheep, often in a high voice or cry, and the sheep recognize his voice and follow him. Sheep in Israel were trained to follow the shepherd, whose voice they could distinguish from all others.

We are getting a lot of mixed signals from many who profess to be shepherds of the Lord’s flock today. Repeatedly, during the 2008 presidential race, clips were shown on television and on the Internet of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, under whose preaching one presidential candidate sat for over twenty years. That pastor consistently made radical statements in which he denigrated America and allegedly took God’s name in vain from the pulpit. Two of the most popular preachers in America openly state in interviews that they do not mention sin or its consequences because they just want everyone to feel good. This writer listened to a fellow minister tell about a choir in Texas that had planned a trip to California. They were scheduled to sing at a very popular church, but before they left someone from that church called and wanted a list of the songs they would be singing. He said, “We don’t want to hear anything about the blood or anything else that’s gory, that might offend these people out here.” The blood of Christ would offend their church members?!

FOLLOW HIM. Jesus made a statement that would resonate with the people of the region, especially those who kept sheep or knew shepherds. The shepherd called out to his own sheep and his own sheep followed him “because they recognize his voice.” I have owned English Shepherds and Border Collies for over thirty years. Both breeds look their owner in the eye when he is with them. Bear, my last English Shepherd, was always anxious to ride in my truck or golf cart. He would stay in the back of the golf cart unless I stopped and began working in the yard, and if I did not get back into the golf cart in a few minutes Bear headed back to the carport. The Border Collie, Abigail’s Beaux (my granddaughter Abigail spells it “Bo”), rides only on the seat by me. When I go out through the carport he is on his feet looking at me. If I have on a coat and tie, Beaux heads around to the gate, knowing there is a good chance I am going to fasten him in the back yard. If I have on casual or work clothes he watches me and if I get into the golf cart, he stands beside it, anxiously looking at his spot on the front seat. When I say, “Come on”, Beaux springs onto the seat. When I stop to work he lies across the seat and watches me, unless he decides to herd a bumblebee, bird, of anything else that moves.

I have demonstrated Beaux’s obedience to a number of people, usually to children. I will say, “Beaux, come”, and he comes to me. I will then give commands, and he obeys each one: Beaux, sit. Beaux, shake; Beaux, lie down; Beaux, roll over; Beaux, stay.” He obeys each order, but being a Border Collie, sometimes he anticipates a command and after sitting, he lies down and then rolls over, then looks up to see what comes next. I like to demonstrate his obedience to children. He loves people and they can play with him as long as they like. At times a child will say, “Beaux, sit!” Beaux ignores them as if they were not there. They try other commands, but he looks toward me, or just looks past them. When they ask me to do it again, he obeys me. He is so intelligent and so determined to please me that I have to be careful when I give a command. I realized that when I called to him from the golf cart, “Beaux, come.” He went to the right side and jumped onto the seat.

I tried over and over to get him to come to me, but he always went to the right side of the golf cart. When I was not in the golf cart I could give him the same command and he obeyed. I realized that I was confusing him, and after that if I was in the golf cart I would say, “Beaux, here” and he came to the driver’s side. He obeyed me, but he did not obey others. Why? We gave the same commands, but responded only to me. He does not have to be looking at me to respond when I speak. He knows my voice and obeys me. Beaux has the Border Collie’s instinct for herding and I know he would have been a good sheep or cattle dog.

10:5 - NEVER FOLLOW A STRANGER. *“They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t recognize the voice of strangers.”* Those in America who have seen shepherds working sheep with dogs cannot fully appreciate the relationship that existed between a shepherd and his sheep in Bible times. In this passage, the shepherd is pictured as having a personal relationship with his own sheep, and the sheep are portrayed as recognizing the shepherd’s voice and responding as trained. The author of the two volumes on the Gospel According to John in the *New American Commentary*, provides us with his own observations:

“Having taught in Israel, two illustrations have become seared in my memory concerning eastern shepherds and their sheep. Of the two pictures, one is that of a shepherd leading his sheep through the city of Jerusalem just outside the Jaffa Gate. Cars were whizzing by while the shepherd sang and gently whistled to his sheep, and they dutifully followed him despite all of the bustling traffic nearby. The other picture is that of an early morning with the Bedouins when the shepherds began to lead their sheep out of the sheepfold, which contained the combined flocks of four shepherds. As each shepherd took his turn and began to sing and call his sheep, they dutifully separated from the larger flock and began to follow him to the hills for their daylight feeding (cf. 10:3–4). Such contemporary pictures of the intimate relationship between shepherd and sheep can provide us with the framework of thinking about the great shepherd texts of the Bible: the beloved shepherd psalm (Ps 23), the parable of the lost sheep (Matt 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7), the compassion statements of Jesus (Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34), the Old Testament texts likening God to a shepherd (Jer 23; Ezek 34;), and particularly here in this fascinating shepherd mashal” [NAC].

In America, children may name a pet pig or a favorite calf, but a cattleman does not name all his steers. Dogs and horses are commonly named, but “The concept of naming was extremely important to the biblical writers because names were declarations of the nature of living creatures. When Adam named the creatures and even Eve, he identified each one’s nature (Gen 2:18–23). Moreover, changes in names such as from Abram to Abraham and from Jacob to Israel were identifications of changes in the nature or the circumstances of a person (cf. Gen 17:4–7; 32:26–30).

It would be a glorious thing if all who profess to be Christian recognized the voice of the our Shepherd and followed Him. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if they would follow only Him? Instead, church members often move from church to church, looking for a church that offers something better for their children, never considering the fact that if they were willing to get involved they could

provide the same program for their own church. Many move because another church gets excited when they call a new pastor and they urge others to come to hear him. Of course, others leave because they don't like what their pastor says. They go to church wanting to feel good about themselves, not to be confronted with their sin!

10:6 - JESUS GAVE. *“Jesus gave them this illustration, but they did not understand what He was telling them.”* To the modern reader who has studied this passage, the meaning may seem clear, but those people simply “didn’t get it.” The illustration Jesus used seems clear to us, *“But this spiritual lesson was missed by those who heard Jesus, even though they certainly understood the local shepherd/sheep relationship. In their blindness, they could not see Jesus as the Lord who is the Shepherd (cf. Ps. 23)”* [BKC]. That some who heard Jesus may not have understood the meaning of the illustration is consistent with the response of many of the people to whom He spoke. That the religious leaders would not understand Him is a testimony to deplorable spiritual condition these Jewish authorities had created and continued to perpetuate. No wonder the prince of this world thought he might tempt Jesus to veer off course. He had been very successful with the religious leaders up until now.

The Good Shepherd

10:7 - JESUS SAID AGAIN. *“So Jesus said again, “I assure you: I am the door of the sheep.”* In verses 1-6, Jesus presents the allegory about a shepherd who goes to the door of the sheep pen, and when the doorkeeper opens the gate, calls his own sheep by name and leads them out to graze, in contrast to the thief who breaks in some other way. At this point there is an obvious change in focus, which has led various Bible scholars in different directions. For example, one author writes, *“After presenting the allegory, Jesus first expanded on the meaning of the door of the sheep (10:7-10) and then on ‘the shepherd of the sheep’ (10:11-18). As the door of the sheep, he was the One uniquely qualified to fulfill the role of Messiah”* [NCWB]. Robertson says He repeated the allegory, with more detail. Yet another writes, *“Having pointed his finger at Jesus’ opponents, John shifted the image to the second double amen (“I tell you the truth”) announcement of Jesus. This time the focus was placed upon the gate or door of the sheepfold”* [NAC].

For many years I have taken a different approach, which is not a radical departure from what others

have written, but one that makes sense to me. I have no idea when I came to this conclusion, but I was pleased to see the Bible Knowledge Commentary more or less agrees.

Here is my interpretation. In 10:1-6, Jesus gives an allegory that focuses on a communal, or Co-Operative sheep pen, into which several shepherds would lead their flocks, leaving them under the protection of the doorkeeper or gatekeeper. A modern parallel is the farmers' Co-Op. In 10:7, Jesus is not trying to amplify that allegory. Instead, He turns to an individual shepherd who takes his sheep from the communal sheep pen and leads them out into the fields to graze. When evening comes, instead of leading his sheep some distance back to the communal sheep pen, he leads them to some favorite cave, makeshift stable, or nook in the side of a hill. This is his private sheep pen where he provides protection for his sheep for the night, the time when there is greatest danger to the sheep.

Let's picture it like this. His sheep have grazed (in green pastures, Ps. 23) all day, so he leads them to a quiet stream (still waters) where they drink all the water they want before he leads them on to his chosen place where the sheep can bed down, and where he can get a good night's sleep. The natural pen is closed in, except for the opening through which the shepherd leads his sheep. When the sheep lie down, the shepherd prepares a simple meal, and then after checking on his flock, lies down in the entrance. If the entrance is wider than the shepherd's height, he stacks boulders on the sides to close it in to a space he can fill when he can lie down, and when he does so, he becomes the door to the sheep.

No sheep can escape without going over the shepherd. No thief can enter to steal or harm one of his sheep without first overpowering the shepherd. Now, can you see where Jesus is going with this? If you follow Jesus, He is your Shepherd, He is the door to the sheep, and as such your security is in Him. You are as secure as Jesus. That is exactly what he says in 10:28.

10:8 - ALL WHO CAME BEFORE. *"All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them."* Some say "All who came before Me" refers to false Christs (NCWB] while others expand it to include not only false Messiahs, but also self-appointed prophets and religious leaders who made havoc of the flock. Those false prophets were the thieves and robbers, not the prophets and sincere teachers of old (see Jer. 5:31 where Yahweh declares that the prophets prophesy falsely) . These thieves and robbers stand in contrast to Jesus (John 10:1). "There had been numerous such impostors already (Josephus, Ant. XVIII. i. 6; War II. viii. I) and Jesus will predict many more (Mat 24:23). They keep on coming, these wolves in sheep's clothing (Mat 7:15) who grow rich by fooling the credulous sheep" [ATR].

Still others believe Jesus is referring to *"those leaders of the nation who cared not for the spiritual good of the people but only for themselves"* [BKC]. While it is conceivable that false prophets sought to control the sheep, they may not have represented themselves as the Messiah. Whatever the case may have been, "the sheep did not listen to them." The sheep that belong to the true Shepherd do not listen to thieves and robbers.

They only listen to the voice of their true Shepherd. That means that those who follow after false prophets or false prophets today do not really know the Shepherd.

10:9 - I AM THE DOOR. *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.”* He has already stated, in verse 7, that He is the door, and while it can be distracting if one repeats himself too often when he is writing, repetition under the circumstances was often necessary when Jesus was speaking to the people. Jesus is not a door, He is **the** door. It is popular in the national media and in politics today (and a growing number of people who profess to be Christians) to insist that there are many paths to God, or many ways to heaven, but the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus is the only way to be saved from sin and its eternal consequences (Acts 4:12).

IF ANYONE ENTERS BY ME. This is the condition of third class: he may, or he may not. Robertson adds that “with ean and second aorist active subjunctive of eiserchomai. Note proleptic and emphatic position of di’ emou. **One can call this narrow intolerance, if he will, but it is the narrowness of truth.** If Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth for our salvation, he is the only way. He had already said it in John 5:23. He will say it again more sharply in John 14:6” [ATR, bold added by this writer]. Jesus is speaking the truth, the religious leaders who are already plotting to kill Him are enraged by what He says. Jesus, the true Shepherd, opens the door to all who are willing to follow Him (John 7:17), whereas thieves and robbers lead the sheep to their destruction.

HE WILL BE SAVED. He uses the “future passive of sôzô, the great word for salvation, from sôs, safe and sound. The sheep that comes into the fold through Jesus as the door will be safe from thieves and robbers for one thing” [ATR]. Anyone who wants His salvation may go to the Father through the Son and he will receive it. He “shall be saved - he shall have his sins blotted out, his soul purified, and himself preserved unto eternal life. This the scribes and Pharisees could neither promise nor impart” [Adam Clarke's Commentary, the Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, TN - after this, CLARKE].

COME IN AND GO OUT. Since Jesus is the door, His sheep are completely safe, now and for ever. They can go in and out freely. *“The statement shall go in and out comes from an OT expression describing ‘the free activity of daily life’” (Dods)—i.e., the freedom to come and go as one pleases (see Deut. 28:6; Ps. 121:8; Jer. 37:4). In short, the Shepherd would provide his sheep with freedom” [NCWB].* Jesus may have had in mind what Moses was inspired to write in Numbers 27:16-17: *“May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the community who will go out before them and come back in before them, and who will bring them out and bring them in, so that the Lord's community won't be like sheep*

without a shepherd.”

FIND PASTURE. The sheep of Jesus flock are under His constant protection. Sheltered in the shadow of His vigilant care, His sheep may go about their daily routine without fear (go in and come out). That is, they may tend to their responsibilities to God and to one another under His care. We may glean from this that His sheep enjoy both their Shepherd’s protection and His provisions. They will always (future indicative) find pasture, or have their needs met. “The shepherd leads the sheep to pasture, but this phrase pictures the joy of the sheep in the pasture provided by the shepherd” [ATR]. As the door, *Jesus the Shepherd of His flock, “provides security for His flock from enemies (whoever enters through Me will be saved, or ‘kept safe’). He also provides for their daily needs (the sheep come in and go out, and find pasture)”* [BKC, bold in original].

10:10 - A THIEF. “A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.” A thief comes into a home or business to “steal and to kill and to destroy.” His primary purpose is to steal, but he is prepared to kill and destroy in order to accomplish the theft. The thief of whom Jesus spoke would break into the sheep pen to steel sheep, but if the shepherd got in the way he would kill him and destroy anything that got in his way.

“The use of a triad such as ‘steal and kill [better ‘slaughter’] and destroy’ (10:10) is a typical biblical way of emphasizing either positive or negative qualities. Paul frequently thought in triads (e.g., faith, love, hope of 1 Thess 1:3; turn, serve, wait of 1:9–10; spirit, mind, body of 5:23; hearts, passions, mind of Rom 1:24, 26, 28). So also apparently did Jesus use triads (e.g., way, truth, life of John 14:6; cf. ask, seek, knock of Matt 7:7). **The mind quite naturally places lists of ideas into triads**, and any teacher who understands the mind realizes the power of triadic thinking. Here the triad sets the context of the powerful nature of the evil opponents of Jesus who threaten the security of the flock” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

It is often hard for the law abiding citizen to appreciate just how ready some thieves are to kill and destroy. My friend Wayne Whiteside has for many years visits condemned criminals on death row in prison in Texas, and he is expanding this ministry not to include other states. He knows that when I was a student at Mississippi College I led a mission trip to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson for two and one-half years, and that I also preached at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman every Sunday morning at 8:00 before going to preach at the church where I served as a student pastor. It was my privilege to preach to and talk with some really tough men, I saw a few men who had committed murder go to the Father through Jesus. Two men often come to mind. They were saved in the maximum security section of the Hinds County Jail, and I had the opportunity to preach to them and talk with them at Parchman.

Wayne Whiteside sent articles to me about “Spider” Gonzoles, who had killed his first person when

he was thirteen years old. He was released from prison at 21, and within weeks he had killed someone else. That conviction was overturned when his attorneys appealed on the basis that some of the testimony against him was racist in nature. The man was recently in court to try to have his latest conviction overturned, and when his wife was on the stand he went into such a violent rage that they had to postpone the hearing. He cursed his wife and threatened to kill her. Wayne Whiteside tells me “Spider” has cursed him many times. He says there are many men on death row who want to die, and “Gonzales heads the pack.”

I HAVE COME. Jesus, in contrast to the thief, says “I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance.” As opposed to the thief who came to kill and destroy, Jesus came to provide abundant (eternal) life to all who believe in Him.

10:11 - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”* We often speak of people as well as material things as being good. There are things that are good in a generic sense, and other things that are good in that they serve the purpose for which they were made. One car may be called good in contrast to another that is called a “lemon”, but the word here has a deeper meaning. Literally, it is “I am the good shepherd” (egô eimi ho poimên ho kalos). There is a repetition of the article: “the shepherd the good one.” This “Takes up the metaphor of verses John 10:2... Philo calls his good shepherd agathos, but kalos calls attention to **the beauty in character and service** like ‘good stewards’ (1Pe 4:10), ‘a good minister of Christ Jesus’ (1Ti 4:6). Often both adjectives appear together in the ancient Greek as once in the New Testament (Luke 8:15). ‘Beauty is as beauty does.’ That is kalos” [ATR, bold added by this writer].

When Jesus uses repetition we should pay attention. In speaking to His disciples He would want to be sure they remembered what He said. The beauty of it is that, whether they remembered or not, the Holy Spirit inspired John to write this Gospel so all believers might read it and learn from it. In this passage He demonstrated His love in that He laid down His soul for the sheep.

“Four times in this passage Jesus indicated that he would lay down his life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17, and 18). Jesus was, of course, alluding to his substitutionary death, in which he would sacrifice his soul, his life (psuche - in Gk.) so that the sheep might enjoy the abundant, divine life (zo-e in Gk.). Isaiah 53:10 says the Messiah would offer “his soul a sacrifice for sins.” What a difference between the good Shepherd and the thief and the hireling! The thief steals, slaughters, and destroys, and the hireling depicts those Jewish leaders who took their office for self-gain. In the OT these hirelings were severely reprovved by God (e.g., see Ezek. 34, where “the

shepherds of Israel' are rebuked for abusing their office). The leaders of Israel had not shepherded Israel properly prior to the captivity; thus, many of the Jews became like scattered sheep having no shepherd (again see Ezek. 34)" [NCWB].

Jesus has announced that He is the door to the sheep. Now He states that he is the Good Shepherd. All true believers are His sheep and anyone who would attack His sheep must first defeat Jesus. His sheep are as secure as He is. No one can destroy me until he first destroys my Shepherd.

LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE. Jesus came to lay down His life for the sheep. His death on the cross was not the result of circumstances that overcame Him. He came to die for the sins of the world, that all who believe in Him might have eternal life. No one has ever stated that more clearly than John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in this Gospel: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

10:12 - THE HIRED MAN. *"The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and doesn't own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them."* The hired man was a man employed by the owner of the flock to guard the sheep. He had nothing invested in the sheep, so when he sees a wolf coming he flees and leaves the sheep to the mercy of the wolf. The wolf "snatches and scatters" the sheep.

If the hired man was a thief or robber coming "to steal and to kill and to destroy" (vs. 10), he would not be inclined to risk his life for the owner's sheep. There might have been exceptions, but generally speaking, he would not lay down his life for sheep that belonged to someone else. By contrast, "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (vs. 11).

There are business owners today who tell their employees not to risk their lives to protect his money or merchandise. He does not expect them to risk their lives for his property. In stories of the Old West, a period in the history of America which lasted less than half of one century, a cowboy "rode for the brand." Stories are still being written about that time when even the youngest cowboy prided himself in "ridin' for the brand", and no doubt there were many who would stand by his boss against anyone who threatened to "cut the heard" or rustle the cattle. Armed with a rifle instead of a sling, those cowboys would also have been more willing to try to protect the flock against a wolf, bear or cougar. If the hired man here discovered that a wolf was approaching the sheep, especially at night, he would think first of his own safety.

Jesus is using pictures with which those people could identify, but He has in mind something far more dangerous than a four legged wolf. Israel had seen its share of two legged wolves who slipped into the flock to snatch away some of the sheep and scattered the rest of them. "Israel had many false prophets, selfish kings, and imitation messiahs. The flock of God suffered constantly from their abuse

(Jer. 10:21-22; 12:10; Zech. 11:4-17)” [BKC]. There is a shocking statement from the Lord in Jeremiah that captures the treachery of a wolf among the Lord’s sheep:

“For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is gaining profit unjustly. From prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. **They have treated My people’s brokenness superficially**, claiming: Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:13-14, bold added by this writer).

We can be sure all the wolves that would attack the Lord’s sheep did not become extinct in the First Century. There is a clip on one web site that shows a black man in Islamic garb challenging his audience to show him any place in the Bible where Jesus claims to be the Son of God. He went on to asked them to look at the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus prayed, “Forgive us our sins....” He was telling them that Jesus was not the Son of God, and that He had to ask forgiveness for sin. People were cheering him! In the first place, Jesus absolutely does declare Himself to be the Son of God throughout the Gospels. See again the Prologue to this Gospel. In the second place, it is not the Lord’s Prayer, but the Model Prayer. Jesus is not praying, He is teaching His followers how to pray. Turn to John 17 and you will see a prayer Jesus prays.

Some wolves attack openly and viciously. Others are much more subtle, preferring to slip into sheepfold in sheepskin. This is when they can be the most satanic because the wolf is always most deceptive when he comes wearing the sheepskin. Some today are preaching well prepared sermons and delivering them masterfully, but they do not preach about sin or its consequences. They state that they don’t preach about repentance because they want people to feel good. They are treating the brokenness of God’s people superficially! There is nothing new in this. Vance Havner was distressed in his day by those who sought to reach the people through what he called a dog and pony show. Some attack without mercy. One church was in revival and the deacons came to the pastor on Monday night and told him he was fired! The evangelist didn’t know whether to show up the next night or not. All the wolves are not outsiders. Jeremiah records the shocking words of the Lord about the false prophets of his day:

“Among the prophets of Samaria I saw something disgusting: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. Among the prophets of Jerusalem also I saw a horrible thing: They commit adultery and walk in lies. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, and none turns his back on evil. They are all like Sodom to Me; Jerusalem’s residents are like Gomorrah” (Jer. 23:13-14).

“I did not send these prophets, yet they ran [with a message]. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied” (Jer 23:21 (HCSB)).

Dr. Henry Morris, the founder of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), is a hydrologist who became convinced that the available evidence today supports

special creation. Among the many books he has authored are, *THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR MODERN SCIENCE*, and *THE REMARKABLE RECORD OF JOB*, but there are many more. The late Dr. Jan Mercer, who guided my study of the Creation vs evolution issue for a quarter of a century, was convinced that Henry Morris had one of the top five minds in America. He has written numerous devotional articles for ICR publications, including the following one entitled, *The Good Shepherd*, based on Psalm 23 and John 10 (*Days of Praise*, ICR, July 17, 2009):

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (*Psalm 23:1*). The 23rd Psalm is perhaps the best-loved chapter in the Bible, with its beautiful picture of Christ as the Shepherd. This chapter finds its New Testament exposition in John 10:1-30, where Christ identifies Himself as "the good shepherd" who "giveth his life for the sheep" (*John 10:11*).

“These two chapters (*Psalm 23; John 10*) are probably the two greatest chapters in the Bible on the security of the believer in Christ. This theme seems woven by divine inspiration into the very structure of the passages. For example, there are six verses in the poetic structure of the psalm, each containing a different testimony concerning the providing and protecting Shepherd. In similar fashion, there are six times the word ‘shepherd’ is used in John 10, each referring again to the work of our Good Shepherd. There are also six references in the other books of the New Testament where Christ is referred to as a shepherd.

“The intensely personal aspect of the 23rd Psalm is evidenced by David’s use of the first person pronouns (‘I,’ ‘me,’ ‘my,’ etc.) no less than 17 times in its six verses, all expressing his absolute trust in the Lord. Similarly, the word ‘sheep’ is used 17 times in John 10, with the grand theme again stressing the security of the sheep. This number ‘17’ repeatedly seems to crop up in Bible passages related to our security in the Lord. As one example, the famous passage ending the eighth chapter of Romans lists exactly 17 things that can never ‘separate us from the love of God’ (*Romans 8:35-39*).

“In any case, this marvelous psalm of security concludes (as it began) with a great promise and testimony, which can be paraphrased as follows: ‘Surely |Christ’s| goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me as long as I live, and then I will dwell in God’s great heavenly family through all the ages of eternity!’”
[HMM, bold added by this writer].

10:13 - A HIRED MAN. *“[This happens] because he is a hired man and doesn’t care about the sheep.”* The hired man cares first about his job, not the sheep. This is not to imply that all hired people do not care about their employer’s business, but when a serious threat arose, the hired man abandoned the sheep because they were not his sheep.

10:14 - I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. *“I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me...”* Are you beginning to get the message? He intends for you to get it! David was inspired to write the best known psalm the world has ever known. I have preached from the Twenty Third Psalm scores of times, taking either the entire Psalm or a few words for my text, depending upon the circumstances. The following sermon is from a Fathers Day sermon I preached a few years ago, less a part of the introduction. I have also used bold print to highlighted parts that are not bold in the original sermon (found on the PastorLife.Com web site).

MY SHEPHERD, MY FATHER

TEXT: Psalm 23

INTRODUCTION. (Most of the Introduction deleted here) A faithful father must offer three things to his children: (1) relationship, (2) protection, and (3) provisions. God clearly meets those three obligations in the mind and heart of David, the shepherd King.

There is another point that I would like for us to keep in mind. Man did not simply assign attributes of an earthly father to his concept of God in order to explain Him to his children. God is the model, the standard, and the inspiration for the earthly father.

Even though no earthly father can measure up to our Heavenly Father, He is still the model for all earthly fathers.

I. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT, Ps. 23:1.

A. The LORD Is My Shepherd, 23:1a.

1). First, consider the word **“the”**. If I remember my grammar lessons the word “the” is a definite article. We are not dealing with some generic god here. We are

looking at THE Lord, the one true God. David wanted people to know that his Shepherd was the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. He was not talking about Baal, Dagon, or Allah. The One to whom he owed allegiance was the God of Creation, the God of Adam and Eve. This is the God of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the God of the Exodus, the God who met Moses on the holy mountain, the God of the Ten Commandments, the God of the Covenant. He was the God of the Conquest, the God of history, the God of the Psalms.

David's Shepherd was not simply a God, He was THE God. Francis Schaeffer wrote a book, THE GOD WHO IS THERE, in which the former agnostic makes the case for the existence of the one true God. He followed that book with another one, HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT, in which he shows that God the Creator reveals Himself to the one creature created in His image. He reveals Himself in nature, but He reveals Himself more forcefully in and through His Word. For example, he spoke these words to Moses:

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **Thou shalt have no other gods before me.... for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Ex 20:2-6, KJV).

Paul was inspired to write some powerful words in Romans about those who witness evidence of God's existence and decide to worship some false god of their own making rather than the one true God. He writes:

“For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since **what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them.** From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse. **For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude.** Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. **Claiming to be wise, they became fools** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles” (Rom. 1:18-23, HCSB).

David was certainly no fool when we wrote, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 14:1, KJV). Nor was a fool when he recognized one, and only one,

God as His Shepherd.

2) When the word **“LORD”** is found in all caps, there is a special significance associated with it. There are three primary words used for the Creator in the Old Testament. The first is Elohim, a general name for God which stresses His power (He had the power to create the world exactly as He says He did in Genesis. The second word is Adonai, a word which denotes sovereignty. He has the sovereign right to reign over all He created. The third word is special, it is the covenant name for God. Most student of the Word believe the name to have been pronounced Yahweh. The name is unique because it can apply to no other than the God of Abraham, Moses, and David. It is the name the Lord gave Moses at the burning bush. This word for God is actually a verb, “I AM”. When the word Adonai is translated into English it is Lord (Capital “L” and lower case “ord”). When Yahweh is translated into English it is rendered LORD (all caps). When you see that you know you are looking at the covenant name for God, the most holy name, meaning, I am that which I am; I was that which I was; and I will be that which I will be.

Listen to the words God spoke to Moses on a later visit when he gave the Ten Commandments for a second time:

“The Lord came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed [His] name **Yahweh**. Then the Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed: **Yahweh—Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God,** slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand [generations] , forgiving wrongdoing, rebellion, and sin. But He will not leave [the guilty] unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers’ wrongdoing on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation” (Ex 34:5-7, HCSB).

David used the covenant name for God in Psalm 23, along with the definite article. David’s Shepherd is the one and only God, Who can never be confused with pagan gods, the gods of the New Age movements, or the gods of gold, silver, brass, stone, or wood.

3) The word **“my”** makes this very personal. He is **“my”** LORD. He is **my** God. He is **my** Shepherd. He is **my** Father. In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to pray **“Our** Father.” In so praying, we settle the relationship between ourselves and our Lord, just as we settle the relationship between ourselves and all other believers.

Somewhere a number of years ago I read about two ministers who took a vacation in the Highlands of Scotland, where they walked daily among the hills and alongside bubbling brooks. One day, they encountered a young boy who was tending the

family's small flock of sheep. They shared their faith with the lad, using the Twenty-third Psalm to draw a parallel between the Good Shepherd and the boy's work with his sheep. They prayed with him, believing that he understood.

The following year they returned to the area and again walked those same hills each day, all the time looking for the shepherd boy. Toward the end of their vacation they stopped by a cottage to ask for a drink of water, and as they visited with the lady of the house, one of them told her about meeting a young lad the year before who was tending his sheep. When they described the boy the lady exclaimed, "That was my son!" She went on to tell that he failed to come home one day and when they searched for him they found that he had fallen over a precipice and had apparently lived only a short while after the fall. They expressed their sympathy. The mother said, "I would like to ask you a question. When they found his body the ring finger of his left hand was held tightly in his right hand. Do you have any idea what that could mean?"

The visiting ministers smiled and one said, "Yes, we know. You see, that's the 'my' finger. We told him about Jesus and asked him to pray, asking Jesus to forgive his sins and come into his heart. We asked him to hold up the fingers of his left hand and touching each, and beginning with the thumb say THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD. We asked, if you are really trusting Jesus to be your Good Shepherd, take hold of the 'my' finger. Your son died holding onto the 'my' finger."

4) The Lord is my "**Shepherd**". No one who read the Shepherd's Psalm in David's day had to ask what the duties of the shepherd were. No one had to ask what kind of person it took to make a good shepherd. No one had to ask about the courage or commitment of a good shepherd. They all knew. The shepherd was like the cowboy of the Old West. His was a rugged life, not for the faint of heart. David was, even as a young boy, a model shepherd. He led his sheep to green grass and good water. His presence assured them. He provided for them. He protected them against all enemies, killing both a bear and a lion that threatened his father's sheep. He knew the commitment required and he had the courage to do whatever it takes to protect and provide for the sheep.

The good shepherd offers three things: (1) He offers a personal relationship (John 10); (2) He offers his protection; and (3) He offers the provisions the sheep need. David did those things for his sheep, and meditated upon the many ways in which his Shepherd did those things for him.

In the NT, Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd. Let Him tell us about it in His own words: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11, (HCSB). Jesus offers a personal relationship, He offers us His protection, and He offers His provisions. How do we become a part of his fold?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved (Rom. 10:13).

B. I Shall not want, 23:1b.

1) I shall not want for a relationship. David provided everything his sheep needed, including the security and peace of knowing him as well as a sheep can know a shepherd. David had a personal relationship with the Shepherd of his life. Everything he did for his father's sheep his Heavenly Father did for him. That and much more.

2) I shall not want for protection. David fought and killed both a lion and a bear when he was still a young boy. There was no questioning the fact that he would risk his life to protect his sheep. As he considered the LORD, his Shepherd, he realized that God was absolutely able to protect him. David might give his life and still not fully protect his sheep. His Shepherd could and would protect him, and his Shepherd was never in any danger. No threat in the world would prevent God from protecting His servant.

3) I shall not want for provisions. A father who loves his children seeks to provide for them. Sometimes he fails through no fault of his own. Circumstances, such as illness, war, famine, or a depression can greatly impact the earthly father's ability to provide for his children. Bad decisions can prevent the earthly father from providing for his children. Divorce may determine to some extent how much he can help his children. Drugs, alcohol, and gambling will have a negative impact on the family.

The only thing that stood between David and the LORD, his Shepherd, was that which stood beyond the will and purpose of his Shepherd. Today, when our Heavenly Father's provisions do not reach us we can look to two primary factors: (1) our rebellion, or (2) His sovereign will for us. God not only provides our daily bread, He has provided gravity to hold us on the earth. He has placed the earth at exactly the right distance from the sun so that we will neither freeze to death nor burn up along with all other life on earth. He has blessed us with water to drink and food to eat.

II. HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES: HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS, 23:2.

A. He Maketh Me to Lie Down in Green Pastures, 2a.

David, like all good shepherds, planned the grazing carefully so that he would always be able to lead his sheep to a green meadow or hillside so that they could receive the nourishment they needed. That was the goal of every good shepherd. They kept in mind the fields in their area so as to avoid overgrazing and to avoid following another flock only to find stubble where he expected to find green grass. Having grown up on a farm, I have seen the stubble where there should have been green grass. Drought,

flooding, and overgrazing were usually responsible.

Some of the early cattlemen in the west reasoned that if the land could support millions of buffalo, it could sustain a herd of cattle numbering in the thousands. In time they came to understand that buffalo kept moving and in doing so instinctively avoided overgrazing. The grass came back, but when it was over grazed it would die down to the roots. David sang the praises of his Shepherd for leading him to green pastures. He is still leading his people to green pastures. If you end up in a dry, barren field you can be sure you were not following the Good Shepherd.

The faithful father seeks to provide for his family. My father was orphaned at four years of age. At twelve years of age he dropped out of school and began pulling a cross-cut saw all day every day with grown men to help feed himself and his grandmother. At sixteen he was running a crew in the woods. Before he was twenty, during the Great Depression, he joined the CCC so that he could help provide food shelter for the aunt who had helped provide for him when he was growing up. When he had a family he worked long hours on his farm to provide for his children. He was concerned about their physical needs as well as their spiritual, social, and educational needs. When I go into my shop and pick up a tool I often think of my father who taught me how to use it. My earthly father loved me, protected me, and provided for me, but he was not infallible. My Heavenly Father is both willing and able to provide everything I need.

B. He Leadeth Me Beside the Still Waters.

Here is another example of the provisions we receive from our Shepherd. Some earlier students of the Word explained that sheep will not drink from running water. A teacher in a Christian school where I was speaking told me that was not true. She knew, she said, because her father kept sheep and they would drink from running water. The lady was right, up to a point.

David may never have heard anyone say, “Still waters run deep”, but he understood the significance of it. Randy Knepper, a banker in Jacksonville, Florida, and I served together on the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources. In September, 2006, Randy and I arranged to meet early for a board meeting at Glorieta, New Mexico, so we could spend some time driving through the Pecos Canyon, following the Pecos River. The next day we drove much higher into the Rockies, often stopping to photograph streams. As we drove higher and higher into the mountains, we stopped often along side deep gorges or canyons. When we stepped out of the car, or let down the windows, we could hear the water running down the mountain side. Even when we could see no water we could hear it. We often saw white water rushing between big rocks or cascading over boulders. That would not be a safe place for sheep to drink. A few days later Charles and Doris Roberts and I drove to Sante

Fe and then to a popular vacation spot where the rock formations which looked like Teepees attracted people from all over the world. After that we drove to Los Alamos. We saw deep mountain streams where sheep might drink without fear and without danger. The shepherd was careful to lead his sheep to good, clear, clean water where they could drink without fear. He may have dammed up small streams to guarantee an abundance of safe water for his sheep.

In the New Testament, Jesus declares, “ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, **the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life**”, (John 4:14). Jesus, on another occasion, shocked the religious leaders in Jerusalem when He shouted out, “The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams of living water flow from deep within him**”, (John 7:38). The earthly father does all he can to provide for his children. Our Heavenly Father’s provisions are always adequate. Much more than adequate!

III. HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE, 23:3.

A. He Restoreth My Soul, 3a.

My Shepherd provides for my salvation. No earthly father can do that, but he can lead his children to the Good Shepherd who can and will save all who trust in Him. Having served, on the B & H Publishing Group Committee during the time Ken Stephen (President) and Phill Burgess (VP) were working with Chinese translators, I was blessed to have been able to place copies with a lady from China who was even more excited about the opportunity to get a copy to her mother and her aunt in Beijing. My friends at LifeWay have given me hundreds of copies of the Gospel of John in both the new Mandarin and the HCSB, for a friend to share with others in China. Knowing this, my wife Becky asked me for a few copies of the Gospel of John in the new Mandarin translation to show her class. I gave her three copies so her students see what the Mandarin looked like. They wanted to know what it said and she told them if they wanted to see the translation they could look at the HCSB on the opposite page. They soon found John 3:16 and began to look at it. The majority of the students were from non-traditional families but all those students except one could quote John 3:16, and that student learned it very quickly. The one verse they had memorized, possibly in Bible School, is the one verse you would want every child to know in order to receive God’s salvation.

B. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, 3b.

That is sanctification. I know, I know! That is not the way some would define sanctification, but if we leave off the means, and methods for just a moment, may I

ask what you think of the outcome. What about the results? Is there anything in this world, or the next, for which one should strive more than Christ-likeness? Please allow me to give you a verse that makes the case here: “For those He foreknew He also predestined **to be conformed to the image of His Son**” (Rom. 8:29). Now, how is one conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? I am glad you asked! Paul has an answer for us: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil, 2:5). I am pulling those words out of context, but I believe the principle applies. When you begin thinking like Jesus you will begin acting like Jesus.

An earthly father can desire sanctification for his children, but he can no more produce sanctification than he can produce salvation. What he can do is lead his children to the One who can do both.

IV. YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME, 23:4.

A. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

David knew his Shepherd would lead his sheep under all circumstances. You will observe that the shepherd king did not say that the Lord His Shepherd would lead him **to** the valley of the shadow of death. He did not say that his Shepherd would lead him *into* the valley of the shadow of death. Nor, did he say he would walk with him *in* the valley of the shadow of death. What he said was, “though I walk **through** the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

I have two sons and when they were growing up things happened to one (Mark), and one (John) happened to things! I once heard my wife say she wouldn't take a million dollars for either one of her sons - but she wouldn't give two cents for another one just like them. A father can identify with that! John was in the fifth grade when I received the call from his school. He had fallen from a piece of playground equipment and they thought he had broken his arm. I rushed to school, picked him up and headed to the hospital. Now consider these possible explanations of what happened:

(1) I took John **to** the hospital (then put him out with instructions to see if he could find the ER?).

(2) I took him **into** the hospital (and let him see if he could find the ER”).

(3) I walked with him **in** the hospital (until I saw a friend and told him to find the ER on his own?).

(4) I saw my son **through** the hospital, including walking him **into** the hospital, **down the hall** to the ER, made sure he would get the medical help he needed (including a cast!), and then took him home where his mother and I could watch him (and spoil him just a little).

Like David, I know the Lord, my Shepherd, will walk with me through the valley of the shadow of death. He has already done that. He saw me through an extended period in ICU, through by-pass surgery, through recovery and rehab. And you know something? I never once saw a light at the end of a tunnel. You see, I was walking with the Light of the World!

B. For thou art with me.

This relationship reassures me. When I attended my first funeral service I sat by my father, a fact for which I have often been thankful. I had been told that Uncle Willie was a Christian. Uncle Willie was in heaven. Uncle Willie was with the Lord. Then why, I wondered, are all these people crying? I didn't feel like crying. I wondered why I didn't feel like crying if so many others were. Then I looked up at my father. I looked right into his eyes. He was serious, but in control. He had known Uncle Willie all his life - a lot longer than I. I was thankful that my father was with me that day. I was thankful many times after that when I could look to the most courageous man I have ever known for guidance, wisdom, integrity, and protection.

After growing up, I came to understand that my earthly father was limited, but my Heavenly Father is infinite, eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. I am thankful that He is always with time. By the way, during those 14 or 15 days and nights in ICU, I was encouraged by His presence. No hospital schedule, no doctor, and no nurse could keep Him out! My cardiologist told me the nurses were talking about my positive spirit and my positive attitude. He is a Christian and when I explained it to him he understood.

C. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

1) The "rod" denotes my Shepherd's protection. The rod was a heavy club, about like a baseball bat. With it the shepherd could fight off wild animals or thieves that would steal his sheep. My father protected his family, but he didn't stop there. The nearest law enforcement officer was in Tunica, Mississippi, 25 miles away, and in order to call the sheriff my father would have had to drive into Quitman County to find someone up so he could use the telephone. By the time he did that, it might be too late to do any good. On more than one occasion, I saw my father go to a home on our farm, or out into a field and take a gun away from a drunk who was threatening to kill his family. I was convinced that if he could protect those families he could protect his own family. Sadly, I watched my father grow older, have heart attacks

and strokes, and in time his family had to care for him. My Heavenly Father will never grow old, He will never grow weak, and I will never have to care for Him.

2) The “staff” denotes guidance and security. We have all seen pictures of the shepherd’s staff. With the crook, he could reach down a lift a lamb that had fallen into a ditch or a shallow gorge. With the straight end he could gently guide his sheep, or he could discipline the sheep by touching it with more pressure - or by slapping it on the side if it didn’t respond to the touch. David had both used the shepherd’s staff, and been the recipient of his Shepherd’s guidance and discipline. These are two things that are sadly missing in many homes today: a father’s guidance and discipline.

V. THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES: THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP RUNNETH OVER, 23:5.

A. Thou prepest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Let me give you a hypothetical situation from David’s day. Jonathan had become involved in a fight with Simeon and in the fight Simeon was accidentally killed. Jonathan flees and all the men in Simeon’s family and many friends pursue him with one thing in mind - vengeance. Jonathan sees a shepherd’s tent and heads for it. There, shepherd Benjamin welcomes Jonathan, who explains what he has done and that he is fleeing to a city of refuge where he will take hold of the horns of the altar and ask for a fair trial.

Simeon’s avengers cannot invade the tent of another shepherd, so they will wait until Jonathan’s time is up and trap him and kill him. They cannot, according to the “law of the plains” enter Benjamin’s tent and take him. They watch from a distance as Benjamin prepares a meal and sets it before Jonathan “in the presence of his enemies.” Jonathan has found a place of refuge in the tent of Benjamin - just as David’s Shepherd had protected him when he was being pursued by Saul.

That is good, but it gets better!

B. Thou anointest my head with oil.

Not only does Benjamin provide a sanctuary for Jonathan in the face of Simeon’s avengers, he anoints him with oil. In other words, he makes him feel at home. He offers more than a refuge, he offers his friendship. He did not just do his duty, he went far beyond the call of duty.

Do you remember the story I told about taking John to the hospital after he had fallen and broken his arm at school? Well, there is another chapter to that story. The next

morning I went to John's school and spoke with his teacher. I thanked her for calling me and taking care of John until I got there. Her rather curt reply was, "It was my duty!" My wife and her friends who taught in a local public school were appalled at the attitude of John's teacher in the Christian school he attended.

Benjamin may well have said to Jonathan, "there is some mutton, eat it and be prepared to leave as soon as possible." He did more than his duty. David had experienced the goodness and mercy of his Shepherd on many occasions, especially when he was being pursued by Saul.

This speaks of a relationship, protection, and provisions. We live in a hostile world today. The earthly father should seek to provide all three things our Heavenly Father provides for us. In order to do that he must know the Heavenly Father intimately.

I told you it was getting better, right? Well, it gets even better.

C. My cup runneth over.

This speaks of an abundance in all the things David's Shepherd had made available to him. It also speaks of an overflowing of those three things which a father makes available to his children: relationship, protection, and provisions. In the New Testament, we read that the Good Shepherd declares, "**I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance**" (John 10:10).

VI. SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE: AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER, 23:6.

A. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

No one takes the initiative in finding God. One may well try to "find religion", but no one finds Jesus Christ through his own efforts or pursuits. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, taught, "As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all [people] to Myself" (John 12:32). Those who have come to know him are urged to "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

This speaks again of a relationship, protection, and provisions. All of these things our Heavenly Father can and will provide for His children, and the earthly father who follows the Heavenly Father will so provide for his children.

B. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Do you remember our story about Jonathan, who is fleeing from the family and friends of Simeon, whom he accidentally killed? Jonathan comes to the tent of Benjamin where he is invited in and treated like a family member - for a brief period of time, but not forever. David, however, has absolute confidence that he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The Old Testament saints did not have as clear a picture of end time events or heaven as the Holy Spirit reveals in the New Testament, but this verse shows that David believed that he would live with his Lord forever. Job had declared, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: (Job 19:25, KJV). David has no doubt he will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Our Heavenly Father provides a home in His house for all believers. Forever! Jesus, the Good Shepherd stated it clearly in his Farewell Discourse (Read John 14:1-6).

CONCLUSION (deleted here).

10:15 - AS THE FATHER. *"...(A)s the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep."* Jesus (vs. 14) has declared, "I am the good shepherd", and the next sentence should be read with it: "I know My own sheep, and they know Me, as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father" (vs. 15). *"My sheep know Me stresses their reciprocal knowledge of and intimacy with Him. This intimacy is modeled on the loving and trusting mutual relationship of **the Father** and the Son"* [BKC, bold in original]. It is critical that we understand what Jesus is saying. He is the good shepherd to those who are of His flock and they know Him as He knows the Father. They know Him, not by recognition, but by experience and ownership. Only those who have the experience of the new birth (John 3), really know Him, and those who are born again belong to Him because they are bought with a price (His blood).

Multitudes recognized Jesus and followed Him as long as he fed them. Thousands looked for Him when he came to Jerusalem for the Festivals, but only 120 waited in the upper room for the fulfillment of His promise. The multitudes recognized Him, but only those of His flock knew Him as the Father knows Him. How does the Father know the Son? He knows Him through a personal relationship. We know Him through a personal relationship. We also know He is the one and only Son of God.

I LAY DOWN MY LIFE. *"Jesus' care and concern is evidenced by His prediction of His coming death for the flock. Some shepherds have willingly died while protecting their sheep from danger. Jesus willingly gave His life for His sheep (vv. 11, 15, 17-18)—on their behalf as their Substitute (Rom. 5:8, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). His death gives them life"* [BKC]. Barnes writes, "That is, I give my life as an atoning sacrifice for their sins. I die in their place, to redeem them from sin, and

danger, and death. See John 10:17,18" [Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, TN - after this, BARNES]. Jesus alluded to His death for us many times, but when He died for us His followers did not believe He would be raised from the dead. John was the first to believe and that was after he had witnessed the open tomb.

Jesus, four times in this passage, states that He would lay down His life for His sheep (10:11, 15, 17, and 18). The New Commentary on the Whole Bible comments on his substitutionary death

“in which he would sacrifice his soul, his life (ψυχη - in Gk.) so that the sheep might enjoy the abundant, divine life (ζω-ε in Gk.). Isaiah 53:10 says the Messiah would offer “his soul a sacrifice for sins.” What a difference between the good Shepherd and the thief and the hireling! The thief steals, slaughters, and destroys, and the hireling depicts those Jewish leaders who took their office for self-gain. In the OT these hirelings were severely reprovved by God (e.g., see Ezek. 34, where “the shepherds of Israel” are rebuked for abusing their office). The leaders of Israel had not shepherded Israel properly prior to the captivity; thus, many of the Jews became like scattered sheep having no shepherd (again see Ezek. 34)” [NCWB].

10:16 - I HAVE OTHER SHEEP. *“But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd.”* This must have raised some questions among those who heard Him. It is still raising questions. What did Jesus mean by “other sheep that are not of this fold”? Did He mean other Jews who were not present when He was speaking? Did He have in mind the Samaritans who had believed? Was He thinking of the Gentiles who had received Him? Did Jesus mean that He had other sheep at that moment who were not among the believers present in that place? Or did He mean all believers of all ages? New Testament scholars are still looking for the answers. For example, Robertson writes:

“Clearly ‘his flock is not confined to those enclosed in the Jewish fold, whether in Palestine or elsewhere’ (Westcott). Christ's horizon takes in all men of all races and times (John 11:52; John 12:32). The world mission of Christ for all nations is no new idea with him (Mat 8:11; Luke 13:28). God loved the world and gave his Son for the race (John 3:16)” [ATR].

One writes sees in this statement a fulfillment of prophecy. *“The good Shepherd would come, however, to gather God’s people together again and bring them into one flock (see Ezek. 34:11 – 14, 23). This flock would consist of Jewish and Gentile believers (called other sheep . . . not of this fold). All would be brought into one flock, with one shepherd (cf. Eph. 2:14; 3:6)” [NCWB]. He clearly sated that not all of His sheep were at that*

moment in His sheep fold. “As a result he understood his mission also to involve the gathering of the other sheep so that all might belong to one “flock” or “herd” (poimne, not “fold” as in the KJV). The issue is significant because not everyone is from (out of) the same sheepfold or enclosure, but all belong to the one (mia) flock since there is only one (heis) shepherd (10:16). So much for the basic argument” [NAC]. We are still faced with the question, What did He mean by this statement? That same writer continues as follows:

“It certainly is a stretch in logic to suppose with the Mormons that Jesus was here referring to North America and Indian ancestors on the western side of the Atlantic Ocean. Such an idea has to be read into the text and not interpreted from the text. The context must instead refer to a situation in the time of Jesus and the early church. Robinson argues for two groups of Jews, those in Israel and those of the diaspora outside of Israel. Martyn goes in the opposite direction, arguing that the verse represents the Christian diaspora of the late first century. The latter view makes the meaning irrelevant to the time of Jesus. The former view makes a little more sense, if one would accept Robinson’s thesis that John’s Gospel was aimed at the people (the lost sheep) of Israel and not the Gentiles, as in Jesus’ initial task outlined at Matt 10:5–6; 15:24. The alternative possibility is that the first group refers to the Jews who followed Jesus and who already were being viewed as part of the fold. They could thus be identified with the flock of Jesus. The other group would then logically seem to refer to the Gentiles who would come thereafter into the flock. (Note the strategic coming of the Greeks at 12:20, which seems to serve as a sign to Jesus of the changing time and the coming of his hour. Robinson, however, thinks the Greeks there were Greek-speaking

Jews, not an impossible idea.)” [NAC].

It might help to ask what Jesus cannot mean by “other sheep that are not of this fold.”

He cannot mean universal salvation, because John 3:16 prohibits that. He cannot mean that there are many paths by which one may find God, for Acts 4:12 denies that. He cannot have in mind all members of the organized church because those of His flock are the ones who have been born again, by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8), not of works (Eph. 2:9). No one becomes a part of His flock through ritual or ceremony. So what is left? We shall see.

I MUST BRING THEM. He will call them, He says, and “they will listen to My voice.” This is the “Second aorist active infinitive of ἀγὼ with *dei* expressing the moral urgency of Christ’s passion for God’s people in all lands and ages. Missions in Christ’s mind takes in the whole world. This is according to prophecy (Isa 42:6; Isa 49:6; Isa 56:8) for the Messiah is to be a Light also to the Gentiles. It was typified by the brazen serpent (John 3:14). Christ died for every man. The Pharisees doubtless listened in amazement and even the disciples with slow comprehension” [ATR].

ONE FLOCK. “Then,” He said, “there will be one flock, one shepherd.” If “then” refers to heaven the answer is simple. He means that as individuals believe in Him they are placed in His sheep fold, and ultimately “there will be one flock” and He will be the shepherd.

10:17 - THE FATHER LOVE ME. *“This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again.”* Jesus now moves from the illustration about the shepherd and his sheep to His relationship with His Father.

“The gathering of the sheep evokes a reflection (10:17–18) on the forthcoming death of Jesus introduced earlier (10:11, 15). The focus of these texts is upon relationships. The good shepherd’s relationship with his sheep is based on their interpersonal knowledge of each other (10:14). The use of *ginoskein* (‘know’) here is far more than cognitive (factual) knowledge. The relationship between Jesus and his sheep is modeled on the relationship between Jesus and the Father (10:15). It is this relationship that supplied the rationale for the self-sacrifice of Jesus for his sheep. The discussion of 10:17–18 thus flows from the presupposition of this relationship” [NAC].

The Father’s love for the Son is seen in Jesus’s death and resurrection. In death He obeys the Father. In the resurrection He glorifies the Father. From the perspective of the reader today it is hard to believe His disciples did not understand that Jesus came into this world to lay down his life for all who believe in Him. It also seems incomprehensible that no one believed He would rise from the dead.

Even as I write this, I am thinking about a book I received in the mail a few days ago. The author of the book, *THE LANGUAGE OF GOD: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, (Free Press, 2006), Francis S. Collins, tells us that he was the leader of the International Human Genome Project, which

has revealed some remarkable things about the DNA sequence. He writes:

“Such is the amazing complexity of the information carried within each cell of the human body, that a live reading of that code at a rate of one letter per second would take thirty-one years, even if reading continued day and night. Printing these letters out in regular font size on normal bond paper and binding them all together would result in a tower the height of the Washington Monument. For the first time on that summer morning this amazing script, carrying within it all of the instructions for building a human being, was available to the world” [COLLINS, pp.1-2].

This, of course, is no surprise to David, who had never heard of the genome, but understood that the God he worshiped was the author of that code. He wrote a hymn praising God for it:

“For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know [this] very well. My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was formless; **all [my] days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began**” (Ps. 139:13-16, bold added by this writer).

The book to which I referred above was written by a brilliant scientist who has made some new discoveries that have amazed the scientific community. He is a brilliant scientist, but not the greatest historian I have read. In talking about religion, he said that even though Mohammed did not use violence against those who persecuted him, but Jihadists have always used violence. Collins must have missed out on the news that Mohammed was the one who perpetrated violent attacks on his neighbors, as my old friend, Anis Shorrosh, a Christian Arab has written.

Those who are trying to convince readers that Islam and Christianity can peacefully co-exist do not understand Islam. There is none of the love of which Jesus speaks in Islam. As a matter of fact, it is woefully lacking in some Christian congregations. The love between the Father and the Son has been written in the blood Jesus shed on the Cross for all those who are created in the image of God (John 3:16). On the Cross Jesus demonstrated both His love for the Father and His love for those created in His image.

TAKE IT UP. Jesus said, “I am laying down My life so I may take it up again.” The resurrection was written down in God’s plan before the Incarnation. He spoke of it a number of times, but the first person to really believe in it was John as he stood looking at the burial cloths that had collapsed in the place where Jesus’ body had lain.

10:18 - O LAY IT DOWN. “*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father.*” Now, let’s get this straight: Jesus came into the world to lay down His life in a painful, ignominious, cruel manner. His death was no surprise to Him. He knew He would suffer as no one

could imagine and He still came and submitted Himself to the worst fallen man, empowered and motivated by Satan, could do to Him. He not only knew it, He forced the issue with those who plotted against Him.

Francis S. Collins, the scientist quoted above (see notes on vs. 17), mentions Martin Luther King, who gave his life for the cause of civil rights [COLLINS: 40]. While King was killed while leading in the civil rights battle, he did not go to Memphis to die. He may well have known there was a risk involved, but no doubt he wanted to see the fruition of his labor at some later date. He did not lay down his life, it was taken from him. The soldier who goes to Iraq or Afghanistan does not want to die; he knows that he is laying his life on the line for his country, but he does not want to die.

On September 29, 2006, Navy Seal Mike Monsoon was on top of a building in Ramadi, Iraq, with two other Navy Seals, providing cover for a US Army operation on the street below. Suddenly, a hand grenade thrown by an enemy soldier, hit him in the chest and fell to the roof. Mike Monsoon could have saved himself by diving away from the grenade, but it would have killed his two buddies. Instead of diving away and saving himself, Mike Monsoon dived on the grenade and took the full blast when it exploded. He chose to die for his buddies. One of them said, "It was as if Mike has said to the grenade, "You cannot take the lives of my friends! I will die for them." On April 8, 2008, the family of Michael Monsoon stood before President George W. Bush at the White House and receive the Medal of Honor he was awarded posthumously. Mike Monsoon made the split-second decision to die for his friends, but he did not go there to die.

LTC Andy Shoffner, sent me a flag from Iraq along with a letter expressing his conviction that the Lord had protected Him. This was during his first deployment. He wrote that bullets had passed right by his head and a bomb had exploded under the vehicle in which he was riding. Both he and his brother, Col. Allen Shoffner, have sent soldiers out time after time, knowing that some of them might not return. However, they did everything they could to protect them and bring the back alive. Jesus came to die for our sins.

Human beings kill other human beings, both in war, and while committing crimes, but no one could kill Jesus until He permitted it. No one could take His life from Him; He could only lay it down for us. In doing so, He demonstrated the love of the Father for that one being created in His image.

I HAVE THE RIGHT. I love this! Jesus said, "I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father." Where did He get such "right"? He tells us that, too: "from My Father." He was authorized to come into the world, live, preach, teach, perform signs, demonstrate power, to lay down His life, and to "take it up again."

10:19 - A DIVISION. *"Again a division took place among the Jews because of these words."* The word translated "division" means "to cleave" and it "*describes a fact which continually recurs in John's narrative.* See 6:52, 60, 66; 7:12, 25; 8:22; 9:16, 17; 10:19, 24, 41; 11:37; 12:19, 29, 42; 16:18, 19" [VINCENT]. *Indeed, there*

was an ongoing division, from time to time and from group to group, when Jesus spoke. Today, when people hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ there are divisions. Even among those who profess Him as Lord, there are divisions. My son confided that in his daughter's Sunday School class a few years ago there were little girls he would not let her visit because their parents let them watch programs that he would never let his daughter watch.

Divisions are demonstrated today by denominations, as well as those who condemn all denominations, professing, to be the true church. Some who profess to be Christians abstain from alcoholic beverages, dancing, profanity, and gambling while others indulge to varying degrees. Christians are divided over baptism, the Lord's Supper (even over whether or not it should be called Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper), and the Scripture. There are the so-called Christian cults like Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses who insist they are Christians, but deny Christ in one way or another. There are serious divisions within denominations, such as the division within the Lutheran church that produced a revival in the Missouri Synod, and the division that gave us the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Convention, and divisions within the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopal denominations.

Throughout May, 2009, there has been a major debate within the Roman Catholic denomination in America over the invitation extended by the president of Notre Dame University to President Barak Obama to speak at that institution's graduation exercise, along with the announcement that he would be granted an honorary doctorate. Immediately after being sworn in as president, Obama began what many consider an assault on every law that would protect the unborn child. On May 15, a number of outstanding leaders were arrested for protesting the ceremony in which the president would be given the honorary degree. They strongly oppose the invitation to speak, but

were much more outraged by the honorary degree. This flies in the face of the church's position on abortion. Polls showed that the nation as a whole was divided over this situation. Some Catholics were saying that the president of Notre Dame defied the Pope, and "He receives his orders from Rome." This highlights another division: there are those who look to the Bible as their authority, and others who look to a bishop, a synod, or elected officials as their authority.

The major division, however, is between those who accept Jesus as Savior and those who reject Him. I have often said there are only two kinds of people in the world: lost and saved. I might add that when you receive Jesus Christ as Savior you receive Him as Lord, or you have not received Him at all.

10:20 - HE HAS A DEMON. *"Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and He's crazy! Why do you listen to Him?'"* This, we may safely assume, was not the first time for religious zealots to say that those who disagree with them have a demon, and it certainly was not the last time. Rather than sermonize on the charge that "He has a demon and He's crazy", both charges any student of this Gospel will dismiss, it would seem more productive to remember where and how this fits into this marvelously constructed Gospel.

"One of the important characteristics of the Festival Cycle has been the element of conflict and the division Jesus created among the people (cf. 5:16; 6:41-42, 52, 60, 66; 7:20, 32, 47; 8:22-24, 44, 48, 52, 59; 9:16, 22, 34, 40). Here again the hostility is noted, and many of "the Jews" (the symbol of the opponents) identified Jesus as both demonic and demented (10:20). The point is that Jesus' words cut deeply into the guilty hearts of his opponents and dulled their sensitivities to his actions. But for others his powerful actions gave perspective to his words (10:21; cf. 7:31)" [NAC].

10:21 - OTHERS WERE SAYING. *"Others were saying, 'These aren't the words of someone demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'"* A "Negative answer expected. Demons would more likely put out eyes, not open them. It was an unanswerable question" [ATR]. The crowd was divided between those who insisted Jesus had a demon which had made him crazy (vs. 20), and those who rejected that too simple analysis. *"The gracious grandeur of Christ's words struck deep into the hearts of his hearers, and they responded with either scornful rejection (10:20) or timid acceptance (10:21). Yet none of these leaders seemed willing to acknowledge the presence of God the Son in their midst"* [NCWB].

Jesus at the Festival of Dedication

10:22 - THE FEAST OF DEDICATION. *“Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter.” The Feast of Dedication is now called Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights. It was a very important festival, commemorating the re-consecration of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 165 B.C. after it had been desecrated by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) in 170 B. C. [BKC]. The Holman Bible Dictionary notes that “Maccabees was the name given to the family of Mattathias, a faithful priest, who led in a revolt against the Hellenizing influences of the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes in about 168 B.C.” [HBD].*

The time for the eight-day feast was in December (winter, as John noted). Celebration of this feast was not one of the official feasts the Lord commanded the people to observe at Sinai, but “Christ attended it anyway because he wanted to identify himself as fully as possible with every legitimate activity of his people. (Compare the commentary on 2:1, 2.) Despite all the evidentiary words and miracles which Jesus had produced in the previous weeks and months (2:1–10:18), the Jewish leaders refused to acknowledge his Messiahship” [NCWB].

Various writers suggest different dates for the cleansing of the temple, instituted by Judas Maccabees, with Vincent using 164 B. C., rather than 165 as mentioned above. Vincent’s article is lengthy, but it is included here with only the deletion of the first few sentences:

“The victorious Jews, says Dean Stanley, ‘entered and found the scene of havoc which the Syrian occupation had left. The corridors of the priests’ chambers, which encircled the temple, were torn down; the gates were in ashes, the altar was disfigured, and the whole platform was overgrown as if with a mountain jungle or forest glade. It was a heartrending spectacle. Their first impulse was to cast themselves headlong on the pavement, and blow the loud horns which accompanied all mournful as well as all joyful occasions—the tocsin as well as the chimes of the nation. Then,

whilst the foreign garrison was kept at bay, the warriors first began the elaborate process of cleansing the polluted place.... For the interior of the temple everything had to be refurnished afresh—vessels, candlesticks and incense-altar, and tables and curtains. At last all was completed, and on the 25th of Chisleu (middle of December), the same day that, three years before, the profanation had occurred, the temple was rededicated.... What most lived in the recollection of the time was that the perpetual light blazed again. The golden candlestick was no longer to be had. Its place was taken by an iron chandelier, cased in wood” (“Jewish Church,” pt. iii., 345, 346). According to tradition, the oil was found to have been desecrated, and only one flagon of pure oil, sealed with the High-Priest’s signet, was found, sufficient to feed the candlestick for a single day. But by a miracle the flagon was replenished during eight days, until a fresh supply could be procured. The festival lasted for eight days. Lights were kindled, not only in the temple, but in every home. Pious householders lighted a lamp for every inmate of the home, and the most zealous added a light every night for every individual, so that if a house with ten inmates began with ten lights, it would end with eighty. The Jews assembled in the temple, or in the synagogues of the places where they resided, bearing branches of palm, and singing psalms of praise. No fast or mourning, on account of any calamity or bereavement, was permitted to commence during the festival” [VINCENT].

IT WAS WINTER. This is another of those times when John adds an historical note that tells us that he was there: “and it was winter.” He was inspired to write this Gospel, but unlike Luke, who researched everything he wrote very carefully, John was an eyewitness. As Vincent points out (above), it was the middle of December. John’s aged bones may have recalled the cold as he reflects on the scene.

10:23 - JESUS WAS WALKING. “*Jesus was walking in the temple complex in Solomon’s Colonnade.*” Jesus was walking (Imperfect active of *peripateo*) in, or through, the area of the temple complex known as Solomon’s Colonnade (covered walkway). It was “a covered colonnade or portico in which people could walk in all weather. See Acts 3:11; Acts 5:12 for this porch. This particular part of Solomon’s temple was left uninjured by the Babylonians and survived apparently till the destruction of the temple by Titus A.D. 70 (Josephus, Ant. XX. 9,7). When John wrote, it was, of course, gone” [ATR]. *Solomon’s Colonnade* was “a long covered walkway on the

east side of the temple. Two months had elapsed since Jesus' last confrontation with the Jews (7:1-10:21) at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2), which was in October. Jesus again returned to the temple area" [BKC, bold added by this writer].

10:24 - THE JEWS SURROUNDED HIM. *"Then the Jews surrounded Him and asked, 'How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'" Writing some 16 years after the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of Jews from Jerusalem, John continues to refer to both the Jewish religious authorities and to the nation as a whole as "the Jews".*

By this time, the Pharisees and Sadducees were on the lookout for Jesus at every feast or festival because they were looking for any reason to demand that He be put to death by the Roman governor. Their desire to see Jesus put to death seems to grow with each event. Among the Jewish people there was a division (10:19) over Jesus, some condemning Him while others were more willing to hear Him. The Jewish religious leaders on the other hand were almost unanimous in their desire to have Jesus killed.

Let us be sure we understand that all who were friendly to Jesus, or anxious to see Him, did not accept Him as the Messiah. Soon, we will see that many wanted to believe in Him, but only if He would continue to prove Himself with signs and wonders. They wanted the Messiah to come to deliver them from Rome, but Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they would follow. These people would soon turn away from Him.

Jesus, by this time, was the Person they were focused on any time there was a feast or festival in Jerusalem. It seems that there was a sense of expectancy among the Jews attending the feast: will this be the time He will proclaim Himself to be the Messiah? For many, it was a matter of driving out the hated Romans who ruled over them. They would follow a Messiah who would fight for them as Judas Maccabees had once fought the Syrians. Others had already dismissed Him as the Messiah, but controversy draws a crowd.

IF YOU ARE THE MESSIAH. "Tell us plainly," they demanded. In the first place, the Jewish authorities wanted to see Him trap Himself by declaring that He was the Messiah so they could go to the Roman governor with the charge that He was advocating an insurrection. Others were no doubt like any crowd that comes together in what today might be considered a media circus. For many of those who demanded an answer from Jesus, *"Their request was not a search for truth but a thinly-veiled accusation of blasphemy, as shown by the Pharisees' actions a few moments later (10:31, 33, 39)" [NCWB].*

10:25 - I DID TELL YOU. *"I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. 'The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me.'" Jesus had told them over and over that He was the One sent by the Father to lay down his life for the salvation of all who believe in Him. He has declared Himself to be the bread of life, the light of the world, the water of life, and the Son of God.*

They still demand more proof. How sad, we say, that those poor ignorant peasants were so naive. But what about all the sophisticated people of this day who might believe in Him, if He would only prove Himself in some new way? Are they not sinning against a greater light? Hundreds of millions of them have access to the complete Bible in their own language, as well an abundance of trained teachers and pastors to guide them.

Some of the blame for the ignorance of the masses when it comes to the Bible may be laid at the feet of some of the teachers and preachers of the Word. Some Sunday School classes get off to a good start, but in time evolve into something of a social club. I was amused when I scanned some crackers on a shelf at a local grocery store. I had been used to seeing the words, "Low Sodium" in bold print on some of the boxes, but that day when I glanced at the shelf I saw the same cracker boxes with the words, "Hint of Salt." Sadly, some Sunday School classes might be more honest if they had a sign on the door that reads, "Hint of Scripture". A highly respected retired high school teacher, whom I have known for thirty years, lamented to her friend, "I have never had but one pastor who ever taught me anything." Hint of Scripture?

THE WORKS. Jesus did not try to engage them in yet another debate here. He simply replied, "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me." This was not the first time they had heard that. In Chapter 5, Jesus identified the testimonies which prove that He is the Messiah: "If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid"(vs. 31). He went on to mention John the Baptist, whom they admired (vv. 32-35). He then added:

"But I have a greater testimony than John's because of the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish. **These very works I am doing testify about Me that the Father has sent Me.** The Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have not heard His voice at any time, and you haven't seen His form. You don't have His word living in you, because you don't believe the One He sent. You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. And you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:36-40, bold added by this writer).

[SPECIAL NOTE: Formal commentaries in a hard copy format simply list the reference, but in **The Bible Notebook**, the Scripture is sometimes printed so the busy pastor or Sunday School teacher can read it without having to leave the page to run references.]

10:26 - YOU DON'T BELIEVE. "*But you don't believe because you are not My sheep.*" This had been the point in the allegory of the Good Shepherd. Instead of being His sheep, they were the children of the devil, both in spirit and conduct (John 8:43). Their image was that of super pious religious leaders, but in fact they were wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). They did not deceive Jesus, nor did they intimidate Him. John has told us that He knew what was in every person, so He was not about to be fooled by this crowd. Many of those who argued for Him against those who condemned Jesus did not believe in Him as the Messiah. They were like so many people who are attracted to a celebrity.

10:27 - MY SHEEP. *“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”* Jesus began this dialogue by identifying Himself first as the door to the sheep pen, and then He added, “I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me” (10:14). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus knew His sheep by name, as He has said (10:3), “and they know his voice (verse John 10:4), they have experimental knowledge (ginôskô) of Jesus as their own Shepherd. Here (in this mutually reciprocal knowledge) lies the secret of their love and loyalty” [ATR]. His sheep hear His teachings and respond to Him. *“They listen to His voice (vv. 3-5, 16). They have an intimacy with Jesus (I know them; cf. vv. 3, 14), they understand His message of salvation, and they follow Him (vv. 4-5). To follow Him means to obey the Father’s will as Jesus did”* [BKC].

10:28 - I GIVE THEM. *“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.”* Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. Why would anyone want to complicate that? Sadly, some do. Returning to the Prologue once again, we read, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. **But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name,** who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13, bold added by this writer). In John 3:16, we read that all who believe in the “only begotten Son” of God receive everlasting life, whereas all who do not believe in Him perish. Jesus is the giver; believers are the recipients, and eternal life is the blessing received.

THEY WILL NEVER PERISH. In John 3:16, we read that all who do not believe in Jesus perish, and there is no question that means hell, a place of conscious, eternal torment. Jesus Himself says as clearly as any truth has ever been declared: Those who believe in Him “will never perish”, ever! They will **never perish unintentionally** (unintentionally fall away); **they will never perish intentionally** (by their own choice); they will never perish **accidentally** (slip up some way or another). Jesus could not have stated this more clearly and it cannot be stated more clearly today in English (or Greek, for that matter). If I read those words and reject them, how can I believe anything else He has said? Yet, millions of people who profess to belong to the Good Shepherd live in fear of losing their salvation.

How important is it for us to believe this? To the serious follower of Christ it is very important. First, the sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd. Second, every true follower of Christ should believe everything He says. Third, this has the support of many other promises in the Bible. Fourth, acceptance of this great doctrine contributes greatly to the joy in the believer’s salvation.

Some refer to the doctrine of eternal security in Christ as Perseverance of the Saints. Others refer to the teaching as Security of Believers, holding that the believer is not eternally secure because of his perseverance, but because of the grace of God. We are secure in Christ, not because we hold on to Him but because He holds onto us. When my son was three or four years old, I would let him hold

onto my finger as we walked through a department store, but when we approached the door I would take his hand in mine and walk with him across the street and through the parking lot to the car. If he stumbled I simply held him until he got his feet back under him. When we came to a hole in the street or a curb I would lift him over it. I would never trust his security and safety to his strength or commitment to hold onto me. I held onto him. Regardless of what we call it, the doctrine states that genuine believers cannot perish on their own accord.

Elsewhere, there is a brief study on the Security of Believers written by Dr. Henry M. Morris. More recently, his son Dr. John D. Morris wrote an article on John 10:28-29 for July 26, 2009 edition of *Days of Praise*, the daily devotion for **The Institute for Creation Research**, that deals with the same subject:

They Shall Never Perish

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.’ (*John 10:28-29*)

“What rich blessings Christ promises to those who ‘hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me’ (v. 27). To think that the omnipotent Creator knows us, and gives us eternal life! He is certainly powerful enough to see that this life is in no danger, either from our own weaknesses (‘they shall never perish’) or from the enemy without (‘pluck them out’). Temporary eternal life simply cannot be. The eternal life which He gives lasts for eternity.

“Actually, the promise ‘they shall never perish’ is very strong in the original Greek. A repeating negative precedes the word ‘perish,’ and the specific form of the word ‘never’ literally includes ‘eternally,’ or ‘forever. A more complete rendering would then be, ‘they shall not, in no wise perish, no, not for eternity.’

“The word ‘man’ is not in the original, and the word ‘any’ is more properly translated ‘any one’ or ‘any being.’ This includes Satan-- no match for the Savior. He is powerless to pluck or snatch us from either the Father's or the Son's hands. How could we be any more secure?

“Note that the Father gave us to His beloved Son as gifts of His love. In turn, Christ values these precious gifts so much that He holds us securely in His hand, so tightly

that no created being can snatch us away. The Father even assists in providing us this security, for we are also in the 'Father's hand,' and 'I and my Father are one' (v. 30).

“When we consider the size and strength of the Creator's hand, we can understand why no one, not even Satan, can snatch us out of its protective care.” [JDM]

SNATCH THEM. Jesus first says that true believers will never perish, and now He says “No one will snatch them out of My hand.” No individual, no force, no other god, not even Satan can snatch the born again believer out of the hand of the Good Shepherd. This does not force a personal belief on others, and it does not impose one denominational interpretation on another. It simply takes Jesus at His word. Some people might respond that this is simply a Baptist doctrine, but I am far more concerned about the Biblical truth than Baptist doctrine. If a believer gets out of step with the Word of God, he should go to the Bible and discover what it says, and align himself with it. He should never try to adapt the Bible to his beliefs.

I was attending a meeting of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources a number of years ago at the LifeWay Conference Center at Glorieta, New Mexico, when then President Jimmy Draper presented seven Baptist Essentials for our consideration. I asked Dr. Draper, and received permission to use those seven Essentials, with his reminder that while there are many Baptist distinctives, these are Baptist Essentials. They are as follows:

1. Salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing
2. Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
4. Autonomy of the local church
5. Religious Liberty
6. Trinitarian view of God
7. The Great Commission

Salvation by grace, through faith is consistent with the doctrine of Security of Believers. Peter wrote:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and **into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you**, who are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5, bold added by this writer).

There are three theories of Justification: (1) salvation by works (denied by Eph. 2:9; Gal. 2:16); (2) salvation by works plus grace (rejected by Rom. 11:6; Gal. 3:3); and (3) salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing: the only way to be saved found in the New Testament (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 2:16, and

numerous other verses).

10:29 - MY FATHER. *“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”* In the Prologue, John writes: “The Word became flesh

and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In the opening verses of the Prologue he writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Elsewhere, I noted that someone has circulated a film clip of a Muslim cleric who was challenging a large audience to take the Bible and show him any place that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Such a challenge is ludicrous beyond words. The entire New Testament is the story about God loving us enough to send His only begotten Son to die for our sins (John 3:16). The Greek word for ‘only begotten’ actually means that Jesus was the only one of His kind, uniquely the Son of God. Jesus, in His High Priestly prayer, prayed, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You” (17:1). At the Baptism of Jesus, the Father calls Him “My beloved Son” (Mark 1:11), and He used the same term at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).

WHO HAS GIVEN THEM TO ME. Jesus would pray, “I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, **You gave them to Me**” (John 17:6, bold added by this writer). He also taught, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). No one “finds God.” Francis Schaeffer wrote, “The most meaningless word in the English language is the word god, spelled with a small ‘g’. Any god you find on your own should be spelled with a small ‘g’”.

GREATER THAN ALL. Jesus taught that His Father transcends all. Since there can be but one true God, Jesus teaches that He is greater than all, which must include the natural world and the supernatural world. There is no one anywhere who can compare with Him.

MY FATHER’S HAND. Jesus amplifies what He has just said (“No one can snatch them out of My hand” (vs. 28), and adds here that no one can snatch the believer out of the Father’s hand, which is the message he expressed in calling Himself the Good Shepherd. The shepherd guarding his sheep with his life is a metaphor of the protection the Heavenly Father provides for those who are a part of His flock.

“The impossibility of true believers being lost, in the midst of all the temptations which they may encounter, does not consist in their fidelity and decision, but is founded upon the power of God. Here the doctrine of predestination is presented in its sublime and sacred aspect; there is a predestination of the holy, which is taught from one end of the Scriptures to the other; not, indeed, of such a

nature that an “irresistible grace” compels the opposing will of man (of course not), but so that the will of man that receives and loves the commands of God is produced only by God’s grace (Olshausen). It should be noted that this verse appears in the ancient manuscripts in three ways. The first, as cited above; the second, “My Father, as to that which he has given me, is greater than all”; the third, “That which the Father has given me is greater than all.” The last reading is the most difficult and perhaps original—it speaks of the Father’s gift to the Son (i.e., the church) as being able to overcome all outside forces” [NCWB].

When I was still a young man, the Late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, was preaching in revival service in the church I served as pastor, and in every spare moment he would ask me to drop him off at the home someone provided for him that week. He was working on his commentary on the Book of Acts, trying to get it to the publisher before the upcoming January Bible Study. He told me that Dr. J. P. McBeth had, many years earlier, written a commentary, AN EXEGETICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, and he liked the title so much that he asked Dr. McBeth for permission to use that title for his commentary on Acts. Permission was granted to go with the title, AN EXEGETICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON ACTS. Either I had Dr. McBeth’s commentary in my library, or Dr. Eddleman sent me a copy. I spent a lot of time with it and quoted from it in my own study of Romans, which is now posted on the PastorLife.Com website, which Dr. Mike Minnix edits for the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Dr. McBeth reminds us that we not only have the words of Jesus and John (see 1 John) to assure us that born-again believers are secure in Jesus, we also have a special tense in the Greek to affirm it. In comments on Romans 5:1, Dr. McBeth points out that “being justified” is in the aorist tense and,

“The aorist tense denotes the justification as being wrought once for all time. God’s justification prevails, and never needs to be repeated. The participle denotes the continuous progress that God’s justifying grace is making from individual to individual. Thus, the word denotes that as grace is multiplied to a growing number of people, they are also justified, that is, saved once for all” [McBeth, J. P., AN EXEGETICAL AND PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, Hennington Publishing Co, Wolfe City, Texas, 1937, p. 146].

After discussing the peace justification by grace, through faith, brings to the individual, Dr. McBeth takes up the permanency and eternal nature of our salvation again:

“Justification in the aorist tense emphasizes the assurance of salvation. Then is mentioned the peace that comes from salvation. And the verse is consummated in the (Greek) word *pros* (with, motion toward), which denotes fellowship with the personal God and the personal Lord. The personal Lord is Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, and Christ of the resurrection. Justification by faith produces assurance, peace, and fellowship; that is, it gives assurance of future life, fruits in this life, and fellowship with God and Jesus Christ both now and eternally. Justification is abiding, peace is immediate, and fellowship is eternal” [McBETH, p. 147].

10: 30 - THE FATHER AND I. “*The Father and I are one.*” Once again, the Prologue becomes the back drop for a momentous declaration. There, John wrote, “The Word was with God and the Word was God.” Here, Jesus emphasizes his oneness with the Father. This writer holds a trinitary view of God, the unitary view choking down on passages like this. The Trinity denotes one in essence, three in Person (Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit), which claim is consistent with both the Gospel, the Book of Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles, and the Revelation.

ARE ONE. This is a very important truth and we shall take a close look at the word as it is used here. This does not justify a unitary view of God. It is consistent with the opening words of this Gospel, words to which we must often return in any serious study of John. Robertson notes that Jesus is saying, “Not one person (cf. heis in Gal 3:28), but one essence or nature” [ATR].

“The Pharisees had accused Jesus of making himself equal with God as his own special Father (John 5:18). Jesus then admitted and proved this claim (John 5:19-30). Now he states it tersely in this great saying repeated later (John 17:11, 21). Note *hen* used in 1Co 3:3 of the oneness in work of the planter and the waterer and in John 17:11, 23 of the hoped for unity of Christ’s disciples. This crisp statement is the climax of Christ’s claims concerning the relation between the Father and himself (the Son). They stir the Pharisees to uncontrollable anger” [ATR].

Jesus and the Father are “ONE in nature, ONE in all the attributes of Godhead, and ONE in all the operations of those attributes: and so it is evident the Jews understood him” [CLARKE]. The author of the NAC materials offers a good summary statement:

“The perishing of true sheep was an unthinkable idea to early Christians. But contemporary Christians often wrestle with the question because they fail to perceive the logic of the biblical writers. Moreover, they often fear to read thoroughly texts like Hebrews 6. The biblical writers did not have such a superficial view of salvation that would consider walking down the aisle of a church and going through waters of baptism to be a guarantee of salvation. Nor did the biblical writers have a superficial temporal view of salvation based on an inadequate understanding of John 3:3 and other passages. Instead, the biblical writers have no problem placing side by side texts concerning God’s love, grace, and covenant promises with God’s stern warnings to the readers of the Scripture.

“The biblical view of salvation is clarified by John in the first epistle when he tells us how we can determine if a person is a true Christian. John’s rationale is that a true believer remains faithful to commitments, whereas the opposite is true for pseudobelievers (cf. 1 John 2:19; cf. John 2:23–25; 12:42–43; 15:26–16:1; 17:11, 15–19; 20:28–29; 21:22). The same perspective is present in Hebrews 6, where between the two great “impossibles” of warning and assurance (Heb 6:4–6 and 6:18–19) stands the confessional words of the preacher, ‘We are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation’ (Heb 6:9). How do we know who are true Christians? Is it merely by their words? We can sense in the passages just cited the inherent concern John had to identify stages of faith” [NAC].

They Try to Stone Jesus Again

10:31 - TO STONE HIM. *“Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone Him.”* “Again” takes us back to 5:18 when the Jews tried to kill Jesus for “breaking the Sabbath,” and for “calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

PICKED UP ROCKS. A number of questions might be entertained at this point. **First**, where did they get the rocks? The Greek may indicate that they picked up rocks and carried them for a distance, which makes sense here. They were not stumbling around over rocks large enough for stone a person to death, and we can be sure they Jewish authorities did not keep piles of rocks in or near the temple complex so worshipers could run over and gather up fist sized rocks to stone a fellow worshiper whom they believed to be guilty of blasphemy. One reason Jesus had been able to escape stoning earlier may well have been that He simply walked away while the people were running to get rocks to stone Him. If He had needed to do so, He could have disappeared supernaturally, as some seem to believe, but it seems more reasonable to assume that when those zealous “worshipers” ran some distance to find rocks, Jesus simply melted into the crowd and then walked on out of the area. It is easy to see that when you consider that there was a veritable sea of men in the temple complex and on the streets of Jerusalem, dressed as Jesus was dressed.

The **second** question that comes to mine is this: Were “the Jews” who picked up the rocks to stone Jesus the Jewish officials, or does it mean that those Jews who had come to the temple for the festival had become so enraged by what Jesus said that they picked up rocks to stone Him? We know that the Jewish authorities wanted to see Jesus killed, and if they were to accomplish their purpose they must either come up with charges that would stand up in a Roman court, or they must stir up righteous indignation the crowd in the temple complex to such a point that they would kill him in a mob action. Such action was very risky, for they were being observed by Roman soldiers. It is possible that the Jewish authorities believed that the Romans might overlook a single mob action, but such action would certainly expose them to Roman justice. It has been suggested that “Mobs could thus forgo the customary need for procedure and quickly dispatch their Jewish troublemakers without a regular trial” [NAC]. In the Levitical Law, stoning was the punishment for witchcraft (Lev.

20:27), for sacrificing one's children (Lev 20:2), for serving other gods (Deut 13:10; 17:5), for immorality (Deut 22:24), and other serious offences, and "particularly important in our study of John, for Sabbath breaking (Num 15:35–36) and blasphemy (Lev 24:23)" [NAC].

A third question has to do with the efforts of the Pharisees and Sadducees over a long period of time to entrap Jesus so they might take Him to the Roman authorities with sufficient charges to force them to have Him crucified. The Jewish authorities want Jesus dead, one way or another, just so long as they could protect themselves. The Roman soldiers were probably observing the confrontation, but since they might not have understood the language, or the religious significance of the action, they would have no evidence that the Jewish authorities were responsible for the stoning. They may well have seen fanatical action resulting from religious zeal elsewhere among pagan peoples.

The fact is that the people did become so worked up with righteous indignation that they ran out to get rocks and came back to stone Jesus to death. This does not mean that every worshiper had gone to get rocks, because there might still have been a division among the people. We may also assume that the authorities hoped that the Romans would see this as a spontaneous mob action and not connect them with it. They were still had the legal angle to fall back on if this failed. We might also remind ourselves that some of the youngest worshipers here might have participated in the mob action against Paul; and a few may have still been living at the time of the rebellion that led to the destruction of the temple and the dispersion of the Jews from Jerusalem in A. D. 70. As a matter of fact, we can reasonably assume that sons and grandsons of these religious authorities participated in that rebellion (which Jesus foretold).

10:32 - JESUS REPLIED. *"Jesus replied, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father. Which of these works are you stoning Me for?'"* On an earlier occasion Jesus had simply passed through the crowd, but here He waits for the people to return with rocks to stone Him, and then challenges, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. Which of these works are you stoning Me for?" Jesus is still in control of the situation. He came to die on a cross for the sins of the world. Until the time came for the crucifixion there was no way a mob was going to stone Him. Jesus once asked, "Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels?" (Matt 26:53). A Roman legion was made up of 6,000 men, so He was saying that He could instantly call down 72,000 angels to protect Him! One angel was enough to bring Egypt to her knees in one night. One angel slew 1850,000 Assyrians in one night (The Sennacherib Crisis of 701 B. C.). See 2 Kings 19:35-36 for that account.

Jesus asked them for what good work were they going to stone Him. In their minds, they were stoning Him for blasphemy. Earlier, they were prepared to kill him for healing a blind man on the Sabbath, and for calling God His Father. For the Muslims who would convert Christians with the claim that Jesus never called God His Father, Christians should point out that Jesus consistently revealed Himself as the Son of God.

10:33 - WE AREN'T STONING. *"We aren't stoning You for a good work,' the Jews answered, 'but for blasphemy, because You—being a man—make Yourself God.'"* Jesus had asked (vs. 32) for

what good works were they stoning Him. They deny that they are stoning Him for His good works. They are possibly also denying that they had tried to stone Him for good works by healing of the blind man on the Sabbath (John 8:59), yet the facts are clear.

FOR BLASPHEMY. One earlier mob (5:18) would have stoned Him for making paste to anoint the eyes of a blind man on the Sabbath. Here, they accuse Him of blasphemy “because You -being a man - make yourself God.” For anyone else to make that claim would be blasphemy. For Jesus it was a statement of fact. He had been careful to reveal Himself in such a way as to draw people to Himself, not to cause such a mob action. Now we can understand why He did not proclaim His relationship with the Father more forcefully from the beginning. He had some disciples who needed to be trained, and He had an appointment with the cross that he would keep in His own time. “There is no indication that Jesus was ever sacrilegious, but there also is no indication that the Jews in Jesus’ day were committed to such precision in their definitions or that crowds were interested in fairness. In any event, Jesus rejected their charge of blasphemy” [NAC].

10:34 - JESUS ANSWERED. “*Jesus answered them, “Isn’t it written in your law, I said, you are gods?”* That Jesus had an answer is not surprising to us today. That He calmly faced a bunch of men with big rocks in their hand, arms ready to draw back throw them at Him, is not really surprising. That He would quote from the Old Testament is less surprising, but that He would quote a passage that says, “you are gods”, whether it surprises the modern reader or not, must have frozen them with their arms drawn back. The author of the material in the Bible Knowledge Commentary explains that

“Jesus’ response to their objection requires a bit of insight into the methods of argument common in Rabbinic discussions. He first directed them to the Old Testament: in your Law. Normally “the Law” refers to the first five books. But here it means all the Old Testament, for Jesus quoted from the Psalms. It was ‘your’ Law in the sense that they gloried in their possession of it, and also in the sense that they should submit to its authority over them. Psalm 82 speaks of God as the true Judge (Ps. 82:1, 8) and of men, appointed as judges, who were failing to provide true judgment for God (Ps. 82:2-7). ‘Gods’ in Psalm 82:1, 6 refers to these human judges. In this sense, God said to the Jews, You are gods. In no way does this speak of a divine nature in man” [BKC].

YOUR LAW. If Jesus had been quoting from the rabbinical law one would not be surprised that He would have referred to it as “your law”, but since He quoted from Psalm 82, we know He was referring to the Old Testament. The Jews in general, and the Sanhedrin in particular, thought of

themselves as guardians of the Scripture.

YOU ARE GODS. Remember that those Jews had gone out and found rocks with which they were prepared to stone Jesus to death. He turned the charge on them by referring them to Psalm 82, where we read, “God has taken His place in the divine assembly; He judges among the gods: ‘How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?’” (Ps. 82:1-2). Later in that Psalm we read: “I said, ‘You are gods; you are all sons of the Most High’” (Ps. 82:6). “The judges of Israel abused their office and God is represented in Ps 82:6 as calling them ‘gods’ (theoi, elohim) because they were God’s representatives. See the same use of elohim in Ex 21:6; Ex 22:9, 28. Jesus meets the rabbis on their own ground in a thoroughly Jewish way” [ATR].

My friend, Dr. Bill Cooper of Middlesex, England, will understand this use of the word gods. Our mutual friend Dr. Gene Jeffries told me that Dr. Cooper had friends in the House of Lords. Dr. Cooper later assured me that at the present, after battling leukemia for many years, he no longer has friends “among the lords of the realm.” The use of the lower case letter at the beginning of the word in the English translation should be enough to remind us that Jesus was referring to the Jews as custodians of the law, not the Author of the Law.

“Perhaps it is best to remember that Jesus raised the issue in a rhetorical fashion because he knew his opponents could not supply an answer that would be adequate to defend their charge of blasphemy against him. To seek for some theological rationale, such as Hanson’s representative incarnational thesis or other equally sublime arguments, is to fail to recognize that in the interplay of words Jesus could beat the Pharisees at their own games of logic. But the main point is that he was in fact the God-sent one, and if Scripture could apply such theological terms to created beings, how much more should such terms be applied to the unique Son of God (10:36). The argument is similar to Jesus’ unanswerable question when he quoted Ps 110:1 in his Synoptic arguments with the Jews (cf. Matt 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44)” [NAC].

10:35 - WORD OF GOD. “*If He called those whom the word of God came to ‘gods’—and the Scripture cannot be broken--*” Jesus is beating the Pharisees and Sadducees at their own game! They are the self-proclaimed masters of the Law, but Jesus is taking the law and tying them in knots with it. This was not supposed to be happening. A carpenter from Galilee should be coming to them for instructions in the law, not using the Scriptures to correct them.

THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN. On this they all agreed. This statement would have been effective in stopping those who were prepared to stone Him. “Jesus’ logic was impeccably clear. If their sourcebook (‘your Law’) called humans ‘gods’ and the Scriptures are utterly reliable (‘cannot be broken’), then where was their problem? [NAC].

10:36 - DO YOU SAY. “*-(D)o you say, ‘You are blaspheming’ to the One the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God?*” The Jewish mob, with the backing of

their religious leaders, were prepared to stone Jesus to death. That they had gone out and armed themselves with rocks shows that they were so determined to stone Jesus that not even the threat of the Roman army would dissuade them.

10:37 - IF I AM NOT. *“If I am not doing My Father’s works, don’t believe Me.”* Jesus uses simple logic as His defense against the mob, but at the same time He is interested in more than preventing Himself from being stoned. He wants to persuade them to believe Him. The Greek word, “with the simple dative; (means) believe *me*, not *on me*. *It is a question of faith in His testimony, not in His person*” [VINCENT, italics in the original]. The problem here was not with His claim to be the unique Son of God, but their failure to believe Him. So, He now turns to the key issue of recognition, His works. “If his works were not what God would do, then he agreed that they had a reason for their unbelief (10:37). But if his works were the works of God, then the works were a witness to who he was (10:38). Jesus’ argument here is similar to the logic of the healed blind man in 9:30–33. Jesus’ works were the window into his words” [NAC].

The Jews had gone out and found rocks to stone Jesus because He had claimed that God was His Father. His claim to be the Son of God was to them blasphemous and grounds for stoning, and they were so worked up that the threat of Roman retribution would not deter them from killing Jesus. Such was their zeal for God that they would prove their loyalty to Him by killing His Son!

10:38 - BELIEVE THE WORKS. *“But if I am doing them and you don’t believe Me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father.”* Jesus was using the rabbinical method in stating the divine truth, and in so doing He left them “without a food to stand on”, as we would say today. His brilliance and His logic was so powerful that they had no answer for it.

“There was in Christ’s words, independent of any miracles, a self-evidencing truth, majesty and grace, which those who had any spiritual susceptibility were unable to resist (7:46; 8:30). But, for those who lacked this, ‘the works’ were a mighty help. that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him—thus reiterating his claim to essential oneness with the Father. The Son and Father’s oneness is described by John in terms of mutual indwelling. The two were one with one another because they dwelt in each other (see 14:10, 11; 17:21)” [NCWB, bold in the original].

10:39 - TRYING TO SEIZE HIM. *“Then they were trying again to seize Him, yet He eluded their grasp.”* Earlier, I wrote that the mob, having armed themselves with rocks, had their arms

drawn back, ready to stone Jesus. Mentally, that was certainly the case, but actually they would probably seize Him and drag Him from the temple complex before stoning Him. Such was their reverence for the temple that they would drag the Lord of the temple out of the temple complex before stoning Him to death.

The more I study the Gospel According to John the more convinced I am that it would serve us well to read it with one eye on the Prologue and the other on John 20:31: “But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). In 1:1-18, John was inspired to tell us what he sought to accomplish in this Gospel; in 20:29-30, he tells us what the reader should have gleaned from it. Chapter 10, falling right in the middle of the Book, affords the reader an opportunity to stop and look both ways (however, the actual centerpiece of this Gospel, as we shall see, is Chapter 12). The NAC summarizes these verses exceptionally well:

“The goal of the Gospel is to believe without seeing (20:29, namely, believing through the witness of words), but the early stage of achieving real understanding concerning the relationship between Jesus and the Father was to respond to the works of Jesus (10:37). This Gospel then is intended to serve as the transition from works to words.

“But as the Jews failed to recognize the great work of healing the blind man, they were not about to accept the words of the one who did such works. Instead, they once again sought to seize him. Yet they were not in charge of his life, and therefore Jesus merely escaped their violent attempt (10:39). We could of course add from other contexts that it was not yet his hour (cf. 7:30; 8:20)” [NAC].

Many beyond the Jordan Believe

10:40 - ACROSS JORDAN. *“So He departed again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and He remained there.”* Such was the intensity of the opposition now in Jerusalem that Jesus was forced to move outside of the city. The Jewish religious leaders were determined to see Him dead, and they had a significant number of people stirred up to the point that they were willing to stone Him. So, Jesus took His disciples and crossed over the Jordan River into Perea where John the Baptist had proclaimed the coming of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Ch. 1). There, He baptized those who believed his message and repented. *“Jesus’ ministry here was received much more favorably, probably because the Baptist had prepared the people there. John, even though dead, was still having influence in people’s lives as they remembered his witness. Though John never performed a miraculous sign (se-meion), the people believed his witness about Jesus. By contrast, the hostile Jerusalem crowd had seen His signs and yet disobeyed. In Perea many trusted Jesus as Savior”* [BKC].

10:41 - MANY CAME. *“Many came to Him and said, ‘John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true.’”* John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Messiah, had proclaimed the coming of the long awaited Messiah, and then he said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29).

“And John testified, “I watched the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He rested on Him. 33 I didn’t know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One you see the Spirit descending and resting on—He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God!” (1:32-34 (HCSB).

JOHN NEVER DID A SIGN. This is what the people of the region said about John. He preached that the kingdom of God was hand, and then identified Jesus as the coming One. John did not confirm his mission by working miracles because (1) that was not his mission, and (2) because the Lord who sent him to herald the coming of the Messiah did not what the people to assume John was the Messiah. Instead, “he showed that he was a prophet by foretelling the character and success of Jesus. Either miracle or prophecy is conclusive proof of a divine mission, for no man can foretell a future event, or work a miracle, except by the special aid of God. It may be remarked that the people of that place were properly prepared by the ministry of John for the preaching of Jesus” [BARNES].

EVERYTHING JOHN SAID. John the Baptist had prepared them well for the coming of the Lamb of God. Now that they had heard Jesus many believe Him and professed that everything John had said about Him was true.

10:42 - MANY BELIEVED. *“And many believed in Him there.”* Many of the people in the region had heard John preach and some of them had heard John identify Jesus as the Messiah. Now, after hearing Jesus, “many believed in Him.” Clarke writes that they believed in Him “1. because of the testimony of John the Baptist whom they knew to be a good and a wise man, and a prophet of the Lord; and they knew he could neither deceive nor be deceived in this matter; and, 2. they believed because of the miracles which they saw Jesus work. These fully proved that all that John had said of him was true” [CLARKE]. Is it not interesting that the scribes and Pharisees, with all their training in the Old Testament Scripture could not, or would not draw the same conclusion? It is also interesting that, with all their religiosity, they could work no miracles.

In Chapter 9, a blind man with no theological training gave a remarkably simple testimony about what Jesus had done for him. The highly trained Pharisees and Sadducees arrogantly rejected his testimony. In Chapter 10, those same religious authorities hear the truth from Jesus and not only reject the truth, they seek to kill the Messenger. Adam Clarke provides us with a transition from this chapter to the next:

“It must be remarked, by every serious reader, that our Lord did frequently speak of himself to the Jews, as being not only sent of God as their Messiah, but as being one

with him. And it is as evident that in this sense the priests and Pharisees understood him; and it was because they would not credit this that they accused him of blasphemy. Now, if our Lord was not the person they understood him to state himself to be, he had the fairest opportunity, from their strong remonstrances, to correct their misapprehension of his words, if they really had mistaken his meaning- but this he never attempts. He rather strengthens his assertions in his consequent discourses with them; which, had not his positions been true, he could not have done, even as an honest man. He not only asserted himself to be equal with God, but wished them to believe it to be true; and he amply confirmed this heavenly doctrine by the miracles he wrought” [CLARKE].

CHAPTER 11

The Death of Lazarus at Bethany

11:1 - LAZARUS. *“Now a man was sick, Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.”* The name Lazarus appears only here and in chapter 12 in John and then in Luke 16:20ff. The Lazarus of whom Luke writes is not the same as the one about whom John is writing here. The name may have been a shortened form of the name, Eleazar, meaning “God assists”. Robertson notes the other Lazarus was a man mentioned in a parable, but we are never told that the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus was a parable, and since the usual formula and character of a parable of Jesus is missing, this writer rejects the notion that the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus was a parable.

BETHANY. Bethany was located just east of the Kidron Valley, on eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives, some two miles from Jerusalem. According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, Bethany “became the final stop before Jerusalem just off the main east-west road coming from Jericho. Being at the foot of the mountain, the people could not see Jerusalem, thus giving Bethany a sense of seclusion and quietness. The road between Bethany and Jerusalem provided a ready avenue for travel across Olivet with the journey taking about fifty-five minutes to walk” [HBD]. The name Bethany means “house of suffering”, but not because of the suffering of Lazarus. Jesus visited his friends there before the illness and death of Lazarus.

MARY AND HER SISTER MARTHA. Both Mary and Martha, sisters Lazarus, are mentioned here and in Luke 10:38-42. “In both contexts Martha is represented primarily as a rather determined worker (Luke 10:41: cf. John 12:2) and Mary as the worshipful one (Luke 10:39, 42; cf. John 11:2; 12:3)” [NAC].

11:2 - MARY WAS THE ONE. *“Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.”* John is writing this over a half a century later and it would not be surprising if every time he thought of Mary the first

thing that came to mind was the image of her anointing Jesus with the fragrant oil and wiping His feet with her hair. That would happen after the miracle about which he is now writing, but this is the way he remembers this Mary. “In this present context an interesting technique of storytelling is employed. Mary the sister of Lazarus is identified here before the event as the one who anointed the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair (11:2; cf.12:3). That loving, sacrificial event must have seared itself into the minds of the early Christians, as both Mark (14:9) and Matthew (26:13) bear witness” [NAC].

My eight year old granddaughter Abigail plays on a softball team that has four Abigails on it. They call one Abigail, one Abby, and the other two by their middle name. Abigail’s middle name is Grace so she had to have “Grace” printed on her helmet. Still, when someone calls out, “come on, Abigail!”, I look for our Abigail. Can you imagine the early disciples’ effort to distinguish one Mary from another? It is possible that many of the early saints referenced this anointing of Jesus and the wiping of His feet with her hair to distinguish her from any other Mary.

We are given the basic information we need for this story: Lazarus, along with his sisters Mary and Martha lived in the village of Bethany and Lazarus was sick. John will explain the brevity later (21:25).

11:3 SENT A MESSAGE. *“So the sisters sent a message to Him: ‘Lord, the one You love is sick.’”* When they realized that their brother’s illness was serious they sent a messenger to tell Jesus. Obviously, they knew no other identification would be necessary other than “the one You love”. Such was His relationship to this family. *“Though Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha is mentioned only in John 11 and 12, verses 3 and 5 of this chapter show that Jesus must have been his friend for quite some time” [NCWB].* *The sisters obviously believed Jesus would come quickly when He received their message, and that He could and would restore their brother to his health.*

11:4 - JESUS HEARD IT. *“When Jesus heard it, He said, ‘This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’”* Jesus’ response to the message has challenged scholars through the centuries. We can only imagine what was going on in the minds of His disciples. My first question is, to whom did Jesus say, “This sickness will not end in death”? To the messenger who would immediately return to tell Mary and Martha what He said? Or, to His disciples who were going to see a miracle they would never forget? The logical answer is that this message was delivered to Jesus in the presence of His disciples, and that He responded in their presence. The messenger would immediately return to Mary and Martha to tell them what He said, but the disciples would be left to wonder about His response.

NOT END IN DEATH. Jesus knew that Lazarus would die from his illness. In fact, He must have known that his friend was already dead. He also knew that his death would be the what He was going to do. The fact of the resurrection is a critical part of the Gospel (Rom. 10:9-10), and after the resurrection of the Lord, His disciples proclaimed it everywhere they went. Jesus is preparing to give

His disciples, the people of Bethany and Jerusalem yet another sign, and this one they would never forget. Clarke notes that “It is very likely that this verse contains the message which Christ sent back, by the person whom the afflicted sisters had sent to him; and this, no doubt, served much to strengthen their confidence, though their faith must have been greatly exercised by the death of their brother: for when this took place, though they buried him, yet they believed, even then, probably on the ground of this message, that Jesus might raise him from the dead. See John 11:22” [CLARKE]. Robertson’s take is that He meant “Death in the final issue, to remain dead. Lazarus did die, but he did not remain dead” [ATR].

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. Jesus knew the death of His friend would not result in a permanent loss to his sisters and his friends, but it work out “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Any student of the Word appreciates the fact that this incident is still bringing glory to God and that Jesus is still being glorified through it. True believers understand that not all who read this account will glorify Jesus. Some will read it and reject it as nothing more than a myth. Others may read it and believe that a man named Jesus did something spectacular, or at least His followers interpreted it that way. No one, however, glorifies Jesus apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. After two thousand years, countless believers still glorify Him.

11:5 - JESUS LOVED. “(*Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus.*)” John and his fellow disciples needed no one to tell them how Jesus loved “Martha, her sister, and Lazarus”, but he makes this statement for our benefit.” Robertson writes, “Now Jesus loved (êgapa de). Imperfect active of agapaô picturing the continued love of Jesus for this noble family where he had his home so often (Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8). The sisters expected him to come at once and to heal Lazarus” [ATR].

11:6 - HE STAYED. “*So when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*” Based on what we read in verses 11 and 39, it would seem that Lazarus was already dead when received the message. “Jesus’ *movements were under God’s* direction (cf. 7:8)” [BKC]. From our vantage point we would certainly agree that “The lingerings of God seem unbearably trying at times, but their culminations are always glorious. The hesitation of God is never based on calloused indifference (11:5), *but always on divinely perfect timing*” [NCWB].

11:7 - TO JUDEA. “*Then after that, He said to the disciples, “Let’s go to Judea again.”*” After His recent encounter with the Jewish authorities at the temple complex, Jesus had led His disciples across the Jordan into Perea. Two days after He received the message that Lazarus was sick, and three days after His friend’s death, Jesus announced that they would go back to Judea. Bear in mind that Lazarus had probably died very soon after the messenger had left Bethany. He traveled one day, Jesus delayed two days, and they would travel another day to reach Bethany. We know that Lazarus had been dead four days when Jesus arrived (11:39).

11:8 - THE JEWS TRIED TO STONE YOU. “*Rabbi,*” the disciples told Him, *‘just now the*

Jews tried to stone You, and You're going there again?" His disciples must have been relieved when Jesus did not go immediately to the home of Lazarus and his sisters upon receiving the message that His friend was sick. Now, they are alarmed that He is planning to return to Judea. They remind Him that the Jews "just now" tried to stone You (see 10:39).

THE JEWS. At the time John was writing this, well over fifty years after the event, he had been serving the Lord in a Gentile land for many years. The lone surviving apostle, he preached to, and taught both Jews and Gentiles, and this Gospel account would be read by both Jews and Gentiles. However, as the time passed, a predominantly Gentile church would be reading this Gospel. He is not writing this to blame the Jews for killing Jesus. Earlier writers (the Synoptic Gospels) identified those behind the plots against Him as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jewish readers would make that distinction, but when John wrote this everything had changed. The temple had been destroyed in A. D. 70 and he was writing this around A. D. 86. While many Jewish believers remembered the various sects among the Jews, the Gentiles did not know them. For this reason, John was inspired to write , "the Jews tried to stone You." At His latest visit to the temple "the Jews" were clearly divided over Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees were almost unanimous in their bitter opposition against Him.

The apostles were amazed that Jesus would return to Judea after the close call in the temple complex. Jesus, on the other hand, knew that no one would stone Him. In fact, no one could have stoned Him, not without overcoming 12 legions of angels (Matt. 26:53). He came to die on the cross and nothing would change that.

11:9 - IF ANYONE WALKS. *"Aren't there 12 hours in a day?" Jesus answered. 'If anyone walks during the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world.'* In a sense, Jesus' "day" had reached the eleventh hour, and He was now walking in the final hour of His time on earth. He would use His remaining time to do that which would glorify the God and bring Glory to Himself.

"On one level, this refers to the actual sunlight and daylight of the physical world. Jesus' time to walk in the sunlight was now limited. He had work to do before his death. On another level, "the light of the world" refers to Christ's presence among mankind. While he was among men, he was their light (see 1:4; 8:12; 9:5). 'Men should make the most of the presence of Christ, the Light of the world. For when he is withdrawn from them there is no possibility of their 'walking' without stumbling' (Morris)" [NCWB].

11:10 - DURING THE NIGHT. *"If anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him."* In that day, one simply did not travel at night. Most walked wherever they were going, and while towns and villages may have kept a few oil lamps burning at night, the roads

and paths between the villages were not lighted, and the travel was often dangerous, especially when one was climbing steep hills with dangerous precipices along the road.

What Jesus is saying in verses 9 and 10 is not simply rambling to have something to say to His disciples. He is teaching them.

“Jesus responded with a sermonette. Employing the traditional religious theme of light and darkness usually associated with good and evil, he applied these symbols to the imagery of travel by day and night. The former permits of safe travel whereas the latter is to be associated with the danger of stumbling. But picking up the theme from the Festival of Tabernacles that he was “the light of the world” (cf. 8:12; 9:5), Jesus reminded his disciples that the light enables them to see (blepein). Conversely, those who do not have the light in (en) them were in danger of stumbling. Time designations in John often carry powerful theological implications such as references to ‘night’ (e.g., 3:2; 13:30) and ‘winter’ (10:23). Like Nicodemus, who came by night, Jesus was implicitly suggesting in his sermonette that the disciples needed to deal with their spiritual condition of ‘nightness’ by relying on the presence in their midst of ‘the light’ (Jesus). Unfortunately, it will become evident in the crucial remark of Thomas (11:16) that the disciples were stuck in the fearful condition of night and were not responding to the presence of light” [NAC].

11:11 - LAZARUS HAS FALLEN ASLEEP. “*He said this, and then He told them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I’m on My way to wake him up.’*” The disciples had tried to dissuade Jesus from returning to Judea but He has told them there are twelve hours in the day and one must travel while there is light for traveling. One normally did not travel at night, though an individual or a small group of men might travel some distance under a full moon. Now, He announces that Lazarus has fallen asleep. But, He adds, “I’m on My way to wake him up.” His “disciples missed the meaning of this euphemism for death (11:12, 13; cf. Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:14)” [NCWB].

11:12 - FALLEN ASLEEP. “*Then the disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.’*” Robertson renders it, “He will recover (sôthêsetai).” and notes that this is the “Future passive indicative of sôzô used in its original sense of being or getting well (safe and sound). Conclusion of the condition of the first class (ei kekoimêtai)” [ATR].

Jesus has spoken of traveling while there is daylight, but His disciples are still in the dark. To them, the conventional wisdom is that if Lazarus was asleep he must be recovering from his illness. What more could anyone ask than for a person who has been ill to receive rest? Anyone who has spent any time in a modern hospital wonders why the nurses cannot appreciate that! The evening shift comes in and wakes the patient out of restful sleep to check his blood pressure, take his temperature, and whatever else has been ordered. He then goes back to sleep just in time for the nurse on the graveyard shift to come in and disturb his rest once again to do the same thing. Then, they come in

and awaken him in the middle of their shift, and again before they end their shift. He dozes off just before the day shift comes in the check everything once again. The information is necessary for the doctor, but the patient is thinking, "I would be all right if they would just let me sleep."

11:13 - JESUS, HOWEVER. *"Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought He was speaking about natural sleep."* The Tyndale NT agrees: "the natural sleep" [Vincent]. When Jesus said Lazarus had fallen asleep (vs. 11), He meant that he was dead, but the disciples (vs. 12) thought He was talking about "natural sleep". We should remind ourselves that John was one of those disciples, so he is once again writing about something of which he had personal knowledge. Can you imagine the significance of reading a first hand account of the work and words of Jesus? And a divinely inspired account at that. It is sad that many people who have an opportunity to read the words of eye witnesses to the ministry of the Lord are satisfied to read what modern writers say about those witnesses. One older scholar noted to a friend that many of our schools today do not teach the Word of God, they teach students "about the Word of God."

11:14 - JESUS TOLD THEM. *"So Jesus then told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died.'" Since they had missed His meaning when He said that Lazarus was asleep, He stated plainly, "Lazarus has died." They finally got the message, but this raises a question or two. Was Jesus being too vague for people of that day? Or, had He chosen some really dense disciples? Asking those questions is a little like asking, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" If you answer yes, it means that you used to beat her but you have stopped. If you say no, it means you are still beating her. Jesus often made statement the people did not fully comprehend until after they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit Who would call His words to their remembrance (John 14:26). That His disciples were not ignorant is seen in their ministry, writings, and eventual martyrdom. They did not understand what He was teaching them about His death and resurrection until after His arose.*

11:15 - GLAD FOR YOU. *"I'm glad for you that I wasn't there so that you may believe. But let's go to him."* Does Jesus mean that had He been there he would not have let Lazarus die? Some think so. If He had been there, and had He healed his friend, the disciples, and for that matter, believers of all ages would have been denied a great blessing. What Jesus was about to do would never be forgotten.

LET'S GO TO HIM. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. He held off going until the time was right to work a mighty sign and to make an awesome proclamation. In the entire history of the world there has never been anything else like this, and John, the beloved disciple, was there and he saw it all. This is a direct testimony and for many years the account could have been verified by a large host of witnesses.

11:16 - THEN THOMAS. *"Then Thomas (called "Twin") said to his fellow disciples, 'Let's go so that we may die with Him.'" They had protested His return to Judea (vs. 8), but now Thomas says to his fellow disciples, "Let's go so that we may die with Him." Sadly, many remember Thomas today as "Doubting Thomas" (because of what we read in John 20:24-25). John identifies him here as "Twin". Perhaps after this statement we should remember him as the first disciple who was ready*

to die with Jesus. Thomas is ready to die with Jesus. Lazarus is already dead. He recognizes the danger in returning to Judea, but he is still ready to go with Jesus, regardless of the cost. One writer sees his statement here as ironic. *“On one level it reveals Thomas’ ignorance of the uniqueness of Christ’s atoning death. On another level it is prophetic of many disciples’ destinies (12:25)”* [BKC].

The Resurrection and the Life

11:17 - WHEN JESUS ARRIVED. *“When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.”* Lazarus, as noted above, must have died soon after the messenger left with the message Mary and Martha gave him for Jesus. *“Jesus was then a day’s journey away.* Since Palestine is warm and decomposition sets in quickly, a person was usually buried the same day he died (cf. v. 39)” [BKC].

11:18 - BETHANY. *“Bethany was near Jerusalem (about two miles away).”* Bethany was located just east of the Kidron Valley, on eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives, some two miles from Jerusalem (see note on 11:1). Mention of Bethany and its nearness to Jerusalem points out two things for our consideration. First, it explains why many people from Jerusalem were at the scene of this great miracle (see vv. 45-46). Second, it also *“prepares the reader for the coming climax which was to take place in the great city. When a person died, the Jews mourned for a prolonged period of time. During this period it was considered a pious duty to comfort the bereaved”* [BKC].

11:19 - MANY OF THE JEWS. *“Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.”* These Jews were not hostile to Jesus, and they would have known the family’s love for Him. There were seven days of solemn mourning (1Sam. 31:13), and they were right in the middle of time when friends, and possibly professional mourners would weep and mourn with the family of the deceased. *“Many of the Jews”* here it does not seem to carry the political overtones the words obviously imply when John writes of the Jewish authorities. Here, it may suggest that Lazarus had been a person of some influence, however, the real point for us may be that the miracle they were about to see was witnessed by a lot of people and it could not be easily dismissed by the authorities.

John, as previously mentioned, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to a church that was becoming

more and more a Gentile church, even though there were still many Jews who believed in Jesus. The Gentiles would not have been familiar with all the sects and parties of the Jews. Many Jews from the area had come to comfort Martha and Mary, who were grieving the loss of their brother Lazarus. The Matthew, Mark, and Luke, writing before the destruction of the temple, mentioned the Pharisees and Sadducees more often than John. When John wrote there was not temple in Jerusalem, no Sanhedrin, and the influence of the major religious sects was but a painful memory to those Jews who had been scattered throughout that part of the world (the Dispersion).

11:20 - MARTHA HEARD. *“As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary remained seated in the house.”* John is continuing the narrative in a way that reminds us that he was there. There were many Jewish mourners at their home, and as soon as one of the mourners spotted Jesus and His disciples someone found Martha and told her Jesus was coming. Instead of waiting for Him to reach her house, she went out to meet Him. Mary, John tells us, “remained seated in the house.” Did she not hear that Jesus was coming? Did she hear it, but for some reason we are not given “remained seated in the house”? That is really not plausible, considering her love for the Lord. The home, both inside and outside, was swarming with friends, neighbors, and other mourns. Martha may have been inside the house while Martha was outside, or nearer to the door.

11:21 - LORD, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE. *“Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.”* Is this an accusation, or simply a statement made by a loving sister to a very close friend of the family? For those who believe she was rebuking Jesus for not being there, this would be a good place to remind ourselves that Martha understood that He could not have been there, since her brother had died very soon after they had sent the messenger to inform Him that the one He loved was sick (vs. 3). She expresses faith that, had Jesus been there, He would have healed her brother.

Pastors who have visited family members who were still in mourning following the death of a loved one have heard many statements that might not have been made days or weeks later. Jesus has come and she is pleased to see Him. “Mary (verse John 11:32) uses these identical words to Jesus. Clearly they had said so to each other with wistful longing if not with a bit of reproach for his delay. But they used *ês*, not *êlthes* or *egenou*. But busy, practical Martha comes to the point” [ATR].

11:22 - YET EVEN NOW. *“Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You.”* Does she believe Jesus will raise her brother after four days? Is Martha asking Jesus to ask His Father to raise Lazarus even now? What happens later would cause us to doubt that. So, what then is she asking? Is she asking Him to help her bear her grief?

GOD WILL GIVE YOU. Robertson translates it “As many things as thou dost ask of God”, and then comments: “God will give (*dôsei soi ho theos*). Repetition of *ho theos* for emphasis. Martha still has courageous faith in the power of God through Jesus and Jesus in verse John 11:41 says practically what she has said here” [ATR]. I agree with the writer who says Martha’s statement “might imply by themselves that she was confident Lazarus would be resuscitated. But her actions in

protest at the tomb (*John 11:39*) and her words to Jesus (v. 24) contradict that interpretation. Her words may be taken as a general statement of the Father's blessing on Jesus" [BKC, bold added by this writer].

11:23 - RISE AGAIN. *"Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her.*" Jesus had delayed two days after hearing that Lazarus was sick, and now four days have passed since his death. If anyone else had made this statement we would assume that he meant a future resurrection of the dead, but Jesus had deliberately delayed His departure from Perea for a specific reason. He knows what He is about to do. Some speculate that the Jews believed that one's spirit remained in, or near, the body for three days after his death, and that Jesus delayed His visit until the fourth day so no one would believe He had simply resuscitated Lazarus. While some may have believed that, the Scripture does not support it here. There could be no doubt that Lazarus was dead, as we shall see.

11:24 - I KNOW. *"Martha said, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'*" Martha expresses no hope for an immediate resuscitation, but expresses her faith in a future resurrection. If one wants to find Scriptural proof that those who believe in God will experience a future resurrection, they may want to read the Book of Job, possibly the earliest Book of the Old Testament, to see that Job expressed hope (*Job 19:25*). Clarke writes: "The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was then commonly received; and though it was our Lord who fully exemplified it by his own resurrection, yet the opinion was common, not only among God's people, but among all those who believed in the God of Israel. The Jewish writings after the captivity are full of this doctrine. See *2Macc. 7:9, 14, 23, 36; 2Macc. 12:43; 2Macc. 14:46; Wisd. 5:1, 7, 17; Wisd. 6:6, 7*. See also Josephus and the Targums, *passim*" [CLARKE].

11:25 - I AM THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE. *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live.'*" Here we find **the fifth I AM sayings of Jesus**. With these words, Jesus begins one of the greatest dialogs on the resurrection in the history of mankind. **I AM the Resurrection and Life**, He declared. Who else could say that?

John was inspired to begin this Gospel with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (*John 1:1*). Throughout the first three volumes this writer has often stressed the importance of keeping the Prologue in mind as we read the Gospel According to John. At the burning bush, Moses asked God to identify Himself so he could tell Pharaoh who the Lord God of Hebrew people was. The Lord gave Moses a name that he had never given anyone else: I AM. When we use the name YAHWEH, we should understand that it means I AM, or in the fullest sense, "I Am that which I am; I am that which I was; and I am that which I shall be." He is the self-existent One, and He is the One responsible for our existence. He is the changeless God of eternity, the one who cannot be defined in human terms. Jesus, who is One with the Father, now says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus has the power to raise one who has been dead four days and restore him to life here on earth, and He has the power to raise one unto eternal life. The NAC quotes Dodd and others who have

provided a “convincing basis to argue that the further statements explicate the double-level meaning intended in Jesus’ original statement to Martha that her brother would rise again (11:23)” [NAC].

“Resurrection and life were two related dimensions of Jesus’ proclamation. Jesus clearly possesses the power of resurrection so that the one who believes in Jesus, even though he were to die, will experience that power of resurrection (“will live,” 11:25) in their dead bodies. But beyond resurrection, Jesus is also life. Accordingly, whoever experiences resurrection (“lives and believes,” 11:26) also will experience the great Johannine goal of life (20:31) or eternal life (3:16) and will never die (11:26, or perish, 3:16). Jesus’ statement to Martha therefore is not a tautology. Her brother was dead and even though he had entered Sheol (the four days), he was not beyond the range of Jesus’ power. Martha, however, could think only eschatologically about Lazarus and thus she was in for a surprise” [NAC].

Vincent explains why the words “I Am” are so significant: “Martha had stated the resurrection rather as *a doctrine, a current tenet: Jesus states it as a fact, identified with His own person. He does not say, I raise the dead; I perform the resurrection, but I am the resurrection. In His own person, representing humanity, He exhibits man as immortal, but immortal only through union with Him*” [VINCENT]. The same author comments on “life”:

“The life is the larger and inclusive idea. Resurrection is involved in life as an incident developed by the temporary and apparent triumph of death. All true life is in Christ. In Him is lodged everything that is essential to life, in its origin, its maintenance, and its consummation, and all this is conveyed to the believer in his union with Him. This life is not affected by death. ‘Every believer is in reality and forever sheltered from death. To die with full light, in the clear certainty of the life which is in Jesus, to die only to continue to live to Him, is no longer that fact which human language designates by the name of death. It is as though Jesus had said: In me death is certain to live, and the living is certain never to die’ (Godet)” [VINCENT].

11:26 -EVERYONE WHO LIVES. “*Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?*” One Bible student translates it, “. . . shall not die forever”

[NCWB]. This would certainly apply to Lazarus, who had been a believer in Jesus at the time of his death. Even though he had died, he would live again (live forever). “Every believer who has died would yet live, and everyone who was (and is) still living and believing would certainly not die forever. Christ did not promise the prevention of death; He promised the life that guarantees resurrection and eternal life. Christ did not prevent Lazarus’s death, but he would guarantee his eternal life” [NCWB].

In this, the fifth of Jesus’ great “I am” declarations, He is saying that the “Resurrection and the Life of the new Age is present right now because Jesus is the Lord of life (1:4). Jesus’ words about life and death are seemingly paradoxical. A believer’s death issues in new life. In fact, the life of a believer is of such a quality that he will never die spiritually. He has eternal life (3:16; 5:24; 10:28), and the end of physical life is only a sleep for his body until the resurrection unto life. At death the spiritual part of a believer, his soul, goes to be with the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6, 8; Phil. 1:23)” [BKC].

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS? This is not one of those “Can you believe that?!” statements which one makes to announce the absurdity of some statement or event. Jesus had made a powerful statement about Himself, and then he asked this question to test Martha’s faith. It is a “Sudden test of Martha’s insight and faith with all the subtle turns of thought involved” [ATR]. It was obviously asked at this time to imply that He was “able to raise up Lazarus, and because it was a proper time for her to test her own faith. The time of affliction is a favourable period to try ourselves to ascertain whether we have faith. If we still have confidence in God, if we look to him for comfort in such seasons, it is good evidence that we are his friends. He that loves God when he takes away his comforts, has the best evidence possible of true attachment to him” [BARNES]. Little did she realize where Jesus was going with this.

11:27 - YES, LORD. “Yes, Lord,” she told Him, “I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” Martha used the perfect tense to stress that her past faith was still very much in effect, in spite of the circumstances. Hers was a great confession of faith in Jesus Christ. “She agreed with Jesus’ exposition about eternal life for those who believe in Him. Then she confessed three things about Jesus. He is (a) **the Christ** (‘Messiah’), (b) **the Son of God**—which is probably a title of the Messiah (cf. 1:49; Ps. 2:7)—and (c) **the One who was to come into the world** (lit., ‘the Coming One’; cf. John

12:13). *She believed that Jesus is the Messiah who came to do God's will, but as yet she had no hint of the coming miracle regarding her brother*" [BKC, bold in the original].

Jesus Shares the Sorrow of the Sisters

11:28 - THE TEACHER IS HERE. *"Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.'*" Martha left Jesus long enough to go and announce to Mary that Jesus was there and that He was calling for her. "This segment begins with Martha, the activist organizer type, summoning her sister to action. Carson assumes that Jesus was calling for Mary. Such a reflection may be correct, but I wonder if that statement may not also have been an indication of Martha's controlling temperament (note her role at the tomb; cf. a similar type of driving personality evident in Luke 10:40)" [NAC]. That author may be right, but we are really not given enough information here to assign motives or to psychoanalyze the two sisters.

Martha used the title, Teacher, here for Jesus. Later, He would say to His disciples, "You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am" (John 13:13). Martha called Jesus "Teacher", and Jesus affirmed that title, but to some professing Christians this is not a complimentary title for a pastor. A half a century ago people were more or less apologizing for their pastor when they said, "Our pastor is a good teacher, and he is a good pastor, but he is not a good preacher." In the days before most churches had a good sound system, the really "great preacher" was one who had a "powerful voice". I heard that statement many times in my youth when someone was asked about his or her new pastor. If he was not a "fire and brimstone" preacher some were compelled to apologize for him. Jesus was not ashamed to be called Teacher, and any preacher who does not constantly teach his people is failing both the Teacher and his people. In the New Testament emphasis is placed on both the preaching of the Word and the teaching of the Word.

11:29 - AS SOON AS SHE HEARD. *"As soon as she heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him."* I find it interesting that a serious Bible scholar would suggest here that Martha had to persuade Mary to go out to see Jesus. The truth is that as soon as she heard that Jesus was there she jumped up and went directly to Him. When someone announced to Martha that Jesus had come, she obviously left immediately to meet Him, and there is no basis for concluding that Mary was any less anxious to see Him. Jesus apparently wanted to have a private conversation with Mary, as He had just had with Martha. "His purpose was probably to comfort and instruct her. 'The Teacher' is a notable title for it was unusual for a Jewish Rabbi to instruct a woman (cf. 4:1-42)" [BKC].

11:30 - JESUS HAD NOT YET. *"Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met Him."* Robertson noted that Jesus wanted to meet with Mary away from the crowd, but he said that he didn't know why. It would seem to me that Jesus wanted a private audience with Mary, similar to the one He had just had with Martha. My first thought was that He did not want this private conversation to be heard by the assembled crowd, out of respects for her grief. Then I remembered that Mary was accompanied by a host of mourners. Those mourners,

however, were a source of frustration when Jesus was trying to communicate with Mary.

11:31 - THE JEWS. *“The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.”* The Greek word means to cry aloud, to wail. Here again, John uses the term “the Jews” to identify these mourners who were following Mary. They were sympathetic, loyal mourners who were determined “to be there for her” in her time of grief. No doubt, they were whispering among themselves about where Mary was going and concluded that she was going to mourn at the tomb of Lazarus. That Mary was followed closely by an entourage of mourners is not surprising, since in her culture “prolonged mourning for the dead was considered an essential part of every funeral. (Professional mourners were sometimes even hired for a fee.) It was this kind of excessive sorrow over physical death—and especially in the case of a believer like Lazarus—that grieved our Lord so very deeply” [NCWB].

11:32 - WHEN MARY CAME. *“When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him, ‘Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!’”* Mary says the same thing her sister had said to Jesus. What pastor is there who has not stood with a family as they mourned the death of a family member by repeating the same words to a succession of visitors? Mary says basically what Martha had said. May we not assume that Mary and Martha had said those same words about Jesus during the past four days? To one mourner after another they may well have said, “If only Jesus had been here, our brother would still be alive.”

LORD. When Mary came to Jesus she “fell at His feet” and addressed Him as “Lord”. Was she acknowledging Him as Lord, or was she simply using it as a term of respect for a beloved teacher? Her physical action seems to imply more than a title of respect. Did she have had a deeper understanding of His Lordship than many of His other disciples? Her statement certainly implies that she looked to Him as her Lord.

11:33 - WHEN JESUS SAW. *“When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was angry in His spirit and deeply moved.”* Jesus saw Mary at His feet, and the mourners still uttering their words of comfort, which they had been doing for four days now. He took in the scene instantly. Mary and “the Jews who had come with her” were all crying.

HE WAS ANGRY. Jesus was there with a purpose in mind, but when He saw Mary on the ground before Him crying, and the whole crowd of mourners crying with her, His response was anger. Yes, Jesus did become angry at times. Was He not angry when he cleansed the temple? Was God not often angry with His Chosen People in the Wilderness (Num. 11:10), and throughout their long history of rebellion and idolatry? The Bible commands us to be angry and sin not (Eph. 4:26).

The question here is, what caused Jesus to become angry? Some seem to assume that while her statement was the same thing as Martha’s, her attitude was different. Some have implied that Mary

was accusing Jesus of failing to be there to heal her brother. One writes: “*The atmosphere all around Jesus must have angered and agitated him: the mourners with their excessive sorrow, Martha’s lack of understanding, Mary’s faithless rebuke, and the general unbelief*” [NCWB]. That may sound reasonable at first, but is it not also reasonable to ask how that writer arrived at the conclusion that Mary’s was a “faithless rebuke” of Jesus? Does her weeping, or her statement justify assigning her a condition of “general unbelief”? I am not sure it does.

We still have the question, why was Jesus angry. Some obviously believe it was *because of the people’s* unbelief, “or hypocritical wailing. But this seems foreign to the context. A better explanation is that Jesus was angry at the tyranny of Satan who had brought sorrow and death to people through sin (cf. 8:44; Heb. 2:14–15)” [BKC]. The NAC expands the discussion:

“The pathos here is immediately heightened when after having encountered Jesus, Mary fell at his feet before uttering her helpless cry, ‘if ...’ Schnackenburg’s reaction that ‘Mary gives the impression of being nothing but a complaining woman’ seems to be a western male’s misunderstanding of the story’s focus. Obviously, Mary expressed her loss differently from Martha. Mary’s tears have in fact taken the place of most of Martha’s words. The careful reader of John will remember the mourning of Mary Magdalene at the Lord’s tomb when what she wanted was merely to care for Jesus’ lifeless body (20:16). Here Mary’s pathetic piety became a hallmark of her portrait. Even her sacrificial anointing of Jesus (12:3) fits this picture of her” [NAC].

We may remind ourselves that it was the custom of the day for Jewish mourners to weep and wail aloud with those who were grieving over the loss of a loved one. We must not interpret this in light of a modern scene in America where families and friends come together to comfort the immediate family when one dies. It is not uncommon to see a spouse or adult child shed tears when a close relative or friend arrives immediately after a loved one’s death. During the scheduled visitation, there may be some tears, but often there are smiles as one after another says, “I remember when...” In the present story, weeping, even loud wailing, was a part of the Jewish practice of public mourning. “Professional mourners and musicians were generally engaged to assist the family in expressing grief. The fact that Mary fell at the feet of Jesus and wept (klaiein or “wailed”) was undoubtedly a signal to others that they too could support her in the weeping or wailing process (11:31, 33a)” [NAC]. Any pastor today can tell you that a family often weeps together when other family members arrive, and during the scheduled family visitation before the public visitation when friends come to offer their support. When a family is deeply committed to the Lord, they may accept the comfort of the Comforter and then visit without weeping and wailing. In fact, one often hears family members and friends laughing beside the open casket as they exchange stories about their loved

one who has died and gone on to be with the Lord.

11:34 - WHERE HAVE YOU PUT HIM. *“Where have you put him?” He asked. ‘Lord,’ they told Him, ‘come and see.’* Jesus became angry when He saw Mary on the ground at His feet, and a host of mourners weeping and wailing with her. There He stood, the One who gives life to all who believe in Him, looking at a bunch of people who had no conception of who it was who was standing before them, or what He might do for them. Before we condemn those people, maybe we should ask ourselves, just how many times have we been to a funeral at which the deceased walked away from the service? Furthermore, they did not have this Scripture to prepare them for this hour. Rather than rebuke the Mary, or the official mourners, Jesus simply asked where they had put the body of Lazarus. He invited Him to “come and see.”

11:35 - JESUS WEPT. *“Jesus wept.”* That’s it! That is the whole verse. Children in Sunday School learn that this is the shortest verse in the Bible. Bible trivia games invariably include the question, “What is the shortest verse in the Bible?” Well this is it. However, if that is all this verse means to you, you are walking away from this funeral experience without a blessing. Robertson explains the original language and comments on it:

“Jesus wept (edakrusen ho Iêsous). Ingressive first aorist active indicative of dakruô, old verb from dakru or dakruon, a tear (Acts 20:19), only here in N.T. It never means to wail, as klaiô sometimes does... Apparently this was as Jesus started towards (see verse John 11:38) the tomb. In a sense it was a reaction from the severe strain in verse John 11:33, but chiefly it was the sheer human sympathy of his heart with Martha and Mary touched with the feeling of our common weakness (Heb 4:15). Often all that we can do is to shed tears in grief too deep for words. Jesus understood and understands. **This is the shortest verse in the Bible, but no verse carries more meaning in it**”[ATR, bold added by this writer].

Why was Jesus angry (Vs. 33)? And, why did He not mourn with the mourners? Why did He not weep and wail with them? Why would He weep when He had been planning for three days to raise Lazarus from the dead? If He was angry when He observed the ignorance of the people about death, He certainly would have been grieved over their ignorance of His power to do something about the present situation. Was Jesus weeping because of the grief of Martha and Mary, or was He weeping over the ignorance of these people for whom He had come to die. The answer here may not be an “either, or” matter, but a “both, and” answer. He had compassion for His friends, but He was also conscious of the lack of understanding expressed by the mourners. They were standing in the presence of the One who gives life, yet they were hopeless and clueless.

11:36 - HOW HE LOVE HIM. *“So the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’* It is not uncommon for individuals in a crowd to interpret what they see differently. I watched my father suffer for eight years from heart attacks and strokes that finally robbed us of the man we knew, leaving only a body in a hospital bed, breathing out his last breaths. At the funeral, visitors came for the visitation and we appreciated it. When they shared memories we appreciated it. When that

exceptional individual took it upon himself or herself to deliver a canned speech they had no doubt used on any other occasions, then we grieved! They assumed we were crushed over the loss of our father. When the funeral director began his speech of sympathy, I stopped him and said, “Ron, I appreciate what you are doing, but that is not necessary. I grieved for my Daddy for eight years, and when the Lord took him home I thanked Him for giving him his release.”

With my mother, it was a malignant brain tumor. The doctor gave her nine months, the Lord gave her eight years! For the first few years, we had hope for a recovery, but then the effects of the radiation and chemotherapy created an advanced aging process that left her lying flat on her back for many months in a nursing home. I have never known anyone who loved the Lord more than my mother, and when He took her home to heaven I thanked him. There was no grief. I would never have asked the Lord for another day of that. What a joy it is to know that there is no more sickness, no pain, no sorrow, and no death in heaven (Rev. 21:1ff). I appreciated those who came to the visitation and to the service for my parents, but I did not need a canned speech by someone who had not seen us in years, but assumed that our hearts were broken and that they were the answer to our grief. Yet, we remembered that they came, and sincerely thanked them.

11:37 - BUT SOME SAID. *“But some of them said, ‘Couldn’t He who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?’”* One can imagine that Jesus heard those comments, but whether He heard them or not, He knew what was in every person, as John tells us. Maybe now we know why He was angry! Maybe this gives us a clue as to why He wept. The question is, were these people accusing Him, or were they simply repeating what Mary and Martha had said? We probably should not give this the worst possible interpretation. We always need to be careful in attributing motives to others. It is enough to say that *“The misinterpretation of his tears, coupled with the mistrust of his motives and abilities, grieved Christ still further”* [NCWB].

The Seventh Sign

Raising Lazarus from the Dead

11:38 - THEN JESUS. *“Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.”* Jesus had become angry(11:3) when He heard the wailing of Mary and the absurd charges of the mourners that He could have prevented Lazarus’ death, had He been there. Martha had talked with Him. Mary had said the same thing when she saw Him, but then she fell down before Him and began crying. As she did, the mourners, even after four days began their loud wailing. As they walked to the tomb the wailing must have continued, for Jesus became angry again. He was disgusted with them! “It is important to remember that 11:37 ends with the mourners questioning his power. It was accordingly a tense situation when Jesus arrived at the tomb” [NAC], if tense is the word for it. The mourners may well have been such an interference that it was hard for

Jesus to communicate with the sisters.

Jesus had the words of comfort, encouragement, and life these people needed to hear but they would not shut up and listen to Him. He began the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, in which He taught, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”, but some of these people may have been professional mourners who would not stop their wailing in order to hear His words of comfort. The only One who had ever walked on this earth who had could offer genuine comfort, even hope for the hopeless, walked with them to the tomb, but He couldn’t get a word in for their wailing.

THE TOMB. Robertson notes that this statement (erchetai eis to mnêmeion) is a “Vivid historical present” [ATR]. John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was writing this Gospel for readers who had never seen Israel, let alone Bethany. As he often does, he provides that little extra touch that tells us he was there. The tomb was a cave, either a natural cave or a cave dug into the side of a cliff for this purpose. Though some commentaries skip over the description of the tomb, Adam Clarke offers an interesting comment”

“It is likely that several of the Jewish burying- places were made in the sides of rocks; some were probably dug down like a well from the upper surface, and then hollowed under into niches, and a flat stone, laid down upon the top, would serve for a door. Yet, from what the evangelist says, **there seems to have been something peculiar in the formation of this tomb.** It might have been a natural grotto, or dug in the side of a rock or hill, and the lower part of the door level with the ground, **or how could Lazarus have come forth,** as he is said to have done, John 11:44?” [CLARKE, bold added by this writer].

11:39 - REMOVE THE STONE. “*Remove the stone,*’ Jesus said. *Martha, the dead man’s sister, told Him, ‘Lord, he already stinks. It’s been four days.’* Jesus took charge as soon as they reached the tomb. We would assume that it was not to the women who mourned with the sisters, but to the men who were there with them, that Jesus ordered, “Remove the stone.” I doubt that these people had ever heard a more shocking command. What a joy it is that Christians worship One who can command, “Remove the stone”!

HE ALREADY STINKS. Martha was understandably shocked by Jesus’ command, and expressed the first thing that came to her mind. The last thing she wanted to do was to smell the body of her beloved brother. She reminds Him that “It has been four days.” He had died soon after the messenger left to travel a day’s journey to find Jesus; He had delayed two days; and they had traveled another day to reach Bethany. That was four days. Those who insist that Jesus had not died, but had simply fainted, and then revived in the coolness of the tomb, cannot make the same claim here. Everyone knew the odor coming from the tomb would have been repugnant to all, and heart breaking to the sisters.

The modern reader in America cannot fully comprehend this, unless they work in some position in

which they help recover bodies from some disaster, like a mine cave-in. Today, when one dies, the coroner is called and when the individual is officially pronounced dead, the funeral home picks up the body and prepares it for family viewing, then for friends to see, and finally for burial. I have only personally known one person who stated that she did not want to be embalmed. I did not get to attend the funeral for a great aunt because I was living in Texas and she was buried in north Mississippi. They couldn't wait.

Walter Cost, as I think back now, was a legitimate World War I war hero, but during the time my family knew him, he just seemed a little "peculiar". He was my step-grandfather and when we visited with my maternal grandmother we often talked with him. When their health became an issue, my parents moved them into a house they had moved next to our home near Sledge, Mississippi. For years, we saw the large oval picture of him in his uniform in a military frame, so we knew he had been in the army. However, there was nothing about him that suggested that he had been a hero. Then, one day he began talking with me about what it was like during one phase of his service. He was a member of a team of men who went onto the battlefield and gathered up the bodies of our fallen soldiers, loaded them onto mule drawn wagons, and transported them to a burial place. After removing their dog tags and other identification, they buried them in a common grave, which was nothing more than a monstrous trench. He told me that smell of rotting human flesh was so bad that all the soldiers on this detail would stuff his mouth with chewing tobacco to try to cover the odor. I never learned whether this preceded his being sprayed with poison gas or followed it. I have no idea what he did during the battles, but every family that lost a loved one in that war owes a debt of gratitude to those who retrieved those bodies, buried them, and sent their personal effects home to their families.

11:40 - JESUS SAID. *"Jesus said to her, 'Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?'"* There was never a time when Jesus was not in charge. There was never a time when He did not have words of wisdom for those who heard Him, and those closest to Him were learning more every day to listen when He spoke. Some marveled that He spoke with authority. Temple police said, "No man ever spoke like this" (7:46). Imagine what they would have said if they had heard this!

THE GLORY OF GOD. It is easy enough for someone to say that *"The whole event was for Christ to display God's glory; Christ knew this all along (11:4)"* [NCWB], but what does that mean? We often hear references to the glory of God, or hear someone say they want to glorify God. What do they mean by that? Here is another question: have you ever heard someone say that, and wondered if they were not more interested in glorifying themselves? Are we honest enough to realize that we may all be tempted to seek personal glory in, and from the Lord's service? How are we to understand what Jesus means here? Let us consider a part of Vine's explanation of the Greek word for glory (doxa, from dokeo, "to seem"). He says the word

"primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion. It is used (1) (a) of the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, i.e., what

He essentially is and does, as exhibited in whatever way he reveals Himself in these respects, and particularly in the person of Christ, in whom essentially His "glory" has ever shone forth and ever will do, John 17:5, 24; Heb. 1:3; it was exhibited in the character and acts of Christ in the days of His flesh, John 1:14; John 2:11; at Cana both His grace and His power were manifested, and these constituted His 'glory;' so also in the resurrection of Lazarus, John 11:4, 40; the 'glory' of God was exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, Rom. 6:4, and in His ascension and exaltation, 1Pet. 1:21, likewise on the Mount of Transfiguration, 2Pet. 1:17. In Rom. 1:23 His 'everlasting power and Divinity' are spoken of as His 'glory,' i.e., His attributes and power as revealed through creation; in Rom. 3:23 the word denotes the manifested perfection of His character, especially His righteousness, of which all men fall short...[Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources, Technology Division, after this, VINE].

11:41 - THE MOVED THE STONE. *"So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me."* As shocking as His command had seemed, men still obeyed Him and removed the stone that covered the tomb. When the women visited the tomb of Jesus on that Sunday morning, they were wondering who would move the stone for them to anoint His body. That was not a problem here. Before long, Jesus would be moving another stone (without man's help) in order to give proof to the world that He had risen from the dead. Don't think the two stones are not related. The first is a promise of one to come.

FATHER, I THANK YOU. While the crowd waited by the tomb, wondering what Jesus might do next, He lifted His voice to the Father and thanked Him for what He was about to do. There was no hint of a doubt that the Father had heard Him, or that the Father would not grant His request. As the people waited to see what would happen next, Jesus stood there glorifying the Father.

11:42 - YOU ALWAYS HEAR ME. *"I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me."* Robertson renders it, "And I knew (egô de êidein), and notes that this is the "Past perfect of oida used as imperfect. This confident knowledge is no new experience with Jesus. It has 'always' (pantote) been so" [ATR].

Jesus had absolute confidence that the Father heard Him. There was never any doubt about that. What Jesus says here destroys the unitary view of God: the idea that there is only one Person in the Godhead, who plays different roles at different times. Francis Schaeffer said in one of his many very deep books, that it was when he came to understand the doctrine of the Trinity that he moved from agnosticism to theism. It was at that time that he realized that God did not have to create man in order to have a relationship with someone. He has always had a relationship, a horizontal relationship within the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). He did not create man out of any sense of inadequacy within Himself.

BECAUSE OF THE CROWD. It is reasonable to assume that Jesus knew what He was going to do long before He arrived at Bethany, and it equally reasonable to assume that He had already talked

with the Father about what He would do. He is saying this so those standing there “may believe You sent me.” It is unfortunate when some pass over this prayer without considering certain things about the prayers of Jesus in this Gospel.

“These verses form one of the three prayer texts of the Gospel (cf. also 12:27–28; 17:1–26). As I have indicated elsewhere, these prayer texts all invoke the ‘Father’ (pater), and all have their focus in the mission of Jesus. In this case the mission statement (‘that they may believe that you sent me,’ 11:42) is very close to the purpose statement of the Gospel (20:31). Unlike the other prayers, however, this prayer focuses on thanksgiving and is not unlike the formula prayer in Ps 118:21 (a psalm frequently cited by the NT writers). The prayer presupposes that Jesus knew the Father’s will concerning Lazarus, and what he was about to do would not be merely for the sake of Lazarus but for those who would witness the incredible act that was to follow. The prayer thus was not primarily for his benefit, but it was aimed at bringing the observers into the group of believers (11:42)” [NAC].

11:43 - HE SHOUTED. “*After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’*” Has Jesus just shouted for a dead man (a man dead four days) to come out of his tomb? He raised the widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:11) while the funeral procession was on the way to the burial place. Here, he commands a man whose body was in a state of decay (“he stinks”, Martha had said, vs. 30) to come out of the tomb. Jesus shouted, not just to “wake the dead”, but to focus the attention of emotional mourners on what He was doing.

LAZARUS, COME OUT! Robertson translates and comments on Jesus’ command: “Lazarus, come forth (Lazare, deuro exô). ‘Hither out.’ No verb, only the two adverbs, deuro here alone in John. Lazarus heard and obeyed the summons” [ATR]. Sadly, a man dead four days obeys Jesus more quickly than most church members today. There are those who insist that God must regenerate one’s soul before he can repent, because dead people cannot hear Him. Lazarus had been dead four days, but when Jesus called his name he came forth. Of course that is not the same thing, but the same One who raised Lazarus from the dead is still calling to men and women who are dead in sin to trust Him and receive eternal life.

11:44 - CAME OUT. “*The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him and let him go.’*” It must have been with some difficulty that Lazarus was able to get to his feet and somehow walk out of the tomb, considering the fact that he was “bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth.” Those who spend their time trying to prove the shroud of Turin was the burial cloth of Jesus, should read this verse in order to understand how people were buried in Palestine at the time. Can there be any doubt that Jesus was prepared for burial in the same manner?

LOOSE HIM. Jesus commands and the people standing there obey Him. “Since God never wastes his power by using supernatural energy for ordinary tasks (cf. 2:7, 8; Luke 9:12-17), Jesus instructed the speechless onlookers to unwrap Lazarus themselves” [NCWB]. We can be sure

Lazarus heard Him and waited excitedly as his neighbors removed the burial strips from his body and the face cloth from his head.

SPECIAL NOTE: Do you remember what Jesus had said to Martha as soon as she met Him? He said, **“I am the resurrection and the life.** The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?” (11:25-26, bold added by this writer). Jesus said this, knowing that He would raise Lazarus from the dead, but in saying it, He declared an eternal truth: He is “the resurrection and the life” for all who believe in Him. He continually calls people who are dead in sin to come to Him for eternal life. Throughout the study of John, we should keep in mind what John wrote in the Prologue:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. **Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men**” (John 1:1-4, bold added by this writer).

Plot To Kill Jesus

11:45 - BELIEVED IN HIM. *“Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He did believed in Him.”* Once again, John, writing to a predominantly Gentile church, simply identifies these people as “the Jews”. These mourners, friends, and neighbors had just seen Jesus speak to a man who had been dead four days and call him from his tomb. Interestingly, John associates “the Jews” with Mary rather than Martha here. He does not say they had come to both sisters. One might wonder if this is simply a reference to 11:31 - 32, when Mary and those mourners who accompanying her went out to meet Jesus, when they began their loud wailing. What ever the case, “the works and words of Jesus usually created feelings of both hostility and acceptability concerning him (5:16–18; 6:15, 41–43 60–61, 66; 7:25–26, 30–32, 45–49; 8:48)” [NAC]. It is possible that those Jews who provoked Jesus to anger were the mourners who focused more on Mary than Martha at this point.

There were always magicians and con men who tried to fool people for their own purpose, but never had anyone imagined anything like this. Not even those who insisted that, had Jesus been there, He could have healed Lazarus, could have imagined anything like this. How did they react to Jesus and to the situation? Many of them “believed in Him.” The shocking display of His power finally convinced some of the Jews that Jesus really was the Messiah.

11:46 - BUT SOME. *“But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.”* As to why some believed in Jesus and others set out to betray Him, one can only offer an educated guess. They all saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead and they all heard His words. Some (vs. 45) believed in Him, but others, no doubt whispering among themselves, set out to report what they had seen to the Pharisees. Even the raising of a dead man did not convince these people that Jesus was the Messiah. What would it have taken? At this point it is possible that the influences of Satan, the world, and the flesh came together to convince them that they should report Jesus to the Pharisees. They were perfectly willing to report Jesus, either out of a deep conviction that He was

not the Messiah, or a desire for the approval of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They knew the Pharisees would be interested in what they had to report.

The modern Christian who reads this may be amazed that these Jews, who should have been praying for the coming of the long awaited Messiah, would see Him raise a man from the dead, and not only reject Him, but go to the religious authorities to report Him. I recall standing in mess hall of Camp Four at the Mississippi State Penitentiary, preaching to around 140 convicted criminals. Some were already believers, but some were in the service because it gave them an opportunity to get out of the dormitory type room where their bunks were for a little while on Sunday morning. I have two vivid pictures that, even after many years are still fresh in my mind.

After I preached, the men formed a line and passed by me after the service. Some shook hands and spoke, and some made a few comments. The men were courteous and friendly for the most part, but two men stand out in my memory. One man stopped in front of me and asked, "Were you in Jackson last May?" I told him I was, and he asked, "Did you visit the Hinds County Jail?" I thought a second and assured him I had been there. "Every Thursday afternoon." He smiled, opened a New Testament, and showed what I had written in it before I gave it to him. He had married a woman, taken out a ten thousand dollar life insurance policy on her, and killed her in what can only be called a cold-blooded, premeditated murder. Several years later I met his brother and learned that he was still faithful to the Lord. He deserved his life sentence, but Jesus had set him free for eternity.

The other man walked toward me in the line, looked me in the eye like the other men who came by and shook my hand and made some comment. However, just as this young man reached me, he gave his left shoulder the most arrogant shrug he could manage under the circumstances, gave his head a noticeable jerk away from me, and passed on by without shaking hands. I have often wondered whether or not this was the man who had the tattoo on his arm that read, "Born to go to hell." I don't have any ideas what he thought he had accomplished, but I kept going back to Parchman. He only revealed the depth of his sin and his determination not to be effected by the preaching of the Gospel.

11:47 - CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE PHARISEES. *"So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, 'What are we going to do since this man does many signs?'"* The chief priests were the elite group of priests who, along with the high priest, had the greatest influence in the Sanhedrin, the religious "supreme court" of the Jews. Their authority was granted by Rome and they were accountable to the Roman governor. Some believe some of the chief priests may have served a year or more as the high priest, but if Caiaphas served 18 years that conclusion may merit a second look. More than likely, they were members of the family of Annas, a former high priest, whose sons had served in that office, and whose son-in-law Caiaphas was high priest at this time. Though in Old Testament times, a high priest served for life, at this time Rome appointed the high priest each year and for some time that appointment had come the sect of the Sadducees. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees were represented on the counsel known as the Sanhedrin.

SANHEDRIN. After the witnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus reported what had happened to

the chief priests and Pharisees, they convened the Sanhedrin as quickly as possible. The Holman Bible Dictionary includes the following information on this religious court:

“The highest Jewish council in the first century. The council had 71 members and was presided over by the high priest. The Sanhedrin included both of the main Jewish parties among its membership. Since the high priest presided, the Sadducean priestly party seems to have predominated; but some leading Pharisees also were members (Acts 5:34; 23:1-9).

The word Sanhedrin is usually translated ‘council’ in the English translations of the Bible. Because of the predominance of the chief priests in the Sanhedrin, at times the words chief priests seem to refer to the action of the Sanhedrin, even though the name itself is not used.

According to Jewish tradition, the Sanhedrin began with the 70 elders appointed by Moses in Numbers 11:16 and was reorganized by Ezra after the Exile. However, the Old Testament provides no evidence of a council that functioned like the Sanhedrin of later times. Thus, the Sanhedrin had its origin sometime during the centuries between the Testaments” [HBD].

The Roman officials gave the Sanhedrin a lot of authority over the Jews, but as we will see in the trials of Jesus, they could not pass the death sentence. The Sanhedrin was a powerful influence when Matthew, Mark, and Luke were writing, but no longer existed when John was writing the Gospel that bears his name. Many matters on which they took action were routine, but these witnesses had presented them with a sticky problem as they convened that day.

MANY SIGNS. They were already plotting to have Jesus put to death, but after news of this latest sign the rulers came together with a greater sense of urgency. After hearing about the raising of Lazarus four days after his death, they decided that it was time to take immediate action to put an end to this movement before Rome took notice and decided that they couldn’t handle it. If they couldn’t handle it they no longer served a purpose for Rome. Jesus had fed a great multitude with a child’s lunch, raised a widow’s son at Nain, walked on water, healed the sick, and given sight to the blind, none of which persuaded these Pharisees and Sadducees that He was the Messiah. Now, do we not see why it was not the Father’s plan to place the promised Messiah in the hands of the religious rulers in Jerusalem at the time of His birth? Add to that the threat from Herod, and we see why Jesus was reared by a simply carpenter in a remote village in Galilee..

11:48 - IF WE LET HIM CONTINUE. *“If we let Him continue in this way, everybody will believe in Him! Then the Romans will come and remove both our place and our nation.”* This was not something whispered in a back room before the Sanhedrin convened, but an actual statement made “for the record” (as we say today) by at least one of the members of the religious “supreme court” of the Jews. They had tried everything else to silence Jesus. They had set traps for him (as with the woman caught in the act of adultery), they had debated Him, challenged Him, and condemned Him to the people. Nothing they tried had worked. His signs were becoming even more dramatic and more and more people were believing in Him.

ROME WILL COME. Roman authorities could look down from the tower of Antonia, which though not mentioned by name in the Bible, is described in the writings of Josephus. The tower of Antonia, was a

“fortress near the Temple built around A.D. 6 that served as a palace residence for King Herod, barracks for the Roman troops, a safe deposit for the robe of the high priest, and a central courtyard for public speaking. The tower of Antonia is not mentioned directly in the Bible. It served various functions between A.D. 6 and A.D. 66, the time of its destruction by Titus. Herod the Great built the tower at the northwest corner of the Temple court to replace the Maccabean fort. The tower was 75 feet high and was named for Herod’s friend, Mark Anthony. Although the name ‘Antonia’ is not used in the Bible, several references from the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, describe the appearance and function of the tower of Antonia” [HBD].

Roman authorities were expected to maintain peace in any and all provinces conquered by Rome. They could be very charitable with cooperative, peaceful nations whose assigned leaders maintained the peace and honored the laws of Rome. Dr. William R. Cooper, in his book, *AFTER THE FLOOD*, gives a picture of the relationship between Rome and the Island of Briton. For example, he wrote of Marius (ca AD 57-97), who enjoyed friendly relations with Rome.

“During his reign, he defeated and killed Soderic, king of the Picts, in a great battle. The present county of Westmorland was named in Marius’ honour because of the battle, and Marius accordingly had an inscribed stone set up in the county commemorating his victory.

“Coilus, his son, then ruled. He had been raised and educated as a Roman. Coilus was to rule his kingdom in peace and prosperity, being succeeded by his son Lucius. Taking up the crown on his father Colius’s death, Lucius was to send to Rome for teachers of the Christian faith. He in turn passed on the crown to Geta, a son of the Roman Severus. He was elected king by the Roman Senate. He was eventually killed by his half-brother Bassianus who reigned from ca AD 221-256. Like Geta, he was the son of Severus, but by a British noblewoman. The Britons elected Bassianus king after he killed his half-brother. Carausius then took the crown. After raising a fleet of ships with the blessing of the Roman Senate, Carausius invaded Britain. He compelled Britons to proclaim him king, and killed Bassianus in the ensuing battle. He was eventually murdered by the Roman legate, Allectus, and it was during Allectus’ time that a Briton conce more held the throne” [Cooper, William R., *AFTER THE FLOOD*, New Wine Press, West Sussex, England, 1995, p. 77].

Prior to that, according to Dr. Cooper (*OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH*, unpublished research), the Romans successfully invaded his island after capturing their king and military

commander, Caradoc, which victory was made possible when a family member betrayed Caradoc's family to Rome. After defeating the Roman invasion army in thirty pitched battles, Caradoc surrendered after the Romans captured his wife, children, brothers, and father. When taken before the emperor, his family fell on their face before him, but Caradoc stood, crossed his arms and gave the emperor a piece of his mind. Those present declared that he was too courageous to put to death, so they placed him and his family in the home of a senator, whose wife (Lady Pomponia) led them to faith in Christ. Dr. Cooper is convinced that Lady Pomponia's conversion had taken place several years earlier.

Dr. Cooper supposes that Caradoc was held in Rome, and his father Bran was sent back to Briton as a puppet king in A. D. 58 or 59. He is also convinced that Bran took with him one Aristobulus. Bran is credited with taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the island of Briton. Paul greets those of the "household of Aristobulus" in Romans 16:10, and Dr. Cooper is convinced that Aristobulus was with Bran, and that is the reason Paul does not greet him personally, but greets those of his household.

Rome gave conquered nations certain freedoms, and let local officials rule over the people as puppet rulers under the Roman emperor. However, when there was any sign of an insurrection, Roman troops moved quickly and ruthlessly to put it down. Insurrectionists were slaughtered without mercy. These authorities knew what might happen if they lost control. The nation would feel the wrath of Rome, and they would lose their position, with its power, money, and perks. The members of the Sanhedrin openly discussed what might happen if Jesus caused enough of a movement to attract the attention of Rome, and if Rome concluded that they could not control the people.

11:49 - CAIAPHAS. *"One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all!"* Caiaphas, the son-in-law of former high priest Annas (both Sadducees), served as high priest for 18 years, or from A. D. 18-36. "That year" seems to refer to an annual appointment by the Roman governor, which seems to have been the practice at this time. However, all do not agree, as Vincent notes:

"This has been cited to show that John is guilty of a historical error, since, according to the Mosaic law, the high priesthood was held for life. The occurrence of the phrase three times (vv. 49, 51) is significant, and, so far from indicating an error, goes to connect the office of Caiaphas with his part in accomplishing the death of Christ. It devolved on the High Priest to offer every year the great sacrifice of atonement for sin; and in that year, that memorable year, it fell to Caiaphas to be the instrument of the sacrifice of Him that taketh away the sin of the world" [VINCENT].

Some believe Annas had sons who had served as high priest, as well as his son-in-law. They were all

Sadducees, so the position for them was perhaps more political than religious. Ironically, a high priest who does not believe in a resurrection, life after death, or miracles, is plotting the death of the One who proved Himself to be the Resurrection and Life; proved that there is life after death; and proved that miracles do happen. The raising of Lazarus should have convinced him, but it only hardened his heart. We must also remember that the time would come when Caiaphas would stand in judgment before this same Jesus whose murder he was now plotting.

11:50 - ONE MAN SHOULD DIE. *“You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.”* He had charged, in vs. 49. *“You know nothing”*, and now he adds, *“You’re not considering that”* it is better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish.” One doubts that any member of the Sanhedrin misunderstood his meaning. His arrogance expressed itself in a pseudo-pious concern for the nation, when in reality, his first concern may have been his own position. That is not to say that he was not concerned about his nation, but it is reminiscent of a modern day politician who argues that his latest pork barrel amendment was added for the “people of my district”.

THAT ONE MAN SHOULD DIE. *Caiaphas had probably reached his conclusion before the meeting began, and now expresses it frankly. His judgment was that Jesus must be sacrificed if they were to continue to hold their positions, and if nation was to continue in Rome’s favor. “The alternative was destruction of the Jewish nation in war (11:48). But their rejection of Jesus did not solve the problem. The Jewish people followed false shepherds into a war against Rome (a.d. 66-70), which did in fact destroy their nation [BKC].*

One practical question comes to mind here: how did John know what was said in this meeting? There is no evidence that there was no one else present. The temple police were there. Nicodemus was there. Other members may have repeated it to friends. A few religious leaders eventually came to believe in Jesus, and they may have repeated the words Caiaphas uttered in the meeting. However, above all else, the Holy Spirit, who inspired this Scripture had perfect knowledge of what happened and what was said.

11:51 - ON HIS OWN. *“He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation...”* Only the Holy Spirit could fully understand that Caiaphas, though totally ignorant of the significance of his words, was uttering a significant prophecy. Jesus did indeed die for the nation, but not as the high priest imagined. When we read that Caiaphas prophesied here, we may recall the words from 1 Samuel, “Is Saul among the prophets?” How ironic that the high priest, with murder in his heart, should make the prophetic announce that Jesus would die for the nation! “But certainly unconscious prophecy on his part and purely accidental. Caiaphas meant only what was mean and selfish” [ATR]. Barnes writes:

“Though he uttered what proved to be a true prophecy, yet it was accomplished in a way which he did not intend. He had a wicked design. He was plotting murder and crime. Yet, wicked as he was, and little as he intended it, God so ordered it that he delivered a most precious truth respecting the atonement. Remark,

1st. God may fulfil the words of the wicked in a manner which they do not wish or intend.

2nd. He may make even their malice and wicked plots the very means of accomplishing his purposes. What they regard as the fulfillment of their plans God may make the fulfillment of his, yet so as directly to overthrow their designs, and prostrate them in ruin.

3rd. Sinners should tremble and be afraid when they lay plans against God, or seek to do unjustly to others” [BARNES].

11:52 - NOT FOR THE NATION ONLY. *“(A)nd not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God.”* In vs. 50, the high priest said that it would be “to your advantage” (sumpherein, “better”) for one man to die “for the people”. We should not overlook the significance for this word within the context of this passage. It is loaded with sacrificial significance.

“The term hyper is frequently associated with a substitutionary or replacement view of the atonement. In the Old Testament the devotees and priests would place their hands on the sacrificial animals or scapegoat in identification (cf. Lev 16:7–10, 20–22), and thus the animals would carry the weight of sin and guilt on behalf of (for) the worshipers. Accordingly, the worshipers would not bear the punishment of God. Here the word of the high priest provides insight into the means whereby the nation would be spared from perishing. But the evangelist added that the death of Jesus (the sacrificial victim) would extend beyond the ethnic and geographical borders of Israel (‘the nation’) and unite into one group all the scattered children of God (11:52; cf. 10:16)” [NAC].

SCATTERED CHILDREN OF GOD. This could refer to the Jews of the Dispersion, Jews scattered among the Gentile nations. The high priest held out no hope for Gentiles, who were fit only for the fires of hell, as far as some religious leaders were concerned. Jesus had some far greater in mind, however.

11:53 - PLOTTED TO KILL HIM. *“So from that day on they plotted to kill Him.”* They had tried to trip Jesus up in every way they could imagine. They had challenged Him before the people to try to show Him up and cause the people to reject Him. They had accused Him of violating the Sabbath. Finally, they had taken to Him a woman taken in adultery in order to try to get Him to either condemn her to be stoned, or release her. They were determined to force Him to make a decision that would cause the masses to turn away from Him, or to allow them to take Him to the Roman authorities with charges that would have them to condemn Him. And now, the plot thickens! From this point on they would plot His death in earnest. John and the Synoptics record the vitriolic

challenges, arrogant accusations, vile plots, bribe, and satanic lies they would employ in their efforts to rid the nation of Jesus. **The religious leaders of the Jews would, in the name of God, kill the Son of God to protect the Chosen People of God, and the temple of God.**

11:54 - JESUS NO LONGER WALKED. *“Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim. And He stayed there with the disciples.”* The word “therefore” in the Bible is often used to focus our attention on what has just happened or what has just been said, and then show the consequences of the action, or the conclusion drawn from the words. Because of the action of the Sanhedrin, Jesus would no longer walk openly among the Jews. He would no longer go to the temple complex and teach the people, and He would no longer preach to great crowds, or teach His disciples in public places.

Had the Jewish leaders won? Had Jesus given up on His mission? Absolutely not! Why then, if He was supposed to die in Jerusalem, as He had taught His disciples, did He leave Jerusalem and take them to a remote area in the hills northeast of the city? We shall see.

DEPARTED FROM. Jesus departed from Jerusalem and went to a remote area with His disciples. Had the Jewish authorities finally driven Him out of Jerusalem? Had they finally found a way to silence Him? How could he effectively reach the masses if He had take his disciples to a remote area in the countryside? *“Because God’s divinely appointed moment for Christ’s capture had not yet arrived (cf. 7:30, 44; 8:59; 10:39), our Lord discontinued his public appearances in Jerusalem. It is not always God’s will for his people to risk death in a storm of persecution (cf. Acts 8:1-4; 9:23-25)”* [NCWB]. **Jesus left Jerusalem because the time for His sacrifice had not yet come.** He, the fulfillment of every Passover prophecy, would die at the Passover, which was still a month away.

EPHRAIM. The word for “town” (polis) here means a small town of village. Ephraim is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, but Josephus mentions (War, IV. ix. 9) a small fort near Bethel in the hill country and in 2Ch 13:19 Ephron is named in connexion with Bethel” [ATR].

“Up here Jesus would at least be free for the moment from the machinations of the Sanhedrin while he faced the coming catastrophe at the passover. He is not far from the mount of temptation where the devil showed and offered him the kingdoms of the world for the bending of the knee before him. Is it mere fancy to imagine that the devil came to see Jesus again here at this juncture with a reminder of his previous offer and of the present plight of the Son of God with the religious leaders conspiring his death? At any rate Jesus has the fellowship of his disciples this time (meta tôn mathêtôn). But what were they thinking?” [ATR].

11:55 - THE JEWISH PASSOVER. *“The Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to*

Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover.” John is writing this Gospel to a church that is becoming more and more a Gentile church, made up of people who knew very little about the Jewish religion. He is instructing his readers as His Lord had instructed Him in that month before the Passover. John writes in 2:13, “The Jewish Passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” So, the Jewish Passover is not only significant to the Jewish worshiper, it played a vital role in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, our Passover. Jesus had been on earth about 33 years, and about 33 years later, Paul would write: “Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For **Christ our Passover** has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7, bold added by this writer).

WENT TO JERUSALEM. *Many of the people “from the country” went into Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover.*” John leaves it to the Synoptics to tell us what people were going to Jerusalem, or from what places. On the surface, one might think that Jesus and His disciples were still in Epharim (vs. 54), observing families and small groups of people walking from the country side to Jerusalem in preparation for the Passover, but it would seem that they had gone on to Galilee and were returning, as they always had, to Jerusalem for Passover. “The Jewish people were right in preparing themselves for the Passover (cf. *Exod. 12:14-20; 13:1-9*) but tragically wrong in ignoring or rejecting the very sacrifice it pictured (1 Cor. 5:7, 8; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6-14)” [NCWB].

John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, skips from the time Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem to go to Ephraim, to the journey of the Jew to Jerusalem to purify themselves for the Passover. “The Synoptic Gospels tell this last journey up through Samaria into Galilee to join the great caravan that crossed over into Perea and came down on the eastern side of the Jordan opposite Jericho and then marched up the mountain road to Bethany and Bethphage just beside Jerusalem. This story is found in Luke 17:11-19:28; Mark 10:1-52; Mat 19:1-20:34. John simply assumes the Synoptic narrative and gives the picture of things in and around Jerusalem just before the passover (John 11:56, 57)” [ATR].

TO PURIFY THEMSELVES. It was very important that the worshipers arrive in Jerusalem early so that they might purify themselves for the observance of the Passover. Some commentaries skip over this, but Barnes explains that the purification

“consisted in preparing themselves for the proper observation of the Passover, according to the commands of the law. If any were defiled in any manner by contact with the dead or by any other ceremonial uncleanness, they were required to take the prescribed measures for purification, Le 22:1-6. For want of this, great inconvenience was sometimes experienced. See 2Ch 30:17,18. Different periods were necessary in order to be cleansed from ceremonial pollution. For example, one who had been polluted by the touch of a dead body, of a sepulchre, or by the bones of the dead, was sprinkled on the third and seventh days, by a clean person, with hyssop dipped in

water mixed in the ashes of the red heifer. After washing his body and clothes he was then clean. These persons who went up before the Passover were doubtless those who had in some manner been ceremonially polluted” [BARNES].

11:56 - LOOKING FOR JESUS. *“They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple complex: ‘What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will He?’”* No doubt, many of the people were wondering whether or not they would see Jesus, but the Jewish authorities, the ones who had decided that Jesus must be killed, were watching closely for Him in the temple complex. The Sanhedrin would have alerted the temple police to be on the lookout for Him, and members of both major factions, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were no doubt watching for Him.

HE WON’T COME. Both members of the Sanhedrin who had decided that they must take action to see Jesus killed and others who were aware of that decision were wondering if Jesus would come to the temple at this time. He had quietly left Jerusalem a month earlier. Would He dare come back now?

11:57 - CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE PHARISEES. *“The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it so they could arrest Him.”* The high priest Caiphas, the chief priests, and the Pharisees had issued orders throughout the area that anyone who saw Jesus must report it to the Sanhedrin so they could arrest Him. The temple police would have been especially diligent in their search for Jesus, but the Sanhedrin would have sent out word all over Jerusalem for people to report it to them if they saw Him in the city. They were determined to see Him put to death. It was just a matter of how.

The author of the material in the New American Commentary underscores the importance of these final three verses (55-57) of this chapter. He notes that they serve as

“an important shoulder text or transition between chap. 11 and the centerpiece (chap. 12) of the Gospel. The verses are a crucial conclusion because they announce the coming of Passover and thus the close of the Festival Cycle. They also prepare the reader for the next event, Jesus’ anointing for death (12:7). The hostility that had developed throughout this cycle had here reached its finale. The orders for Jesus’ arrest were certified by the Council (11:57), and all Jerusalem had come to a fever pitch of excitement (11:56). The die had been cast.

For the Jews the Passover represented the death of the lambs and the birth of their nation to freedom in the exodus. For the evangelist, whose thematic perspective has been focused on “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29), however, the closing of the Festival Cycle at Passover was absolutely foundational to his message. The Lamb who had been sent by God was about to die. Yet ironically while all Jerusalem was gripped in a state of upheaval, this Lamb of God was removed from the chaos and intrigue as he waited for the hour of his destiny outside the ‘Holy’ city. But intriguingly John notes that the people had come to ‘sanctify’ or ‘cleanse’

(hagnizein, 11:55) themselves while their leaders had indelibly stained themselves as they ruthlessly plotted the death of the blameless Son of God. The Festival Cycle had thus come to its predictable end! But chap. 11 is not the end of the story. It is just half-finished” [NAC].

Chapter 12

IMPORTANCE OF CHAPTER 12. The New American Commentary has a very imposing heading for this chapter: “The Centerpiece of the Gospel: Preparation of the Passover Lamb for Glorification”. When it was announced that Broadman and Holman was publishing the NAC, I subscribed immediately so that I would receive each volume as it was released. Little did I realize that I would be serving as chairman of the Broadman and Holman Committee for LifeWay Christian Resources as the project was being completed. So it is with a deep sense of appreciation that I use the NAC as a resource. The author of this volume explains why it is important for the reader to understand the place this chapter plays in linking the first half of this Gospel with the second half:

“Apart from the Prologue, there is scarcely a more encompassing chapter than chap. 12, for **it serves a unique role in linking the two major sections of this Gospel together**, as will be explained below. Chapter 11 brought the public ministry to a climax with the strategic raising of Lazarus and the crucial ex cathedra statement of the high priest concerning the necessary death of Jesus. Chapter 12, with the anointing of Jesus and the entry into Jerusalem, prepares the reader for the final cycle--the Farewell Cycle directed to the disciples of Jesus--and for the Death and Resurrection stories. Thus **the chapter serves as an Introduction to the second major section of the Gospel**. It sets a serious tone with the anointing scene but also offers a foretaste of the fact that the dying one is also the King of Israel, as is proclaimed by the crowd at the entry into Jerusalem (12:13).

“...not only do I regard chaps. 2-11 to contain two well-defined and purposeful cycles, but I consider chap. 12 to be a singularly significant part of John that stands as a strategic unit at the center of the Gospel and serves as a major focal text for understanding the work. The chapter....also serves as a window into the forthcoming sections of the Gospel; for it signals the arrival of the strategic hour (12:23) as an unmistakable announcement of the imminent coming of the self-sacrificial death of God's Son” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

12:1 - SIX DAYS. “*Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead.*” Not only is John writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is writing as an eye witness to the events of which he is writing. In fact, he may have been

the lone surviving eye witness to what happened at this final Passover in our Lord's life on earth. Robertson writes, " If the crucifixion was on Friday, as seems certain from both John and the Synoptics, then six days before would be the Jewish Sabbath preceding or more probably the Friday afternoon before, since Jesus would most likely arrive before the Sabbath. Probably we are to put together in one scene for the atmosphere John 11:55-57; John 12:1, 9-11" [ATR].

I recently played a CD of the late R. G. Lee preaching Pay Day Some Day. Dr. Lee was pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis for 33 years, but he had been retired many years when the late Adrian Rogers, who was pastor at the time, asked him to preach Pay Day Some Day at Bellevue. I was privileged to hear Dr. Lee preach that sermon in person on two occasions. I heard him preach many times in my youth. R. G. Lee preached that one sermon over 1200 times and people never tired of hearing it. I cannot help but wonder how many times the Apostle John preached about what happened the last week of Jesus' life.

We would expect an eye witness to begin, "It was six days before Passover...." I was challenged by an arrogant young English professor a number of years ago at a health club to name one First Century historian who ever mentioned Christ. He was from New York and he was teaching at the Mississippi Valley State University. The professor had challenged a number of people by stating that there was no way Muslims could know that Jesus ever lived. One of the men looked up when I came into the health club with my bag, heading to the dressing room. He said, "There's a preacher, ask him!" Every pastor loves to hear those words!

That the professor was really enjoying the confrontation was obvious from the mocking smile and arrogant challenges. He turned to me and demanded, "Can you name one historian from that era who ever mentioned Jesus?!" I knew where he was going with this, so I simply said, "Yes." "Name him!", he demanded. I said, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." The professor said, "Those are gospel writers, they are not historians. Can you name a historian from that time who ever mentioned Jesus?" I said "Yes." He demanded, "Who?" Again, I said, "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

As my friend and others gathered around us, the professor continued to demand that I name any historian from the First or Second Century who ever mentioned Jesus. I continued to give the same answer, but finally, I said, "I know what you are asking, but I refuse to concede this point. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were Gospel writers, but how can anyone read the Gospel according to Luke and deny that he is also reading history. The Book of Acts is a history book that chronicles the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria unto the uttermost parts of the known world. "But", I added, "there were Roman historians who did mention Jesus." I mentioned either Suetonius or Tacitus, both of whom mentioned an uproar in Rome over one "Christus"

John is not inventing a religion, nor is he shoring up a new one. He is giving an eye witness account of what happened, but **He is not just writing history!** Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was recording that which the Lord wants us to know about what happened at the time. In other words, we do not have to wonder about John's memory. I was talking with my brother James one time when he said something about how much it hurts to stick a pitchfork in you foot. I said, "I

know. I stuck a pitchfork in my foot one time.” He said, “You didn’t stick a pitch fork in you foot, you stuck it in mine!” Maybe so. I know I was shocked by that revelation, but from childhood I could remember hearing a lot of people talk about how much it hurt to stick a pitchfork in your foot. That horrifying memory of something puncturing my foot went through an adjustment when I remembered the nail I stuck in my foot. My memory if faulty, so how do I know John’s was not also faulty? It doesn’t matter. He was writing under the inspiration of the Lord of History.

BEFORE PASSOVER. Jesus had either waited in Epharim (11:54) until Passover time [BKC], or He and His disciples had moved north from Epharim and returned with the pilgrims who were going to Jerusalem for the Passover. He and His disciples stopped in Bethany, only about two miles from Jerusalem, to visit with His friends, Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. This would be His final visit to Jerusalem and Jesus made sure He was there for Passover. Jesus had, on a number of occasions, mentioned what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem, but for some reason His disciples had not understood it. In fact, they would not begin to understand until after the Resurrection. He had taught them but obviously the message did not penetrate their minds. We are not told why, but it is possible that they were influenced by what the crowds were saying about Jesus.

LAZARUS. With the added note that Jesus visited the home of Lazarus, “the one He had raised from the dead”, John reminds of His last visit to Bethany when he raised Lazarus after he had been dead for four days. Again, this is simply an historical footnote.

12:2 - A DINNER. *“So they gave a dinner for Him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”* The word “so” is transitional. Mark tells us the meal was given in the home of Simon, who was healed of a serious skin disease (see Mark 14:3-9). The name Simon was common in Israel. This was not Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36), but Simon the leper (Mark 14:3; Mat 26:6) in whose house they were entertained. “The Simon in Luke was sharply critical of Jesus; this one is full of gratitude for what Jesus has done for him” [ATR].

They arrived for a visit, so a dinner was given for Jesus and His disciples. According to Matthew (26:6-13), this dinner was given two days before Passover. Mark agrees with Matthew (Mark 14:3-9). That would make this visit on Tuesday by our calendar (the beginning of Wednesday on the Jewish calendar). Why does John mention the dinner as though it happened as soon as they arrived in the area? The answer may well be that while the world has the other inspired accounts, John is not so much focused on chronology as upon a significant event that should be considered in connection with Jesus’ upcoming sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world.

“This is the last mention of Jesus in Bethany and he may have mentioned it proleptically for that reason as seems to me quite reasonable. Westcott notes that in chapter 12 John closes his record of the public ministry of the Lord relative to the disciples at this feast (John 12:1-11), to the multitude in the triumphal entry (John 12:12-19), to the world outside in the visit of the Greeks (John 12:20-36), and with two summary judgements (John 12:36-50)” [ATR].

MARTHA WAS SERVING. John does not tell us what part Mary and Martha played in preparing the meal, only that Martha was serving them. Simon's wife, or servants may have prepared the meal. With Jesus, His twelve apostles, Lazarus, and Simon reclining around the table, Simon's wife would have appreciated the help.

Modern believers have often been enlightened by sermons which, on the basis of this account, ascribe both personality and spiritual differences between Martha and her sister Mary. Jesus knew what was in the heart of each woman, but we should consider certain things before condemning Martha here. If we have message to deliver on responsibilities of women we should be careful that we do not read our thesis into this account. When the two sisters go out to meet Jesus when He arrived, it was Mary and those who mourned with her who may have been responsible for Jesus' anger when she fell on the ground and they all began wailing, and did not stop to listen to Him. It was Martha who professed her faith more clearly at that time. Here, Martha served a large number of men who are reclining around a table. Have you ever prepared a meal and served it on a table that is only slightly raised from the floor? Someone had to do it. They were in the home of Simon (the leper) and Simon's wife may have needed help, and it was probably Martha's nature and habit to get involved in such a situation.

I served a church in Bastrop, Louisiana for 13 years, and there were many times when I would receive a call from a family member or friend informing me that someone had died. I would drive to the home and speak to the immediate family and to friends of the family if they had arrived ahead of me. I would then look into the kitchen and see that our Church Hostess, Mrs. Willie Jordan, was there, quietly serving coffee, arranging for meals, and cleaning up after the family and the visitors. I might visit again if the family needed my help with funeral plans, or to offer comfort to the family. I often stopped by the home after the funeral, never calling attention to herself. Our Miss Willie would be there, quietly, efficiently serving, greeting, and cleaning up after others. For the past sixteen years, I have been going to homes to be with family members who were grieving and making funeral plans after learning that a loved one had died, knowing I would see Mrs. Ollie Guice and her daughter Paula there, serving coffee and cake, preparing food, serving a meal, cleaning up after people. Some people are good at doing this and they understand what needs to be done.

LAZARUS. John tells us that Lazarus "was one of those reclining at the table" with Jesus. It is possible that Simon was both honoring Jesus and celebrating with Lazarus after his resurrection. Other guests would have included the twelve apostles. Paintings, movie, and plays portray Jesus and His disciples sitting at a modern type table, but as John writes, they were reclining at the table, which was their custom. They circled a very low table, with each guest reclining on his left side, propped on his elbow so he could reach over with his right hand for food. Why would they do that? Where would they have put a modern dinner table and the other furniture associated with it, especially in a small house where family members or guests might have to sleep on pallets in that very space?

12:3 - THEN MARY. *Then Mary took a pound of fragrant oil—pure and expensive nard—anoointed Jesus' feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*" Before getting into this verse it may help to distinguish this anointing of Jesus from the one

recorded by Luke (7:36-50). There is no reason to assume any conflict between the two accounts. There were two different anointings by two different women, two different purposes.

POUND OF FRAGRANT OIL. The “fragrant oil” was pure nard, a fragrant oil “prepared from the roots and stems of an aromatic herb from northern India. It was an *expensive perfume, imported in sealed alabaster boxes or flasks which were opened only on special occasions. Mary’s lavish gift (a pint) expressed her love and thanks to Jesus for Himself and for His restoring Lazarus to life. The house was filled with the fragrance. This is one of John’s many side comments which indicate that he was an eyewitness of much of Jesus’ ministry [BKC]. Mary either brought the fragrant oil from her home, or returned for it, which might explain why Martha was working and Mary was not helping serve the meal.*

ANOINTED HIS FEET. The anointing of His feet is no doubt the reason some identify this Mary with Mary Magdalene, who also anointed Jesus’ feet (Luke 7). Why did Mary anoint Jesus’ feet instead of His head? From a practical standpoint, His feet were accessible and His head was not. At least fifteen men were reclining around the table, with their heads near the table and their feet away from the table. It is also possible that she felt compelled to humble herself before Jesus at that moment.

WIPED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR. Why did she wipe his feet with her hair rather than a towel? Was it that she had forgotten her towel? Surely there would have been one in the home of Simon, her neighbor. If she has returned to her home for the oil she would have known she would need a towel. It seems that she never considered using anything but her hair to wipe Jesus’ feet. Considering the fact that she had just seen Jesus raise her brother and call him from his tomb four days after his death, it seems reasonable to assume that, even though she may have been breaking with customs of the day, Mary was simply humbling herself beyond what anyone else would have expected. “It is no doubt true that it was usually considered immodest for a woman to wear her hair loose. But it is not impossible that Mary of Bethany in her carefully planned love-offering for Jesus on this occasion was only glad to throw such a punctilio to the winds. Such an act on this occasion does not brand her a woman of loose character. Was filled with the odour of the ointment (eplêrôthê ek tês osmês tou murou). Effective first aorist passive of plêroô and a natural result” [ATR]. Having said all of that, it is still possible that Mary never thought of anything other than anointing Jesus with the oil until she saw the oil running off His feet, at which time she realized she had no towel, so she used her hair. Either way, the scene was unforgettable.

HOUSE WAS FILLED. John remembers that “the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.” That is not surprising, nor is it surprising that John would remember the fragrance. Neither is it surprising that John would be sharing another historical note with us. However, we may ask if there

is any significance to the fact that the whole house was filled with the fragrance? It would have been more remarkable if the house had not been filled with the fragrance of the oil! At the same time, we may remember here that when Isaiah saw the vision of the Lord in the year that King Uzziah died, God's glory filled the temple (Is. 6). God's glory fills the hearts of believers. His glory fills heaven and it is indeed a pleasant presence. This is not necessarily a prophesy of that glory, nor an explanation of it. Just a reminder.

12:4 - JUDAS ISCARIOT. *“Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray Him), said...”* The only thing that could possibly be interpreted as a complimentary note about Judas in the Bible is that he was of the tribe of Judah (see also, John 6:71; John 13:1). In John 6:71, his father's name is given “in the genitive, Simônos and Iskariôtou (agreeing with the father), but in John 13:1 Iskariôtês agrees with Ioudas, not with Simônos. Clearly then both father and son were called ‘Iscariot’ or man of Kerioth in the tribe of Judah (Jos 15:25)” [ATR]. Judas was the only one of the twelve who was not from Galilee.

ABOUT TO BETRAY HIM. Though millions betray Jesus by their lives and lies every day, Judas is uniquely identified as the one who betrayed Jesus. He was not just a snitch who leaked secrets about the One he followed. He was not an undercover agent who followed Jesus to gather information for the religious authorities. He was not a one time follower who eventually denounced his leader. He was a thief, a liar, and a black hearted betrayer of the Son of God.

Judas was one of the disciples who distributed the food when Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children. He was in the boat and saw Jesus walking on the water. He saw Him raise the widow's son at Nain, and more recently he had seen him raise Lazarus after he had been dead four days. He had been right there when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. He had also been with Jesus when He had humiliated the highest authorities of the Jews with His knowledge of the Scripture. Judas apparently never considered deserting Jesus, or going AWOL. He stayed with Jesus, stealing from the purse and looking for ways to profit from his association with Him and the other disciples. He was Satan's contact person with Jesus and the inner circle of disciples. In America today, Judas would probably have a contract to write a book about his experiences with Jesus.

12:5 - WHY? *“Why wasn't this fragrant oil sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?”* Denarii is plural for “denarius”, a small silver Roman coin, worth about a day's wage at the time. So, 300 denarii amounted to a year's earnings. It would be interesting to know how vocal Judas was when Jesus declared Himself to be the Light of the World, or the Bread of Life. When he saw Mary anoint the feet of Jesus with the precious oil the only thing he could think of was the cost of the oil! He had walked for three years with the One who created all things (1:1f), and all he could see was the cost of the oil.

GIVEN TO THE POOR. The value of the fragrant oil was *a year's wages*, “perhaps a lifetime of savings” [BKC] for the average Israelite of the day. Mark (14:4-5) tells us that the other disciples picked up his criticism and strongly rebuked Mary. *“Evil quickly*

spreads, and even leaders can be carried along by Satan's tools" [BKC]. Satan is at his evil best when he disguises himself as an angel of light and shows compassion for the poor. Marxists everywhere use the poor as a tool. They use them to rebel and overthrow their government, and then they very cunningly turn those poor people into a slave of the state. Only about five percent of the people in the Soviet Union were ever Communists, the other ninety-five percent were slaves of the state. Yet, knowing that, politician after politician in America campaigns on promises to take from the rich and give to the poor.

12:6 - HE WAS A THIEF. *"He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it."* Like thieves everywhere, Judas always kept an eye on the money. It was his job, since he was "in charge fo the money-bag", so others would expect him to offer an opinion about money. John obviously did not know at the time (according to Mark 14:4-5) that Judas was a thief, but we can be sure that Jesus knew. He knew what was in every individual (John 2:24-25).

STEAL PART. Judas must have been subtle about it, but every time there was any money to put in the money bag to support Jesus and His twelve disciples he would steal some of it. One of my brothers-in-law, owns a number of businesses, but he began with one pawn shop, and then expanded into furniture, a tax service, direct deposit banks, and other businesses. A number of years ago, when his business was just beginning to grow to the point where he could not watch everything himself, he hired a policeman to work for him when he was off duty. It seemed like a good idea to have a policeman in the place to keep people from stealing merchandise. One day, a friend was visiting in the store and observed the police officer sell a gold chain for \$75.00. As the customer turned to leave the policeman slipped the money into his own pocket. My brother-in-law was disappointed, but kept him on because he decided it was worth an occasional theft by his employee since the man prevented more serious thefts. We can be sure Jesus knew what Judas was doing, but He tolerated it for an important reason.

If the other disciples had been aware of his thievery they probably would have seen through his motives when he lamented the fact that money had not been spent on the poor. *"Whereas Mary gave openly and sacrificially, Judas wanted to hoard money for himself secretly and selfishly. He even betrayed Jesus for money—30 pieces of silver (the price of a gored slave; cf. Ex. 21:32; Zech. 11:12-13)" [BKC].*

12:7 - JESUS ANSWERED. *"Jesus answered, "Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of My burial."* At first, one might assume that Jesus is only rebuking Judas, but since the other disciples joined in and criticized Mary (Mark 14:4-5) it would seem that He is speaking to all of His disciples when He tells them to leave Mary alone.

Since the NASB has, "Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial", some have suggested that Mary had used only a part of the oil in anointing Jesus' feet, and

would use the rest of it to anoint His body. The HCSB states that she had kept the precious anointing oil until now, and she used it all to anoint Him. She may not have had a clear understanding of the act, but Jesus interpreted it for His disciples.

Why would a woman keep such a valuable vial of oil as this? Was it, as some suggest, her dowry? If so, her act of anointing the feet of Jesus would make it even more amazing. It was an expression of love that defied the belief of the twelve.

THE DAY OF MY BURIAL. Jesus is facing the Cross with His eyes wide open. No one is going to take His life; He is going to lay it down on His own. All the forces of hell and earth could not take His life from Him. Even if He had been stripped of His power to protect Himself, twelve legions of angels could be called on to protect Him. One angel was enough to destroy all the first born of Egypt, and one angel was enough to slay 185,000 men of Sennacharib's army in 701 B. C. (2 Kings 19).

John introduced this pivotal chapter by telling us that this anointing happened six before Passover (vs. 1), whereas Matthew (26:2) and Mark (14:1) tell us it was two days before Passover. How do we resolve that? According to the NAC, this passage

“reflects the Johannine desire to focus the reader's attention on the fact that the stories in this chapter form a unit around the key idea of the death of Jesus with the anointing serving as a symbolic introduction to the Death Story. The entry into Jerusalem and the triumphant praise of the crowd are, therefore, not in John to be seen as the focal points of this chapter. Thus, the chapter does not begin with them. The focus of the Johannine chapter is on the coming of the hour and the imminent death of the Son of God.

“Accordingly, the anointing scene was placed first in this centerpiece of the Gospel. Such placement contrasts with Matthew and Mark, where the use of the anointing seems to be different and therefore follows the entry scene (cf. Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11 for the earlier entry scenes in those Gospels)” [NAC].

As to the question as to whether this was done two days or six days before Passover, there are various opinions. Those who subscribe to a late date for the Gospels suggest that the story was told and retold in churches all over that part of the Roman Empire for years before all of the New Testament books were written and canonized. In telling those stories, they insist, the early preachers and teachers may not have focused on the chronology of the events in the life of Christ.

That seems like a logical, until one considers the research done by Dr. William R. Cooper in England. This writer communicates with Bill Cooper almost daily, and is now in possession of autographed copies of some of his amazing work. Cooper writes that he has found evidence in very ancient documents that the Gospel reached his island very early, possibly within 10 years of the death of Jesus, but certainly by the time Bran was returned by Rome as a puppet ruler around A. D. 58 (as

noted elsewhere). Bran was the father of Caradoc, who had defeated the Roman invasion army in thirty pitched battles before he was betrayed by a relative. His family captured and used to persuade him to surrender. Caradoc was probably held in Rome as a guarantee that Bran would not rebel against Rome.

Based on intensive research in ancient documents, the British scholar writes that one of Caradoc's sons, Linus, was the first bishop of the church at Rome, and his daughter Claudia (who was married to Pudens, who is mentioned by Paul) wrote some of the hymns the early church sang. Dr. Cooper is convinced that Bran took a number of Christian missionaries with him when he returned to Briton, including Aristobulus (whose household Paul greets in closing his letter to the Romans. Dr. Cooper says that his research has led him to conclude that the Gospel of Matthew reached Briton very early, in which case, the church was not totally dependant upon the memory of the early disciples.

12:8 - THE POOR. *“For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”* Jesus never dismisses the poor, and Christians should, of all people, minister to the poor. However, Christians should never use the poor as the Marxists do to take over a country and then when they no longer need them, neglect them, abuse them, let them starve, or even kill them. Experts still disagree on how man millions of people Communists slaughtered in the Twentieth Century, but history bears out the fact that Communist, Nazis, and Muslims have often championed the poor when it served their purpose, but abused, misused, and sacrificed them when that served their purpose. Jesus focuses on His coming death and reminds His disciples that they will have an opportunity to minister to the poor after He is gone. A careful study of the Book of Acts gives us an idea of how seriously early Christians took their responsibility to the poor.

Jesus told His disciples they would not always have Him with them. We are not told that Mary had some special insight or intuition that the twelve apostles lacked. She may have simply feared that the religious authorities would kill Him and she wanted to anoint Him for His coming death, or she may have simply wanted to honor Him. Whether she understood that or not, Jesus accepted it as an anointing for His death. Rather than focusing on the value of the oil, they should see it as an anointing for His burial.

Chief Priests Decide to Kill Lazarus

12:9 - A LARGE CROWD OF JEWS. *“Then a large crowd of the Jews learned He was there. They came not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus the one He had raised from the dead.”* Vincent notes that this word implies a large group of the common people. The Jews here probably included neighbors and their guests who had traveled to Jerusalem for Passover, as well as a large number of those pilgrims who were camped out in the vicinity. In some places, John means the Jewish religious leaders when he writes about “the Jews”, but here he seems to have in mind the Jews in general.

THEY CAME. “They” denotes both neighbors and pilgrims who had come for Passover. News spread that Jesus and Lazarus were guests of Simon (Mark 14:3; Mat 26:6) and they rushed there to

see both the Lord and the man he had raised after four days. The neighbors would have seen Lazarus and now they would want to see Jesus. Those who had not previously heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead would have heard about it as soon as they arrived in this vicinity. Crowds were drawn to celebrities and sensational events then as they are today.

Picture the crowds that gather to get a glimpse of a famous actor, singer, or athlete. There is something in human beings that will draw us to anything sensational. When I was a student at Mississippi College, I read in the Jackson Clarion Ledger that Rocky Marciano would be the referee for some of the bouts in the state Golden Gloves finals in Jackson. I loved boxing above all other sports at the time, but I might not have gone just to see those fights. I had not gone in previous years, but Rocky Marciano had not been there. I had to see my all-time favorite fighter. He had not learned to box in the gym like most boxers. He needed money and so he started fighting, and knocking out one opponent after another until he captured the attention of fans as well as promoters. He demolished famous boxers like Joe Louis and Archie Moore, and ended the career of some outstanding younger boxers, like Roland LaStaza. Long before he learned to box, he was knocking out boxers. My friends and I had to go to the fights to see Rocky Marciano.

No one was marketing the arrival of Jesus and His disciples, but word spread and a large crowd gathered at the home of Simon in order to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. In time, many would connect the resurrection of Lazarus with the promise Jesus had made that He would be victorious over death, but now they just wanted to see a man who had been raised from the dead after four days, and they wanted to see the One who had raised him.

12:10 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore the chief priests decided to also kill Lazarus...”* The word “therefore” is often used to hold before us what has just happened and connect it with that which follows. Because a large crowd gathered to see Jesus (and Lazarus), the chief priests decided that they would not only kill Jesus, they would also kill Lazarus! They, along with the high priest Caiaphas, had already decided that Jesus must be killed.

*“The chief priests and Pharisees were too cowardly to arrest Christ in the presence of the welcoming throng (cf. Mark 11:26-33; Luke 19:47, 48; 22:1, 2), so the common people were free to welcome both Jesus and Lazarus. Yet far from abandoning their plan to kill Jesus (11:53, 57), the Jewish leaders included innocent Lazarus in their postponed scheme of murder. **The venom of unbelief is truly astonishing** (cf. Acts 7:54-58). Lazarus’s resurrection (11:37-44) had so enthralled the fickle crowd that they were now ready to acclaim Jesus as their Savior and king” [NCWB, bold added by this writer].*

12:11 - HE WAS THE REASON. *“(B)ecause he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.”* The chief priests, who were preparing to lead the worshipers in the holy festival of Passover, had already plotted to kill Jesus, the Lamb of God, to whom every Passover lamb that had ever been sacrificed pointed as the fulfillment of the sacrificial system. **In the name of God, they would kill the Son of God!** While they were at it they would go on and kill Lazarus. Why? Because many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

It would be hard to improve on summary statement in THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY on verses 9, 10, and 11:

“These three verses in this centerpiece section serve as another linkage or minor saddle text between two significant stories, just as occurred earlier at 2:12. These three verses, however, are more complex because the evangelist addressed **three pertinent ideas** in them. **First**, in v. 9 he draws the reader’s attention away from the anointing scene to the gathering of a crowd that had come to see Jesus (an incredible miracle worker) as well as Lazarus (the recipient of a startling resuscitation). After the healing of Lazarus, Jesus had withdrawn with his disciples from the Jerusalem area to a place called Ephraim (see 11:54). But now the word was out that the healer and the healed both could be found together in the vicinity of Jerusalem. That combination was certain to attract a crowd. John notes the gathering of the crowd (12:9; see my comments at 12:12). The crowd of ‘Jews’ here does not imply that they were enemies.

“**Second**, this gathering, in the second place, brought the presence of Jesus and Lazarus to the attention of the enemies of Jesus, who had already plotted his death (11:49-53). The presence of Lazarus as a living witness to the power of Jesus meant that the plot now had to be expanded to include the resuscitated Lazarus (12:10). This verse is an important reminder that an evil thought or deed does not usually remain an isolated event, and those involved in such evil matters are generally forced further into evil in order to ‘clean up the loose ends.’

“**Third**, this ‘loose end’ about the Lazarus raising was having its effect because the narrator tells us that ‘many’ Jews were ‘departing’ from the fold of the authorities and ‘believing’ in Jesus (12:11). The combination of the words ‘departing’ and ‘believing’ could well have also been viewed by the evangelist as a proleptic portrayal of what would happen in the conflict between the early Christians and the synagogue. The preaching and ministry of the early believers led to the departure (exclusion) of Jewish believers/converts from their cradle of Judaism into the fold of the Christian church.

“**With these three setting statements** in mind the evangelist moves from the framing story of the anointing to the story of the Rubicon-like entry into Jerusalem” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

The Royal Entry

SPECIAL NOTE: Traditionally, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem that day has been called the Triumphant Entry, but I am going to break with tradition and call it The Royal Entry. Where do I get that? What difference does it matter? It made a lot of difference a thousand years earlier. David, king of Israel, was on his death's bed and his son Adonijah decided to proclaim himself king in the place of his father. He had a chariot prepared and then assembled a calvary and fifty men to run before him as he entered the city, no doubt to proclaim him the new king of Israel. Nathan reported this to Bathsheba and she had him to tell David what had happened. David had promised that Solomon would be the next king, but Adonijah jumped the gun and proclaimed himself king. Bathsheba and Nathan were not sure what to do, but David did not hesitate to act:

“The king said to them, ‘Take my servants with you, **have my son Solomon ride on my own mule**, and take him down to Gihon. There, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet are to anoint him as king over Israel. You are to blow the ram's horn and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ You are to come up after him, and he is to come in and sit on my throne. He is the one who is to become king in my place; he is the one I have commanded to be ruler over Israel and Judah” (1 Kings 1:33-35, bold added).

According to some traditions, when a king visited a city in his kingdom he might ride his horse of war (or chariot of war) if the visit was not peaceful. However, if his mission was peaceful he would ride his royal mule into the city. The people would not panic when they saw him riding on the royal mule. When the people saw Solomon riding into Jerusalem on David's royal mule, with people crying out that he was the new king over Israel, the people would join in the cry, “Long live King Solomon!” Solomon's was a royal entry (though in a sense it was triumphant), and the people understood that and joined the servants of Solomon in proclaim him king.

In the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7), God made a promise to David that included both Solomon and the One who sit on the throne forever. We know this was a Messianic prophecy, and we know that Jesus is here fulfilling another Messianic prophecy. That the people would respond as they did is more than just remarkable, it is amazing in every way, and their response would guarantee that the religious leaders would move quickly to have Jesus killed. God is orchestrating the events to accomplish His purpose, just as He had for centuries moved empires like pieces on a chessboard to prepare the world for this moment.

As noted above, I like to think of this as the Royal Entry. That does not mean that it was not a triumphant entry, when considered from a spiritual perspective, Jesus did conquer death, hell and the grave. The Roman cross was a sign of a shameful execution, an inglorious defeat, and a dishonorable death, but we do not stop with the cross. The open tomb is our victory sign.

12:12 - THE NEXT DAY. *“The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival*

heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem...” A large crowd gathered at Simon’s house in Bethany to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. Some from this crowd must have begun spreading the word that Jesus would be entering Jerusalem the next morning and the word spread like wildfire, in part because of past experiences in Jerusalem and in part because He had raised Lazarus from the dead. Today, something can happen in some place like Denmark and set off wild demonstrations all over the Middle East, as well as destructive demonstrations throughout Europe. We understand today how Muslim leaders can fan the masses into a religious frenzy that fills the streets with angry young men carrying signs (often in English!), but it is truly amazing that word would spread so quickly in First Century Jerusalem, and their response was just as astonishing.

12:13 - PALM BRANCHES. *“(T)hey took palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!’”* The large crowd went out to meet Jesus with palm branches to hail the arrival of the promised King, the son of David, who would drive out the hated Romans, conquer all the territory David had conquered, and establish Israel as a mighty nation once again (after 1000 years!).

HOSANNA! The word (from the Hebrew) means “*save now*”. *When the modern man or woman reads*, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” he or she might think they were celebrating the coming of the Messiah who would provide those who believed in Him citizenship in an eternal kingdom. That, however, was not what they had in mind when they shouted, “the King of Israel!”.

“ (T)hey were expecting that the conquering Messiah had come to save them from Roman captivity. To their way of thinking, the one “*who comes in the name of the Lord*” would be “*the King of Israel*” (see Ps. 118:25, 26; Zeph. 3:15). *The people were hailing the arrival of their King! Indeed, their King was coming to them—but not the kind of king they expected. Rather, Jesus came to them in the way prophesied by Zechariah: ‘Behold your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey’ (9:9, NASB). The King, in this coming, would not be a conqueror, but a humble servant. And he would not be exalted to the Davidic throne, but lifted up on Calvary’s cross. The Passover Lamb had come to be slaughtered (1 Cor. 5:7); the grain of wheat had come to be buried (12:24). Of course, the people at that time could never have imagined that his entrance into Jerusalem was an entrance into the*

throes of death. They never would have thought that Jesus was about to enter into glory through death and resurrection. As they shouted scriptures from *Psalm 118:25, 26*, they probably never thought that the very same Psalm (vs. 22) *ironically foretold that the cornerstone would be rejected by the builders*” [NCWB].

12:14 - JESUS FOUND. “*Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written...*” How did He find a donkey? He had His disciples to find one for Him, as we see in Mark 11:2-6; Matt. 21:2-3, 6; and Luke 19:30.

12:15 - FEAR NO MORE. “*Fear no more, Daughter Zion; look! your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.*” This quotation is from Zechariah 9:9 (though not the complete verse). As mentioned already, the donkey was ridden in peace, and the horse was ridden in war (Judges 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam. 17:23; 19:26). Zechariah pictures the Messiah as One coming in peace, and the people here may not have recalled that promise and may not have regarded Jesus as the Prince of Peace, but there is no doubt that and they regarded Jesus as a one who might drive out the Romans.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the Fourth Gospel is not the creation of John. A very dignified lady once told me that my son Mark had given her a copy of my commentary on Philippians, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*. I recognized the name as that of an attorney who had just received a federal appointment of some kind. The lady stepped around a table and said, “I really enjoyed your book, and I normally don’t like Paul.” Stepping a little closer, she added, “Paul was strictly a product of his time, wasn’t he?” I said, “Yes, Paul was a product of his own time, but the Scripture is not the product of the mind of Paul, it is the product of the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is the One responsible for the arrangement of all the signs, the I AM sayings, the teachings of Jesus, and the record of these historical events. **This is a pivotal chapter**, the centerpiece of the Gospel [NAC]. Jesus is fulfilling prophecy, even though the cheering crowd misunderstood that prophecy.

12:16 - HIS DISCIPLES DID NOT UNDERSTAND. “*His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.*” This is not the first time John has mentioned their lack of understand things concerning Jesus death (John 2:22; John 7:39). The modern student of the Word may find it hard to believe that the “His disciples” (especially the twelve apostles) did not understand what was happening. John says they did not understand “at first”. In the first place, no matter what Jesus had taught them about His death and resurrection they did not believe until that Sunday morning when John entered the tomb, saw the burial cloths where they had collapsed where Jesus’ body had lain, and the napkins that had been wrapped around His head lying in another place. (That takes care of the shroud of Turin!)

REMEMBERED. “After the ascension of Christ, the disciples saw the meaning of many prophecies which referred to Christ, and applied them to Him, which they had not fully comprehended before. Indeed it is only in the light of the new covenant, that the old is to be fully understood” [C;ARKE]. It would only be after the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers that they would fully understand a lot they had seen and heard, as we shall see in Jesus’s Farewell Discourse, and in Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians. A lost person today may read the Bible over and over and never understand the Sermon on the Mount, upon which Christians ethics are based. If he reads John 3:16 and believes in Jesus Christ he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who will illuminate the eyes of his spirit so he can understand the Scripture and make a personal application of the Inspired Word in his or her own life. Let’s face it, there are simple housewives, farmers, service station attendants, and department store clerks who do a better job of applying the Word of God in everyday life than some pastors, denominational workers, and Bible college professors. How can that be? Consider the work of the Spirit in producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22): meekness, gentleness, kindness. There is nothing more disturbing than hearing someone pontificate on the Scripture with his ego showing.

WHEN JESUS WAS GLORIFIED. Was glorified (edoxasthê) “is the first aorist passive indicative of doxazô, to glorify, used of his death already in John 7:39 and by Jesus himself of his death, resurrection, and ascension in John 12:23; John 13:31” [ATR]. John was the lone surviving apostle, the last one in the whole world who could give a personal testimony about what happened from the perspective of one of the twelve apostles. He writes, “However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.” We know the Holy Spirit, who inspired the beloved disciple John to write this, could have produced Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus through another believer, just as He inspired Paul to write the Epistle to the Romans. We shall see in Chapter 16 of this Gospel that the Holy Spirit would call the things Jesus had said to them to mind, and guide the disciples that they might understand them. I can imagine the response of those early believers who read this Scripture, knowing that John had been there and he was a personal witness to all of this. Think how many times some of them heard John speak of these events!

12:17 - THE CROWD. “*Meanwhile the crowd, which had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify.*” As Jesus moved into the city the crowd would continue to increase, and those who had been there when Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb continued to tell those they met along the way about it. Some time had passed between the raising of Lazarus and the Royal Entry, and those who had been there and seen Lazarus come out of the tomb had been telling everyone about it and it seems that many of those people were in the crowd that moved along with Jesus and His disciples as they entered Jerusalem that day. They continued to tell the story.

This is another of those times when it is obvious that John was an eyewitness to the events of the day. He may well have recognized some of the people who had been at the tomb when Lazarus was raised. I refused to concede the point to those enemies of God who call themselves secularists when they insist that this is “a gospel, it’s not history.” What would any historian give to find an eyewitness

account like this to events in the life of Ramses the Great? We know a lot about a number of Pharaohs, but historians and archaeologists crave more information. Would historians call a testimony like this anything other than history if they uncovered a scroll that recorded such information as this about Nimrod, the mighty warrior who founded both Nineveh and Babylon? What would they give for a first hand witness to the conquests of Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar? While the Bible was not written to be used as a text book for a history class, but no ancient document has been subjected to the kind of scrutiny that has been given the Gospels.

12:18 - THIS IS WHY. *“This is also why the crowd met Him, because they heard He had done this sign.”* This crowd met Jesus as He entered the city, not because they embraced Him as Savior, but because they had heard about the raising of Lazarus. This answers a question that came to mind when I read about the crowd the chief priests had assembled to stand before Pilate and shout for him to crucify Jesus. There were enough people in Jerusalem for more than one crowd. These were not necessarily the same people. Let’s be realistic, the Pharisees and Sadducees knew what that crowd would do. They were taking no chances with a fickle crowd that might be influenced by Jesus or His followers at this point.

Those who met Jesus this day, crying “hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (12:13), were not greeting Him as a Savior, but as potential king, like David, who would drive off the Romans. *“This reiterates the rather superficial enthrallment with Christ’s miracles which characterized most of the cheering well-wishers (12:13). It is still possible to speak of Christ in glowing terms but reject him as our personal Savior. This is surely the ultimate human tragedy” [NCWB].*

12:19 - THE PHARISEES. *“Then the Pharisees said to one another, ‘You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look—the world has gone after Him!’”* While the crowds cried hosanna, the Pharisees acknowledged that all their efforts to refute, embarrass, trap or discourage Jesus had failed. This public reception of Jesus by such a large enthusiastic crowd thwarted the plans of *the Pharisees for the moment.* They were looking for just the right charges to arrest Jesus and kill Him, but they didn’t want the arrest, trials, and crucifixion going on during the Feast, they said among themselves, *“or the people may riot” (Mark 14:1-2).* *“Pessimistically they acknowledged, ‘the whole world has gone after Him!’* Irony is again evident, for most of those people did not really believe in Jesus” [BKC - Bible Knowledge Commentary]. The temporary despair of the Pharisees *“only intensified their burning desire to eliminate Christ at any cost and at the very first opportunity. This helps to explain the almost instant hatred which the Jewish leaders later displayed at Christ’s several fraudulent trials (Matt. 26:66-68; 27:22-25; John 18:29-31; 19:6, 7, 14,*

15)” [NCWB - New Commentary on the Whole Bible, NT].

Jesus Predicts His Crucifixion

12:20 - SOME GREEKS. “*Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival.*” The Greek (Hellenes) in the original tells us that these were actually Gentile Greeks, not Greek-speaking Jews, or Hellenistic Jews (see Acts 6:1). Paul was a Hellenist Jew, whose credentials surpassed those of his Palestinian peers in the school for the Pharisees in Jerusalem. He was born and reared outside Palestine, in a Greek speaking country heavily influenced by Greek culture. Some believe the Greeks mentioned by John were probably “converts to Judaism and had very likely been among the Passover pilgrims who greeted Christ as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (12:12 – 15)” [NCWB].

“They probably would best be identified either as proselytes or God-fearers (those who had not yet committed themselves fully to circumcision and the Jewish rites). The former were numbered among the Jews as converts and permitted into the inner Court of Israel. The latter were still regarded as Gentiles and were permitted only in the Court of the Gentiles, but not allowed beyond the stone wall that threatened death to the unworthy (or to those who encouraged them) if they crossed the boundary (cf. the false charge against Paul in Acts 21:28)” [NAC - New America Commentary].

F. F. Bruce agrees in general, but supplies additional information that should interest the serious Bible student. He wrote that these Greeks may have come from a Greek city within Palestine. He mentions Cornelius of Caesarea (Acts 10) and the Centurion of Capernaum who loved the Jewish people and built a synagogue for them (Luke 7:5). He adds that these Gentiles

“embraced the Jewish way of life and synagogue worship without becoming full proselytes or converts to Judaism. Such people occasionally went up to Jerusalem to worship at the festivals (like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27); they were admitted to the outer court of the temple, which accordingly was called ‘the court of the Gentiles’. Penetration to the inner courts was forbidden to Gentiles on pain of death, and warning notices were attached to the barrier - ‘the middle wall of partition - separating the inner courts from the outer court...’ [THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, Bruce, F. F., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983, p. 263 - after this, BRUCE].

Bruce follows that with a note of historical interest:

“Seven years later a very distinguished Gentile came to Jerusalem in company with Herod Antipas ‘to sacrifice to God’ at Passover season; this was Vitellius, the Roman governor of Syria. Josephus has occasion to mention this because half way through the week news arrived of the death of the Emperor Tiberius (on 16 March, AD 37).

But even Vitellius had to content himself with worshiping in the outer court” [BRUCE].

12:21 - CAME TO PHILIP. “*So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, ‘Sir, we want to see Jesus.’*” Why did they go to Philip, rather than one of the other apostles? Gaebelein asks the same question and notes that both Philip and Andrew had Gentile names [Gaebelein, Frank, THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE COMMENTARY, Vol. 9, Zondervan, 1981, p. 128 - after this, GAEBELEIN]. We may also wonder if they sought Philip out deliberately? Some believe this is a possibility. One writer observes that “Some suppose that these Gentiles were of Phoenicia or Syria, or perhaps inhabitants of Decapolis, near to the lake of Gennesareth and Bethsaida; and therefore they addressed themselves to Philip, who was of the latter city, and probably known to them. The later Syriac calls them Arameans or Syrians. The Vulgate, and several copies of the Itala, call them Gentiles” [CLARKE].

Of course, there may have been a more practical answer. Philip may have simply been the disciple most accessible to these Greeks at the moment, but in a big crowd it is certainly plausible that they would recognize a fellow citizen of their district (if indeed they were from the same town or province).

12:22 - ANDREW. “*Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.*” Why did Philip tell Andrew rather than going to Jesus himself? Was it because of an organizational structure among the Apostles that made it seem expedient for Philip to go through Andrew to talk with Jesus? More than likely, Philip was caught off guard by the request and the closest person to him was Andrew, so he told him about the request and, “*after discussing it with Andrew, both of them approached Jesus together. (Compare the intermediary role of these two men in 1:41 – 46. See also 6:59.)*” [NCWB].

12:23 - THE HOUR. “*Jesus replied to them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.’*” It would be interesting to know what stage Jesus had reached in His Royal Entry when He stopped to speak. Obviously some of the noise had died down or they would not have heard Him. They had been shouting hosannas as He made his way into the city on the donkey. One possibility is that Jesus simply stopped, which had the effect of silencing the crowd. His disciples did not yet understand what was happening (vs. 16), but Jesus understood perfectly. Another possibility is that the crowd did not understand what He was saying because he was talking with Philip and Andrew, who would no doubt repeat it countless times after the Resurrection.

TO BE GLORIFIED. Jesus said, “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” If His purpose had been to declare Himself the King of Israel and lead the nation in rebellion against Rome, the people might have expected Him to declare that the hour had come. They were shouting that He was the King of Israel (vs. 13), so they must have expected some proclamation. However, the hour had *come for the Son of man to be glorified* through death, burial, resurrection, ascension;

He continues to be glorified through His present ministry in our behalf; and He will be glorified through His eventual return and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

12:24 - A GRAIN OF WHEAT. *“I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop.”* I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta, seven miles west of the little town of Sledge. I understand what Jesus was saying, not as one who plants a few seeds in a flower bed. I began working ten hours a day in cotton fields when I finished the fourth grade, like other children who were brought up on a farm in those days. The children who grew up like that were not abused, but they were certainly kept busy! As I grew older, I helped my family grow cotton, soybeans, and a little corn. Later, I worked with the US Department of Agriculture to help pay for college and seminary expenses. As a young man, I did some part-time work with the Statistical Reporting Service (USDA). We checked on every aspect of farming. We distinguished between “cotton seed”, “Mechanically delinted cotton seed”, and “acid delinted cotton seed”. I understood that the farmer planted 18 pounds of acid delinted cotton seed per acre, or 22 pounds of mechanically delinted seed.

Those to whom Jesus was speaking lacked the modern technology and research, but they understood what He was saying just as well as I, but the words of our Lord bring a picture to mind that I have not thought of in years. My father did not work on Sunday. Other than feeding livestock, he did not work on Sunday. Period. As he told one tenant, “I don’t work on Sunday; my land is not worked on Sunday; and my tractor does not work on Sunday.” Every Sunday for a number of years we came in from our worship service at the Green River Baptist Mission in time to watch R. G. Lee preach from Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, after which we would eat Sunday dinner, and then watch Billy Graham. After that we usually played a few games of cork ball in the yard.

I have a clear picture in my mind of something I saw my father do each Spring as long as I was at home. At some point he would walk out to the cotton field in front of our house and look at the drill where he had planted cotton. He would then walk out into the field, stop, ease his pocket knife out of his pocket, open the long blade, ease it into that drill and gently lift the crust. He wanted to know if there was enough moisture for the seed to germinate. He would do the same thing in other fields and he was always relieved when he saw the first sign of germination. After that, he would simply watch the drill in the center of the row. He would soon see the crust begin to break as the new plant began pushing against it. A few days later there would be a green line all the way down the top of each row, a promise of a good harvest that Fall. When that happened there was no longer a seed in the ground. **The seed ceased to exist** and in its place there was a live cotton plant.

“The hour had come for him, like a corn [grain] of wheat, to be buried in the earth. He would forego the momentary glory for the eternal. The buried grain would eventually bring forth much fruit, more fruit than could have been gained had he then and there taken the kingship on earth. Indeed, Jesus, through being lifted up on the

cross, would draw all men to himself. His cross, like a charged magnet, would draw millions and millions to him (12:32). This has been evidenced by the history of the last two millennia. How many have been drawn to Christ! And how many grains have come from that one seed! Thank Jesus that he chose the way of death. If he had not gone to Calvary, he would have remained single and alone, like an unplanted grain. But his burial, like a planting, brought germination and multiplication” [NCWB].

Only Jesus could have used this illustration at that time with absolute understanding of the full significance of it. He came into the world to die for our sin, and the resurrection was a part of His plan from the beginning.

Again, we need to remind ourselves of the organization of this Gospel. **This chapter is strategic:** “Prior to this verse the evangelist had consistently pointed forward to the hour (cf. 2:4; 4:21,23) and had noted that his enemies were not yet able to complete their death wish for him because it was not yet his hour (7:30; 8:20). Now, however, the dirgelike drumbeat leading to Jesus’ death had begun to play. The last act had now started; the hour had arrived (12:23; 13:1; 17:1)” [NAC].

12:25 - LOVES HIS LIFE. *“The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”* We find the same words in Matthew 10:39 and Mark 8:35. Jesus was saying He was about to give up His life for the salvation of all who believe in Him, “but I shall speedily receive it back with everlasting honor, by my resurrection from the dead. In this I should be imitated by my disciples, who should, when called to it, lay down their lives for the truth; and, if they do, they shall receive them again with everlasting honor” [CLARKE].

HATES HIS LIFE IN THIS WORLD. The modern reader needs to understand that ancient rabbis used extremes to make a point. They would make a statement and then in support of that point, make another statement that would either contradict it, or compliment it. Whereas we might say some thing is as different as night and day, they would use a more extreme statement. Some have suggested that God was doing that when He said He loved Jacob but hated Esau (Malachi 1:2ff). I am convinced that God was saying that He loved Israel (the Chosen People), but hated Edom (descendants of Esau) who did everything they could to prevent God from accomplishing His purpose with Israel. Robertson out the sharp contrast in Luke (Luke 14:26-35)

“where *miseô* is used of father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, as well as one’s own life. Clearly *miseô* means ‘hate’ when the issue is between Christ and the dearest things of life as happens when the choice is between martyrdom and apostasy. In that case one keeps his soul for eternal life by losing his life (*psuchê*, each time) here. That is the way to ‘guard’ (*phulaxei*) life by being true to Christ. This is the

second paradox to show Christ's philosophy of life" [ATR].

The author of the material in THE BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY stresses that in the case of His disciples, the principle is similar. "A disciple must hate *his life in this world*. To 'hate his life' means to be so committed to Christ that he has no self-centeredness, no concern for himself. On the other hand *the man who loves his life will lose it*. Anything in life can become an idol including goals, interests, and loves (cf. Luke 12:16-21; 18:18-30). A believer should undergo a spiritual death to self (Rom. 6:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 6:14)" [BKC, bold in the original].

12:26 - IF ANYONE SERVES. "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." Many claim to serve Jesus who do not demonstrate that commitment with their lives. This is the condition of third class, meaning the outcome is still undetermined: they may serve, or they may not. Those who do serve Him are the ones who keep on following Him. The wheat analogy (v. 24) "illustrates a general paradoxical principle: death is the way to life. In Jesus' case, His death led to glory and life not only for Himself but also for others" [BKC].

MUST FOLLOW ME. The one who would serve Jesus must prove it by following Him. They must follow His example, His commandments, and the ethics and principles He taught. "Being a servant of Jesus requires following Him. Many of Jesus' original servants did follow Him—in death. According to tradition, the early disciples died as martyrs. Jesus' word was thus a prophecy and also a promise. His true disciples (those who serve Him) follow Him in humiliation and later in honor or glory (Rom. 8:17, 36-39; 2 Tim. 2:11-13)" [BKC]. Sadly, many who profess their faith in Jesus do not follow Him.

THE FATHER WILL HONOR HIM. Just how does the Father honor the one who serves and follows His Son? Will he or she be listed in "Who's Who in Religion in America"? Will He make sure he or she gets a writeup in denominational publications? Or, does He mean earthly honors at all? David Brainerd poured out his life for Christ at an early age, exposing his frail body to rain, snow, and storms in spite of serious health issues. He once entered an Indian village where the people were ready to hear him. Through a translator, the chief told him they had surrounded him while he was sitting down with his back against a tree with his head down. He wasn't asleep, he was praying. They understood that. A rattlesnake was coiled by his foot and David Brainerd never knew it. Such was the intensity of his prayer that the braves who had planned to kill him backed off and returned to

their camp. They wanted to hear the man whose God wouldn't let the rattlesnake bite. How did God honor David Brainerd? At age 29, he died of tuberculosis in the home of Jonathan Edwards, his fiancé, Edwards' daughter, standing by his side. To the world, that is not much of an honor. However, God is not forced to act in the here and now. He can honor one here on earth, or in the "Sweet Bye and Bye".

12:27 - MY SOUL IS TROUBLED. *"Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour."* John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write in the Prologue to this Gospel "The Word became flesh and dwelled among us" (1:14), and we are certainly seeing here that Jesus was as human as if He had not been God at all. Later, John would write, "This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 John 4:2).

WHAT SHALL I SAY? Should He ask His Father to save Him from what was about to happen. "This hour" refers to His appointment with the Cross, and all the humiliating agony, weakness, inner stress, and pain associated with it. How could He asked to be saved from the suffering when, as He said, "that is why I came to this hour." The hour was approaching like a snowball rolling down a hill and the time for His crucifixion was "approaching so rapidly that Jesus concluded his remarks to Philip and Andrew (12:20–26) with a glimpse into his inner agony of expectation" [NCWB]. The agony of Passover had already begun, even though Jesus was the only one to understand it.

12:28 - FATHER, GLORIFY YOUR NAME. *"Father, glorify Your name!" Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!"* This is the first aorist (note of urgency) active imperative of *doxazo* and "in the sense of his death already in verses John 12:16, 23 and again in John 13:31; John 17:5. This is the prayer of the pneuma (or psuchê) as opposed to that of the sarx (flesh) in verse John 12:27. The 'name' (onoma) of God expresses the character of God (John 1:12; John 5:43; John 17:11). Cf. Mat 6:9" [ATR]. The Son's love for the Father shines through brilliantly in these words.

Jesus does not ask to be spared the suffering, and He does not ask for personal glory. He prays, "Father, glorify Your name." His "burning desire to glorify the Father transcended his revulsion of sin's judgment, and God the Father responded to this noble motivation with his audible approval from heaven. All of Christ's words and works had truly glorified the Father (cf. 5:19–21, 30; 8:28, 29)" [NCWB]. To glorify His name was to let His "character, nature, wisdom, goodness, and plans of mercy be manifested and promoted, whatever sufferings it may cost Jesus" [BARNES]. His name was glorified by His Son, it continues to be glorified by His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit, and it shall be glorified forever.

A VOICE CAME FROM HEAVEN. *This voice from heaven was in answer to Jesus' prayer for help. It also reminds us that the Father had spoken from Heaven before: at the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:11) and at the transfiguration (Mark 9:7). Many who recall those time may forget that the Father spoke at this critical time.*

I HAVE GLORIFIED IT. The Greek word (from *doxa*) denotes an opinion, thus to ascribe glory to another. This is a word we use in reference to God or to Jesus so often that we may never stop to ask ourselves what we mean when we use it.

“As the glory of God is the revelation and manifestation of all that He has and is ..., it is said of a Self-revelation in which God manifests all the goodness that is His, John 12:28. So far as it is Christ through whom this is made manifest, He is said to glorify the Father, John 17:1, 4; or the Father is glorified in Him, John 13:31; John 14:13; and Christ's meaning is analogous when He says to His disciples, ‘Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be My disciples,’ John 15:8” [VINES].

God said that He had already glorified His name through the life and ministry His Son, and now He says, “I will glorify it again.” Jesus had just asked if He should pray for the Father to save Him from “this hour”, and now the Father speaks from heaven and offers the encouragement He needs as He faces the betrayal, arrest, trials without mercy or justice, the agony of the scourging, the humiliation of the mocking voices, and the intense pain of the Cross.

12:29 - THE CROWD HEARD. *“The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to Him!’”* Consider the circumstances. Jesus is in the middle of a great crowd, a crowd that may well have been growing all the time. As He entered the city they were shouting hosannas to Him, and declaring Him to be their king. Jesus, cries out to the Father to glorify His name and the Father answers from heaven and says, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!” (Vs. 28). The crowd heard the voice of the heavenly Father, but did not know the source of the voice. The one thing that is obvious is that they all heard God speak, but some thought they had heard thunder while others thought an angel had spoken. God speaks today, but we may be so distracted by the things of the world that we miss His message, and then wonder why God doesn't speak to us today as He did in then.

Jesus understood what the Father had said, but we are not told whether or not the apostles did. This reminds us of the time when Jesus spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts. 9:7; 22:9). Saul understood the voice but those with him heard the voice but didn't understand it. “The unexpected sound of the voice would confound and amaze them; and though there is no reason to doubt that the words were spoken distinctly (Mat 3:17), yet some of the people, either from amazement or envy, would suppose that this was a mere natural phenomenon” [BARNES].

ANGEL. The Pharisees believed in angels, the Sadducees did not. Many of those who made up this

crowd obviously had no problem believing an angel had spoken. “It was the opinion of many of the Jews that God did not speak to men except by the ministry of angels, Heb 2:2: ‘The word spoken by angels;’ Gal 3:19: ‘It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” [BARNES].

12:30 - THE VOICE. “*Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for Me, but for you.”* From this, we know that Jesus understood both what the Father had said, as well as what the people in this crowd were saying. When Jesus says the voice was “not for Me”, the statement is “*Emphatic in the Greek order: but is not for my sake* that this voice hath come” [VINCENT]. Robertson, on the other hand asks, “...why not take it to be the figure of exaggerated contrast, ‘not merely for my sake, but also for yours’?” [ATR].

12:31 - THE JUDGMENT. “*Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*” This crowd had been shouting hosannas because they believed a king was riding into Jerusalem to overthrow Rome. Jesus, however, declares a much greater victory. He did not come to overthrow a foreign emperor, He came to overthrow “the ruler of this world” (who is none other than Satan).

There are many people who profess to believe the Bible, who do not believe in a personal devil. I realize now that I probably should not have been surprised when a fellow student in our Intensive in Revelation began pressing our professor with the questions: “Do you believe in a personal devil? Do you believe Satan really exists?” That professor had been teaching us from Revelation for a number of weeks, but he didn’t believe that Satan really exists! He had managed to cover up that fact until that day. He and others often quoted an older, highly acclaimed professor, who didn’t believe in a personal devil. The older professor would go on to write a book on the Doctrine of Christ a number of years later. How can one deal with the temptations of Christ if he does not believe Satan exists? I was asked to teach, the study, *The Doctrine of Christ*, in Nebraska. I told that pastor that I would be happy to teach the subject, if he would allow me to prepare my own study, but, I added, “If I have to teach that book I won’t come.” The pastor asked me to prepare my own study and “come on and teach it.”

12:32 - IF I AM LIFTED UP. “*As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all [people] to Myself.*” Jesus uses the third class condition here “with first aorist passive subjunctive of *hupsôd*, the verb used in John 3:14 of the brazen serpent and of the Cross of Christ as here and also in John 8:28. Westcott again presses *ek* instead of *apo* to make it refer to the ascension rather than to the Cross, a wrong interpretation surely” [ATR]. It is clear here that Jesus was talking about the Cross rather than the Ascension. There can be no mistaking what He means in 3:14.

12:33 - TO SIGNIFY. “*He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die.*” One thousand years earlier, David sang about the Cross (Ps. 22). That was not only one thousand years before His crucifixion, it was hundreds of year before any nation used crucifixion as a means of execution. Jesus knew He was about to die and He knew the instrument of His death. Nothing caught Jesus by surprise. He came into this world to die on the Cross, which was illustrated over

1400 years earlier when Moses was told to lift up the brazen serpent in the wilderness. But how, we may ask, could these people have been expected to understand that? Jesus will soon answer that question in His great discourse on the Holy Spirit.

12:34 - WE HAVE HEARD. *“Then the crowd replied to Him, ‘We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?’”* People from this confused crowd said to Jesus, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever.” When had they heard that? Was that what they had been taught in their synagogues? Is that what their rabbis were teaching them? Before we dismiss those people as ignorant or primitive, ask yourself what you might understand today if you had no New Testament, and if the Holy Spirit had not come to illuminate our hearts so that we might understand the Scripture. They thought they knew what the Messiah would do when He came into the world,

“But Christ’s majestic disclosure, coupled with a hint of his circumstances of death, only confused his listeners still further. They had believed in a figure called the Messiah—and when Jesus seemed to fit that image, they began to believe in him; but it was difficult to believe him when he continually spoke of his imminent death, and that on a cross. The signs he performed encouraged their faith, but his words about his death shattered the Messianic image” [NCWB].

This tells us a lot about this crowd. The fact that they had just been shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!” (12:13), does not mean that they had committed themselves to Him as Savior and Lord. They were looking for a political/military Messiah who would overthrow Rome and conquer again the territory David had conquered.

12:35 - THE LIGHT. *“Jesus answered, ‘The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going.’”* Jesus continually tied together Scripture, images, prophecies, and lessons from their history, but the people did not understand Him, and His followers would not understand until after Pentecost. He has just used the image of His being lifted up on the Cross. Now he alludes again to the light. In 9:5, He declared, “I am the light of the world”, and at the tomb of Lazarus, He declared, “If anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him” (John 11:10).

WALK WHILE YOU HAVE THE LIGHT. That is, “walk in conformity with the fact that you have the Light among you” [VINCENT]. He returns to the metaphor of the light and urges them to walk while they have light (while He is with them). “Their time of opportunity was limited. He is **the Light** for the world (1:4, 9;

8:12; 12:46), but the day of His public ministry was almost over (v. 23). *The darkness of night was coming in which evil powers would hold sway over people. The man who walks in the dark means an unbeliever who stumbles through life without knowing what life is all about and where it is headed (cf. 3:19; 8:12; 1 John 1:6)*” [BKC, bold in the original].

WALKS IN DARKNESS. We must not miss what Jesus is saying here. He has placed a great deal of emphasis on light throughout His ministry. The Creation story begins with the command from God, “Let there be light.” The plants and animals He would create might make it without light for some varying periods of time, but man could not live without light. He did not equip man to see in the dark, so light is essential to our very existence. Picture two million people in the wilderness with absolutely no light at night. Babies cry and demand attention. Toddlers cry, “I have to go to the bathroom.” Children call out to their parents, “I want a drink of water.” There were no night lights, no street lights, not flashlights. But there was a light, a miraculous light.

If Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write, “For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, **and that rock was Christ**” (1 Cor 10:4, bold added), are we not safe in saying that the light that enabled them to live at night in the wilderness for 40 years was also Christ? When He shouted out at the Festival of Tabernacles, “I am the Light of the world”, He is telling us that throughout their history He had been the only true spiritual light to guide them in a morally and spiritually darkened world, a world in which we are lost and hopeless. As He is the source of living water (John 4:10; 7:38), so is He the light of the world.

12:36 - WHILE YOU HAVE THE LIGHT. “*While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light.*” Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them.” Jesus had walked in their midst for three years, proclaiming Himself to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world, yet they had not understood Him. He had taught them in their synagogues; He had opened the Old Testament Scriptures before them; yet, they did not understand. His time for teaching them is now running out, so “Rather than engage in a futile attempt to correct the people’s misconceptions against their will, Jesus replied with an easily understood warning to take advantage of the light of the world while he was still with them (cf. 1:5-9; 3:18-21; 8:12; 9:4, 5). After delivering this ample warning, Christ withdrew from the crowds to prepare for his final pre-crucifixion activities” [NCWB].

Barnes observes that when Jesus says, “while you have the light” implies two things:

- “1st. That he was the light, or was the Messiah.
- 2nd. That he was soon to be taken away by death. In this manner he answered their question--not directly, but in a way to convey the truth to their minds, and at the same time to administer to them a useful admonition. Jesus never aroused the prejudices of

men unnecessarily, yet he never shrank from declaring to them the truth in some way, however unpalatable it might be. Believe in the light. That is, in the Messiah, who is the light of the world” [BARNES].

Fulfilling Isaiah’s Prophecy 12:37-50

The significance of this section is abundantly clear to the author of the material in THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY, who sets before us what he calls, “The Centerpiece Summations”:

“As the Gospel turns toward its final and decisive movements, the evangelist supplied two brief refrains of reflection. Thus, before he set in motion the third cycle, which is focused on Jesus’ concern for his close disciples and prior to his consideration of the death and resurrection stories, he paused in this complex centerpiece and presented **two focal summations** that should cause readers to ponder how they would have reacted to Jesus if they would have witnessed his words and works. The questions that underline these summations for readers are: **What about you, do you believe? And, if you believe, what does that imply?** The careful reader should recognize immediately that these questions in fact parallel the concern in the purpose statement of the Gospel (20:30-31). The symphonic nature of this Gospel has always captivated me as a reader and forced me as a believer to ponder my life in light of God’s incredible gift to us as human beings” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

12:37 - MANY SIGNS. *“Even though He had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him.”* John began this Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ with a Prologue that should have destroyed all false religions for all time. In those opening verses, he was inspired to write, “We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John :14b). Sadly, he also wrote of these Jews, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

God had, in the Old Testament Scriptures, prepared the Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Genealogical records (Matt. 1) proved that He was descended from both Abraham and David, as required by prophecy. On top of that, Jesus had given them every reason to believe in Him through numerous signs. These signs were performed in the presence of these Jews. No one could deny that He had fed a huge multitude with a child’s lunch. No one could deny that he had given sight to one born blind. Certainly, no one could deny that He had raised Lazarus from the dead. They had every reason to believe in Him, but they refused.

12:38 - TO FULFILL. *“But this was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said: Lord, who has believed our message? And who has the arm of the Lord been revealed to?”* Is John saying that Jesus set the stage so He could claim that the prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled? Anyone who

believes that does not really know Jesus, and anyone who rejects Him after the Resurrection and Ascension in the presence of over 500 witnesses does not know Him, no matter how loudly they shout their confessions. Robertson offers critical help at this point: “That might be fulfilled (*hina plêrôthêi*). It is usually assumed that *hina* here with the first aorist passive subjunctive of *plêrôô* has its full telic force. That is probable as God’s design, but it is by no means certain since *hina* is used in the N.T. with the idea of result, just as *ut* in Latin is either purpose or result, as in John 6:7; John 9:2; 1Th 5:4; Gal 5:17; Rom 11:11 (Robertson, Grammar, p. 998). Paul in Rom 10:16 quotes Isa 53:1 as John does here but without *hina*. See Rom 10:16 for discussion” [ATR]. Barnes offers a practical opinion:

“That the same effect should occur which occurred in the time of Isaiah. This does not mean that the Pharisees rejected Christ in order that the prophecy of Isaiah should be fulfilled, but that by their rejection of him the same thing had occurred which took place in the time of Isaiah. His message was despised by the nation, and he himself put to death. And it was also true--by the same causes, by the same nation--that the same gospel message was rejected by the Jews in the time of Christ. The same language of the prophet would express both events, and no doubt it was intended by the Holy Spirit to mark both events. In this Way it was completely fulfilled” [BARNES].

12:39 - THIS IS WHY. *“This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said...”* To what does “this” refer? The answer to that question is the key to understanding why those people “were unable to believe”. It is possible that, as in 8:47, the Scripture holds before us what has just been said and ties it to what is about to be said.

Does the “because” mean that these people had no choice but to reject Jesus if Isaiah’s prophecy was to be fulfilled? That is inconceivable because it is inconsistent with the Gospel the Savior proclaimed. The Scripture does not absolve these Jews of any moral responsibility for rejecting Christ because it was prophesied over seven hundred years earlier. The words of Isaiah “had to be fulfilled, for they were the expression of Divine foreknowledge’ (Bernard)” [ATR].

12:40 - HE HAS BLINDED. *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they would not see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I would heal them.”* Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 6:9, and it is possible that this “refers more to the judgments that should fall upon them as a nation, which God was determined should not be averted, than it does to their eternal state. To suppose that the text meant that God was unwilling that they should turn unto him, lest he should be obliged to save them, is an insupportable blasphemy” [CLARKE].

The Eighth Century B. C. Has been called the Golden Era of Prophecy. From around 760 B. C. until the end of the century, Amos and Hosea prophesied in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, while Isaiah and Micah proclaimed the word of Yahweh in Judah (composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). Israel had refused to obey the statutes and commandments of Yahweh ever since Sinai. During the Period of the Judges, the Chosen People went through a cycle of rebellion over a dozen times: (1)

they would rebel against the Lord; (2) He would use a pagan nation to inflict His judgment on them; (3) they would cry out to Him for deliverance; (4) He would send a judge to deliver them; and (5) they would follow him as long as they judge lived. As soon as that judge died they would begin that cycle all over again. This cycle was repeated more than a dozen times.

Finally, they demanded a king like the pagan nations, which would not seem like a major offense to modern Americans who insist that we live in a secular nation. However, pagan kings were often seen as representatives of the pagan god or gods they served. In fact, some pagan kings declared themselves to be gods. When John heard Jesus speak these words Roman emperors worshiped false gods, but by the time John wrote the Revelation some emperors were declaring themselves to be gods. When John heard Jesus speak these words, Israel was one of many nations that made up the Roman Empire, but by the time he wrote the Fourth Gospel Israel had rebelled against Rome and paid an unbelievable price. Titus came with his army, laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, broke through the walls, destroyed the temple (A. D. 70), and the Jews had been scattered among the nations of the empire. For some nineteen hundred years there were many Jews but they had no homeland until the end of World War II.

THEY WOULD NOT SEE. The Lord warned Israel to repent or be destroyed by the Assyrians. They refused and Sargon II came in 722 B. C. and Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was no more. Isaiah warned Judah that the Lord would raise up Babylon to destroy the Assyrian Empire and take Judah into captivity if she did not repent. Judah refused to listen and the Lord did two things simultaneously: (1) He called Jeremiah to warn Judah to repent or face His judgment, and (2) He raised up Babylon to carry out His judgment. Both of these things happened during the reign of Josiah, who, more than any other king had a heart like that of David.

After dramatically describing the rebellion of Judah in the second Chapter of Jeremiah, the Lord declared: “For My people have committed a double evil: **They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water**” (Jer 2:13, bold added by this writer). This writer has a sermon series posted (or being posted) on the PastorLife.Com web site, Jeremiah’s America, in which parallels are drawn between ancient Israel’s rebellion against the Lord, and America’s apostasy today. America is guilty of those very same sins: rejecting the fountains of living water, and hewing cisterns that can hold no water. Islam is a broken cistern. New Age religion is a broken cistern. Humanism is a broken cistern that can hold no water.

I WOULD HEAL THEM. Yahweh was a longsuffering God who continually tried to get His Chosen People to follow Him, but they absolutely refused. He appealed to Israel to repent and follow Him, and when she refused He sent Amos, the prophet from Tekoa in the Southern Kingdom, to warn them: “Prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12). He held out His salvation to Judah to the very end, but when she refused to obey Him He sent the Babylonians to take them into captivity for seventy years, during which time they were finally purged of idolatry. The promised remnant from those taken away in the Captivity returned with a hatred for the idolatry of the pagan nations. For the first time since the Exodus (about 1446 B. C.), Jews totally rejected idol worship. That remnant returned with Zerubbabel to build the temple around 536 B. C. (some say 538 B. C.).

12:41 - ISAIAH SAID. *“Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke about Him.”* Is Jesus saying that Isaiah had seen the glory of Yahweh, or had he seen the glory of Jesus? The Book of Isaiah is filled with Messianic prophecy. Isaiah was not the only one to see the glory of which Jesus is speaking. In fact, Jesus had already said to these Jews, “Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day; he saw it and rejoiced” (John 8:56). The HCSB is right in translating it “because he saw” rather than “when he saw His glory.” The BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY carries the following note:

*“In a vision Isaiah... saw “the Lord Almighty” (lit., “Yahweh of hosts,” or “Yahweh of armies”; Isa. 6:3). John wrote that this glory Isaiah saw was **Jesus’ glory**. The implication is startling: Jesus is Yahweh! (Cf. John 1:18; 10:30; 20:28; Col. 2:9.) Jesus in His nature is God (but God the Son is distinct in person from God the Father and God the Spirit). Isaiah **spoke about Him**, for many of Isaiah’s prophecies predicted the coming Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (e.g., Isa. 4:2; 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; 32:1; 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3). Earlier Jesus had said that Moses wrote about Him (John 5:46) [BKC, bold in the original].*

When did Isaiah see the glory of the Messiah? He saw the glory of Yahweh in the temple (Ch. 6). The Lord also pulled back the veil and gave Isaiah glimpses of the coming Messiah on numerous occasions. For example: “For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

The amazing thing is that even after the Resurrection, the nation as a whole still refused to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Dr. Bill Cooper of England, one especially gifted in languages, has told me that he sits up at night and listens to Israeli radio in the modern Hebrew. He tells me that from time to time they mention Christians in their country in such a way that shows

their absolute rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. At the same time, they do mention individual Jews who have received Christ as the Messiah.

12:42 - MANY DID BELIEVE IN HIM. *“Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue.”* They would soon declare their faith, but at this time they remained silent, as the multitude had earlier: “Still, nobody was talking publicly about Him because they feared the Jews” (John 7:13). At that time, the people remained silent because of their fear of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

“Even among the rulers” means that some of the Pharisee did believe in Jesus. Among those Pharisees who remained, for the time being, “secret disciples”, were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (19:38, 39).

DID NOT CONFESS. Those Jews, including some of the religious rulers, remained silent about their belief in Jesus for fear that they would be banned from the synagogue. Certain Pharisees remained silent for fear of the other rulers. In America, especially during the television era, politicians and those in the media become easily addicted to words and phrases. When George W. Bush was running for the office of president of the United States, his enemies came up with a buzz word that was designed to destroy his chances of success: gravitas. Webster’s defines it: “dignity: formality in bearing and appearance”, but when his enemies, including both politicians and the majority in the media, used the term they implied that he was a “light weight”, lacking in experience and intelligence. He had earned a graduate degree from a prestigious university, become a part owner of a professional baseball team, and was serving as governor (but only in a southern state!), accomplishments critics in the media could never match, but they kept repeating, “but he lacks gravitas!” His open, courageous profession of his faith in Jesus Christ probably underscored his naivete with many in the media and most politicians.

More recently, someone coined the phrase, “rush to judgment”, and the media loved it. Over and over, we heard, “but that’s a rush to judgment”. When we read this verse we should avoid a “rush to judgment.” *I have said many times that “there is no such thing as a secret disciple: either the disciple destroys the secret, or the secret destroys the disciple.”* In general, I still believe that. However, there are times and places when the believer must be careful of every word he says. Each individual must speak as the Holy Spirit directs, not as a Christian living in a safe haven dictates.

The Pharisees who believed, knew better than anyone else the lengths to which

their fellow “rulers” would go to have Jesus killed. They were well aware of the position of the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin, who feared that if they did not have Jesus killed He could place their position, if not their lives, in jeopardy. Rome might abolish their position and possibly put them to death. However, the more intensely they hated Jesus and the movement He had started, the more they would risk the wrath of Rome. Some of these younger Pharisees and Sadducees may well have been a part of the plot to murder Paul while he was being escorted by Roman soldiers).

Nicodemus had been challenged as to his loyalty to the Sanhedrin, and those “rulers” who did believe in Jesus would recall the time the Pharisees sneeringly asked the temple police, “Have any of the rulers believed in Him? Or any of the Pharisees?” (John 7:48).

Bill Pace, this writer’s good friend, retired at age 65 and moved to China, where he has been teaching Conversational English for a number of years. I was on the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources when terrorists bombed the Twin Towers. We were in a meeting at the LifeWay Conference Center in Glorieta, New Mexico at the time. The response of leaders like Ken Stephens, who was President of B & H Publishing at the time, was “What can we do in response to this attack?” I was on the Broadman and Holman Committee, and would serve as vice-chairman and chairman of that committee, so I became good friends with Ken Stephens and his leadership team. At the next meeting we would learn what our response would be. We formed B & H Outreach International in order to reach out to the world with the Gospel. One of the most important things accomplished by B & H Outreach International was the New Mandarin Translation of the New Testament. The old Mandarin translation was seriously flawed. Phill Burgess, the vice president over the new department, has sent me hundreds of copies of

the Gospel of John in the New Mandarin (and HCSB) for Bill Pace to distribute.

Many students have come to faith in Jesus through his ministry and through the New Mandarin translation. In July, 2008, I placed a large box of Gospels of John in his hands when he spoke at our church. I also gave him a pre-publication copy of the entire New Testament. In July, 2009, I gave him a box of the completed New Testaments in the New Mandarin translation.

When Bill Pace first began working in China he was very careful not to place any student in danger by publically witnessing to them. He gave copies of the Gospel of John, with the New Mandarin on the left page and the HCSB on the right to students and said, "This will help you learn English." In time, he led many to the Lord, and then some professors began asking about Jesus Christ, and they wanted to go to church with him. He explains that the government will not allow them to go to the English service, but he can go to their service. Now, he attends both services each week.

I once talked with a very articulate lady from China who had married an American. Her mother-in-law was having surgery and I when I talked with her, the young lady was obviously interested, but she would not commit herself. I left the hospital, drove home and picked up a copy of the Book of Romans in the New Mandarin, with the Old Mandarin on the opposite page, and drove back to the hospital and gave it to her. I asked if she could see a difference and she said, "Oh, yes."

In time, I would discover that the lady has a deep and genuine faith in Jesus Christ, but with her background, she was very guarded in what she said. She has a mother in China and she was most anxious to get the New Mandarin translation into her hands. What she didn't want was to see her mother thrown into a Chinese Communist prison by doing anything that might attract

the wrong kind of attention.

There is one other point that should be made here. None of the disciples were especially vocal about their faith in Jesus between the crucifixion and Pentecost, except those in the Upper Room. After Pentecost, when they were indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they boldly proclaimed their faith in Jesus. When the Holy Spirit is permitted to do His work in one's heart he or she will have the courage and conviction to share their faith in Jesus.

12:43 - PRAISE FROM MEN. *“For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”* Was their faith what we might call a saving faith, or was it an intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus might possibly be the Messiah? In the limited space of this Gospel, that question is not answered, however, “It does not appear that they had a living, active faith, but that they were convinced in their understanding that he was the Messiah. They had that kind of faith which is so common among men--a speculative acknowledgment that religion is true, but an acknowledgment which leads to no self-denial, which shrinks from the active duties of piety, and fears man more than God. True faith is active. It overcomes the fear of man; it prompts to self-denying duties, Heb 11:1” [BARNES].

As noted previously, there were two men among them who did believe, and would soon act on their belief. They were Joseph and Nicodemus, John 19:38,39. See also, Mark 15:43 and Luke 23:50,51. These believers would not confess Jesus openly at this time, but Nicodemus and Joseph would soon make their faith known to all.

“The church has always had people who remain borderline believers, unwilling to confess openly their attachment to Jesus because of all sorts of pressure. For many today, especially in Muslim countries, the pressure is not merely a matter of membership, prestige, or economics like these secret believers but of life itself, a situation the early Christians soon encountered. The cost of discipleship is often high, and some, like the leaders in this story, remain borderline believers because of fear of exclusion (12:42) or loss of popularity (12:43).

“Contemporary readers of the Gospel should not fail to reflect on the implications of this text for themselves. Believing in Jesus is often very costly” [NAC].

Jesus Offers a Summary of His Mission

12:44 - BELIEVES IN ME. *“Then Jesus cried out, “The one who believes in Me believes not in Me, but in Him who sent Me.”* This seems to be a summary of what Jesus had already said as in

verse John 12:36. “John closes the public ministry of Jesus without the Synoptic account of the last day in the temple on our Tuesday (Mark 11:27-12:44; Mat 21:23-23:39; Luke 20:1-21:4)” [ATR]. Jesus had withdrawn from the skeptical crowds earlier (12:36, 37), but now He makes “one final public appearance he appealed to his hearers to believe in him as God (cf. 5:17-44; 6:27-65; 7:16-18; 8:14-58; 10:14-18) and thereby walk in his light” [NCWB]. He has continued to focus the attention of those who heard Him, not on Himself, but on the Father who had sent Him.

12:45 - THE ONE WHO. “*And the one who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.*” In verse 44, the emphasis is on **believing in the One who sent Jesus**. In this verse, the emphasis is on the **seeing the One who sent Him**.

“The summary proper begins with a twofold statement not only concerning believing and seeing Jesus but also believing the one who sent him. All three italicized ideas are major themes in this Gospel. This twofold statement furthermore prepares the reader for a third expanded version on receiving in the next chapter, which includes an important reference to the ones whom Jesus sent (13:20). This statement occurs in the introductory chapter of the Farewell Cycle, the cycle that focuses on discipleship” [NAC].

This summary statement focuses attention once more on the the relationship between the Father and the Son. At various points in the verse by verse study of the Gospel According to John this writer has called stressed the importance of keeping the Prologue in mind. The summary statement here “presupposes representative unity that was introduced in the opening verse of the Prologue in terms of the Word and God (1:1) and was stated most emphatically in the conflict setting of the Festival Cycle just before the Jews attempted to stone Jesus (10:30). Moreover, the idea that Jesus had been sent on mission to represent God and to ‘make him known’ is a theme that is introduced in the concluding verse of the Prologue (1:8)” [NAC].

12:46 - I HAVE COME. “*I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me would not remain in darkness.*” Jesus is a light unto the world (John 1:9; 3:19, 12:35). In 8:12, stated very clearly, “I am the light of the world.” He is exclusively the light of the world. As light dispels darkness in the physical world, so Jesus dispels darkness in the spiritual world. Darkness became a metaphor for evil because men often commit crimes under cover of darkness. Jesus had said, “This, then, is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Jesus declares Himself to be the light of the world, and in the Sermon on the Mount He says of **those who manifest the qualities set forth in the Beatitudes**: “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). I live in a community nestled in a forest, and when the power goes out the whole area is in total darkness until we light our lanterns, turn on our flashlights, and start our generators. I have numerous LED lights, Mag-lights, and crank up lights. My son John and I have collected the most powerful lights we could find for years, so when the power goes out we can find our way around the

house or yard. I even bought a new Lithium Ion powered drill and light combination. The other batteries that power my cordless drills may be down when you need them, but the Lithium Ion batteries will hold a charge for up to two years if they are not used. Human beings cannot function long in a darkened universe, and they soon become aware of that fact. Physically, we need light for security, protection, production, fellowship, and normal daily life.

Sadly, there are many people who think of themselves as enlightened, but in reality they live their lives in spiritual darkness and never realize it. They joke about things that condemn them to spiritual darkness: immorality, pornography, drinking beer, gambling, dishonesty, and violation of the Lord's Day. Physically, when you are in the dark you know it, but one who is in the dark spiritually will only realize it when the Holy Spirit convicts him or her of the sin that darkens the sinner's life.

12: 47 - HEARS MY WORDS. *“If anyone hears My words and doesn't keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.”* This is the third class condition, showing that the response has not yet been determined. They may hear His words, or they may not. It is the same today. A lot of lost people may hear an evangelist but only a few repent, confess their sins, and ask the Lord of save them.

I DO NOT JUDGE HIM. Greek scholars call this an exaggerated contrast (see also, John 3:17 for same contrast). This is interesting, and no doubt there are those who would point to an inconsistency here, for Jesus states clearly in John 9:39, “I came into the world for judgment...” How do we reconcile that? Jesus is the ultimate Judge, but his primary purpose for coming into the world is not judgment, but salvation (see the Prologue and John 3:16-18). We may turn to the close of the Sermon on the Mount “for the same insistence on hearing and keeping (obeying) the words of Jesus (Mat 7:24, 26) and also Luke 11:28” [ATR]. He came to the world to save people, but for those who reject His salvation He becomes the Judge.

The author of the material in the NEW COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE, NEW TESTAMENT notes that this verse “reiterates the important truth that Christ came not to judge the world but to save it (cf. 3:17; 8:15, 16), even though his rejected words would condemn all unbelievers in the final day of judgment (cf. 3:31-36). At that time Christ will indeed judge all mankind as the magistrate of the Father (5:22, 23, 26-30)” [NCWB].

12:48 - THE ONE WHO REJECTS ME. *“The one who rejects Me and doesn't accept My sayings has this as his judge: the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”* The one who rejects Jesus' words of salvation rejects Him, and stands condemned by His “sayings” (His message of salvation). This Gospel is all about salvation, but if you reject those words you stand condemned by them. What, other than hell, can there possibly await anyone who rejects the One who gives eternal life and promises to keep all who believe in Him (John 10:28)?

JUDGE HIM ON THE LAST DAY. There is a great day coming, but for the lost that day will

be a terrible day. It is the Day of Judgment. The purpose of God's *revelation in Jesus is positive: He came to save, not to judge (see 12:47; 3:17)*. "But rejection of God's Revelation inevitably brings a hardening in sin and ultimately God's judgment. In speaking of Jewish national unbelief John balanced his theological explanation with Jesus' serious exhortation to the nation to repent. In the words of Moses, these "are not just idle words for you—they are your life" (Deut. 32:47)" [BKC].

From John 3:16, we know that God sent His Son into the world to provide for our salvation, and that all who believe in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. His first desire is not to condemn people but to save them. Jesus stressed that in the previous verse, and now He warns all who reject Him of the consequences. Those who trust Him as Savior will never stand before Him as the Judge who condemns all lost people to hell.

There are always those who insist that a God of love would never send anyone to hell. I have an answer for them. **All believers should thank God that we will not spend eternity in the presence of murderers, liars, thieves, adulterers, or profane and vulgar people** (all those mentioned in Rev. 21:8). We will not have to spend eternity in the presence of doubters and scoffers. We will not have to spend eternity in the presence of religious people who have rejected a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. **When Jesus sits in judgment on such people and condemns them to hell, all true believers will say "Amen!"**, even when that person is your father, brother, sister, or son or daughter. If you find that thought shocking, then pray fervently for your family and friends, and warn them while you have the opportunity. There is no place in heaven for anyone who looks God in the face and says, "I don't want you!" There is no place in heaven for anyone who looks his Creator in the eye and says, "I don't believe you." There is no place in heaven for anyone who looks at all the evidence the Lord has placed before him and still says, "I will not believe!"

There is nothing vague in what Jesus says here: "the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day." The message Jesus uses to offer salvation is the very word which condemns anyone who rejects Him on the last day, the Day of Judgment. "There is no escaping it. And yet Jesus himself will bear witness for or against the one whose conduct has already revealed his attitude towards the message of God (Mat 10:32; Luke 12:8)" [ATR]. I have no idea whether or not the number is right, but I read one time that there are 237 warnings in the New Testament of the judgment that awaits those who reject Jesus Christ. One writer summarizes the message of this verse like this:

"It is possible to agree with Brown that 12:48 contains a sense of both realized and futuristic eschatology. If a person who rejects Jesus already is judged by his words, then I would argue that, in agreement with the evangelist's statement at 3:18, such a person is already condemned and the wrath of God remains or stays upon him (3:36). On the other hand, John states that there is a sense in which judgment will be finalized

on ‘the last day.’ As one might expect, Bultmann cannot envisage a futuristic eschatology and therefore assigns the ‘last day’ statement here to an ‘ecclesiastical editor’ in the same manner as he dismissed the futuristic statements of John concerning the resurrection to life and to judgment (5:29). But future reward and punishment, though not at center stage here as in the book of Revelation, are nonetheless fundamental realities for the evangelist. This world and the present are not the only realities of existence, and the reader is forthrightly warned here not to forget the future” [NAC].

12:49 - ON MY OWN. *“For I have not spoken on My own, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a command as to what I should say and what I should speak.”* The Son of God is certainly in a position to speak with authority, but the earthly Jesus spoke under the authority of the Heavenly Father. Why does He say this at this late hour? His critics have already rejected Him as the Messiah, and now the religious leaders are planning to kill Him because He called God His Father.

Jesus, while on earth, did not speak on His own authority for His personal benefit. He did not seek personal gain or earthly power. Instead, He proclaimed the message “the Father Himself” had commanded Him to speak. When did the Father command Him to speak? There can be no doubt that the Father Himself gave His Son the message to speak before the Incarnation. There is more! **When Jesus felt the need to withdraw from the masses and spend time with His Father, can we doubt that there was communication between the Father and the Son?** During the forty days in the wilderness, following His baptism, can we doubt that Jesus was communicating with the Father. This is also a testimony to interaction within the Trinity.

Jesus continually declares His obedience to the Father. I have never been able to understand how those who subscribe to a unitary theory of God deal with this. If there is but one Person in the Godhead, to whom was Jesus praying? If there was no Father with whom He communicated, Jesus was misleading His disciples when He withdrew to pray. If there was no Father in Heaven, He was lying to these people to whom He was speaking at this time. This reinforces my conviction that the Bible reveals a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We worship a God who is three in Person, but one in essence. Look at the baptism of Jesus: the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks.

12:50 - I KNOW. *“I know that His command is eternal life. So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”* Jesus speaks with authority because He has perfect knowledge of the Father. When Jesus says, “I know”, He speaks from a unique position as the “one and only Son” whom the Father sent into the world to provide for our salvation (John 3:16).

HIS COMMAND. Jesus had absolute knowledge that the command (message) of the Father “is eternal life.” Adam Clarke writes:

“These words of our Lord are similar to that saying in St. John’s first epistle, 1John 5:11, 12. This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in

his Son. He that hath the Son hath life. God's commandment or commission is, Preach salvation to a lost world, and give thyself a ransom for all; and whosoever believeth on thee shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Every word of Christ, properly credited, and carefully applied, leads to peace and happiness here, and to glory hereafter. What an amiable view of the Gospel of the grace of God does this give us? It is a system of eternal life, Divinely calculated to answer every important purpose to dying, miserable man. This sacred truth Jesus witnessed with his last breath. He began his public ministry proclaiming the kingdom of God; and he now finishes it by asserting that the whole commission is eternal life; and, having attested this, he went out of the temple, and retired to Bethany" [CLARKE].

The message we should get from these closing verses in what one writer calls the "centerpiece" chapter [NAC], is that the words Jesus is speaking are not mere human words. John refers to the words of the Father as "His commandment" here for the first time.

"Accordingly, John uses at this point the designation 'commandment,' which has not been previously applied to Jesus' teaching. But it will be hereafter as he links love and commandment together in the Farewell Cycle (13:34; 14:15,21; 15:10,12). The alert biblical reader should hardly miss the force of the designation 'commandment,' not as a basis for legalism but in the best sense of Torah (command) as a principle for life (cf. Deut 32:46-47). The New Moses had come to the world. The investigating committee had asked the Baptizer if he was the expected prophet like Moses (1:21; cf. Deut 18:15). The answer was no, but he also added that there was one standing 'in their midst' whom they did not know (John 1:26). He knew the way of life!

"As this centerpiece of the Gospel is concluded, therefore, the reader is also faced with the burning question: What does it mean for readers today that the sent one has come to the world, and what really is the danger of not receiving him and his commands?" [NAC].

Our Lord will answer that question in the following chapters of this amazing Gospel. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed not only for those disciples, but for all who would hear His message of salvation until He comes again (see Chapter 17).