

John 1A

- Leon Morris wrote that John's Gospel is a pool in which both a child can wade in and an elephant can swim in
 - It's a book of simple yet profound truth, relying on metaphor and symbols to reveal Christ to be the only begotten Son of God
 - Chronologically, the Gospel of John was the next to last book of scripture penned at the end of the first century
 - Only the book of Revelation came later
 - And yet it's often the first book we recommended to the person curious to know more about Christ or Christianity
 - John's Gospel is so memorable partly because of its uniqueness among the Gospels and John's distinct purpose in writing it
 - By the time John's Gospel was written, the church had come to recognize that God's timetable for Christ's return was much longer than first anticipated
 - All but one of the apostles had died, and second and third generations of followers were now leading the church
 - The church was being embraced by Gentiles, even as its early Jewish constituencies were dwindling rapidly
 - All this made clear that the promise of a coming Kingdom needed to be understood with a new appreciation and patience
 - Certainly, it remains for a true, physical kingdom to arrive on earth, with Christ as the King reigning from Jerusalem
 - But by the time John wrote, few still expected that the arrival of that kingdom was right around the corner
 - After all, the earth had waited thousands of years for God to reveal Himself in Christ the first time
 - So it might take thousands of years more for His return
 - Therefore, unlike the other gospel writers, John approached his Gospel with the purpose of strengthening the church for the long period that lay ahead

- John was Jewish but wrote for an increasingly Gentile church by taking time to explain Jewish words and customs and geography
- In recognition that the Second Coming would not be soon, he emphasizes the present-day reality of Christ's Kingdom and His ever-present authority in the lives of believers
- He wanted believers to abide in Christ, to depend on His word
- Because of his unique focus on living in the light of Christ (and because his Gospel came last), John chose to skip over many important moments in Jesus' ministry
 - His omits Jesus' genealogy, birth, baptism of John, His temptation in the desert, exorcising demons, no parables, the transfiguration, the Lord's Supper, the time in Gethsemane, and His ascension
 - And in their place, he reveals Christ through extended discourses between Jesus and a variety of actors
 - A Pharisee
 - A woman of ill repute
 - A blind man, a lame man
 - A crowd seeking to be fed
 - His earthly brothers
 - And of course, His various disciples
 - These conversations are often comical, resembled two ships passing in the night
 - Jesus will speak in spiritual terms of birth, water, bread, blindness, and so on
 - While his audience usually remains confused, bound by an earthly perspective
 - He frequently employs the verb, belief (*pisteuo*), which appears 98 times in the Gospel
 - But he never uses the noun, faith (*pistis*)

- In other words, John emphasizes the necessity of knowing Christ through an active, continual trust in the Lord, rather than simply resting on our moment of confession
- The content of John's gospel suggests he selected a portfolio of Jesus' best work, carefully selected to illustrate both Jesus' deity and humanity
 - To demonstrate Jesus' deity, John related seven of Jesus' miracles
 - After each of these miracles, John captured a lengthy discourse in which Jesus explains the spiritual significance of His work
 - Through these moments we come to know our Lord as a compassionate Shepherd Who cares for His people
 - And Who has the power to sustain them in the present age as we await His return
 - To remind us of His humanity, John selected other moments when Jesus reacted to life just as we might have
 - Submitting to his mother's authority
 - Weeping at the death of a friend
 - Raging at corrupt and evil men in the Temple
 - Expressing disappointment at the poor choices of His disciples
 - John's Gospel is also known for its seven statements of "I am"
 - Jesus said "I am the bread, the light, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection, the vine and the way, the truth and the life
 - The phrase "I am" evokes the name of God provided to Moses from the burning bush
 - Reminding us that while God has revealed Himself in many portion and many ways through Moses and other prophets, in these last days He has spoken through His Son
 - As Thomas Constable said, the knowledge of who Jesus really is, is the key to the knowledge of who God really is
 - And so John wrote His Gospel to reveal Jesus as the light Who came into the world conquers the darkness

- He's the Provider, the Life Giver, the Good Shepherd
- He's the One Who receives all that Father sends and loses not a one
- Even the start of John's Gospel is wholly unique and reflective of his purposes
 - John begins by affirming Jesus' role in the beginning of all Creation

[John 1:1](#) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[John 1:2](#) He was in the beginning with God.

[John 1:3](#) All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

[John 1:4](#) In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

[John 1:5](#) The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

- It doesn't take a seminary professor to notice that the opening words of John's account are familiar
 - In fact, if you were to recite the words "In the beginning..." to a Bible student and asked him to complete the sentence, you would be equally likely to hear them finish with Genesis 1:1 as with John 1:1
 - The first five verses of Genesis and John are strikingly similar
 - And of course, this is no accident
 - Genesis begins this way

[Gen. 1:1](#) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

[Gen. 1:2](#) The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

[Gen. 1:3](#) Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

[Gen. 1:4](#) God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

[Gen. 1:5](#) God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

- Like Genesis, John begins with a statement of the beginning of Creation and with light and darkness
- John borrows from the words of Genesis so that we might ponder the connection...and ponder we will

- Who is this God Who created all things?
 - The God with the power to create merely by speaking Creation into existence
 - A God Who made light by His word
 - And separated light from darkness by that same word
- John writes to answer that question
 - That God was Jesus Christ
 - The member of the Godhead Who acted to bring about Creation was the Son
 - And since He spoke the Creation into existence, John calls Jesus the Word
 - And to be sure we understood that Christ is the One and only Creator, John adds verse 3
 - Paul echoes this truth in Colossians, which was written decades earlier

[Col. 1:15](#) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

[Col. 1:16](#) For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.

- So John coined the name “The Word” as a succinct way to explain that Creation of Genesis 1 was the work of Christ
- But then John also points out that there is God and there is the Word, and they distinct
 - And yet they were together in the beginning
 - By definition, if two entities are both present before the start of all Creation, then neither created the other
 - So both are God
- Perhaps John was seeking to clarify Genesis 1:26, where God declares, “Let Us make man in Our image.”

- The references to God in the original Hebrew are written in the plural, something that has perplexed Jewish scholars for millennia
- Now we see that the plural tense was always intended to reflect the Trinity of the Godhead
- Ironically, John is embarking on explaining how God made His Son in the image of man, so to speak
- We could talk all night on the mystery of the Trinity
 - But even after hours of talking, we probably wouldn't understand it any better than we do right now
 - Simply put, our God is One God in Three Persons
- Continuing with the Creation story, John gives Christ yet another name: Light
 - Specifically, John says in Jesus is life and He is Light of the world
 - John is establishing a chain of logic as he moves through his opening (or prologue as some call it)
 - Logically, if Jesus is the Creator and God, then He is also the source of all Life, since God is the Life-giver
 - So since Christ is the Creator, in Him is life for men
 - But Christ gives men life in two ways, which is a central theme in John's Gospel, which he introduces here
 - As Creator, He brings physical life,
 - But Christ is also the source of spiritual, eternal life
 - That's what John means when he says the life in Jesus is the Light of men
 - Once again, John is borrowing from the first day of Creation
- Christ created light and darkness on the first day of creation
 - This design is very different than the one God follows for the New Heavens and Earth we all will occupy one day
 - In that new world, we will know only light...there is no darkness according to Rev 22:5

- So if the new, perfect world will have no darkness, why did God include darkness in His plan for our current world?
- John alludes to the answer when he draws this association between light and spiritual life
 - God uses light as a metaphor in scripture for truth, righteousness and the eternal life that results from the righteousness, which we receive in Christ
 - While dark is a metaphor for the opposite, that is sin and the death it produces
- In our present world, we can experience both the righteousness of God and the darkness of man's sinful heart
 - So God has built our present world with Light and dark to serve as convenient metaphors for the concepts of righteousness and sin
 - Then in the world to come, we will no longer know no sin or death
 - And therefore, He no longer needs to have darkness as a metaphor in the Creation
- In that sense, John is saying Jesus is the solution to the problem of darkness
 - Not only does He bring life to our physical bodies, as our Creator, but Jesus is also the Word, the source of Truth
 - And by the revelation of Christ, come to understand He also brings eternal life to our souls by His righteousness
 - He is the Light and the eternal life of the world
 - The question becomes will the darkness embrace the light of Christ?
- John answers in v.5 that Jesus brought His light into the world, but He was not understood by the darkness
 - John neatly summarizes Jesus' entire earthly ministry in that one verse
 - Jesus is revealing Himself to the world, but the world rejected Him

- Note that the first half of the verse is written in the present tense, while the second half is in the past tense
- The revelation of God in Christ is forever available, and therefore it shines without end
- The revelation was not limited simply to the period of Jesus' first visit to earth, but is everlasting
- The second half of the verse refers to the response Jesus received from Israel in His first coming
 - They rejected Him as Messiah
 - So the unbelieving hearts of men did not comprehend the message of the Gospel in Christ
 - This is another major theme in John's Gospel: explaining the rejection of Christ
- John now begins to explain the completeness of that rejection

[John 1:6](#) There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

[John 1:7](#) He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

[John 1:8](#) He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

- It might be easy to dismiss the Jews rejection of their Messiah as merely misunderstanding or perhaps a case of mistaken identity
 - But John wants to make clear that the rejection was spiritual and supernatural
 - He begins with a simple observation on the ministry of John the Baptist
 - John was sent from God, which means John was a prophet
 - We often say John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet, in the sense that he was called into ministry before the Messiah was revealed
 - John is the one foretold in Isaiah 40, a man who would come from the wilderness proclaiming the Messiah's arrival
 - Notice that John says John the Baptist was a witness, sent to testify about the Light

- John's ministry was essentially to prepare an audience within Israel to be anticipating the Messiah's arrival
- Not merely to expect Him "one day" but to expect Him imminently
- As Isaiah said, John was preparing a way for Christ by stirring up an interest within Israel
- Those who believed in the promised Messiah followed John into the desert and received his baptism as a sign of repentance in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival
- Then when Jesus finally appeared, John had prepared a audience of disciples who readily followed Jesus from the very first point in His ministry
- As Jesus came to John for His own baptism, He was announcing to John's disciples that He was the Messiah John had foretold
 - And at that moment, John directed his disciples to begin following the Lord in his place
 - Notice in v.8 John clarifies that John the Baptist was not the Messiah himself
 - But he was a prophet who announced the coming Messiah
- John has more to say about John the Baptist, but for now he returns to his theme of Christ as God and Creator as he paints a contrast between the two men

[John 1:9](#) There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

[John 1:10](#) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

[John 1:11](#) He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

[John 1:12](#) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

[John 1:13](#) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

- As we seek to understand what John is teaching, we need to keep in mind that John wrote knowing that the other three Gospels were available to his readers
 - And in those Gospels, John the Baptist had been well chronicled

- But for some, there was a lingering question of John's role and importance
- Even in Jesus' day, men questioned John's identity, to which John denied he was the Christ
- And some were still some claiming to be disciples of John the Baptist in the day John wrote this Gospel
- There is still a sect, which is hostile to Christianity, living in present day Iraq that claims to be ancestral followers of John the Baptist
- So John takes pains to distinguish John's importance and purpose from Jesus Christ's
 - While John the Baptist was not the Light, John says there was a true Light that entered the world
 - And that Light came to His own, that being the Jewish people
 - The very people John the Baptist had been attempting to prepare
 - And still they did not receive Jesus as the Christ
- The Jewish rejection of Christ is all the more astounding when we consider John's opening theme of Creation
 - Jesus is the source of spiritual truth for all men
 - And He is also the One Who made the world
 - And then, in the mystery of the incarnation, He became a part of that very world He Himself made!
 - Nevertheless, the Creator, Who condescended to enter into His own creation, was then rejected by that same creation
 - Consider the humility of a God Who would orchestrate the circumstances by which He would suffer humiliation at the hands of the very people He spoke into existence and granted life
- The word world (kosmos) is often used in a negative sense in John's Gospel

- At the end of v.10 we see that emphasis as he uses worlds as a euphemism for all unbelievers living in the darkness of their sinful nature
 - In that fallen state, the darkness of men's hearts leave them incapable of understanding truth, of seeing the light
 - Imagine beams of sunlight falling upon a blind person
 - Despite the brightness of that light, the person will remain in darkness for as long as they are blind
 - Someone must first give them eyes to see before they can
- Paul taught something very similar in an earlier day

[2Cor. 4:3](#) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [2Cor. 4:4](#) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- This is another theme of John's Gospel we'll see repeated many times
 - Men are by nature set against Christ by their spiritual blindness
 - And only those the Lord draws to Christ will see the light and come to know the truth
- As John says in v.12, all was not lost in God's plan, for some received Him
 - And all that received Him were granted the right to become adopted children of God
 - Those who believe in His name, in other words, are those who receive Him
 - This is the first of many expressions of the Gospel itself
 - That to believe in the name of Christ brings eternal life
 - How did these few find the eyes to see the Light and believe in His name?
 - In v.13 John answers the question, and in the process he introduces yet another of his themes

- John says they were born – or as he will clarify in chapter, they were born again
 - And that new birth was not of blood, meaning of natural birth or ancestry
 - Nor was it according to the will of the flesh, meaning it does not come because we earned it by our works
 - Nor did it come by the will of man, meaning we didn't make a choice of our own will to open our eyes and see the Light
 - Our new birth comes exclusively by the will of God who grants to us the knowledge of Christ
- Finally, John ends his prologue introducing his final theme, that the fullness of the Father dwells in the Son

[John 1:14](#) And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[John 1:15](#) John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

[John 1:16](#) For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

[John 1:17](#) For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

[John 1:18](#) No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

- The incarnation of Christ is another major theme of John's Gospel
 - Jesus didn't just become a man nor did he merely take on a body
 - Such statements leave room for someone to say God came upon a man or merely took the form of man
 - Truly, the Lord became flesh
- The thought that the Eternal Creator God could occupy a living body is a concept that has captivated human consciousness
 - Even the unbelieving world is fascinated with the idea of God incarnate, though they distort it in ignorance
 - The Greeks and Romans had mythology
 - Hollywood has countless messianic deliverers

- Even comic book writers and sports teams love to borrow from the incarnation to create demigods
- But only once did the true God take on flesh and dwell among men
- The word for dwell in Greek is similar to the word for tabernacle, reminding us that God once dwelled among the Israelites in the tabernacle
 - But that tabernacling was incomplete and temporary
 - When Christ took on flesh, He dwelt in a fullness never before seen
 - A man or woman could look upon the man Jesus, and he or she was seeing the fullness of God the Father
 - No one has ever seen the Father
 - He is Spirit and not visible to the Creation
- Therefore, the Son has explained the Father, not only in words, but in His physical incarnation and life example
 - Explained in Greek is exegesato, from which we get exegete or exegesis, which means to interpret scripture
 - So we can Jesus explained or interpreted the Father to men
- Under the Law virtually no one ever witnessed the glory of God resting on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies
 - Under those circumstances, how much could any man truly know of the Father?
 - Even the patriarchs and the prophets only received glimpses of God in what was revealed
 - As Hebrews summarizes:

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- Notice the writer also combines the concepts of Jesus providing a full revelation of God to a world He created
- That's John's point in raising the issue of the Law and Moses
 - There was a degree of revelation and light and truth and dwelling experienced in past generations under a lessor covenant and deliverer
 - But now the greater things have arrived in fulfillment of God's promises
 - Law has given way to grace and truth
 - Just as John will record Jesus saying later that men must now worship in light of that grace and truth
- John the Baptist was playing the part of another Old Testament prophet as he too testified to Christ
 - He was the final man to provide a partial revelation of God
 - And his purpose was to reveal who would be the Messiah
 - His revelation told men that the fullness of God was to be found in Christ
 - John's role was not to compete or compliment Jesus, since he himself declared that Jesus existed before John
 - Yet we remember according to Luke that John was born six months before Jesus
 - John knew that Jesus was no mere cousin, but God incarnate
 - Jesus was the complete and final expression of God the Father to His Creation
 - He is the begotten God (later to be called the begotten son)
 - This John's unique description of the Son
 - Begotten (monogenous)
 - The word means the only one to come forth
 - It doesn't suggest birth or creation
 - It speaks to a unique manifestation sent out

- And before He was sent out, Christ was in the Father's bosom, another uniquely Jewish idiom
 - It describes an intimate and close relationship
 - Such were the Father and Son before Christ became flesh
 - In fact, John took to describing himself as reclining in the bosom of Christ later in the Gospel, reflecting his own intimate relationship with Jesus
- John has opened the Gospel presenting Christ as the Creator, eternal and one with the Father in the beginning, the Light, the Truth, the fullness of God and yet flesh living among men
 - These themes will reverberate throughout John's 21 chapters
 - Finally, John concludes his prologue and introduces Jesus' public ministry by explaining the completion of John the Baptist's ministry

[John 1:19](#) This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

[John 1:20](#) And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

[John 1:21](#) They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

[John 1:22](#) Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

[John 1:23](#) He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

[John 1:24](#) Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

[John 1:25](#) They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

[John 1:26](#) John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

[John 1:27](#) "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

[John 1:28](#) These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- This encounter begins what appears to be a single week of events that John records up through the wedding in Cana in chapter 2
 - It's a week for the changing of the guard

- John the Baptist is leaving the scene while Jesus is entering
- John's disciples are leaving to join Jesus
- And Jesus is on the brink of revealing Himself in public ministry through miracles and teaching authority
- John begins by relating a moment toward the end of John the Baptist ministry, when he was confronted by men sent from the Pharisees
 - They were questioning him over his authority and identity
 - John answers each question without hesitation
 - He denied he was the Christ
 - He also denied being Elijah and "the" prophet
- Each of these questions has its root in Jewish understanding of OT prophecies
 - The OT tells Israel to expect a conquering, reigning Messiah, or Christ, who will rule the world with a rod of iron
 - But it also tells Israel that a great prophet will come and suffer on behalf of the sins of Israel
 - In addition, Malachi says that the prophet Elijah will return before the great and terrible day of the Lord
- The Pharisees were the religious authorities of Israel, and they had come to see the Christ and the prophet as different people
 - They had no understanding for how a conquering King and a suffering Prophet could both be the same Messiah
 - So they concluded there must be two Messiahs
 - But of course we know it wasn't to be two Messiahs but rather one Messiah with two comings
 - In the first coming, the Messiah will serve as a prophet and as the Lamb of God, suffering for the sins of the world
 - In the Second Coming, Christ will return to rule over His Kingdom
 - And in before each of these arrivals, a forerunner will come to announce the event

- Before the Second Coming, the Bible says that Elijah will return to prepare Israel for their Lord's return
- Malachi gives us that word
- But before the Messiah's first coming, a different forerunner came, John the Baptist
 - Isaiah said that a forerunner would come to make path straight in the wilderness before the Son's arrival
 - That was John the Baptist
- So when the priests and other Levites came to inquiry of John, they guessed three of the four possibilities, but they overlooked the one correct answer
 - John was the prophet Isaiah said would come before the Messiah
 - John quotes from Isaiah 40 to explain his identity
 - The Pharisees would have undoubtedly recognized the quote
 - So they understood that John was calling himself a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy
 - And that meant he was announcing the arrival of the Messiah
 - Since the Pharisees didn't see John in the right way, they couldn't see Jesus either
 - So when they ask John to explain himself, he focused not on himself, but on his purpose: to announce Christ
 - He says though he baptized in water, the real baptism had come
 - Jesus brings a baptism far greater than the water baptism John performed
 - Water has no spiritual properties
 - It is merely an earthly substance intended to picture something spiritual
 - The water baptism John performed pictured the baptism of the Spirit
 - That's the baptism Jesus brings to those who believe in His name

- Then John boldly declared that these men did not know this Messiah
 - Because they were not willing to submit to the baptism of John, then they were demonstrating that their hearts were not prepared for the Messiah
 - The crooked roads that John prepared for the Messiah's arrival were not literal roads
 - They were metaphors for crooked, sinful hearts
 - As John declared his call for repentance in preparation for the Messiah's arrival, some men responded while others didn't
 - A person who challenged John's authority or refused to submit to His baptism were revealing that their hearts were not prepared
 - They remained crooked
 - They were not going to follow the Messiah when He appeared
 - So John rightly said these men did not know the Messiah
 - Yet that Messiah was so great that John was not even worthy to untie his sandals
 - Do we all know Jesus in this way?
 - Are we aware of His deity and authority?
 - Were our hearts prepared to see His Light and hear His truth?
 - Are we still crooked in our sin or have we humbled ourselves and sought the salvation that only comes through Jesus?
 - If not, you're come to the right study

John 1B

- Let's continue in the opening chapter of John's Gospel
 - John is explaining the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus, using John the Baptist's own words
 - John is reinforcing that John the Baptist was just a man called to be a prophet in anticipation of the Messiah
 - It's the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry
 - And it begins a week of events in chapters 1-2 that brings Jesus to the public's attention
 - John's role in announcing Jesus' ministry is the first event of the week
 - In last week's study, we saw John being interrogated
 - He denied he was the Messiah
 - And now we move to the second day of the week
 - As the Messiah arrives

[John 1:29](#) The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

[John 1:30](#) "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

[John 1:31](#) "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

[John 1:32](#) John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

[John 1:33](#) "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

[John 1:34](#) "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

- The day begins with John in his usual place, baptizing in Bethany beyond the Jordan
 - And as he is at work baptizing, John looks up to see Jesus approaching
 - At this John declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the One Who takes away the sins of the world

- John was making this declaration to those who were there with him in that moment
 - Those who had come to be baptized on that day
 - And the rest of his disciples who were waiting for the Messiah
- But notice in vs. 30-31 John begins to speak in the past tense
 - He says this He whom I said He comes after me
 - John is speaking in the past tense, because this isn't the first time that John has seen Jesus at the riverside
 - John baptized Jesus probably only a few days earlier at most
 - As John mentions in v.33, he witnessed the Spirit descend upon Jesus like a dove
- That scene is not recorded in John's Gospel, but it's given in the synoptic Gospels
 - Here's a brief excerpt from Mark

[Mark 1:4](#) John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[Mark 1:5](#) And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

[Mark 1:6](#) John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

[Mark 1:7](#) And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.

[Mark 1:8](#) "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

[Mark 1:9](#) In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

[Mark 1:10](#) Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

[Mark 1:11](#) and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

- All four Gospel writers describe this moment when Jesus came to John to be baptized in water
 - And as he came up from the water, a theophany appeared

- The Holy Spirit manifested Himself like a dove and descended upon Jesus
 - In conjunction with the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the Lord spoke words from the heavens
 - In John's Gospel we come to understand why Jesus was intended to be baptized by John
 - And we also come to understand the relationship between our water baptism and the Holy Spirit
- First, Jesus received the Holy Spirit to enable Him to serve in His earthly ministry
 - The Gospels tell us that Jesus' ability to perform miracles was by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - When Jesus became a man, He willingly lowered Himself and setting aside His power to act in supernatural power
 - Jesus wasn't a superhero, a super human
 - He was truly a man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit He could accomplish great miracles
 - The arrival of the Holy Spirit was the moment that Jesus transitioned from carpenter's son to rabbi and Messiah
 - Secondly, Jesus comes to John to receive the Spirit, because John was the man appointed by God to identify the Messiah to the world
 - Those who were ready and waiting for the Messiah still needed the Lord to tell them Who the Messiah would be in the day He arrived
 - John's ministry was a ministry of calling attention to Jesus and naming Him as the Messiah
 - Jesus came to be baptized so that John's ministry could be made complete

- Finally, the water baptism Jesus received was to become a picture of the Spirit's arrival
 - As when He instituted the Last Supper communion meal, Jesus is blazing the path for the church in future years
 - Like our Lord, every believer receives an indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - The very same thing the Spirit did for Jesus is still happening for believers today
 - We know the Spirit isn't in the habit of descending as a dove on each and every believer in their moment of faith
 - But every believer can and should submit to water baptism just as Jesus did
 - Jesus commanded as much
 - And His own baptism involved both water and a dove to make sure we understood the connection to our own baptism
 - A believer receives the Holy Spirit at the moment we come to faith in Christ
 - And at some later point, we submit to water baptism to picture the baptism of the Holy Spirit which we received at faith
 - Jesus' water baptism wasn't a washing away of sin, but a demonstration of what He expected His followers to do as a symbol of Spirit baptism
 - Just as John says in v.33, John the Baptist applied a baptism of water alone, but Jesus brought a baptism of the Spirit
- Notice in v.31 John says that he didn't know who the Messiah was to be prior to the moment of Jesus' baptism
 - In fact, John goes even farther and says he didn't even recognize Jesus as Jesus approached John for baptism
 - This is a curious and striking detail
 - We know that Jesus and John were early cousins, since their mothers were related
 - They were born only 6 months apart

- Yet John had no idea his cousin, Jesus, was the Messiah
- John didn't realize that Jesus was the Messiah until he witnessed the dove
- It's important to understand that the four Gospel writers record only two people as having witnessed the theophany of the dove and hearing the Lord's voice from the heavens
 - Only Jesus and John the Baptist witnessed these things
 - For anyone else who happened to be present in that moment, Jesus' baptism looked just like any other that John performed
 - The theophany was for the benefit of Jesus and for John
 - For Jesus, it confirmed for Him that the Father was bringing the Spirit to Him on this day to begin His ministry
 - And for John, it was the sign he had been promised so he could properly identify the Messiah
- After the baptism took place, John began testifying that Jesus was the Messiah
 - He told everyone what he had heard and seen, just as we see John recording here
 - This is exactly God's pattern of revelation
 - God gave one man a supernatural revelation of the Messiah
 - But the rest of the world was then to believe the testimony of the prophet sent by God
- John said Jesus was the Messiah, and men and women began to follow Jesus from the first day based on John's testimony
 - That's John's point in chapter 1 of his Gospel
 - It was John the Baptist's testimony that Jesus was the Son of God
 - The promised Messiah
- Based on John's uncertainty of who the Messiah would be, we must conclude that Jesus' true identity was entirely unknown to the world prior to the baptism
 - We know Jesus' earthly mother and father knew of His spiritual destiny because an angel told them at His birth, but it seems no one else did

- Certainly, we know Jesus own earthly brothers had little regard for Him while He lived with them
- So if John the Baptist was in the dark about the Man he was called to announce, then certainly it must have been a secret to everyone else too
- This fact reinforces for us the true humanity of Christ: He lived an absolutely normal human life because He was fully human
 - As we said, Jesus was not a superhuman or Clark Kent figure who could stop bullets even when He wasn't dressed in tights
 - Apart from a few moments (like His birth and the time He was left behind in the Temple by His parents), His life was unremarkable
 - He truly was living as a man, without anything to suggest He was God and the Creator
 - Yes, Jesus was sinless, but apparently a person can live sinlessly without drawing too much attention to himself
 - I know the feeling (*joke*)
 - This would also explain why the Gospels contain so little detail of Jesus early years
 - Why record details of a mundane, ordinary life?
- Finally, take note that Jesus' ministry began immediately after He was baptized
 - We have already said that Jesus receive a baptism by the Spirit to equip Him for earthly ministry
 - And He took water baptism to establish a picture of the Spirit baptism
 - So it stands to reason that we should understand our own baptism in the Spirit as the moment we launched an earthly ministry
 - We were equipped by the Spirit and now we have a mission to serve the Lord
 - I wonder how many Christians truly begin their service from the first moment

- I suspect many of us took some time to figure out that we even had a mission
- Perhaps some are still trying to figure that out
- Don't hesitate to follow Jesus' example...it's never too soon to start serving someone in Christ's name
- So on this day, John testifies to his own disciples that Jesus is the Lamb of God
 - His purpose was to direct his disciples to leave him and to begin following Jesus
 - But apparently, not everyone took John's advice right away
 - So John records a third day in this week, when Jesus came back to the river to visit John again
 - And on this day, a couple of John's disciples heed John's advice and begin to follow Jesus

[John 1:35](#) Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,
[John 1:36](#) and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

[John 1:37](#) The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

[John 1:38](#) And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?"

[John 1:39](#) He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

[John 1:40](#) One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

[John 1:41](#) He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).

[John 1:42](#) He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

- On the third day, John sees Jesus again and repeats his declaration that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God
 - Imagine how thrilling it must have been to be among that first small group to know the identity of the Messiah
 - The Messiah is a Person promised since Adam and Woman fell in the Garden
 - All Israel had been taught of this promised Deliverer

- Young girls grew up in Israel dreaming and hoping they might be privileged to one God selected to birth the Messiah
- Religious men were forever asking each other how to recognize the Messiah when He arrived
- And on this day, those at the river Jordan were learning for the first time that Jesus was to the Messiah
- Two of John's disciples leave John and seek to follow Jesus
 - They begin by just walking behind Jesus, following Him as He walked
 - They had not even approached Him, perhaps intimidated
 - Jesus notices He's being trailed, so He turns and asks them what they want
 - Immediately, they call him teacher, which John helpfully translates for his Gentile audience
- By calling Jesus rabbi, these men are acknowledge Jesus as a man of spiritual authority in their lives, a man they may wish to follow as a disciple
 - But they only ask Him where He is staying, which simply means we want to hang out with you
 - They aren't committing to be His disciples just yet, but they're curious and want to know more
 - All this tells us that they don't yet understand what John said or even what a Messiah was
 - They knew Jesus was the Messiah, but they didn't know Him as God incarnate
- The word Messiah just means anointed one
 - Israel saw prophets and kings as anointed by God
 - So Israel understood their kingly deliverer would be an anointed man
 - Only by spiritual revelation could someone come to understand that Jesus was also God in the flesh

- And that hasn't come to these men yet
- In answer to their question, Jesus tells them to come and you will see
 - In the context of this narrative, Jesus is saying follow me to where I'm staying and you will have the answer to your question
 - But Jesus choice of words are revealing and purposeful
 - Anyone who wants to know Jesus must come to Him
 - We have to enter His house, so to speak
 - And then by coming to Jesus, we will see
 - We will have spiritual life and spiritual sight
 - This is the offer Jesus is making to these men, though they obviously don't appreciate His meaning at the time
 - John identifies one of the two men as Andrew (we don't know who the other man was...some speculate it was John himself)
 - Andrew eventually becomes one of the twelve disciples designated as apostles
 - And his first response to meeting Jesus is to go tell his brother, Peter, to come see the Messiah
 - What a wonderful first response to meeting the Messiah
 - Another example we would do well to follow
- At Peter's first meeting with Jesus, Jesus immediately identifies Peter by name and ancestry
 - The scene strongly suggests that Jesus was never told Peter's name nor his father's name
 - So when Jesus revealed this information to Peter, I'm sure Peter was a little surprised
 - And then Jesus goes the next step and changes Peter's name
 - His name was Simon, which probably comes from Simeon
 - But now he is called Cephas, which is an Aramaic word for rock
 - Peter is the Greek word for rock

- Simeon you may remember was a man who acted rashly and impulsively at times
 - And Peter is showing acting much the same way in the years with Jesus
 - But later, Peter was the man who founded the early church in Jerusalem and beyond, truly a rock upon who's ministry the church began
- As we end chapter 1, we enter the forth day of this opening week in Jesus' public ministry

[John 1:43](#) The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

[John 1:44](#) Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

[John 1:45](#) Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

[John 1:46](#) Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

[John 1:47](#) Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

[John 1:48](#) Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

[John 1:49](#) Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

[John 1:50](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

[John 1:51](#) And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

- The day after meeting Andrew and Peter, Andrews decides to travel back to his home in Galilee
 - Your Bible might have the "he" in v.43 capitalized suggesting it was Jesus who decided to go to Bethsaida, but a careful reading of the text leads us to a different conclusion
 - First, notice in v.41, when Andrew brings Simon to meet Jesus, it says he "first" brought his own brother Simon to Jesus
 - The word first suggests that Andrew brought two people to Jesus, and the first was his brother Simon
 - Who was the second? Philip appears to be the second person

- But Philip lived back in Andrew's home town in the Galilee, so he asked Jesus to accompany him back home
- On the map this was a walk of about 20-30 miles, so it took most of that fourth day to travel there
- Once again Jesus tells Philip to follow Him
 - Interestingly, no one who is following Jesus at this point found Jesus of their own accord
 - Everyone has met Jesus because someone else introduced them to Jesus
 - And that chain of introductions goes back to John the Baptist, who initiated the introductions just as his ministry was intended to do
- And again, the pattern repeats with Philip introducing Jesus to a friend called Nathaniel
 - When Philip finds Nathaniel he announces Jesus by His earthly affiliation and then adds that this is the One that God's word has been talking about from the beginning
 - It's unclear to us how these men have become so convinced that this lowly man from Nazareth is in fact the Messiah, but they all get it
 - As we said, they aren't sure what Messiah means yet, but they do understand that Jesus is the One God promised to bring to Israel
 - And there is great excitement over this discovery and the need to share it with others follows immediately
 - What does it say that Andrew wanted to travel 20-30 miles the very next day to introduce Jesus to a friend
 - How far are we willing to go to do the same?
 - Nathaniel's response is decidedly less enthusiastic, and he utters one of the most memorable lines in all the Gospels - a line he probably regretted
 - He asks if anything good could come out of Nazareth

- Nathaniel was probably reacting to the ridiculous thought that God would raise up someone as important as the Messiah from such an insignificant place
- This also shows just how lowly Jesus' beginnings were
- The Father chose to give His Son a human identity that would add nothing whatsoever to His appeal or credibility
 - If anything, Jesus' earthly origins detracted from His appeal
 - But that was in keeping with God's purpose in bringing salvation by faith and not by sight
 - He uses foolish things to shame the wise
 - It annoys me when Hollywood makes Jesus look like a rock star or a Calvin Kline model
 - Instead, you need to image someone who was probably shorter than you expect, and far less attractive
- Once again take note of Philip's response to Nathaniel's tepid response
 - Philip says "come and see"
 - If we want someone to understand who Jesus truly, we simply extend an opportunity for them to come to Jesus
 - And if they do, they will see for themselves that what we say is true
 - But unless and until they make that spiritual trip, there is nothing we can say to convince them
 - Our offer to come is far, far more important than any rational argument we can make to persuade them
 - In fact, trying to convince someone that Jesus is the Messiah before they are inclined to come is a reversal of the salvation call
 - It's come to Jesus so you can see Him as Lord
 - It's not see Jesus as Lord, so that you can come to Him

- In Nathaniel's case, he chose to come to Jesus
 - Notice that Jesus didn't come to Nathaniel
 - Nathaniel had to make a decision to come to Jesus so that He come have that experience of knowing Him
- And then as the encounter begins, Jesus initiates the conversation
 - He declares that behold, here comes an Israelite in whom is no deceit
 - And the word for deceit is also a euphemism for the name of Isaac's son, Jacob
 - Jacob meant deceiver
 - So Jesus essentially said here comes an Israelite in whom is no Jacob
 - What He meant was here's a man who has a true heart
 - His decision to come to Jesus has set his heart straight
 - This reminds us of John the Baptist's ministry, to make crooked paths straight
 - And John indeed did his job for Nathaniel
 - Nathaniel's heart had been made straight because John the Baptist sent Andrew to Jesus, Andrew sent Philip to Jesus, and Philip sent Nathaniel to Jesus
- After Jesus calls Nathaniel by name, Nathaniel is taken aback and asks Jesus how He could know him
 - Jesus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares that before Jesus called Nathaniel, Jesus saw Nathaniel sitting under a fig tree
 - Once again, notice Jesus careful choice of words
 - First, He says before I called you...
 - But it was Philip that called Nathaniel
 - Only now we understand that Jesus Himself was the One issuing that call through Nathaniel
 - And so it is with us, as we endeavor to call others to know Jesus

- We may be the ones choosing our words, honing our techniques, and inevitably worrying about how to recruit the most followers for Jesus
- But the Bible testifies that we don't call anyone
- Jesus calls through us, and so it suggests that an emphasis on certain methodologies must be tempered by an appreciation that God can work through the mouth of a donkey
- We should move with the Spirit, freely changing our focus and methods as the Lord directs
- Secondly, Jesus' mention of a fig tree is interesting because of its connection to be called
 - We remember that a fig leaf was the way Man and Woman tried to cover their own nakedness after the Fall in the Garden
 - That clothing was insufficient from God's point of view
 - He provided animal skins, which imply a sacrifice was made for their sin
 - So before Jesus called Nathaniel, he was covered only by fig leaves
 - Now there is no deceit found in Him
 - Why? Because he came and saw Jesus
- Then Jesus offers Nathaniel a great promise, one that is true for every believer
 - Jesus told Nathaniel that he would see many greater things
 - Of course, Jesus was referring to the events Nathaniel would witness in the years with Jesus and afterward
 - But Jesus is also thinking of the marvelous things that await all those who believe in Jesus
 - We will rule and reign with Him in His coming Kingdom
 - And we will see His glory
 - In response to Jesus' demonstration of prophetic knowledge, Nathaniel exclaims that Jesus is the Son of God and King of Israel
 - This is a strong reaction, even under the circumstances

- The Jewish understanding of the Messiah didn't include a Triune Godhead
- This phrase is likely being uttered under inspiration of the Spirit
- Which makes sense, since Jesus had just declared that Nathaniel is a Israelite without deceit
- In other words, it seems as though the Lord declared that Nathaniel would speak truthfully
 - And thereafter the Holy Spirit inspired Nathaniel to make his declaration
- Finally, Jesus reacts to Nathaniel's strong statement asking if you are willing to make such a declaration on the basis on so little, just wait
 - Greater things are coming as we said
 - And then Jesus adds that all the disciples will see the heavens opened and angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man
 - Here's another interesting reference to Jacob's life
 - As Jacob was in Bethel fleeing from his brother Esau, he wondered if God was going to take care of him

[Gen. 28:10](#) Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

[Gen. 28:11](#) He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.

[Gen. 28:12](#) He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

[Gen. 28:13](#) And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

[Gen. 28:14](#) "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

[Gen. 28:15](#) "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

[Gen. 28:16](#) Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

- In Jacob's dream, the ladder reflected God's promise to be with Jacob and to minister to him by way of angels
 - When Jacob awoke, his response was that surely God was in this place
 - And yet he says I didn't know it
 - Jacob hadn't realized how close God could be to him in his life on earth
 - God was capable and willing of descending from heaven and reaching down to the earth
 - He did so through intercessors, angels appointed to minister to the saints
 - But of course, in that dream was a picture of Christ Himself
 - Jesus is the intercessor Who came to earth to reveal the Father to men
 - And to make a way possible for men to enter Heaven
 - In other words, Jesus is the ladder in that dream, as he says in v.51
 - While the angels ascended and descended on an ladder in Jacob's dream, now Jesus says they ascend and descend on Jesus
 - Jesus says you will see something that Jacob saw in a limited form
 - Only you will see it in its full form
 - Previously, God revealed Himself in a limited form to Israel, that is to Jacob
 - And now God was revealing Himself to an Israelite in the full form
 - And like Jacob, Nathaniel declares (in so many words) that the Lord is in this place, but he didn't know it
- This is only the fourth day, but already several disciples have been collected and the awareness is growing that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel
 - And in the first chapter, the identity of Jesus has already become John's dominant theme

- He's used no less than 16 different names or descriptions of Jesus' identity in this opening chapter
- The point is to emphasize Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God
- Three days after the meeting with Nathaniel, Jesus is in Cana with his mother

[John 2:1](#) On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;

[John 2:2](#) and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

[John 2:3](#) When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

[John 2:4](#) And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."

[John 2:5](#) His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

[John 2:6](#) Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

[John 2:7](#) Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim.

[John 2:8](#) And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him.

[John 2:9](#) When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,

[John 2:10](#) and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

[John 2:11](#) This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

- This is the seventh day of Jesus' public ministry, and it seems appropriate that the first of Jesus' miracles would occur on the seventh day of His ministry
 - In fact, John generally doesn't include specific time references in his Gospel
 - This suggests that John had reasons to make clear that this event happened on Jesus' seventh day of ministry
 - We remember that John began his Gospel with obvious references to the first chapter of Genesis
 - And if we think back to that first chapter, we also find that the chapter is structured as a series of days...six days to be exact

- And the start of the second chapter of Genesis is Day 7
- Likewise, we see the next chapter of John starting on Day seven of Jesus' ministry
- There may be no more significance than simply emphasizing once more that Jesus is the Creator
- The occasion is a wedding in Cana, which is a small town in the Galilee where Jesus has been staying
 - Jesus and the five disciples he's collected so far were invited as was Jesus' mother
 - It must be a wedding that involved a close family connection
 - That would explain why Jesus' mother chooses to involve herself and her Son in the affairs of the wedding
- We're told in v.3 that at a point the wine runs out
 - This is a bit surprising, since wine drinking was a highlight of any wedding
 - Perhaps more people attended than the host expected
 - Or perhaps the host simply did a poor job of estimating the need
 - In any case, the party is about to become a disaster
 - Not only was it a social disgrace to fail to care for guests in the right way, there were financial implications as well
 - In that culture, if you invited someone to a party or dinner, you were legally obligated to care for them properly
 - If you didn't, you would be expected to compensate them for their loss
 - So Mary turns to her Son and simply says "They have no wine"
 - When a mother, especially a Jewish mother, says something like this, it's not simply idle chit chat
 - She is expecting her son to recognize the seriousness of the problems and to do something to rectify the problem
 - Perhaps her close connection to the host led her to want to help

- The question we ask ourselves at this point is what exactly did Mary think Jesus would or could do about this problem?
 - John says in v.11 that this miracle was the beginning of the signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee
 - It seems to suggest Jesus hadn't yet done miracles
 - And since Jesus only received the Holy Spirit a week earlier, it stands to reason He wasn't in the habit of making wine miraculously
- So did Mary think Jesus would perform a miracle in this case?
 - It's hard to imagine that she expected anything other than a miracle
 - Consider that Jesus had no significant financial resources that we know of
 - And even if He did, He hardly could have procured wine on a moment's notice
 - Furthermore, in v.5 Mary all but anticipates that Jesus is going to work something miraculous
 - She tells the servants to do whatever Jesus told them
 - That would seem like an unnecessary thing to say, since servants do what they're told naturally
 - But if Mary expected Jesus to perform a miracle, then it makes sense that she was preparing the servants for something unusual
- As I look at the entire scene, I conclude that Mary expected a miracle
 - Mary knows Jesus is the Messiah
 - She's known His true identity from the time of her conception
 - She's probably noticed that Jesus never went through terrible twos
 - He was an ideal teenager
 - And now she knows He has been baptized by John
 - Furthermore, she sees that Jesus has disciples in tow at the party

- So she had every reason to believe that Jesus has begun His earthly ministry and was now prepared to act in the power and authority of His divine nature
- So like a typical proud mother, and a Jewish mother no less, she wants to advance the career of her Son and give him a kick start
 - So she asks Jesus to perform this little miracle
 - I don't know if she understood that Jesus would use water to make wine
 - But she seems to be confident Jesus can produce more wine somehow
- There is an interesting irony here
 - Mary is the only one who truly gets Jesus at this point
 - She knows His origins
 - She knows His destiny
 - She knows His power and authority
 - These are things no one else yet understands like she does
 - But then she is the one trying to misuse that authority and power
 - I realize Mary has good intentions, and she thinks she's doing the right thing
 - She assumes it's Jesus' desire to save the host's reputation at this party
 - But in reality, she's looking at Jesus as a genie in a bottle
 - She wants to rob the bottle, so to speak, and make a request, and expect Jesus to respond
 - More than anyone else, she should be sensitive to approaching Jesus in a manner consistent with His divinity
 - Instead, she treats Him most dismissively
 - And we are prone to the same mistake at times
 - We approach Jesus forgetting He is the Lord of the Universe

- We bring Him our concerns, which we are supposed to do, but we expect Him to respond like a genie who does our bidding
- But this is not how we approach Jesus
- Consider His response to His mother

[John 2:4](#) And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."

[John 2:5](#) His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

[John 2:6](#) Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

[John 2:7](#) Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim.

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[John 2:10](#) and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

[John 2:11](#) This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

- He asks His mother what does the lack of wine have to do with Mary and Jesus?
 - This is a Jewish idiom that is hard to translate into English
 - It can be understood to mean "your concerns are not My concerns"
 - The problems of this wedding party have nothing to do with Jesus' earthly ministry
 - Jesus didn't voluntarily leave the right hand of the Father and lower Himself to take the form of man so He could cater weddings
 - The Holy Spirit didn't come upon Him and grant Him power to perform miracles so that He could accommodate everyday needs
- Jesus came to earth and displayed His power so He could validate His identity as Messiah

- The miracles were always a means to an end in His ministry
- Jesus showed signs and wonders to prove a message which He delivered in conjunction with those miracles
- But here Mary wanted the miracles done divorced from any message
 - Her concern was for the host's reputation rather than for Jesus' glory
 - That's why Jesus asks what does this have to do with us?
 - Mary's purposes were not in keeping with the Father's purposes, and therefore by definition her desires were sin
- We do this as well, more often than we realize
 - We declare that what we want is what God wants
 - We assume that just because we think something is good, well then certainly God must want it too
 - But we forget that God's definition and understanding of what's good is not the same as ours often times
- Look at how Jesus ends His comments to her
 - He says my time has not yet come
 - He's reminding Mary that the timing for Jesus' miracles is according to the Father's plan
 - So in this moment, she was acting according to her own will and not the Father's
 - Jesus was displaying His divinity before Mary in the way He highlights her behavior as sin
 - In a sense, He was acting as Judge, convicting Mary for having the wrong motives in making her request
 - But then notice Mary conveniently ignores Jesus' response and tells the servants to follow His instructions
 - What does Jesus do at this point?
 - He goes through with the miracle
 - Why does He do it if Mary was wrong?

- Well, making water into wine is not a sin by itself
 - Jesus did it discretely and without drawing any attention to Himself
 - In fact, the headwaiter credit the bridegroom, not Jesus
 - Only the servants knew what Jesus had done
 - So Jesus didn't violate the Father's will in performing the miracle, because He didn't use it to publicize His ministry prematurely
- Nevertheless, he obeyed His mother's request, because to do otherwise was to dishonor his mother
 - Therefore, the humanity of Christ respected His mother and complied with her request
 - As Divinity, Jesus had rebuked the sin of Mary
 - And now as Humanity, Jesus had obeyed his mother to avoid sinning
 - John shows us both sides of Jesus' nature in one succinct story
- As it ends, we see that Jesus' creative work is so superior that his product is the best wine possible

John 2

- As we return to chapter 2 of John's Gospel, we pick up immediately after Jesus has performed His first miracle, turning water into wine
 - Notice in v.11 John declares that this was the first of Jesus' signs

John 2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

- The word sign is important, because it reminds us of the purposes in Jesus' miracles
- Jesus performed supernatural displays or miracles to give evidence of His claims as Messiah
- Each time He performed a miracle, He was giving a sign to the world that His claims were legitimate
- The most compelling sign He ever performed was the sign of His own resurrection, the sign of Jonah as He called it
- That's why we said last week that Mary was wrong to seek for a miracle when there was no message to validate
 - The time had not yet arrived for Jesus to make His declaration to the world that He was Messiah
 - And so He wasn't prepared to perform a sign either
 - Nevertheless, He obeyed His mother out of respect for her, turning the water into wine
 - But as we noted, Jesus never called attention to the miracle, at least not to the public, so He didn't perform a sign prematurely
- The only ones who knew what happened were His disciples, as v.11 said
 - His disciples believed in Him
 - What exactly did they believe? They believed His claims to be the Messiah
 - But almost just as assuredly, they didn't appreciate that Jesus was God incarnate

- This was something they learned only after His death and resurrection
- Despite being the wrong time for Jesus to announce Himself, it's still significant that Jesus' first miracle involved wine at a wedding feast
 - For that is one of the clear signs of the Messiah, according to the scriptures
 - The Bible uses the wedding feast as a picture to represent the arrival of the Kingdom of the Messiah
 - Obviously, this wedding wasn't the wedding feast of the Kingdom
 - But still, Jesus' choice of miracle to begin His public ministry is telling
 - Furthermore, that Jesus' miracle brings about an abundance of great joy for the wedding party is another picture of His ministry to world
 - There will be great joy at the arrival of the Kingdom, not only for Israel but also for Gentiles
 - And that joy begins even before the Kingdom arrives on Earth
 - For the citizens of that Kingdom are enjoying it even now, even as we await the Kingdom's arrival
- So now John moves forward in his narrative

[John 2:12](#) After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

[John 2:13](#) The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

[John 2:14](#) And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

[John 2:15](#) And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

[John 2:16](#) and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

[John 2:17](#) His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."

- After the wedding, Jesus and His mother and brothers and His disciples all travel down to Capernaum
 - Capernaum is a town where Jesus spends considerable time during the first year of His ministry
 - It says they went down even though the town is northeast of Cana, because it's a lower elevation
 - In fact, this town in the Galilee becomes the center for His earthly ministry for a time
 - Jesus moves His home from Nazareth to Capernaum at about this time
- The fact that Jesus is accompanied by His earthly family suggests that they may all be moving to Capernaum at about this time
 - Joseph died before Jesus' earthly ministry began
 - We can safely assume this from two details in scripture
 - First, the fact that Jesus appoints John to care for Mary at the cross indicates she was a widow
- Secondly, Jesus is the last Man to hold the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek
 - That priesthood was handed down in a line of succession from Adam to Jesus
 - It's a title held for life, according to Hebrews, and it can only transfer to another man at the death of the current office holder
 - Since Jesus never dies, He holds the title now forever
 - But Jesus couldn't inherit the priesthood until the previous holder died
 - That previous holder was Jesus earthly father, Joseph
 - So Joseph had to pass away before Jesus could assume His priestly duties as a priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - For more information on this principle, we have an article on the order of Melchizedek on the website

- After spending a few days in Capernaum, Passover of the Jews comes (John explains that this is a feast of the Jews, since the early Church had now become thoroughly Gentile and didn't practice the Jewish feasts)
 - This timing places us in the Spring of Jesus' first year of ministry
 - Which also tells us that His baptism and first week of ministry happened in the late winter, early spring
 - Passover was one of three feasts on the Jewish calendar when every adult Jewish male was required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem
 - As many as three million Jewish men (often accompanied by their families) would descend upon Jerusalem this week
 - As Jesus enters the Temple grounds, He encountered a common and sad sight
 - The court of the Gentiles surrounding the temple building itself was transformed at Passover into a merchant's bazaar
 - Two principle forms of commerce took place at this time in the temple
 - First, money was being changed
 - Much in the way we change our money at an airport before or after we take a trip to a foreign country, so was the practice for Jewish worshippers
 - They came into the temple bearing Roman coins, for that was the only kind of money accepted in the Roman empire, which now occupied Judea
 - But when you came into the Temple, the only money accepted by the Jewish authorities were Jewish coins
 - They rejected Roman coins because they bore the relief of the Roman Caesar
 - And the Jews consider such an image to be an idol in violation of the first commandment
 - So the worshippers exchanged their Roman coins for Jewish coins, which came a price

- The business of changing money was a major source of income for the priests of the temple, who ran the money changing business
- Secondly, the worshippers needed the Jewish coins money because this was the only money that could be given to the Temple as a tithe payment or to purchase sacrificial animals
 - When a family came to the Temple for passover, it was often impractical or expensive to bring the required animal to the Temple
 - Worshippers often traveled for many miles on foot to meet the obligations of the feasts and temple service
 - So instead of bringing the animal with them, they brought money to buy an animal in the temple grounds
 - And you can be sure that those animals were priced accordingly
 - Another source of profit for the temple priests
 - And even those families who chose to bring their own lambs into the Temple were still getting fleeced by the priests, so to speak
 - The priests were required to inspect every lamb brought for sacrifice
 - And in keeping with the Law, only a spotless lamb was suitable for sacrifice
 - Spotless means no evident defect, but of course the priests went to extraordinary lengths to inspect each lamb, certain they would find a disqualifying defect
 - And wouldn't you know it, the priests always found something wrong with each worshipper's lamb
 - So if your lamb was disqualified, how were the worshippers to meet the obligations of the Passover?
 - Well, fortunately the priests had a solution
 - They offered to take the defective lamb as a "trade-in" toward a new, spotless lamb they could sell the worshipper
 - Only after they changed their money, of course

- So the priests made money on the sale of these “certified spotless” lambs
- And then when the next unsuspecting family entered the temple with their defective lamb, they were likewise directed to buy a replacement spotless lamb
- And the lamb this family purchased was none other than that defective lamb traded in earlier, which had apparently experienced a miraculous healing
- In other words, it was a scam run by religious leaders to make money off of worshippers
 - Not much has changed today, has it?
- As a result of all this commerce taking place in the temple, it was literally impossible for a Gentile to enter into the temple and worship the living God
 - Remember, that Gentiles were only permitted to enter the court outside the gate leading into the temple grounds
 - This outer court was called the Court of the Gentiles for that reason
 - It represented the closest point any Gentile could approach to the God of Israel
 - This is why Paul described the Gentile worship experience prior to the New Covenant this way:

Eph. 2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- We were “far off” in the sense that the court of Gentiles was as close as we could approach under the terms of the Law
- But by His blood, Jesus united Jew and Gentile in one covenant
- But now all this commerce was now taking place in the one space reserved for Gentile worship
 - So it would be impossible for a Gentile worshipper to approach the Lord in a quiet manner or even to approach at all

- And this is the scene Jesus comes into as He enters the temple on this Passover
- Seeing the priests operating in direct violation of their own code as God instructed

[Lev. 19:30](#) 'You shall keep My sabbaths and revere My sanctuary; I am the LORD.

- So Jesus finds some hemp or other suitable material, and probably sits somewhere unnoticed where he quietly strands together the cord into a whip
 - This probably goes on for some time, and we might wonder why did Jesus chose to make his own whip?
 - Undoubtedly with so many animals around, He could have found a way to borrow someone's whip rather than make his own
 - But the Lord is preparing to act in judgment, in defense of His Father's house
 - And when the Lord judges men, He does so on His own terms according to His own power and authority
 - Constructing his own instrument of judgment reinforces His authority
 - After the cord is ready, the fun begins
 - Jesus must have walked up to the first table of money changers in a calm manner, probably unannounced
 - He starts by driving the money changers out of the courtyard, beating them about the head and shoulders to make them leave
 - We can just imagine the scene as Jesus begins the whipping
 - The temple security speaking into the ear pieces ("We have a situation here!")
 - Soon the other merchants figure out Jesus is after them, and they probably flee en masse
 - After the merchants have retreated, Jesus drives out the animals, which was probably a fairly easy task
 - And then he returns to the table and turns them over

- Pouring out the money on the ground to emphasize the worthlessness of it in comparison to the value of God's glory
- In a moment of compassion, however, the Lord only instructs the people selling doves to leave
- He doesn't set the doves free, which would have been destroying their property
- This is one of two times scripture records Jesus driving out money changers from the temple
 - Jesus will repeat this scene when He enters the temple during the Passover week that leads to His crucifixion
 - The Synoptic Gospel writers all record the second of these incidents, but only John records this earlier moment
 - John also records that Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for Passover all three years of His earthly ministry
 - We can only guess what Jesus did the other two times He visited the Temple
 - Perhaps Jesus made driving out the money changers an annual tradition
- As Jesus speaks to the dove sellers, He describes the temple as My Father's house
 - In describing it as His Father's house, Jesus is referring to the role of the temple to house the Shechinah glory of God
 - The tabernacle originally held that glory
 - And later, the glory of God descended upon the temple Solomon built
 - But as Israel sinned against God and profaned the temple, God's glory eventually departed from Solomon's temple and never returned
 - At this point when Jesus visits, the temple no longer houses the Shechinah glory of God
 - In fact, Herod's temple never saw the Shechinah glory of God

- Nevertheless, every temple, including Herod's temple, housed the glory of God at least at some point in its existence
 - On this day, it contained the glory of God in the Person of Christ
 - In fact, this house is Jesus' house as much as the Father's house
 - In the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple, the Shechinah glory that occupied the Holy of Holies was a preincarnate manifestation of Christ Himself
 - Jesus is always manifestation of the Father's glory
 - No one has seen the Father at any time, except the Son, we're told
 - So any visible manifestation of God is always a manifestation of Christ, as John told us and Colossians confirms
- So here the glory of God in Christ entered His temple and cleansed it on this day
 - This scene forms a striking contrast to the one in Cana
 - Where Cana gave us a quiet and compassionate Jesus, seeking to bring joy to a wedding party, while mollifying His earthly mother
 - But the scene in Jerusalem is a visceral and passionate Jesus, seeking to inflict judgment and enforce righteousness
 - We're getting an early introduction to both sides of the Messiah's mission
- Today there is still a temple of God in the world, one that Jesus occupies, one that He cleanses from unrighteousness
 - That temple is the house of God
 - But the house of God is not the place you attend services on Sunday morning
 - The church building is not the house of God today
 - It's not a substitute for the Jewish temple
 - The Bible says our very bodies are the temple of God, since the Spirit of Christ lives in us

[1Cor. 3:16](#) Do you not know that you are a **temple of God** and that the Spirit of **God** dwells in you?

[1Cor. 3:17](#) If any man destroys the **temple of God**, **God** will destroy him, for the **temple of God** is holy, and that is what you are.

- But our temple isn't pure any more than that temple was on that Passover day
- We need cleansing too if we are to be a suitable dwelling place for the Lord
- As Paul said

[1Cor. 6:19](#) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

[1Cor. 6:20](#) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- It's tempting to reflect on this story, imagining Jesus whipping all those evil, sinful money changers, and taking great satisfaction in the thought of it all
 - You almost wish you could be there to cheer Jesus on
 - We enjoy the prospect of bad people getting what they deserved from God
 - After all, how dare they pollute the temple of God?
 - But then I have to stop myself and remember that I'm guilty of the same thing from time to time
 - I have a temple I'm supposed to guard from sin, that is my physical body
 - And when the Bible speaks of us guarding our bodies as the temple of God, it's not talking about don't "smoke, drink, or chew or date girls that do," as the saying goes
 - It's talking about sin
 - Every time I chose to sin, in a sense I'm like those money changers in Herod's temple
 - Unrighteousness is setting up shop in my temple
 - Rather than making my temple of holy place for God to dwell

- And if I'm not willing to police my temple myself, then I should imagine Jesus beginning to weave a cord quietly, which He will use to discipline me
 - Sooner or later, He's going to pick up that scourge and use it to drive unrighteousness out my temple
 - So given the choice of policing my temple myself or prodding Jesus into the doing it for me, I'm guessing it's better to avoid the whip
 - Because Jesus is willing to apply the pressure, as Hebrews says

[Heb. 12:5](#) and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,
"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

[Heb. 12:6](#) FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

[Heb. 12:7](#) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

- Can you imagine what His disciples were thinking as they watched the whole scene?
 - Perhaps a few were ready to bolt at that point
 - They're thinking Jesus is a mad man
 - And even if He isn't crazy, He's going to get us arrested
 - They must have been completely besides themselves watching Jesus at work
 - I think the Spirit understood they would have this reaction
 - After all, it's a natural human response to the scene
 - So in grace and mercy, the Spirit brings to their minds a passage of OT scripture to help them understand what they were watching
 - In v.17 John writes that they remember a verse of scripture found in Psalm 69:9

[Psa. 69:6](#) May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts;

May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel,

[Psa. 69:7](#) Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;

Dishonor has covered my face.

[Psa. 69:8](#) I have become estranged from my brothers

And an alien to my mother's sons.

[Psa. 69:9](#) For zeal for Your house has consumed me,

And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

- Remembering this psalm, the disciples begin to see the moment with spiritual eyes
 - They knew that Psalm 69 is a Messianic psalm
 - And as they witness Jesus wrecking havoc in the temple, the Spirit connects the dots in their head
 - They realize this is what the Psalmist meant by the Messiah having zeal for the Father's house
 - This insight confirms again for them that Jesus is the Messiah
- But only the disciples know this truth, for only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit does anyone connect these dots
 - All the crowd saw the same crazy behavior the disciples witnessed
 - They also knew the same Psalm the disciples learned
 - But without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the crowd was incapable of making a connection between the psalm and the things they saw on that day
 - Despite the very public nature of this event, Christ wasn't revealed to the crowd as Messiah because apart from the disciples, the Holy Spirit wasn't at work to make that revelation known
 - As we said earlier, only by the Spirit do we gain spiritual understanding
 - As Paul writes in 1Corinthians, a person comes to understand that Jesus is Lord only by the Holy Spirit
 - The truth that Jesus is the Messiah lies outside the grasp of mere flesh

- There is no better group in which to find this principle at work than the Pharisees of Israel
 - They were the most educated religious men of their day, and yet their studies never brought them to recognize Jesus as Lord
 - These men were first mentioned in John's Gospel in chapter 1, as the men who sent priests to inspect John the Baptist's ministry
 - But now they make their first appearance in the Gospel during Jesus' outburst in the temple
 - This is the first time Jesus has caught the attention of the religious authorities
 - In a sense, this was Jesus' coming out party, though His true identity will remain hidden to them
 - He is declaring war against the hypocrisy of the Jewish authorities
 - So it's only fitting that Jesus should make His declaration of way in the Temple in Jerusalem
 - From the perspective of the religious leaders, Jesus' antics threatened to undermine their entire business model in the temple
 - So a few of the leaders approach Jesus as the turmoil dies down

[John 2:18](#) The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

[John 2:19](#) Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

[John 2:20](#) The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

[John 2:21](#) But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

[John 2:22](#) So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

- For the Pharisees, this key issue in this moment was not Jesus' identity, but His authority
 - They ask Him to provide them a sign for His authority to do what He did
 - They give no thought to whether what Jesus did was correct or not

- They already have an opinion, and they don't want to be confused by the facts
 - Interestingly, they don't they take immediate action against Him
 - Perhaps they sensed that Jesus possessed some kind of authority, so they step carefully in this conversation
- Their request for a sign is typical of what unbelieving men have always expected from God and those He sends in His name
 - Skeptics demand that God's messengers perform a miracle to support their claims
 - Something in the fashion of Elijah or Moses with fire coming down from Heaven or burning bushes
 - The point in the request is to remove all doubt, to compel agreement
 - As if Jesus needed authority to point out the obvious sin taking place in the temple that day
- The Pharisees' reaction was the polar opposite of the believing disciples
 - Jesus' followers had recognized Jesus' actions as the fulfillment of scripture, but the Pharisees were blind to that connection
 - The Pharisees couldn't recognize the sign because their hearts were not illuminated by the counsel of the Spirit
- Unbelievers are no different today
 - Until a person is given eyes to see by the Holy Spirit, they will react to any revelation of God in Christ in a similar manner
 - Unbelievers demand that God prove Himself to their satisfaction
 - They demand proof that the Bible is accurate before they will believe the Gospel
 - Or that the Trinity exists before they will accept it Jesus as God
 - Or that we reconcile Evolution and the Creation account before they can consider it Genesis as literal
 - In other words, unbelievers demand that God remove the need for faith
 - But as Paul says, who hopes for what he already sees?

- God demands acceptance of His word on faith
- These Pharisees are just one example of many John will provide showing how Jesus' claims were met with unbelief by those who should have been best prepared to recognize Him as Messiah
- Later Paul explained the reality that Israel rejected their own Messiah sent to them this way

[Rom. 9:30](#) What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

[Rom. 9:31](#) but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

[Rom. 9:32](#) Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

- The irony in this situation is Jesus did give them sign of His authority
 - He fulfilled Psalm 69:9
 - The disciples recognized the sign because they were given spiritual insight from the Holy Spirit to see it
 - But the Pharisees missed it, and even if the sign had been more dramatic, they wouldn't have recognized it
- As we said, no sign can substitute for faith in the word of God
 - A sign can be used by God to connect those dots in a believing mind and thereby strengthen faith and bring encouragement
 - But a sign never substitutes nor creates faith
 - We must have faith in the Lord by His word alone if we ever hope to see and understand the Lord and His work around us
- As Jesus Himself said

[Luke 16:31](#) "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

- Nevertheless, in response to their demands, Jesus announces another sign to prove His authority
 - Jesus says if the Pharisees would destroy this Temple, He would raise it in three days

- Obviously, if we assume by “this temple” Jesus meant the stone building standing nearby, then the sign He proposed was just going to perplex the men all the more
- They couldn’t destroy the building, and even if they could, they wouldn’t do it
- The Jews revered their stone temple
- And Jesus is highlighting that fact with His choice of this sign
 - It’s a wonderful picture of what faith requires
 - Before we can know God truly, we must be willing to turn our back on those things we trust in
- The Pharisees worshipped the law and the sacrificial system in the temple, rather than the God Who dwelled within it
 - And Jesus is drawing attention to their hard hearts living by law instead of by faith
 - And at the same time, He’s emphasizing the impossibility of satisfying their demands for proof
 - Jesus could no more have granted them a satisfactory sign than they would have been to tear down the temple
- This is the first of many conversations John records of Jesus and a protagonist engaging in two different conversations simultaneously
 - While Jesus speaks in spiritual terms, using metaphors to express important spiritual truths, His unbelieving audience remains clueless
 - In this case, the Jews heard Jesus’ words to mean destroying the stone temple
 - So they respond that a stone temple that required 46 years to construct couldn’t possibly be rebuilt so quickly, let alone by one man
 - By the way this gives us a precise date for this moment in Jesus’ life
 - History records that Herod’s temple took 79 years to build and wasn’t finished until AD 63

- So at 46 years of construction, the year would have been AD 30
 - They lacked the the spiritual insight to see beyond the literal
- Three years later when Jesus was placed on trial by the Jewish authorities on the night of Passover, one of His accusers recalled this moment testifying that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple,
 - Like all the accusations against Jesus, it was a lie
 - Jesus never said He would destroy the temple
 - He said if the Pharisees destroyed the temple, He would rebuild it
- John explains to us that when Jesus said “this temple,” He was speaking of His body as the temple of God
 - And we can see why Jesus would call His body the Temple, because in fact it was in that day
 - His physical body was the dwelling place of the Father’s glory on earth
 - That’s why the Lord never brought His glory to reside in Herod’s temple
 - The glory of God was to occupy a far greater temple, one not built by human hands
 - That temple was destroyed on the cross by these unbelieving men
 - Literally, they did destroy the temple of God
 - And after three days in the grave Jesus rebuilt it, as He promised
 - Jesus’ body was raised from the dead
 - As Jesus made this statement, even His disciples were confused in the moment
 - John says it was only after the death and resurrection of Christ three years later that they came to understand what Jesus meant by this sign
 - And no doubt, His words were a great help to them in understanding the circumstances of His death

- That's why Jesus choose to speak in this way, with a riddle that He knew His audience wouldn't understand in the moment
 - Signs from God are always crafted to bolster the faith of the believer, never as a substitute for faith in the unbeliever
 - Moreover, the Lord designs spiritual signs to have maximum impact on the intended audience
 - Usually, the meaning of a sign will remain hidden even to the believer until the right moment, when an understanding is most beneficial
 - And then as we come to understand the sign, we also come to recognize that the truth was there all along
 - The fact that it was revealed in advance and yet hidden until an appointed moment reinforces for us that the message was truly from God
 - We're going to see this pattern many times in John Gospel
 - Jesus speaks to His audience in spiritual terms
 - The unbelievers in His audience miss His point entirely, while even the believers miss His point for a time
 - But then later, at a moment the Lord determines, the spiritual truth of His words become evident
 - And the power of the delayed revelation is evident in the believers' response
 - Luke records one such moment at the end of His Gospel, on the road to Emmaus

[Luke 24:13](#) And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.

[Luke 24:14](#) And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.

[Luke 24:15](#) While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them.

[Luke 24:16](#) But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.

[Luke 24:28](#) And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther.

[Luke 24:29](#) But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them.

[Luke 24:30](#) When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.

[Luke 24:31](#) Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

[Luke 24:32](#) They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

- In the way that situation played out, Jesus made His appearing all the more powerful and instructive through careful timing
- He also taught these disciples a valuable lesson about expecting the Risen Lord to reveal Himself through an examination of the Scriptures
- John concludes his account of Jesus's first ministry visit to Jerusalem by telling us this moment in the temple was not the only sign Jesus gave the crowds

[John 2:23](#) Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

[John 2:24](#) But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,

[John 2:25](#) and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

- Though the Pharisees rejected Jesus' authority in the temple, many other Jews in the city were believing in Jesus
 - And as Jesus encountered the believing crowds, He performed signs for them
 - We don't know what miracles Jesus did specifically, but it's safe to assume He healed people as a routine
 - But despite their belief in Him, Jesus was not entrusting Himself to them
 - What John means is Jesus was not relying on their belief to protect Him nor to promote His ministry

- Notice John says Jesus knew all men and didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, or to explain the duplicity of human beings
 - Jesus knew the hearts of men all too well
 - Despite what men said or claimed, Jesus always knew the truth behind the words and actions
 - While the crowds were adoring and supportive now, they would not always be that way
 - When religious leaders came offering false praise, Jesus knew it was a trap
 - He wasn't naive to assume that men's hearts remain true or that they always speak in honest ways
 - So Jesus did not commit Himself to anyone, thinking that He could trust them or depend upon them
- Perhaps one of the reasons Jesus was so wary of depending upon the crowd's support was because He knew that some were accepting His claims merely on the basis of the miraculous signs He performed
 - Those who embraced Christ on the basis of signs and wonders rather than by faith in His word would be the first to fall away
 - As the religious leaders turn up the heat on Jesus and the disciples, even those of faith were tested and failed at times (Peter for example)
 - So clearly, those followers who pursued Jesus for the miracles or healing were not truly His sheep
 - And therefore, He knew to expect the devotion and joy of many to be temporary at best
 - The Bible warns us that within the Church will always be those who come to Christ in a superficial manner, apart from saving faith
 - They approach Jesus based on some perceived benefit in knowing Him
 - Whether because they believe He will heal them or free them from oppressive circumstances or make them rich
 - Or in some other way because they expect Jesus to give them their best life now

- They are not rooted in a belief in Jesus by His word, and so as Luke records, they fall away in a time of testing

[Luke 8:13](#) “Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

- In coming chapters, John will illustrate this dichotomy time and time again
 - He contrasts the true believers, who obtain a faith in Christ despite lacking religious training and knowledge of scripture
 - With unbelievers, who possessed great knowledge of the scriptures but lacked the spiritual insight to recognize the Messiah
 - Through these encounters, we’re going to learn a lot more about Jesus and the nature of saving faith
 - As well, we’ll gain greater insight to the deadness of unbelief and the power of God’s word to raise the dead to new life

John 3A

- Now we enter into one of the most intriguing and unique section of John's Gospel
 - Beginning tonight in chapter 3, John chooses to relate a number of encounters between Jesus and various men and women
 - A Pharisee
 - A harlot
 - An blind man...among others
 - Each person John highlights become believers in the Messiah, having been touched by Jesus' words and miracles
 - They begin each encounter in ignorance
 - But they leave transformed by Christ
 - Therefore, each of these interactions serves to highlight a dimension of the salvation found in Christ
 - Between these encounters, John also records various miracles and dialog between Jesus and three different groups following Jesus
 - First, there is Jesus interaction with Jewish leaders and the crowds of ordinary Jews who followed Him
 - Secondly, John records numerous private conversations between Jesus and His disciples
 - Finally, John invites us into Jesus' private moments in prayer to the Father
 - John selects these moments to further illustrate the nature of saving faith
 - Those profiles of each unique character and how they came to faith will show us how an open heart responds to the Light of the Gospel
 - While the Jewish leaders and crowds typify the response of darkness to the message of salvation

- And then we have Jesus' disciples and their struggle to understand the nature of Christ's ministry and their own salvation
 - Reflecting how spiritual immaturity is common to all new believers
- Finally, Jesus' conversations with the Father show us the magnitude of the Father's love for those He saves
 - And the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice to deliver that salvation
- Stepping back, it's easy to see that John's focus in writing this Gospel was to explain the nature of so great a salvation
 - He's explaining it through the eyes of those who encountered Jesus
 - Both those who believed and those who didn't
 - And through the experience of Jesus Himself
 - John isn't simply retelling events; he's teaching us about the nature of the Gospel itself
 - So we begin this section in chapter 3, with an encounter that illustrates the manner of our salvation, that is how it arrives
 - And what better figure to feature in a discussion of how one is saved than a Pharisee, the self-appointed religious leader and teacher of Israel
 - This scene takes place in Jerusalem, sometime around the Passover celebration, before Jesus left the city for His home in Capernaum in the Galilee

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

- We were told at the end of the chapter 2 that Jesus was performing many miracles in the city during Passover week, and and many believed in Him
 - Without a doubt, some of those who would observed Jesus' ministry during this week in Jerusalem were the religious leaders of Israel
 - The Pharisees, Sadducees and priests would have heard Jesus' teaching and seen His miracles firsthand

- And they would have also witnessed seen the crowds' positive response
- And we can be sure many of these leaders went away scoffing and even angry by what they saw
- But not all of them reacted that way, as we discover from Nicodemus
 - First, we hear that Nicodemus is a Pharisee
 - A pharisees was a rabbi (or teacher) of the scriptures in Israel
- Secondly, we're told he is a ruler of the Jews
 - This indicates that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council over Israel
 - In fact, we'll see in later chapters of John that Nicodemus uses his position on the council to come to Jesus' defense
- Knowing a little about Pharisaical teaching is helpful to understanding what takes place in this encounter
 - First, Pharisees taught that every Jew was assured a place in the coming Kingdom merely on the basis of their Jewishness
 - Simply by virtual of being an obedient child of Abraham, a Jew could be sure they would be included in the Kingdom
 - In fact, Pharisees taught that Abraham himself sits guarding the gates of Hell to intercept and save any Jew consigned to that place
 - We see this thinking reflected in numerous places of NT

[Matt. 3:7](#) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

[Matt. 3:8](#) "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

[Matt. 3:9](#) and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

[Rom. 2:28](#) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

[Rom. 2:29](#) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

- Secondly, Pharisees were the conservative, law-abiding party, politically speaking
 - Their chief rivals for power were the Sadducees, which was the liberal political party of Israel
 - As it happened, the Sadducees were the political party in power at this time, holding a majority of the seats on the Sanhedrin
 - As a result of their majority, the Sadducees were responsible for the Temple and the operations of the temple mount
 - So the temple was the source of the Sadducees power, influence and wealth in Jewish society
- The Pharisees, on the other hand, had no ruling or financial interest in the temple, so they had to rely on a different base for their political power
 - They obtain power over the people through their theology and teaching
 - Their power over the people came from teaching a strict adherence to the Law as a means of maintaining citizenship in Israel
 - They were renown experts in the Law
 - And their teaching from the Law stressed that in order for a Jew to enter the Kingdom, they had to be in good standing with the Law
 - If a Jew didn't keep the works of the Law according to the Pharisees' teaching and standards, the people were at risk of forfeiting their Jewish identity
 - In other words, when they approached the gates of Hell, Abraham wouldn't save them because they had lost their right to be called a Jew
 - It was a works-based theology, and it ensured that Jews eager to enter Heaven would give heed to the Pharisees' teaching
 - To solidify their authority over the people, Pharisees made a point of modeling a scrupulous obedience to the Law in a very public way
 - They went to ridiculous lengths to abide by the Law or display their piety to the world

- As Jesus commented elsewhere, referring to the Pharisees' tendency to make a public show of even their prayers

[Matt. 6:5](#) "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

[Matt. 6:6](#) "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

- The purpose in such displays was to creating an impression among the people that satisfying God's demands was nearly impossible for the average Jew
- That the effort required to secure the Kingdom was enormous and few beyond the Pharisees were capable of making the grade
- But of course, these men were self-deceived in thinking themselves righteous, for they weren't even close to meeting the standard God requires, as Jesus said

[Matt. 5:20](#) "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- And that's how a Pharisee's gained power over the people: they portrayed themselves as ones held the keys to Heaven for the ordinary, hapless, sinful Jew
 - When the average Jew saw the difficulty of following in the Pharisees' footsteps, they would seek some other solution
 - They would come to their rabbi, the Pharisee, seeking a solution for how to be assured entrance into the Kingdom
 - And the Pharisee would offer new burdens, rules or requirements for the Jew to adopt in return for increased potential to be judged worthy for the Kingdom
 - Naturally, the appreciative Jew was expected to reward the Pharisee for their advice and spiritual wisdom
 - This is a scam as old as religion itself, and the Pharisee played the game as well as anyone ever has
 - By exhibiting themselves as guardians to the gates of Heaven, the Pharisees gained both the praises and wealth of men

- Consider some of Jesus' comments concerning the Pharisees:

[Luke 16:14](#) Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

[Luke 16:15](#) And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.

[Matt. 23:1](#) Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,

[Matt. 23:2](#) saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

[Matt. 23:3](#) therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

[Matt. 23:4](#) "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

[Matt. 23:5](#) "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

[Matt. 23:6](#) "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,

[Matt. 23:7](#) and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

- So with that background, let's look at the conversation between this Pharisee and Jesus

[John 3:2](#) this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

[John 3:3](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- The name Nicodemus literally means "a victory over people" or "victory for the people"
 - It's ironically prophetic when you consider that Jesus delivered a victory for the common man over the tyranny of Pharisees
 - He decides to come to Jesus by night, which tells us he was hoping for a private moment outside the watchful eyes of his fellow Pharisees
 - His desire for secrecy is our first indication that Nicodemus isn't your ordinary Pharisee

- His interest in Jesus is very personal and sincere
- Also, coming to visit Jesus in darkness also reminds us of John's metaphor for spiritual blindness
- As he speaks, Nicodemus gives Jesus respect and consideration from the start
 - He calls Jesus rabbi and confesses that "we know You have come from God" because of the signs Jesus has done
 - Teacher was a respectful term, but it falls short of acknowledging Jesus as Messiah
- And the use of "we" would refer to the rest of the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin
 - Apparently, the Sanhedrin had concluded that Jesus was doing miracles by the power of God
 - The irony of course is that though the religious leaders could see the power of God at work in Jesus, they rejected His claims
- As we said last week, this is one of the central themes in John's Gospel: explaining the response of unbeliever to the Gospel
 - The acceptance of the Gospel is a matter of supernatural faith and it isn't dependent on miracles or signs
 - Hearts in darkness will reject the Light of the Gospel even when it's accompanied by self-evidently evidence of God
 - John revisits this point later in this chapter
- In response to Nicodemus' polite opening statement, Jesus abruptly jumps into the heart of what's on Nicodemus' mind: a conversation on entering the Kingdom
 - Jesus knew that this man, who claimed to hold answer to entering Heaven
 - He knew Nicodemus wanted to hear God's answer to the question, "How does one enter the Kingdom of God?"
 - But before he could even ask the question, Jesus gives the answer

- Jesus tells this man that the true way a man enters the Kingdom of God, or we could say being saved, is to be born again
 - The term born again long ago became part of the Christian lexicon, such that most true believers know and understand it
 - It describes the moment when we receive a new living spirit, at the moment of faith in Christ
 - Made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit
- We might assume that this phrase would be completely unknown to a Jew living at this time and that Jesus' choice of words would have been entirely confusing
 - And to an extent that's true, as evidenced by Nicodemus' response
 - But it's not because Nicodemus had never previously heard the term "born again"
 - It's because Pharisees had contrived their own understanding of that term as part of their twisted theology
- Look at Nicodemus' response:

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7 "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

- Nicodemus asks how can someone be born when he is old?
 - He doesn't ask how can someone be born again, but rather how can someone be born again when they are now grown old
 - This question reflects the Pharisaical teaching on being born again
- Pharisees taught there were six ways that a man could experience a rebirth in life

- Much like the Catholic teaching on sacraments, the Pharisees taught these six moments were important moments of spiritual transformation during our life
- Not all men could experience all six moments, but progressing through them was a journey of spiritual advancement
- For example, when a Jewish boy had his bar mitzvah, or when he got married or when he became a rabbi, in each instance he was said to be born again
 - As in his life began again in a new and better way
 - Like sacraments, it suggested a work that moved the person closer to God
- Nicodemus hears Jesus telling him he still lacks a necessary step of rebirth before he can be assured of salvation
 - But to a Pharisee, this statement makes no sense
 - If there was every someone who could be said to meet the requirements of being born again, it would be a Pharisee
 - A Pharisee would have met most every “rebirth” tollgate
 - But now Jesus is saying there’s more required
 - Nicodemus can’t believe what’s he’s hearing, so he responds in a somewhat mocking tone asking Jesus how it’s possible to re-enter a mother’s womb
 - Since Nicodemus has met every type of rebirth taught by the Pharisees, he can’t imagine any other rebirth possible except to take Jesus’ literally
 - And of course there is no possible way to be born again physically
- So that’s the thought that Jesus seizes upon to respond to Nicodemus
 - Jesus says one must be born of both water and spirit if they are to enter the Kingdom of God
 - To be born by water is a Jewish expression that means to be born physically
 - It’s a reference to the amniotic fluid breaking at birth

- Obviously, no one is going to enter Heaven unless they've first been born into existence
- But Jesus includes this obvious prerequisite as a response to Nicodemus' mocking about climbing into a womb
- He says there is a birth that is physical (or flesh) and one that is spiritual and both are necessary to enter the Kingdom
 - In the way Jesus phrases His response, we can clearly see that these two births do not happen in the same moment
 - If every physical birth included a spiritual birth, then there would be no reason to call them out separately
 - Jesus is emphasizing that a second kind of birth, one that comes after our physical birth, must happen to us
- Jesus' choice of birth as a metaphor is telling, because it teaches us about the manner of our salvation: being born again is similar to being born physically
 - Consider the process of physical birth
 - Our physical birth is an event that happened to us because of a decision made by our parents - we don't chose to be born
 - And when the time came for our birth, we were oblivious to everything - it just happened to us
 - We took our first breath and may have cried
 - But those were our responses to being birthed
 - And in the first weeks and months after our birth, we lacked the maturity to appreciate what life was about
 - But then our awareness began to grow and over time we got to know our parents and came to understand the significance of life
 - This is the model Jesus chose to explain spiritual renewal: we were born again spiritually
 - That birth came to us by the will and power of God
 - When it happened, we were oblivious to God, our Father

- Even after our new birth, we lacked the maturity to understand it properly
- But over time, we gained in spiritual maturity as we are taught by God's word,
- Until we develop the capacity to appreciate our new life
- That's the point Jesus is making to Nicodemus
 - In contrast to the Pharisaical teaching that said men could effect their own rebirth through certain works, Jesus says it only happens by the work of God by His Spirit
 - Nicodemus is hearing Jesus' words, and he understands what Jesus is saying at some level, but yet he's amazed
 - Who has ever experienced such a thing? When has such a thing ever happened to a man?
 - In v.7 Jesus tells the man not to be amazed by this concept

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

- Nicodemus was amazed at the prospect of the Spirit of God moving among men granting rebirth yet undetected by Israel's religious leaders
 - In Pharisaical thinking, rebirth was a process of works, like the sacraments of the Catholic theology
 - It was something tangible
 - Something that men could see, understand and achieve
- But Jesus was speaking of a spiritual rebirth accomplished by the Spirit of God Himself
 - If such rebirth was the only way to enter Kingdom, then surely it would be happening all around Israel
 - Certainly, Nicodemus and other religious leaders would have seen it if not experienced it themselves
 - But no one had seen a spiritual rebirth, or so Nicodemus must have thought

- So Jesus offers a short parable to explain how something so critical to eternal life could be so invisible to a religious leader like Nicodemus
 - Jesus compares the Spirit's regenerative work to the wind blowing
 - The wind blows as it will under God's direction, but we cannot see it at work
 - Wind is invisible
 - We only sense it by the force it exerts or the sound it makes
 - So it is for everyone born of the Spirit
 - We can't see the moment of a spiritual rebirth, since it's an invisible process
 - And we don't know where the Spirit is going next in His mission to bring men to faith, since those He chooses to regenerate are not announced in advance
 - But that doesn't mean we can't detect the Spirit at work
- Just as the wind makes sound as it passes by, so we can recognize the Spirit's spiritual regeneration taking place in the hearts of men and women
 - We can see men and women brought to repentance
 - We can hear the resulting confessions of faith and see water baptisms
 - We witness lives, lifestyles & priorities changing as sin is set aside
 - We see the spiritual fruit of the Spirit working in believer's lives
 - In all these ways, we recognize a spiritual rebirth
 - At this point, Nicodemus is starting to get the point, so he asks the question that every person should ask:

[John 3:9](#) Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

[John 3:10](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

[John 3:11](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

[John 3:12](#) "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

- Nicodemus asks how can these things be, meaning how do these things happen?
 - Nicodemus wants to know how a person can be born again by the Spirit?
 - What set of circumstances lead to this wonderful outcome?
 - What are the steps required to enter the Kingdom
- This is the right and proper question for him to ask
 - In fact, this is question every person should ask
 - Every human being should be literally obsessed with finding that answer in every day they spend on earth
 - For there can be no higher purpose in our earthly lives than to answer the question what comes after death
 - As Christians, we often lament the fact that so many people latch onto the wrong answer to that question, falling victim to false religions
 - But we should lament all the more the fact that so few people even think to ask the question at all!
- Nicodemus asked it, and because he did, now it's Jesus' turn to be amazed
 - Jesus asks how can a man who is a teacher of Israel not know how someone enters the Kingdom of Heaven?
 - Is there no more basic question than this in all religion?
 - Yet here's a man who supposedly leads others into finding Heaven asking Jesus how a man can enter the Kingdom
 - You need no further evidence of how far Israel was from understanding their own scriptures than this man's testimony
 - But we shouldn't be surprised to discover that teachers will sometimes be as ignorant as their students
 - They claim to know how to find God when they themselves are far from God
 - The Pharisees were just one group in a long line of wolves in sheep's clothing

- And these men still operate in the church today
- Don't ever assume because someone is a pastor or elder or Bible teacher that they will have the right answers to central questions of faith
 - In fact, don't be too quick to assume they even know the Lord themselves
 - Instead, look for evidence of the Spirit in their lives
 - As Jesus says:

[Matt. 7:15](#) "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

[Matt. 7:16](#) "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

[Matt. 7:17](#) "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

[Matt. 7:18](#) "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

- In vs.11-12, Jesus explains why Nicodemus has found himself in his predicament of ignorance
 - Jesus says we have spoken of what we know and what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony
 - Who is "we?"
 - It could be a reference to the Trinity, that is Jesus and the Spirit have been testifying to this truth
 - But I think Jesus is referring to Himself and Moses, because of what comes next in the narrative
 - Jesus is referencing the teaching of Moses, the author of the Torah, which the Pharisees memorized and studied to no end
 - Moses taught the way of salvation and foretold of a coming Messiah Who would bring men into the Kingdom
 - Moses testified of what he saw and Jesus is now fulfilling what Moses wrote
 - Yet the Pharisees have not believed what was given them in God's word
 - Of course, the words of Moses were given by Jesus Himself, since He is the word of God

- So Jesus asks if the Nicodemus wasn't willing to accept the words and signs given already, why would he accept even greater revelation?
- Nicodemus was looking past the word of God, which had been given to Israel so they could recognize their Messiah
 - He was asking for special, divine revelation concerning entering Heaven
 - Which is why Jesus asks Nicodemus how he expects to receive greater, heavenly knowledge if he hasn't accepted the earthly knowledge already made available to him
- So it is with men everywhere
 - They want something special and unique revealed to them, when all they need has already been given through the scriptures
 - As Paul says, Jews seek for a sign and Greeks seek for wisdom
 - But God has hidden the message of salvation in a foolish message
 - It's foolish to the natural ear
 - It sounds crazy when we hear that the way into Heaven is by placing your trust in a convicted criminal Who was executed 2,000 years ago
 - Nicodemus is stumbling in the same way that men stumble today
 - He is overlooking what has been provided while seeking something greater
 - And so Jesus asks him how he expected to gain anything from Heavenly revelation when he hadn't made use of what God already provided in Earthly revelation
- In compassion, Jesus gives Nicodemus an answer to his question, the answer to how a person may be born again
 - And what follows in chapter 3 includes what is easily the best known verse of the New Testament, John 3:16
 - As eloquent as it is at expressing the essence of the Gospel, let's consider the whole of Jesus' answer and avoid focusing on just one verse

[John 3:13](#) “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

[John 3:14](#) “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

[John 3:15](#) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

[John 3:16](#) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

[John 3:17](#) “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

[John 3:18](#) “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

[John 3:19](#) “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

[John 3:20](#) “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

[John 3:21](#) “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

- In answer to Nicodemus' question, Jesus says there are two parts to reaching Heaven, and both are ultimately the product of God's work
 - The first is step is the Son of Man descending from Heaven
 - Christ's descent from Heaven was a fulfillment of what Moses demonstrated in Numbers 21
 - When Israel demonstrated unbelief in God's word, the Lord brought a judgment of snakes or serpents to kill the people
 - The image of a serpent is a reminder that all sin traces back to the serpent in the Garden
 - The Israelites had sinned in unbelief, and now they were dying at the hands of the serpent
 - But then Moses placed a bronze serpent on a pole and held it up high
 - And he instructed the people that if they looked upon the bronze serpent in faith that God would heal them, they would not die
 - And those in the camp who looked upon the pole with faith in God's promise were saved from the snakes

- Now Jesus explains that this moment in Numbers 21 was a carefully constructed picture of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the sins of men
 - The metal bronze always represents judgment in the scriptures
 - And the serpent represents the power of the enemy to bring death to men
 - And the raising up of the serpent of bronze symbolized Jesus taking the judgment for men, the judgment required by sin
 - And He takes that judgment while being raising up on a wooden pole or cross
- This is the first step of being born again and entering the Kingdom
 - Until and unless the Lord descended and took this penalty upon Himself, there was no solution possible
 - Faith in this sacrifice is a requirement for salvation, and so the first step of being born again is in knowing who to look upon
 - At this point, Christ has only just begin His ministry
 - And yet He's already describing the need to be lifted up on a pole, which is a clear reference to His crucifixion
 - Salvation depended on Jesus dying in our place
 - Secondly, a person must believe in Jesus' death on that pole
 - Just as the people in Israel had to look upon the pole with the serpent, so much we look upon Jesus' death with confidence that it satisfies the wrath of God
 - Jesus says that whosoever believes in the Messiah will have eternal life
 - Belief means belief that His death saves us from judgment
 - Just as the people in the desert had to look upon the serpent to express their belief in God's promise to spare them
- Jesus then summarizes these two parts to the plan of salvation in v.16, and then amplifies each parts in more detail in vs.17-18
 - In v.16, Jesus says the plan of salvation begins with the love of God

- The word for love is *agape*, which means self-sacrificial love
 - Giving a life for another
- There is no greater evidence of love than that a person lay down His life for His friends
- Which is what God voluntarily did in the Person of Christ
- Don't forget that Jesus didn't participate in this plan against His will
 - The Son and the Father determined together to accomplish this plan from the foundation of the Earth

[Eph. 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

[Eph. 1:4](#) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

[Eph. 1:5](#) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

[Eph. 1:6](#) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- Since Jesus was the Creator, we can say that Jesus created the world knowing He would then have to die to save it
 - And He still went through with it
- This is the purest definition of Love
- God's love is for the *world*, which is the word *kosmos* in Greek, which refers to the created universe, to all Creation
 - It is not a specific reference to the population of the earth, although it includes humanity of course
 - The full sense is that God so loved His Creation that He was willing to send His Son to die to redeem it from sin
 - You can see this truth reflected in Paul's teaching on Christ as our redeemer of Creation

[Col. 1:19](#) For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
[Col. 1:20](#) and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

- Jesus redeems all Creation for the Father, including those men and women who believe
- His payment on the cross redeemed the Creation from Satan, sin and the curse
- It's important to understand that John is not saying that God loved all mankind and sent the Son to die for all mankind
 - Self-evidently, not all mankind are saved, so not all mankind will be redeemed or loved by God
 - This fact alone means that we cannot interpret the word "world" to mean all people
 - We must understand it according to its literal meaning, which is as a reference to Creation generally
 - Including those who place their faith in Christ
- But then for that sacrifice of love to be effective in the life of a particular person, he or she must believe in Jesus as their Savior
 - At the moment of belief in the Messiah, Christ's sacrifice becomes effective in a person's life
 - They believe and receive eternal life
 - This is the second part of the answer to Nicodemus' question
 - What must happen for a man to be born again?
 - The Redeemer must be lifted up on a cross to take the penalty for our sins
 - And a person must believe in that sacrifice so they can be covered by God's provision
- In vs.17-18, Jesus comments on each of these steps in more detail
 - In v.17 He says that the Son's arrival on earth was not to bring judgment against sin
 - He came expressly for the purpose to die for the sins of the world
 - And through that death the world might be saved through Him
 - Jesus words remind us that God could have had a different plan in response to the sin of mankind

- Instead of sending Jesus to die for our sins, the Father could have sent His Son to judge the world the first time
- His judgment would have been justified and warranted
- Sin demands judgment, and there was nothing requiring the Lord to spare us that judgment
- Instead, the Father sent Jesus on a mission to take that penalty on our behalf
 - So His arrival was for a mission of mercy and grace
 - But the Bible also records that Jesus returns a second time in the near future
 - When that day comes, Jesus will have a different mission'
 - The mission of mercy has already been accomplished in His first coming
 - So His second coming will be one of judgment, as depicted in Revelation 19 and 20
- Notice in v.18 Jesus says that those who believe are not judged
 - Jesus is confirming that there is a judgment coming one day
 - The fact that Jesus didn't come to judge in His first coming doesn't mean that there isn't a judgment
 - And yet when you place your trust in Jesus Christ, you change your future
 - You will not be subject to the coming judgment for sin, because your judgment fell upon Christ
 - Even though that judgement day lies in the future, for the believer it's been cancelled
 - And then Jesus says that for the one who has not believed, his judgment has already happened because he rejected the only solution
 - There is no second solution
 - Once you reject the Son of God, you assure yourself a seat at the coming judgment moment
 - And when that judgment comes, it will be certain and final

- So in that sense the unbeliever has been judged already
- But then Jesus goes further in explaining how that judgment came to men “already”
 - In v.19 Jesus says that when the Light came into the world, it revealed who was judged and who was not
 - Those who loved the darkness rather than loving Christ, the Light are those who have been judged already
 - They rejected the Light because they loved evil and didn’t want their evil deeds exposed by the Light of the truth
 - This is the common experience of unbelievers
 - Before faith, we all live in immorality and sin, for that’s all we know
 - And the prospect of approaching God holds no appeal, because we know instinctively it will require an exposing of sin
 - As Jesus says at the beginning of v.20, everyone who does evil hates the Light, that is Christ
 - Because the Light of the truth will expose the sin of our lives
 - Every unbeliever is set against Christ by nature
 - This is why Paul says in Romans 3 that none seek God by nature

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,
 “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Rom. 3:11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
 THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

Rom. 3:12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
 THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
 THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

- So what causes any man or woman to make that trip into the Light?
 - We all have evil in our hearts
 - We all have lived in sin
 - So why do some choose the Light instead of preferring darkness?

- Remember I said that both parts of plan of salvation are steps done by God?
 - Well, Jesus now explains how God is responsible for both the work on the cross but also for the work of belief in the heart
 - In v.21 Jesus says it's the one who practices the truth comes to the Light
 - Someone who practices the truth refers to someone whose heart has already been brought into agreement with the truth
 - John commonly speaks of practicing righteousness and practicing unrighteousness as ways of describing believers and unbelievers

[1John 1:6](#) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not **practice** the truth;

[1John 2:29](#) If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who **practices** righteousness is born of Him.

[1John 3:7](#) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

[1John 3:10](#) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice** righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

- So the one who practices the truth would be someone who is righteous by faith
 - That person will come to the Light
 - Which makes sense, because if a person has come to be righteous by faith in Messiah, then they have nothing to fear in coming to the Light
 - Their sins have been forgiven by faith, so the Light is no longer a threat to them
- But the odd thing about Jesus' statement is the order in which Jesus places these conditions

- He says that those who practicing the truth are those who come to the Light
- We might have expected Him to say that those who come to the Light will become those who practice the truth
- The order seems backward
- Isn't it our coming to faith in Christ that brings us into a walk of truth?
- Jesus has established a conundrum in these verses
 - He said that those who are in the darkness will always avoid the Light
 - The Light of Christ will expose the evil deeds of the unbeliever
 - So the unbeliever will always avoid the Light
 - But then Jesus said that the salvation God offers through spiritual rebirth requires that a person believe in the Messiah
 - So how can a person come to know Jesus as Messiah so as to believe and receive eternal life if every unbeliever hates the Light
 - And how can someone become the person who practices the truth before they come to the Light?
 - Jesus resolves the conundrum in the second half of v.21
 - People are brought into the Light by the power of God
 - Notice that Jesus says the deeds of this person are wrought by God
 - The deeds Jesus is talking about are the deeds of walking in truth
 - Moving from a life of unbelief and evil deeds is transformed into a life of faith according to the truth by the work of God
 - The word for wrought simply means accomplished by God
 - The work to bring a person into the Light so that they might believe and be saved is a work done by God
 - So not only does God descend to die in our place
 - But He is also the one Who transforms us spiritually, by His Spirit

- And by that transformation, we are then able to come to the Light
- And that entire process is wrought or accomplished by God on our behalf
- This is the true definition of grace
- This ends the discussion with Nicodemus
 - Summarizing this discussion, we learned about the manner of our salvation
 - It's a process of spiritual rebirth, not one of human works
 - It's accomplished in the heart by the invisible work of the Spirit
 - It brings men into a walk of truth, so that they may come to the Light
 - And in the Light they come to belief in the Messiah's death on their behalf
 - Just as Moses prophesied
 - That a provision from God would be lifted up on a cross
 - So that all who believe in that sacrifice would be saved
 - And this Pharisee believed in this provision, having heard it explained by Christ Himself
 - He's a man who was teaching men the wrong way to enter the Kingdom
 - And on this day, he came to understand it truly for the first time

John 3B

- Having finished the story of Nicodemus last week, we still have the latter half of chapter 3 to finish followed by the start of our next vignette in chapter 4
 - Many Bible students are familiar with the story of Nicodemus and with Jesus' response, especially because it includes John 3:16
 - And as we saw last week, there is a lot going on in that exchange
 - On the one hand we had the Pharisee who teaches that works are the means to a man being born again
 - But as Jesus explained, entering the Kingdom comes not from the work of men, but the work of God in the heart
 - That exchange ended with Jesus stating that God must bring a person out of spiritual darkness and into the light of the knowledge of the Gospel
 - Jesus said that those living in darkness do not enter into the light for fear it will expose their evil deeds
 - Paul echoes this truth in 2Corinthians

[2Cor. 4:3](#) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [2Cor. 4:4](#) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- Therefore, we asked last week how can anyone be saved?
 - Jesus answers that those walking in truth are the ones who come to the light
 - God changes hearts to bring people into the light of salvation
 - So that their obedience can be shown to be a work of God
 - That's the definition of God's grace
- Thomas Constable sums up this story in a helpful way:

Fallen man generally views human beings as neutral if not good. Therefore the fact that God sent Jesus, and Jesus came to save sinners, seems only interesting at best. If man is good and not in need of salvation, he can applaud God's love as admirable. If man is neutral, he can take salvation or leave it. If he leaves it, God appears unfair for condemning him.

However, man is not good or neutral—but bad! He already stands condemned and destined to experience God's wrath. Therefore faith in Jesus becomes a necessary way of escape from that dreadful destiny. The Incarnation is a manifestation of divine grace, not just divine love.

- Now as well-known as the first half of John 3 may be, the second half is probably less familiar
 - John returns to chronicling Jesus' return north to the Galilee
 - And he focuses one again on the ministry of John the Baptist, as John continued baptizing men and women

[John 3:22](#) After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing.

[John 3:23](#) John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized –

[John 3:24](#) for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

- Jesus and his disciples move north into the land of Judea
 - The land of Judea refers to the region around Jerusalem
 - He's moving toward the Galilee beginning in the Judea countryside
 - Then Jesus will pass through Samaria, a region generally unfriendly to Jews traveling to or from Jerusalem
 - Finally, He will enter the Galilee
- So as Jesus moves out of Jerusalem and into Judea, He's bringing His disciples with Him
 - We don't know who they are specifically, except for the few mentioned in chapter 1

- They are not yet called the Twelve, for Jesus didn't select the twelve apostles until after John the Baptist's death, according to the synoptic Gospels
- They arrive at a place called Aenon along the Jordan River
 - The exact location is unknown and could be located anywhere west of the Jordan river valley between the Galilee and the northern end of the Dead Sea
 - The name means springs, and as John describes it's a place of abundant water
 - Obviously, Jesus has stopped at a spring because in the wilderness of Judea, finding enough water to be baptized is an issue
 - By the way, this fleeting reference to abundant water is another indication in scripture that the only proper form of water baptism is by immersion
 - If a Christian baptism could be accomplished merely with a sprinkling of water on a forehead, then Jesus wouldn't have needed to find a deep spring of water to conduct His baptisms
 - Just a jar of water would have been enough
 - But John says specifically that Jesus and the disciples stopped to conduct baptisms in this location because they found an abundance of water
 - They needed the abundance, because they were going to be immersing people
- We've explained in past studies why immersion is so essential to the purpose and message of water baptism
 - Time doesn't permit a lengthy discussion on that topic today
 - But briefly, the water of baptism serves as a picture of the grave, and our immersion pictures the death of our old self with Christ through faith
 - And our coming up out of the water pictures our hope of resurrection
 - Only by immersion can we portray those pictures as Christ intended

- Also, this is the only mention in the Gospels of Jesus' baptism ministry
 - Though later in chapter 4, John clarifies that Jesus never baptized anyone Himself
 - It was His disciples who were baptizing followers
- It makes sense that Jesus would step back from baptizing personally, just as Paul did in his own ministry
 - They were operating in a culture where people sought associations with powerful people and wore them like badges of honor
 - So it would have been a huge problem to have early Christians running around claiming to have been baptized by Jesus personally
 - Paul says something similar about his own ministry

[1Cor. 1:12](#) Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

[1Cor. 1:13](#) Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

[1Cor. 1:14](#) I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

- Considering how believers in Corinth were willing to make too much of getting baptized by an apostle, can you imagine how they would have responded to being baptized by Jesus?
 - It would have been an unhealthy influence on immature fleshly Christians
- In v.23 we learn that John the Baptist was also ministering in this area of Judea
 - John has evidently moved some distance north of his previous location near Jerusalem
 - This suggests that John migrated north to separate his ministry from Jesus
 - He was avoiding competing with Jesus' ministry, as we'll understand shortly

- John says that John the Baptist continued in his ministry of baptizing followers even after Jesus had been revealed as the Messiah
 - We learned in chapter 1 that John's purpose was to be a forerunner to the Messiah
 - So once the Messiah arrived, we assume that John's ministry would give way to Jesus
 - And this John did, but initially John continued ministering and baptizing and directing believers to their Messiah
 - He was Jesus' downline, so to speak
 - So as John baptized, he directed them to follow Jesus instead of himself, so that they could on from repentance to faith in Christ
 - And all the while John made great effort to avoid competing with Jesus' ministry
 - John continued in this ministry until he was murdered by Herod, as John indicates here
- At this point, John's disciples engage in a conversation with an Jew about the baptism ministry that John was conducting

John 3:25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification.

John 3:26 And they came to John and said to him, " Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

- Some unidentified Jew came out to the springs where John was baptizing, and he starts to discuss Jewish theology with John's disciples
 - We don't know what they discussed, but we can guess
 - Jewish teaching had a well-developed system of ritual washings in various forms and for various purposes
 - For example, there were the ceremonial washings prescribed by God's Law, particularly for the priesthood
 - But beyond that, the Jews had developed additional purification requirements of their own, based on various schools of Jewish thought and rabbinical traditions

- And beyond that, new rabbis or leaders would come along from time to time proposing new washing requirements
 - This was part of the never ending expansion of Jewish ritual, custom and commentary on the Law
- So this Jew probably came out to understand where John's baptism ritual fit within the larger context of Jewish teaching on washings
 - Was John performing a washing required in the Law?
 - Was he following a particular rabbinical tradition?
 - Was he establishing some new ritual?
 - What was John's authority to do so?
 - And how did John's baptism compare to the one Jesus' disciples were now conducting?
- We're not sure exactly what they discussed, of course, but it appears that something like my last point caught their attention
 - John's disciples learned that Jesus was also baptizing, and that His ministry was growing rapidly
 - In fact, they come to John and tell him that all the people are going to Jesus
 - He's baptizing all the people
 - The implication is that John's baptism ministry was diminishing as more people begin to follow Jesus instead of John
 - This is exactly as we would expect, since John's been encouraging his disciples to follow Jesus
 - For this is the very purpose of John's ministry!
 - But there are still some men who remained with John
 - And for them, this development was troubling
 - So they raise this concern with John, suggesting that he should be concerned about this competition
 - This is simply professional jealousy

- Like a merchant upset that customers are flocking to a competitors store across the street
- This comment tells us a lot about the heart of these remaining disciples of John
 - They were more interested in building an audience for themselves than they were in serving the purpose of John's ministry in glorifying the Messiah
 - Notice also they don't refer to Jesus as the Messiah
 - They refer to Jesus as the one John testified concerning, but they don't say what John testified about
 - And they certainly give no indication they agree with John's testimony
 - What's more, the fact that they continued following John even after he told them to follow Jesus tells us everything we need to know about their hearts
 - They have remained with John in the wilderness for reasons other than faith
 - This is a career move for them
 - They are approaching this ministry in a manner typical for rabbis and their disciples in this day in Israel
- Rabbis in Israel were a cross between pastor and lawyer in the culture
 - These were respected men who had authority to teach and adjudicate over the people
 - Becoming a rabbi was a stepping stone to greater power in the nation
 - Today, the key to a good start in law or politics is to be admitted to the right university, so it was in their day
 - They key to becoming a successful rabbi was to be accepted as a disciples by a prominent rabbi and eventually to collect your own students
 - Aspiring rabbis recruited the best disciples in much the same way that universities covet high school valedictorians

- Likewise, aspiring religious leaders sought to become disciples of respected rabbis just as straight A students today apply to the best universities
- In short, a disciple's credibility was based on the reputation of his rabbi, while a rabbi's reputation was built by a legacy of excellent disciples
 - For example, Paul gave evidence of his superior Jewish training by reminding his audiences that he was a student of Gamaliel, the most honored Pharisee of the day
 - These disciples of John had come to John not for repentance and the anticipation of the Messiah
 - Instead, it appears they came seeking religious training as a career move
 - And so they are working to protect the reputation of their rabbi
 - And by extension, they're protecting their own reputations as disciples
 - Non on wants to hitch their wagon to the losing train
- This is the way that the flesh thinks, and though it's typical of an unbelievers perspective on religion, it can also become the attitude of believers working in ministry
 - We have to guard our hearts against becoming disciples of a denomination, or movement for selfish interests
 - We aren't followers of a certain congregation or pastor
 - Or of a certain Bible teaching or ministry
 - We are not called to advocate for the success of these things
 - We aren't saved to merely become cheerleaders for the First Church of Whatever or for Pastor Bob or Brother Joe or whoever
 - And their success or failure is not a reflection on us in any case
 - Of course, there's nothing wring with holding respect and admiration for our teachers or leaders or church communities
 - But never let their earthly success – or our own success by affiliation – become the motivation for our association or contribution

- More importantly, we don't want to develop a career mentality as we serve the Lord
- Once opportunity to serve in ministry is not a stepping stone to another
- As far as we are concerned, it's the only thing the Lord has for us
 - Now and perhaps forever
- John's ministry had no second step, so to speak
 - Once Jesus arrived, his ministry came to an end
 - But if John had listened to His disciples, he might have thought he should have more than that
 - He might have put out his resume expecting entitled to move up to a mega ministry baptizing 20,000 people in Jerusalem
 - Careerism is a serious cancer in the church, and it's hurting the flock
- In this case, I believe we're seeing something even worse, that is a group of unbelievers posing as disciples and displaying envy
 - These men didn't come to John in true repentance, but only for personal ambition
 - After they received his baptism, they were accepted as one of John's disciples
 - And they saw this as a ticket to future employment
 - So when John pointed out the Messiah to them, they weren't interested, since they already had the rabbi they wanted
 - And now they've become bothered by the competition, and they want their rabbi to up his own game to compete
 - We can see their hearts even more clearly when we look at John's response

[John 3:27](#) John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.

[John 3:28](#) “You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’

[John 3:29](#) “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.

[John 3:30](#) “He must increase, but I must decrease.

- John’s response is humble, wise and convicting to anyone serving in ministry
 - First, he says that men receive nothing unless it’s given by heaven
 - First, John is speaking about receiving success in ministry
 - As we work in ministry for the Lord’s sake, our results will be determined solely by the Lord Himself
 - Hard work and diligence is His expectation for us, but nevertheless the results are entirely in His will
 - So when you look upon another’s work in ministry and see it blossoming perhaps more than your own, you must consider that their success is directed from above as well
 - God causes the growth
 - So there is no place for jealousy
 - Jealousy among those working in ministry is tantamount to doubting God’s judgment
 - We’re suggesting God got it wrong when He chose to increase another’s ministry over the one we favor
 - But John’s comment goes much deeper than ministry; it’s a universal truth that God gives everything to everyone as He desires
 - Whatever we have has come from God
 - And by that same token, whatever we lack is also decreed by God
 - We need to guard against a mindset that lacks contentment and continually seeks for what we don’t or can’t have

- Then John begins to explain to his disciples the proper perspective on this situation
 - He reminds them in v.28 that he has always said that he is not the Christ
 - John has never been coy or ambiguous about his mission
 - He was sent by God ahead of the Christ so that he could testify to the Christ when He appeared
 - And so it only makes sense that when the Messiah did appear, that John's mission would have been fulfilled
 - And as it is fulfilled, it will naturally fade away
 - John uses a familiar parable to explain his relationship to the Christ
 - In a wedding ceremony, the bridegroom and his bride are the focus
 - It's all about them and naturally they experience the greatest joy among all who attend
 - But standing next to the groom is the friend of the bridegroom (the word in Greek means *attendant*)
 - Today, we might say the Best Man
 - He is a friend of the groom and therefore he shares in the groom's joy as a friend would
 - He is privileged to watch the Groom and the bride united
 - And he is fully satisfied in that role, having done his assigned part in the wedding
 - No true friend would feel jealousy for the groom
 - Nor would he dream of stealing away the bride
- This is the relationship between John and Jesus
 - Jesus is the Groom and those believers who are coming to Him are His bride
 - Today we say that the Bride of Christ are those believers who have come to follow the person of Jesus following Pentecost

- At the time John spoke these words, Paul had not yet revealed the mystery of the Gentile Church
- So it's likely that John was referring to Israel as the Bride
- Of course, John plays the role of the attendant, because he attended to the Groom as the marriage began
 - John says he rejoices greatly at hearing the Lord's voice, at coming to know Who the Messiah would be
 - And so His joy is complete in knowing he fulfilled the mission the Lord assigned Him
 - He would no more wish to compete with Jesus than a Best Man would desire to flirt with the Bride
- So John says Jesus' fame, power and authority must grow
 - They must grow because that is the Father's purpose in bringing His Son
 - And therefore, John's role must necessarily decrease
 - John's role was to precede the Messiah, not compliment or compete with Him
- Once the Messiah arrives, anyone with a mission to precede Him is automatically going to diminish
 - In fact, every servant of Christ should seek for the same goal, to magnify the name of Christ
 - Not to magnify our own prominence or importance as a Christian
- The fact that John's disciples had heard this from John yet remained with him anyway tell us they didn't have faith in the Messiah
 - So naturally, John begins to preach the Gospel to them, using concepts and even words that are virtually identical to what Jesus said to Nicodemus

[John 3:31](#) "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

[John 3:32](#) "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

[John 3:33](#) "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.

[John 3:34](#) "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

[John 3:35](#) "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

[John 3:36](#) "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

- John says the one who comes from above is above all
 - John is preaching that Jesus' origins were heavenly
 - He was born of a woman, but He had no earthly father
 - He is God coming to Earth
 - When he describes of a birth from above, he's saying the same things Jesus did when He spoke of being born again
 - The two terms are synonymous
 - They both refer to a spiritual rebirth made possible by God, Who does this work from above
 - John is merely a man from below, so he could only share with the world what can be known from an earthly perspective
 - That is, John repeated the promises of scripture concerning the Messiah and the forerunner
 - God revealed to John that he was the forerunner, of course
 - But that was a confirmation of knowledge already given in scripture
 - Only the Christ Himself can bring new revelation from Heaven, because He alone knows Heaven from personal experience
 - So Jesus supersedes all prophets that came before him, including men like John

- Finally, John repeats Jesus' words saying that even though Jesus came testifying of Heaven, no one receives that testimony
 - Once again, why do some receive the testimony of the Lord when we're told that no one receives it?
 - In v.33, John says that the one who receives Jesus' testimony has sealed or guaranteed that God the Father is true
 - In other words, the one who receives the Son is giving evidence that the truth of the Father has been given to them
 - So that the one who accepts the Son is himself showing evidence that he is accepted by the Father
 - By the Spirit of God dwelling in the Son, the fullness of God is present and all the mind of God is available to Christ
 - So Christ can relate all things men need to know concerning Heaven
 - The Father have given His Son all things because He love His Son
 - Not only has the Son all knowledge but also He has been given all Creation
 - All things exist for Christ, Paul says in Colossians
 - So how can any mere man compare to the fullness of God in Christ
 - To the God Man Who receive all things from the Father?
- The answer is so obvious it would be ridiculous for a disciple to even hesitate to abandon John and follow Jesus, right?
 - And yet here these disciples remain with John
 - Complaining because Jesus is stealing their sheep
 - It's no wonder that John preaches the Gospel to these unbelievers
 - As John finishes, again with words that sound like they came directly from Jesus' mouth, restating John 3:16-18
 - The one who believe in the Son has eternal life

- But the one who does not believe, who does not obey Christ, will not see life
- The wrath of God abides, or remains, on that person
- For any person who has not obeyed the Gospel, they are essentially walking around carrying the wrath of God
 - They haven't seen that wrath poured out as yet, but they are storing it up for the day of judgment
 - And that's John's point to his disciples
 - They may perceive themselves as having found what they are looking for, but John wants to open their eyes to their jeopardy
 - They are only a heartbeat away from judgment
 - So they need to become disciples of Christ too
- Leon Morris summed it up this way:

"The wrath of God is a concept that is uncongenial to many modern students, and various devices are adopted to soften the expression or explain it away. This cannot be done, however, without doing great violence to many passages of Scripture and without detracting from God's moral character...we should not expect it [God's wrath] to fade away with the passage of time. Anyone who continues in unbelief and disobedience can look for nothing other than the persisting wrath of God. That is basic to our understanding of the gospel. Unless we are saved from real peril there is no meaning in salvation."

- With that John the Baptist fades from John's Gospel, but for a few brief mentions of John's past ministry by Jesus
 - John doesn't record the end of John the Baptist's life, since he knew that the other Gospel writers had covered it sufficiently
 - Instead, John continues north with Jesus as He enters into Samaria on his way back to the Galilee
 - This opens the door in chapter 4 for the appearance of the next of our character studies
 - And for another conversation between Jesus and a woman of questionable character

- The encounter and it's aftermath requires most of chapter 4, and though I would prefer to cover the entire encounter in one sitting, time requires I split it up
 - Tonight, we'll look at opening of the encounter

[John 4:1](#) Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John

[John 4:2](#) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

[John 4:3](#) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

[John 4:4](#) And He had to pass through Samaria.

- The chapter picks up at the end of the events in chapter 3, with Jesus in Judea preparing to leave for the Galilee
 - Jesus is leaving we're told because the Pharisees had heard Jesus was baptizing more than John the Baptist
 - As we mentioned earlier, it was Jesus disciples who were doing the baptizing, not Jesus
 - But regardless, the Pharisees were increasingly worried about Jesus' growing popularity and they were becoming a danger to Jesus
 - So, Jesus picks up the tent stakes and set out for the Galilee
 - Jesus was near John in Aenon, probably near Jericho
 - Now Jesus must travel N-NW to reach Galilee
 - This route takes Him through a region called Samaria
 - No doubt most of us have heard the term Samaritan in times past
 - Most of us had heard the name with the prefix "good"
 - Specifically, from the Good Samaritan story in Luke 10
 - The real power of that parable – and this story - comes from an understanding of the historical relationship between Jews and Samaritans
- The Samaritan take their name from the region of Samaria
 - They trace their origins to the time of the Babylonian captivity

- When Nebachnezzar took the southern nation of Jews (Judah) captive in 597 BC, he forced them to leave Judea in chains
 - About 120 years earlier, the Assyrians had taken captive the northern Jewish kingdom of Israel
 - Left behind in the northern kingdom region were a few ragtag refugees of Jews
 - They largely remained separate from their Jewish brethren in the south, since the northern and southern kingdoms remained enemies
- But after the southern kingdom was taken captive as well by Babylon, those northern refugees were all alone in the land
 - And over time they began to intermarry with Gentiles sent into the region by Assyria
 - They settled in a region called Samaria, just north of Judea
 - By intermarrying with Gentiles, these Jews polluted their bloodline and forfeited their Jewishness - they became Gentiles
 - They were no longer truly Jewish, and over time they abandoned many of the orthodox traditions of Judaism
 - Yet they continued to see themselves as Jewish
- Meanwhile, after 70 years of captivity the southern Jews return to their land
 - When these Samaritans heard the Jews had returned, they traveled to Jerusalem expecting to join their rebuilding of the temple
 - Ezra records what happens when they first meet the newly returned Jews under the leadership of Zerubbabel

Ezra 4:1 Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel,

Ezra 4:2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."

Ezra 4:3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."

- In short, the Jews told the Samaritans to get lost
- And of course the Samaritans took it personally
- Thus began a centuries-long feud between Jews in Judea and the Samaritans directly north
 - The Samaritans responded by separating themselves from the Jews and challenging them for the claim of true Jew
 - While the Jews rebuilt their temple on the Mt Moriah, the Samaritans built a counterfeit temple on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria
 - They took the five books of Moses and deleted any reference to Jerusalem and changed Mt. Moriah to Mt. Gerizim
 - They eliminated all other books of the OT, since they refused to recognize any of the prophets sent to the other Jews
 - They created their own priesthood
 - They developed their own theology
- You could draw parallels from the Samaritans to Mormons, JW's, or any false man-made religion that attempts to supplant the truth
 - They are false religions that counterfeit the broad outlines of Christianity
 - Yet they lack the truth of it in their hearts by God's Spirit
 - Remember, the truth of God is granted by God alone, not found by men through their own efforts
 - So when men lack the true knowledge of God, they create their own, distorted version to suit themselves
- This rivalry produced a fierce hatred between Jews and Samaritans
 - Jews saw Samaritans as only slightly above Gentiles
 - The only reason they placed Samaritans one rung higher on their social ladder was owing to their heritage and willingness to keep the dietary rules of the Law
 - For their part, Samaritans hated Gentiles as well but reserved their greatest anger for Jews

- They typically refused comfort to Jews traveling through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem to worship
- This is why Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan helping a Jew is so surprising

[Luke 9:51](#) When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

[Luke 9:52](#) and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

[Luke 9:53](#) But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

[Luke 9:54](#) When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

- You can clearly see the rivalry between Jew and Samaritan reflected in the disciples' ridiculous comments
- They were practically begging Jesus for the opportunity to wipe all Samaria off the map
- I would give a lot to have seen Jesus' expression in response to their request
- Clearly, there is no love lost between these two groups
 - Because of the hatred between Jews and Samaritans, there was some risk for a Jew to pass through Samaria
 - It would have been customary for a Jew to walk around this region rather than through it
 - But Jesus walks directly into the heart of Samaria
- What's so interesting about the Samaritan culture is their certainty they were the ones with the truth while Jews were deceived
 - But all the facts told an opposite story
 - The scriptures spoke of Jerusalem, not Samaria, and the history of how Samaria came into existence was not in dispute
 - Yet they were sure Samaritans were truly Jewish while the Jewish people in Jerusalem were wrong
 - And they believed that their deeply held convictions and cherished traditions were pleasing to God

- But they were sincerely wrong
 - Can we be absolutely certain about something and still be completely wrong?
 - Of course we can
 - Especially when we make up our own version of truth

A Barna Research Group survey on what Americans believe asked, "Is there absolute truth?" Amazingly, 66 percent of American adults responded that they believe that "there is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and both still be correct." The figure rises to 72 percent when it comes to those between the ages of 18 and 25. - Christianity Today, October 26, 1992, p. 30

- But we can come to understand the difference between truth and error, right and wrong
 - The Truth never changes and won't bend to fit the desires of an evil heart
 - If we change the truth to suit our desires, it's no longer the truth
 - A 99% truth is a 100% lie
 - If the Samaritans in Jesus' day wanted to know the truth, they could have found it easily enough
 - They could have researched the history of their traditions and teaching
 - They could have read the Jewish scripture and compared them to their own
 - But they weren't interested in doing such a thing because like many people today, they would rather be "right" than know the truth
 - They were content with their own counterfeit version of truth
 - Paul says this is the state of every man's heart before God brings the truth to us by His Spirit
 - As John showed us in the previous chapter, we are terminally self-deceived from birth
 - So dead hearts invent their own ways to reach God

- The Samaritans had contrived a false religious system modeled after Judaism
- But ironically, so had the Pharisees of Israel
- All men prefer to believe what suits us
- With that background, let's meet one of these Samaritans

[John 4:5](#) So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph;

[John 4:6](#) and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

[John 4:7](#) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

[John 4:8](#) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

[John 4:9](#) Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

- When Jesus reaches Sychar, he's just outside the city of Shechem
 - As John's gospel says, it was near the land that Jacob gave his son Joseph in Gen 48
 - This spot was within sight of Mt Gerizim, the Samaritan temple
 - And there was a well at this spot, and Jesus stops to rest
 - The well was called Jacob's well because the Samaritans had concocted folklore concerning the location
 - They knew the land had once been in Jacob's possession, so they began claiming that this well was one that Jacob actually used
 - No evidence that was actually true, but here again, who cares?
 - If they say it's true long enough, then it might as well be true
 - That's how a culture of unbelief decides what's true
 - Once again, things really haven't changed much
 - Today, men still prefer relics and folklore to truth

- For example, did you know that today, a number of the designated NT historical sites within the land of Israel are wrong?
- There is little or no evidence to suggest that many of these places famously declared to be associated with Jesus are legitimate
- In several cases, the places can't possibly be accurate because various geographical details don't align with scripture
- That doesn't seem to bother the hordes of tourists that pay homage to the places every year
- We might ask if this Disneyland theme-park religious experience is really so bad
 - Does it really matter if some of these sites are wrongly identified?
 - Well the answer depends
 - If we're asking does it matter if we know the precise location Jesus fell while carrying the cross
 - Of the precise place of His burial tomb
 - Then the answer is no, we don't need to know those things
 - On the other hand, if we're asking does it matter that we hold such places in high regard and allow these physical relics to take on spiritual significance, well then the answer is an emphatic yes
 - It matters very much if in our hearts they become a kind of idol
 - If these places supersede or substitute for faith in God's word or for true worship of the living God, Who cannot be contained in buildings built by human hands
 - Then absolutely it matters...
 - it's become a false man-made religion
 - A counterfeit for true worship
- Consider what it means that God never allowed the Jews to learn the location of Moses burial location in the desert
 - Obviously, the Lord didn't want Israel to turn it into an idol or relic
 - But the Samaritans were guilty of the same kind of idol worship

- They weren't true followers of God
- They followed a counterfeit faith
- And when you depart from the truth of God's word, what do you have left?
 - Relics. Buildings. History. Folklore.
 - You have an empty shell of human ritual
 - You worship your religion rather than the God in Heaven
- You worship according to the precepts of men and convince yourself you are the custodians of God's truth
 - And we can feel quite comfortable with that counterfeit style
 - Until we encounter the truth
 - And on this day, this woman will encounter the Truth

John 4A

- Pick up again with Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well
 - Jesus is traveling north back to the Galilee
 - He has the beginnings of his crew of disciples in tow
 - They must travel through Samaria, a region hostile to Jews
 - As we learned last time, the Samaritans were a group who went to great lengths to counterfeit the Jewish faith
 - They had descended from the northern tribes of Israel
 - But they had polluted their bloodlines by intermarrying with Gentiles
 - And thereby forfeited their Jewishness
 - As a result, they were spurned centuries earlier by the Jewish remnant returning to the land after the Babylonian captivity
 - As a result, they became enemies of Israel
 - And they contended for the title of true Jew
 - They counterfeited Judaism with an elaborate system religious law, temple service and priesthood
 - But none of it was true
 - It merely mimicked the true faith
 - As a result, it was largely based on worship revolving around holy places and relics and ritual
 - This is not a pattern unique to Samaritans
 - As we said last time, it's the definitive pattern of religion absent the Spirit
 - Manmade religion is a manmade attempt to reach up to Heaven
 - But true religion is delivered from Heaven as a revelation of God

- In this story, a Samaritan woman meets Jesus at a well
 - This woman is trapped in a system of false religious worship
 - She doesn't know it's false
 - But something inside her knows there must be more to worshipping God than what she's been taught
 - More importantly, her life doesn't reflect God's presence, as we'll soon see
 - Son on this day, a woman trapped in false religion meets the Truth
 - That is the Way, the Life and the Truth

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- Sychar is a city located just outside the city of Shechem
 - On this land, Jacob gave his son Joseph a well in Gen 48
 - This particular spot was within sight of Mt Gerizim, the Samaritan temple
 - And Jesus stops to rest and get water
 - He sends the disciples into the city to find food, while he waits here alone
 - As we said last time, the Samaritans called this well "Jacob's well," but it was folklore and unlikely to be the true well
 - They made this location another relic
 - And they used their claim to possess Jacob's well as another proof that they were the true Jews

- In this way, they were guilty of worshipping the creation rather than the Creator
- In v7 Jesus asks a Samaritan woman who comes to draw water to give Him a drink
 - And she is clearly surprised by His request
 - She says how is it that you, a Jew, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink?
 - She asks “how” and not “why” because Jews were forbidden to become indebted to a Samaritan
 - Asking a Samaritan for any service or favor without offering payment in some way was indebtedness to Jew
 - Furthermore, men rarely showed regard for strange women in a public place
 - So she asks how can Jesus get around this rule and speak to her, being both a Samaritan and a woman
 - The answer of course is that these limits are rules set by man
 - God is not a respecter of persons, according to Acts 10:34
 - These restrictions were the result of human prejudice, instituted by the rulers of Israel as a means of shunning Samaritans
 - But Jesus came to seek and save the lost
 - So Jesus engages this woman with a request for water
- We can all learn something from Jesus’ technique
 - First, He engages the lost
 - He doesn’t wait for her to speak first
 - He doesn’t avoid conversation altogether
 - We are here on earth *to engage*
 - We are Jesus’ ambassadors
 - Secondly, Jesus doesn’t start with a conversation about religious matters

- He begins with a simple request for water
- We need to be real and natural
- Typically, we don't start our conversations with the lost by saying "So, do you have Jesus in your heart?"
 - Not because it's wrong
 - But because it's abrupt and unnatural
- Don't convert someone so that you can establish a relationship
 - Develop a relationship, so you can work them toward conversion
- Third, be purposeful in your engagement
 - Of course, Jesus knew how His request would take the woman by surprise
 - He will use her surprise to begin a conversation that leads somewhere purposeful
 - He knows that as she works with him in this conversation, He can direct it into more meaningful things
 - If she takes the bait, so to speak, then there is an opportunity
 - These are the methods we should use as we seek the lost in keeping with our mission
- As this scene plays out, we will see that there are two conversations taking place
 - Like with the Pharisee, this woman is having one conversation, while Jesus is having another conversation
 - There's a story of an older couple who suffered under similar circumstances

A mature-looking lady had an appointment with a marriage counselor, and told him flat out: "I would like to divorce my husband." To this, the counselor replied, "Well, do you have any grounds?" She answered, "Why yes. We have almost an acre." The puzzled counselor asked her, "You don't understand. What I want to know is do you and your husband have a grudge?" The lady answered, "Actually, we don't, but we do have a nice carport." At this, the counselor shook his head and said, "Ma'am, I'm sorry, but I just don't see any reason why you should divorce your husband." The lady looked at the counselor and said to him, "It's just that the man can't carry on an intelligent conversation."

- Now that the woman has taken the bait, Jesus moves into the conversation proper

[John 4:10](#) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

- After the woman's disrespectful comment, Jesus responds by raising an entirely different topic, but one that uses the topic of water as a metaphor
 - He says if this woman knew the gift of God and if she knew who was speaking to her, then she would have asked for living water
 - Living water is a Jewish euphemism for flowing water, like a spring or river of water
 - Flowing water is "living" in the sense that it's clean and safe to drink
 - Therefore, living water is the Bible's metaphor for the life-giving power of the Spirit of God

[Jer. 2:13](#) "For My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters,
To hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns
That can hold no water.

- Just as fresh water is essential to sustaining our physical life, so is Spirit essential to eternal life
- So the Bible uses the idea of a never-ending supply of fresh water as a picture of the never ending spiritual life that comes from the Spirit of God dwelling in us

- Just as with Nicodemus and birth, Jesus is speaking about salvation using earthly metaphors
- And like Nicodemus, Jesus is addressing a woman who's captive of a false system of worship, a false religion
 - He's calling her to know the true God, to seek the truth and put aside the myths and false creeds
 - Jesus says she's missing an important opportunity because she lacks two things
 - Things that are closely related
- First, she doesn't know the gift of God
 - What is this gift of God?
 - We know Jesus is on the topic of eternal life
 - Therefore, we must assume He's talking about the gift that leads to eternal life
 - As Paul explains in Eph 2

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Eph. 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- If she had known the grace of God manifested through the gift of faith, she could have recognized Jesus
 - Ironically, she had just mocked Jesus because He had asked her for a gift of water from the well
 - But Jesus says she should have been the one asking Him for a gift, the gift of eternal life through faith
- Secondly, Jesus says if she had known who was speaking with her
 - If she knew Jesus, her Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God
 - Jesus is telling her she doesn't know His true identity
 - And if she knew, she would speaking about entirely different things

- If you know you're talking to the One Who can grant you salvation, then no matter how the conversation starts, you would direct it toward a request for eternal life
- And knowing Jesus' identity as Messiah is only possible with the gift of faith
 - Men cannot find the Truth in their own power
 - It's as if you were placed in an infinity large room filled with boxes but with no light whatsoever
 - And in one box is a treasure you wish to find
 - Unless and until the light is turned on, you have no hope to find the right box
 - Even if you happened across the treasure box in the dark, you would just stumble over it

[2Cor. 4:3](#) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, [2Cor. 4:4](#) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

[2Cor. 4:5](#) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

[2Cor. 4:6](#) For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

[2Cor. 4:7](#) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

- We need the Light from God to find the true treasure of eternal life
 - And because that light is delivered in the form of earthen vessels – beginning with Jesus in the form of Man – it defeats the pride of men
 - It leads to moments like this, when this woman is stumbling over Jesus
 - She is arguing over rules and cultural prejudices rather opening the treasure standing before her
 - Which is why He begins by saying if she knew the gift of God, things would be different

- But the woman isn't on Jesus' wavelength as yet...she's still having an earthly conversation that misses Jesus' point

[John 4:11](#) She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"

[John 4:12](#) "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"

- She hears Jesus' words about living water, and she assumes He's just talking about moving water
 - To her unopened ears, it sounded like Jesus was offering to draw water for her from a well that was superior to the one she was drawing from
 - And then she notices that Jesus has brought nothing to draw water from this well
 - And this well in Samaria is one of the deepest in Palestine
 - Over 75 feet
 - So naturally she says she is perplexed about where Jesus expects to obtain better water
- And she isn't done with her insults yet...she mocks Him again by asking if Jesus is greater than "our" father, Jacob
 - Jacob was one of the most important figures in Samaritan theology
 - He was even greater than Abraham or Moses for a Samaritan
 - He was their link to true Judaism
 - In the Bible, Abraham is associated with the land of Judea, which reminded the Samaritans of their enemies in Jerusalem
 - And Moses was the link to the Jewish law, which the Samaritans rejected in place of their own version
 - So Jacob was king in Samaria
 - And so the woman reminds Jesus that Jacob was the father of the Samaritans as much as the Jews

- The Samaritan woman, like all Samaritans, assumed that if God gave Jacob and later Joseph this well, then there was no better source
 - Take note that there is always a degree of pride that accompanies manmade religion
 - Like all Samaritans, this woman lived with a religious chip on her shoulder
 - She was always primed to defend herself against the accusations of a Jew
 - Every relic, every acre of sacred land, every symbol was important and worthy of defense
 - This is the heart of every religious man who lacks the gift of God
 - They defend their manmade religious system, even when truth is against them
 - Because the alternative is to concede that their religion is based on lies
 - Their pride and ego are at stake
 - I can remember my years growing up in a Catholic family
 - I thought I had been given the truth, though I didn't know the first thing about God or the true Gospel
 - So if someone suggested I wasn't truly Christian or that I didn't have the right viewpoint, I was always quick to defend the Catholic faith
 - I wasn't defending the word of God or the Lord Himself
 - I was defending my tradition and family identity and my pride
 - Even a cursory study of church history would have shown me that the tradition I sought to defend was demonstrably false
 - But I wasn't really interested in the question of how to truly find God
 - I was only interested in defending my pride
 - Just as this woman is blindly defending her culture and history

- God's word reveals the truth, of course, and because that truth comes by way of the gift of God, it excludes prideful boasting by those who know the truth

[Rom. 3:27](#) Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

[Rom. 3:28](#) For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

[1Cor. 1:27](#) but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

[1Cor. 1:28](#) and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

[1Cor. 1:29](#) so that no man may boast before God.

[1Cor. 1:30](#) But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

[1Cor. 1:31](#) so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

[1Cor. 4:7](#) For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

- We certainly work diligently to defend the truth every bit as much as those trapped in false religious systems defend what they believe
 - But our defense doesn't (or shouldn't) be focused on saving face or protecting our pride
 - As Paul says, what do we have that wasn't given to us by God?
 - We didn't figure this out on our own, and neither should we expect to argue someone else into accepting the truth
 - We are messenger, and the power of our message is self-evident to those being saved
- The message of salvation isn't designed to sound sensible to human intellect or pride
 - It's designed to sound foolish to shame the pride of men who think they can find God through their own devices
 - God crafted His message of salvation as a foolish-sounding story about a criminal crucified long ago so that when someone finds it appealing, it's a sign of the power of God at work
 - The person who receives the Gospel is showing evidence they have received the wisdom of God by means of the Spirit

- The question in our current scenario is whether this woman is going to receive that wisdom
 - To this point, she's simply defending the Samaritan perspective as a matter of pride
 - And she's arrogantly insulting Jesus in the process
 - She asks Jesus if He was greater than Jacob?
 - It's an ironic insult, because it's true
 - Jesus is so much greater than Jacob
 - He is the God of Jacob
 - Jesus' response ignores her insult and continues to teach on the meaning of living water

John 4:13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;

John 4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

- Jesus points to the water in her well and says everyone who comes here must return again
 - Physical water only provides temporary satisfaction
 - No matter how often she drinks of this water, sooner or later she will be thirsty again
 - And of course, Jesus' point goes far beyond the physical dimension
 - He's speaking of how manmade religion cannot satisfy the soul's longing to be reconciled with God
 - No matter how often this woman sacrificed at her temple on Gerizim, she still walked away with the guilt of her sin
 - No matter how often she prayed to idols or a nonexistent god, she remained unsatisfied
 - She could return over and over again, but still her guilt remained
 - No matter how much she tithed, she couldn't buy God's favor

- No human ritual or work can achieve what only comes by a gift of God
 - Eventually her doubts and fears of death return
 - Nothing of this world will ever satisfy
 - Because rituals can't cancel out our spiritual debt nor fill the spiritual emptiness of fallen man
- But Jesus gives her a better way
 - He says, first, the one who seeks must come to Jesus
 - They don't come to physical water in a well or to some relic or through a ritual
 - They come to the person of Jesus, because our faith must be in Him
 - Secondly, what Jesus offers is everlasting
 - Jesus doesn't bring a partial or temporary solution
 - We will never need to seek again
 - His solution satisfies us because it addresses the very cause for our seeking: it removes the penalty for sin
 - He reconciles us to God once and forever, so we will never want for something else
 - Thirdly, once the Spirit takes up residence inside us, He becomes a wellspring bringing forth eternal life
 - The indwelling of Christ's Spirit leads to a changing within
 - We begin to move in a direction of holiness and contentment
 - Righteousness begins to spring up in us
 - And that sanctification process continues until it brings us into eternal life
- But these ships are still passing each other, as we see by her response

John 4:15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

- Once more, the woman refuses to enter into a spiritual conversation
 - She acts as if Jesus is still talking about literal water
 - And she sarcastically asks Jesus to give her this “water” that never leaves her thirsty so she can avoid returning to do the work of drawing water
- She doesn’t realize that her comment is a perfect response to the spiritual meaning of Jesus’ words,
 - She says if she had Jesus’ water, she wouldn’t have to continue working to obtain her own water
 - That is essentially the Gospel message
 - Jesus’ offer of eternal life eliminates the need for us to labor at obtaining our own solution through dead works
 - This woman is asking for Jesus to solve an earthly problem, not realizing Jesus is the solution to an eternal problem
- At this point, we give this woman the benefit of the doubt and assume she is just missing Jesus’ point
 - But given what John has taught earlier, we must conclude that this is an example of darkness avoiding the Light
 - This woman is in the darkness, and she won’t enter into Jesus’ spiritual conversation because it would require stepping into the Light
 - And coming into that Light will expose her evil deeds
 - This isn’t a conscious process
 - Rather, it’s instinctive, a result of a sinful nature
- So what must happen before a person leaves the Light and steps into darkness?
 - The Bible tells us that God must act first
 - We must be brought to repentance with an expectation of forgiveness
 - She is still looking for an earthly solution

- Why? Why hasn't she understood Jesus words properly? What's missing?
- In a word, repentance
 - The woman hasn't yet come to repent of her present circumstances
 - Repentance is a turning away, but not from some specific mistake
 - It means a turning away from man-made religion and to obedience to the Gospel
 - Repentance means seeing ourselves the way God sees us and being just as troubled by what He sees
- The Bible says repentance is the necessary preparatory step to faith taking hold in the heart

Mark 1:14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,
Mark 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

- Repentance must precede true faith because we can't pile God's truth on top an existing heap of false religious beliefs and dead works
- We must turn away from the darkness before we can receive the Light
- But even the repentance that leads to salvation is itself a product of God's work in our hearts

Rom. 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**?

2Cor. 7:9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of **repentance**; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

- Godly repentance produces godly sorrow
- And this type of sorrow comes as a consequence of the kindness and will of God

- And so in kindness, Jesus takes the first step to provoke repentance

[John 4:16](#) He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

[John 4:17](#) The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband';

[John 4:18](#) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

[John 4:19](#) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

- Jesus tells the woman to go and get her husband
 - Jesus is asking to address to the authority in her home
 - This was culturally expected
 - He just offered to give her a gift, and she accepted
 - But in this day, a man could not give a gift to a strange woman
 - So Jesus calls for the husband, so he can transact the business
 - But of course, in this case Jesus has an entirely different purpose in raising the question of her husband
 - Supernaturally, Jesus knew this woman's situation
 - Remember, John told us in chapter 2 that Jesus knew all men and didn't need anyone to testify to the nature of their hearts
 - He knew this woman was living in sin
 - She had married five times
 - And each time, her husband had put her away, probably for some indiscretion or indecency
 - And now she is in a sexual relationship with a man who has not married her
 - She was just one step above prostitute
 - So by raising the question of a husband, Jesus opened the door on her evil deeds
- The woman's answer is circumspect

- She says she has no husband but never mentions her past relationships or her current relationship
 - This is no confession
 - At best, we can say it was truthful
 - And Jesus Himself acknowledges the truth of it
 - But there is no sense of repentance at this point
 - She is still hiding her evil deeds from the Light
- But the Jesus seizes on her answer to expose her deeds and convict her
 - He explains her marital history
 - And He calls her out for living in sin in her current relationship
- In the way He answers her, Jesus highlights how she is hiding the truth
 - Notice He says “you have correctly said you have no husband...”
 - In other words, He’s saying you have spoken more truth about yourself than you are willing to acknowledge
 - Again, at the end Jesus says “this you have said truly,” meaning the only honest thing you’ve said is that you are without a husband
- The power of God’s Light is in His ability to reveal the things hidden in the darkness of our hearts
 - This woman must have been pariah in her town and culture
 - She was a disgrace
 - And she carried that guilt everywhere
 - When she encountered people who knew of her circumstances, she would have been shunned or condemned or
 - The only ones who treated her with respect were strangers who knew nothing of her situation
 - But here’s a stranger who knows her sin, yet He hasn’t condemned her
 - Instead, Jesus was willing to treat her with respect

- He even offered to give her a special gift
- She must have been surprised, both by Jesus' insight and His willingness to accept her
- She responds saying, "I sense you're a prophet" referring to Jesus' insight
 - But she's saying more here than meets our Western eyes
 - Samaritans rejected all Jewish prophets after Moses
 - The only prophet they were prepared to acknowledge was the prophet Moses himself said would come one day
 - The prophet described in Deut 18

[Deut. 18:17](#) "The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well.

[Deut. 18:18](#) 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

[Deut. 18:19](#) 'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

- Like the Jews, the Samaritans understood this coming prophet would be the Messiah
 - The Messiah was the only prophet the Samaritans were willing to acknowledge because He was the only prophet mentioned by Moses
 - And so when this woman says she perceives that Jesus is a prophet, she is raising the prospect that Jesus is the Messiah
- Now if you're the woman, there are a number of places you could take the conversation from this point
 - You could ask Jesus how He knew these things about her
 - You could become defensive and seek to explain your circumstances
 - You could get embarrassed or angry and run away
 - But she does none of those things
- Instead, she takes the conversation in a religious direction, asking Jesus to settle an ages-old religious dispute

[John 4:20](#) “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

- The woman asks Jesus to rule on whether the Samaritans or Jews had the correct view on where to worship
 - Samaritans had made Gerizim the center of worship, owing back to Abraham and Jacob’s wandering in this land
 - They said this mountain was the place of Isaac’s sacrifice
 - And this was the place Abraham met Melchizedek
 - Since this mountain was near Shechem and many significant events in the patriarch’s lives were connected to Shechem, it was logical to conclude that this was an important place
 - Nevertheless, Jewish scriptures had revealed that the place God chose to place His temple was in Jerusalem, not at Shechem
 - Because the Samaritans rejected the word of God delivered by His prophets, they were in the wrong
 - But the very question of where someone should worship was growing obsolete
 - Both Samaritans and Jews were worshipping places and faces rather than the Living God Who sanctified those things

[John 4:21](#) Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

[John 4:22](#) “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

[John 4:23](#) “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

[John 4:24](#) “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

- Jesus confirms the superiority of the Jewish perspective but then quickly moves passed the question of where one worships to *how* one worships
 - Jesus says a time is coming when true worshippers won’t go to any particular mountain to find God
 - In that day, the true mountain was in Jerusalem, Jesus says
 - The Samaritans were worshipping a counterfeit, Jesus says

- True salvation is found only through the Jewish people
- The Jewish people are the ones God selected to deliver the truth to the world
 - They received the covenants of God
 - They produced the prophets who revealed the word of God
 - They produced the Messiah, through Whom we must approach the Father
 - So if you desire true salvation, then you must accept the preeminence of the Jewish people in God's plan
- But nevertheless, the way into eternal life isn't found through the customs, law or sacred places of Judaism
 - Jesus says an "hour" is coming and is already here when true worship is set free from a prescribed form or location
 - The word hour refers to a time or age, and that time is called the last days or the church age
 - The time following the Messiah's appearing until His return
- During this time, Jesus says the Father will seek true worshippers who approach Him through spirit and truth
 - Worshippers must approach the Father on His terms, and in past days those terms were dictated by the Law given to Israel
 - By His word, the Lord determined that worship would be limited to certain people and certain places
 - He required a temple and sacrifices
 - This was the truth that the Samaritans lacked
 - But these constraints were a temporary measure in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah
 - The writer of Hebrews says that the existence of the tabernacle signified that the way for personal access to the Father had not yet been revealed

[Heb. 9:8](#) The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing,
[Heb. 9:9](#) which is a symbol for the present time...

- Once the Messiah was revealed, the hour came for men to approach the throne personally
- But that approach is made possible by the revelation of the Messiah and our faith in that Messiah
 - The revelation of God is the Truth that makes possible a way to the Father
 - And our faith in that Messiah is a gift of the Spirit, which makes our worship acceptable to the Father
 - We must worship in the truth of Christ and by His Spirit or else our worship is null and void
- Jesus emphasizes that worshiping in Spirit is necessary because God Himself is Spirit
 - In other words, the Father is not localized to a single place
 - He exists in Spirit form, which means ironically that though He is everywhere, He cannot be found in a certain place
 - We approach Him only through His Spirit residing in us
- The Samaritans lacked the truth of God's word, so they were far from the Spirit of God and could not worship Him truly
 - But an hour was coming for the world to know God in Truth and Spirit, and that hour had already come to this woman
 - Jesus is announcing the arrival of salvation for this Samaritan woman
 - He has brought her evil deeds into the Light
 - Yet He didn't condemn her for them
 - The Lord's kindness softened her heart, and she entered into a conversation about finding God
 - And Jesus has told her that worship must be a matter of Spirit and Truth

- Now all that remains is for this woman to embrace that truth

[John 4:25](#) The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

[John 4:26](#) Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

- The woman confesses her faith in God's promise of a Messiah from Deut 18:18
- And when that One arrives, she says, He will explain all things, settle all arguments and set straight every dispute
- And by this confession, she is showing faith as a child of God
- But once the identity of the Messiah is revealed to world, true faith will embrace the Person of Messiah
 - So then came the test for this woman
 - Jesus announces He is the One that Moses said would come
 - Critics of Jesus and the Bible will suggest that Jesus never declared He was the Messiah or God in the flesh
 - This verse (among other in John's Gospel) counter that lie easily
- Like the earlier encounter with Nicodemus, this scene teaches us something about salvation
 - Ritual and tradition are not a substitute for true worship of God
 - The time of relics and special buildings and rituals is passed
 - That age has gone and in its place has come a new age
 - An hour when worship shows no regard for form or place
 - With Nicodemus, we learned that salvation comes by a new spiritual birth, and with this Samaritan woman we learn our worship must be guided by that new spirit
 - There are some intriguing contrasts between these two characters
 - In John 3, we found a man of high regard and reputation
 - A Jew who supposed possessed the truth of Heaven

- He had nothing to hide, yet he came to Jesus in the night and in ignorance
- In John 4, we have a woman of low regard and ill repute
 - She is a Samaritan trapped by religious lies
 - She had everything to hide, but she met Jesus in the open under a midday sun
- The Lord is not a respecter of persons, saving both Jew and Gentile, but to the Jew first, for salvation is of the Jews
 - But unlike Jesus, the apostles are still very much respecter of persons
 - And a Samaritan woman deserves no respect as we see in v.27

John 4:27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"

- As the disciples approached the well on foot, they must have observed Jesus speaking to this Samaritan woman from a distance
 - And they are completely perplexed
 - They are completely amazed, because Jesus is breaking one of the more important restrictions of Jewish society
 - He is speaking to a Samaritan – and a woman no less
 - But despite their curiosity, they say nothing to this woman
- Their silence could have been driven out of respect for Jesus' authority
 - But if that were all there was to this, why would John think to mention it?
 - I think he raises this point to illustrate the disciples' ongoing prejudice
 - Jesus has spoken kindly to an enemy and she has received His word
 - But the disciples of the Lord are still living in their flesh, unable to move past human prejudice

- This verse sets up a contrast that takes us into the second half of the chapter, a contrast between the disciples and the Samaritan woman

John 4B (2014)

- What is the proper response to becoming a disciple of the Messiah?
 - That's the question John explores in the second half of chapter 4
 - The chapter starts with the Samaritan woman at the well
 - She was a woman who lacked access to truth of God
 - She was trapped in a false religious system
 - But on this day, she came to understand that Jesus was the Messiah
 - And through this encounter, the Lord gave her the gift of faith
 - And by her faith, she has been transformed
 - Her spiritual transformation was similar to that of Nicodemus and the disciples of Jesus
 - Just as with this woman, those Jewish men were living in darkness until the moment the Light of the World enlightened their hearts
 - Now being Jews, we might expect that those converts would have set the standard for how to be a disciple of the Lord
 - Surely a Pharisee would be a strong witness for Christ among his peers in the Sanhedrin
 - Surely the disciples of Jesus would be the first to reach out to the lost with a testimony of the Messiah
 - And the last person we might expect to set the standard as a follower of a Jewish Messiah would be a Samaritan woman
- But as we saw in v.27 last week the disciples didn't react properly to finding Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well
 - They refused even to address her
 - Of course, they had no idea that the woman had accepted Jesus as Messiah
 - They're weren't privy to their conversation

- So if they didn't know she had learned that Jesus was the Messiah, is it too much to expect that they might have considered this woman a likely candidate to follow Christ
- Instead, they continued the Jewish practice of shunning Samaritans, including this woman
- Seems they haven't got the idea yet
- Ironically, the Jews had every advantage with respect to the truth of Messiah
 - They had the prophets, the covenants, the Temple service
 - They had the full counsel of God's word
 - And most of all, they had the Messiah born in their midst
 - Yet they have no sense of mercy and charity to their fellow man
 - So Jesus has His work cut out for Him with these guys
- Meanwhile, the Samaritan woman ignores these men and their prejudice
 - She might have wondered why the Messiah was bothering with such poor disciples
 - But regardless she has more pressing things to attend to...

[John 4:28](#) So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,
[John 4:29](#) "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"

[John 4:30](#) They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

- The woman says nothing to the disciples and simply leaves
- But she is so excited to leave, that she forgets her waterpot at the well
- John includes this detail to demonstrate her urgency and excitement
- But there is also a great symbol in her absentmindedness
 - A moment earlier she had been defending this well and chastising Jesus for offering a better source of water

- And she had even mocked Him for not having a bucket to draw water
- But when Jesus offered her the living water He promised, she found it so exciting that she had no need for the other water
- Just as Jesus had promised
- She leaves to enter into the city of Sychar and immediately found the leading men of the city
 - Consider the courage that this required
 - The men of the city would have been sitting in the city gate on a normal day of business
 - This woman would have had brought her tattered reputation into that public place with probably few if any friends to support her
 - Just entering the city gates would have provoked stares and perhaps mocking comments
 - Nevertheless, she doesn't let these things stop her
 - This is quite a contrast to the disciples
 - That group of Jewish men couldn't bear the thought to talk to a single Samaritan woman about the Messiah standing next to them
 - This shamed woman is willing to run right to the leaders of the city and declare the arrival of a Christ that no one had yet even seen
 - Faith leads us to do crazy things
 - Formulaic religion just leads us to conform to human expectations
- The most comical part of the woman's testimony is the way she highlights her own sordid past as proof of her claims
 - She points to the fact that this stranger could name her sins so specifically as her proof that Jesus was Messiah
 - As we said last week, this was the turning point for this woman's heart

- Her deeds were brought into the Light, but there was no condemnation!
- So now she neither worries about them being a matter of public discourse
- What a relief it must have been for a woman living the kind of life she was living
- That's the impact of Christ in our hearts...He removes the guilt for our past sins and takes away the burdens
- In the past, this woman may have entertained thoughts from time to time of the Messiah's arrival
 - But I assume that possibility didn't leave her feeling very optimistic
 - More likely, she was terribly worried at the prospect of what His arrival would mean for her
 - Given her sinful past, she might have assumed it would be a bad day
 - And that concern was the source of her guilt
 - But now that she has encountered grace, she can confidently and joyfully announce the good news to others, despite her shameful past
 - Such is the power of the Gospel
- Perhaps it's her insistence, or her bravery or just her lack of shame, but something caused the leaders to take her claims seriously...seriously enough to follow her to the well
 - The leaders of the city go out of the city to investigate the woman's claims
 - And as the Samaritans make their way to Jesus, the Lord is still sitting at the well with the disciples
 - They had brought Him food as He requested

[John 4:31](#) Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

[John 4:32](#) But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”

[John 4:33](#) So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?”

[John 4:34](#) Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

[John 4:35](#) “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

[John 4:36](#) “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

[John 4:37](#) “For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’

[John 4:38](#) “I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”

- I like to imagine Jesus seated by the well, perhaps in the shade of small tree nearby
 - And the disciples have brought Him bread, maybe a piece of fruit, perhaps some salted fish
 - But Jesus isn’t interested in eating
 - He’s disappointed in them and it shows on His face
 - And the disciples are concerned not understanding what’s bothering Christ
 - So they urge Jesus to have some of the food
 - Jesus responds by teaching them a lesson using food as an example
 - He says he has food they don’t know about
 - Immediately, we’re made aware that Jesus is talking about something spiritual again
 - We know this because we know Jesus hadn’t received any food while He’s been at the well
 - But naturally, the disciples assume He’s talking about physical food
 - Here’s another of those “passing in the night” conversations

- They asking one another if one of them gave Jesus food earlier, and of course no one did
- These guys are missing Jesus' point, of course, just as the Samaritan woman did a moment earlier
- Funny how the Samaritan woman was too busy looking down her nose at Jesus to understand His conversation
- And now the disciples, who were too good to talk to a Samaritan woman, are equally clueless
- The Jesus takes pity on them and explains the meaning of His comment
 - Jesus says that His food is to do the will of the One Who sent Him
 - Obviously, we know Jesus is speaking of doing the will of the Father in Heaven
 - How is obeying the Father a "food" for Jesus?
 - Well, consider that this conversation was coming on the heels of the earlier one with the woman
 - In that conversation, Jesus redirected the woman's thoughts away from satisfying her flesh's need for water
 - And toward her spirit's need for living water
 - Jesus wasn't denying that the body needs to drink water
 - But He did want the woman to put satisfying her spiritual needs ahead of satisfying her physical needs
 - It should have been more important for the woman to find a source of eternal life than to spend time keeping her physical body alive
 - Likewise, Jesus isn't denying the need to feed His physical body with food
 - He's asking the disciples to think about spiritual priorities ahead of physical priorities
 - They had been so focused on eating that they hadn't even considered the possibility of reaching this Samaritan woman with the message of the Kingdom

- So Jesus is teaching them a lesson about priorities in life
- The first priorities of life must be spiritual priorities
- And specifically, pleasing the One Who calls us into service must be our first priority
- For Jesus, the highest priority was accomplishing the work of the Father, and this was all the satisfaction Jesus needed
 - He wasn't even willing to delay obedience for the sake of a single meal
 - He hadn't stopped at this well to get a drink or to get food
 - He stopped here to reach a Samaritan woman
 - And through that contact, Jesus anticipated reaching an entire community with the Gospel
 - This was the work the Father sent Jesus to do, and He wasn't going to get distracted
 - But the disciples have their priorities backward, it would seem
 - Jesus tells them not to say that the harvest is still four months away
 - Instead, they needed to serve God with a mindset that the harvest is continually ready, speaking of a harvest of men and women
 - Interestingly, the Samaritan people customarily wore solid white robes as a sign of their spiritual purity
 - So as Jesus spoke these words, the disciples might have been able to look up and see a "field" of white walking toward them
 - As the men of Sychar made their way out from the city to meet Jesus
- In v.36 Jesus says the harvest has already begun, that is the message of salvation is already going out into the world
 - The reaping of this harvest is the responsibility of Jesus' disciples
 - These men and all believers who come after them are responsible to assisting in the harvest
 - We receive those the Lord is saving

- We proclaim the Gospel
- We baptize those who believe
- We disciples all who confess so they may return to the field and harvest still more
- That is the labor of a disciple in the world, but these disciples haven't internalized that responsibility as yet
 - That's a shame, because a disciple that fails to serve in the field is sacrifices wages, Jesus says
 - Notice in v.36 that Jesus says a reaper will receive wages for their service
 - We know these wages to be eternal rewards for serving
 - We're like workers picking up fruit in the field, except that this is eternal fruit
- Jesus says there are those who sow and those who reap, and in this context both refer to disciples
 - It's similar to the analogy Paul uses in 1Corinthians when he said that He planted and Apollos watered
 - The idea is that we each take part in the process of reaping in different ways
 - But in the end we will all have a chance to rejoice together over the resulting rewards
- Jesus sums up the Lord's expectation by saying that He expects that our cycle of sowing and reaping is to continue in a selfless fashion
 - Jesus quotes a saying that one sows and another reaps, meaning that both roles are required for either party to benefit from the labor
 - It was easy for the one harvesting to be motivated by their work, since they were anticipating eating the harvest
 - But those who reaped the harvest should share it with those who earlier planted the seeds
 - It was harder for the one sowing to be as motivated since the harvest is four months away

- But if both the planter know they will share in the harvest, than neither has excuse to work hard
- So it is in serving as a disciple and ambassador in the world
 - We might think that since we have secured our salvation, there's no reason to work hard for Christ
 - But no Christian is free to take a pass in the work of the Gospel
 - Jesus reminds us that we were all brought into faith through the work of another who worked selflessly to ensure a good harvest
- In fact, all disciples reap a harvest they didn't plant, including the ones seated around Jesus at the well
 - Others had labored before them as God called and equipped
 - Those others were the OT prophets including John the Baptist
 - They were also the faithful men and women in Israel who guarded the word of God and taught it to their children
 - They were priests and rabbis with true hearts to teach the people about the coming Lord
- Clearly, Jesus is chastising the disciples for their apathy for sharing what they know about the Messiah with the world
 - We might be tempted to cut these guys some slack, since they haven't been following Jesus very long
 - Just how much experience would Jesus expect these men to have by this point?
 - Well however little time these disciples have spent with Jesus, it's still an eternity compared to the brief encounter the Samaritan woman had
 - And yet we see what she's accomplishing as a disciple of Jesus

[John 4:39](#) From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done."

[John 4:40](#) So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

[John 4:41](#) Many more believed because of His word;

[John 4:42](#) and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

[John 4:43](#) After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee.

[John 4:44](#) For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

- Just the simple testimony of this woman was enough to draw out a large crowd from the city
 - All she told them was that Jesus had the ability to know her innermost secrets
 - Not the most compelling testimony, at least not in earthly terms
 - Nevertheless, it was enough to bring out this crowd
 - Of course, their interest in coming as a result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit
 - Which is the whole point to why Jesus can say the harvest is white
 - Even when we don't know exactly what to say or how to say, it matters not because the Lord is capable of taking even the most meager testimony and using it to change a heart
- Notice that the people who came out to meet Jesus believe in what they hear
 - And they tell the woman that their faith in Messiah is no longer based solely in her testimony
 - Instead, they now see for themselves that the word of Christ testify to His claims
 - They are convinced by Jesus Himself
 - The woman played an important role as God chose to use her
 - But in the end, the truth of Jesus' claims don't rest in the credibility of His disciples

- He is self-evidently true, and He is more than capable of making Himself known to anyone who seeks Him
- These details remove any objections we might offer for refusing to serve as an obedient disciple
 - We know from chapter 3 that saving faith is a product of new birth accomplished by God in the heart of man
 - And yet the Lord calls disciples to follow His example of living to serve and please the Master Who called them
 - That work involves sharing a testimony of Jesus with the world
 - But in the end our testimony merely brings someone to an encounter with Christ, and in that encounter Christ makes Himself known
- Even though the result lies in God's power, it still hold out the potential for an eternal reward for us
 - So we have no reason not to place the Lord's priorities above our own
 - That's why Jesus tells His disciples not to worry about earthly things
 - Focus on a heavenly food
 - Don't feed your flesh, serve the Lord
- I imagine the disciples would have been amazed to see a friendly crowd of Samaritans approaching Jesus at the well
 - It was beyond their comprehension to think that their rabbi could unite Jew and Samaritan in this way
 - Remember, two years later in Jesus' ministry the disciples offer to call down fire from Heaven to destroy Samaritans who refused Jesus accommodation
 - So as dramatic as this moment must have been, it didn't settle the issue in their hearts
 - In fact, in the book of Acts we still see evidence of that prejudice in chapter 8 as Peter and John travel into Samaria to verify Philip's ministry

- The apostles were surprised to see Samaritans accepting the truth of Jesus as Messiah, even though this scene had happened already
- Interestingly, the people remark that Jesus is the Savior of the world
 - Only John uses this phrase, and it reflects his desire to expand on what had already been written in the earlier Gospels
 - By the time John wrote his Gospel, the world had come to realize that the good news of the Messiah's arrival was intended to reach far beyond the nation of Israel
 - It was intended to reach into Samaria
 - And more than that, it was to reach Gentiles as far away as Rome and Tarsus
 - But when the earlier Gospels were written, that truth was still emerging
 - Now by the end of the first century, it was clearly evident
 - So John makes a point to emphasize that Jesus wasn't just a Jewish Savior
 - He was the Savior for all nations, for the whole world
- Jesus ends up staying in the area two days at the request of the Samaritans
 - And as a result of being there, even more believe John says
 - Normally, Samaritans wouldn't even allow a Jew to stay in the area overnight
 - But now, these people are encouraging Jesus to stay with them
 - The power of the Gospel to change hearts is on full display
 - These people, inspired by their leaders, are now worshipping in Spirit and Truth
 - And these Samaritans stood in marked contrast to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who discounted Jesus in favor of their own dead, religious system
- So after two days Jesus sets out to return to the Galilee
 - The Galilee was the northern most part of Judea

- It was largely considered a backwater region
- Jews in Jerusalem held it low regard
- Later in John's Gospel we'll here the Pharisees dismiss Jesus as Messiah by saying that no prophet ever arises out of the Galilee
 - Which was actually untrue
- Nevertheless, the Jews in Jerusalem were self-important, elitist and privileged
- Which is exactly why Jesus spent most of His time ministering in the soft hearts of the Galileans
- In v.44, John quotes Jesus testifying that He had no honor in his own country
 - The Greek word for "country" can also mean home city
 - And by the context, we know Jesus was referring to Jerusalem
 - Jerusalem is the home city of the Messiah in the sense that the throne of David was in that city
 - Jerusalem is the place the Messiah is rule and reign over the people of Israel
 - And one day, He will
 - But for now, Jesus is moving back to the Galilee where He will find a very different reception

John 4:45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

- The Galileans received Jesus warmly back into their region
 - And they did so because they had likewise traveled into Jerusalem for the feast of Passover
 - As we said in an earlier lesson, all male Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover
 - So like the Jews in Jerusalem, these Galilean Jews saw the miracles Jesus performed in the city over the week of Passover

- And they haven't forgotten how impressive His teaching and miracles were
- In fact, they have probably been waiting for Jesus to make His way back home
- This explains why Jesus spent so much time in this region early in His ministry
 - He went where He saw the Spirit working, for that was His mission
 - And conversely, He went to Jerusalem to die, for that is where the prophets were killed
- And now that Jesus has returned, He returns to His healing ministry

John 4:46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.

John 4:47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."

John 4:49 The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

John 4:50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.

- Jesus returns to Cana, for as we said, Cana seems to be the city Jesus moves Himself and His earthly family as He began His ministry
 - John's mention of Cana serves as a bookend to the start of Chapter 2
 - Between these two mentions of Cana, we find John's's only description of Jesus' early ministry
 - So what did John want his readers to understand about Jesus' early ministry?
 - The two conversations John highlights between Jesus and Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman neatly sum up those early months
 - Among the Jews of Jerusalem, there was suspicion, dismissal, and ignorance of Jesus' identity
 - Later this would turn to outright hostility

- And while a few like Nicodemus come to faith in the Messiah
- For the most part, Jesus is not well received among the Jews in Jerusalem
- But among the outcasts, the Samaritans, the poor, the Gentiles...Jesus finds a ready and receptive audience
 - And they return time and again to Him seeking His word and His healing power
 - This in a nutshell explains why Jesus spent most of His years in earthly ministry in the northern region rather than Jerusalem
- As He returns, He is met by a royal official in need of healing for his dying son
 - A royal official would mean some someone who is in service to a king
 - And in this time and place, that would have to mean someone who served Herod Antipas, the self-appointed King of Judea
 - It's unclear whether this man was Gentile or Jewish, though Jesus' comments in v.48 seem to suggest He was talking to a fellow Jew
 - The official says his son lives in Capernaum
 - Capernaum was the seat of Roman rule in Judea, so it would make sense that the official lived there
 - It's also a considerable distance from Cana, about 17 miles
 - This man is clearly desperate for anything that might save his son
 - So he traveled the distance to see Jesus when he hears that Jesus has returned
- As he makes his request, Jesus remarks that the people of Galilee are consistently requesting signs and wonders before they can believe in Jesus
 - Now why does Jesus chose this moment to make this declaration?
 - Jesus is remarking on this man's willingness to travel so far to make His request
 - And on his insistence that Jesus return with him to Capernaum to heal his son

- If the man truly were operating in faith in Jesus as the Messiah, then he wouldn't need Jesus to return physically
 - In fact, he wouldn't have needed to make the trip himself
 - He could have just prayed for healing from his child's bedside
 - If Jesus is capable of healing the human body, then He is clearly capable of operating in supernatural ways
 - And therefore, time and space would not be an obstacle
 - So faith in Jesus as Lord wouldn't require that a man travel and insist that Jesus travel as well
- So, if you feel the need to make the trip and bring Jesus back with you, then it suggests you need to see physical proof, a sign of Jesus' power
 - That's what Jesus means when he says these people are consistently seeking physical signs to bolster their faith
 - It's one thing to believe that Jesus could heal, but it's another to believe that Jesus was the God Who could heal without barriers
- When God works through a man or woman, naturally that work will be as limited by the physical nature of the person
 - A man with the gift of healing must be in the presence of the one He heals
 - God is the One performing the healing
 - But still He is working through a person, and that constrains the healing to space and time
 - We can acknowledge that God did the work
 - But we also understand that the person performing the healing is just a vessel the Lord is using
 - On the other hand, when God Himself performs a miraculous work on His own, He is not bound by space or time
 - He doesn't suffer the limitations that a created being must work within
 - Such was Jesus, even in His incarnate form

- Jesus could direct supernatural outcomes through the Spirit of God
- So, belief in Christ's healing power from a distance became a distinguishing characteristic of true faith
- Believing that Jesus could heal from anywhere meant acknowledging Him as God
- Jesus chastises this man's incomplete faith, but the man is so desperate He isn't put off by Jesus' comments and pressing his request
 - So Jesus grants the man his request for healing
 - Jesus declares that the man's son is healed from 17 miles away
 - Now the question is whether the man would believe Jesus' word
 - Jesus hasn't given him the sign he required, that is Jesus didn't travel and heal the son in the man's presence
 - Instead, Jesus made a declaration to test the man's faith
 - At this point, in v. 50 we're told that the man believed Jesus' word
 - This is the biblical definition of saving faith throughout the Bible
 - Just as when Abraham believed the word of God and was declared righteous, so has this man believed in the word of Jesus
 - He truly believes his sons has been healed by the word of Christ
 - If he had any doubt at all, he wouldn't have left Jesus to walk 17 miles back to Capernaum
 - He wouldn't have wanted to risk the possibility that his son hadn't been healed
 - Saving faith is always a confidence in things hoped for, and a conviction in things unseen
 - This man is convinced that what he hopes for has come to pass based solely on Jesus' word
 - Saving faith is always this way
 - Today, we hope for the resurrection that follows our death

- And we are convinced that Jesus is Lord and will return for us one day
- And though we haven't seen these things come to pass as yet, we still maintain that confidence because he have faith in the word of God
- Just as this royal official did

[John 4:51](#) As he was now going down, his slaves met him, saying that his son was living.

[John 4:52](#) So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

[John 4:53](#) So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household.

[John 4:54](#) This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

- The official leaves to return to Capernaum, and on the road he encounters his own servants coming to inform him that his son was well
 - The distance of 17 miles represents about 2 days travel by foot, so it's in the second day that the official and the servants meet
 - When the man hears the news, he immediately asks when the son was healed
 - The purpose of his question is to test Jesus' words
 - And in that sense, he continues to seek for a sign
 - He's told that the fever left at the seventh hour
 - This is a specific moment and a specific event
 - The suddenness of the healing was remarkable, such that the servants knew the exact moment it occurred
 - This confirmation was a sign to this man that Jesus did as He promised
 - In this case, his desire for a sign follows his faith, rather than preceding faith
 - This is an important distinction

- A sign can be a useful and healthy support to faith when it follows faith
 - The Lord grants us such a confirming sign in the way we receive the Holy Spirit after faith
 - The work of the Spirit in us gives us a confirmation that we have received what the scriptures promises
 - But when we seek signs in advance of faith, it's proof that we lack faith altogether
 - And our request for signs becomes a barrier to faith, not a means to it
- As the official learns that his son was healed at exactly the time when Jesus spoke, it says that he believed and all his household
 - We need to understand these statements with a full appreciation of the context of these events and the natural process of faith in the heart
 - First, the man believed in Jesus' promise during a moment of crisis
 - He appealed to Jesus, and Jesus declared the son healed
 - The man left believing in Jesus' potential to save and hopeful that the healing would happen as Jesus promised
 - This is the faith of a new believer: a fragile hope that needs signs to strengthen
 - Then the official hears the news of his son's healing, and his faith is strengthened
 - This moved him from faith found in a crisis to a faith formed in confidence
 - The sign of the instant healing caused the man's faith to grow strong and assured
 - From this point forward, he would never have doubted in Jesus' word or claims
 - And when you have a faith that is strong and confident, you are in a position to share that faith with others in a convincing manner

- You move to a contagious faith, one that leads others to follow through the supernatural blessing of the Spirit
- That's why we hear that the man's household believed
- The Bible isn't declaring that because one member of the family believes, then automatically all members will believe
- We can find many examples of families where one member comes to faith but no one else follows
- Instead, John is simply emphasizing the strength of this man's faith
 - He is so convinced and so enthusiastic over Jesus' miracle that he has come home and preached the truth to his whole family
 - And of course, they saw the healing as well, which no doubt bolstered their faith as well
 - And they all believed
- John ends with by saying this was the second sign that Jesus performed when He came out of Galilee
 - John is calling it the second, because of the earlier miracle done in Cana
 - The first was turning water into wine
 - The second is healing the official's son from a distance
 - These are signs that reflect Jesus as Creator and God
 - Indisputably, if someone can turn one physical substance into another or heal with just a word, they are demonstrating themselves to be the Creator
 - Together these two miracles form a complete cycle in Jesus' early ministry
 - The ministry began somewhat prematurely with his mother seeking a miracle to save a wedding host from embarrassment
 - And it ends with a father seeking Jesus to heal his son
 - The first sign is done in private but causes the disciples to believe
 - And the second sign is done in private and causes the official's family to believe

- But together they show the deity of Jesus
 - In fact, the entire narrative between these two miracles highlights the power of God in Jesus
 - His creative power is on display in the water and wine
 - His authority over the temple and in teaching were evident in Jerusalem and with Nicodemus
 - His omniscience was evident with the Samaritan woman
 - And His healing power over time and space was evident with the official's son
- And they sum up Jesus time in Galilee prior to gaining the unhelpful attention of the Pharisees
 - Jesus showing mercy on people of all kinds
 - Jesus teaching His disciples that they are to seek the lost as well
 - And Jesus displaying Himself to be God through miracles that could mean nothing else
- Looking ahead, chapters 5-10 chronicle Jesus antagonizing the leaders of Israel
 - Jesus moves into Judea and Jerusalem routinely and as He does, He begins to explain Himself more forcefully
 - John's Gospel is best known for the long monologues Jesus speaks
 - The first of those comes in John 5, as Jesus explains His work on behalf of the Father

John 5 (2014)

- As we enter into chapter 5, let's remember that John has specific purposes in mind as he wrote his Gospel
 - Tonight, a couple of those purposes are squarely in view
 - First, John explores the union of the deity of God with the humanity of human form
 - Jesus lowered Himself to become man, and in the form of man, He became a servant of the Father
 - But how does God serve Himself in that sense? How can One part of God be a servant to another part?
 - This relationship between Jesus incarnate and the Father in Heaven is a central focus in John's Gospel
 - it fascinates us to consider the ramifications of God becoming man
 - And we ponder how that change manifested itself in Jesus
 - But as we'll see tonight, the unique relationship that resulted from Jesus' incarnation yielded a model for our own relationship serving the Father
 - Secondly, John highlights the way Jesus was constantly contending with religious authorities
 - Why would men who supposed represented the Father have such concerns with the Son of the Father?
 - Wouldn't we expect that men appointed to teach Israel about God would be the first to embrace the very God they studied in the scriptures?
 - In this chapter, Jesus and the Pharisees will conflict over certain rules of life that the religious leaders imposed but Jesus ignored
 - So the question arises why are these conflicts happening, and what do they say about Jesus and these men
- The first part of chapter 5 describes a miraculous healing which sets up the conflict with the religious leaders

- The second part revolves around the leaders' challenge to Jesus' teaching and Jesus' response

[John 5:1](#) After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

[John 5:2](#) Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.

[John 5:3](#) In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters;

[John 5:4](#) for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

[John 5:5](#) A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

[John 5:6](#) When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"

[John 5:7](#) The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

[John 5:8](#) Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."

[John 5:9](#) Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

- As we saw back in chapter 2, John again describes a feast in Jerusalem that requires Jesus to travel back down to the city
 - Generally, when Jews talk of a feast without mentioning it by name, they are referring to the feast of Passover, which was the most important feast on their calendar
 - Like today, we might say the holidays, and it's understood we mean Christmas and New Years
 - So this is the second time Jesus travels to Jerusalem during His earthly ministry
 - That would set the time of these events to be about a year after the events in chapter 4, almost halfway through his earthly ministry
 - Going back to Jerusalem meant Jesus would also run into the Jewish religious leaders
 - John sets up one such conflict with a story of a healing by a pool in the city called Bethesda

- It was located by the Sheep Gate, which was located in the northern part of the city wall according to Nehemiah
- The name of the pool probably means house of mercy
- A pool has been excavated in that place, and today it's called St. Anne's pool
- Interestingly, John says the pool has five porticoes, which isn't significant to the account
 - Except perhaps because the number five in scripture is the number of grace
- John says that around the pool lay a multitude of sick who came to the pool for healing
 - Why did they come to pool for healing?
 - In vs.3-4, we're told people gathered around the water because they believed the angel of the Lord stirred the waters from time to time
 - And when the waters were stirred, the first to enter the pool would be healed
 - This possibility had attracted a large number of sick, who sat around the pool watching the water for hours or days at a time
 - As we consider this explanation for a moment, it's sounds very curious and a bit suspect
 - Only one person received the benefit of the Lord's mercy no matter how many were present around the pool
 - It was like God was dispensing His mercy on a lottery system
 - As if He only had a limited supply of healing power to go around
 - Why would the Lord ever dispense His mercy and grace in such an capricious and inevitably frustrating way to those who seek after it?
 - Secondly, this process required a measure of human effort or works to benefit from God's mercy
 - To be healed, someone has to have the strength to beat every other cripple to the water

- So only those who had the physical capacity to enter the water quickly were able to receive the Lord's mercy
- The worst conditions, the people who most needed the Lord's help, were excluded from receiving it, it would seem
- Such a scenario suggests that God only supplies His mercy to those who have strength to contribute something in return
- But that's never the way the Lord extends grace and mercy
 - On the contrary, the Lord gives help to the helpless
- Finally, the account says the healing happens because the "Angel of the Lord" stirs the water
 - But the Angel of the Lord is the Second Person of the Godhead, that is a pre-incarnate Jesus
 - Yet for the past 30 years, Jesus has lived in human form
 - So He couldn't have been stirring the waters at Bethesda unless His physical hand dipped into the water and moved it
 - Yet desperate people have continued watching the water expecting healing, which suggests they have been reacting to something else in the past 30 years
- The unavoidable conclusion is that the story of this pool wasn't a true story
 - The Lord never stirred the water and this pool did not produce healing
 - Nevertheless, a myth had taken hold that many people have chosen to believe
 - Desperate people assembled at this pool hoping that the superstition they had been told was true
 - And perhaps when the wind moved the water or because someone claimed they saw the water stirred, then a great rush of cripples began
 - And perhaps once in a while, someone claimed to have been healed, but then who could be sure
 - So the story of God healing through a pool was not true, though the idea held a power over the people

- This still happens today as con artists work within the church promising miraculous healing to those who meet God's arbitrary test
- Such nonsense serves the same purpose as other religious superstition, like weeping statues of Mary or grilled cheese sandwiches that look like Jesus
 - They substitute for true relationship with the living God
- So why did John include this explanation in his account if it wasn't a true story
 - The answer is John *didn't* include this in his account
 - Rather, an enterprising copyist added this detail
 - In my Bible translation (NASB), the phrase that begins at the end of v.3 and continues until the end of v.4 is in brackets
 - Those brackets were inserted by the translators to alert the reader to the likelihood that these words are not reliable
 - They are not present in the earliest manuscripts, having appeared centuries later
 - The copyist was attempting to explain why so many gathered at the pool
 - So he inserted commentary to explain the myth, though he presents the explanation as if it were true
 - Take comfort in the fact that even when someone tries to add something to the scriptures, the Spirit has insured we can discernment the truth from what is not true
- Back to the story, Jesus asks a crippled man if he wanted to be healed
 - The man responds he hasn't been able to be healed yet because he can't make it happen
 - Someone has always beat him to it
 - He's been waiting for a miracle and has spent 38 years of his life trusting in this superstition to heal him
 - It's the utter epitome of hopelessness made worse by the deception of powerless religion

- I'm sure his friends or the religious leaders simply told him he wasn't worthy of God's mercy
- But now here stands Jesus, Who was prepared to extend God's mercy to this man
 - Take note the man never specifically asks Jesus for healing
 - Jesus asked if he wanted healing, and the man responded by explaining why he couldn't be healed
 - Clearly, his answer implies he wants healing
 - But the fact he doesn't seek healing directly from Jesus tells us he didn't realize Jesus could accomplish such a healing
 - It tells us the cripple was not as yet aware of Who Jesus was
- Nevertheless, at that Jesus orders the man to get up
 - Since this man is crippled and unable to walk, Jesus' words indicate He has healed the man
 - Not only has he been given back the ability to walk, but Jesus also restored strength to the man's limbs
 - After lying around for 38 years, he would have experienced significant atrophy in his limbs
 - Nevertheless, the man picks up the pallet or mat on which he was laying and he walks away healed
 - This account produces a strong contrast with the myth
 - The man has been taught a superstitious myth of human religion that emphasized he must be worthy to receive God's mercy
 - And year after he falls short
 - It's a discouraging, hopeless outlook
 - And yet this is always the recipe when men invent ways to find God
 - These lies always begin with some mystery of supernatural power
 - But at the core, false religion always relies on some human achievement to please God

- So that when the system fails us, we fall back to blaming ourselves for not doing enough to satisfy God
- But the living God doesn't dispense grace according to human rules or expectations
 - The Lord bring grace without a catch, and when the Lord decides to bring healing, the outcome doesn't rest on human abilities
 - Ironically, the Angel of Lord *did* visit the pool on that day
 - Jesus had the power to part the waters in the pool much less stir them, but Jesus didn't need parlor tricks to accomplish a healing
 - Jews seeks for such signs, but God's word is the real power of the Universe
- So by the word of God, a healing took place
 - And it came to the least powerful member of the crowd, the one with no ability to save himself
 - And it asked nothing of the man
 - In fact, Jesus didn't even wait for the man to make a request of Him
 - That's the difference between dead, powerless religion and the grace of God
 - Men look to their works to please God, and yet God is pleased when we hear and believe in His word
- Now this scene of the man's healing is just the warm up act for the conflict that follows in chapter 5
 - Notice at the end of v.9 John mentions that this healing happened on the Sabbath day
 - That's the key detail setting up the rest of the chapter
 - It leads to the first of several disputes between the Lord and Pharisees over the rules surrounding the Sabbath Day observance
 - Under the scribes and Pharisees, the Sabbath day observance in Israel had become a religion all its own

- The rabbis even come to calling the Sabbath day the Bride of Israel or Jehovah's Queen
- Under rabbinical tyranny, the Sabbath had become a religion of its own in Israel
- It was the most important day of the week for religious observance and consequently for religious persecution as well
- Almost anything action a person might take on that day could be deemed an offense against the Sabbath Law
 - So that by the time of Jesus' first coming, the rabbinical system in Israel had established something like 1,500 additional rules for how Jews must observe the Sabbath
 - And the penalties for breaking these rules were severe, including death
 - These rules had no relationship to the Law God delivered to Israel
 - As the Lord delivered the Sabbath, He included all the rules necessary for someone to observe the Sabbath successfully
 - But men with false motives took God's law and turned it into an opportunity to gain political power over the people
- These rules granted power to those who made and enforced them while enslaving those who fell under them
 - And so naturally, it was a source of great concern to the Pharisees when they witnessed Jesus instructing a man to act contrary to their 1,500 rules

John 5:10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."

John 5:11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"

John 5:12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?"

John 5:13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."

[John 5:15](#) The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

[John 5:16](#) For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

- The Pharisees (who John simply calls “the Jews”) took immediate exception to finding a man walking out of the building carrying a mat
 - They tell him it is not permissible to carry the mat
 - Of course, God hadn’t declared it was impermissible
 - It was not permitted according to their manmade rules concerning the Sabbath
 - Yet they portrayed their rules as equal to God’s Law
 - In fact, they taught their obeying God’s Law was achieved by following their rules
 - So they led people to believe that when they violated any one of these 1,500 rules, they were offending God
 - The people believed what they were told
 - And the Pharisees retained control over people as a result
 - The man responded by explaining he was told to carry his mat by the man who healed him
 - The man was saying a lot more than merely explaining his rationale for walking
 - He was implying that the man who told him to walk had greater authority than these men who tell him not to walk
 - The One who can heal a body merely by His word is demonstrating His authority as the Creator
 - And if the Creator tells you to get up and walk with your pallet, you do it no matter how many men you might offend
- It’s interesting that Jesus told the man specifically to walk and carry his pallet
 - Conceivably, Jesus could have just told the man to walk and leave his pallet behind

- Instead, Jesus made a point to tell the man to carry it with him
- It seems as though Jesus was inviting a confrontation with the Pharisees
- In fact, Jesus slips away before they find Him because He has more important things to attend to
- It's also revealing that when the Pharisees hear the man's explanation, they show no interest in his story of healing
 - They're only interested in the violation of their laws
 - They are more focused on their own interests and power than on any true working of God around them
- Once again, notice the man still doesn't know who Jesus is
 - He can't identify Jesus to the Pharisees
 - And he certainly doesn't seem to appreciate that Jesus is the Messiah
 - Which tells us that Jesus didn't require this man to possess faith as a prerequisite for the healing
- At this point in Jesus' ministry, He was performing miracles to establish His authority and prove His claims
 - So it didn't depend on a person accepting His testimony necessarily
 - Nevertheless, Jesus still wants to bring His identity to the man's attention after the healing
 - So, Jesus avoids the Pharisees for now so He can seek the man out and clarify His identity
- When Jesus finds the man in the temple (perhaps thanking God for the healing), He tells the man now that he has become well, do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens
 - Though the language is a bit odd to our ears, we should recognize this is the moment of this man's salvation
 - Jesus says to him that he has become well
 - Clearly, this would suggest his physical healing

- But in this case, Jesus' words go deeper
- In particular, notice that Jesus follows his first statement by saying do not sin anymore
 - That phrase appears in other places in the Gospels as well
 - A few chapters from now, Jesus encounters a woman caught in adultery, and after saving her, He says

[John 8:10](#) Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"

[John 8:11](#) She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

- From the Gospels, we learn that the phrase "go and sin no more" is an instruction Jesus offers those who have experienced spiritual healing
- Therefore, Jesus is saying to this man that since he has been made well spiritually (as well as physically), he must live according to his salvation
 - As a result of receiving God's mercy, the man is expected to live a new life without sinning
 - For if he continues in sin after becoming a child of God, He is at risk of the Lord bringing discipline upon Him
 - Which could result in an even worse calamity than being a cripple
- Then as a result of Jesus words to the man, we're told in v.15 the man goes out proclaiming Jesus
 - Just as the Samaritan woman did
 - He has become a disciple of Jesus
- Now, John has set the scene for what follows between Jesus and the Pharisees
 - Disputes over the Sabbath are a central theme in all four Gospels
 - Across all Gospels, we find a total of seven disputes between Jesus and the Pharisees over the Sabbath
 - John's Gospel records three of the seven moments

- In this case, when the Pharisees learned that Jesus was the One who told the man to pick up his mat, they come after Him
- This then leads us into the first of Jesus' extended discourses in John's Gospel
 - Jesus opens this discourse explaining how the Pharisees completely misunderstood the Sabbath and its purpose

John 5:17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

John 5:18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

- First, Jesus says that His Father is working all the time, even until now
 - The Father rested from His work of Creation, but that doesn't mean the Father ceased all work
 - The Father has remained at work in the lives of His people from the beginning
 - Simply maintaining the operation of the Universe is a constant work of God
 - The natural laws of the Universe that we observe are the result of God at work
 - The Bible says God is holding all things together and working according to His design
 - Jesus point is that God can't be accused of failing to rest on the Sabbath because He God is free to work continually
 - The Sabbath rest requirement was given by God to man so that man might benefit from it
 - And the Pharisees also understood that God was not subject to the Sabbath day commandment
 - And so that's where Jesus began in His defense
 - But by calling God His Father and by saying He is likewise working as well, Jesus went a step further than the Pharisees could accept
 - In v.18 John says the Pharisees sought to kill Jesus all the more

- John lists two reasons why Jesus upset them
- First, they said Jesus was breaking the Sabbath
 - Since Jesus existed in the form of man, He was subject to the Sabbath Law, just as Jesus kept all the Law
 - But Jesus wasn't breaking the Sabbath, not as God commanded it
 - Instead Jesus was breaking one of the Pharisees' stupid extra rules
 - In this case, the Pharisaical rule Jesus violated was a prohibition of carrying anything from a public space to a private space or from a private space to a public space
 - This was one of the many arbitrary rules that the Pharisees added to the commandment
 - When the cripple picked up his mat and moved it out of the portico, he was defying this rule
 - But these manmade rules were not in keeping with the spirit or purpose of the Law
 - The Sabbath was given to Israel to ensure a day each week without a need to work for their existence
 - Remember, in the desert the people of Israel were provided extra manna on the sixth day
 - And in the sixth year, the harvest was great enough to last two years
 - So the point was idleness; it was relaxing from the labors of subsisting
 - More importantly, the Sabbath was given to created a picture of Christ, Who fulfills the Sabbath in the New Covenant
 - Christ work on the cross brings us salvation, so we have no need to work for our own salvation
 - When we believe in Christ, we rest in His work and enter into His rest
 - So Jesus is our Sabbath fulfillment

- Which is why the Christian is not required to keep a Sabbath day, since we have fulfilled the Sabbath requirement in coming to faith in Christ
- Secondly, they wanted to kill Jesus because He made Himself equal with God
 - Of course, all Jesus could say to this accusation was guilty as charged
 - Jesus was saying He was equal to God because He is
 - The Trinity is a basic doctrine of Christianity
 - This verse by itself is further proof that Jesus called Himself God and it refutes those who say otherwise
 - False teachers like the Jehovah's Witnesses will claim that Jesus never declared He was God
 - And they will deny the Trinity
 - But here is one of many places you can go in the New Testament to know the truth
- In response to the Pharisees anger, Jesus shares some details on the intimate relationship that Father and the Son share

[John 5:19](#) Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

[John 5:20](#) "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

[John 5:21](#) "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

[John 5:22](#) "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

[John 5:23](#) so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

- First, Jesus says the Son never acts apart from the Father, for they always act in unison
 - Jesus would never seek to do anything except what is the Father's will
 - This is the definition of holiness and sinlessness

- Doing everything and only what is the Father's will
- Everything single thing that Jesus did was perfectly in unison with the Father
- So when Jesus told the man to pick up the may, His instructions were perfectly consistent with the Father's desires
 - In other words, what Jesus told the man to do was what the Father wanted done
 - And if the Father wanted it done, then by definition it couldn't have been a violation of the Sabbath
 - And equally true, the Pharisees were sinning by demanding the man do otherwise
 - In effect Jesus explained that His instructions were in keeping with the Sabbath while the Pharisees' were not
- The idea that Jesus submitted to the will of the Father leads some to question whether Jesus was truly God in the flesh
 - How could God submit to God, and so they conclude Jesus was just a man, a prophet, sent from God
 - In coming to this conclusion, they overlook the detail that Jesus followed *perfectly*
 - As Jesus said to the rich young ruler, no one is good but God alone
 - The only way any man could follow in the Father's will perfectly is if He were sinless, as only God is
 - So Jesus must be God to live a perfectly submitted life
 - Nevertheless, because of His incarnate form, Jesus had to watch and learn from the Father in order to know what to do
 - This is probably the greatest mystery and most awe-inspiring aspect of the incarnation
 - Though He was God, Jesus experienced the process of learning, growing and maturing as a human being
 - As Jesus grew, He was always aware of His relationship to the Father

- And He was constantly seeking to follow the Father and do only what pleased Him
- What a mystery that God could be confined to flesh and therefore required to learn and grow and yet still remained forever obedient and submitted
- Next, Jesus says the Son is always in the loop, because the Father reveals all things to the Son out of love
 - The Son is on earth for a purpose and the Father never fails to instruct the Son on how to fulfill His mission to the Father's satisfaction
 - So the Son never acts out of disobedience
 - Nor does He ever act out of ignorance
 - He is perfectly in tune with the will of God in all things
 - And the things that the Father is willing to do out of love for the Son doesn't stop with human works
 - Jesus says the Father is prepared to show the Son even greater works than healing the physical body of a cripple
 - Beginning with future works of bringing men back to life and other great miracles
 - And culminating with His own resurrection and glorification
 - And continuing until today as Jesus brings new birth to all His children by faith
- Jesus' greatest miracle is His mission to save the lost, which He calls out in v.21
 - This claim wasn't novel, since the Jewish understanding acknowledged that God could and sometimes did raise dead bodies back to life
 - Resurrections had happened at point in the Old Testament
 - The widow's son was raised by the prophet Elijah, for example
 - But now Jesus says He shared that same power, and He was prepared to grant it to whoever He wishes
 - When Jesus says that the Son gives life to whomever "He" wishes, the He is a reference back to the Father
 - We can see that from the context

- The Father is the One raising people from the dead
- And Jesus said He can do nothing on His own, but He only does what the Father is doing
- So when Jesus raises someone from the dead, He is raising those the Father wishes to raise
- Still, the point is that Jesus claims the same power as the Father in raising dead bodies back to life
- And this statement means Jesus is claiming to be God
- But there is one area in which the Father had delegated all authority to the Son
 - The Father has given the Son the right to judge all Creation
 - Peter declares the same thing in Acts

[Acts 10:42](#) "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

[Acts 10:43](#) "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

- Jesus was appointed to judge all things
- The Pharisees who were seeking to kill Jesus were going to stand before Him in a future day and receive His righteous judgment
 - What a warning! Jesus is telling them one day I will judge you
 - Yet in the meantime He willingly suffers under their condemnation
 - I can't imagine the judgment these men faced
- Then Jesus says in v.23 that the Father will ensure that all will honor the Son in the same way they have said to honor the Father
 - And if a person rejects the Son, that person is simultaneously rejecting the Father too
 - This is the natural conclusion from all that Jesus has stated
 - These men say they honor the Father, but their hearts are far from Him

- And the proof of that is the way they reject the Son
- But in the end, all men will honor the Son, as Paul says

[Phil. 2:9](#) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

[Phil. 2:11](#) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Here we find the exclusivity of Jesus position and Christianity's claims
 - The phrase "there are many roads to Heaven" is a popular way of saying that we don't all have to believe the same things about God in order to be accepted by Him
 - Some can find "god" in following Muhammed
 - Some find Him in following Buddha
 - Some find Him in following Jesus
 - And some find God in completely unique ways
 - But Jesus' words completely refute that notion
 - Jesus says that God is only found through the Son He sent
 - Jesus is the One and only Name with the power to save men from their sin
 - Any other belief is folly and will lead to disappointment
 - We can't say that Jesus is both a good person or consider Him to be one way to Heaven, because His own words preclude those conclusions
 - Either Jesus was lying or crazy
 - Because He said He was equal to God
 - He said to reject Him was to reject the Father
 - If Jesus was wrong, then there is no reason to consider anything else He said

- Or He is right, in which case we can't add any other name to our list of ways to Heaven
- Those are the only two rational positions we can take on the question of how to consider Jesus
- At this point, you can imagine that Jesus' words had His audience with mouths wide open gaping in either disbelief, astonishment or disgust
 - So Jesus begins to speak more forcefully about His authority

[John 5:25](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

[John 5:26](#) "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

[John 5:27](#) and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

[John 5:28](#) "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,

[John 5:29](#) and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

[John 5:30](#) "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

- The voice of the Son of God is a life-giving power to the dead
 - Jesus is speaking of two things at once in this statement
 - First, He's speaking to the miracles that He was preparing to work in raising people from the grave
 - People like Lazarus
 - But in spiritual terms, Jesus' voice would call many men and women to belief in Him as Messiah
 - And that belief raises these dead people to new life
 - Just as Jesus explained to the Pharisees Nicodemus
 - The Son's ability to give life is equal to the Father's ability to give life
 - The Godhead is equal and the power of Creator is shared and equal
 - Just as we see in Genesis, when we read

[Gen. 1:26](#) Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;...

- Once again, Jesus is calling Himself God, in that He can grant life to dead bodies and spirits
- But He has also been granted the power to execute judgment
- So, we will either hear His voice for the outcome of obtaining eternal life
 - Or else we will hear His voice on a judgment day to come
 - And on that judgment day, we will not ignore Him, for we will receive the penalty for our sins
 - One way or another, we will hear His voice and obey
- From here, the conversation move to a comparison of life and judgment
 - In vs.28-29 Jesus explains that there both outcomes include a resurrection
 - In the first case, those who have heard His voice and did good are resurrected to life
 - In v.29 your Bible may contain the word "deeds" twice in this statement, but that word never appears in the original Greek language
 - That's important, because Jesus isn't saying that good deeds or evil deeds are the determiner for eternal life or judgment
 - Read the sentence without the word "deeds" and Jesus was saying that doing the good thing or the evil thing makes the difference
 - The good thing in this context is to hear the voice of the Son of Man and respond in a positive way
 - As did the cripple man, when He was told to get up and he obeyed
 - And later when He heard Jesus tell Him to go and sin no more, and the man believed in Jesus and was joyful
 - These are the ones who will be resurrected to eternal life
 - We who have believed in the name of the Son of Man will receive new bodies in a future day

- And with those new bodies, we will never die again
- We will live forever in His Kingdom of righteousness and glory
- On the other hand, the evil thing in this context would be to ignore the Lord's voice, to reject Him
 - But those who rejected Jesus as Lord will still be resurrected
 - They too will receive a new bodies
 - But in that new body, they will experience a judgment, which the Bible calls the second death
 - This is the eternal death that the Lord promised as wages for all those who sin
- We see these two moment juxtaposed in Revelation

Rev. 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev. 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Rev. 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Rev. 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

Rev. 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

- All believers are a part of the first resurrection, which occurs over a series of moments
- And all unbelievers are a part of the second resurrection
- The first leads into the Kingdom
- While the second leads to the Lake of Fire
- Jesus then repeats in v.30 that He does nothing except what the Father wills, including the judgment that Jesus renders in this future moment
 - The Son's judgment will be the result of the Father's will
 - According to all that the Father has ordained, the Son must judge
 - Once again, the Son and Father are acting in unison in all matters
- To end the chapter, Jesus explains that the truth of His claims are corroborated in four ways
 - Jesus says that if He were making these statements with no other support, then we can be sure He was lying
 - People come with outlandish claims all the time
 - But they always lack the testimony of God to support their claims
 - But Jesus had supporting testimony from God
 - First, Jesus mentions that His testimony was backed by John the Baptist
 - John told the people of Jesus' coming, and so when Jesus arrived, John's testimony confirmed Jesus to be the One foretold
 - Jesus reminds the Pharisees that they sent to John as we saw in chapter 1
 - And when they inspected John, they could find nothing in His ministry to discredit him
 - But Jesus adds that he doesn't need the testimony of an earthly man to validate His ministry
 - Rather, Jesus says He mentioned John's testimony so that those who heard these words might be saved

- Jesus wants the disciples, the readers and perhaps the Pharisees themselves to remember the words John spoke about Jesus, that He was the Lamb of God
 - And by that testimony to believe in Jesus
- John was a light that was burning for a while, but as you we can tell from Jesus' words in v.35, John has died by this point
- Secondly, Jesus claims are supporter by His miraculous works, which are a greater testimony than John's words in that they demonstrate the truth of His claims
 - There is no way to escape the truth of a miraculous healing
 - Or a person raised from the dead
 - As we said, it's telling that the Pharisees never cared to inspect the healing and rule on it
 - They skipped past that testimony because it was an inconvenient fact
 - If you accept that Jesus did the miracles the Gospel writers claim He did, then there is simply no getting around the fact that Jesus is God
 - For only the Creator can accomplish such things
- This will be a recurring theme in John's Gospel, that the religious leaders in Israel were lost in their sin and far from the Father

[John 5:37](#) "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.

[John 5:38](#) "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

[John 5:39](#) " You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

[John 5:40](#) and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

[John 5:41](#) " I do not receive glory from men;

[John 5:42](#) but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

[John 5:43](#) "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

[John 5:44](#) "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?

[John 5:45](#) “Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.

[John 5:46](#) “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.

[John 5:47](#) “But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

- Finally, Jesus offers the fourth and most powerful testimony that supports Jesus’ claims, and it’s the one these men rejected first and foremost
 - It’s the testimony of the word of God, the scriptures
 - Jesus says that the Father Himself has testified to Jesus
 - But the Father’s voice has never been heard
 - And the Father’s form has never been seen at any time
 - The Father is all Spirit and cannot be seen nor heard according Jesus
 - The Creation has only seen the Godhead in the form of the Second Person of the Godhead
 - So if no man has heard or seen the Father, how has the Father testified to the Son?
 - In v.38 Jesus says they don’t have the word of God abiding in them
 - The word of God is the testimony of the Father concerning the Son, Who is the Word
 - All the scriptures testify to Christ in one way or another
 - But these men do not have the word of God abiding in them
 - This statement must have been a true shock and completely offensive
 - These men prided themselves on being experts in the word of God
 - And yet they understood none of it
 - Which was proven in the fact that they were rejecting the very One that the scriptures testified about

- These men searched the scriptures in a pious and scrupulous fashion, but as if their eyes were closed the whole time
 - For spiritually, they did possess closed eyes
 - They read the words seeking an answer to how they can obtain eternal life, but didn't comprehend what they found
 - Eternal life isn't found in what we learn or what we do
 - It's found in the word of Christ
 - And so if you miss Christ in the word, you miss eternal life
 - These men couldn't see the true message of salvation in Christ which is contained throughout the Bible
 - So they were unwilling to come to Jesus for the eternal life He offers
- Without hesitation, Jesus labels them out as unbelieving men
 - He says He knows them, and therefore He knows that the love of God is not in them
 - That phrase is one that must have made an impression on John, because John uses this phrase in various ways in his letters
 - These men were seeking only for the glory that comes from other men
 - They were interested in receiving the praise of other men for their piety and zealousness
 - So they did all that they did for the praise of others
 - They would receive a man as an authority in the faith based on the name of a man
 - Meaning they would give honor to pedigree and association
 - The right teacher would grant a man an audience
 - But when Jesus comes in the authority and name of the Father, they reject Him
 - Which proves their hearts to be about pride and not love

- And Jesus says that the one who accuses them before the Father is not Jesus personally, but rather it's the word of God
 - Moses accuses them in the sense that the Law convicts them for their sin
 - And more generally, the word of God, which is a testimony of the Father, testifies against these hypocrites
- Remember how the chapter began with a man healed merely by the word of Christ
 - The cripple started as like the Pharisees, believing in myths and manmade rules
 - Looking for supernatural displays and signs
 - Trying to save himself by his own power
 - But unable to do so
 - But then Jesus entered and by His word granted the man a healing that only God can work
 - The healing came by the power of Christ's word
 - And that healing testified to Christ's identity as Messiah
 - The crippled man got it
 - The Pharisees did not
 - And the difference was that the Word

John 6A (2014)

- The opening verses of the 23rd Psalm read:

[Psa. 23:1](#) The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

[Psa. 23:2](#) He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.

- The first half of John's 6th chapter is the apostle's case for Jesus as the Good Shepherd
 - Jesus is our shepherd who cares for our needs
 - And Jesus is our comforter in times of distress
- The events of this chapter are set a full year after the events of chapter 5
 - We're within one year of Jesus' crucifixion
 - This corresponds to the late Galilean period of Jesus' earthly ministry
- That period dominates the narratives in the other three Gospels
 - But John devotes only chapters 6 and 7 to this period of Jesus' ministry
 - So let's see did John wanted to emphasize about this important period of Jesus' life

[John 6:1](#) After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).

[John 6:2](#) A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

[John 6:3](#) Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

[John 6:4](#) Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

[John 6:5](#) Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"

[John 6:6](#) This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

[John 6:7](#) Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."

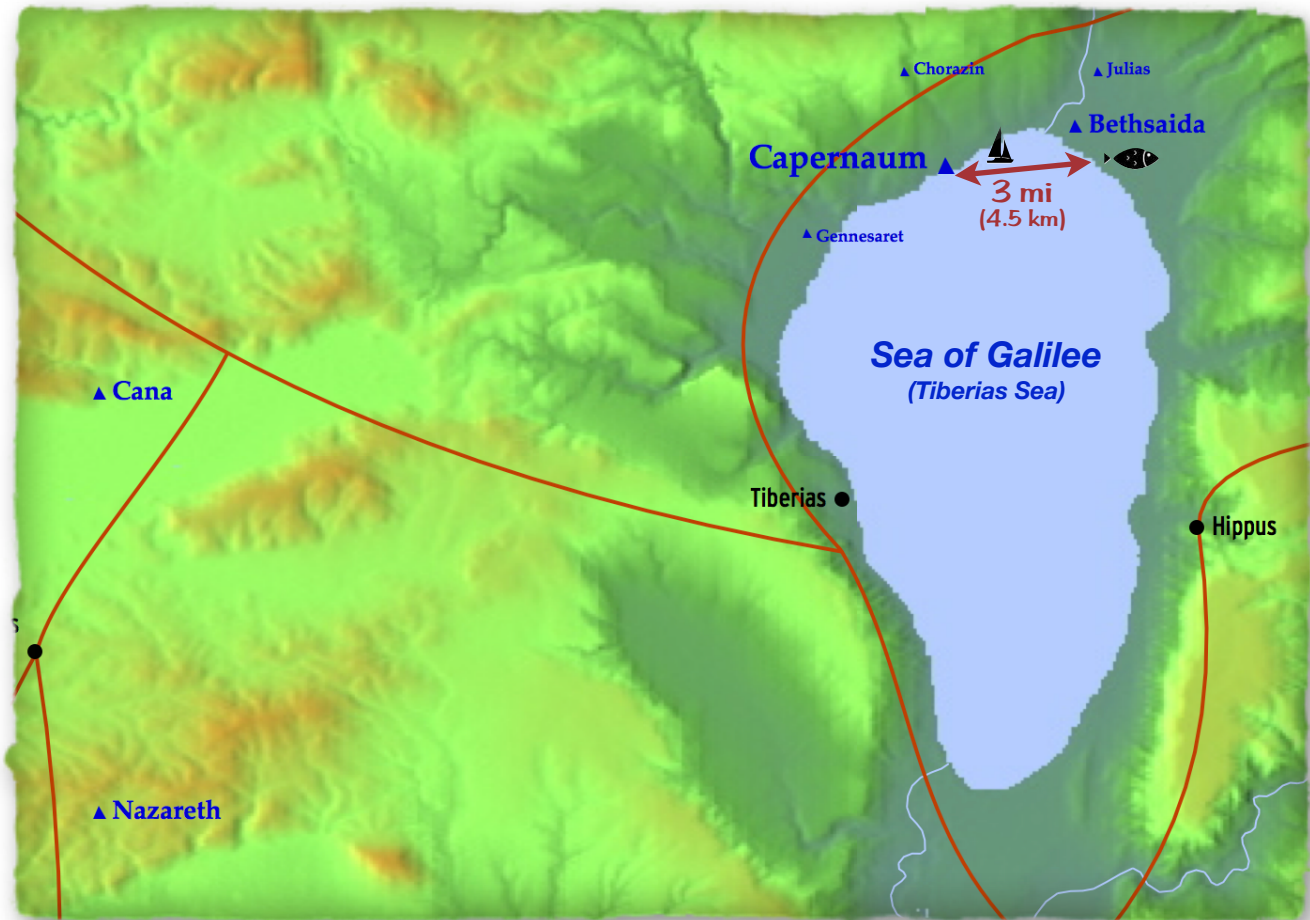


Figure 1

- John opens by saying “after these things...”
 - John doesn’t mean immediately after the events of chapter 5
 - At the beginning of chapter 5, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast
 - Now in 6:4 John mentions an upcoming Passover feast, which means a separate Passover event
 - So a whole year has passed between chapters 5 & 6
 - John skipped over the many events that took place in that intervening year in the Galilee
 - Probably because the other writers covered those things in detail

- Still John did chose to include the following account of the feeding of the 5,000 and the disciples' subsequent sailing back to Capernaum
 - In fact, this is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels
 - Clearly, this moment is important
 - And John had something to add to the other writers' accounts of these events
 - So we'll make some comparisons between his account and the other Gospels as we move along
- According to Mark's account, Jesus travels from His home area near Capernaum on the Northwestern coast of the Sea of the Galilee to Bethsaida again
 - John simply says they went to the "other side" of the Galilee
 - Jesus sails about 3 miles (4.5 km), cutting across the northern tip of the sea
 - Prevailing winds in that area blow from West to East
 - So assuming they were sailing with the wind, it would have taken about an hour or two to make that journey
 - The place Jesus lands is a relatively remote place, sparsely inhabited
 - The disciples must have wondered why Jesus chose to travel into such a remote area
 - In v.2, we're told a large crowd follows Jesus as He makes this journey because they seek more of Jesus' healing ministry
 - We learn later in this chapter that they traveled by foot walking around the northern tip of the Galilee
 - In this case, the journey by foot is only a slightly longer than sailing, maybe about 4 miles of walking
 - An adult walks about 3 mph
 - So they probably arrived in Bethsaida only slightly later than Jesus
 - Jesus takes advantage of this head start to retreat with His disciples into the nearby mountains about a kilometer away

- At this point John mentions that the Passover of the Jews was near
 - Consider the details in this story that John has provided already
 - Jesus crosses a body of water
 - A crowd of large crowd of needy people following Him
 - He leads them to a wilderness with no apparent way to sustain them
 - And then Jesus retreats up the side of mountain leaving the people below
 - And all these things are happening in conjunction with the time of Passover, which is a memorial of Israel's exodus out of Egypt?
 - Do these details ring any bells yet?
 - Right away we notice that John is constructing his narrative to draw our minds back to the story of Moses leading Israel out of Egypt
 - There is something about this account that ties back to the Exodus
 - Obviously, we know that Jesus fulfills the Passover as the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world
 - John has already made that connection for us through the words of John the Baptist
 - And later in the Passion of Christ, we see Jesus completing the picture in His death on the cross
 - But now John is working to really bring Jesus' connection to the Exodus account into clear focus
- In fact, John has already been at work in a previous chapter making this same connection, though it was subtle
 - Remember, after the first Passover and the resulting Exodus, the Israelites required water and food to survive in the desert
 - The Lord provided them water from a rock
 - And we know from 1 Corinthians 10 that Paul says the rock was a picture of Christ

- So in chapter 4, John showed us how Jesus fulfilled that picture when He told the Samaritan woman that He was the source of living water
 - Jesus is the Rock that gives us the water that leads us to thirst no more
 - And now one year later, the Passover has come again and this time Jesus will fulfill yet another picture from that most important of Jewish experiences
- So as Jesus stands on the mountain, He lifts up His eyes and sees the crowd gathering at the base of the mountain waiting for Jesus to descend
 - He turns to one of the disciples, Philip, and asks him what should be done to feed so many people
 - The question is relevant, because the place was remote and the people were numerous
 - Jesus is telling the disciples to assume responsibility for them
 - Since the people have evidently followed Jesus without giving much thought to how they will eat
 - I like to imagine that as Jesus asked Philip the question, Jesus' eyes glanced upward, toward the sky
 - Offering Philip a hint for how to answer the question
 - Hoping Philip's memory of the Exodus story might kick in at this moment and he might remember how God supplied food for His people
 - In v.6, John makes sure we understand His question was just a test, since Jesus already had a plan
 - What was the test?
 - I think the test was whether the disciples were recognizing the picture of the Exodus that Jesus was carefully orchestrating around them
 - Did they realize they were re-enacting that moment, only with Jesus playing the part of Charlton Heston?
 - Would they put 2 and 2 together and realize that God was capable of solving this problem in His power?

- Most importantly, would they understand that Jesus is the Lord Who fed the people manna the first time, and He was prepared to do it again?
 - The test emphasized Jesus' identity
 - Just as with the woman at the well, the question is, "Who is Jesus?"
 - If you know Jesus is Lord and if you recognize the picture of the Exodus, then you would suggest that Jesus provide bread for the people
- But that was a bridge too far for the disciples, and Philip missed the whole point of the question
 - Philip responds with a sense of hopelessness and defeat
 - He says not even 200 denari would be enough money to buy even a little food for everyone
 - His statement gives us an indication of how many people were assembled below
 - 200 denari represents about 8 months salary for a working man
 - In present day U.S. standards, that might be around \$40,000
 - Though that's an enormous sum of money, it still wasn't enough to even give the crowd even a little food each
 - Philip makes a matter-of-fact assessment of the situation and reports his findings
 - There is no spiritual dimension to his answer
 - He doesn't consider supernatural possibilities
 - He's thinking only of what men are capable of doing to solve a problem of this magnitude
 - And since the disciples lack the capability, he reasons the situation is hopeless
 - Matthew's Gospel adds that the disciples went a step further at this point and recommended that Jesus send the people away since they had no solution

- This is exactly the way the Israelites were thinking when they sized up their own situation in the desert
 - They told Moses that they expected to starve in the desert
 - And in their case, they blamed their predicament on God's incompetence

Ex. 16:2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

Ex. 16:3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

- The people knew the Lord had lead them into the desert in miraculous ways
 - Yet they hadn't considered the possibility that this same God could feed them supernaturally in the desert
 - God had a plan to free 2 million slaves from Egypt, but somehow He hadn't foreseen the need to feed them in the wilderness
 - So they assumed they would die of starvation
- Here we see the same scenario developing with Jesus' disciples playing the part of the Israelites
 - Philip can't see a solution because he's discounting Jesus' potential to perform a miracle
 - He's assuming the only way food will appear for this crowd is if someone orders takeout
 - So he failed the test, a test of whether he understood Jesus' identity
 - Philip didn't recognize Jesus to be the same Lord who fed Israel in the desert
 - So Jesus moves ahead with a supernatural solution as God intended

[John 6:8](#) One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,

[John 6:9](#) "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

[John 6:10](#) Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

[John 6:11](#) Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

[John 6:12](#) When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost."

[John 6:13](#) So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

- The enterprising disciples Andrew offers a potential solution
 - He spies an a young boy moving around the crowd with some small fish and barley loaves
 - The word "lad" in Greek literally means "little male child", so we're probably talking about a boy of perhaps 6 or 7 years old
 - And the Greek word for fish is the word for a very small fish, probably something like anchovies intended to be eaten as a relish with the bread
 - He may have been the child of a family in the crowd, and he sees an opportunity to peddle his goods
 - Why did Andrew even think to propose this child's basket of goods as a solution to the problem?
 - Philip had just said that \$40,000 worth of food wouldn't be enough to feed these people
 - But then Andrew proposes this idea?
 - What was he thinking?
- At this point in the story, most of us probably run past this detail so we can focus on what comes next
 - We remember Jesus turned this meager meal in a miraculous provision, but why did the apostles even think to suggest this source to Jesus?
 - Andrew's suggestion is so pathetic, it seems almost nonsensical that he even raised the option in the conversation

- Did he think Jesus could do something miraculous with these items?
- Given the way Andrew finishes his sentence, I don't think so
- In fact, it sounds like he realized a little too late that his idea was no help at all
- Still, Andrew's contribution to the story becomes a significant detail in the story and marks a significant departure in this story from the parallels to the Exodus
 - In the desert situation, the Lord delivered food to Israel literally from Heaven
 - The manna fell from above
 - The Lord didn't start with something on Earth, no matter how meager
 - In the Exodus account, the Lord brought a provision down from Heaven supernaturally
 - Obviously, Jesus will perform an equally impressive miracle this time, but it's significant that He chooses to multiply something on Earth
 - In this situation, nothing new is going to come down from Heaven
 - This time He begins with something very meager, barely noticeable, and hardly suitable
 - A solution proposed by a disciple
 - Something that was insignificant in the eyes of men,
 - Hardly sufficient to solve such a pressing problem
 - Clearly, we should understand why the Lord has changed the program this time around
 - This departure from the story of Exodus is an important detail in the retelling of manna
 - The purpose of this departure will become clear in the second half of the chapter, as Jesus discusses the meaning of these things with the crowd
 - So we'll wait until then to discover it for ourselves

- Though perhaps some of you see it already too
- We should also note in passing that there are a total of seven food items in the boy's basket, which is a number that catches our attention obviously
 - Seven is a number meaning the total or complete or fulfilled number of something
 - Today, we would say "100%" to mean the total of something
 - The Bible uses the number "7" to mean the same thing
 - So, something is being completed or fulfilled in this moment
 - That's something we also want to understand as we go forward
- Then Jesus gives instructions to the disciples
 - The details are probably familiar
 - First, Jesus instructs the people to sit in the grass
 - In Mark's Gospel we're told they sit in groups of hundreds and fifties, which simply means into small, manageable groups
 - We can easily imagine practical purposes in why Jesus asked them to sit down
 - If hungry people see food coming their way, they tend to rush toward it to make sure they get a share
 - Making them sit ensures orderliness and also imparts confidence that there is a plan to ensure everyone is fed
 - But those practical reasons are the main reason Jesus seats them down in grass
 - The main purpose relates back to Psalm 23
 - The Shepherd is the One Who causes His sheep to lie down in green pastures
 - The Shepherd cares for His sheep and makes sure they receive their rations
 - Sheep don't have the ability to find their own green pastures

- They are famously stupid animals
 - They move about in the field with their eyes down following what's in front of their faces, even to the point of stumbling into danger
 - So they depend on a Shepherd to lead them
- So Jesus' instructions were part of testifying that He is the Shepherd of Psalm 23, the One who cares for us because we can't do it for ourselves
 - This is true for every member of Jesus' flock
 - Even when we think we're providing for ourselves in our daily occupation or through our savings, we're only fooling ourselves
 - By that thinking, we're at risk of overlooking the Lord's provision and presence in our life
 - Because everything we have comes from the Lord
 - The fact that our daily provision arrives by way of a weekly paycheck...
 - Or in a 1099...
 - Or through our stored up savings...
 - Doesn't mean our security is any less the result of God's ongoing provision of grace
 - At any moment, those things could (and often do) disappear
 - And when they do, we'll finally recognize that we never had security because of those things
 - Our security comes from the Shepherds willingness to care for His sheep
 - By causing us to lie down in green pastures when we need them
- At this point, John gives us the head count of men, numbering them at about 5,000
 - The overall number is not significant (apart from the occurrence of the number "5," which is the number of grace), but it reinforces the size of the problem facing the disciples
 - 5,000 men means 5,000 families

- 5,000 families means a lot of people
- Which would explain why \$40,000 wasn't enough to give everyone even a little food
- There could have been as many as 15K-30K people at the base of that mountain!
 - Considering that this scene takes place near the end of Jesus' years working in the Galilee, it's entirely likely He has amassed a very a large following by this point
 - It would also explain why the Pharisees viewed Jesus as a serious threat to their power and authority
 - Anyone who is followed by a loyal crowd of 20K people has real power
- Next, Jesus gives thanks for the food and the miracle that's about to follow, then He begins to break the bread and divide the fish out
 - John says Jesus distributed the food to the people seated, but Mark's Gospel clarifies that Jesus distributed the food through the hands of the disciples
 - Jesus handed the food to each disciple who then carried it down to the people in a basket
 - Therefore, each disciple returned to Jesus many times to refill their baskets
 - And as this process continued, the groups of people ate their fill, no one was left wanting
 - You have to wonder what was going through the minds of the disciples as they moved up and down the mountain filling their baskets
 - They knew Jesus started with only a little food
 - But now they find their their baskets filled time and time again
 - There is no conversation among the disciples recorded by any of the Gospels
 - So I assume the disciples were speechless, unable to muster words

- Though I assume they probably exchanged a few glances with each other as they passed back and forth on the mountain
- After the crowd had been fed (which must have taken several hours), Jesus ordered the disciples to collect the excess food from the people
 - Don't overlook that the disciples were required to collect the food from the people
 - The Lord could have simply multiplied more food for each disciple
 - Instead, the disciples' food had already been handed out to the people below
 - The Lord had literally given away the disciples' food, so that now the disciples had to go back and retrieve it from the people
 - So how do we imagine the disciples went about collecting that food?
 - Obviously, they had to petition the people for it
 - The people would have likely wanted to keep it for themselves
 - So the disciples walked among the groups of people calling for all excess food to be collected and placed in the disciples' baskets
 - The excess materialized as Jesus said, because the Lord had ensured that there was more provided to the people than they needed
 - That excess was a reflection of the Lord's abundant goodness
 - But it was also a provision intended to meet the needs of those disciples who had just worked to serve the people
 - Notice that the amount collected was exactly twelve baskets, reflecting the 12 apostles who had served the people
- What was Jesus trying to teach us by the way He construct this process of feeding the people and providing for the disciples?
 - First, Jesus often begins His greatest works among His people with meager beginnings
 - When Jesus turned to Philip, it was Philip's opportunity to suggest something great

- Instead, Philip gave up on the situation because no solution was readily visible
- Faith isn't faith if relies only on what can be seen, as Paul taught
 - Sincere, active faith requires a willingness to act in hopeful expectation
 - Andrew was a step closer to faith because at least he suggested a solution that depended on faith in God's ability to multiply
 - But just as quickly, he retreated from faith by abandoning the possibility
- What would have happened if someone had suggested to Jesus that they hand out the boy's food expecting the Lord to make it sufficient to meet the need?
 - I believe the situation would have turned out exactly the same
 - And that's the point
- Jesus' opening question was an opportunity for these men to participate in a miraculous work of God that He was already planning to accomplish
 - It was a work the Lord was prepared to perform with or without their participation
 - But by offering them the chance to believe in it before they saw it, they could be blessed in having their faith strengthened
 - There is a real spiritual blessing for the believer when they act in faith, as Jesus told Thomas

John 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

John 20:28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

- So the first lesson is those who serve the Lord must step out with faith expecting the Lord is prepared to work through meager beginnings
 - Don't let meager beginnings hold you back from meeting needs and expecting miracles

- Secondly, the Lord's servant can't stray far from the Master in our service
 - As many Bible commentaries have observed, Jesus caused the disciples to return to Him repeatedly as they went about the business of serving the people
 - Each disciple's success depended on continually returning to the Lord to fill a basket
 - If they returned, they had something to offer the people
 - If they didn't come back, they soon would have nothing
 - And they would be useless
 - The picture couldn't be clearer: we must abide in Christ if we are to serve in His power
 - The disciples couldn't make the food multiply on their own
 - They didn't possess magic baskets
 - They were simply waiters
 - On the other hand, their role wasn't irrelevant
 - Jesus designed the miracle so that it depended on the disciples delivering the food to the people
 - At first, the people were largely unaware of what was happening up on the mountain
 - They just knew that the disciples were bringing them a meal
 - No one ministers to God's people by virtue of brilliance or training or experience or sheer force of our personality...
 - Successful servants of God only deliver what Jesus provides for His flock
 - What He gives us tends to run out pretty quick
 - So we have to return time and time again
 - Return to His word
 - Return to Him in prayer
 - Return to Him in repentance and humility

- If we do that, we can be useful to Him and become part of making amazing things happen
- Thirdly, from our limited perspective, the works we're called to join rarely appear miraculous or even very important, but God can accomplish much through us
 - Consider that these disciples probably never witnessed the moment when Jesus multiplied the bread or fish
 - More likely, it seems they simply came back to Jesus to find more food ready to load into their baskets
 - Obviously, they knew something special was happening, but in the moment, their job was nothing more than picking up food and delivering it
 - Often, that's what it's like to serve God from our perspective
 - We're just delivering fish
 - We volunteer for a duty in the church
 - We participate in a service project
 - We host someone in our home
 - We offer a prayer request
 - We write a check to a missionary
 - But as we do what the Lord asks us to do, we become part of a larger work that leads to miraculous outcomes by God's power and orchestration
 - Sometimes, the Lord is willing to grant us peek into the supernatural outcomes that result from our work
 - Most times, we never see it
 - But eventually, when we enter into our glory, we will learn all the works of God and how we participated in those things by faith
- Finally, those who serve the Lord should expect that their hard work will be met by an adequate provision from the Lord
 - But that provision doesn't materialize out of thin air
 - It comes as a consequence of serving God's people diligently

- I imagine the disciples were exhausted after going up and down the mountain so many times over several hours
- Perhaps they wondered when it would be their turn to eat or even if there would be enough left for them
- But in the end, the Lord took care of them
- A servant of God should expect to receive God's provision as a consequence of working hard to serve God's people
 - And that provision will be supplied from the hands of those whom he serves
 - The Lord supplies His people with an excess intended to meet the needs of the Lord's servants
 - And then the Lord calls upon His servants to seek for that provision from among the people so that they may be blessed by giving back
 - And God's people must be willing to relinquish the excess to those who deserve it
- But the servant's provision is to be no more luxurious than that given to God's people
 - In this case, the disciples received the same provision that the people received from the Lord
 - Some fish and bread
 - If Jesus had been handing out steak and lobster, then the disciples might have expected to receive the same
 - And if the Lord had chosen to provide rice and beans, then the Lord's servant couldn't expect something better
 - In all cases, the servant should be allowed to share in that provision
 - But always remembering that if we have food and covering, we should be content Paul says

- Sooner or later, the crowd realizes the magnitude of the miracle that has taken place, and perhaps they also recognize the connection to the Exodus story

[John 6:14](#) Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

[John 6:15](#) So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

- Notice that people declare this miracle was a sign to them
 - Calling something a sign means they believed God was revealing something to them through these events
 - They were correct, but they misunderstood the meaning of the sign
- They said that Jesus was the Prophet who has come into the world
 - They were referring to the prophet Moses said would come to Israel one day in the future

[Deut. 18:15](#) "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

[Deut. 18:16](#) "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.'

[Deut. 18:17](#) "The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well.

[Deut. 18:18](#) 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

- The prophet Moses was describing was the Messiah, Jesus
 - So the people were correct when they recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Moses' promise
 - But then they go in the wrong direction
 - They conclude that the Prophet would conquer Israel's political enemy, Rome, and lead Israel into political freedom just as Moses did against Egypt
 - So they call for Jesus to be taken to Jerusalem and install Him as their new political leader
 - Notice John says they want to take Jesus by force

- It's unclear if John means they are preparing to force Jesus to go to Jerusalem
- Or perhaps John means they are calling for people to join Jesus in forcing the Romans out of Israel
- Either way, they have exactly the wrong idea of why Jesus came to Israel
 - Yes, Jesus is the prophet Moses promised
 - But Jesus came for heavenly, eternal purposes, not earthly, temporal purposes
- To properly understand the connection between Jesus' ministry and Moses' ministry, we first have to understand that pictures in scripture always form a lessor to greater relationship
 - Moses' life and work was constructed by God to form a lessor version of Jesus' ministry
 - From his birth to His exile in the desert to His return for Israel to His role as a mediator and so on (see our Exodus study), Moses pictured Christ
 - Moses set Israel free from slavery to Egypt, but Jesus sets men free from slavery to sin
 - Moses led Israel to the Old Covenant in stone while Jesus leads men to the New Covenant in His body
 - Moses' conquered the army of Egypt, while Christ conquers the forces of Satan
 - So Jesus' ministry was a greater ministry than Moses, thus making Moses a picture of Christ in lessor form
 - But the people didn't see that relationship
 - They perceived Moses and the Prophet as working on the same level and for the same purposes
 - This was a consistent point of confusion among the people of Israel in Jesus' day
 - They couldn't understand how Jesus could be greater than Moses or Abraham or even Jacob, as the woman at the well remarked

- Even today people continue to repeat this mistake of reducing Jesus' ministry and teaching to only earthly outcomes
 - Today people will say Jesus was merely a good teacher or "spiritual leader" or moral example or even prophet
 - They deny Jesus as God
 - So they can ignore questions of death and judgment and hell that Jesus' ministry raised
 - By reducing Jesus' goals to nothing more than an earthly agenda, an unbeliever can feel comfortable in their sin
 - These Jews rushed to assuming an earthly purpose in Jesus' miracles because they never considered they were in need of a spiritual solution
 - They heard Jesus teaching and saw His miracles
 - Yet they respond by declaring Jesus will conquer Rome
 - When Jesus saw what was developing, He retreats back up the mountain to remain inaccessible to them
 - Jesus wasn't going to allow the crowd to redirect His mission toward an earthly kingdom
 - We could ask why didn't Jesus give the people both?
 - Why didn't He defeat Rome and bring them salvation?
 - Because the Kingdom couldn't be installed until the citizens of the Kingdom have been prepared to enter into it
 - And those citizens are to be found by faith
- I think Christians occasionally make this same mistake today
 - We reduce the spiritual purpose of the Church and the Gospel to achieving earthly goals and establishing earthly kingdoms
 - We say Jesus fed the people, so our Christian goal should be feeding the poor
 - Jesus healed the people, so our Christian ministry should be healing the sick
 - And so on...seeking to better the lives of people by addressing their physical needs

- Without a doubt, the Church has a mission to show compassion for the needs of people, but the New Testament sets boundaries for that mission
 - First, benevolence is to be directed to the Church, first and foremost
 - The NT letters command the church to care for the physical needs of the saints
 - There is no general command in scripture for the Church to make a priority of feeding, clothing or caring for the physical needs of all humanity
- Secondly, when the Church does endeavor to meet physical needs in the world, our charity must be purposeful
 - We are seeking opportunities to preach the Gospel
 - We want to show them love and gain their attention, so we can turn that moment to a discussion of heavenly things
 - We have sought to address an earthly need so that we can discuss their heavenly need
- When the church becomes preoccupied with solving earthly needs only, without turning those contacts into Heavenly discussions, we've followed the mistake of these Jews following Jesus
 - We are trying to take Jesus by force in a direction He will not go
 - The ministry of the Church cannot be co-opted into a mission of charity or public works
 - It's this thinking that eventually leads to "Christian" hospitals, universities, retirement homes, and other businesses
 - Ironically, many of these institutions eventually outlaw the preach of the Gospel in the spirit of tolerance
 - The Church mission is to preach the Gospel so that souls may be saved
 - The body is not our focus; the soul is

John 6B (2014)

- Last week I introduced chapter 6 of John by pointing to Psalm 23
 - In that Psalm, David writes that the Lord is his Shepherd
 - The Shepherd provides for his sheep such that they shall no want
 - And he makes the sheep lie down in green - that is, fertile - pastures
 - And then in the first part of John 6, we studied the miracle of Jesus feeding the crowd of 5,000+ people by multiplying bread and fish
 - John arranged the narrative to reveal two pictures
 - First, he confirmed Jesus as Psalm 23, the Shepherd who told the people to sit on the grass so He could feed them
 - Secondly, John emphasized Jesus as a latter day Moses in fulfillment of Moses' own words
 - In the desert, Moses told Israel to expect a Prophet to arrive in the future, One "like him" Who would speak all that the Father commands
 - Israel understood this promise to point to the Messiah
 - And in fact, as the miracle came to an end, we heard the people proclaim that Jesus was The Prophet
 - Meaning they recognized Jesus to be the One promised by Moses
 - The people saw Jesus crossing a body of water, followed by a crowd of many Jews, arriving in a desolate place, ascending a mountain
 - And then He brought the people a miraculous source of bread
 - All of these details evoke a memory of Israel camped in the desert following Moses
 - The people saw this and responded by calling Jesus the Prophet
 - But what did they think that meant? John puts that question aside for a short time so he can turn his attention to the disciples

- The disciples of Jesus participated in this miracle and they must have been amazed to see it unfold
 - So the question is what did they learn from this experience?
 - Has it altered their understanding of Jesus' identity?
 - Do they recognize Jesus as the Shepherd of Psalm 23?
 - If so, then the next events of chapter 6 would will give them an opportunity to demonstrate that understanding
 - Because the next line of Psalm 23 is:

Psa. 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.

- The same Shepherd that provides for His sheep in green pastures also leads us beside still waters
- So as a continuation of the test that began chapter 6, the Lord allows His disciples to experience some very turbulent waters
- Each test moves them closer to understanding Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah

John 6:16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,
John 6:17 and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.
John 6:18 The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.
John 6:19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.
John 6:20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."
John 6:21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

- These events serve as a bridge in John's narrative between Jesus' feeding of the crowd and their eventual reunion on the other side of the Sea of Galilee
 - Jesus waits until evening to descend the mountain with His disciples
 - He waits presumably because the crowd had been talking of taking Him to Jerusalem to install Him as king

- Since this was NOT something Jesus wanted to see happen at this point in His ministry, He retreated until evening
- And now He's ready to return to Capernaum
- If you're following this same story in the other Gospels, you may run into a point of confusion when making comparisons to John's account
 - Marks' Gospel says they were returning to Bethesda, which is where John says Jesus fed the crowd
 - So you might wonder are they leaving Bethesda or returning to Bethesda
 - As it turns out, there are two Bethesdas around the Sea of Galilee
 - The word Bethesda means "fishtown"
 - So it's not surprising that there would be multiple places around a large lake called fishtown
 - They were leaving Bethesda Julius and returning to a Bethesda which was was part of larger Capernaum
- There are other helpful things we learn about these events in the other Gospels
 - For example, we learn in Mark and Matthew that it was Jesus Who escorted His disciples into the boat and told them to depart without Him
 - In fact, Mark says Jesus bid the disciples farewell
 - So I assume the disciples were wondering why they were sent away alone and when Jesus would rejoin them
 - Also we're told Jesus sent the crowds away at this point
 - Then He retreats up the side of the mountain again to pray
- All three writers tell us that Jesus sent the disciples late in the day but before it was dark, according to Matthew and Mark
 - John says in v.16 that the disciples started to cross the sea in the boat headed to Capernaum
 - They were rowing themselves according to Mark
 - This makes sense since the winds were quite contrary

- And on that night, they were especially strong
- Rowing taking longer than sailing, and it goes especially slowly when the wind is against you

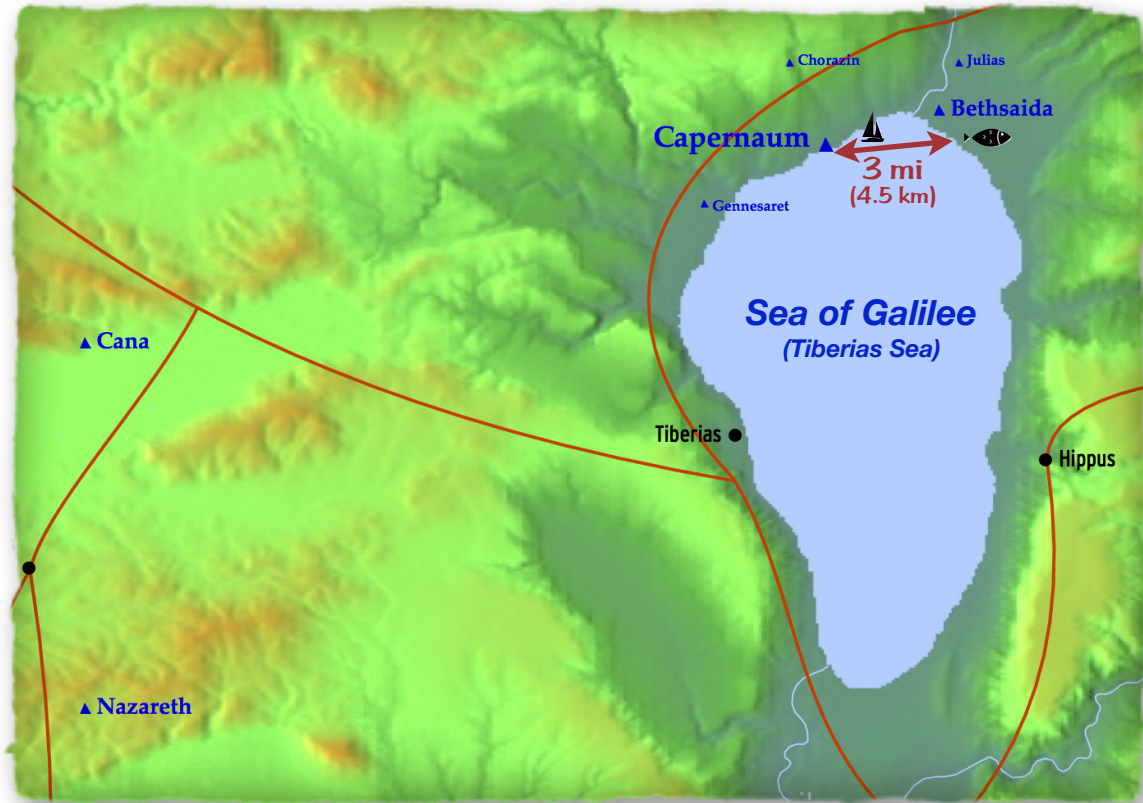


Figure 1

- In the midst of their journey, night falls, and as we discussed in earlier weeks, darkness is always a frequent motif in John's Gospel
 - Darkness represents unbelief in John's Gospel
 - So when we see that these men were in darkness, we should understand that John is emphasizing that detail to suggest something about them
- John also says that Jesus had not yet come to them
 - It's unclear how the disciples expected Jesus to eventually catch up to them
 - Perhaps they thought He would walk along the shore, since the route they took was within site of the shore

- We learn later that there was one other small boat at the shore, so perhaps they assumed He just wanted some alone time and then He planned to row Himself out to meet them
- Whatever they thought, they eventually give up waiting and decide to go all the way to Capernaum probably assuming they would meet up with Jesus there
- John then tells us that at some point in the night the seas begin to be stirred up
 - The phrase stirred up literally in Greek is to be completely awakened
 - The other Gospel writers tell us that the boat was battered by the waves
 - And that the wind was against them as they tried to row
 - There is no indication they were afraid of the storm itself
 - But they were troubled by their inability to move ahead
 - In fact, Matthew tells us that Jesus approached them in the fourth watch of the night
 - Which was between 3–6 AM
 - So these men had been at work rowing for at least 6–7 hours for a trip that should have taken less than half that time
 - And they are still not at the shore as yet
 - John adds that they had rowed around 3 miles by this point which places them almost to their destination
 - Mark's Gospel says they were in the middle of the sea but the Greek word can also be translated the "midst" of the sea
 - In other words, they were still too far from land to get out of the boat
- Then at this point, they look up to see Jesus walking on the water
 - Countless jokes have referenced this scene and many have been said to "walk on water" as a way of suggesting a claim to perfection
 - I think it's fair to say that Jesus couldn't have selected a better entrance
 - But it's not altogether unprecedented

- In times past, the Lord has used His command over natural elements to demonstrate His power and divinity
- Most dramatically, in the story of the Exodus, when Moses was called to part waters or perform other dramatic miracles
- Here again, this scene reminds us of the Exodus account, at least in the sense that we see God demonstrating His power over the elements
- How might we explain what is happening to allow Jesus to walk on water?
 - Jesus is 100% human being
 - He has the same physical body that you and I possess today, though without sin
 - And when you or I sink in water, it's not because of our sin
 - It's simply a matter of physics
 - The material of our physical bodies is so dense that it breaks the surface tension of water, so that we sink
 - And we are not more dense than Jesus, at least not physically
- So how did Jesus float on the water?
 - My assumption is that Jesus' body didn't change
 - The Spirit changed the water in a sense
 - He permitted the water to support the weight of a man, at least in the places Jesus rested His feet
 - My assumption finds support in the fact that not only did Jesus walk on the water, but so did Peter at least for a time
 - If it was the Spirit working to support Jesus on the water, then it return us to another of John's motif's, that of the Creation account
 - In Genesis 1 we're told that in the beginning the Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters in total darkness
 - And earlier in John's Gospel we were told that Jesus was the Word Who created all things in the beginning

- So now we see both Jesus and the Spirit once again demonstrating their authority over the surface of the water
- When you combine this scene with a knowledge of what had just transpired earlier in Bethesda, a clear story about Jesus' identity emerges
 - Jesus is painting a picture of Himself for His disciples, once that depended on a little knowledge of the Old Testament
 - If the disciples knew the Genesis account, they could recognize Jesus as the Creator, with power over the elements
 - If they knew the Exodus account, they could understand that Jesus is the Lord of the Exodus, leading His people to the mountain and feeding His people with bread
 - If they remembered Deuteronomy, they could recognize Jesus as the Prophet Who comes in manner of Moses and fulfills the promise of Moses
 - And if they knew the Psalms, they might see Jesus as the Shepherd Who causes His sheep to lie down in green pastures
 - And now as the One Who leads them by still waters
- In fact, in Mark's Gospel, we read this concerning Jesus' intentions

Mark 6:48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

- Notice that Marks says it was Jesus' intention not to enter the boat but to pass it by
 - Jesus was intending to walk past them so He could lead them to the shore, to still waters
 - Had they not expressed fear over seeing Him, then the picture would have been complete
 - They might have rowed the boat following Jesus on still waters to their destination, which was very close by already
- Instead, they do not respond to His arrival as sheep respond to their shepherd

- Instead, all three Gospel writers make clear that the disciples respond in fear to Jesus' appearance
- Mark's account says they thought they had seen a ghost
- Now certainly, seeing a man walk on water would be surprising
- But there is clear emphasis in the Gospel accounts that their fear was unreasonable
- Mark's account ends this way

Mark 6:51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,

Mark 6:52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

- That given all that they had witnessed to this point, they should have understood Jesus' identity and therefore His potential to command the elements
- So that they would not have been so disturbed by what they encountered
- So surprised, yes...frightened, no
- When Jesus sees their concern, He calls out to the men to not fear what they see
 - And Jesus explains why they shouldn't fear by saying, "It is I"
 - Literally in Greek, the phrase Jesus spoke was "I am"
 - Once more, John gives us a clear connection back to the Exodus story
 - I AM was the terms the Lord used to identify Himself to Moses at the burning bush
 - There can be no clearer way to declare oneself to be God than to repeat that iconic phrase
 - The disciples were commanded not to fear because the Lord was with them
 - Truly, can there be any more convincing reason to set fear aside?

- As Paul said in Romans:

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- If the God and Creator of the Universe has declared He is for us, that is He has determined to align Himself with us, then on what basis would we fear?
- What is more powerful than God?
 - Are the waves more powerful? Would a so-called ghost be more powerful? Would death itself be a cause for fear?
 - Over all these things the Lord has power
 - They can only harm us to the extent the Lord permits
 - And if He permits them to come against us, then there must be some good reason in it
 - So again, what is there to fear?
- As Mark points out, there was something missing in their understanding of Jesus
 - They hadn't learned the lesson from the loaves, because their hearts were hardened
 - What was Mark saying about them? Were they unbelieving?
 - Consider that in Matthew's Gospel, the scene ends this way

Matt. 14:32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

Matt. 14:33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

- After Jesus entered the boat, the wind stopped
 - And upon seeing Jesus walk on water and the wind cease so suddenly, they began to worship Him, declaring Him to be God's Son
 - So they are not *unbelieving*
 - And yet Mark says they hadn't learned the lessons due to hard hearts

- We're seeing that even among those who understood Jesus to be Messiah remained in the dark about what a Messiah came to do for them
 - They hadn't gained insight about the connection to the Exodus so they could understand how they needed setting free from slavery to sin
 - They hadn't understood that a man could also be God Himself
 - They didn't realize that...

[Psa. 23:4](#) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;

- This episode on the water was another test for the disciples, a test designed to reveal whether they were prepared to walk in the faith budding in their hearts
 - And like the test at the mountain of Bethesda, the disciples have failed
 - They succumbed to fear because they didn't know Jesus as God
 - Twice now, they have failed to anticipate Jesus' ability to command the elements
 - This is the difference between knowing Jesus as Lord and abiding in Jesus
 - To know Jesus as Lord is to accept the Gospel
 - To abide in Jesus is to live according to the Gospel
 - These men all recognize Jesus as the Messiah
 - But they aren't in a position to live in the light of that revelation
 - All Christians are learning how to make this same transition, and some are farther along that path than others
 - But we all are challenged by the word of God to move further and faster in the direction of spiritual maturity
- There will be more lessons for the disciples, but this one has come to a close
 - As Jesus enters the boat, John says they are immediately at their destination

- The word in Greek can mean instantly but it can also mean in a very short time
- So this doesn't require a miraculous movement to the shore
- More likely, it simple means they were close enough to the shore already that once the wind stopped, it was a very journey to reach the shore
- John's description of the events leaves us with a strong contrast between the men struggling to make it to shore on their own vs. a quick journey with Jesus
 - That's the flip side of our lesson on abiding in Christ
 - When a disciple of the Lord isn't abiding in Him, that is not relying on His power, we're rowing against the wind
 - We're exerting a lot of energy but we're not getting anywhere
 - And all the while, we may be very close to our destination, but we're in the dark, so we can't know how close we are
- Whether we're striving to obtain a peaceful, loving family, or a raise godly kids, or address an addiction or emotional trauma or accomplish a difficult work of ministry...
 - In each case, we can choose strive in our own power or abide in the Lord's power
 - Striving in our own power leaves us standing still, problems unresolved, energy wasted
 - But abiding in Jesus begins with recognizing Jesus' power to do what we cannot
 - Then it does away with fear
 - And ultimately, it brings us to wherever the Lord has decided to lead us
- Clearly, we could talk at length about the lessons to be found in this moment, but since John will return to them again, we'll wait as well
 - Meanwhile, we have unfinished business with the crowd that received the bread and the fish in Bethesda

- They saw the miracle and then declared Jesus to be the Prophet promised by Moses
- But then they respond by seeking to take over Jerusalem by force
- Perhaps they were just making the same kind of mistake as the disciples
- Maybe they understood Jesus to be Messiah but they misunderstood what being Messiah meant

- So then John explains what happens next

John 6:22 The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone.

John 6:23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

John 6:24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

John 6:25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, " Rabbi, when did You get here?"

- The next morning, the crowd in Bethsaida awakes to discover that Jesus is gone
 - They knew He didn't leave with the disciples
 - In fact, they saw Him sending the disciples away and then return to the mountain
 - They also see the one small boat remaining, so they know Jesus couldn't have left by boat
 - And no one saw Jesus walk out of the camp and head back to Capernaum
 - So they are mystified
 - And then more boats begin to arrive in the morning
 - Apparently, word has spread fast that Jesus had opened a fish and chips operation at Bethsaida
 - Because boats as far away as Tiberias are arriving in the morning

- Tiberias lies near the opposite side of the sea of Galilee, about 8 miles away by water
 - People are obviously very interested in being fed and healed
- After a time, the people finally figure out that Jesus is simply not there any longer, so they use the boats that have arrived to hitch rides back to Capernaum
 - Returning to Capernaum was the logical choice, since Capernaum was Jesus' home turf during His time in the Galilee
 - Once they get to Capernaum, they find Jesus there with His disciples
 - And they ask the natural question, "How did you get here?"
 - Had Jesus decided to answer that question honestly, what a story that would have been!
 - Notice they address Jesus as rabbi, which means teacher
 - That's the first hint that their perspective on Jesus isn't right
 - They address Him in a respectful manner, but not as Messiah much less as Lord
 - Just a night earlier, they thought He was the Prophet
 - But now it appears they have retreated from that opinion, probably because Jesus didn't join in with their rebellion
 - So now He's just teacher to them
- As we've seen in past chapters of John, Jesus begins an extended discussion with the crowd that presents another ship passing in the night experience
 - Jesus engages them in a spiritual discussion while the crowd remains stuck in earthly, fleshly concerns

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

John 6:27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

John 6:28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

[John 6:29](#) Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

- First, Jesus, knowing their hearts, calls them out for their false motives
 - He says they aren’t seeking Him, they are seeking food
 - The signs that Jesus performed were intended to reveal Him as Messiah and God incarnate
 - For this crowd, the signs were not seen in a spiritual manner
 - They were seen only in their physical form
 - That is to say, the meaning of Jesus multiplying bread and fish miraculously was that they could expect unlimited refills
 - It was a message about food to these people
 - But it was intended to supply spiritual insight concerning Jesus’ identity
 - The crowd was supposed to see the miracle and care nothing for the food or the prospect of more in the future
 - They were supposed to be moved to consider the implications of what it means that a man stands before them performing works that only God could perform
 - It was supposed to lead them to seek Him as God
- Instead, they embarked on long trips back and forth across the sea of Galilee to find bread and fish, so Jesus says that’s working for the wrong thing
 - In v.27 Jesus says don’t work for things that perish
 - He’s referring to the bread and fish, but of course He means anything of this world
 - We have physical needs and God is prepared to meet them
 - But we can’t make the obtaining them our focus in life
 - Instead, we should seek the food that endures to eternal life
 - The Greek word for endure is meno, which is more commonly translated abide

- In effect, Jesus says we need to work for to abide in eternal bread, which is the eternal life that the Messiah offers to mankind
- The Messiah is the One on Whom the Father has set His seal, that is the seal of His approval
- To say it simply, the Messiah is the only One approved by the Father to grant eternal life
- So if we're going work for something, we should work to abide in Christ, but that's not what these people are doing
- The people's response to Jesus' comments offers a clear window into their hearts
 - They ask Jesus what works they need to do to please God
 - They want to work "the works of God"
 - The sense of their question is what can I do to earn eternal life
 - Jesus confronted another man in Matthew 19 who asked how he could obtain eternal life
 - Jesus essentially answer by telling him he had to be sinless, to which the man relied he had indeed kept all the commandments
 - This is the attitude of this crowd in the face of Jesus' complaint
 - They are telling Him if Jesus would only explain what works they need to do to qualify for eternal life, they would be happy to accomplish those works
 - They had no understanding of sin or the judgment that sin requires
 - No one prior to receiving God's grace can understand that they are incapable of entering Heaven
 - For all men believe themselves good enough to qualify
 - As Jesus explained to that man from Matthew 19, there is no one who is good except God alone
- So Jesus answers their question in v.29 saying that the only "work" that we can do to obtain eternal life is to believe in the One the Father has sent, that is Jesus

- Of course, this is no work at all, since it is a matter of faith
 - Faith is a confidence that a promise of God is true, according to Hebrews 11
 - The promise of Christ is that He is the Son of God, and that His death in our place satisfied the wrath of God against our sin
 - And therefore, placing trust in that provision will ensure we are resurrected into eternal life just as Christ Himself was resurrected from the grave
 - That's the so-called work that brings us eternal life
- As Jesus spoke these words to the crowd, He was describing Himself as the Son of Man and calling on the crowd to see Him in this way
 - He is reaffirming His identity as the Prophet they recognized a day earlier
 - He is claiming to have been sent to them from the Father
 - He's reminding them of His miracles as proof of His claims
 - And He calls them to embrace Him as the solution to the problem of their sin
 - This was a Gospel call spoken by the lips of the Lord Himself directly to these people
- So what do we suppose they did with such a clear and compelling call?

John 6:30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?"

John 6:31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'"

- The people answer asking Jesus to give them a sign so they can believe in Him
 - And just to be sure Jesus gets the hint, they offer a suggestion of what kind of sign He should do for them
 - They remind Him of what Moses did for the Israelites who wandered in the desert
 - Their ancestors ate manna in the wilderness because Moses provided it

- Remember they had declared the day before that Jesus was the Prophet that Moses promised
- Now they're telling Jesus they are willing to consider that possibility once more, but they need Jesus to do at least what Moses did
- If Moses gave the people bread from heaven on a daily basis, then certainly if Jesus is to be a prophet like Moses, He should be able to accomplish as much
- You don't have to be a genius to see through their scheme
 - They misuse scripture in an attempt to bait Jesus into providing another free meal
 - Even if Jesus did what they requested, it wouldn't convince them He is truly the Son of God
 - If a miracle of this type was all they required to know Him as Messiah, then the previous feeding in Bethsaida would have been enough
 - They make this request simply because they want the free meal
- While they remain focused on earthly things, Jesus sticks to a spiritual discussion

[John 6:32](#) Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

[John 6:33](#) "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

[John 6:34](#) Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

- First, Jesus corrects their interpretation of the scriptures
 - Moses didn't perform the miracle of providing bread
 - It was the Father in Heaven Who supplies the manna
 - And notice that Jesus says "my" Father in Heaven
 - His point is two fold: God provides bread and I am that God
 - Secondly, Jesus distinguishes between the bread of earth and the bread of Heaven

- He calls the bread of Heaven true bread
- This is a bread that descends from Heaven to give men life, eternal life
- Very easily, we're able to see that the manna that descended for the Israelites was designed by God to create a picture of Jesus
 - First, the bread was a provision of the Father
 - Secondly, the bread came out of nothing, descending from Heaven to Earth
 - Thirdly, the bread was a source of life for Israel in the desert
- In each of these details, the manna of the desert was a picture of Christ in a lesser-to-greater relationship
 - Jesus was sent by the Father for Israel and the world
 - Jesus came down from Heaven out of nothing, so to speak, being born from a virgin
 - And Jesus is the source of eternal life for those who take Him in
- It's this last point that Jesus is trying to make to this crowd
 - Just as Jesus called Himself the Living Water to the woman at the well, now He's declaring Himself to be the Bread of Life
 - The Exodus motif has come full circle for this crowd
 - They follow Jesus as if He's successor to Moses, yet they follow in much the same way that Israel in the desert followed
 - They see the wonders but they lack faith in the heart
 - Jesus' disciples have understood Jesus as Messiah, though they are sadly lacking in an appreciation for all that means, but this crowd is still on the outside looking in
 - Notice their reaction
 - They say Lord, always give us this bread
 - They call Him Lord but not in the Messianic sense...only as a sign of respect

- They are flattering Him hoping He will agree to their appeals for bread
- Notice they say always give us this bread
 - They are hoping the manna gravy train that God gave to their forefathers in the desert has come back to stay
 - This is a stunning example of the blindness of unbelief
 - For this crowd, there is simply no other consideration beyond the physical and earthly
 - They can't imagine a better blessing from God than to have their physical needs met
- But Jesus keeps point them back to their spiritual needs
 - To put it simply, Jesus could have agreed to their request and fed them again
 - But the best that would have simply meant sustaining their earthly life a little longer only to see their soul spend eternity in Hell
 - As Jesus says in Mark

Mark 8:35 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:37 "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

- To conclude His point, Jesus says

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

- Pressing the metaphor further, Jesus declares plainly He is the bread that comes down to give eternal life
 - And those who receive Him will stop hungering for a solution to their sin
 - Once you find the Bread of Life, you have no need for any other

- The endless search for satisfaction and absolution is found only in the solution provided by God Himself in the Person of Jesus
- And tying together the Exodus theme from John 4, Jesus adds that no one will thirst either
- Simply put, seek for a solution to your spiritual needs rather than physical needs
 - Those who have ears to hear will see the sense of this call to believe and seek for Christ so that they find Him
 - And having found Him, they will rejoice for what they gain eternally and care little for what they lack physically
 - For whatever they lack (or gain for that matter) on earth is temporary
 - But what we gain eternally can never be taken away from us
- Remember in the beginning of the chapter I said there was good reason why the miracle of the loaves began with bread already on earth
 - And I promised to explain it later...well, Jesus just explained it
 - In the time of Exodus, the manna was a representation of Christ to come
 - He had not yet descended from Heaven
 - So the symbol the Lord provided to the people was of something materializing out of nothing from Heaven above
 - That was a perfect picture of Jesus' coming arrival
 - In the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the Lord was already resident on earth...He had already descended
 - And He came presented in a meager form, one that hardly appeared sufficient to meet the qualifications He claimed
 - So the Lord changed the miracle of the bread to match Jesus' appearance
 - Since Jesus, the Bread of Life, had already descended, He used bread already present among the people

- But it was a meager, barely noticeable and entirely inadequate provision to meet the people's needs – or so they would have thought
- Nevertheless, it multiplied to meet every need abundantly
- So it is with Christ, who causes us to never hunger again spiritually speaking
 - But this conversation isn't over yet
 - What's left to consider is how a group like this could get so close and yet be so far from understanding Jesus as Lord
 - It offers John the chance to explore yet another facet of salvation
 - That's is the source of saving faith

John 6C (2014)

- Let's dive right back into the conversation Jesus is having with the crowd He fed miraculously with the fishes and loaves
 - It's the day after that miracle took place, and the crowd has followed Jesus around the Sea of Galilee hoping to find Him in Capernaum
 - And when they did, He confronts them over their reasons for following Him so fervently
 - Jesus told them they weren't following Him because they had come to know Him as Messiah and Lord
 - They weren't devoted worshippers as their actions might suggest
 - No, Jesus declared, they followed Him merely because they were hungry and they hoped Jesus would satisfy their desires for bread
 - So then He told them they should redirect their goal from satisfying earthly concerns to seeking for eternal satisfaction
 - Specifically, Jesus said they should seek the Bread that comes down from heaven, referring to Himself
 - By calling Himself "bread," Jesus revealed that the manna given to Israel in the desert was a picture of Christ
 - Therefore, Jesus had fulfilled this picture when He descended from Heaven to bring eternal life to Israel
 - So Jesus told the crowd to stop working to preserve their physical lives; instead, work to save their souls
 - They asked what kind of work they must do, and Jesus replied they must believe in Him Whom the Father has sent
 - Instead, they demanded a sign and suggested Jesus repeat the one Moses performed in the desert
 - In other words, they want Jesus to produce manna
 - And in response, Jesus repeated they should be seeking the Bread from Heaven, meaning Himself

- It's at this point that we rejoin the conversation, and it's in this final part of chapter 6 that Jesus begins to teach the crowd and His disciples on the topic for tonight
 - The origins of saving faith

[John 6:35](#) Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

[John 6:36](#) "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

- We briefly covered v.35 last time, but I repeated it tonight as part of the context we're studying
 - Jesus continues to affirm to this unbelieving crowd that He is the bread that gives life
 - This crowd may be hungering for earthly bread to nourish their bodies
 - But Jesus explains to the crowd that they suffer from another hunger
 - One that is far more dangerous and urgent than their need for food
 - They need the bread of life to feed a spiritual hunger
 - And like He told the Samaritan woman, they need to quench a spiritual thirst
 - The solution in both cases is for the crowd to come to Jesus
 - Remember in chapters 1 and 2 we heard the disciples repeatedly telling each new disciples that they must "come and see" for themselves
 - Here again, Jesus says eternal life begins with coming to Him
 - And one comes to Him, Jesus reveals Himself as Savior
 - By that recognition, the person is born again and follows Him
 - Nevertheless, these people have approached Jesus, and yet they have not believed
 - Jesus continues to tell them that they must "come" to Him

- Haven't they already come to Him at least in the sense that they followed Him across the Sea of Galilee?
- Notice in v.36 Jesus says they have come and they have seen Him, and yet they do not believe
 - Why haven't they acknowledged Him as Messiah? What's holding them back?
 - Jesus has certainly been as clear with them as with anyone else to this point
 - And He's done miracles in their presence that are equal to anything else recorded in the Gospels
 - So why have they refused to see Him for Who He is?
- At the end of last week's lesson, I asked how it could be that the Lord Himself could present the Gospel message and yet His call to believe not be effective in converting?
 - If the Lord's own presentation of the Gospel fails to persuade a man to believe, how can anyone convert another person?
 - If our own Lord strikes out, then what hope is there for us?
 - Is the outcome merely random?
- Does the outcome rest on the capriciousness of a person's perception or mood or feeling at a given moment?
 - Does eternal salvation rest on chance?
 - What explains the inability of these people to make sense of all they have seen and all Jesus has said?
- Jesus gives us the answer to why this crowd was unable to accept Jesus as Lord

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

- Over the next series of verses, Jesus teaches the origins of salvation and why it is that some people accept Him as Lord
 - The explanation Jesus provides is absolutely foundational to our understanding of the Gospel and of grace itself
 - In fact, there are few individual verses in the New Testament more important on the topic of our salvation than v.37 by itself
 - So let's note carefully what Jesus says in this verse
- First, Jesus says the Father "gives" people to Christ
 - The meaning of this statement is very specific and not at all ambiguous
 - Jesus says some people are given to Christ by the Father
 - The Father selects (or the Bible would say elects) certain individuals to come to Christ, to accept Him as Messiah
- The verb "gives" clearly indicates that this process is entirely within the Father's control
 - The Father is the One Who gives
 - He isn't reacting to something or responding to something in Creation
 - He is the One initiating the process, determining that certain ones will come to His Son
- Then notice the second verb in this opening phrase
 - Jesus said all the Father gives will come to Jesus
 - Jesus doesn't say those the Father gives may come, as if they are presented a choice as to whether to come or not
 - Rather, Jesus says all will come, meaning the outcome is determined by the Father
 - Furthermore, Jesus uses the word "all"
 - Not some, but all of those the Father gives will come to Jesus
 - There will be no exceptions
 - No one can be given to Christ but then fail to come to Christ

- All those the Father gives to Christ will come to know and believe in Christ
- Based just on the first half of this verse, we learn two fundamental aspects of the doctrine of salvation, soteriology
 - First, our salvation rests on a decision of the Father to bring us to Christ
 - It does not depend on our will
 - This is often called the doctrine of election
 - Secondly, the Father's election always leads to a person to accept Christ
 - We cannot resist salvation once the Father has determined to give us to Christ
 - This is called the doctrine of irresistible grace
- So when the Father has determines that a person will receive His mercy in Christ, then that person will inevitably respond affirmatively to that grace
 - They do so because God's grace changes them from within, as we learned in chapter 3
 - They are born again so that they can then respond to the call of the Gospel
 - Salvation is a work of God in the heart
 - And there is no power in the Universe strong enough to stop the work of God
 - Not even our own will can resist what God purposes to do
 - For as Paul says in Romans 9, who can resist God's will?
 - Answer: no one
- And the Bible also teaches that the Father's choice to bring us grace was made long before we were born
 - Paul teaches that the Father's decision was made before time began

[Eph. 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

[Eph. 1:4](#) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

[Eph. 1:5](#) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

[Eph. 1:6](#) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- Notice again that Paul credits the Father with choosing us to be holy and blameless in Christ
 - And Paul says the Father made that choice before the foundations of the world
 - The word in Greek for foundation can also be translated “conceived”
 - So before the world itself was conceived, you and I were chosen by the Father to enter into His grace
 - We were predestined to be adopted as children by God
- This is the definition of grace according to the Bible
 - Grace is not defined as the offer of the Gospel, as some have erroneously defined it
 - The Bible describes grace as God’s willingness to save us even while we were His enemies
 - That is, even before we knew well enough to say yes to the Gospel
- That’s why Paul says this in later in Ephesians

[Eph. 2:8](#) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

[Eph. 2:9](#) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- Notice Paul’s particular choice of words
 - We are saved by grace, through faith

- We aren't saved by faith, because faith is the second step in the process
- We are saved by grace
- And all that follows is the result of God's grace
- So by grace, God delivered salvation to us
 - So what part does faith play in this process?
 - Paul says God granted us salvation through (or by way of) our faith
 - Said another way, God's grace was delivered (or manifested to us) through a faith we received
- Paul says very specifically that the faith we have we received
 - It is a gift from God, Paul says
 - God gave us the gift of faith so that we would respond to the Gospel
 - This is how Jesus can say with confidence that all who are given to Him will come to know Him
 - Because even our coming to Christ is something God Himself produces in us by His grace
- Obviously, the idea that our salvation originates in the Father's choosing of us can be a challenging and disorienting revelation
 - Almost without exception, every Christian who has come understand the doctrine of election from scripture has been surprised to see how they were saved
 - But let your surprise cause you to reject this teaching out of hand
 - Because our pride naturally recoils at the suggestion that our decision to follow Christ was not truly ours to make
 - The teaching of John 6:37 clearly shows that salvation does not originate in our own choices or decisions
 - And of course, this truth is backed up by the entire text of scripture from Genesis to Revelation

- Few doctrines of scripture are more clearly evident throughout the pages of scripture than the principle of God's sovereignty
- But no where is it more clearly seen nor more succinctly expressed than in the first ten words of v.37
- So in the first half of this verse, Jesus taught the doctrines of election and irresistible grace
 - Then in the second half of this verse, He teaches another core doctrine of salvation
 - Jesus says that the one who comes to Jesus, He will certainly not cast out
 - Casting out in this context means to opposite of coming to Jesus
 - As in to be cast into the judgment fires of Hell
 - Once a person has come to Jesus, once they have believed in Him, then that person will never again be without faith in Christ
 - As some have come to say, "once saved, always saved"
 - Notice Jesus doesn't say those who remain in Him will not be cast out
 - There is no requirement placed on the individual to maintain their salvation by anything they might do
 - And this makes sense, because our entry into salvation in the first place wasn't a result of anything we did
 - So it makes sense that our continuing in salvation isn't dependent on our own strength
 - Once the Father wills us to come to faith, Jesus says this person will never be cast out
 - Eternal judgment has been eliminated forever...

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Rom. 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Rom. 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Rom. 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

- The phrase theologians use to summarize this point of soteriology is eternal security
 - Every believer is eternally secure in the salvation they have received from the Father
 - There is no potential for a believer to ever “lose” what the Father has given them freely in Christ
- If you’re challenged by the three pillars of soteriology in v.37, consider what Jesus says next
 - Notice in vs.38-39 Jesus’ repeating emphasis on the Father’s will in each verse
 - In v.38, The Father’s will dictated Christ’s role in the plan of salvation
 - Jesus says the Father determined that His Son would come down because the Father “sent” Jesus
 - So that even Christ Himself was subject to the Father’s will

[Is. 53:4](#) Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

[Is. 53:5](#) But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

[Is. 53:6](#) All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

- If Christ Himself was obedient to the Father’s will, even to death on a cross, then we know that no man can resist the Father’s will!
- Secondly, Christ says in v.39 that the Father’s will ensures all those He gives to Christ forever remaining in Christ
 - Christ loses nothing

- Christ promises that all the Father has given Him will be raised on the last day, meaning resurrected into a new body to live eternally
- Jesus summarizes all His statements with a powerful conclusion in v.40
 - He says everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life and be resurrected
 - And He prefaces this conclusion once again with the phrase “this is the will of my Father”
 - We could read v.40 in this way: “It is by the will of my Father that someone beholds the Son and believes, and these I will raise up”
- As challenging as this teaching may sound, it is just Jesus’ opening salvo in this discourse
 - And if this teaching is a challenge for us, how do you think this unbelieving crowd responded to Jesus’ words?
 - Predictably, not well...

John 6:41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.”

John 6:42 They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?”

- In response to Jesus’ statements about Himself, the crowd began grumbling or murmuring amongst themselves
 - To grumble or murmur means to utter disapproving comments indirectly
 - Specifically, they didn’t approve of the idea that someone so ordinary as Jesus of Nazareth should compare Himself to God
 - Their concern betrays their hearts, for it proves to us that they didn’t know Jesus as Lord
 - They are grumbling over His identity
 - Jesus’ claim to have authority whether they enter Heaven is too much for them to accept
- The Gospel always comes back to Jesus’ identity

- If you cannot accept that Jesus is Who He claims to be, God in the form of Man with the power to determine our eternal destiny, then nothing else He says will matter
- It's our view of the identity of Christ that determines whether we are truly saved or not
- Those who recognize Jesus as Lord are saved; those who don't, are not
- At this point, Jesus has explained how someone comes to believe in Him
 - But if this is so, then do we conclude about this crowd that that has seen and heard so much and yet hasn't believed in Him?
 - We get that answer in the next part of Jesus' teaching

[John 6:43](#) Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves.

[John 6:44](#) "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

[John 6:45](#) "It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

[John 6:46](#) "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

[John 6:47](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

[John 6:48](#) "I am the bread of life.

[John 6:49](#) "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

[John 6:50](#) "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

[John 6:51](#) "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

- Jesus rebukes the crowd for disapproving of His words
 - And in response to their rejection of Him, Jesus teaches a corollary truth to His earlier statements
 - Just as everyone the Father gives will come to Jesus, so also those who are not given by the Father will never come to Jesus
 - As Jesus says, no one can come to belief in Jesus unless the Father draws him

- The way Jesus spoke these words in the Greek language is more dramatic and consequently, more revealing
- The word for draw in Greek is *helko*, which literally means to drag
- Consider some other uses of that same Greek word in the New Testament:

[John 21:6](#) And He said to them, “ Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.” So they cast, and then they were not able to **haul** it in because of the great number of fish.

[Acts 21:30](#) Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they **dragged** him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

- Personally, I’m not sure why the NASB translators choose to soften Jesus’ language in John 6,
 - Jesus literally said no one can come to Jesus unless the Father “drags” us to Christ
 - The word “drag” accurately reflects the fact that we are opposed to God by our own nature
 - They we must be dragged into the Light of Christ
 - As John said in chapter 1 one comes to Jesus of his own will
 - Only by the Father’s will do we come to belief in Jesus
- And now we learn why this process must depend on the Father’s will
 - Because we must be “dragged” to Jesus
 - Our sinful nature is set against God and the Gospel
 - So unless the Father elects us and drags us to faith, we will never go there on our own accord
- Paul and John also teach this truth in various places of the New Testament

[Rom. 8:6](#) For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

[Rom. 8:7](#) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

[Rom. 8:8](#) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

[1Cor. 12:3](#) Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

[1Cor. 2:14](#) But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

[1John 4:1](#) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[1John 4:2](#) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

[1John 4:3](#) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God;

- Jesus is revealing to this crowd that their murmuring over His identity was proof that the Father had rejected them already
 - Notice in v.45 Jesus says even the OT prophets said that God's people would know Him because they would be taught by Him
 - Jesus quotes Isaiah 54:13 to emphasize that this is not a new concept
 - God has always worked this way in bringing men to Himself in faith
 - Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father will come to Jesus
 - Once again, it's a 100% success rate for God as evangelist
 - So as I asked last time, how could Jesus present the Gospel and not have success in converting this crowd?
 - The answer is that the Father had not taught these people about Christ
 - He was not in the process of dragging them into the Light

- And so naturally they preferred the darkness
- If the Father had taught them Who Christ was (as Isaiah says He does), then 100% of them would have received Christ
 - But because the Father had not taught them, exactly 0% received Jesus
 - It's a black and white process: those who receive God's grace are saved
 - Those who do not, are not
- As a side note, when the word of God says that God's children are taught by God, it doesn't mean we are taught directly by the Father
 - For no one has seen the Father at any time Jesus says
 - Jesus clarified that the only One Who has seen the Father is the One Who is from God
 - That One, of course, is Jesus
 - Jesus has seen the Father
 - So Jesus is our teacher by means of His word and His Spirit living in us
 - Therefore, men are taught by God through His Spirit and once we have been taught, we will believe
 - As Jesus emphasizes again, he who believes has eternal life
 - And with that, Jesus now return to emphasizing His identity as the key to salvation
- Once again, Jesus uses bread as His analogy, saying He is the bread of life
 - The bread that the Lord gave Israel in the wilderness was only good enough to sustain their earthly bodies
 - Even though they ate the manna, they still died
 - But Jesus is a new, improved manna, the bread of life
 - As we said last time, manna pictures Jesus's ministry
 - Manna came at night, as Jesus came into darkness

- Manna came from Heaven, as Jesus descended from Heaven and became flesh
- The manna was sweet, and Psalm 34:8 says

Psa. 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

- Just as Israel in the desert took the manna into their bodies, so we have to take Him into our spirit through faith
- Just as the manna was completely consumed up by the people each day, so will Jesus be completely consumed as He saves us spiritually
 - Jesus gave up everything on the cross to save us
- But there is an important difference between manna and Jesus
 - The Jews in the desert had to eat manna every day in order for it to sustain their physical bodies
 - Yet a man need only take in Jesus once to be saved for eternity
- Specifically, Jesus says that it will be His flesh that is consumed like bread for the life of the world
 - We understand that Jesus was referring to His sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of the world
 - In that sense, His flesh was like bread, given to the world to consume so that we might live
 - But can you imagine what the unbelieving crowd was thinking at this point?
 - Well, we don't have to imagine because we see the response in the next section

John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

John 6:53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.

John 6:54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.

[John 6:56](#) "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

[John 6:57](#) "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.

[John 6:58](#) "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

- The people have the predictable response to Jesus' words: they are disgusted at the prospect of cannibalism, which is what they assumed Jesus was suggesting
 - So naturally, they ask one another how can this man give us His flesh to eat?
 - Notice John says they were arguing with one another and not with Jesus
 - The word in Greek means an intense argument erupted
 - Some people were trying to make sense of Jesus' words, while others had heard enough and were ready to leave it seems
 - But Jesus doesn't intend to make this any easier for these people
 - He repeats Himself saying one must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life
 - Jesus adds the reference to blood in response to the crowd's claim that Jesus was advocating cannibalism
 - Obviously, that's not what Jesus is talking about, and it's their inability to see Jesus with spiritual eyes that has led them to this conclusion
 - Therefore, Jesus decides to pick up on the idea of cannibalism and pushing it even further to mock their ignorance
- When He refers to eating His body and drinking His blood, He's saying two things at once
 - First, He's using a figure of speech called a synecdoche, which means using a part of something to stand for the whole of it
 - Jesus' flesh and blood are parts of His body, but by the context we can see Jesus meant the whole of Himself
 - He's telling the crowd they must take in not only Jesus flesh but also His blood, meaning all of Him

- You must accept everything about Me, everything I claim to be and do, or else you do not have eternal life
- Secondly, Jesus is also alluding to the Last Supper and the command for believers to participate in the Communion meal
 - Obviously, that sacrament had not yet been established at this point
 - Nevertheless, Jesus' words are an allusion to that coming ritual
 - Our salvation depends on consuming Christ, which means to believe in Him
 - And our belief is pictured by our participation in the Communion meal, where we consume symbols of His body and blood
- Then in vs.56-57, Jesus returns to the principles of eternal security and the Father's sovereignty in the salvation process
 - Jesus says those who consume Christ will abide in Him and He will abide in them
 - The word abide in Greek is *meno*, and it has a range of meanings
 - It can mean to continue or to endure or to remain
 - So, the person who takes in Christ (i.e., believes in Christ) will remain in Him
 - Our salvation is eternally secure
 - And our belief will ultimately lead to resurrection from the dead
 - We will live again as Jesus lives again
 - Jesus says as He lives because of the Father, so will we who take Him in live because of the Father
 - Jesus' resurrection was accomplished by the power of God to raise Him from the dead
 - And that same power will act to raise us because of our faith in Jesus
 - Jesus sums up His point on bread by repeating that He is a kind of bread that is far superior to the bread their father's knew
 - He is a type of bread that won't lead them to death

- But instead to eternal life
- His point is stop worrying about how to keep your body alive
 - Start concerning yourself with how to keep your soul alive
 - As Jesus says elsewhere

[Luke 12:4](#) "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

[Luke 12:5](#) "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- So Jesus has addressed the question of the crowd's unbelief by explaining that they haven't been led by the Father into belief
 - But what of the disciples in all this?
 - They were also having a hard time accepting Jesus for Who He was, at least in the sense that they didn't recognize His power
 - So where did Jesus' words to the crowd leave them?

[John 6:59](#) These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

[John 6:60](#) Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

[John 6:61](#) But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"

[John 6:62](#) "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?"

[John 6:63](#) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

[John 6:64](#) "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

[John 6:65](#) And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

- We now learn that the crowd caught up to Jesus while He was teaching in a synagogue service, presumably on a Sabbath day
 - Naturally, His disciples were in the room also, so they heard all the same things the crowd heard, including Jesus calling for people to consume His flesh and blood

- So in v.60 many of His disciples began to join in with the crowd's grumbling
- They say this is a difficult statement, but the word in Greek is a euphemism for offensive
- They were offended by Jesus' words
- Their reaction tells us that the word disciple in this context isn't synonymous with the word "believer"
 - A disciple was simply someone who chose to follow Jesus at least for a time
 - But not all who followed Jesus were believing in Him
 - And it merely took some hard statement like this one to weed them out
- The same pattern exists today in the church as it always has
 - False disciples are everywhere
 - And we come to know them when we see them rejecting clear teachings of Jesus from the Bible
 - When they reject Jesus as God
 - When they reject Jesus' teaching on sin, Hell, judgment, etc.
 - When they reject the notion of salvation by faith alone and not by works...
 - They are showing themselves to be false disciples because they are rejecting the very truths that define our need for Christ
- In v.61, Jesus asks these grumbling disciples if His words are leading them to stumble?
 - His question is rhetorical and serves to set up His next statements
 - Jesus adds in v.62 that if they are unable to accept this teaching, how will they accept Jesus resurrected from the grave and ascending into Heaven?
 - The answer of course is they can't
 - If they cannot accept Jesus' word in one thing, then they cannot accept Him at all

- Once again, it's an all or none proposition
- You are either in or not, according to the Father's grace
- Then Jesus graciously offers a clarification of what He meant in His earlier statements
 - He says in v.63 that the One Who gives men eternal life is the Spirit
 - He's referring to the regeneration process that the Spirit does in the heart
 - Being born again is literally a process done to us by the Spirit inside us
 - Because of that Spirit's work of regeneration, we come to believe in the Gospel and are saved
 - In that way we receive eternal life
- And then Jesus calls out those in the room for their unbelief
 - In v.64 He says that some of these people have not believed
 - But notice, John adds that Jesus knew from the beginning who these unbelievers were
 - What does John mean when he says "from the beginning?"
 - From the beginning of what? The meeting? The day? The events of the prior day?
 - The answer is from the beginning of the foundations of the Earth as Paul taught
 - Jesus knew which people were given to Him by the Father and therefore they would come to Him
 - And He knew which ones were not given to Him and would not come to believe
 - And in fact, Jesus knew He had a disciple following Him who would one day betray Him
- In other words, Jesus wasn't waiting for each person to make up their minds concerning His identity so that He could know who would be His followers

- Jesus knew who the Father had selected for Him before He ever left Heaven and came to earth
 - So that as Jesus walked around the Galilee and ministered to the crowds, He could see His sheep even before they knew Him
 - Just as He did with Nathaniel
 - Just as He did with the woman at the well
- Likewise, Jesus knew who wasn't given to Him by the Father and therefore would never come to believe in Him
 - This crowd and even some of His disciples were people such as these
 - Men and women who could not accept the things Jesus said because they were not among those elected by the Father
- Notice in v.65 Jesus repeats His central tenet on the origins of our faith
 - No person can come to believe in Jesus unless it has been granted by the Father
 - So that if someone rejects Christ, it is evidence in itself that the person is not given to Christ
 - Or at the very least, the day of their salvation has not yet arrived
- We see the truth of Jesus' words in the effect it had on the crowd

[John 6:66](#) As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

[John 6:67](#) So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

[John 6:68](#) Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

[John 6:69](#) "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

[John 6:70](#) Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

[John 6:71](#) Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

- As a result of His teaching, many of these so-called disciples withdrew and stopped following Jesus
 - These people were exposed for who they truly were: unbelievers

- As Peter teaches in 2Peter, a dog returns to its vomit
- They acted differently than their true nature for a time, but eventually the act grew old
- It became too hard to follow Jesus given all that He was saying
- So then it came down to the twelve disciples, those Jesus handpicked
 - How will these men react to Jesus' teaching?
 - Jesus offers them the chance to leave as well, asking you don't want to leave too, do you?
 - The point of His question is to expose their hearts as believing just as He had exposed the rest of the disciples' hearts as unbelieving
- In response to Jesus' challenge, every-ready Peter steps up and declares, "Where else would we go, since you have the words of eternal life?"
 - This is a great opening, and if Peter had left it there, he might have done pretty well in Jesus' eyes
 - Instead, Peter pushes the conversation once step further saying we have believed and come to know you are the Messiah
 - Now that statement might not seem too bad either, except that it's completely wrong
 - Peter asserts that these twelve were sticking around because they had come to know Jesus as Messiah
 - The construction of Peter's statement in Greek suggests that the disciples themselves worked out Jesus' identity on their own
 - As if to suggest they evaluated His claims
 - Considered His teaching and miracles
 - And then concluded that Jesus must have been the Messiah
 - But nothing could have been further from the truth
 - These disciples didn't come to faith in Jesus any differently than any other person
 - As Jesus says in v.70, "Wasn't I the One Who chose you?"

- Jesus is pointing out that each of the was brought to Jesus and subsequently selected as apostles entirely because of Jesus' own choice
 - And as He taught earlier, their faith in Him was ultimately the result of the Father's will
 - These men didn't "come to know" Jesus as Lord
 - They were made to know Jesus as Lord
 - They aren't staying because they have resolved to stick around
 - They are staying because Jesus will not lose any the Father has given to Him
 - And just to prove the point, Jesus says that one among them is a devil?
 - John explains in v.71 that Jesus was referring to Judas who was later to betray Him
 - Of course, the rest of the disciples didn't have a clue what Jesus meant at the time
 - Though obviously it made an impression, since John remembered the statement
- God's sovereignty is so certain and His plan so intricately worked out in advance that even Jesus' betrayer was selected by God in advance
 - The Father knew that no true disciple of the Lord would ever desire to betray their Master
 - So if the plan of the Father is for Christ to be killed by Romans on a cross, then He must position at least one unbeliever inside Christ's inner circle
 - So that by this one, Christ may be handed over to His enemies at the right time
 - And in that way, Christ's death in our place would be assured
 - So when Peter declares that they chose Jesus, the Lord rebukes Peter saying, "No, I chose you."
 - And so it is for each of us who believe in Jesus
 - While you might be tempted to think you chose Christ
 - The word of God declares that He chose you

John 7A

[John 7:1](#) After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

[John 7:2](#) Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

[John 7:3](#) Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.

[John 7:4](#) "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

[John 7:5](#) For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- In chapter 6, Jesus fed thousands of people with bread, then crossed a body of water miraculously, and then explained that the crowd was following Him for the wrong reasons
 - In all these elements, John wanted us to recognize how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Exodus account
 - In fact, John said specifically that these events took place as the Passover drew near
 - The Passover was the feast that began with the Exodus, of course
 - So, John included mention of the Passover as a way of pointing us back to the Exodus story
 - After the events of chapter 6, Jesus remained in the Galilee teaching for some time
 - John says Jesus didn't venture down to Jerusalem because His enemies, the Jews, were seeking to kill Him
 - John calls those living in Judea "the Jews" to distinguish them from those living in the Galileans
 - But in reality, both regions were mostly occupied by Jews
 - Therefore, the Jews of Judea is a reference to the various religious leaders of the nation who opposed Jesus
- Then in v.2, John gives us another timestamp reference, telling us that the events of chapter 7 occur as the Feast of Booths was near

- The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles commemorates the Jews arrival in the Promised land
 - On the Jewish calendar, it occurred six months after the feast of Passover
 - So we know that six months have elapsed between John 6 and John 7
 - More importantly, these two feasts were among three feasts that all Jewish men were required to observe in Jerusalem each year
 - Besides Passover and Tabernacles, the third feast was the Feast of Pentecost
- So in the six months between John 6 & John 7, Jesus' notoriety within the Galilee has grow exponentially
 - After a very a very dramatic and public miracle like feeding thousands, Jesus is elevated to "rock star" status among those in the Galilee
 - But as we see here at the beginning of chap 7, it's also produced enemies for Jesus in Jerusalem
 - Which explains why Jesus wants to remain in Galilee for now – He's not interested in a confrontation until the time is right
 - God's timing is all that's standing between those who cheer Jesus on being overrun by those who wish to put Him to His end
 - And this is a central theme in this chapter and others that follow
- In fact, the opening line of the chapter also serves as its topic sentence
 - There were some in Israel who would accept what Jesus said about Himself, and there were some who would not
 - And only those who had heard from God could and would accept
 - While those who have not heard from God, will not accept
 - And this division existed even in Jesus' own household
 - In v.5, John says not even Jesus' own brothers were believing in Him

- Jesus' brothers refers to Jesus' half-brothers, including Jude and James, who wrote the New Testament letters
- Obviously, these two and probably others came to believe in Jesus after His resurrection
- But at this point, Jesus is just an older brother desperate for attention and with some pretty impressive tricks up His sleeve
- So in v.3 Jesus' brothers offer Him some friendly, helpful advice
 - They tell Jesus to leave the Galilee, where Jesus has been spending all His time thus far, and go to Jerusalem
 - They insinuate that a real prophet is seen and heard in Jerusalem
 - And so if Jesus wants to be received by the greatest crowds, He will have to be prepared to play on the largest stage
 - Like the song says, "If I can make it there, I can make it anywhere..."
 - Their advice is neither friendly nor helpful
 - First, we already know they were not believing in Jesus' claims to be the Messiah, as John told us
 - So as unbelievers, we can be sure they don't have Jesus' best interests at heart
 - On the contrary, we know their desires and values and instincts are set against God
 - Secondly, we can see they're baiting Jesus, hoping He'll take their advice so they can expose Him as the fraud they think Him to be
 - They accuse Jesus of hiding away in Galilee
 - They're suggesting that Jesus has become popular only because He's playing the part of a big fish in a small pond
 - He's throwing fastballs at bush league batters
 - But what happens if you have to make your case under the bright lights in the big city?
 - Notice they presume Jesus was seeking to be known publicly in v.4

- They're daring Jesus to submit Himself to harsh criticism of the religious leaders in Jerusalem during the most popular feast of the year
- They're taunting Jesus to risk everything, and they're expecting He will fail
- The brothers' advice is bad advice, of course, and it's wrong because it rests on two wrong assumptions
 - First, the brothers have assumed that Jesus wasn't a contender for the role of Messiah unless He gained the backing and support of the people
 - His small healing and teaching engagement centered in the Galilee wasn't going to meet that test
 - Jesus needed to present Himself to the leaders in Jerusalem and to the masses at the feast
 - If they accepted Jesus, then He might win the title He was seeking
 - But this assumption is completely wrong, and if they had paid close attention to their Old Testament scriptures, they would have known this
 - The Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, David and Moses foretold that the Messiah would be rejected by His own people
 - Instead, He would be embraced by a people who are not God's people, meaning the Gentiles
 - Furthermore, the Old Testament foretold that the Messiah would die a shameful death, hanging on a tree at the hands of those He came to save
 - Clearly, God's plan for His Son, the Messiah, didn't depend on winning public approval
- Which leads to their second assumption, that truth is determined by public opinion or acceptance of an idea
 - The brothers expected that a Messiah could only rise to power with popular support
 - Like a politician seeking public office, the title of Messiah was something that an adoring public bestowed upon a worthy candidate

- And therefore the true Messiah – by definition – would be the one who could persuade the masses of his worth
- But if Jesus couldn't even convince His own family, what chance did He have, His brothers assumed
- But once again, their thinking couldn't be further from the truth
 - The truth of any matter doesn't turn on public opinion
 - Jesus was Messiah because the Father appointed Him to that role
 - The truth of that appointment didn't rest on how many people accepted it to be true
 - It was true if one person believed it or even if no one believed in it
- But the sinful world has always measured truth like a popularity contest
 - Whatever position is accepted by the majority must be the truth
 - Because we naturally assume that the more people who agree with a given position, especially if it's our own position, then the more worthy it is of our trust
- This is relativistic thinking and it's never the way we find truth
 - For example, prior to the 15th century, most people were convinced that the Earth was a flat square with edges
 - If someone traveled too far in any one direction, he would fall off the face of the Earth into Hell
 - This was a popular public opinion
 - And it was also false
 - Similarly, most people used to believe that sex prior to marriage was immoral
 - But then popular thinking began to change
 - So for many people the truth "changed"
 - But the morality of fornication, or adultery or homosexuality isn't determined by public opinion

- It is determined by the Law Giver Who revealed Himself in scripture so that we might know the truth
- But now fornication has become morally acceptable to the world simply because it's widely practiced
 - Not because God changed His view of sin or because we discovered new revelation
 - Merely because public opinion shifted
- Obviously, we know that Christ's mission was not a public relations campaign orchestrated to win men's approval
 - Nor do we wish to establish the truth of the Gospel in the minds of men by building popular acceptance of its claims
 - Our Gospel isn't more true because millions believe it
 - And it isn't less true with the whole world mocks it
 - Scripture tells us that in the end, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Christ (Isa 45:23)
 - In fact, turning back to Chap 7, look what Jesus says in response to His unbelieving brothers

John 7:6 So Jesus said to them, " My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.

John 7:7 " The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

John 7:8 "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."

John 7:9 Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.

John 7:10 But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

- First, Jesus says something we've heard before: My time has not yet come
 - You probably remember back in chapter 2 when Jesus told Mary something very similar
 - And in fact, the circumstances were very similar as well

- Mary had been pushing Jesus to enter into the limelight in a manner and at a time that wasn't consistent with the Father's plans
- So Jesus rebuked His mother for trying to dictate God's timetable
- Once again, Jesus issues a rebuke here to His brothers for making the very same mistake
 - When it's time for Jesus to enter into the public eye in Jerusalem in the midst of a feast, He will do so
 - It won't be this year and it won't be this feast, but it will happen
- Then Jesus adds that His brothers' time is always opportune
 - Jesus means that His brothers were not constrained in their decision making by considerations for what the will of God might be
 - On the contrary, as unbelievers these men acted as they pleased at all times
 - In that sense, it was always the right time for them to do whatever they pleased
 - But Jesus was strictly bound to the will of the Father, which is the definition of sinlessness
 - Secondly, Jesus' brothers could venture into Jerusalem at any time without fear of persecution, because they were of the world
 - Jesus is speaking of spiritual identities
 - Everyone person's spiritual identity is aligned either with God or with the world
 - Since His brothers were unbelieving, we know they were spiritually aligned with the world
 - All those who are aligned with the world belong to Satan, and he knows who are his, and he doesn't waste energy trying to tear down his own world except where he finds some advantage in it
 - As Jesus said, a house divided against itself cannot stand
 - So Satan and the world only oppose God and those who are spiritually aligned with God

- The world opposes Christ, the Bible, Christianity, and Christians
- It does so because these things are spiritual enemies of darkness because the truth is light that exposes the evil deeds of the world
- So while it's safe for these brothers to be in Jerusalem, it is not for Jesus, which becomes increasingly evident in this chapter
 - Though Jesus rejects the brothers' advice, nevertheless He still goes to Jerusalem in His own way in v.10
 - Why does Jesus say He will not go up to Jerusalem for this feast and yet He does go?
 - Did He lie to His brothers?
 - No. Jesus rejecting the idea of attend in the manner they suggested, that is by drawing attention to Himself
 - To this, Jesus said you are free to do this but I am not
 - Therefore, Jesus separated Himself from His brothers by telling them to go up without Him
 - While His own time to go up has not yet arrived
 - Later, after His brothers depart, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem in secret
 - He goes first to be obedient to the command to observe the feast
 - Secondly, Jesus will engage in another dialog with a crowd, this time in the temple
- To help us get a sense of the environment Jesus was walking into, John gives us three verses of background leading us into the next section

John 7:11 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"

John 7:12 There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray."

John 7:13 Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

- First, we see that Jesus concerns were well-founded

- Even though Jesus has not yet made an appearance, the Jewish leaders expected Him to travel down to Jerusalem for the feast as every Jewish male was required
- So they were seeking Him
- That seeking was not a friendly sort of inquiry
- They were seeking to accuse Him of something and have Him condemned
- Secondly, the crowds are grumbling about Jesus
 - He has become the talk of Israel
 - This backwater Rabbi from the Galilee has the entire city talking about Him in His absence during the largest celebration in the Jewish year
- The talk runs along two lines, as we might expect
 - John says there were those who were saying Jesus was a “good man”
 - These people were generally supportive and defended Jesus’ ministry it would appear
 - And then of course, there were those who claimed Jesus led the people astray
 - In other words, they accuse Jesus of making false claims about Himself and the scriptures
 - Of course, we’re not surprised to learn that Jesus has opponents in the city, but perhaps we’re pleasantly surprised to hear He has His supporters
 - But let’s be careful before we make any assumptions
 - There are those saying He is a good man, but notice what they aren’t saying
 - They aren’t saying He is the Messiah
 - As we’ve said before, there is a big difference between saying Jesus is a good person or good teacher or even a prophet – and saying He is God
 - Jesus wasn’t just claiming to be a good person
 - Or a good teacher

- Or even a prophet
- Jesus was claiming He was literally God
- Yet we don't see anyone making that public declaration in this crowd
- In fact, that's the third point John makes in v.13: no one was willing to speak opening of Jesus in any case
 - Why would people be so unwilling to share opening their opinions of Jesus?
 - Clearly, they must be afraid of the religious leaders
 - Which tells us that the leaders so opposed Jesus that no one dared run the risk of crossing these men
 - But it also tells us that even those who supported Jesus weren't willing to take a public stand
 - It's into this environment Jesus travels incognito and starts to teach in the temple

[John 7:14](#) But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

[John 7:15](#) The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"

[John 7:16](#) So Jesus answered them and said, " My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

[John 7:17](#) " If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

[John 7:18](#) "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

- In the larger courtyard of the temple, Jesus began to teach and as He does so, he attracts a crowd
 - Word gets out quickly that Jesus has come up for the Feast and is in the temple
 - Once again, His teaching astonishes the crowd
 - They wonder how someone who was not trained as a Pharisee could be so learned in spiritual matters

- As if to suggest that knowledge of God can only be obtained through manmade institutions of higher learning
- Jesus answered them saying He is simply delivering them what the Father has given Him to say
 - In other words, Jesus is speaking the word of God directly to them
 - And so they are feeling the impact of knowing the truth delivered straight from the source
 - When you hear the truth, directly from God through His word, you will know it
 - It will stand out in a way that is unexplainable and undeniable
 - Like the men on the road to Emmaus who heard Jesus teach them and then remarked

Luke 24:32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

- Jesus adds in v.17 that those who are willing to do the will of the Father possess the discernment to recognize whether Jesus’ teaching is truly from God
 - Those who have been giving the heart to know and obey God’s will shall also possess the ability to recognize His words
 - Jesus expresses this same thought in simpler terms elsewhere in the Gospels when He says “those who have ears to hear, let him hear”
 - If we wish to know the truth and avoid the false teaching the enemy brings, we only need to be willing to obey the Lord
 - And if our heart is directed toward obedience, we will then recognize and follow the truth of God’s word
 - But if our hearts are deceived by sin and unwilling to repent and follow the Lord, then we are in danger of missing the truth when it is revealed to us
 - Notice what Jesus says next

John 7:19 “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”

- Jesus says to the crowd that Moses had delivered the Law to Israel, and certain the nation revered Moses as their prophet
 - And yet the nation did not keep the very Law they revered
 - No man could keep it fully
 - So here was the essential problem of Israel: they weren't willing to do the will of God
 - They weren't willing to do God's will because their very nature precluded it
 - Sinful flesh cannot obey God

[Rom. 8:6](#) For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

[Rom. 8:7](#) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

[Rom. 8:8](#) and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- Since by nature sinful flesh cannot keep the Law, then it was also lacking in an ability to discern His teaching
 - Yet while the nation was unrighteous for failing to keep the word of God, Jesus' critics were accusing Him of leading people astray
 - So Jesus points out that all He has done is repeat the words of God, which any God-fearing person could recognize and accept
 - Yet His very critics were the obviously unrighteous ones, but yet they sought to kill Him
 - He's pointing out the hypocrisy of their leaders
- And of course, at this point things get a little testy

[John 7:20](#) The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"

[John 7:21](#) Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel.

[John 7:22](#) "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.

[John 7:23](#) "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?

[John 7:24](#) "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

- First, the crowd thinks Jesus is suffering from a persecution complex, because they doubt His assertion that someone was seeking to kill Him
 - They think Jesus must be demon possessed
 - As a side note, notice that no one in scripture ever accuses another person of being crazy
 - Instead, they accuse someone of having a demon
 - In other words, acts of insanity in the Bible are explained by demonic activity
 - Jesus ignores their attempts at pretense and stays on the offensive
 - He reminds them of the miracle that started His opposition in the city of Jerusalem: the healing of the paralytic in John 5
 - That was the last miracle Jesus performed in Jerusalem, and it was the one that got Jesus into hot water with the Pharisees
 - They objected to Jesus healing on the Sabbath
 - And on that basis, they sought to kill Jesus
 - Jesus says that for healing a man on the Sabbath, someone wants to kill Him and yet these same men make similar judgments in their own favor all the time
 - For example, they circumcise infants on the eighth day even when it falls on the Sabbath
 - A part of a child's body was "fixed" even when it conflicted with another Law
 - This was permissible on the Sabbath because obedience to God's commands is never work in the sense of violating the Sabbath
 - Yet they objected to Jesus "fixing" the entire body of a man on the Sabbath
 - Once again, there was no law against God healing someone on the Sabbath
 - Jesus is highlighting the leaders' hypocrisy, which is judging by appearances rather than by true righteousness

- The main point of the chapter is starting to come to light at this stage of the chapter
- Jesus identity is the primary question throughout John's Gospel, and in this chapter John is exposing the strong difference of opinion that existed in Israel over Jesus
- And how the religious leadership acted as a wedge driving the two sides apart
- John wants to drive home the reality of this division among the people
 - As we look at the rest of the discourse, pay attention to the way John highlights the crowd's uncertainty
 - And they're reliance on their leaders for instruction concerning Jesus

[John 7:25](#) So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"

[John 7:26](#) "Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"

[John 7:27](#) "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

[John 7:28](#) Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know."

[John 7:29](#) "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."

[John 7:30](#) So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

[John 7:31](#) But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

[John 7:32](#) The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.

[John 7:33](#) Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me."

[John 7:34](#) "You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."

[John 7:35](#) The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?"

[John 7:36](#) "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"

- The crowds saw all the signs that would lead them to suspect Jesus was the Messiah
 - And they're own words betray them in that respect
 - They ask is this not the one "they" are seeking to kill, referring to the Jewish leaders?
 - In other words, isn't this that famous rabbi whose been causing all that trouble?
 - And as they hear Him speak, they marvel that Jesus is willing to speak in the open publicly, since His life was in danger
 - And then in v.26 the people ask do the leaders not really know that this man is the Christ?
 - In other words, they are saying, "We know our leaders want this guy to be seized and put in prison and yet here he is teaching...is this because they have come to agree He is the Messiah?"
- Their statement tells us two very important things about what's going on in the people's minds at this point
 - First, they are aware that the questions about Jesus center on the question of Messiahship
 - The whole controversy over Jesus was "Is this guy the Messiah or what?"
 - The religious leaders wanted to seize Jesus for leading the people astray on this specific question
 - Leading the people astray was an offensive in Israel punishable by stoning
 - Yet Jesus taught and performed miracles in a convincing manner, so that the question of whether He was the Messiah was not clear cut
 - And now the mere fact that Jesus was teaching opening without fear of the authorities caused this crowd to wonder if perhaps the leaders had a change of heart
 - Maybe they had accepted Jesus' claims to being Messiah
 - That leads us to the second thing we learn from their statement: the people of Israel relied heavily on their leaders to establish their opinions on any spiritual matter

- The crowd waited to hear from their leaders before deciding if Jesus' claims to be Messiah were true or not
- The spiritual leaders had the ability to direct the fate of the nation in that regard
- If the nation was told to follow Jesus, they would and the nation would receive their King
- If not, then the entire generation of Israel would perish, like lemmings walking off a cliff
- To help them justify their doubts, in v.27 they fall back on a myth in Israel that the true Messiah's earthly origins would be a mystery
 - But this was easily disproven from scripture, which declared specifically that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem
 - Which leads Jesus in v.28 to remind them of as much
 - He says you know me, meaning you know I'm Joseph's son
 - Which means they also knew He was born in Bethlehem as Scripture required
 - And that Jesus was of the right tribe and family
 - In other words, Jesus was counting the myth while at the same time emphasizing He was qualified to meet these tests
 - But then Jesus goes further and says the One Who sent Jesus is One the crowd does not know
 - In other words, they don't know the Father
 - This is an unbelieving crowd, which explains their lack of spiritual insight
- Then Jesus said He was from God, sent by God, which of course brought back the anger of the crowd, which perceived Jesus as speaking blaspheme
 - There was an interest in arresting Him, but miraculously no one is able or willing to do it
 - John explains because Jesus' time to be crucified had not yet come, Jesus was safe
 - Probably, some moved to seize Jesus

- But in v.31 we hear that many in the crowd believed in Jesus, and that support probably prevented anyone from acting against Him
- By this point, the leaders have heard as well, so they move to arrest Jesus in the temple
 - Knowing the leaders were moving against Him, Jesus warns the crowd that their window of opportunity will not last long
 - In fact, for Israel the opportunity to seek the Messiah is limited
 - They were only going to have Him for a short time longer
 - After that, they might seek for the Messiah, but they won't find Him
- Why was Jesus so definite in that statement? Because Israel's unique relationship with God placed them in an equally unique position
 - The Messiah was promised to Israel
 - And they had the prophets sent by God so that the nation would have no excuse for overlooking Christ when He arrived as promised
 - If the nation recognized and embraced their Messiah, then He was prepared to set up an earthly Kingdom for them
 - And Israel would be exalted as the chief nation on earth in this kingdom
- But if they rejected their Messiah, then that generation to see Christ would be judged harshly
 - Moreover, Israel as a whole would see great sufferings for many generations afterward
 - Only in the last days of this age would a distant generation of Israel have opportunity once again to know and receive their Messiah a second time
 - And in this second opportunity they would correct the mistake of the earlier generation, embrace Christ, and receive the Kingdom
- Here we find the connection to the feast of Booths as well

- The Old Testament teaches that the Feast of Tabernacles is the feast that will begin the Kingdom of Christ after His second coming
 - That feast pictures the arrival of the Kingdom for Israel
 - But it can only arrive after the nation as a whole embraces Christ as Messiah
 - All Israel must accept Jesus Christ is their Messiah, or else the Kingdom remains on hold for Israel
- Moses made this promise to Israel in the Law:

[Deut. 30:1](#) "So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you,

[Deut. 30:2](#) and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

[Deut. 30:3](#) then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

[Deut. 30:4](#) "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.

[Deut. 30:5](#) "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

[Deut. 30:6](#) "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

[Deut. 30:7](#) "The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

[Deut. 30:8](#) "And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

[Deut. 30:9](#) "Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers;

[Deut. 30:10](#) if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

- Notice that the promises of receiving this kingdom depend on all in Israel acting in this same way
- The promise is contingent on 100% of Israel acting in keeping with God's commandments
- And Moses also tells the people that they may reach this level of obedience by a national confession of repentance and faith...

[Lev. 26:40](#) 'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me –

[Lev. 26:41](#) I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies – or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity,

[Lev. 26:42](#) then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

- Here again, notice that God's willingness to honor His promise of blessing hinges on all Israel acting in unison to confess and believe
- If only part of Israel is accepting of the Messiah, then these terms are not met
- And the nation will not receive the blessings of the kingdom
- So in this chapter, John brings us into the feast of Booths, a feast intended to commemorate Israel's entry into the Promised Land and ultimately to foretell their arrival in the Kingdom
 - And yet that arrival is dependent on a universal acceptance by Israel that of Jesus is Messiah
 - Clearly, Israel is not of one mind concerning Jesus in this chapter
 - And therefore, Israel is no closer to receive the Kingdom in this day
 - And that's the main thrust of chapter 7: to show the division among the people
 - Which then explains why Jesus' first coming could not fulfill the Feast of Booths...why it must wait for the Second Coming

- Meanwhile, the Jews wonder where is Jesus going to go and why can't we find Him then?
 - Clearly, they don't understand what Jesus is talk about
 - And that's been the problem from the start
 - Next time we'll finish the chapter by looking at the climatic tie between the events of chapter 7 and the events of the Feast of Tabernacles

John 7B

- This week we finish one story and begin another
 - First, we must finish the account of Jesus in the temple at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles
 - This is the week-long feast where Israel remembers the wanderings of Israel in the desert prior to reaching the promised land
 - It also looks forward to the Messiah's arrival and the kingdom the Lord will bring to Israel
 - This is the most popular feast in each year, and it's one that every Jewish male was expected to observe in Jerusalem
 - Jesus' unbelieving brothers tried unsuccessfully to convince Jesus to use the occasion of this feast to campaign for support as the Messiah
 - Instead, Jesus traveled up to Jerusalem secretly to observe the feast
 - And then while He was in the city, at a point late in the feast week, Jesus began to teach in the temple drawing attention from the crowds
 - And then a debate ensued concerning the identity of Jesus
 - Was He the Messiah?
 - Some said yes, but others said no
 - While the religious leaders actively opposed the notion that Jesus was the Messiah
- The fact that a debate took place over a question that should have been easy to answer explains why the kingdom wasn't given to Israel at Jesus' first coming
 - Since Israel didn't embrace Jesus, Jesus didn't embrace them
 - Since Israel was divided on the question of Jesus' identity, He didn't bring the Kingdom into reality for that generation
 - Instead, this generation of Israel will be condemned, while a future generation will receive the Kingdom

- So John wrote this ironic chapter, set during a feast that celebrates the Kingdom
- Meanwhile, the Jews are rejecting the opportunity for the Kingdom
- Let's return to the story to where John explains how the week-long festival ended

[John 7:37](#) Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

[John 7:38](#) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

[John 7:39](#) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

[John 7:40](#) Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."

[John 7:41](#) Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"

[John 7:42](#) "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

[John 7:43](#) So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.

[John 7:44](#) Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

- John refers to the great day of the feast, which was the end of the seven-day observance
 - It was the great day because it involved an elaborate ritual involving water
 - Early on each morning of the seven days, the high priest would lead a procession from the pool of Siloam in the city up to the temple
 - Another priest would bring a golden pitcher, which he filled from the water in the pool
 - He then carried this water through the Water Gate on the south side of the temple and up into the courtyard
 - Then in a ceremony, the priest would pour the water into a silver basin on the west side of the brazen altar
 - The Jews had connected a tube to the silver basin, which carried the water down to the base of the altar

- The water would then run out at the altar base
- The crowd of Jews that would follow the priests to the pool to watch them collect the water each morning
 - Some Jews might drink from the pool
 - While others would joyous recite Isaiah 55:1 and 12:3

[Is. 55:1](#) "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;

[Is. 12:3](#) Therefore you will joyously draw water
From the springs of salvation.

- The Mishnah stated that he who never has seen the joy of the water-drawing has never in his life seen joy
- Finally, on the seventh day of this feast, the same routine was repeated, except with one change
 - When the priests entered the temple with the water, they walked in a procession around the altar seven times
 - As the water was poured into the silver basin on its way to the altar, other priests would pour the daily drink offering of wine at the altar
 - The pouring out of water represented the Lord's provision of water in the desert
 - While the pouring of wine symbolized the Lord's pouring out of His Spirit in the last days as Joel foretold
 - Ironically, when Pentecost arrived and men spoke under the influence of the Spirit, they were accused of being drunk
 - Meanwhile, the crowd of men gave thanks and recited Psalms
- So now we can appreciate the drama of Jesus' words, as He stands in the temple on the final day of this feast, and makes His declaration
 - Jesus says if anyone thirst, let him to Me and drink
 - And he who believes in me, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water

- Obviously, Jesus' statements are drawing upon the vivid images of the feast
- People are celebrating a river of water leaving the altar
- And they're drinking of water from the pool
- But they are missing the spiritual significance of these symbols
- Meanwhile, the very fulfillment of these things is standing in their midst
 - If anyone comes to believe in Jesus as Messiah, that person will never experience a thirst for God
 - Not in the sense of wanting for something that lies out of reach
 - Instead, we can experience so much living water that it becomes a constant flow through and out of us
- To be sure we got the point, John adds a verse of commentary in v.39
 - He tells us that this river Jesus mentioned was a euphemism for the ministry of the Holy Spirit inside every believer
 - Because the people wouldn't come to Jesus as a group, He invites them to experience Him individually
 - While the nation as a whole wasn't receiving the Kingdom yet, still it was possible for individuals in the nation to receive many of its joys even now
 - That division is still very evident, as the people continue their debate
 - In vs.40-41 the crowd offers two familiar answers to the question of Jesus' identity
 - Some say He is the Christ while others say He is the Prophet
 - Remember John the Baptist faced similar questions from the religious leaders
 - The Christ refers to the conquering Messiah, while the Prophet refers to the suffering Messiah
 - Two Messiahs instead of two arrivals
- To settle the argument, some begin to go down the prophecy checklist for who the Messiah would be and from where he would originate

- Some remember that the Christ was not to come from the Galilee
 - They say that the scriptures said the Messiah would be a descendent of David
 - And He would be from Bethlehem
 - Of course, they don't realize that Jesus was born in Bethlehem'
 - How ironic that the very verse of scripture that could prove Jesus was Messiah was being used by the ignorant crowd to discredit Him
- In the end, the division remained, leading some to threaten violence against Jesus for impersonating the Messiah
 - But His supporters stood in the way
 - So no one laid hands upon Him
 - Once again, another stalemate and continued division

[John 7:45](#) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"

[John 7:46](#) The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

[John 7:47](#) The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?"

[John 7:48](#) "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?"

[John 7:49](#) "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

[John 7:50](#) Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them,

[John 7:51](#) "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

[John 7:52](#) They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

- Apparently, those in the crowd who wanted to seize Jesus had enlisted the temple officers to make the arrest
 - The officers, who were Levites, were unable to complete the arrest, so when they report to the chief priests and Pharisees, they show up empty-handed
 - Their excuse is that Jesus spoke with such power it prevented them from acting

- They probably mean that Jesus' words stirred up the crowd to the point that they couldn't have enforced their orders
- Or perhaps they mean that they themselves were so impacted by what Jesus said, they couldn't bring themselves to grab Him
- As a commentator once wrote, the soldiers came with weapons to arrest the Lord, and instead He arrested them with His words
- In the end, we know it was the sovereignty of God that stopped their act
- The Pharisees chastise the Levites
 - They ask if they have also been led astray as well?
 - Then they add that not a single Pharisee has been fooled into following Jesus
- These statements are classic techniques of peer pressure and appealing to fear and pride
 - The Pharisees want the officers to feel foolish for showing sympathy for Jesus
 - If they agree with Jesus' words, then they will be branded as having been fooled and tricked
 - No one likes to be accused of being a fool
 - And so this accusation pressures them to fall into line
 - This is a favorite trick of the enemy: making you feel pressure to join the crowd
 - My favorite example for today is the way opponents of the Creation account in Genesis try to make those who believe it feel like fools
 - I was listening to a science program on the radio recently as a scientist who took every opportunity to mock those who reject Evolution and believe in Creation
 - His tactic was exactly the same as these Pharisees
 - Rather than address the substance of the conversation, he moved directly to attacking the person who holds a different view

- We have to be prepared to become a fool for what we believe concerning Christ
 - Whether it's our belief in Creation or the Flood account
 - Or because we believe the Bible is literal history
 - Or because we hold to biblical views of morality and family and Heaven and Hell
 - Or simply because we believe in the deity of Christ
- We should expect to receive such treatment
 - Since the Lord determined that His children would not be treated better than His Son received

1Cor. 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1Cor. 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

1Cor. 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

- Then we have the Pharisees' second statement that no Pharisees had followed Jesus
 - Here's another favorite tactic of the enemy: never disagree with the experts
 - The Pharisees say that you can't trust the crowd's assessment
 - They said the crowd didn't know the Law like the Pharisees did
 - Therefore, they were bound to come to the wrong opinion about matters of God
 - So if you side with the crowd over the experts, then you are equally stupid
 - This tactic has never fallen out of favor, because it's very effective
 - The priests and bishops of the Catholic church long argued that laymen shouldn't read the Bible
 - Only priest and bishops can interpret the Bible properly

- If anyone else tried, they were punished, which was the tactic used against Martin Luther
- Ironically, the so-called experts are typically the ones without any spiritual understanding of their own
- The enemy also uses this technique in the battle over Creation
 - We're told that many so-called experts have determined that Genesis is a myth and that Darwin was correct
 - Then they leave us feeling like the fool because the experts and the majority view are against us
 - After all, if 4 out of 5 dentists agree, it must be true
 - Of course, when it comes to knowledge of God, the majority are generally if not always wrong
 - The Bible says that the path is narrow that leads to righteousness
 - And there was only ever a remnant of true faith in Israel
 - And today only a minority of the world population knows the truth about Christ
 - So don't be surprised to find yourself in the minority
- The truth is though you are in a minority, you are not alone in knowing the truth
 - There are believers everywhere, in every camp and among all kinds of men
 - Like the Lord told Paul before Paul entered Corinth, the Lord has many of His people in every city
 - I read a story about Chinese believers enduring great persecution
 - One day they were overjoyed to meet with a Western Christian visiting their home church in China
 - And they asked him if there were Christians outside China
 - They had assumed that Christianity was limited to China!
 - We see the same thing here, as John reminds us there was a Pharisee who did know the truth

- In v.50 John reintroduces Nicodemus, the one who had visited Jesus at night back in chapter 3
- Obviously, John mentioned the sympathetic Pharisee at this critical moment to counter the Pharisees' false claims
- There was a believing Pharisee although he was keeping a very low profile!
- In this moment, Nicodemus speaks up in a subtle defense of Jesus
 - He reminds his peers that anyone accused under the Law must be given a chance to defend himself and explain his words or actions
 - He wants to put the brakes on their rush to judgment
 - He's trying to buy Jesus time, yet he's being careful not to risk aligning himself too visibly with Jesus
 - We might want to be critical of Nicodemus for not taking a more public stand, but we should withhold that judgment
 - He's a new believer, without the benefit of discipleship
 - And he's trying to preserve his position of influence so he can use it to Jesus' advantage
 - We would probably do the same thing
- Notice how the Pharisees ignore the substance of Nicodemus' arguments and instead attack him personally
 - They insult him by suggesting he was from the same backwater region as Jesus, that is the Galilee
 - This is a third tactic of the enemy
 - They were attacking him to provoke fear
 - They're suggesting Nicodemus' loyalties might lie with Jesus instead of with the Pharisees
 - The fourth tactic of the enemy is to misquote the truth
 - The Pharisees said no prophet arises from the Galilee
 - They make this assertion as if it was a well-accepted fact
 - But it was not true in the least

- Prophets did in fact arise from the Galilee
 - Jonah, Hosea, Nahum and other prophets originated from the region known as Galilee
 - Perhaps they meant that the Prophet was to come from Bethlehem and not Galilee
 - But I'm not included to give them the benefit of the doubt
- As we move into the next section, make a note of how the enemy works against us when we stand up for the truth of scripture
 - Enemies of the Gospel have four favorite tactics as we've seen used here
 - When you show your faith publicly, they will mock your views as proof of your ignorance and gullibility
 - If you say you rest on scripture to support your views, they will misquote biblical truth
 - If you make logical arguments to reveal their errors, then they will simply abandon the debate and move to attacking you personally
 - In other words, they aren't interested in the truth, because as John said, they hate the light for it exposes their evil deeds
 - You can't reason with spiritually dead people
 - You can only present the truth in love and wait in hope for the Lord to open the heart
- That brings this story to an end, and it launches us into the next

[John 7:53](#) [Everyone went to his home.

[John 8:1](#) But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

[John 8:2](#) Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.

[John 8:3](#) The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,

[John 8:4](#) they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

[John 8:5](#) "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

[John 8:6](#) They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

[John 8:7](#) But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

[John 8:8](#) Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

[John 8:9](#) When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

[John 8:10](#) Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”

[John 8:11](#) She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

- As we begin to study this story, we first need to address a curious issue in this text
 - You may have noticed in your Bible that this passage begins and ends with brackets
 - Brackets means the Bible translators suspect this text was not originally written by John
 - In other words, the story of the adulterous woman that opens John’s eighth chapter was not originally written by John
 - The section 7:53–8:11 appears to have been added several centuries after John wrote His Gospel
 - Most English translations today acknowledge this by enclosing this section in brackets to indicate its questionable origins
 - There are several clues that lead scholars to this conclusion
 - First, the vast majority of original manuscripts of John’s Gospel lack this passage
 - In fact, the passage didn’t appear in manuscripts of John’s Gospel until about the sixth century
 - That was long after the New Testament canon was officially established in the fourth century
 - Also, the style of writing in this passage differs greatly from John’s normal style
 - It reads much more like one of the synoptic Gospel writers

- And it's placement at this point in John's eighth chapter makes for an awkward interruption in John's narrative
- If you jump from John 7:52 directly to John 8:12, the narrative flows seamlessly,
- That suggests the passage was inserted later by a copyist
- So should we still study this passage? Absolutely!
 - The fact that John didn't write these verses doesn't mean the story isn't true or isn't trustworthy as inspired Scripture
 - On the contrary, most scholars believe there is no reason to doubt this story's authenticity
 - Personally, I think Luke is probably the original author, who wrote this account as part of his Gospel under the inspiration of the Spirit
 - The writing style matches his style closely, and it features a woman in distress, which is a favorite theme of Luke
 - And the events would fit very easily into the narrative of Luke 22 when Jesus is teaching in the temple and avoiding the traps of the religious leaders
 - So why would a scribe or copyist move this story out of its proper place in Luke and into John's gospel?
 - In a word: convenience
 - The texts of scripture were copied by hand onto long rolls of parchment called "scrolls"
 - These parchment rolls were made of certain, fixed lengths
 - After the biblical cannon was amended to add chapter and verse headings, copyist endeavored to copy entire books or at least complete chapters of scripture onto a single scroll
 - They resisted spanning a single chapter of scripture across multiple scrolls
 - Usually, a chapter of scripture fit easily on a single scroll, but occasionally copyists would encounter longer chapters

- The men who assembled the NT canon assigned some of the longest chapters in the NT to Luke's Gospel
- While John's Gospel has numerous short chapters
- So a copyist might have been running low on scrolls and reached the end of his parchment while copying Luke 22
 - So to avoid running chapter 22 onto a new scroll, he decided to end the chapter by deleting the story of the adulterous woman altogether
 - Not wanting to lose the material of course, the copyist inserted the story between John's seventh and eighth chapters
 - He chose this location probably because these chapters are also set in the temple and John 8 is relatively short
 - Many unbelieving Bible critics see this textual issue and others like it as evidence that scripture cannot be trusted
 - They scoff at the notion that we can place our trust in what the Bible says
 - They cite examples like this as proof that we can't be sure we have received the scriptural texts in an authentic, unadulterated form
 - Consequently, they dismiss all scripture as untrustworthy and useless for serious study
 - In reality, these examples are proof of just how trustworthy our Bibles truly are
- The surviving record of ancient Biblical manuscripts is simply unparalleled among ancient literature
 - For example, the world today still has over 24,000 surviving ancient manuscripts of New Testament writings
 - By contrast, we have only 643 manuscript copies of all the works of Homer
 - We have only 49 copies of all the manuscripts of Aristotle
 - And in all the world, only 7 copies of all of Plato's work exist in original manuscript form

- Despite the survival of so few copies of these ancient document, you'll never find the academic world questioning the authenticity or accuracy of these works
 - They never wonder whether the works of Plato or Aristotle are worthy of serious study because of the limited number of copies
 - On the contrary, literary scholars in universities the world over devote entire careers to studying the Greek classics
 - No one suggests that our few surviving copies of Plato's works might have been altered or manipulated to the point that they holds no value
- Yet when it comes to scripture - which has far, far better documentation and a far, far more important message - these same academics say the rules should be different
 - We can't be sure scripture was preserved correctly
 - We can't know if it's been modified, since the manuscripts have been copied and changed so many times
 - And because the originals are so old
 - Ironically, the truth is exactly the opposite
- It is because we have so many surviving copies of the original biblical texts that I am able to stand here today and tell you the material in John 8 isn't original
 - We can see how it was moved from one Gospel to another
 - We can compare the many original surviving manuscripts with later copies and detect the changes
 - That's the power of the many thousands of ancient manuscripts
 - The huge number of copies confirms for us the authenticity of what we possess today
 - In fact, no ancient record is better preserved than scripture
 - Because God has ensured His word would be accurately preserved
 - God even reveals to us how the movement of John 7 occurred

- So even though it's not in the right place, nevertheless it's still scripture and worthy of study
- That's the power of God to preserve His word just as He desires
- Back to the story, everyone left the temple at the end of the day, while Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives (probably added to provide a transition)
 - Jesus returns the next day to continue teaching, when Pharisees and the scribes spring a trap on Jesus
 - You might recognize this pattern from the synoptic Gospels
 - The Jewish leaders, who were unbelievers and frauds masquerading as men of God, are frequently shown devising ways to discredit or accuse Jesus
 - They contrived situations that placed Jesus in a dilemma from which there was no easy escape
 - They expected Jesus to either look foolish before the crowds in struggling to avoid the trap
 - Or He would be forced into committing a violation of Roman law
 - Either way, the leaders could neutralize Jesus as a threat to their authority
 - On this occasion, they bring a woman accused of adultery and set her in front of Jesus as He taught the crowd
 - The leaders chose this moment for their trap for good reason
 - Jesus was sitting in the large open court of the Temple, a place filled with many Jews on this week of Passover
 - Whatever happened to Jesus during this confrontation, it would be witnessed by literally hundreds if not thousands of His followers
 - So the Pharisees chose this setting to inflict the maximum potential damage to Jesus' reputation among His followers
 - Secondly, the temple grounds was the one place in Jewish society where the Jewish people had some latitude to exercise their own law free from Roman interference

- In Jesus day, the Jewish people were an occupied nation, under Roman rule and oppression
- Though the Jews had a Law of their own, they were not permitted to exercise self-rule, especially in the area of criminal justice
- For example, Jewish authorities could conduct trials according to their own Law but they could not carry out sentencing without Roman permission and Roman supervision
- Inside the Temple grounds, Jewish leaders had greater freedom and latitude because the Romans would not enter the Jewish courts of the Temple
- This was probably the one place and time of year when Jewish leaders might carryout an execution under Jewish law without Roman interference
- So against this backdrop, the Pharisees ask Jesus to render judgment in the case of this adulteress
 - They claim this woman was caught in the very act of adultery and that such a crime was punishable by stoning, according to the Law of Moses
 - If Jesus agreed with their assessment, then almost certainly the Pharisees would have call upon the crowd to stone the woman on the spot
 - This is challenge they have placed before Jesus: they dare Him to condemn this woman to death
 - Before we look at Jesus' response, we need to recognize that the Pharisees were playing fast and loose with the language of the Law
 - Let's look at the Law concerning adultery in the Law

Lev. 20:10 If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

- The penalty for adultery was death under Moses, but it was to be death for both the man and woman
- So we ask where's the man?
 - The Pharisees claim they caught her in the act, which means they would have caught a man in the act too

- They take time to drag this woman all the way into the Temple grounds to face Jesus
- Then shouldn't we expect them to do the same to the man who is equally guilty?
- So why didn't they apprehend both man and woman and bring them both before Jesus?
- The reason is this woman was just a pawn in a chess match the Pharisees were playing to defeat Jesus
 - She was probably a well-known harlot who the Pharisees would have likely ignored on any other day, but today they make an example of her to trap Jesus
 - It was probably obvious to everyone that the Pharisees had no sincere interest in serving justice
 - Moreover, the Pharisee didn't need Jesus' approval to judge and convict this woman
 - There was no good reason to bring this woman before Jesus at this time and in this manner except in an attempt to discredit Jesus
 - And everyone in the crowd would have see through their game
 - Secondly, the Pharisees misstated the penalty in the Law concerning adultery when they spoke to Jesus
 - The Law does say adulterers deserve death
 - But it doesn't say that adulterers must be stoned
 - In fact, historically the method of execution in Israel for this offense was strangling
 - Later in the time of Ezekiel, it was stripping the offenders naked in public, stoning them and then cut the bodies to pieces with a sword
 - If the adulteress was a daughter of a priest, she was burned to death
 - By Jesus' day, stoning was again an approved method, but it was not required by the Law and it would not have been conducted by crowds in the temple in any case

- It would have been conducted in place outside the city usually, and only after a proper trial
- So these men are demanding immediate, vigilante justice against the woman, which was itself against Jewish custom
- Now we can clearly see how the Pharisees intended to trap Jesus
 - They bring a sympathetic defendant before Jesus in a very public setting and demand Jesus agree to an immediate, harsh judgment
 - Jesus had two equally dangerous options for how to respond to these men
 - Whatever Jesus decides to do, He is likely to run into trouble, either with the crowd or with the authorities
 - On the one hand, Jesus could agree to punish the woman
 - Her guilt was probably beyond doubt
 - And the Law did specify the death penalty for her crime
 - But agreeing with the Pharisees was a real problem for Jesus
 - The crowd knew the Pharisee's were applying the Law selectively and unfairly in this woman's case
 - And they generally hated the Pharisees anyway for their harsh enforcement of the Law and their self-righteous hypocrisy
 - So they would have been sympathetic toward the woman and opposed to the Pharisees
 - Furthermore, the crowd loved Jesus because He taught mercy and forgiveness and fairness and justice
 - So they would have expected Jesus to defend the woman against this kangaroo court injustice
 - If He presided over a stoning of this woman, then everything Jesus stood for – grace and mercy and love – would have been forfeited in the minds of the people
 - This woman's blood would have been on Jesus' hands
 - Which of course was the Pharisees' goal

- Finally, had Jesus agreed to the stoning, the Pharisees could have turned him over to the Romans for ordering an illegal execution
 - The Jews were not allowed to execute capital punishment
 - The Romans reserved that right for themselves
 - So by issuing an order to kill the woman, Jesus would have broken Roman law
- On the other hand, if Jesus had declined to punish the woman, the Pharisees could accuse Jesus of being a law breaker
 - As Heb 10:28 reminds us, anyone who sets aside the Law of Moses is due the punishment of death
 - So Jesus couldn't rule that a guilty woman go free, since the Law required a punishment
 - His own righteousness was at stake
 - The Pharisees would now have a legitimate charge against Jesus with which to prosecute Him
 - So how does Jesus escape this trap?
 - In v.6 we're told Jesus says...nothing
 - He just stoops down and begins to write in the ground
- To fully appreciate what's happening here, we need to put ourselves as an observer in this crowd
 - Imagine yourself seated on the ground in the temple court watching this scene from maybe 30-40 feet away
 - From our seated position, we are surrounded by a sea of other seated people
 - Jesus is standing in the center
 - We see Him clearly above the heads of the thousands of people seated around us on the ground
 - Suddenly, a group of Pharisees and scribes appear on the edge of the crowd, stumbling their way toward Jesus dragging this woman
 - Eventually, they reach Jesus and the confrontation begins

- You hear them challenge Jesus
- And as you strain to hear Jesus' response, you reach the climactic moment when...
- Jesus simply drops down to the ground
 - He disappears out of your view!
 - One moment you're watching Jesus and the Pharisees talking
 - The next moment the Pharisees and this woman are left alone standing in a sea of people
 - They look a bit foolish, don't they?
 - The visual impact is clear
 - Jesus has removed Himself from the conversation
 - He has declined to play their game or participate in their trap
 - More importantly, He has refrained from judging this woman
 - He leaves only the Pharisees standing in the middle of the crowd, isolated in their judgment of this woman
 - While stooped down, we're told Jesus occupies Himself with something a bored child might do: he draws or writes in the dirt
 - He's showing a complete lack of interest in the circumstances
 - We do the same thing today, of course, though we probably don't stoop to draw on the ground
 - Instead, we pull out our iPhones
 - But either way, the message is clear
- Naturally, the Pharisees are uncomfortable by Jesus' maneuver
 - They must have recognized Jesus was avoiding answering their question
 - So the writer tells us that the Pharisees persisted in asking Jesus even as He draws
 - At this point, Jesus straightens up, coming back into view for just a moment

- He presents the Pharisees with a simple condition for how they may proceed if they are to judge this woman
- He says the one among them who has no sin may cast the first stone at her
- Then Jesus promptly returns to His low position near the ground leaving the Pharisees standing alone again
- It wouldn't surprise me if some in the crowd were snickering at this point, though the stakes were very high
- Before I go any further in the story, let's address one of the most hotly debated questions among Bible students...what did Jesus write in the ground?
 - Two popular suggestions are Jesus wrote the Ten Commandments or He wrote a list of sins committed by the Pharisees
 - Before we pass judgment on these ideas or any others, let's acknowledge an important fact:
 - The Gospel writer didn't think it important to include this detail in his account
 - He pays no attention to it what Jesus wrote
 - If what Jesus wrote were important to the story, John would have told us
 - Secondly, any suggestion of what Jesus wrote must be the product of pure guesswork
 - We cannot know what wasn't recorded
 - So while it may make for an entertaining exercise, there can be little value in such speculation
 - In fact, speculation is likely to move us farther away from insight rather than granting us more insight
- Case and point, the two suggestions I mentioned earlier are not only unlikely to be true, they lead us to a wrong view of the moment, in my opinion
 - First, there doesn't appear to be near enough time in this exchange for Jesus to write such an exhaustive document in dirt

- Try writing even one of the commandments in dirt with your finger and you'll see how impractical the whole thing would have been
- Given the length of time that seems to pass in the moment, Jesus wouldn't have had enough time to get more than a few words written out
- Secondly, both these speculations are attempting to suggest the same reason for why the Pharisees' gave up on their trap: guilt
 - The thinking goes that when the Pharisees saw the Ten Commandments or when they saw their sins written in dirt, they were convicted
 - And as that conviction entered their hearts, they felt sorrow and regret for having tried to trick Jesus
 - They felt pity for the woman and they left with their tales between their legs
- But that storyline runs counter to everything else we're told about the Pharisees
 - Jesus' words never bring conviction to the Pharisees, only anger and increasing frustration
 - They may feel conviction, but they never acknowledge it nor react in repentance or sorrow
 - They certainly don't back down simply because Jesus tells them they have sin
 - So these answers are leading us away from what's truly happening, not toward greater insight
- Personally, I don't not believe there was any significance to Jesus' writing - He was probably just doodling for all we know
 - His purpose in being near the ground was simply to disengage from the Pharisees and avoid their question
 - He wanted to separate Himself visually from the Pharisees leaving them to be alone in the eyes of the people
 - He went to the ground as if to identify Himself with the people rather than with these men

- He stooped out of sight to emphasize that only the Pharisees were standing in judgment over this woman
- The Pharisees were her only judges
- If we focus too much on the drawing, we miss the true point of the moment, which is found v.7
 - As Jesus straightens back up and reinserts Himself into the conversation, He says only those without sin may render judgment against her
 - Jesus doesn't deny their accusations or insist the woman wasn't guilty
 - So He isn't contradicting nor contravening the Law
 - Instead, Jesus accepts the role of judge, and renders His decision for how punishment will be executed in this case
 - He established that the standard for those who may execute the sentence against this woman is sinlessness
 - What is Jesus doing here?
 - The Pharisees were the legal authorities in Israel, so they had legal authority to adjudicate this woman's case
 - But at the start of this exchange, they delegated their authority to Jesus to render judgment over this woman
 - They told Jesus He should decide the woman's fate
 - Therefore according to Jewish tradition and law, this woman's judgment would now come from Jesus' decision and not the Pharisees
 - Now we must remember who Jesus truly is
 - He's not simply another rabbi making a determination in some run-of-the-mill criminal case
 - Jesus is THE judge of all creation and for all eternity
 - When Jesus renders judgment for sin, it always carries eternal consequences

- So any judgment Jesus might render against this woman's sin would carry eternal consequences
 - Jesus would be rendering judgment as the Judge of all Creation, because He can do no less
 - Jesus has been appointed as judge of the world by the Father
 - But Jesus is not to render His judgment until an appointed day
 - As Paul declared:

[Acts 17:30](#) "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

[Acts 17:31](#) because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

- For now the Lord is overlooking the times of ignorance, meaning the time when men sin against God
- But in v.31 Paul said this period of overlooking won't last forever
- Once day He will judge the world
- But in His first coming, Jesus did not render judgment but instead offered salvation to sinners
 - Had Jesus been willing to judge the world for its sin, then who could possible stand?
 - Before His atoning work on the cross, there could be no hope of anyone surviving Christ's judgment because all men stand guilty of sin
 - Therefore, it's the supreme example of God's mercy and grace that He sent His Son into the world with a mission that precluded any judgment for the moment

[John 12:47](#) "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not **judge** him; for I did not come to **judge** the world, but to save the world.

[John 12:48](#) "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will **judge** him at the last day.

- Notice Jesus adds that on the last day, Jesus will become the world's judge
- And in the meantime, Jesus cannot pass judgment on sin, not even for a moment like this
- But because Jesus has been assigned authority by the Pharisees to dispose of this woman's case, He rules that her punishment could go forward but only by the hands of sinless executioners
 - Jesus applies the same standard to these men as the Father applies to Jesus
 - Jesus earned His right to judge the world because He lived sinlessly
 - He obeyed the Father perfectly so He alone was qualified to judge sin
 - Therefore, Jesus demands that if these men would presume to take His place as judge, then they must first pass the same test Jesus passed
 - Only the one without sin shall be qualified to begin the execution of this woman
 - Sinlessness is not ordinarily a requirement for passing judgment under the law
 - Imperfect human judges are called upon to bring judgment against lawbreaker everyday
 - But because the Pharisees elected to delegate this particular matter before Jesus, they allowed Him to define the terms of the judgment
 - They committed themselves to whatever course of action Jesus prescribed
 - Now they they have delegated to Jesus' authority, they cannot ignore it or else they will become law breakers themselves
 - So now the Pharisees find themselves in a trap
 - If they choose to stone the woman, they will be mocked by the crowd - and perhaps even charged with blasphemy - for daring to consider themselves sinless
 - And they can't object to Jesus' condition, since they gave Him permission to decide the matter

- So beginning with the oldest, that is to say the wisest, of the group, they decided that they had to retreat
- They aren't retreating out of guilt or sorrow or repentance
- They are retreating angrily, reluctantly, out of fear of the crowds and out of a desire to preserve their pride
- So as the scene comes to an end, only the woman remains with Jesus
 - Jesus asks her who judges you? She says no one, Lord
 - And so Jesus responds, neither do I. Go and sin no more
 - This is the same message the Savior is giving to you from the pages of Scripture tonight
 - No man in this world judges you, for no one is qualified to render that judgment according to God's standard
 - And neither is Jesus passing judgment on your sin...yet
 - If you are a believer, having placed your trust in Christ for your salvation, then know for sure that no one stands in judgment over you
 - Not a man, not a woman, not the enemy, not even the Lord your God stands in judgment over you
 - Your sins have been washed away by the atoning blood of Christ
 - The Lord place only one expectation on you: go and sin no more
 - If you have yet to know Jesus as your Savior, then you will be pleased to know that this is still a time of grace and mercy
 - You may have ignored His commandments, you may have spoken words against Jesus
 - But He tells us that these things may be forgiven during this time of grace, by our faith in Him as our Savior and stoning sacrifice
 - So if you have never placed your trust in Christ, you still have time and opportunity
 - Your sins will not be held against you in the day of judgment if you have accepted the gift of mercy the Lord offers you now
 - But this time of mercy and forgiveness will not last forever

- Sooner or later, the last day will arrive and Jesus will assume His role as judge
- And the Lord's judgment will be strict and inescapable
- How much better is to bow your knee to Him now, while His grace and mercy are still available
- Then to wait for the moment of your conviction on the judgment day
- When every tongue will confess and every knee will bow

John 8

- Our study on the Feast of Tabernacles experience of Jesus continues
 - This feast account began in John 7 when Jesus and His brothers were discussing His attendance at the feast
 - Then it moved into Jesus' secret arrival in Jerusalem that week
 - Then to His teaching in the temple during the later part of the week
 - On the seventh day of the Feast, Jesus is standing in the temple when the time comes for the water drawing festival
 - And as the water is poured out at the altar as part of the Feast celebration, Jesus interrupted the ceremony to declare that those who thirst should come to Him
 - And He would give living water
 - Then in the beginning of chapter 8, we saw Jesus confronted by the Pharisees and the adulterous woman
 - That story was our opportunity to see Jesus get the better of the hypocrites
 - He showed that they were unqualified to judge the woman
 - And when they gave up their game, Jesus refrained from judging the woman as well
 - Now in the rest of chapter 8 and into chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10, the setting remains the Feast of Tabernacles
 - First, in chapter 8 John recounts another moment on the seventh day of the feast with Jesus teaching in the temple
 - Once again, He makes a comparison between Himself and the feast
 - Later in chapter 9, John recounts a healing Jesus performed as He exited the temple
 - The healing in chapter 9 serves as a powerful illustration of the truth of Jesus' teaching in the temple

- Finally in chapter 10 John records one last encounter between Jesus and the crowd, where we see still more division

- First, we must finish chapter 8

[John 8:12](#) Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

[John 8:13](#) So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true."

[John 8:14](#) Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

[John 8:15](#) "You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.

[John 8:16](#) "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.

[John 8:17](#) "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true.

[John 8:18](#) "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me."

- Jesus declares to the crowd gathered in the temple for the greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacle that He is the Light of the world
 - Obviously, this sounds a lot like the declaration that Jesus made in chapter 7 when He said He was a source of living water
 - When Jesus made the comment about living water, He chose the moment when the water ceremony was taking place in the temple
 - And as He speaks these words, another part of the seventh day ceremony was taking place
 - There was a ceremony each evening of the feast called the kindling of the lights
 - There was huge lampstand set up in the temple courtyard
 - This lampstands was similar to the menorah used inside the Holy Place except that only four cups were lit
 - At sundown, the cups were lit
 - Following the lighting, the men in the temple would light smaller torches from the fire of the large lamps engage in dancing and even juggling of fire touches

- This symbolized the Shechinah Glory of God
- However, on the final night of the feast, the lamps were not lit, since the feast had come to an end
 - John said this was the last day of the feast week
 - Which means the lamps were not being lit on this evening
- And so it with the menorah dark, Jesus declares that He is the Light and he who follows Jesus will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life
- By this point in John's Gospel, the meaning of these symbols are familiar to us
 - Light is a picture of eternal glory, righteousness and the truth of God's word
 - And conversely, darkness is a metaphor for evil, the unbelieving heart, and a life of sin and deception
 - Throughout the Bible, light has been associated with God's presence and life-giving power
- And in this moment, the true Light of the world stood before them
 - But in the darkness of their hearts, they didn't see Jesus for Who He was
 - They didn't embrace Him as the Messiah
 - As with the water, Jesus came to fulfill in reality what the symbol of light was intended to represent
 - But the most of the people are missing this truth
- In response to Jesus' provocative words, the Pharisees say Jesus' words are not true because Jesus is testifying about Himself
- The Pharisees are applying a basic principle of the Mosaic Law
 - Under the Law, no matter could be settled on the basis of only one witness
 - Important matters required the testimony of at least two witnesses to protect against the bias and deception of a single opinion

- So these men claim that Jesus' words concerning Himself can't be accepted because Jesus is alone in testifying to Himself as Messiah
 - Notice they realize Jesus is claiming to be Messiah
 - They just aren't willing to accept Jesus' testimony
 - And because they think Jesus is speaking without a corroborating voice, they accuse Jesus of speaking without proof
- Jesus contends with their wrong assumption with two arguments
 - First, He refutes their faulty logical
 - Yes, the Mosaic Law didn't accept the testimony of a single witness
 - But that didn't mean the one witness was automatically untrustworthy
 - So in v.14 Jesus says even if Jesus were testifying about Himself, His testimony isn't automatically false
 - In fact, Jesus says His testimony is true because He knew things that no other man could know
 - He's explaining why there can't be another person to testify to the truth of Christ
 - Because no man has been where Jesus has been and seen what Jesus has seen
 - Jesus knows the whole story of history from beginning to end, and so He must be alone among humanity in this testimony
 - Nevertheless it's true
 - These men are capable only of judging matters of the flesh, that is matters of the physical world
 - It's this world that the Law of Moses was intending to regulate when it told Israel to require two witnesses
 - But it was never intended to be used to judge the testimony of God Himself
 - Furthermore, the men of Israel simply couldn't make such a judgment

- In contrast to this men, Jesus wasn't judging anyone with His witness
 - Remember, we said last week that Jesus was sent into the world at His first coming with a mission that precluded judging
 - We see that clearly here as Jesus states plainly that He is not judging anyone
 - In this situation, He means that His witness is not for the purpose of bringing judgment upon anyone
 - But even if Jesus were to pass judgment upon a man on the basis of just His own testimony, it would still be a true judgment
 - In other words, Jesus' judgment is true despite the fact that He judges alone
 - Simply put, Jesus' testimony is always true and His judgments are always righteous because He is uniquely qualified
 - He is God and therefore, there is no need for another human witness to join with Christ
- Nevertheless, Jesus wasn't alone in His testimony
 - In v.16 Jesus says He was sent by the Father, and the Father is at work testifying as well that Jesus is the Messiah
 - How was the Father testifying to Jesus' identity?
 - First and foremost, by the Law and the Prophets
 - The word of God foretold specifically details of the Messiah's arrival, and Jesus met every one of those tests
 - Including details that were impossible to fake or contrive, like the timing and location of His birth
 - Like His family associations
 - Secondly, the Father testified to Jesus through John the Baptist
 - We heard earlier in this Gospel how John's testimony was a part of how the Father substantiated Jesus' claims
 - And John stated plainly that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lamb of God sent to take away sin

- Finally, the Father is testifying through His Spirit Who empowered Jesus to perform His miracles
 - Every time Jesus performed a miraculous work, the crowds immediately recognized it was a work of God
 - Many would declare it to be so
 - Therefore, if Jesus is performing works that only God can perform, than it's proof that the Father endorses the claims of Jesus
 - Clearly, the Father wouldn't empower Jesus to perform miracles if the Father disagreed with Jesus' claims concerning Himself!
- So Jesus says in vs.17-18, that the Law itself says that the testimony of two in agreement is to be taken as fact in deciding any matter
 - Therefore, to see Jesus and the Father testifying in agreement concerning His identity should be enough for this men
 - They have no legal grounds to refute Jesus' claims in this case
- Now as the crowd heard Jesus' response to the Pharisees, many became intrigued by His claims and His defense to the Pharisees
 - So the crowd itself begins to pick up the interrogation at this point

John 8:19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."

John 8:20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

John 8:21 Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

John 8:22 So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

John 8:23 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

John 8:24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

John 8:25 So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?

John 8:26 "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."

John 8:27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.

- The crowd heard Jesus say that His Father joined Jesus in testifying to His identity as the Messiah
 - So naturally, the crowd asks Jesus where is His father?
 - That question all by itself tells us that the crowd didn't understand Who Jesus truly was
 - Because if you believed Jesus was the Messiah, then you would also have understood that His Father was God in Heaven
 - Because they aren't believing in Him, the crowd assumes He's speaking about an earthly father and asks to see this father
 - So naturally, Jesus declares this obvious truth
 - He says to the crowd you know neither me nor my Father
 - They don't know Jesus in the sense that they aren't believing in Him as Messiah
 - And they don't know the Father in Heaven in the sense that in their unbelief they are not children of God
 - This is an important but often overlooked truth of scripture: only those who believe in Jesus Christ are considered God's children in the Bible
 - As Paul says:

[Rom. 8:14](#) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

[Gal. 3:26](#) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

- By faith in Jesus Christ, we are born again into the family of God
- And through our relationship with Jesus Christ, we come to know the Father
- So when these people rejected Jesus, they were showing evidence that they were not children of the Father in Heaven
- Jesus will have more to say about this topic later in the chapter

- John interrupts the narrative briefly to remind us where Jesus was saying these increasingly provocative statements
 - He was in the treasury of the temple, which is another name for the Court of Women
 - The court of women was the outer most area surrounding the temple proper
 - It was also called the treasury because in this courtyard were 13 stations or receptacles for depositing monetary offerings
 - Since every Jew could enter the court of the women, it was logical for the priests to place offering boxes in this area
 - But John's point is that this is also the most public, most trafficked part of the temple
 - Which means that as Jesus said these words, He was almost certainly speaking before a huge crowd, especially on a feast day
 - And nevertheless, Jesus wasn't being arrested for what He said
 - His words were cutting, derogatory and embarrassing to the religious leaders
 - But they could do nothing to stop Jesus because the Father's sovereign will was preventing them from acting against Jesus
 - Remember this verse the next time you hear someone throw out that over used and theologically inaccurate statement that, "God loves us so much that He gives us free will."
 - Besides contradicting the teaching of the Bible, that thinking conveniently ignores examples like this one
 - The leaders of Israel most certainly wanted to seize Jesus
 - And in the temple they had little standing in their way
 - Not even the Romans were allowed to enter the temple ground
 - And yet they did nothing to stop Jesus
 - And John explains it was because Jesus' time hadn't arrived
 - In other words, the Father wasn't allowing these evil men to do what their wills desired to do

- Far from being free, they were constrained entirely by the Father's will
- There are many, many other examples like this throughout the Bible, disabusing us of the notion that God respects man's will
- Now in v.21 John picks up the narrative again at a later point in Jesus' discourse
 - He tells the crowd that He's going away
 - Though they will seek for Him, they will die in their sin
 - Where Jesus is going, these people cannot come
 - To which the crowd asks if Jesus intended to kill Himself
 - This is a very important exchange we need to understand
 - First, we know that Jesus is speaking about His coming death and ascension into Heaven following His resurrection
 - More importantly, the crowd knew Jesus was talking about dying and entering into Heaven
 - We know this because they ask if He intends to commit suicide
 - The point is that this crowd is not and has not been ignorant of what's happening in their midst
 - They know Jesus is claiming to be the Messiah
 - They know He is calling Himself a Son of the Father God
 - And they know He's predicting His death and entry into Heaven
 - So we can't give this crowd the benefit of the doubt
 - They have all the facts but haven't believed in what they've heard
- Therefore, Jesus says they cannot go where Jesus is going
 - Think about that statement for a moment
 - Why can't they follow Jesus?
 - Paul says in 1 Cor 5 that when we die, we enter into the presence of the Lord

- Yet Jesus says there is no possibility of these people of following Him...why?
- The natural answer is because they do not believe in Him
 - Failure to belief in Jesus in Messiah means never following Him
 - You won't follow Jesus as His disciple while living on this earth
 - But more importantly, you won't follow Jesus into Heaven either
- And Jesus says that though the nation of Israel would continue to seek for their Messiah after Jesus' departure, they won't find Him
 - Because Jesus is that Messiah
 - And once they rejected Jesus as Messiah, then they will always be looking for the wrong thing and never finding it
 - And so they will die in their sins
- This is a clear refutation of those who claim all Jews will saved despite their unbelief merely because they are Jewish
 - Here we see Jesus plainly telling a crowd of Jews that they will die in their sins
 - And they will receive that eternal outcome because they failed to believe in Jesus as the Messiah
- At hearing they were destined for hell, the people grow concerned and begin to act more interested in Jesus' identity
 - They ask Him Who He is?
 - Their question obviously suggests they don't understand Jesus' claims or teaching
 - But we've already seen that they are following just fine
 - They just won't believe in what they hear Jesus saying
 - And notice Jesus calls them out for this hypocrisy
 - He asks them at the end of v.25 what have I been telling you from the beginning?
 - It's a rhetorical question intended to highlight that they have heard all they need to hear

- So He's not buying their feigned ignorance
- And neither will He be persuaded by their ignorance when He passes judgment on them at the Second Resurrection
 - Notice in v.26 Jesus says He has many things to speak and judge concerning these people
 - What a scary thought, at least for these people
 - God looks at them and says He has a lot to share with them at their judgment
 - It's like when you're in a public place and you make your mother upset at you
 - So she leans over and says "We'll talk about this when we get home."
 - You just know that isn't a conversation you're going to enjoy
- For now, Jesus is sent to speak the truth that the Father has given Him to share with the world
 - But in their unbelief, John says in v.27 that the crowd just didn't get what Jesus was telling them
 - There was a barrier to their understanding
 - That barrier was their own sin
 - And only by the work of God's Spirit can that veil be lifted
 - Nevertheless, there is and always will be a remnant of believers in Israel
 - And this moment is no exception

John 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

John 8:29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

John 8:30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

John 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

John 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

- At this point, Jesus turns His attention to His sheep, those in the crowd who hear and understand the truth
 - Jesus tells them when you lift up the Son of Man, you know that I am the Messiah you've been waiting for
 - He meant when Israel lifted Jesus up in their rejection of Him, they would be fulfilling prophecy
 - And they would be setting in motion God's plan to put His own Son to death on behalf of men
 - And as Jesus is crucified, there will be amazing displays of God's power all around
 - From the sky going dark
 - To earthquakes and the rent of the temple veil
 - And most importantly, the resurrection of Jesus' body on the third day
 - All these signs will become compelling evidence of Jesus' deity and claims as Messiah, and for many it will be convincing evidence
 - The Holy Spirit will use these signs to bring many in Israel to faith after the death of Christ
 - Though most of Israel will fail to see the truth
- Even now, John says many in the crowd were believing in Jesus as the Messiah, and now Jesus begins to address these
 - The key message for anyone who believes in Jesus is to continue in His word
 - Those who continue in the word of Christ are showing themselves to truly be His disciple
 - The word disciple means pupil or student
 - And you become a disciple by faith in Christ's word
 - As Paul says

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- But in v.31 Jesus emphasizes the need to truly be His disciple
 - The word truly in Greek is alethos, which means for sure or indeed
 - It's a word emphasizing the degree of something
 - And so the disciple of the greatest degree is the one that continues in the word of Christ
- Continuing means to think, live and rely entirely on the word of God
 - Jesus says that pleasing Him depends on continuing or abiding in His word
 - If a Christian doesn't make studying and living out the word of God a priority, they cannot be said to be a disciple to the fullest extent
 - Certainly not the extent Christ expects according to John 8:31
- Our reward for that pursuit is that we will come to know the truth in all respects
 - Not merely the truth of what's written in the pages of scripture
 - Though that would be more than enough by itself
 - But also our general knowledge of God's mind and heart
 - We not only learn what the Master wrote, but we also come to know the Master Himself
 - This is the reason VBVM exists
 - We believe that there is simply nothing else a believer can do or even should do to truly be a disciple of Christ
 - We must make study and application of His word a priority
- Now the conversation returns to the unbelievers in the crowd, who proceed to attack Jesus' teaching and try to pick it apart

John 8:33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

[John 8:35](#) “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

[John 8:36](#) “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

[John 8:37](#) “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

[John 8:38](#) “I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.”

- The unbelievers pick up on Jesus saying that His truth will set them free, and they challenge Him to explain how they are enslaved
 - Ironically, they say they are Abraham’s descendants, and therefore they have never been enslaved
 - It’s ironic because Israel had been enslaved to one degree or another almost continuously for hundreds of years
 - Even as they spoke those words, this generation was under Roman occupation
 - They might not be slaves in the harshest sense of the word, but they were certainly not free either
 - They were prideful and self-deluded even in this fact
 - But of course, Jesus wasn’t talking about slavery to another man
 - He was talking about slavery to your own nature
 - The sin nature of every person enslaves that person
 - It’s a slavery because we aren’t the master over our sin
 - It is the master over us
 - It blinds us and drives us, leading us into destruction
 - The truth of Who Christ is has the power to free us from that slavery
 - That truth grants us a new spirit capable of resisting the sin of our flesh
 - And resisting the temptations of the devil
 - Ultimately, knowing Christ sets us free from the penalty of sin, which is what Jesus means when He says we are free indeed

- These people claimed to be exempt from worry because they were descendants of Abraham
 - Being physically descended from Abraham, being called a Jew, was their insurance policy, or so they thought
 - Jesus points out the ironic flaw in their thinking
 - They say they were sons of Abraham
 - Yet here they are trying to kill Abraham's Seed, the Messiah
 - Therefore, the word of God has no place in their hearts
 - Now Jesus takes the gloves off, saying they have a father who different than Jesus' Father in Heaven
 - Obviously, we know Jesus is speaking of the devil, but He will say this specifically in a moment
 - Every unbeliever is an agent of Satan, though he or she doesn't realize this
 - Ironically, those unbelievers who openly declare themselves to be Satan worshippers are the closest to understanding their true identity
 - Jesus speaks concerning the things He has seen, the same things the Father has seen
 - With each of these statements Jesus is continuing to emphasize His oneness with the Father
 - How could a mere man see everything God the Father sees?
 - Jesus is obviously saying He's God as well
 - But this crowd is only able to speak what has been revealed to them by their father
 - If they can't hear from the Father in Heaven, then they have only the devil feeding them knowledge
 - Jesus goes on to explain

[John 8:39](#) They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

[John 8:40](#) "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

[John 8:41](#) "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

[John 8:42](#) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

[John 8:43](#) "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.

[John 8:44](#) "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

[John 8:45](#) "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

[John 8:46](#) "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

[John 8:47](#) "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

- Now the argument heats up...sensing that they've just been insulted, they protest that Abraham is their father
 - By associating themselves with Abraham, they were claiming to be just like him
 - And in doing so, they fall right into Jesus' trap set earlier
 - If they are truly of Abraham, then they would have followed Abraham faith
 - They would have done the deeds that Abraham did
 - Specifically, the notable deed that Abraham did was to believe in the word of Christ

[Gen. 15:6](#) Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

- By His faith in God's word, he was deemed righteous
- But this crowd was anything like Abraham in that regard

- Instead, they were seeking to kill the God who has spoken to them
 - Clearly, this is something that Abraham never dared to do
 - I detect a certain dry sense of humor creeping into Jesus words, don't you?
- Again, Jesus provokes His audience in v.41 saying they are doing the deeds of "their" father, which by now they clearly understood to be the enemy
 - So they respond – and we can safely assume they are growing more agitated with each response
 - They say that God is their Father
 - But Jesus counters that those who are sons of God will love Christ
 - Here again, we see the definition of a son or daughter of God: someone who know Christ as Lord
 - And the reason we equate loving Christ with begin "of the Father" is that these two are truly One
 - You can't separate the trinity; you can't divide the three members of the Godhead
 - So it is spiritually impossible for the same heart to love one while despising another
 - So as Jesus stood before the crowd, He became a test for their hearts
 - If they responded positively to His words, they were also giving evidence that they were loved by the Father
- Now we're back to the essential topic of the nature of saving faith
 - As Jesus says in v.43, the unbelieving crowd can't understand what He's saying because they can't hear His word
 - Obviously, they weren't deaf, so they are capable of hearing the sound of Jesus' voice
 - But spiritually speaking, they can't hear or receive the words Jesus is speaking

- The ability to hear the word of God and receive it as truth depends on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to enable that understanding
 - And as we learned in John 6, that ability is entirely dependent on the Father having granted us ears to hear
 - Essentially, Jesus is telling the crowd that they can't understand Him because they aren't in the family of God
 - And they aren't in the family, because the Father hasn't opened their ears
- To settle the paternity question, Jesus then names names
 - He says the unbelieving crowd's father is the devil
 - To say that someone has the Father as the devil means that they have not been born again
 - Each person is born once in the fallen nature of Adam
 - And that fallen nature owes its existence to the enemy, who authored the fall in the Garden
 - In that sense, every unbeliever is a child of the devil and under the devil's authority
 - And the principle the crowd was trying to apply earlier concerning their association with Abraham still holds here
 - You are like the one you descend from
 - Earlier, they wanted to claim Abraham as their father, so they could claim to share in his attributes
 - Well, now Jesus uses that principle against them
 - They are like their father, the devil
- All unbelievers share the devil's character attributes to one degree or another - just as we did prior to faith
 - The devil was a murderer from the beginning
 - Jesus is referring to Satan's effort to murder the Messiah when he orchestrated Abel death
 - Remember, it was Cain who killed Abel, and yet Jesus is crediting Satan with that murder

- That illustrates that the evil heart of unbelieving men is a reflection of the corrupting influence of Satan, who is the author of that corruption
- So it's fair to say that Satan was murdering Abel because he transferred His murderous heart to Cain
- And here again Satan is working through the evil hearts of his children to murder the Messiah in the flesh
- Furthermore, Satan is a liar, and there is no truth in him
 - Satan is 100% aligned against God
 - So whatever God says or advocates, Satan will reliably speak or act in the opposite direction
 - His primary tactic is to distort and pervert whatever God says is good and holy
 - And likewise, so will those who are under his authority and molded in his pattern
- Therefore, this crowd was molded in the likeness of the devil
 - So the devils words resonate with them
 - While God's word spoken from the lips of Christ fell on deaf ears
- Before we go any further, let's also acknowledge that this rule isn't without exceptions, at least on a small scale
 - For example, we can find unbelievers doing kind and caring things for others
 - We can find unbelievers acting generously at times
 - Showing kindness and consideration for others from time to time
 - We know unbelievers who are generally trustworthy and truthful
 - And by that same token, we know believers who act in very ungodly ways, including ourselves
 - Believers who lie, cheat and scheme others
 - Believers who are unkind and uncaring to others

- Believers who even act violently against others
- But these exceptions simply serve to prove the rule
 - It's relatively rare and refreshing to find unbelievers who consistently act with genuine kindness, selflessness and generosity
 - And it's equally rare to find true believers who show no fruit of the Spirit in their relationships
 - That rarity reminds us that there is an undeniable pattern that differentiates those who are sons of God from those who are sons of the enemy
- Now the argument comes to its climactic end on this important feast day

[John 8:46](#) "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"

[John 8:47](#) "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

[John 8:48](#) The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

[John 8:49](#) Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

[John 8:50](#) "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

[John 8:51](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

- In v.46 Jesus lays out another reason to consider Him to be God
 - He claims to have no sin
 - He asks the crowd to show evidence that Jesus has ever sinned
 - Can you imagine making a similar statement to a huge crowd, including people who had followed you for months and even years?
 - Wouldn't you fear the answer that might come back from such a question?
 - Of course, we would fear the answers we might hear from a crowd, but Jesus didn't

- In fact, there is no record that anyone could offer a single example of sin in Jesus' life
- Once again, what kind of man can safely claim to be without sin?
- Only God Himself can make such a claim
- Then again, if no one could convict Jesus of any sin, then why aren't they believing what He says?
 - Isn't the word of a sinless man trustworthy by definition?
 - And yet here they were rejecting the word of a man they couldn't convict of even one sin
- Even more clearly, Jesus says His words are the words of God in v.47
 - He says that those who are of God will hear the words of God, referring to the words He's been speaking
 - Naturally, they are unable to hear and understand His words since they aren't of God
 - And of course, the crowd has clearly got this point as well
 - Since they now resort to personal attacks, calling Jesus a Samaritan and demon possessed
 - These are some of the worst accusations they could direct at Jesus
 - They call Him Samaritan because Jesus came from the Galilee, which bordered Samaria
 - And they call Him demon possessed to explain His miraculous powers
- Notice in v.49 Jesus denies their accusation and says they are dishonoring Him in what they say
 - Attributing the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan is something Jesus encountered more than once
 - And every time it happened, the crowd was repeating the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, as Jesus explained in Matthew 12

- They were standing in the living presence of the Messiah in the flesh and saw His works done by the power of the Holy Spirit
- And still they declared Him to be Satan
- That sin dishonored Jesus and was unforgivable to anyone in that generation who committed it
- Ultimately, it was this entire generation of Israel that fell to this judgment
- I like the way Jesus quickly turns His response away from defending His own honor and back to preaching the Gospel to the crowd
 - He says He is not seeking for His own glory in this time on earth
 - Jesus is working for the One Who seeks and judges
 - In other words, while Jesus is not a threat to them in this moment, they can be sure that they are in jeopardy
 - And one day, they will be judged and will pay the price for dishonoring God's only Son
- Still, He returns to making known the escape that exists for those who believe in Him
 - The Gospel is never far from Jesus' mind or words
 - He says if they keep His word, they won't see death, meaning the Second Death in the Lake of Fire
- This is the model we've been handed and we should follow as well
 - We should be prepared to defend our faith and to an extent our own testimony
 - But that's not the emphasis in our testimony
 - If we're attacked for what we believe, we can't take those attacks personally
 - The world may dishonor us and Christ Himself, but we push that aside and leave room for the Lord to seek vengeance on our behalf
 - Meanwhile, we return to offering them the grace of God in Christ

[John 8:52](#) The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'

[John 8:53](#) "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

[John 8:54](#) Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God';

[John 8:55](#) and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

[John 8:56](#) "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

[John 8:57](#) So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

[John 8:58](#) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

- Finally, to end the chapter, the exchange is becoming increasingly acrimonious
 - In fact, given their obvious hard hearts, you have to wonder why Jesus pursued the conversation this far anyway
 - The Jews says they know Jesus must have a demon if He says that those who keep His word can't die
 - They take Jesus' words too literally, asking if Jesus was greater than the great men who preceded Him
 - Yet those great men died, so is Jesus saying He was greater?
 - There is so much irony here we hardly know where to start in listing it all out
 - First, the crowd sets forth the standard that all men die, even the great men of history
 - But they never go to the next step and ask why men must die?
 - The answer Paul gives in Romans 5 is that all men sin, and therefore all men must die
 - And that death doesn't end with the body but extends to the soul as well, which goes to the Lake of Fire
 - But Jesus has declared that those who heed His word won't experience death, at least in the sense of eternal death

- So yes, He was saying He was greater than any other man
- But yet Jesus is going to die at least for a time
- But that death is for the sake of you and I, so that we don't have to die
- So the chief irony was that the Man without sin Who should never die was prepared to die for those who deserved to die for sin
- And meanwhile, those He was offering to save were mocking Jesus for claiming to be better than men died in their sin
 - Men who died knowing that a Christ would one day die in their place
- As Jesus says, Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus day
 - He means that Abraham understood the Gospel enough to know that a savior would one day be sent
 - And that savior would be the sacrifice God provided to save men from their sin
 - Abraham knew he wasn't going to live long enough to see that day in the flesh
 - But he rejoiced to see that day arrive nonetheless
 - Jesus has repeatedly said He is working to glorify the Father, Who Jesus knows but this crowd has never known
 - Jesus says He can't deny knowing the Father as He does, otherwise Jesus would be a liar like them
 - He knows the Father and keeps the Father's word
 - Jesus hasn't pulled any punches nor softened the language
 - Notice that Jesus is speaking to a crowd of unbelievers, yet He's not working to win them over
 - Why not? Why is Jesus speaking so harshly to them?
 - Because, these are not His sheep, not appointed by the Father, and therefore He isn't spending time trying to persuade people who can't be persuaded

- He isn't casting pearls of truth before swine to be trampled under in the mud
- In the final moments of this discussion, the crowd reacts to Jesus' mention that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day
 - They ask sarcastically if Jesus, being less than 50 years old, could have been old enough to know Abraham personally
 - Of course, this comment is just further proof that they couldn't see what Jesus was saying with spirit eyes
 - Everything Jesus said was going over their heads because He was speaking with spiritual truth
 - But they were hearing it with unbelieving ears
 - So they assume Jesus is just a man, as so if Jesus says Abraham knew of Jesus' day, it must require that these two men have met at some point
 - Which was clearly impossible to the crowd
 - I imagine some were snickering when they heard Jesus say this
 - Of course, they miss Jesus' main point
- So Jesus gives them the point plainly: before Abraham was, I am
 - Clearly, Jesus is stating clearly He is God
 - You couldn't select a better phrase to more clearly make that point
 - This is another of the "I am" statements in John's Gospel
 - And this one is particularly powerful, because it echoes the statement Christ made to Moses in the burning bush
 - And that connection wasn't lost on this crowd
 - Here's a man standing in the temple intended to serve as God's home on earth, and the One intended to inhabit it is standing in the courtyard declaring the unforgettable words given to Moses
 - I am
 - Jesus says He is the great I AM
 - He is God, the eternal, almighty awesome and holy God

- And the fact that He's standing before them in a humble human form was beyond human comprehension
- And it still is
- If you accept the truth of this claim, then your agreement is proof in itself that you are a child of God, made so by the will and power of the Father
 - If you can't accept this statement, then you are of your father the devil
 - But if you humble yourself, accept the truth of your Savior sent to die in your place, then you too can be born again
 - But if you can't, you will die in your sin
- We'll cover the last verse as part of next week's teaching in John 9, my favorite miracle healing in all the Gospels...

John 9

One day during rush hour, the George Shearing (American jazz pianist who had been blind since birth) found himself at a busy Manhattan intersection, waiting for someone to help him across the street.

After waiting for some time, he was finally tapped on the shoulder. Unfortunately, it was another blind man, seeking similar assistance. What did Shearing do?

"What could I do?" Shearing later laughed. "I took him across - and it was the biggest thrill of my life!"

- Talk about the blind leading the blind!
 - Today's chapter in the Gospel of John is a well-known miracle of Jesus healing a blind man
 - Jesus grants sight to blind men at several points in the Gospels
 - In fact, the most common miracle Jesus performs across all the Gospels is restoring sight to the blind
 - Because restoring sight physically is a simple and beautiful picture of God granting understanding to the spiritually blind
 - In fact, the Old Testament regarding the ability to restore sight to the blind as a uniquely divine power and a sign of the Messiah
 - While each such event is remarkable, this particular example in John 9 stands apart
 - In his ninth chapter, John tells the story of a blind man healed by Jesus
 - This miracle is closely connected to the events of the prior chapters
 - All Israel was celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles
 - Meanwhile, they were disputing and debating over the identity of Jesus
 - Therefore, the nation was forfeiting the opportunity to receive the Kingdom in this generation
 - But we said last week that though the nation as a whole rejects Jesus, the opportunity remains for individual Jews to receive the Gospel

- And chapter 9 records one such example
- And it serves to illustrate the contrast between the nation's leaders, who rejected Jesus
- And the outcasts of Israel who received Jesus
- And once again, the nature of saving faith is front and center in this story
- Let's read the text that opens the chapter

[John 9:1](#) As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

[John 9:2](#) And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

[John 9:3](#) Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

[John 9:4](#) "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

[John 9:5](#) "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

- As Jesus is leaving the temple on the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He comes across a blind man, one born blind
 - The disciples decide to use this man's plight as an object lesson in theology
 - They ask Jesus why this man was born blind?
 - Clearly, they are assuming God made this man to be born blind for some purpose (it's not a random act of nature)
 - And they propose two possible reasons
 - First, they suggest that this man may have been born blind as a result of his parents having sinned prior to his birth
 - The disciples are repeating a common misconception among Jews in their day
 - It comes from a misunderstanding of Ex 34:6-7 which states in part that the Lord will visit the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations

- So they assumed that blindness was God's way of visiting the iniquity of parents on the children
- As strange as this thinking may be for us, the disciples' second possible explanation is even more bizarre
 - They suggest that this man's own sin was to cause for his blindness
 - And yet since he was born blind, how could he have sinned so as to result in this punishment?
- The Pharisees taught the idea that a child could have an inclination toward evil even while still in the womb
 - They would cite the struggle between Jacob and Esau while in the womb in Gen 25 as proof of this concept
 - Even if so, how could a prenatal child commit sin while in his mother's womb?
 - The Pharisees taught that when a baby kicked in the womb, he was striking the mother in violation of Exodus 21:15 which says it's a sin to strike your mother or father
 - Therefore, they proposed that it was possible for a child to sin in the womb and then be born blind as God's punishment
- Both these suggestions are false teaching born out of a serious misunderstanding of God's word
 - And Jesus quickly dispels these myths by His answer
 - He says that neither option they suggested is correct
 - God doesn't transfer the guilt of one person to another
 - Neither can a child sin in the womb, though it is true that all people possess an evil nature from birth
 - Instead, this man was made to be blind by God so that the works of God might be displayed in him
 - The works of God Jesus is describing is the healing miracle He's about to perform, of course

- When He says “works of God,” Jesus is referring to a Jewish teaching that said when the Messiah came to Israel, He would be known by His ability to perform certain miracles
- These Messianic miracles would be things that only God Himself can perform, and therefore they would be clear proof of the Messiah
- The three Messianic miracles were healing leprosy, casting out a mute demon, and giving sight to a man born blind
 - In the Law there is a provision for what the priests are to do should a person be healed of leprosy
 - But in all Israel’s history, there is no record of any Jew ever being healed of leprosy
 - And rabbis had a means for exorcising demons, but only if the demon within the person chose to speak
 - They had no power to cast out mute demons
 - And blindness that comes upon a person after birth is sometimes corrected in time, either by the natural healing of the body or other remedies
 - But a person born blind had never been healed by anyone
- So by His words, Jesus was announcing His intention to demonstrate His divinity and His claim to Messiah by healing this man of his blindness
 - And when Jesus takes this step, He will be performing a work of God
 - And therefore, this man was born blind so that on this day Jesus could heal him
- This concept runs completely counter to our modern view of life and health and physical well being
 - We rarely stop to consider that God’s plan for our lives almost certainly includes physical ailments and limitations
 - It likely includes sickness, injury or defects of one kind or another
 - And in each case, these conditions are His prerogative

- They exist to give opportunity for His glory
- The question is, do we use them that way?
 - As we face these trials in our life, do they influence our perception of ourselves and of God?
 - Do we even consider and understand this principle that God may assign us infirmities for His glory?
- For example, consider the man born blind
 - He was helpless with no hope for a cure
 - This blind man had no reason to ever expect to receive his sight
 - Only the healing act of the creator Himself could reverse a condition that had existed from birth
- On the other hand, we often have many options for correcting our physical ailments
 - Are we as quick to credit God when we are healed?
 - And if healing doesn't come when we want or at all, can be content trusting there is something glorifying in it?
- Jesus then says we (meaning Jesus and the Spirit) must do the work of the Father as long as it is day because night is coming when no one can work
 - Jesus is speaking of the unique time while He walked the earth to testify to the Father
 - It was absolutely essential that Jesus, working by the Spirit of God, should do these miracles
 - They were an eternal testimony to His claims, and everything the Father had purposed for the Son to do must come to pass
 - As long as Jesus and the Spirit are in the world, it is a time of Light on earth, which Jesus calls day
 - Once Jesus departs, the earth will experience a period of night in the sense that the Light of Christ will have left the earth for a time
 - Not until Pentecost will the power of God's Spirit return to work miracles through the Apostles

- So having explained this man's predicament and set up the reason for Jesus' acting on His behalf, Jesus then proceeds to heal him

[John 9:6](#) When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,

[John 9:7](#) and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

- There are several aspects to this story that are unique and intriguing
 - First, notice that this man never requests Jesus' healing nor does Jesus ask the man if he wants to be healed
 - Jesus action is in keeping with His explanation that God purposed to bring this man into the world blind for this reason
 - But from a personal point of view, you have to imagine the blind man is taken by surprise
 - One minute he's sitting there...
 - The next moment he's being assaulted by some passerby (or so he might think)
 - The second unique aspect of this healing is the way Jesus chose to heal this man
 - This is the only healing recorded in scripture where Jesus uses a physical substance in the healing process
 - Specifically, He makes clay from dirt and spittle and applies it to the man's eye lids
 - This unexpected, and presumably unnecessary extra step has always intrigued readers
 - Was there something supernatural in the substance?
 - Was there some special message hidden in it?
 - The answer comes later in the story
- Before we read further in the story, we need to take note of an important subtext in this account
 - We have a lot more in common with this man than you might think

- Like him, we were all born blind
- We each had a birth defect
- When we entered the world, we came with a fallen nature, a defective spirit, one we inherited from Adam
- Even David, the king of Israel, said so of himself when he wrote

Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

- Our sin nature was handed down to us by our parents, who inherited it from Adam and Eve
 - Ironically, the Pharisees were on to something when they said a man could be born blind because of his parents' sin
 - There was more truth in their words than they realized
 - But it isn't blindness of the body but rather blindness of the spirit that comes from our parents
 - As Paul taught

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned –

- Our sin prevented us from seeing God truly, much less knowing him in a personal way
 - In fact, the Romans also says that we were born enemies of God
 - Isn't ironic that though the world is obsessed at times with finding God or religion, in reality it is His enemy and incapable of finding Him
- Which explains why it ends up worshipping gods of its own making
 - Since the world don't have access to the one true God, our conscience seeks to fill that void with other gods
 - Gods in the form of other religions, or perhaps gods of the material world like money, power, sex, career, relationships
 - But none of it ever fills a vacuum that only an infinite God can satisfy

- Our spiritual blindness is similar to the blind man in that way as well
 - There is no solution for our defect to be found among men
 - This man had no hope for a cure on earth
 - The only hope for his condition was that the Creator Himself might provide a solution
 - Unless God healed Him, he would remain blind forever
 - Obviously, John wants us to see the parallels between this man's physical condition and the world's spiritual condition
 - So as we move ahead, we'll continue seeking those parallels
 - Meanwhile, there is still more mystery to uncover in this
 - Jesus applies the clay to his eye lids, and tells the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam
 - And then the man went and washed, after which he gained his sight
 - Consider this moment from the perspective of the man himself
 - As we already noted, he never asked to be healed, though no doubt he welcomed it
 - So what was he thinking when Jesus applied the clay?
 - Jesus never addresses him prior to applying the mud
 - The only thing he heard Jesus say was go and wash in the pool
 - He must have been thoroughly confused by the whole affair
- So Jesus tells this man to go wash his eyes in a pool, but the man still had a choice in the matter
 - Why should he do what Jesus said?
 - Jesus didn't mention that He intended to perform a healing
 - He merely told the man to walk to the pool and wash off
 - This pool was a considerable distance down a steep hill from the temple courtyard where Jesus encountered him

- And Jesus told him to go to a fairly unimportant pool in Jerusalem...there were probably closer places to go
- All of this trouble to wash off mud from his eyes, mud he never asked for and for reasons he doesn't understand
 - Why would he do it?
 - Why do something so foolish?
 - This command was the word of God, spoken by Jesus
 - And while the word might have seemed foolish to some, it is powerful in the heart of man chosen by God
 - So he went, without a word and washed
- The pool Jesus sends the man to was the pool of Siloam, a pool the closely associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, which had just concluded
 - This pool you may remember was the source for the water the priests carried to the temple for the water drawing ceremony
 - It was not a pool known for healing at all
 - It's significance was primarily in the way it supplied the water for the feast
 - And of course we remember that Jesus declared Himself to be the source of living water while He taught in the temple
 - Secondly, this pool would have been a busy, bustling place during this week, with crowds gathered to see the priests and share in the ritual
 - So it seems Jesus selected this pool for maximum symbolism and maximum public exposure
 - As this blind man entered the pool stumbling about, the people would have taken no notice, since they were probably used to him stumbling about on account of his blindness
 - But as he came up out of the water healed, it would certainly make an impression
- Sure enough, it has its intended effect:

[John 9:8](#) Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"

[John 9:9](#) Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one."

[John 9:10](#) So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

[John 9:11](#) He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."

[John 9:12](#) They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

- The blind man's healing causes a real stir among the people in Jerusalem
 - They are so astonished, they begin to question if it's even the same guy
 - All the while, he's telling them plainly it's me, your buddy the blind man
 - As they begin to realize what's happened, they ask the obvious question, who healed you?
 - He tells them that Jesus healed him
 - Clearly, the man knew of Jesus, probably because of the commotion Jesus' teaching had been causing in the temple
 - Or perhaps from Jesus' past healing in Jerusalem
 - He retells Jesus' actions and words and of how he listened and obeyed Jesus' words
 - And then finally, he declares I received sight
 - At this, the crowd at the pool asks the obvious question...where is this guy?
- And at this point, we can piece together the reason Jesus used the clay to heal the man's eyes
 - First, we know this man was blind when Jesus first approached him and performed the healing miracle using the clay
 - We can safely presume that this man's eyes were healed in the very moment Jesus touched him, for that's the way Jesus always heals in the Gospels

- But because Jesus applied mud to the man's eyes, he was unable to open them at the moment of his healing
- Though the man could see, he was prevented from seeing by the mud pressing on his eyelids
- So he had no choice but to walk with his eyes closed until he could wash them off in the pool
- Secondly, we now understand Jesus sent the man to wash in the pool,
 - It wasn't because the water in the pool possessed the power to heal
 - It was because of the pool's significance
 - It reminds us of the living water in the Feast of Tabernacles
 - And it's surrounded by witnesses, who could see the man's testimony
- Can you see a beautiful picture of salvation forming here?
 - We are saved because the Lord does a work in our hearts, causing us to be born again
 - We all come from dirt, fashion into the first man, Adam
 - And likewise, we must be born again, into the likeness of Christ
 - Secondly, that salvation comes upon us when we don't expect it, as a gift given to us before we even know to ask for it
 - We are struck by the Gospel and it arrests our heart
 - It heals us of our spiritual blindness
 - But this work of God has a purpose of glorifying Him
 - In fact, we are born blind so that the works of God may be done in us
 - Thirdly, following our conversion, the Lord commands us to wash in water
 - We are sent to a pool to wash, a ritual called baptism
 - And this washing is accomplished in a public way so that witnesses may see our conversion and inquiry about its source

- And there is yet another reason Jesus uses mud in this healing
 - By the time the blind man could open his eyes, he was a long way from where he met Jesus
 - And he had never set eyes upon his healer
 - In other words, the blind man couldn't have identified Jesus even if he were to see Jesus again
 - So as he declared Jesus to be his healer, he was giving praise to a faceless Savior Who he knew only by the Savior's words
 - So now when the people ask for him to produce the person who did this healing, the man is without an answer
 - He can't identify the person
 - He can't satisfy the crowds skepticism
 - And yet his new found sight continues to intrigue them
 - If they are to ever know the truth of what happened, they must accept the testimony of this man or remain unconvinced
 - Jesus devised a clever means of healing that allowed Him to remain in the shadows while placing His word front and center
 - This man has only the word of Christ to credit for his transformation
 - It was Christ's word that cured Him and led him to the pool
 - And now it's that word which this man testifies to now
- As you might imagine, this event caught the attention of the religious leaders who were everywhere in Jerusalem in this festival week
 - And they were particularly interested in stories of Jesus' antics

John 9:13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind.

John 9:14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

John 9:15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

[John 9:16](#) Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

[John 9:17](#) So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

[John 9:18](#) The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight,

[John 9:19](#) and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

[John 9:20](#) His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

[John 9:21](#) but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

[John 9:22](#) His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

[John 9:23](#) For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

- The final day of the week-long feast was considered a Sabbath day and a high holy day in the Law
 - So tales of Jesus healing on the Sabbath were of great concern to the Pharisees
 - The Pharisees follow a typical in their approach to a work of God
 - First, they reject the healing on the basis that it violated the Sabbath
 - Under their man-made rules, no one could perform a healing on the Sabbath since it was considered work
 - So they say the healer couldn't be from God (therefore he must be from Satan) and be a sinner
 - But other Pharisees disputed this finding, since a sinner couldn't have performed a healing
 - What they're arguing about is really whether God was involved
 - One group says no because He would never be involved in a work on the Sabbath

- The other group says certainly Jesus was not be a sinner since God would never perform such a work through a sinner
- So was God involved in this healing or not?
 - Because if God were at the heart of it, then we had better seek out this healer and worship Him
 - But the Pharisees aren't looking for a new god...they already have a god of their own making
 - It was the Law of Moses, and it suited their purposes just fine
- The Pharisees aren't interested in uncovering the truth; they are only interested in discrediting those they oppose
 - So in this case, they look for a way to discredit the miracle
 - They dispute the man's story
 - He was never blind, they say
 - They are working so hard to discredit this man's claims because if they agree that a man born blind has been healed, then by their own teaching, they must admit Jesus is the Messiah
 - But since they refuse to accept this teaching, they are determined to undermine the facts
 - So they call the parents hoping to hear that this man was not born blind after all
 - But his parents testify that their son had been born blind
 - And they claim ignorance about how he gained his sight
 - Because of course they don't know
 - And they stop short of making any conclusions about the man who healed their son
 - They were afraid of the Pharisee
 - Because if they accepted their son's testimony concerning Jesus, they would become a target of the authorities
 - And these men were clearly disinterested in any testimony that supported Jesus as Messiah

- So the parents say their son can speak for himself
- So they call the blind man to testify again

[John 9:24](#) So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."

[John 9:25](#) He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

[John 9:26](#) So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

[John 9:27](#) He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

[John 9:28](#) They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

[John 9:29](#) "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from."

[John 9:30](#) The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.

[John 9:31](#) "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.

[John 9:32](#) "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

[John 9:33](#) "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

[John 9:34](#) They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

- The blind man stands before these esteemed religious leaders and engages in something of a debate
 - They want him to testify that the man who healed him was in some way a sinner
 - Their angle is once again to discredit Jesus so they can avoid crowning Him Messiah
 - So if Jesus could be said to be a sinner, then He could be disqualified as the Messiah
 - And if Jesus is just a sinner, then His healing was not an act of God
 - It would be explained as an act of Satan
 - But the man won't give in to their pressure

- First, he says you're not interested in the facts or in knowing the truth
- Ironically, the blind man has discernment to see through the tricks of these men
- He says to them you evidently didn't listen to my story closely enough the first time
- And therefore he concludes that they don't *want* to listen
- And then he begins to mock them a little
 - He asks if their intense interest in knowing more about Jesus was because they wished to become his disciples
 - As the blind man probably expected, this suggestion enrages the Pharisees
 - They say they are already disciples...of Moses
 - Notice they don't say of God
- Then the healed man mocks the Pharisees again
 - He says isn't this an amazing thing...
 - You don't know where this healer came from yet you know He opened a blind man's eyes
 - His point is you know exactly what this means, but you're unwilling to admit it
 - Since there had never before been a man cured of blindness from birth, the conclusion concerning Jesus' identity is obvious
 - He must be the Messiah, and yet these men refuse to contemplate that possibility
- This man has been transformed by Christ, so that now he testifies with boldness and confidence
 - And yet he's never laid eyes on Jesus
 - This is the confidence faith in Christ imparts
 - We see our own transformation by the word of Christ
 - And yet we have no proof for our understanding

- And still the conclusion seems all too obvious to us: the world is unwilling to acknowledge the truth
- And so it was with Israel in the presence of the Messiah
- Nevertheless, though this man lived on faith in God's word for a time, eventually he was able to see Jesus face-to-face

[John 9:35](#) Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

[John 9:36](#) He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

[John 9:37](#) Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you."

[John 9:38](#) And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

- Finally, the blind man meets the One Who healed him
 - Notice that Jesus seeks the man out, the man doesn't find Jesus
 - This makes sense, since the man doesn't even know who to look for
 - When Jesus finds the man again, He asks Him if He believes in the Messiah?
 - The man says yes
 - And then he asks to know this Messiah (Son of Man), so He can demonstrate His faith
 - To this, Jesus replies that He is the one speaking to him
 - But notice also Jesus says you have also seen Him
 - Jesus is saying that even before this moment happened, the blind man had "seen" Jesus
 - How had he seen Jesus?
 - By accepting the word of Christ, this man had come to know Jesus already
 - To know the word of Christ is to know Him
 - To have experiences the word is to have been in His presence
 - If you want to know Jesus, to recognize Him, just know His word

- So this man had known Jesus and now was speaking with Him face to face
- So as Jesus declared Himself to be that One, the man worshipped Him
 - Clearly, the man understood he was in the presence of the Living God
 - And in the process he creates a beautiful picture of the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacle
 - He represents the way Jesus grants believers eyes to see and ears to hear spiritually speaking so we might know Him truly
 - But at first we don't know Him except by His word, which is to know Him truly
 - And while He is gone, as Jesus said in the beginning of the chapter, we will be in darkness
 - But when He returns, we will see Him face-to-face
 - And we He will dwell with us, as the Feast of Tabernacles commemorates
 - And we will worship Him truly
 - And all this is happening in the midst of a world that has all the data to draw the right conclusion
 - And yet they refuse to believe because they remain spiritually blind
- Notice how Jesus ends this encounter

[John 9:39](#) And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

[John 9:40](#) Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"

[John 9:41](#) Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

- Jesus says that He came into the world for judgment's sake
 - He came to draw a contrast between those the Father is granting sight and those who are to remain blind

- Those who do not see are those who are unenlightened spiritually
- Those who recognize they do not know God and desire to do so
- They are blind, and they are not self-satisfied
- They have a hunger for God, which God Himself places in them
- But on the other side are those who are spiritually satisfied though they live in ignorance to God and do not know Him truly
 - To this group, Jesus says, though they think they see, they will remain spiritually blind to the truth
 - They will not find God for He will not reveal Himself to them
- At this point the Pharisee, who were overhearing the conversation, ask if Jesus is calling them blind?
 - They think he means physically, and they are mocking Jesus assuming He is speaking in nonsense
 - Jesus simply responds with a fundamental spiritual truth
 - If a person is to gain spiritual sight, they must first understand and acknowledge their blindness
 - The Bible calls this repentance
 - And the expectation is that anyone who would come to Jesus as Lord must first humble themselves in recognition that they are sinners
 - We acknowledge we are in need of a Savior to cure our spiritual blindness
 - And so then the Lord can do a work within us to grant us sight
 - As Paul writes

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- And to the person who stubborn claims to have spiritual understanding though they remain ignorant, Jesus says you remain in your sins

- Without the repentance that leads to salvation, no may will see Heaven
- And so it was with the Pharisees
- So how can someone be cured of their spiritual blindness?
 - If we are blind to God at our birth, what hope do we have to cure our spiritual blindness? To reconcile ourselves to God?
 - Certainly we can't cure ourselves, for if that were possible, there would be no blindness in anyone
 - And we can't turn to another man for a cure when he cannot even cure himself
 - How are we to be reconciled to a holy and just God who demands perfection as the test for entering His presence?
 - Our sinful fallen nature produces in us sinful thoughts and actions
 - For the Bible says that if we have broken even one of God's laws, we have broken the entire law
 - And all who have sinned have fallen short of the glory of God and must face His wrath
 - We face a truly hopeless condition
 - One much like the blind man
 - We cannot hope to face God on our own merits, and yet we cannot repair the defect in us that produced the failure...
- We have every opportunity that blind man had
 - We have heard the word of Christ, and that word can save you

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- I was once that blind man too
- But now by the power of God through faith in Jesus Christ, I see
- And like that blind man, I come to you now a witness to what He has done for me, declaring Him to you and calling upon you

- Be reconciled to God
 - Behold His Son , Jesus, who died in your place, that you might live to Him
 - If you know this to be true but yet you have never made you're a public confession, then don't let another day pass without that confession

[Rom. 10:9](#) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

- If you have been given the gift of sight spiritually, yet you have never made that faith known to anyone, then make it known now

[Luke 12:8](#) "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

John 10

- This chapter is a direct continuation of the scene we left at the end of chapter 9
 - Jesus is addressing the Pharisees, who were eavesdropping on Jesus' conversation with the blind man
 - They are still in Jerusalem
 - This is still the day after the end of the Feast of Tabernacles
 - And we're still looking at division within Israel
 - So without further introduction, let's move into the discourse
 - This is a conversation commonly called the Good Shepherd discourse
 - It follows from the conversation in chapter 9
 - And once again, it adds more to our building understanding of the nature of saving faith

[John 10:1](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.

[John 10:2](#) "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

[John 10:3](#) "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

- At the end of chapter 9, the Pharisees had heard Jesus declaring that those who claim to see, that is to have knowledge of God, are actually blind in that regard
 - To which they exclaimed, "Surely we are not blind [in that way]."
 - To which Jesus replied this is exactly as it is
 - It's because you say you are spiritually wise that you remain spiritually blind
 - For until a person humbles himself to recognize his spiritual poverty, that person can never know God
 - For He will not chose to reveal Himself to such a person

- Now in chapter 10, Jesus continues speaking by explaining the impossibility of finding God by our own means
 - And as John explains in v.6, Jesus teaches this principle in the form of a figure of speech
 - A figure of speech is different than a parable
 - A parable tells a story telling to explain a single concept, while a figure of speech uses a single metaphor explains a series of points
 - In a sense, one is the opposite of the other
 - As we said in the first lesson, John never records a single parable
- So Jesus' topic is the impossibility of a person finding God by their own means, and the metaphor Jesus uses to explain this idea is that of shepherding a flock
 - Obviously, the Shepherd represents the Messiah of Israel
 - This metaphor would have been easily appreciated by Jesus' Jewish audience
 - Multiple Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah used the same metaphor to describe the coming Messiah
 - And the sheep reference those who know and following the Messiah
 - The remnant within the nation of Israel are one fold
 - While the Gentiles are to become another
- First, Jesus explains how the sheep become a part of the fold
 - The word fold refers to the pen that contained a particular collection of sheep belonging to a certain shepherd
 - Each shepherd had a certain fold of sheep
 - And even though to you or I all sheep look basically alike, to a shepherd each sheep is unique
 - A shepherd knew his fold well, so he could tell when any were missing or when a sheep that wasn't of his fold might join his flock

- This level of scrutiny was necessary because shepherds were held financially responsible under the Law for the disposition of their master's sheep
- Jesus begins His metaphor emphasizing the entry point or door to the fold
 - There was a proper entry into the fold, one that was usually guarded by the shepherd
 - If you were not a sheep he recognized, you weren't coming into the pen
 - And if you were not a recognized member of the family or their servants, you wouldn't be allowed access to the sheep
 - Of course, if you were a thief, you wouldn't let that stop you
 - You would climb over the fence and find your way in anyway
 - But climbing over a fence is an improper way to enter a fold
 - More than that, it reveals you to be someone with dishonest intentions, like a thief
 - By contrast, the shepherd would never enter in any way other than by the door
 - As the shepherd approaches the pen, the doorkeeper recognizes the shepherd, and opens the door for him
 - The shepherd has a legitimate reason to enter the fold
- The first part of the metaphor is straightforward
 - The shepherd is the Messiah and the sheep are the saints, true believers saved by faith
 - The fold is the congregation of believers, both Jew and Gentile in the Church
 - And the door represents gaining access to lead God's people
 - Throughout history, God has appointed shepherds to lead His people
 - These representatives are commonly called shepherds, even today
 - And these leaders operate according to God's call and purpose

- Ultimately, the final Shepherd is the Messiah, who leads all God's people in the Kingdom
- Meanwhile, there are also false leaders, unbelievers, who portray themselves as men of God in an attempt to gain control over God's flock
 - Jesus says to these imposters they may try to gain access to God's fold, but they will never enter through the door
 - They can only gain access through illegitimate means, posing as men representing a God they don't know
 - Clearly, Jesus is speaking about the Pharisees and other religious rulers of Israel, who were spiritually blind
 - They were the thieves and robbers holding authority over God's flock
- These thieves come to destroy what God is building, yet Jesus says there is a doorkeeper that guards the flock
 - The doorkeeper is a picture of the Holy Spirit and all those God uses to guard the hearts of God's people
 - For example, John the Baptist could be called a gatekeeper for his day
- Moving ahead in the metaphor, Jesus addresses how the people of God respond to each type of leader

John 10:4 "When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:5 "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

John 10:6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

- A shepherd always goes before a flock of sheep
 - Here in Texas, we're more familiar with cattle ranching
 - Cattle have to be driven from behind to move them to a place
 - Occasionally, a shepherd might drive his flock from behind, but often sheep were led from the front

- The shepherd sets out in a direction with his staff and calls for the sheep to follow him, which they will
- Sheep may not be the brightest barnyard animal, but they have at least one thing going for them
 - They can distinguish between the voice of their shepherd and the voice of strangers
 - A stranger can't simply call for sheep to follow and expect the sheep to do so
 - They only follow a voice that is familiar and reassuring
- Here again, the metaphor is easy to understand, at least for those who have the Spirit
 - The true and proper shepherd of God's people leads from the front
 - He sets an example, one that God's people will follow willingly
 - He doesn't drive the people from behind with burdens and guilt and abuse
 - Once again, the Shepherd primarily in view is the Messiah, Jesus Himself
 - Jesus goes before God's people in every way
 - He lived before we were created
 - He gave Himself for sin so we don't have to
 - He was the first fruits of the resurrection paving the way into glory
- Then Jesus says that when the Messiah comes and declares Himself to the world, those who are the sheep will find Him
 - The Lord's voice (in His word) is heard by God's sheep, and they follow because they recognize the voice
 - But what are we to make of Jesus' other statement concerning a stranger's voice?
 - Is Jesus suggesting that the true saint never follows after false teachers or false messiahs?
 - To understand Jesus' point, we need to remember that every metaphor and even parable has a limited application

- Metaphors are intended to make a point, but it's inappropriate to apply a metaphor beyond its intended use
- In this case, let's recognize Jesus is speaking in broad terms about how God's people respond as a group to the Messiah or to His enemies
- In the case of the Messiah, God's people will receive Him, for God by His grace ensures this outcome
 - Remember, Jesus was explaining to the Pharisees why so many Jews were following Jesus even as the Pharisees worked hard to stop it
 - The Pharisees called Jesus a fraud and took every opportunity to discredit Him in the eyes of the people
 - Nevertheless, many in Israel responded positively to Jesus, because they are the sheep and He is the Shepherd
- But is Jesus saying believers incapable of being misled by false teachers or leaders?
 - No. Some sheep (i.e., believers) can be misled, since many New Testament letters warn us of this very possibility
 - Here again, the purpose of a metaphor is to teach broad principles, but principles usually come with exceptions to the rule
 - While the people of God will not be fooled en masse by a false messiah, false leaders will deceive a few believers
- Notice in v.6 John says that the Pharisees couldn't follow Jesus' teaching, which is proof in itself that they were not of His flock
 - Our ability to hear the word of God and make sense of it is a key indicator that we are in God's flock
 - The Bible says that the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing
- Now Jesus shifts the focus of the metaphor slightly to emphasize the sheep entering rather than the shepherd

[John 10:7](#) So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[John 10:8](#) “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

[John 10:9](#) “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

[John 10:10](#) “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

- Now Jesus turns the metaphor around to compare Himself to the door to the fold
 - Sheep joined the flock in the fold by entering through the door of the pen
 - Likewise, a person joins the congregation of God’s people only by entering through Jesus
 - Meaning, there is no way to Heaven except by faith in Jesus Christ
 - A person who dies without confessing faith in Jesus Christ will not be counted among God’s people
 - Because they never walked through the “Door”
 - This statement (among others in the Bible) absolutely precludes the possibility of “many ways to Heaven”
 - A few years ago, a well-known pastor declared in a talk show interview that he felt someone could enter Heaven even if they didn’t confess Jesus
 - The pope has been quoted saying similar things recently
 - But Jesus’ words directly contradict and refute such thinking
 - If you believe there are many ways to Heaven besides faith in Jesus Christ, then you have no reason to follow Jesus Christ at all
 - Since He clearly believed otherwise!
- Jesus says many others had come (and continue to come) declaring themselves to be the way to Heaven, but they were illegitimate thieves

- Only Jesus is that door which leads a person into the fold, that is to become part of God's people
 - Jesus gives another of the "I am" statements found in John's Gospel
 - Jesus is the door by which one must enter
 - And in case we weren't clear on Jesus' meaning, He clarifies that entering means to be saved eternally
- Then Jesus adds that once someone has gone in, then they go in and out to find pasture
 - The idea in this metaphor is very simple yet profound
 - Once you enter through faith in Jesus, you join God's fold, and from that point forward, you go where the flock goes
 - In other words, you are forever a part of the family of God
 - You will find good pasture, so to speak, but you will not need to worry about earning or retaining your identity
 - You will be forever in God's flock
- This is a stark contrast to the thieves and robbers
 - They lay burdens on people and make demands
 - They set expectations that are always changing and can never be satisfied
 - They offer no security, no joy, no assurance
 - Because they have nothing to offer except destruction, like their father the devil
- Notice how Jesus ends this section, saying that unlike the false leaders, the Jesus came to give His sheep life, and that abundantly
 - This is a verse I've seen adopted by various churches or ministries from time to time as a slogan or calling card verse
 - They celebrate the idea that affiliation with Jesus means abundant life, which is true

- But at least in some cases, they insinuate that our abundant life will be found on this earth, particularly in the form of wealth and health
- Let's see this verse clearly, based on the context of Jesus' discourse
 - The conversation is clearly centered on salvation and the eternal
 - And in that context, Jesus is describing the abundant life to be found in the Kingdom
 - To a very limited degree, a Christian may know that abundance now as they live in the joy of knowing Christ and the blessing of walking by the Spirit
 - But the promise of abundant life is not a promise to make our lives on Earth easier or richer
- Finally, Jesus turns the metaphor around once more, this time to focus on the the Shepherd's love for the sheep

[John 10:11](#) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

[John 10:12](#) "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

[John 10:13](#) "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.

[John 10:14](#) "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,

[John 10:15](#) even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

[John 10:16](#) "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

[John 10:17](#) "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

[John 10:18](#) "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

- Jesus declares He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His life for the sheep
 - A shepherd in the field had many duties and responsibilities, but none were more important than his duty to protect the sheep from enemies
 - Shepherds took turns keeping watch by night

- And during the day, a shepherd drove off wild animals that might try to steal sheep from the flock
- In every case, the Shepherd was placing himself at risk for the sake of the flock
- And he did so because he served a master who demanded that he not lose a single sheep
 - Earlier we in chapter 6, declared that He would not lose a single sheep given to Him by the Father
 - Now Jesus says He loses none because He is willing to lay down His life to save the sheep from the enemy who wishes to kill and destroy
- From there, Jesus extends the figure of speech once more adding the figure of a hired hand
 - A hired hand is a temporary caretaker, one who works for the money and not for any other reason
 - If a master was short on sons to serve as shepherds, he would be forced to hire men to care for his flocks
 - While a hired man may be very responsible and conscientious, still he's only going to go so far in fulfilling his duties to his employer
 - If in the course of his work the hired man encounters mortal danger, he's quickly going to conclude that no amount of money is worth his life
 - And so, he will run away
 - In doing so, he leaves the sheep defenseless facing certain destruction
 - The hired hand has no vested interest in the security of the sheep, and his lack of loyalty is revealed clearly under pressure
- So who is the hired hand? How do we apply this metaphor?
 - Once again, it's a reference to the religious leaders ruling over the flock of God, that is in Israel
 - The Pharisees approached their role as if they were hired hands
 - That is they were in it for the money

- Elsewhere, Jesus said this about the Pharisees

Luke 16:14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

- And therefore, they had no true interest in the welfare of God's people
 - They lived to serve their own interests
 - And as soon as it was no longer in their best interests to care for the people's needs, they abandoned their post
- But Jesus says He approached His role as Shepherd in an entirely different manner
 - First, He knows His sheep and they know Him
 - In other words, there exists an intimate relationship between Jesus and the believer
 - If you've heard someone say you need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, this is what we're talking about
 - We must become one of His fold
 - We must come to know Him through a relationship founded on His word and formed by His Spirit living in us
- Secondly, that relationship is made possible because our Good Shepherd lays His life down for us
 - In contrast to those whose only concern is saving their own hide, Jesus' concern is saving His flock
 - And He accomplishes this by laying down His life
 - He dies in our place, like a shepherd facing danger to save his flock from the wolves
 - Obviously, Jesus is referring to His death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins
 - This is one of many times Jesus foretold His own death as a purposeful action on His part to save His sheep
- Who exactly is Jesus dying to save? The whole world? No, but rather the sheep appointed to His fold by the Father, as He explained in chapter 6

- Notice in v.16 Jesus says He has sheep not in this fold...which fold?
 - Jesus is speaking of two distinct folds: Israel and the Gentiles
 - The sheep of Israel are those Jesus was speaking about when He said "this fold"
 - And the other sheep are those Gentiles who join Israel into one fold
- The Father loves the Son because the Son takes upon Himself this task of dying for the sins of mankind
 - But His death is not the end of the work
 - Jesus says He lays His life down so that He may take it up again
 - In other words, Jesus is revealing not only the necessity of His death but also His coming resurrection
- It was Christ's death that saved us from our sins
 - But it was His resurrection that made possible our glorification into a new body
 - Because He was raised from death, we have proof He will do the same for us
 - For as the Shepherd goes, so goes the flock He leads
 - That's what He meant when Jesus said He is a shepherd that goes before us
- Finally, Jesus' act of sacrificial death on our behalf did not make Him a victim nor does it mean Jesus was less powerful than His enemies
 - On the contrary, Jesus says He lays it down of His own initiative
 - The word initiative is important to understanding what Jesus is saying about His death
 - The word in Greek is *emautou*, which is a compound word meaning "of myself"
 - So Jesus said He lays down His life of Himself
 - In other words, everything about that event came from Jesus

- He decided it would happen from before the foundations of the world
- He decided the way it would happen
- He decided the time it would happen
- He decided who would accuse Him, who would condemn Him, and how He would die
 - Remember His words to Pontius Pilate

[John 19:10](#) So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

[John 19:11](#) Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

- Jesus placed Himself on that cross

[Acts 2:22](#) "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know –

[Acts 2:23](#) this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

- And when the right moment came, Jesus took His own life

[John 19:30](#) Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- In the moment Jesus died, He wasn't being killed
 - Jesus was choosing to lay His life down for the sheep
 - His act was conscious, intentional and planned
 - This was the plan because there is no other way
 - There are not many ways to Heaven...only one
- Now of course, Jesus' elaborate use of this figure of speech, thoroughly confused the crowd and particularly the leaders
 - And once again, John emphasizes the division of the crowd

[John 10:19](#) A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words.

[John 10:20](#) Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

[John 10:21](#) Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

- John offers us these words as a footnote to the entire Feast of Tabernacles week
- Just as we've seen throughout this week, Jesus is a cause of division in Israel
- As John began his Gospel, the Messiah's arrival into the world divides the nation rather than uniting it
- Because some are of Jesus' flock, while others are not
- And once again, the explanation offered for how Jesus could do such marvelous things while speaking in such strange ways is that a demon is at work in Him
 - Some accept this excuse, to their own destruction
 - And to the destruction of Israel in that generation
 - While others reject the explanation, because they see something others don't
 - They recognize that the works of Jesus align with the miracles promised of the Messiah
 - So they are saying, in effect, everything tells us this guy is the Messiah
- At this point, there is a break in the narrative
 - The events of the Feast of Tabernacles has ended
 - This feast takes place in between late September to mid October
 - And after it concluded, we assume Jesus returned to the Galilee
 - Later, Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication, often called Hanukkah
 - The Feast of Hanukkah is not prescribed in the Bible, but it was instituted in Israel following the Maccabean Revolt

- The revolt happened in 164 BC against the Syrian army that conquered Israel in the years after the death of Alexander the Great
 - The revolt was the result of terrible oppression and apostasy in Israel
 - Under Greek rule, the nation had been severely corrupted into joining Hellenistic culture
- A Greek stadium was built next to the temple
 - The games played in this stadium were conducted in the nude
 - It was said that even priest serving in the temple, when they heard the trumpet call to start the games, would leave the temple, disrobe, and join in the games
 - Before returning to continue making sacrifices in the temple
- Later, a Syrian named Antiochus Epiphanes came to power and used Israel as a base of operations in attacking Egypt
 - When his campaigns against Egypt failed, he responded in anger by persecuting Jews in Israel
 - He slaughtered Jews wholesale, forbid the practice of Judaism, desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and much more
 - If a mother circumcised her son, he killed the child and made the mother wear the dead baby around her neck
 - Later she was killed as well
- Against this kind of treatment, a rebellion eventually rose up in a small town northwest of Jerusalem, begun by a man named Mattathias and his five sons
 - They succeeded in taking over the land of Israel from the Syrians
 - And they purified the temple and rededicated it to the Lord
 - The rededication took place on the same day three years after the temple had been desecrated by Antiochus: 25th of Kislev
 - At the rededication, a new 8-day feast was inaugurated in Israel
 - It was 8 days because it was patterned on the Feast of Tabernacles, which looks forward to the temple in the Kingdom

- The Jews used tabernacles as the pattern for this new feast, because they had been prevented from observing the feast of tabernacles three months earlier by the Syrians
- Now that the Syrians were gone, the Jews saw this feast as an opportunity to enjoy a tabernacles feast a few months late
- Also, this dedication feast was patterned off of Solomon's dedication ceremony for the first temple, which was also 8 days
- So just as the feast of tabernacles includes a lighting of lamps, the Jews instituted a lighting of lamps into this feast as well
 - It wasn't until much later that rabbis invented the myth of the oil lasting 8 days, which some of you may have heard
 - That myth is still retold today in Jewish homes as they celebrate the feast each December
 - But there is no historical record of such a miracle ever happening, so it is simply myth and storytelling
- So the Feast of Dedication has a celebratory quality similar to the feast of tabernacles, and according to John, it's one Jesus participated in
 - The historical origins of this celebration might cause us to ponder whether this feast was truly intended by God or was it merely man made
 - If it was intended by God, shouldn't we expect to see it mentioned in OT scripture?
 - And if it wasn't prescribed by God, why does Jesus honor it?
 - Well, the answer is some of both
 - The OT doesn't mention the feast, but Daniel did prophecy the events of Antiochus leading up to the feast
 - So we see that scripture anticipated the events surrounding the feast
 - Secondly, the fact that Jesus did join in in His day is proof in itself that the Lord was in favor of the feast
 - Therefore, we must also assume that the feast has some purpose in pointing to Christ in some way

- With that background, it makes better sense why John chose to knit together these two scenes into a single narrative
 - While at the feast of tabernacles, Jesus declared Himself to be the Light of the world and as the Good Shepherd of the sheep
 - Now at this feast of dedication, the Lord picks up on those same themes, probably because the feast also centered on light
 - So when Jesus re-entered the temple in December, it had only been three months since His earlier, dramatic confrontation of the Jewish leaders
 - No doubt the people remembered what Jesus said, so it's as if the conversation picks right back up where it left off
 - While walking in the portico of Solomon, a large covered area adjoining the temple courtyard, Jesus is again teaching a crowd

[John 10:22](#) At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;

[John 10:23](#) it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

[John 10:24](#) The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

[John 10:25](#) Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

[John 10:26](#) "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

[John 10:27](#) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

[John 10:28](#) and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

[John 10:29](#) "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[John 10:30](#) "I and the Father are one."

- And at some point, the crowd demands that Jesus come clean concerning His identity
- They want Him to declare plainly that He is the Messiah
- It's interesting that they would ask Him to make such a statement
- The fact that they knew to make this suggestion tells us they already understood plainly what He had been saying
- What they wanted was for Jesus to advocate on His own behalf

- This wasn't a case where they people couldn't figure out Jesus' perspective
- They knew He was speaking as the Messiah, but they just weren't willing to accept it
- What they wanted was for Jesus to begin making His case
 - To argue His point
 - To state plainly, meaning to try to persuade them concerning His identity
- But Jesus refused at all times to work in this way
- Why wasn't Jesus willing to make effort to persuade men of His identity? Because it wouldn't make any difference if He tried
 - Jesus knew that faith was the product of persuasion or analysis or reasoning
 - Saving faith is a supernatural change in the heart done by God alone
 - And when the Lord gives the gift of faith, it always results in acceptance of the Gospel and salvation
 - When the Father isn't working by His Spirit to save a man, then no amount of persuasion will work
 - So Jesus could speak softly and in subtle ways without concern that He might miss one of His sheep
 - So Jesus responds I told you already, but you do not believe
 - You have seen my works
 - And these miraculous works were done in the Father's name, meaning by His authority
 - And therefore, these works are a testimony that Jesus is the One the Father promised to send
- Nevertheless, these people do not understand this truth, because Jesus says they are not of His sheep
 - Notice Jesus doesn't say you do not believe, *therefore* you are not one of My sheep

- Instead, Jesus uses the word “because” to indicate that they haven’t believed in Jesus BECAUSE they were not elected by the Father to be one of His sheep
- Remember, Jesus said in chapter that no one can come to the Son unless it is permitted by the Father
- So even though they had heard Jesus speaking plainly about His identity, nevertheless they couldn’t accept it because they weren’t one of His sheep
- This is the consistent testimony of scripture
 - We are only able to believe and receive the Gospel because we are already predestined to be His sheep
 - The Lord counted us His sheep even before we knew Him
 - And these receive eternal life
 - They will know the Lord intimately
 - And they will follow Him
- Remember in the parable of the 99 sheep and the 1 lost sheep
 - In the parable, the lost sheep is a picture of an unbeliever whom Jesus finds and brings back to the fold
 - Yet notice that it’s not a parable of 99 sheep and 1 goat that turns into a sheep
 - It’s a story of 100 sheep, though one is lost
 - There is a finite number of God’s sheep, and Jesus is in the process of collecting them by His Spirit
 - Therefore, the ignorance of this crowd can only mean they are not among Christ’s sheep
- Lastly, Jesus repeats some of His teaching from John 6 when He explains that nothing can snatch the sheep from His hand
 - The word snatch is harpazo, which means to take by carry off
 - No sheep can be stolen or removed from Jesus hand
 - Once we have been given the gift of faith by the Spirit, we are placed in Christ’s power and held there by the Son’s authority

- In other words, once a sheep, always a sheep
- And in case you're in doubt about this guarantee, Jesus reminds us that the Father is greater than all
 - So if the Father has given someone to Jesus, then there is literally nothing in the universe powerful enough to change that decree
 - The devil doesn't have more power than the Father
 - The demons don't have more power than the Father
 - Not even *you* have more power than the Father
 - So nothing - not even the believer himself - can remove the sheep from Christ's hand
- Then, to prove His point, Jesus gives them the answer they requested
 - He says He and the Father are one
 - There is no more provocative statement someone could make to a Jew than to compare oneself to God
 - Yet here is Jesus declaring Himself to be equal to God
 - This is an offense punishable by stoning in Israel
 - Yet this is exactly what the crowd asked Jesus to say, to state plainly whether He was the Messiah
 - And Jesus just finished telling the crowd that making such a claim was pointless since they were not His sheep
 - So why satisfy their request? So He can demonstrate the truth of His words
 - Notice the reaction of the crowd

John 10:31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

John 10:32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

John 10:33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'?"

[John 10:35](#) "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

[John 10:36](#) do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

[John 10:37](#) "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me;

[John 10:38](#) but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

[John 10:39](#) Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

- Jesus states plainly He is the Messiah, to which the crowd picks up stones to kill Him
 - Is it any mystery why Jesus wasn't willing to speak in plain language much of the time?
 - He knew that those intended to understand his words would do so regardless of how clearly He spoke
 - Meanwhile, those who were not His sheep couldn't understand His words no matter how clearly He spoke
 - So by speaking in parables and veiled references, Jesus avoided inciting the crowd to riot while still reaching His intended audience
 - At this point, Jesus engages them in a discussion to highlight their hypocrisy and ignorance
 - He asks them for which of His good works is He being stoned?
 - It's a sarcastic statement, one spoken by a man who clearly is not in fear of His life
 - As the author of His own death, Jesus is not concerned that He might die in this moment
 - He knows that isn't possible
 - Still, He uses the crowd's anger to test their hearts by asking them to justify their actions against Him
 - They respond that they aren't stoning Him for any work but for His words
 - And notice specifically, they understand that Jesus is calling Himself God

- Once more, if someone tells you that Jesus never declared Himself to be God, here's a clear moment when He did so
- This is a verse that directly contradicts the Jehovah's Witnesses claims
- When they raise the charge of blaspheme against Jesus, He counters with a question of His own
 - He asks how it can be then that Psalm 82:6 declares that the judges of Israel are "gods"
 - The Psalmist was speaking by way of euphemism
 - As God's representatives, the judges of Israel were acting like gods in that sense
 - They brought God's counsel and judgments to the people
 - They enforced God's law
 - They did the very works of God as His representatives
 - So the Lord Himself declared these men to be *elohim* or gods (plural)
 - Jesus' point was that if it was appropriate for the psalmist to use the term *elohim* to describe those who were merely judges in Israel
 - Then how is Jesus committing blaspheme for the Messiah to call Himself the same thing?
 - Jesus was clearly sent by the Father, as evidenced by His works
 - And if Jesus is sent by the Father, then He comes to represent the Father in the same way that the judges did
 - Only Jesus is infinitely greater than the judges, so if the term gods could be used to describe them, how much more should it be used to describe the Messiah?
- Jesus then proposes a test for Himself
 - He says if He is not performing the work of the Father, then do not believe Him
 - Let His works decide the matter

- If someone claims to come from God but cannot produce works that prove His claims, then we are right to dismiss such a person
- But if that person comes with the necessary works, we must be prepared to accept His claims as well
- So Jesus says if you will not believe my words, then why not believe my works?
 - If you see the miracles I do, then sure you must acknowledge I am working with the power of God
 - But of course, given all the Jesus has said, it's clear that they are incapable of grasping the fact that Jesus is the Messiah
 - And they are incapable because the Father had not granted them that capability

John 11A

- Jesus' tumultuous week during the Feast of Tabernacles has come to an end
 - And among the many things we learned from John's account of that week in Jerusalem, the overriding message was clear
 - The learned and sophisticated Jews in Jerusalem couldn't agree on the significance of Jesus and His message
 - They divided over His identity
 - They disputed the source of His power
 - And they were further confused by their leaders who insisted Jesus was an agent of Satan
 - So despite all its advantages and learning, the heart of the nation missed their Messiah when He was sent to them
 - Meanwhile, Jesus continues to minister in Galilee
 - Galilee was the backwater, low rent, red-headed stepchild of Israel
 - Home to Nazareth, the place from which nothing good comes, or so it was said
 - And yet this is the place where Jesus was received with joy, embraced and celebrated by many people
 - So as we leave John's four-chapter examination of the Feast of Tabernacles, John ends with a simple footnote that emphasizes the key message

[John 10:40](#) And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

[John 10:41](#) Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."

[John 10:42](#) Many believed in Him there.

- As I said, the contrast couldn't be clearer between Jerusalem and the Galilee

- As Jesus returns to the place beyond the Jordan, to the place where John first practiced his baptism ministry, Jesus is met by those who believe
 - More than that, this place is willing to agree that though a man perform no signs, nevertheless his word can still be true
 - John spoke of the coming Messiah, though John was not equipped with any supernatural signs
 - John came only with a word from the Lord, nevertheless many believed
 - And now that Jesus has come, it's clear that John's words were true, so many believed
- As we move into the next section of John's Gospel, we reach the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry as John recorded it
 - In what John has chosen to record so far, he's highlighted Jesus as the Light of Life, the Bread of Life and the Water of life
 - All of these metaphors focus on Jesus' life-giving power, spiritually speaking
 - So what better way to emphasize Jesus as the source of life than to relate His ability to raise someone from the dead
 - And so John chooses to record perhaps Jesus' most dramatic miracle in all the Gospels
 - Chapter 11 is the account of the raising of Lazarus
 - And interesting, none of the other Gospel writers chose to mention of Lazarus
 - So John chooses to record this scene as the final miracle (the seventh John records) of Jesus' earthly ministry
 - What follows in John's narrative is Jesus' preparation to die on the cross followed by His own resurrection

[John 11:1](#) Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

[John 11:2](#) It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

[John 11:3](#) So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

[John 11:4](#) But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

- The beginning of this account emphasizes the death of Lazarus and Jesus intention to ensure he died
 - Jesus and the disciples were walking back to the Galilee following the feast of tabernacles and then crossed through Bethany
 - Which puts them nearby the home of a family that Jesus knows well
 - Therefore, it makes sense to expect Jesus to call upon this family again as He passes through on His way back from Jerusalem
 - The family is that of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus
 - We remember that Jesus encountered Mary and Martha at an earlier moment, as recorded in Luke's Gospel
 - John reminds us that this Mary is the same one who anointed Jesus with ointment earlier
 - The story of Mary anointing Jesus is recorded only in Luke 7
 - Later, in Luke 10 we read the story of Mary and her sister Martha welcoming Jesus into their home
 - Interestingly, John is referring to an event he didn't record in his Gospel
 - Clearly, John had read Luke's account and expected his readers to have read it as well
 - Further proof that John was writing a Gospel with the intent to fill in gaps
- The focus of the story is Lazarus
 - Lazarus lives in Bethany, a town north of Jerusalem on the way back to the Galilee

- His name is a variation on the Jewish name Eleazar, which means the Lord helps
- And Lazarus is sick
- John clarifies that this Lazarus is the brother of that Mary
 - So the sisters send word to Jesus concerning their brother
 - It's understandable that Lazarus' family might assume Jesus would come to their aid
 - Their relationship and past experiences would naturally lead them to think that Jesus would be compassionate and willing to help
 - And Jesus *is* preparing to help them, though not as they might have expected
- His sisters describe Lazarus as the one Jesus loved
 - It sounds like Jesus had a particularly close relationship with Lazarus
 - Perhaps this is so
 - Or perhaps they simply meant that Lazarus was one of Jesus' sheep
 - Therefore, as His shepherd Jesus would be interested in saving Lazarus from death
- In either case, at hearing of Lazarus' condition, Jesus reassures the women
 - Jesus says the sickness will not end in death
 - Jesus chooses His words carefully here
 - He doesn't say Lazarus won't die
 - He says the sickness won't end in death, meaning when all is said and done, Lazarus won't be killed by this illness
 - Going further, Jesus explains that his sickness is for the glory of God
 - Similar to Jesus description of the blind man in chapter 9, Jesus declares that Lazarus' trial was instigated by God to offer opportunity to glorify Himself through His Son

- Once more, we come face to face with the reality that God uses the lives of men and women to demonstrate His immutable power and character
- Simply put, Jesus can't heal unless someone is sick
- And Jesus can't bring life except in the midst of death
- Ironically, it will be this particular miracle that ignites the leads directly to Jesus' own death
- This truth explains why Jesus does what he does next

John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

John 11:6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

- John wants his readers to understand that Jesus cared greatly for this family, both the sisters and their brother
 - John makes this point clear so we would will have the proper perspective as we read what comes next
 - After Jesus learns that Lazarus is near death in his sickness, He the chooses to stay two days longer in the place He was
 - His delay will ultimately lead to Lazarus dying from his sickness, but as John explains, Jesus' decision was not from a lack of concern or love for this family
 - It was a divine appointment
- After the delay, Jesus announces His intention to travel to the Lazarus' home as the sisters request
 - Lazarus' home was in the area of Jerusalem
 - So visiting him would involve re-entering a city where Jesus was under constant threat and just narrowly escaped an attack the prior week
 - So naturally, the disciples express concern over Jesus' plan
 - The exchange between Jesus and the disciples that follows is comical in the way it reveals the disciples' ignorance of their circumstances

[John 11:7](#) Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

[John 11:8](#) The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?"

[John 11:9](#) Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

[John 11:10](#) "But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

[John 11:11](#) This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep."

[John 11:12](#) The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."

[John 11:13](#) Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep.

[John 11:14](#) So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,

[John 11:15](#) and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him."

[John 11:16](#) Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him

- Jesus announces He's returning to Judea again
 - The disciples respond predictably
 - They point out the obvious: there are people in Jerusalem who are seeking to kill you
 - And they ask why He would want to return there
 - On a human level, this is a sensible question
 - But it's because they are only thinking on a human level that we can know they weren't thinking spiritually
 - At the very least, they don't appreciate the Lord's power
 - In fact, it's quite remarkable that these men are still worried for Jesus' safety given all that they have seen thus far
 - They saw Jesus still wind and waves
 - They saw Him feed thousands of people miraculously
 - They saw Him walk on water, heal blind men, cast out demons
 - But still, these disciples express concern over Jesus being attacked by a crowd?

- It seems highly unlikely that they are speaking up over a concern for Jesus' safety
 - It's much more likely they are concerned for their own safety as they follow Jesus back to Jerusalem
 - Jesus' answer reflects this truth
 - Using the metaphor of light to describe Himself again, Jesus says if you walk in the daytime (i.e., in the Light), you won't stumble
 - So long as these disciples were following Christ, doing His will and not their own, they will not stumble
 - And in this context, to stumble means failing to please God
 - Notice Jesus isn't promising they will be safe from physical harm
 - Certainly, all the disciples did face brutality at the hands of their enemies
 - But that's not the most important consideration
 - Their first concern must be obeying the will of God
 - Everything else is secondary
 - In fact, if a disciple of Christ ceases walking in the Light, that is to cease living according to Christ's commandments and priorities, then they will stumble
 - And the fall that results brings eternal consequences
 - Whatever losses we suffer on earth as a result of our obedience to Christ won't compare to rewards awaiting the obedient servant in Heaven
- So having corrected the disciples for their fear born out of unbelief, the Lord explains why He must travel to Judea
 - Their friend Lazarus had fallen asleep and Jesus was going to wake him
 - In referring to sleep, Jesus employed a common euphemism in His day to describe death
 - Paul uses these same euphemism on occasion in his letters also to describe death and dying
 - Today, we have our own ways of referring to death with subtlety

- We say passed away
- Crossed over
- Resting in peace, etc.
- But the disciples completely missed the meaning of Jesus' euphemism and thought Jesus was speaking literally of sleeping
- So if the euphemism was so common, why didn't the disciples understand it?
 - I think the answer is because Jesus added another element to the euphemism that they weren't expecting and couldn't understand
 - Jesus said Lazarus was sleeping but then added that Jesus would wake Lazarus up
 - While people commonly used sleeping as a euphemism for death, no one ever spoke of "waking" up a dead person
 - So I assume the disciples were following Jesus until He threw them that curveball
 - Clearly, Jesus is referring to His plan to raise Lazarus from the grave
 - Which also tells us that the two day wait was to ensure Lazarus was good and dead
 - So when Jesus raises him, there will be no doubt among the witnesses that a true miracle had taken place
 - That truly, a dead man had been raised back to life
- In v.12, it's clear that the disciples are confused, since they offer Jesus the helpful consultation
 - They tell Jesus that if Lazarus was, in fact, sleeping, then there was no need for Jesus to go to his aid
 - Lazarus would recover on his own
 - The disciples use the Greek word *sozo*, which means cured or restored or saved
 - They are referring to Lazarus' illness, saying if Lazarus is just sleeping and not literally dead, then he will get better on his own
 - Once again, they are thinking only of themselves

- John explains in v.13 that the disciples were assuming the whole conversation was about sleep, so Jesus must dispense with His clever and subtle choice of words
 - As John writes in v.14, Jesus said to them plainly, He's dead
 - In my list of top ten funniest lines in the Bible, this one is near the top
 - Right up there with "this woman whom you gave me..."
 - It's funny, but it's also sad, because their comments demonstrate that it never occurred to them that Jesus could raise someone from the dead
- As a result, Jesus adds a rebuke, saying He was glad He wasn't there to heal Lazarus so that now they can experience seeing Jesus raise someone from the dead
 - As Jesus says, he wants to use this situation to bolster their faith
 - For few things are as dramatic and impressive as raising someone from the dead
- At this point, Thomas piped up with encouraging words for the group
 - This the first mention of Thomas speaking in the Gospels
 - His name is Jewish and means double or twin
 - Didymous was the Greek version of his name, and also means twin
 - Apparently, he was one of twins
 - Thomas is likely speaking for the disciples as a whole
 - They are focused on the dangers of the trip
 - They aren't quite sure what's driving Jesus to see Lazarus
 - And they are even more perplexed now that they hear Lazarus is dead
 - Nevertheless, they want to support their rabbi, so wherever He goes, we will go!
 - Thomas' response is really little more than bravado

- We know that when things do get tough for the disciples at the crucifixion, they run away quickly
- So, his declaration of solidarity is self-serving at best
- Following this call to arms, Jesus and the disciples return to Bethany

[John 11:17](#) So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

[John 11:18](#) Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;

[John 11:19](#) and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.

[John 11:20](#) Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house.

[John 11:21](#) Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

[John 11:22](#) "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

[John 11:23](#) Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

[John 11:24](#) Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

[John 11:25](#) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

[John 11:26](#) and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

[John 11:27](#) She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

- Jesus leaves Bethany of Perea, where John was baptizing north of Jericho, to go back to Bethany in Judea, about 2 miles from Jerusalem
 - As they arrive, they learn that Lazarus had been dead already for four days
 - This mention of four days was significant
 - Jewish rabbinical teaching of the time held that a person's spirit lingered around the dead body for three days or until decomposition set in
 - Only after the hope of resuscitation was gone did the spirit of a person finally depart for Sheol
 - Of course, this teaching is false, but it held sway in the minds of many Jews

- So the Lord constructed this miracle to eliminate the possibility someone might attempt to explain away the miracle
- By waiting four days to raise Lazarus, no one could claim that Lazarus wasn't truly dead and Jesus merely resuscitated him
- In fact, as we will see, Lazarus' body was decomposing already
- Because this family was known in Jerusalem, a large gathering came to grieve
 - At Jesus' arrival, Martha goes out to greet Jesus while her sister Mary stays home
 - This is the same Mary and Martha from Luke 10
 - In Luke's account, Mary is the quiet sister sitting at Jesus' feet
 - While Martha is the leader in the home, busy and distracted
 - John's portrayal of Martha and Mary match Luke's in this regard
 - Martha comes to greet Jesus, but immediately she offers a gentle rebuke or at least complaint to Jesus
 - Why didn't He come sooner so He could heal Lazarus?
 - She shows her faith in Jesus as Messiah both in her words and in her expectations
 - Clearly she believes Jesus has the power to heal
 - And she recognizes that Jesus has a direct line to the Father
 - In response to her faith, Jesus promises that Lazarus will rise again, that is he will be resurrected
 - When Martha hears these words, she assumes Jesus is offering typical mourner condolences
 - We all like to remind a person grieving at a funeral that they will see their loved one again in Heaven and in the Kingdom
 - While this statement is true (at least in the case of Christians), it wasn't addressing Martha's concern over Jesus' delay
 - Martha says in v.24 that she realizes that Lazarus will be resurrected on the last day
 - Martha's eschatology is spot-on

- She's referring to Daniel 12, which teaches that the saints are resurrected prior to entry into the Kingdom of the Messiah
- But Jesus isn't talking about a future, final resurrection
- Jesus' response begins with another "I am" statement
 - Jesus says in v.25 that He is the resurrection and the life
 - He means He is the source of these things
 - Jesus is the one Who provides eternal life, as He's said various ways already (e.g., Light, Water, Bread)
 - And now Jesus says He will be the One to effect resurrection of every believer
 - The Bible teaches that our present body dies because of sin
 - But a new, eternal sinless body is prepared for all those who have believed in Jesus as Messiah
 - When that time comes, Jesus says He will provide the new body
 - So that even though our physical body does, we will live again
 - But first, we must gain the new spiritual life that comes by faith in Jesus
 - Then we are assured we will never die
 - Paul says the same thing this way

Rom. 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Rom. 8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- Notice Paul calls Christ the firstborn among many brethren
- Jesus' spiritual life is shared with many who are born again to be like Him
- And those the Father has predestined to this outcome are set on a course that always arrives at the end of glorification

- Roman 8 teaches there is an unbroken chain of salvation according to God's purpose
- So that the one who receives the life of Christ is assured that even though they die, they will live again
- Jesus ends His statement asking Martha does she believe this?
 - Jesus isn't asking Martha if she believes in the doctrine of resurrection
 - Martha already affirmed her belief in resurrection
 - Jesus is asking Martha if she believes Jesus' statements concern His identity
 - In John's Gospel, the matter always comes down to the identity of Jesus
 - Jesus is asking Martha if she believes that Jesus is the One who grants eternal life and has the power to resurrect the dead
 - Her response is the clearest profession of faith recorded in John's Gospel, and perhaps in any of the Gospels
 - She declares that Jesus is Lord
 - She declares He is the Christ (which means Messiah)
 - She declares He is the Son of God, which means Jesus is God Himself
 - And she declares that He has come into this world, which means He has descended from Heaven to enter Creation as a man
 - Putting all this together, Martha confesses a full and accurate understanding of Jesus' identity
- Why does Jesus ask her to make such a profession of faith at this moment?
 - Was Martha's profession of faith a prerequisite for Jesus to perform His miracle of raising Lazarus?
 - This can't be the answer, since Jesus came back to Judea expressly for the purpose of raising Lazarus
 - In fact, Jesus said that Lazarus' illness was intended so that Jesus would be glorified when He performed this miracle

- So we know that this moment doesn't turn on whether or not Martha makes a proper confession
- I see this moment as part of a larger picture that's forming in the events of Lazarus' death and resurrection
 - The events began with the death
 - Lazarus has died
 - Just as every person is born sinful and dead in their sins, as Paul says
- Next the story moves to a confession of faith in Jesus as Lord
 - Obviously, this is Martha's confession, not Lazarus'
 - But the point being made is not with respect to a specific individual
 - Rather, I believe a pattern is being emphasized
 - The pattern for how anyone may pass from death to life by faith in Christ
- So now following a confession of faith, what comes next in the story

John 11:28 When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

John 11:29 And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

- Following her declaration of faith in Jesus as Lord, Martha returns to her home where her sister is mourning the loss of her brother
 - As Martha arrives, she tells her sister that the Teacher is here and is calling for her
 - The title teacher is a personal way for these women to refer to Jesus, since they have known Him as a teacher in their home
 - We never saw Jesus issue this call for Mary directly
 - Instead, Martha relays the call to her sister
 - This is the next step in the pattern of moving from death to life

- Once a person has made a confession in Jesus, they had the life and will one day have the resurrection
- But in the meantime, they serve Christ by relaying His call to others
- We introduce Jesus as the Teacher, Who instructs us concerning Himself through His word
- We share the word of the Teacher with others, telling them that the Lord is calling them
- As Mary hears the news from Martha, she immediately leaves the mourners and her home to come to Jesus
 - As we saw early in this Gospel, people invite others to come and see the Lord
 - And when that call is issued, they respond by going to find Jesus
 - Metaphorically, this pattern describes the process of evangelism that is the church's mission on earth
 - We have life in Christ, and we await the resurrection He promises
 - And in the meantime, we call the world to know Him
 - In Mary's case, she was already a believer in Jesus, but again we're watching a pattern develop that is not reflective of any one person
 - It's also interesting that Mary leaves behind her home and mourners so that she may join Christ

John 11:30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him.

John 11:31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

- When a person is called to come to Jesus, that call requires that we be willing to leave behind our old way of life
- We leave behind a world that mourns the death that sin requires
- We leave behind those who cannot see past the death of the body

- And we adopt a new perspective and outlook, not only on eternity but even on the world we know now
- We gain eyes for eternity
- As Mary comes to join Jesus, the crowd thinks she is going to mourn at the tomb
 - Wishing to be supportive, they follow her, so that not only are the sisters with Jesus but also a crowd of many witnesses
 - This offers us yet another piece in this puzzle
 - As we make our move from death to life, we create a testimony in our very lives that others around us will witness
 - Some will be intrigued by who we've become
 - And they will be drawn into a greater understanding of Jesus as a result
 - Because of Mary's departure, this crowd will become witnesses to perhaps Jesus' greatest miracle on earth
 - And as we'll see, their encounter with Jesus will persuade many to believe in Him
 - While at the same time inciting His enemy's to take action against Him

[John 11:32](#) Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

[John 11:33](#) When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled,

[John 11:34](#) and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

[John 11:35](#) Jesus wept.

[John 11:36](#) So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

[John 11:37](#) But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

- Now the focus of the story moves to Jesus' compassionate response to Lazarus' circumstances
 - As Mary approaches Jesus, it's clear she is in distress over Lazarus' death
 - We know she was already in mourning in the house

- She's still crying as she meets Jesus
- And as we saw her in Luke 10, Mary once again places herself at Jesus' feet
- In the next chapter, we will find Mary at Jesus' feet a third time
- She tells Jesus that had He been here, Lazarus would not have died
 - While her words are a rebuke of Jesus, they also serve as her acknowledgment that Jesus has the power over life and death
 - Yet they also reveal that Mary can't see any reason for hope now that Lazarus has died
 - Death is a fundamental barrier that Jesus intends to cross, and in so doing, He will prove Himself in a way no other miracle could
- Along with her is a crowd of mourners, also crying in sadness
 - Anyone who has attended a wake can appreciate the depth of emotion and grieving present in this moment
 - All of this turmoil was the result of one man's death
 - And that death was itself brought about by one man's sin
- So as Jesus experienced the group's mourning and reflected on the cause for it all, John says Jesus was deeply moved and troubled
 - The Greek words describing Jesus' reaction are quite a bit stronger than the English words the translators chose
 - For example, the Greek word for deeply moved is *enebrimesato*, which means to be moved with outrage and anger
 - It's a strong negative emotion, not a sympathetic one
 - And the Greek word for troubled is *etaraxen*, which is equally strong in meaning emotional turmoil or stirred up
 - Taken together, we quickly see that Jesus' emotional state was not one of joining in the mourning over Lazarus
 - Clearly, Jesus has something else on His mind
 - And in light of the pattern developing in this story, we must move our attention to a different issue than the sadness of the mourners

- Jesus is reacting in anger even outrage at the prospect of sin and the grief and damage it inflicts upon God's Creation
 - Jesus looks upon a family He loves mourning for the loss of a brother
 - And Jesus understands the spiritual source of this misery in the deceit of Satan and the sin of Adam
 - And He is outraged by the condition of fallen humanity
 - And He contemplates the work that will be required to address this problem
 - That work being His own death and suffering on a cross
 - And He stirred up by this and troubled by it
 - Such is the compassion of our God, that He was moved by sin to address it by His own death on our behalf
 - Death is not a part of God's perfect plan for Creation
 - God is not the author of sin
 - But God did proclaim that death would be the necessary response to sin
 - So that when sin arrived, so did death along with it
 - But knowing death would come, God was moved to provide a solution in His Son
- With that, Jesus asks to see the location of Lazarus' burial
 - They brought Jesus to the place, and then John writes the shortest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept
 - This moment has long been a source of great insight into Jesus' humanity while also being a source of great mystery
 - On the one hand, we see our Lord as compassionate, emotional, feeling what people feel in the face of death
 - And we're comforted to know that God can identify so strongly with our response to death in His Creation
 - It is an utterly crushing experiencing to watch the penalty of sin playing out in the death of a loved one

- The crowd interprets Jesus' weeping in this same way, concluding that Jesus was very close to Lazarus and therefore He mourned His loss
- On the other hand, *why* did Jesus feel this way? It's a bit of a mystery under these circumstances
 - Regardless of how much Jesus loved Lazarus, Jesus also knew that Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead
 - And though Jesus understood the mourners' pain and suffering, He also knew He was about give them immense joy at receiving Lazarus back from the grave
 - So knowing these things, why would Jesus have been moved to such despair now?
 - Wouldn't He have been feeling anticipation and even joy at knowing what was about to happen?
- So we're left searching for a reason that Jesus would have stopped to cry at the tomb just moments before He performed the resurrection
 - Perhaps His weeping anticipated His own death and burial
 - Perhaps He was weeping in sadness for all the suffering and loss of life that has been visited upon the earth across all time as a result of Adam's sin
 - Perhaps He's mourning the countless numbers who will die in their sins and never receive eternal life
 - Whatever has moved Jesus to tears, I believe it was a far, far greater concern than the temporary passing of this one man
- Others in the crowd think they see an opportunity to indict Jesus' power and authority
 - They know of Jesus' healing of the blind man a few days earlier in Jerusalem, so they ask if Jesus could have done more for this man?
 - Their question seems reasonable, but it reflects a doubting and critical perspective
 - There are enemies of Jesus even in this moment
 - Jews who are Jesus' enemy and are looking for any occasion to tear down His claims

- For that group, Jesus' inability to save Lazarus is evidence He not Who He claimed to be
 - Jesus responds by moving directly to the miracle

[John 11:38](#) So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

[John 11:39](#) Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days."

[John 11:40](#) Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

[John 11:41](#) So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

[John 11:42](#) "I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."

[John 11:43](#) When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."

[John 11:44](#) The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

- Once again, John describes Jesus as being moved with outrage as He approached the tomb
 - This tomb had a stone rolled over the entrance, which immediately reminds us of another tomb mentioned in the Gospels
 - Jesus' own tomb is described in the same way
 - This detail may explain Jesus internal anger and turmoil
 - Imagine if you knew you were going to be killed by crucifixion in the near future
 - And you knew the type of burial you would experience
 - And you knew you were made to endure this agony because of another's mistake
 - Wouldn't you experience turmoil and even outrage at the prospect of such a plan? And wouldn't the sight of grieving and of a tomb like your own evoke such feelings?
 - It seems reasonable that Jesus' reactions are looking ahead to bigger things

- And if so, then we should also understand His words as having a larger purpose and meaning than simply the raising of this one man
- Next, Jesus orders that the stone be removed
 - But Martha, the one who earlier professed belief in resurrection, is the first to protest the command
 - She points out that the body is decomposing and therefore opening the grave would not be a good thing
 - So though Martha understood the promise of resurrection, she wasn't prepared to see God bringing new life in the immediate moment
- Jesus rebukes Martha gently by reminding her that those who have faith in Christ should expect to see the glory of God
 - Not only at the resurrection on the last day, but even now as God works in Creation to bring glory to Himself
 - On this day, Martha and the crowd would see a resurrection take place
 - And in a day to come, Mary will arrive at another tomb with a stone rolled back
 - And in generations to come, many corpses will be raised spiritually speaking
 - So the people removed the stone, probably unsure of what was going to happen next
 - At this moment, Jesus prays a sincere prayer, yet one spoken for public effect
 - Jesus' prayer is not one of intercession or even petition
 - He doesn't ask the Father to raise Lazarus
 - Instead, Jesus prays a prayer of thanksgiving that the Father has heard Jesus
 - What the Father has heard was Jesus' request that Lazarus be raised
 - And whatever the Son asks of the Father, He will receive

- Jesus evidently asked the Father to do this thing, and then the Father sent Jesus to raise Lazarus
- Now as Jesus prepares to act, He announces publicly through His prayer that this work is the result of the Father's will
- Jesus is careful to explain that His public prayer was for the benefit of the people, since Jesus Himself already knew that He was heard
- This moment offers us a couple of reminders about the function of our prayer life
 - First, we know we will be heard by Christ and that Christ's requests will be heard by the Father
 - And so if we are praying in the Father's will, we also will be heard

1John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, **He hears** us.

- Secondly, we know from elsewhere in the Gospels that our public prayers must not be for the purpose of drawing attention to ourselves as unbelievers love to do

Matt. 6:7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their **many words**."

- Yet there is a public benefit in our prayers
 - We can pray before others to make clear what lies in our heart and so that our testimony can be made all the more clearly
 - This one purpose in prayer
 - As Jesus said, the Father already knew that Jesus understood these things, but still it pleased the Father that Jesus made it known to the crowd as well
- Finally, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."
 - It has been said that had Jesus not specified the name Lazarus then perhaps all the dead would have been raised
 - Such is the power of Christ's word to accomplish God's purpose

- Only the word of God was required to raised a dead body from the grave
- And so it will be on the day of our resurrection, when we will be raised into new bodies at the sound of a shout

[1Th. 4:16](#) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- And so it was for Lazarus
 - The man who had died came walking out of the tomb, still wrapped in his bandages
 - The modern horror figure of the mummy is patterned directly off the story of Lazarus
 - The Jewish rite of burial involved a very loose wrapping of the body in cloth to hold the embalming spices near his body
 - It was not tight fitting, so Lazarus would have been able to walk without much trouble
- Raising dead men from the grave is evident throughout the Bible, and Jesus' miracle is not even the first such resurrection in scripture
 - Two prophets raised bodies from the dead
 - Elijah raised the widow's son in 1Kings 17
 - Elisha raised another boy in 2Kings 4
 - Both of these events involved the prophets praying and laying on top of the body of the person, ostensible to warm it up
 - In their cases, a word was not enough...they had to work at the effort while expecting God to perform the miracle
 - In that case as in this one, the Lord used only His word to effect the miracle
 - That was the essential difference
 - In the earlier cases, the prophet's validated the truth of their word by the power of their works

- In this case, Christ validated His truth of His claims by the power of His word
- And in both cases, there is no more powerful display than raising a person from the dead
- Later the Bible records the Apostles raising men from the dead and speaking of future times when this miracle will be done again
 - And even in the meantime, there are credible claims of God continuing to show these powerful signs on rare occasions
 - Such displays are generally limited to places where the word of truth is only now penetrating the culture, and so a display of its truth is helpful to it's movement
- Finally, let's consider what actually happened to Lazarus in this moment
 - His body was certainly dead, which means His spirit was no longer occupying his body
 - Without a body to occupy, the spirit of a man must travel to a home God has prepared for it
 - At this point in human history, the Lord held all spirits in a place called Sheol, as described in Luke 16
 - That place was divided into two halves, called Abraham's Bosom and Hades
 - Abraham's Bosom was a place of comfort holding the souls of OT saints
 - While Hades was a place of torment holding souls of unbelievers
 - Given Jesus' love for Lazarus, we know Lazarus was a believer like his sisters
 - So we might assume that his soul was moved temporarily into Abraham's Bosom for the four days
 - While he was there, we might wonder what he learned, what he was told
 - Did he retain memories of this place after he resurrected?
 - More importantly, what did he think when he found himself resurrected

- Did he know he would be coming back?
- When he did learn of Jesus' plan, was he disappointed to return?
- Especially when he learned he would have to die again
- How did this experience change his view of life and of death?
 - The story of Lazarus ends here, but I wonder how much differently he chose to live after this day than he did before?
 - This is the final pattern in our comparison with the moving from death to life
 - Our faith in Jesus Christ assures us that someday we will be raised to new life
 - To a new body, a new world and a new family
 - Lazarus was given a preview of that new world, and no doubt it changed him in profound ways
 - But in a very real sense, we've received a similar preview
 - His came in the form of a 4-day excursion into Sheol
 - Ours comes in the form of God's word, which is even more powerful than any personal revelation
 - The question is are we allowing the revelation of God's word to inform and change our walk on earth to the purpose of becoming a more effective witness?

John 11B

- Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead
 - It was a most impressive miracle
 - In fact, it was one of the three miracles said to be signs of the Messiah's arrival
 - The other two were healing a man born blind, which Jesus did in chapter 9
 - And healing a man of leprosy
 - So now that Jesus had accomplished something undeniably supernatural and beyond the Pharisee's ability to contradict, they know they must act against Jesus
 - These men are unbelievers
 - They are Jews of the type Jesus describes in Revelation when He says

Rev. 2:9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

- These men think they are representatives of God, but in reality they are representatives of Satan
- And they detest the idea of someone like Jesus stealing away the hearts and minds of the people
- So in the last part of chapter 11 and into chapter 12, John records how Jesus' death was planned by the Jewish leaders

John 11:44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

John 11:45 Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.

John 11:46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.

[John 11:48](#) "If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

[John 11:49](#) But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all,

[John 11:50](#) nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."

[John 11:51](#) Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,

[John 11:52](#) and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

[John 11:53](#) So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

- As I read last week, Lazarus comes forth from the grave in a dramatic display of Jesus' power over death
 - Clearly, the one with power to raise the dead is divine, for only the Creator Himself has the authority to decide the life and death
 - As John reports, many of those who had come to support Martha and Mary in their mourning now become followers of Jesus
 - They are transformed by the miracle of Lazarus
 - And they correctly recognize that Jesus must be the Messiah
 - Nevertheless, there were others in the crowd who were not persuaded, for they were not among Jesus' sheep
 - Instead, they belonged to the enemy
 - As a result, they saw this display as a threat
 - And so they immediately left to report what they had seen to the Pharisees in nearby Jerusalem
- If there were ever any doubt concerning the Pharisee's hard hearts, we see it clearly now
 - These men have no doubts concerning the stories they hear about Jesus
 - On the contrary, it's because they believe Jesus was raising men from the dead that they feel all the more compelled to act against Him
 - They convene a council to consider how to stop this force

- In fact, one says if they let Jesus continue on in this way, many will believe He is the Messiah
- You should hear those words as spoken from the mouth of Satan, for they were
 - Though a nameless human being made this statement, it was Satan himself who authored it in the heart
 - Satan could not stand the prospect of Jesus convincing the world to follow Him
 - Something must be done to stop Jesus
- On a human level, the primary concern was political
 - If Jesus gained a large following, a revolution would likely result
 - The people of Israel would rally around their new king, threatening the rule of Rome
 - Predictably, the Romans would respond with overwhelming force to put down the rebellion
 - And in the process, the Pharisees would lose their privileged position as religious leaders over Judea
 - Which is something no other province in Rome enjoyed
 - So out of a desire to preserve their political power, the Pharisees were determined to destroy Jesus
- But at this point, the High Priest, Caiaphas, made a prophetic declaration, though not one he realized was inspired by the Spirit
 - Caiaphas rebukes his comrades as “no-nothings”
 - He was High Priest that year, but he had received his office from Rome, so his allegiance was to Rome
 - He replaced his father-in-law, Annas, as high priest when Annas refused to concede to the Roman’s rule
 - So while Caiaphas held the title, many people in Israel continued to see Annas as the true High Priest
 - Nevertheless, the Sanhedrin continued to look to Caiaphas as their authority, since the Romans held all the cards

- So Caiaphas interrupts the debate and tells the council that they must stop arguing and move to action
 - He declares it's expeditious for one man to die in order to save the entire nation
 - As he spoke those words, Caiaphas meant that by killing Jesus, the council would prevent the Romans from destroying the nation
 - In his mind, Jesus' death would save Israel from military and political destruction
 - And therefore, murdering Jesus could be justified on that basis
- But John seizes upon the high priest's words to point out how prophetic they are spiritually
 - Jesus' death was ultimately intended by God to save Israel
 - But initially, the saving is spiritual, since Jesus dies to save Israel from the penalty of sin
 - Eventually, Jesus' death is the means to save the nation physically in making a way for it to move into the Kingdom
 - And not just his nation, as John says in v.52, but also a nation of Gentiles scattered around the world
- But of course, Caiaphas has no idea his words carried such significant prophetic meaning
 - He's very much like the donkey in the story of Balaam
 - Who spoke by the power of the Spirit, but had no idea what's he was saying
 - A sober reminder for any Bible teacher
- From that day forward, the plot to kill Jesus took root
 - Certainly, these men wished to see Jesus taken down long before this day
 - But it was the High Priest's declaration that Jesus must die that solidified their decision to kill Him

- It would simply be a matter of time and opportunity before their plan came to fruition
- And that timing was a matter of God's will, not their own creativity
- We have no better evidence that these men were far from God and not His representatives than to see their hearts revealed in this decision
 - They are murders, just like their father the devil, as Jesus said
 - They have harbored murder in their heart long before they acted on it
 - And so the occasion of Lazarus' raising will be the cause for Jesus death in end

John 11:54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

John 11:55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.

John 11:56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"

John 11:57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

- At this point in His ministry, Jesus altered His methods dramatically
 - We might suppose that Jesus learned of the Sanhedrin's plot to kill Him from the sympathetic member, like Nicodemus
 - And as He heard how serious the circumstances had become, Jesus retreats from the public eye
 - It's not that Jesus was afraid of these men accomplishing their task
 - Rather, Jesus wants to be sure they accomplish it according to God's timing and purpose
 - So at this point, in the dead of winter, Jesus stops ministering publicly
 - He withdraws to the wilderness where John the Baptist ministered

- This would have been a lonely outpost in Israel, off the beaten track
- A winter of discontent, indeed
- Then in v.55 John jumps forward to the arrival of the Passover in springtime
 - This is the Passover in which Jesus is killed as the Lamb of God
 - Though we're only halfway through John's Gospel, he has moved directly into the final week of Jesus' life
 - Clearly, John wants to emphasize what Jesus experienced in His final days
 - As Jews returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, as was required, many wondered about Jesus
 - They hadn't seen or heard from Him since He last appeared at the time of the Feast of Dedication a little over three months early
 - Obviously, the people expected to see Jesus in the city again as was required for Jewish males
 - For the same reason, the religious leaders are giving orders for anyone who knows Jesus' whereabouts to report it to them
 - Remember, in this period of history, it was relatively easy for a man to disappear for a time
 - There were no phones or TVs
 - So it required considerable effort to pass word about someone's movements
 - And by the time word reached the interested parties, the person they sought could have easily moved on
 - So the Pharisees depend upon informants with knowledge not only of Jesus' location but also of His plans
- Having set the scene for Jesus' death, John now moves us forward into the final week of Jesus' life

[John 12:1](#) Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

[John 12:2](#) So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

[John 12:3](#) Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

- In the year of Jesus' death, the day of Passover began on a Wednesday at sundown and concluded on Thursday at sundown
 - Therefore, six days earlier refers to the Friday before the week Jesus died
 - On that day, Jesus is traveling back toward Jerusalem for the Passover
 - The Synoptic Gospels records many of the events that transpired during the time Jesus traveled into the city, including the triumphant entry, which John records in this chapter
 - But before Jesus reaches Jerusalem, He pays a visit to Mary, Martha and their (very alive) brother Lazarus
 - Interestingly, we find Lazarus reclining with Jesus while Martha and Mary serve, albeit in different ways
 - This scene in their home is the final moment of Jesus' teaching in John's Gospel
 - According to Matthew and Mark, this dinner took place in the home of Simon, a former leper who Jesus healed
 - So in this room we have gathered two of the three beneficiaries of the Messianic miracles
 - John's repeated emphasis of Lazarus in the scene (and later in v.10) suggests that he had become a person of notoriety following his resurrection, which is understandable
 - For now, though, it's Jesus Who is the center of attention at this dinner
 - And His disciples are present as well, of course

- While they are reclining for the meal Martha is preparing, Mary takes the initiative to anoint Jesus with a very valuable perfume
 - When men reclined around a table, they literally lay on the floor
 - The table was set directly on the floor
 - And those gathered around it arranged themselves on the floor facing the table with their feet stretched out behind them
 - They propped themselves up on the left elbow while using their right hand to eat
 - This positioned their feet behind them, fanned out around the table
 - So Mary approached behind Jesus and began to anoint His feet, which was the only part of Him that she could reach while He lay at the table
 - She retrieved a valuable perfume
 - The name is nard, which refers to an oil made from the roots of the nard plant found in India
 - John says it was pure nard, which means a high quality product
 - Such fine and imported perfume would have been very expensive then as it is now
 - In fact, we might say it was even more valuable then than it is now
 - In Jesus' day, bathing was not common, and so the smell of unwashed bodies was common
 - Therefore, perfume was all the more valuable for its ability to mask odors
 - In Greek, John says Mary retrieved a *litre* of perfume, which was a Greek measure of about 11 ounces
 - That was an extravagant amount of perfume, much as it would be today
 - Imagine if a person were to take the equivalent of a Coke can filled with fine, French perfume and pour it on your feet

- As you can imagine, the use of so much perfume fills the air with aroma, as John says in v.3
- So Mary takes an extraordinary amount of valuable perfume and uses it like water to wash Jesus' feet
 - The other Gospels record that she anointed Jesus' head in this scene, so we must assume that she did both
 - Certainly there was enough perfume to anoint His entire body
 - Emphasizing the anointing of His head connotes Mary's desire to honor Jesus, while emphasizing His feet connotes her humility
 - Clearly, both are true in this case
 - After washing His feet, Mary uses her own hair to dry them
 - A Jewish woman would not normally let down her hair in this way in public
 - It shamed her to do so
 - So not only is she making a huge financial sacrifice to lavish Jesus with perfume, but she is humbling herself in the process
 - Mary gives testimony to one of Paul's well-known commands in Romans

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- Mary thought nothing of giving up what was probably her most prized earthly possession so she could honor and glorify the Lord
- But Mary's response isn't merely charity; she's responding to the Lord's blessing in her life
 - In that day, when the man of a home died, the remaining women were often left destitute
 - They would have great difficulty making ends meet, and eventually every valuable possession they owned would be traded for necessities

- In Mary's case, the Lord restored Lazarus, ensuring the family would not be without his provision
- Therefore, offering her perfume to Jesus was a small sacrifice in light of the great blessing He had been to them
- But not everyone in the room thought Mary's actions were appropriate

[John 12:4](#) But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, [John 12:5](#) "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"

[John 12:6](#) Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

[John 12:7](#) Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

[John 12:8](#) "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

- Some of the disciples object to Mary's actions, thinking it a waste
 - John records Judas' objection, while Matthew and Mark mention multiple disciples objecting to the extravagance
 - Judas remarks that the perfume could have fetched 300 denari, which represents about a year's salary for an average working man in that day
 - So imagine watching someone pour a \$50,000 bottle of wine down the drain
 - Or burning \$50,000 in cash in a fireplace to warm the house
 - To see such a thing, we very well might react in a similar way
- Though multiple disciples expressed these concerns, John chose to single out Judas
 - Judas' decision to participate in this protest is the height of hypocrisy
 - And it was especially revealing of his heart, which was John's point in highlighting Judas in this moment
- Judas states that the money should be given to the poor instead
 - John clarifies that this suggestion was not made out of genuine concern for the poor

- Instead, it was because he was a thief who had been stealing out of the group's money box
- He was the group treasurer, which allowed him easy access to the money
- As we learned back in John 6, Judas is not a believer
 - More than that, he was not one of the sheep, which means he was never destined to be a believer
 - Jesus called him a devil, and yet Jesus selected him to join the group of twelve
 - This was intentional on Jesus' part, of course
 - He needed a man close to Him would betray Him at the right time
- This scene offers us a glimpse into the heart and motives of the unbeliever who adopts a form of godliness while denying its power, as Paul says
 - Jude is typical of such a person
 - Jude didn't know the Lord as Lord, for that knowledge lay outside His grasp spiritually
 - Nevertheless, he portrayed himself as one interested in the plight of the poor and needy
 - Yet in reality, these "good" works were merely self-serving
 - And in his heart he remained wicked, hypocritical and self-centered
 - The unbelieving world operates in this same way today just as it has always done
 - Ungodly men and women who do not know the love of Christ will commonly express concern for the needs of humanity
 - They want to see the poor fed and humanity lifted up, or at least they say they do
 - But they are hypocritical, having selfish motives in all they do
 - Whether for political power, social credit, ego, or financial gain

- It's these people Paul is speaking about when he said that depraved men deprived of the truth suppose that godliness is a means of gain
- Because of these selfish interests, they work to solve the wrong problem
 - They seek to solve afflictions of others without appreciating their own spiritual poverty
 - Judas thought the purpose of Jesus' movement was to empower humanity, either socially or politically
 - Naturally, if you don't know Jesus as the Creator, then you are only thinking about things of this world
- Jesus defends the anointing by declaring it is purposeful and necessary for His sakes
 - Jesus says let Mary alone, allow her to "keep it" for the day of His burial
 - That translation is a bit confusing
 - A better way to translate Jesus' words would be, "Leave her alone. For the day of my death she has done it."
 - Jesus is saying that Mary did what she did as a preparation for His day of death
 - Mourners traditionally anointed the bodies of the deceased
 - Since Jesus will be buried in haste prior to the Passover, He will not receive a proper anointing in the day He dies
 - So Jesus says Mary is performing His anointing in advance
 - And for that anointing there is not enough costly perfume in the all the world
 - Of course, no one understood that Jesus was only days away from dying on a cross
 - Still, the Spirit moved Mary to anoint the Lord in preparation for His burial without her understanding why
 - Mary was acting out of a thankful heart and conviction being lead by the Spirit,
 - And as she obeyed she was misunderstood by onlookers

- Believers will always be misunderstood in this way
- Mary traded the wealth of that oil for a spiritual blessing
- From an eternal perspective, her actions made perfect sense to the spiritually enlightened
- Likewise, when you step out to love, glorify and serve the Lord, you will inevitably be called to trade earthly things for spiritual things
 - And these actions will make sense to believers who live with eyes for eternity
 - But we will confuse a world that only understands the material
 - Sell your possessions and move to a far away place to serve the Lord
 - Turn your back on advancement and power and wealth to live a humble and simple life, and you will be dismissed as a zealot
 - Decline to join in great works of social justice and equality so you can preach the Gospel to those with ears to hear, and you're painted as heartless or uncaring
- Notice Jesus says they will always have the poor, but they won't always have Him
 - In this context, we understand Jesus wasn't dismissing the plight of the poor, but He was setting things in their proper priority
 - Of course, the Lord cares for the physical needs of humanity
 - He brings the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous
 - But Jesus didn't come to solve the problem of mankind's physical poverty
 - He came to solve the problem of our spiritual poverty
 - Lazarus' comment turns this priority upside down
 - He is suggesting that endeavoring to solve the problem of world hunger is more important advancing the work of glorifying Christ
 - In theory, if we spent all our time on solving world hunger, we might achieve that end

- But we would not have spent time spreading the Gospel, which brings souls into Heaven
- Such that even when the whole world has become fat, dumb and happy, they still spend eternity in hell
- So Jesus says we will always have the poor
 - He means that the opportunities to minister to the needs of the human condition will never be exhausted
 - Mankind could solve world hunger, and we would still have cancer, violence, abuse, and countless other tragedies that mark our fallen world
 - So don't make it your life's goal to solve the human condition through physical solutions
 - But we won't always have Jesus
 - Jesus meant it literally concerning His time with these disciples
 - But He also meant it spiritually
 - We only have so long to represent Christ to the world
 - And the world itself only has so long to know and believe before they die and face judgment
 - So don't get distracted in solving earthly problems
 - Remain focused on glorifying Christ
 - Humbling ourselves in service to Him
 - Making our lives a living sacrifice to the praise of His Name
- While Jesus is eating at the house, a large crowd learns that Jesus is here

John 12:9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

John 12:10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;

John 12:11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

- Jesus been off the radar for several months, so they are excited to finally discover His location
 - Notice they are coming not just for Jesus but also for Lazarus
 - This guy who was raised from the dead has become a local celebrity
 - He's probably been in hiding himself
- Lazarus' fame has put a bullseye on his chest
 - The movement has suddenly gained serious momentum and it's scaring the religious leaders
 - The Pharisees are determined to stamp out this movement before it can gain any more steam
 - They want to kill Jesus and also Lazarus
- The next day marks Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem

[John 12:12](#) On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

[John 12:13](#) took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel."

[John 12:14](#) Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written,

[John 12:15](#) "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT."

- John mentions a crowd that had come to Jerusalem for the feast, referring to the upcoming feast of Passover
 - This is one of the three feasts that required Jewish men to travel to Jerusalem, and many brought the rest of the their family
 - The city would swell to several million on this week
 - The crowds spill out of the city and into the surrounding countryside
 - It creates quite the scene, and it's into this excitement that Jesus enters for the final week of His life

- The intensity of the crowds devotion and interest in Jesus and Lazarus contrasts with the Pharisees intense hatred
- Clearly, the conflict is about to come to a climax
- What follows is the only public display in all Jesus' earthly ministry
 - Jesus will proceed into the city of Jerusalem amidst crowds declaring Him to be Messiah
 - This is one of the rare moments that all four Gospel writers record, indicating it's importance
- The "next day" of these events are Sunday
 - This is traditionally the start of the preparations for the Passover celebration
 - Families were required by the Law to bring a 3-year old lamb into their home in preparation for the sacrifice
 - The lamb would be inspected for three days to ensure it was indeed spotless
 - During that time, the family would establish a bond with the animal living in their midst
 - All of these details pictured the sacrifice of Christ
 - Three days before He is crucified, Jesus enters the city of David goes into Temple, the house of God
 - So on this day as Jesus enters the city, a crowd is assembled along the rode leading into the east gate to greet the Messiah
 - They place palm branches on the ground in front of Jesus as He rides in on a donkey, in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy of the Messiah riding on a donkey

Zech. 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!

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.

- The palm was a national symbol in Israel
 - It was inscribed on coins made during the rebellion against the Romans in AD 66-70
 - So a large crowd waving palm branches was a provocative act of defiance against Roman rule
 - It sent a message that the crowd saw Jesus as their King coming to establish the kingdom
- The crowd shouts “blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord”
 - This statement is a Messianic declaration from Psalm 118
 - At the three feasts that Jews attended in Jerusalem, they recited the Hallel, which was Psalms 113-118
 - Psalm 118 was written to honor the coronation of David as king
 - And the Jews understood that it was prophetically speaking of the Messiah entering Jerusalem to establish the kingdom
 - So as Jesus enters the city, the crowd declares “here comes the Messiah”
 - Earlier in the Gospels, Jesus said this in response to Israel’s rejection of Jesus as the Messiah

Luke 13:34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

Luke 13:35 “Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

- Jesus told the people of Israel that their rejection of Him as Messiah would mean dire consequences for this generation
- They had committed the unforgivable sin, leaving them with no rescue
- And furthermore, the entire city of Jerusalem would be made desolate as a judgment against the nation for rejecting the Messiah
- Furthermore, Jesus says the nation will not have a second chance to embrace Him as Messiah until they reverse this mistake

- The nation must acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah
- And once they make that acknowledgement, only then will He return to them
- Zechariah 12 describes this future moment, which takes place at the end of the Tribulation at Jesus' Second Coming
- So in this moment, the crowd expects the fulfillment of Psalm 118 to take place on this Palm Sunday
 - Right idea, wrong timing
 - They declare the Psalm in expectation that Jesus will set up His Kingdom right away
 - But if these admirers should have paid closer attention to the context of Zechariah 9
 - That chapter describes a humble arrival of Messiah followed by a triumphant arrival like lightening across the sky
 - The Kingdom is set up only after the second arrival
 - And the crowd were not the only ones to misunderstand the circumstances

[John 12:16](#) These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

[John 12:17](#) So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him.

[John 12:18](#) For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

[John 12:19](#) So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

- John speaks retrospectively, noting that he and the rest of the disciples were oblivious of all that was happening in that moment
- Only after the resurrection of Jesus did they look back and recognize that this moment had been fulfillment of scripture

- I think John's statement may be his best effort to explain, in advance, why the disciples fled Jesus at the crucifixion yet later became His strongest representatives
 - Their behavior in the midst of the turmoil of the Passover is explainable as ignorance and fear
 - Their contrary behavior following Christ's resurrection in the face of threats and persecution is proof that their understanding had changed
 - They were able to act in courage and conviction because they knew the Risen Lord and understood the program of God
- Meanwhile, those who had been there at the raising of Lazarus continued to testify of Jesus as Messiah
 - This crowd is fueled by the signs and wonders they have seen Jesus do of late
 - This observation also serves to explain why the crowds turn against Jesus in only a few days
 - Many are following Him seeking freedom from Roman oppression
 - Others have been impressed by the miracles and signs
 - Many are believers while other may be simply curious onlookers
 - Nevertheless, they will all turn on Jesus or at the very least abandon Him during His passion
 - They depart for the same reason that the apostles depart
 - They are expecting the wrong thing, not understanding what's happening in the moment
 - Only later do they understand
- And of course, all this excitement is driving the Pharisees to the edge of panic
 - They see their power over the people disappearing rapidly, while the crowd continued to declare Jesus is their new leader
 - They turn on one another declaring that someone needs to do something to stop it

John 12

- As John records Jesus' unavoidable march toward the cross, he takes great care to record many details from Jesus' final week that the other Gospel writers overlooked
 - Over the next ten chapters, John captures extended discourses between Jesus and the disciples
 - In particular, at the Last Supper and in the Garden before He is betrayed, John captures very intimate moments absent from the other Gospels
 - Also, the High Priestly prayer Jesus prays with the Father is recorded only in John
 - And John adds important details to our understanding of the trials and crucifixion of Jesus
 - Finally, John offers fascinating detail on the days following Jesus' resurrection
 - All these things await us in the second half of this study, but today we return to Jesus having entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover
 - Over the past three months, the pressure has been building to find Jesus
 - The Pharisees have asked for help
 - And the crowds are waiting to see if Jesus would appear for Passover
 - Now that He has entered the city, a conflict is inevitable
 - And it's because of this building pressure that Jesus knows His death is coming shortly
 - So we pick up again today as John relates a brief and interesting encounter that happened after Jesus' triumphant entry into the city

[John 12:20](#) Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

[John 12:21](#) these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

[John 12:22](#) Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.

[John 12:23](#) And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[John 12:24](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[John 12:25](#) "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

[John 12:26](#) "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

- As Jesus death approaches, a group of Gentiles (John calls them Greeks) approaches to worship Jesus
 - They aren't sure where to find Jesus, so they ask Philip where He can be found
 - This is a curious and almost out-of-place event in John's Gospel
 - No other writer thought to mention it
 - So we might wonder why John chose to include it?
 - Well, it reminds us of another group of Gentiles that came from afar seeking to worship the Lord in Israel
 - This visit happened at the very beginning of Jesus' earthly life
 - They too had to ask where He could be found
 - Those magi were a testimony to the power of the Messiah to reach the world, even the Gentile world outside Israel
 - Now at the end of Jesus' life, He has accomplished that purpose yet again
 - Gentiles were now streaming to Jerusalem to find and worship the Messiah
 - We're told in Zechariah and elsewhere that the Gentile nations will stream to Jerusalem to worship the Messiah

- The fulfillment of that prophecy awaits the Kingdom
- But even now it's fulfillment is prefigured by the arrival of these Gentiles
- When the disciples brought the news to Jesus that even Gentiles were coming to Him, it becomes the catalyst for Him to announce the hour of His death had come
 - It seems that the Gentiles' arrival to Jerusalem demonstrated that Jesus no longer belonged to Israel alone
 - He was now prepared to die for the sins of the whole world, as John says in His letter
- In v.23 Jesus declares the Son of Man will be glorified in death and resurrection
 - How Jesus must have feared what He was speaking concerning Himself?
 - He knew this must happen and it's what He's been moving toward this end even from the beginning
 - Nevertheless, His obedience to that mission is about to be sorely tested in His humanity
 - To help explain the beneficial purpose for His death, Jesus teaches through a parable
 - Jesus uses the example of a seed
 - It's very purpose for existing is to give life
 - But before that seed can serve its intended purpose, it must be buried, which is a picture of dying
 - Paul uses this same analogy in 1Cor 15 to explain bodily resurrection
 - So Jesus is saying He's prepared to die and be buried so by His death He would bear "much fruit," which must be the greatest of all understatement
 - Jesus also says that this one Seed will fall into the earth by itself
 - Generally, farmers sow individual seeds in their own hole in the ground

- In applying that agricultural practice to Himself, Jesus is explaining that He expected to be abandoned by everyone
- Though there were adoring crowds now and even His devoted disciples, they were about to disappear
- Why was Jesus going to be alone? Because sinful always flesh places greater importance on earthly goals over spiritual goals
 - Jesus is about to sacrifice Himself so that others may live, so Jesus lectures these men to do the same knowing they will soon turn their backs on Him
 - Paradoxically, Jesus says that death is the way to life
 - He means it in three primary ways
 - First, He means if someone loves earthly life, then he will miss the opportunity to gain eternal life
 - In a sense, Jesus is defining the repentance that leads to salvation
 - Repentance is a humbling of oneself to recognize that the life we know on earth is not true life
 - We come to agree we are sinners destined to eternal death
 - We must be willing to let this old self go to the grave
 - And instead, we embrace new life in Christ
 - As Paul says, we are buried with Christ so we can be raised with Him
 - Secondly, Jesus is saying we must be willingly to die to self so we can follow Christ
 - We no longer seek for the lifestyle the world offers
 - If we seek after that life, then we won't seek for the life that comes by abiding in Christ
 - We don't depend on this world to find our satisfaction
 - We don't measure rewards by what we gain for ourselves in a world destined to burn up

- We must all adopt the attitude that everything in this world is worth forfeiting for the sake of what Jesus offers in eternity
- Finally, the church must be prepared to follow in Jesus' footsteps by going to the grave if required to support the mission of the church
 - It's often said that the blood of Christian martyrs has watered the seed of the church
 - The death of Christians in the face of persecution is commonly a source for salvation in a new generation
 - And whenever Christians demonstrate that their love for Christ is greater than their love for their life, God uses that testimony to bring more souls life
 - Our death can become a source of new eternal life for another
- Jesus summarizes this final point saying that whoever turns to Jesus should expect to follow in His footsteps in v.26
 - No servant can avoid going where the Master goes
 - Jesus leads His people and so wherever we're drawn to serve, we can know He is bringing us there
 - These words are clearly looking forward to the time when these men will be without Jesus on earth
 - Nevertheless, He will still be leading them
 - And He does the same for us today
 - By His Spirit, He leads us into the moments where He intends to perform ministry through us
 - And the Father will honor the one who serves Christ
 - That honor may be evidenced on earth to some extent
 - But regardless, it will be evidenced in Heaven
- With death on His mind, Jesus now begins to explain the purpose in His coming death
 - Jesus' explanation goes over the heads of the crowd and even the disciples
 - But Jesus is merely planting seeds with these statements

[John 12:27](#) "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

[John 12:28](#) "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

[John 12:29](#) So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

[John 12:30](#) Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

- My Bible says Jesus describes His "soul" as troubled, but the Greek word for soul has a wide variety of meanings
 - It can mean soul, life, heart and even mind
 - So it also can mean the whole person
 - I think that's how Jesus means it here
 - His soul or spirit was committed to the mission, but His humanity – His Person – was troubled by what He knew lay ahead
 - The Greek word translated troubled means frightened
 - Our Lord was frightened but the pain of the beatings
 - The terror of the scourge
 - Unimaginable suffering of the cross
 - Our Lord was God, but He was also a man, and His power as God only served to magnify His suffering
 - First, Jesus knew that this time (this "hour") was coming
 - How much worse is it to know that a terrible thing lies in your future?
 - Better to not know before it happens, right?
 - Furthermore, Jesus had the power to stop it at anytime
 - Notice Jesus asks rhetorically what should He say to the Father?
 - Should He call to the Father and ask Him to save Him from this hour?

- How much harder still is it for someone to contemplate a horrible death knowing you have the power to stop it
- What compels someone to go forward? Love
 - Jesus' love for the Father compelled Him to obey despite His suffering
 - Jesus says it was for this purpose He came to this point
 - If Jesus hadn't been willing to go through with this plan, He never would have begun it
 - Consider the contrast between this second Adam and the first Adam
 - The first Adam was compelled to obey the Father
 - And he lived under ideal conditions
 - Nothing in Adam's existence made obeying God's word difficult
 - Nevertheless, he disobeyed...without hardly a thought
 - But Christ came as the second Adam to reverse the mistake of the first
 - But Jesus' circumstances were a product of the first Adam's mistake
 - Jesus entered a world of sin, not paradise
 - Jesus came to die in suffering, not to live in perfection
 - And Jesus persevered in obedience though it troubled His soul
- Therefore, Jesus doesn't say Father save Me, but says Father glorify Your Name
 - Jesus insists that the Father command His Son to do what brings Him glory
 - He speaks these words as a petition to the Father
 - And so then the Father answers with words that all can hear
 - He says He has glorified His Name and He will again
 - This is the third time that the Father has answered Jesus from Heaven
 - The first was at His baptism
 - The second at His transfiguration

- And now as Jesus rejects the temptation to avoid the cross
- Only John records this third incident
- It's interesting that in all three cases, but especially in this case, these supernatural dramatic revelations from God are veiled
 - They are obviously intended to show the Father's endorsement of His Son and His obedience
 - And yet the audiences are always unsure of what they are hearing or seeing
 - Or they miss it altogether
 - Notice in v.29 the crowd is debating what they heard and they assume it was said for Jesus' benefit
 - Why would God produce such a display and yet veil it from its witnesses?
 - Even Jesus says it was for their benefit and not for His
 - Jesus didn't need an answer to His prayer for He knew the will of the Father
 - The people needed to know that the Son was doing the Father's will
 - Yet it was veiled to them
 - The reason is because the Father glorifies Himself through His Son
 - The Son represents the Father
 - As the writer of Hebrews says

Heb. 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Heb. 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...

- That's what the Father means when He says that He has glorified His name and will again

- Jesus' has been glorifying the Father in all that He has done
- And He will yet glorify the Father even more by what He's about to do on the cross
- Which is what Jesus meant as well when He asked the Father to glorify His name
- He meant give Me the strength to make it to the cross
- So this supernatural display was another seed planted for the disciples to know that the Son's death was a part of the Father's plan
 - We need to understand that what's about to happen will completely rock the disciples' world
 - The last thing they're expecting is for their Messiah and Lord to die
 - As we'll see later, it leads them to conclude that the entire movement is lost
- Can you imagine what it meant to a Jew to think their Messiah had failed in His mission?
 - That will be the depth of their hopelessness after the cross
 - So even now the Father and Jesus are preparing these men to understand the true purpose behind the events
- Then Jesus moves into explaining the purpose in His coming suffering and death

[John 12:31](#) "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

[John 12:32](#) "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

[John 12:33](#) But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

- Adam's sin brought the world under God's judgment
 - And now the Father was preparing to bring that judgment
 - Except that the judgment would rest entirely on Christ
 - He was literally to become Atlas, holding the world on His shoulders
- By His death, the Lord would also cast out the enemy of the world

- The enemy's power was established when he robbed man of fellowship with God
- And that power is taken away when men are reconciled to God
- And since our sin is that barrier, we can say that the enemy's power lies in the way he brought men into sin
- And likewise, Jesus' power over the enemy is evidenced in His ability to remove the penalty for sin
- Therefore, Jesus explains that if He is lifted up on a cross, then it will serve to draw men to Him
 - As the world comes to understand that Jesus has taken their penalty upon Himself, many will flock to Him in thankfulness
 - This is the draw of the Gospel
 - It tells the world that they have been forgiven of sin
 - They have nothing to fear from God, since all the wrath they deserve has been taken upon Christ
 - This reminds us that if we try to preach the Gospel without discussing the reality of sin and the penalty that sin deserves, we gut the power of the message
 - The death of Christ is powerful and compelling only when we understand what it accomplished on our behalf
 - We can all applaud the one who dies sacrificial in defense of others
 - Like a soldier falling on a grenade to save a comrade
 - But we are personally devoted to the One who would die on our behalf
 - It's different when the life that was saved is our own
 - So our presentation of the Gospel must include the reality that all men are destined for eternal death in fire and torment for sin
 - And that only by the death of One in our place can that penalty be avoided
 - And Christ so loved the world, that He died in our place

- So that as He was lifted up, He would draw men to Himself
- All this strange talk of dying and the Son of Man has the crowd pondering, so they ask Jesus to explain

[John 12:34](#) The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

[John 12:35](#) So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.

[John 12:36](#) "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

- At the suggestion that the Messiah was going to die, the crowd says wait a minute, we thought the word says the Messiah will live forever
 - And now you're telling us you have to be lifted up (which the crowd took to mean dying)
 - This bothered them to no end
 - It seemed like Jesus was violating scripture, which began to worry them
 - And the term Son of Man was confusing them, though Daniel uses this term to describe the Messiah
 - It's probably no coincidence that this is the last mention of a crowd following Jesus in the Gospels
 - It would seem that this discussion of His death worries the crowd to the point that they are no longer interested in following
 - Already, the seed is beginning to be buried alone
- Sensing their fickleness, rather than answer their questions Jesus presents the crowd with the call of the Gospel once more
 - Jesus calls them to walk in the Light
 - Of course, we are very familiar with the metaphor of light by now
 - It means to know the truth of Christ
 - To live in the light of spiritual truth

- And the fact that the Light is only among them a little longer makes this call all the more imperative
 - We sit here today faithful followers of a Jesus we've yet to see
 - These people were standing mere feet from Him as He spoke
 - Don't you wish you could be in that moment, to see Jesus walking the earth as a man?
- What a privilege these people had!
 - But they shrugged their shoulders and left
 - So Jesus went away and hid Himself from the people
 - The time for convincing the crowds was over...death was near
- This generation was witness to God incarnate, and yet they walked away unimpressed
 - How can any human being stand in the presence of the Creator of the Universe and not fall on his face?
 - Why did crowds hear Jesus and see Him and not accept Him?
 - We see this theme of why some believe and other do not returning again in John's narrative
- And the same answer comes in the next passage

John 12:37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

John 12:38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"

John 12:39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

John 12:40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."

John 12:41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

- Though Jesus performed so many signs and spoken so many words, still the crowds were not believing in Him

- And the fact that so many rejected Jesus was a result of God's sovereign will
 - The prophet Isaiah was called to write provocative words concerning how the Messiah would be received when He arrived
 - Isaiah asks in chapter 53 who believes the report that the Messiah has arrived for Israel?
 - The question is rhetorical, for the answer will be obvious
 - Virtually no one in Israel believes when the Lord arrives for that nation
- But the fact that Israel doesn't receive their Messiah wasn't chance or the whim of an individual's desires or conclusions
 - No, John says that the nation's rejection of their Messiah was an outcome produced by the will of God
 - In v.40 John quotes Isaiah 6 where the prophet says that God Himself has blinded the eyes of Israel
 - And God hardened the heart of Israel
 - And He did these things so that they would not see Jesus as Messiah
 - And they would not believe that He was Messiah
 - For if they had done so, then the Lord would have been obligated by His own word to heal them
- So not to point a fine point on it, the Lord prevent Israel from receiving their Messiah
 - They heard, but they didn't understand
 - They saw, but they didn't believe
- And this was all done to fulfill prophecy in Isaiah, which said that the Messiah would be rejected by Israel
 - And in case we're in doubt that Isaiah knew what he was talking about, John says Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and knew of it
 - Isaiah knew exactly what was coming in the Messiah

- Which is why everything Isaiah wrote is perfectly accurate to the events of Jesus' life
- Of course, the question in our minds is why did the Lord say He would do such things to Israel and then carry them out?
 - How can the Lord be just to reject His own people?
 - Well, the answer begins with a promise spoken to Abraham
 - In the covenant God made to Abraham, He said

Gen. 12:2 And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

Gen. 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you,

And the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

- The promises spoken to Abraham mention that through him God would bless all the families or nations of the earth
 - God committed Himself to bringing a blessing to the whole world through the descendants of Abraham
 - God fulfills that promise by bringing the Messiah to all nations
 - The Gospel is traveling the world fulfilling God's word to Abraham even today
- So God needed a plan to send the Gospel beyond the Jewish people
 - But if the Gospel was going to go to the world, it needed time to get there
 - And it required the Messiah to deliver it
 - But if Israel had received their Messiah when He came to deliver the Gospel, then the Lord would have been obligated to receive them according to His promises
 - As Isaiah said, if Israel heard the message and receive it, then the Lord would heal them

- And once Israel receives their Messiah, the Kingdom will commence
- So, secondly, the Lord needed a just way to reject His own people for a time to permit the opportunity for the Gentile nations to receive the Messiah He promised them
 - Therefore, the Lord entered into a covenant with Israel at Mt Sinai
 - In that covenant, the Lord delivered the Law
 - And if the people agreed to the Law, they were promised to receive the Kingdom and the blessings of the Land
 - But if they broke the covenant, then the Lord would be just in bringing the nation through a period of judgment
 - The nation agreed to this covenant, and then promptly broke it
 - When they broke it, they gave God just reason to enact the judgments spelled out in the covenant
 - Those judgments include a long period in which the nation is set outside God's mercy, called the Age of the Gentiles, described in Daniel
 - And it's during this age that the Messiah appears to Israel
 - God orchestrated the Messiah's appearance to Israel to fall within this period of judgment for their sin under the Old Covenant so that He could be justified in rejecting them
 - That's what Isaiah means when he says that the Lord blinded the people of the nation
 - He was keeping His word to judge the nation for disobeying the Old Covenant
 - And simultaneously the Lord was keeping His word to Abraham to bring the Gospel to the nations of the Earth
- So the people of Israel were set aside by the Lord so that they wouldn't receive the Gospel when it was offered
 - Because Israel rejected it, then the message had time and opportunity to go another people, the Gentiles
 - As Paul says quoting Hosea and Isaiah

Rom. 9:25 As He says also in Hosea,

**"I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,'
AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"**

Rom. 9:26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE
NOT MY PEOPLE,'

THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

- The Lord called the Gentiles, who were not His people, because He promised to do so
 - So that the Gentiles who were not looking for a Messiah found Him
 - While the Jewish people, who were supposed to be awaiting their Messiah, lost Him in that generation
- This plan of God explains why the nation could be so blind to their own Messiah, as John has demonstrated
 - But all is not lost for Israel
 - For as God promised salvation to the Gentiles, He also promised the Kingdom for Israel
- So one day the Lord returns to bless Israel, as Paul says

Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom. 11:8 just as it is written,

**"GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT,
DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."**

Rom. 11:9 And David says,

**"LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM."**

Rom. 11:10 "LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT,
AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER."

Rom. 11:11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- The stupor the Lord gave to Israel will last only until the purposes in that stupor have been met

- And the purpose is to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles worldwide
- Notice again that Paul reiterates that Israel's rejection of the Messiah was by the hand of God
- But this stumble wasn't intended to bring the nation to its end
 - Instead it was a temporary measure to fulfill God's promise to the Gentiles
 - But at some point the Lord will return to Israel and complete His plan of redemption on their behalf
 - As Paul concludes in Romans 11

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom. 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

Rom. 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- When God's plan for the Gentiles is completed or fulfilled, He will return to Israel and bring them the Gospel again, as the Messiah comes from Zion
 - The Second Coming of Christ will be the moment the Lord fulfills His promises to Israel
 - It will also be the moment when the judgments of the Law are brought to their end
 - All these details are explained in much greater detail in the Revelation study online
 - Nevertheless, John refers to this grand plan of God to explain the otherwise unexplainable circumstances we're seeing here
 - As the nation of Israel runs from their Messiah despite the clear evidence that Jesus is the One they have awaited
 - With blinded eyes and hardened hearts, the crowd dissipates, and Jesus retreats into privacy preparing for His death

- On the other hand, the fact that many rejected Jesus doesn't mean that no one accepted Him of course
 - God's plan to bypass Israel for time didn't mean that God turns His back on the entire nation
 - In fact, Paul teaches that the Lord always keep some of Israel within the family of God
 - This He does to ensure that the nation never ceases to exist in fellowship with Him
 - We call this believing element within Israel the remnant

[Rom. 11:4](#) But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL."

[Rom. 11:5](#) In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

- Therefore, the remnant was present even in Jesus' day, as John explains at the end of the chapter

[John 12:42](#) Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

[John 12:43](#) for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

- John says many of Israel were believing in Him, even among the rulers of Israel
 - Yet we don't see the leaders of Israel stepping forward to embrace Jesus as Christ
 - And the reason for the Pharisees not confessing Jesus publicly was fear and peer pressure
 - We know of Nicodemus already
 - And later we learn of Joseph of Arimathea
 - And John indicates there were others as well
 - This is sober reminder that even among believers the pressure to conceal our allegiance to Christ can be great

- Even in the very presence of the Messiah, some followers loved the approval of the world more than the approval of God
- Consider that statement for a moment
- When you silence your confession, you are forfeiting the approval of God
- When you conceal your witness, you're forfeiting the approval for God
- When you seek to please the world rather than God, you are following in the footsteps of the Pharisees
- But what's about to follow will put everyone to test
 - Do they fear men or fear God?
 - Do they desire the approval of men or God?
 - Are the willing to follow in the footsteps of their Lord?
- Next time, we begin the Last Supper, which continues for five chapters, the longest scene in John's Gospel

John 13

- Tonight we begin the study of the most momentous events in the life of Jesus
 - His final Passover meal, His passion, His death and His resurrection
 - The first of these begins in chapter 13 and will last a full five chapters in John's Gospel
 - Almost 20% of John's entire book is devoted to this one moment in Jesus earthly life
 - That should tell us how important this moment was for John in telling Jesus' story
 - But tonight before we enter that moment, we have one passage at the end of chapter 12 to cover
 - A final call to the people to believe

[John 12:44](#) And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.

[John 12:45](#) "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

[John 12:46](#) "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.

[John 12:47](#) "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

[John 12:48](#) "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

[John 12:49](#) "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

[John 12:50](#) "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

- You may remember that John reported earlier in his Gospel that Jesus had already gone away from the people in preparation for His death
 - But now we hear Jesus crying out for the people to believe in Him while the opportunity still exists
 - Who was He crying out to in this case?

- Well, we know from the other Gospels that Jesus spends the first half of the Passover week in the temple teaching
- John doesn't record this time, probably because the other Gospel writers do
- So though John says Jesus went away from the people on this day, He re-emerged the next day in the temple
 - And when He did, at some point He issued this final call to believe
 - There is a small chiasm in these verses
 - A chiasm is a literary device in which the progression of thought moves in a series of steps toward a point
 - And then backs out a liken number of complimentary points
- In this case, the beginning and ending points are on Jesus' representation of the Father
 - Notice in vs.44-45 and in vs.49-50 Jesus emphasizes the same point
 - Your response to Jesus is your response to the Father God
 - To believe in Jesus is to believe in the Father
 - To witness Jesus at work is to witness the Father
 - In fact, there can be no other way to see the Father except to see Jesus
 - As John explained to us in the first chapter

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

- Only through Christ can the Father be known
- And then in the second half of the chiasm, Jesus explains that He spoke only as the Father directed Him
 - Jesus didn't speak things that were of His own choosing
 - He spoke as the Father directed Him
 - In fact, the message was intended to bring eternal life to those who believed

- So it was especially important that Jesus deliver it exactly as intended
- So at the beginning and the end, Jesus emphasizes His desire to represent the Father and the Father's message of salvation
 - And then sandwiched between these in the chiasm is a message of judgment
 - In v.46 Jesus explains that His mission in coming was to call people out of darkness and into the light of salvation
 - Had God wished to condemn the world for sin, He need not go to the trouble of delivering Jesus into the world first
 - Sometimes, Christians make the mistake of assuming that fairness obligated God to offer mankind a chance at salvation
 - But that isn't so...God would have been perfectly justified in condemning all men without so much as a second thought
 - But in mercy He made a way available through His Son
 - That's why Jesus says He came to rescue men from darkness
 - There would be no other reason for Him to come much less to suffer
 - Going a step further, Jesus says that for those who hear the Gospel and do not believe it, Jesus will not exact judgment upon them in that moment
 - Once again, God is not obligated to wait before He brings judgment for sin
 - It would have been perfectly reasonable for God to never send His Son in the first place
 - But having sent Him, it would have been equally reasonable for the Father to have struck down immediately anyone who rejected His Son
 - But Jesus says that even so, He will not bring judgment for that person in this moment
 - Instead, Jesus is intent on bringing a message of mercy

- So He overlooks the naysayers and mockers and all those who persecute Him
- In fact, Jesus' mission can't be fulfilled otherwise
- If the Lord condemned those who rejected Him, then how could He go to the cross as required?
- But rest assured, judgment for rejecting Christ is coming one day
 - Jesus says in v.48 that the Father has reserved a day of judgment for all those who reject His Son
 - That day, called the last day, will mark the end of mercy and waiting
 - The Lord will note that the Gospel reached in our ears yet we rejected it
 - And in that way, we will have been convicted by our unbelief
 - This is the unavoidable reality of grace
 - Grace is God's unmerited favor in the face of impending judgment
 - Grace isn't grace if judgment weren't a reality
 - The enemy negates God's grace by denying the reality of a coming judgment
 - But Jesus sets the record straight
 - He came to bring a message of salvation to a world that was due judgment
 - And whether you receive mercy or judgment is determined by how you respond to the Father's representative
 - Hear Jesus, believe in Jesus and be saved
 - Reject Him, and in the last day judgment will be certain
- That sobering call sets the stage for the last night of Jesus' earthly life: the Passover celebration
 - John doesn't record much of the ceremony of the Passover meal as does the other Gospel writers

- Instead, John focuses in on the conversation that took place around the table that night
- And what a strange conversation it must have seemed to the disciples who didn't know what was coming

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

John 13:2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,

- In v.1 we hear that Jesus is meeting with the disciples before the feast of Passover
 - The passover was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan on the Jewish calendar
 - Notice that John says that this meeting is happening “before the feast of Passover”
 - Luke sets the scene in similar way

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.

Luke 22:2 The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.

Luke 22:3 And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

- As you probably know, Passover is a feast prescribed in the Law for Israel to observe in commemoration of their exodus from Egypt
 - The Law required each family to sacrifice and eat a lamb
 - The feast was to be celebrated by families in in small groups of around ten people or so
 - In the days preceding the feast, the family brought the lamb into their home and inspected it to ensure it is free of defects
 - Then on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, the lamb was slain
 - And the Passover meal was eaten before twilight on that same day

- Complicating our understanding, the Jewish way of reckoning a day designates that a new day begins at sundown, not at midnight
 - Each calendar day consisted of a 12 hours of dark followed by 12 hours of daylight
 - Therefore, the 14th day of Nisan began like all days: at sundown
 - Since the lamb wasn't to be slain during the nighttime hours, the sacrifice must wait until the daylight hours
 - Naturally, the meal must also wait until the afternoon
 - Since the Law required it be eaten before twilight on that day, the Passover meal was consumed on the afternoon of the 14th after the lamb was slain
- But when we look at the meal Jesus shares with the disciples, we find a different pattern
 - This meal is being prepared on the night before the Passover Feast
 - John has said this meal happened before the Passover feast took place and Luke said the Feast was approaching (i.e., not here yet)
 - And we know from all the Gospel accounts that this meal was held before the day Jesus was crucified
 - They are still eating the meal on the 14th of Nisan as required, since the day began at sundown
 - But it's happening before the lambs were sacrificed, in the evening before the normal day of celebration
 - How do we explain this change?
 - First, we know that Jesus dies during the daylight hours of the Passover day
 - Which means He dies on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan just like the Passover lambs
 - Naturally, dying on the cross precludes Him from eating His Passover meal with the disciples at the usual time
 - By the afternoon of the day of Passover, Jesus would already be dead

- Sacrificed for the sins of the world
- Therefore, the only way Jesus could observe a Passover meal with the disciples was if He moved the meal up to the prior night
 - The Law requires that the meal be finished by twilight on the 14th of Nisan
 - But it places no restriction on how *early* the meal could be eaten on that day
 - So Jesus was still celebrating the meal on the 14th of Nisan as required
 - He just changed convention to accommodate his appointment with the cross
- But what about the lamb they ate at that table?
 - The lamb they consumed at the Last Supper couldn't have been sacrificed as required by the Law
 - In order for their lamb to be ready for dinner on that evening, it must have been killed, prepared and roasted earlier that day, which was the 13th of Nisan
 - Since the Passover lamb had to be killed on the 14th of Nisan, their lamb couldn't have been considered a Passover sacrifice
 - So how did the meal Jesus ate with the disciples satisfy the Law's requirement that they eat a lamb slain on the 14 of Nisan?
 - In the synoptic Gospel, Jesus interrupts the meal to take some bread and wine and then declares they are His body and blood
 - Jesus made those elements representative of His own body, which would be slain on the proper day
 - So it wasn't the roasted lamb at the table that fulfilled the Passover requirement
 - The lamb of the Last Supper was Jesus Himself as represented in those elements
 - Symbolically, the Lamb of that Passover was consumed in advance of His death, for that was the only way it could happen

- As Jesus told the crowd in John 6, unless they would eat His flesh and drink His blood, they would not be saved
- We will return to studying the timeline of the events surrounding Jesus' death as we move further through John's Gospel
 - For now, we rejoin Jesus and the disciples in the waning hours of daylight on Wednesday, April 21, AD 34 (a date we will examine later as well)
 - The day of Passover is about to begin at sundown
 - And as the other Gospels tell us, Jesus has told the disciples that He earnestly wished to celebrate the Passover meal with them
 - If they thought the request was a bit odd, they don't say anything
 - An upper room has been prepared for Jesus
 - It makes sense that a room could have been prepared for the Passover meal yet go unused
 - Remember, this meal is taking place the night before it normally would
 - So the room was prepared but not expecting guests for another 24 hours – except Jesus
- As the men assemble in the room, John opens the scene of the meal remarking on Jesus's amazing mindset
 - Jesus knew that His death was mere hours away
 - He knew that He would die and He knew *how* He would die
 - And yet His focus remained on showing love to those who were His, John says
 - We would have understood had Jesus been a little distracted or even on edge
 - Instead, He's kind, calm and purposeful in all that He does
 - This leads John's conclusion that Jesus loved them to the end
 - In this context John's referring specifically to Jesus' willingness to serve the disciples even in the midst of His mental suffering
 - He was unimaginably burdened by what lay ahead

- Still, He wanted to use these last hours to teach lessons that would stay with the disciples forever
- Even more remarkable is the way Jesus served the very one who would betray Him and bring about His death
 - Judas was still among the twelve as this Passover began in the upper room, though he won't be there at its conclusion
 - And we're told Satan had already sparked in Judas the desire to betray Jesus
 - Judas was not a true disciple, as Jesus highlighted in chapter 6
 - Judas is a devil, yet Jesus recruited him for a specific purpose
 - And that purpose is about to be fulfilled
 - Judas serves as a useful study for us in how the enemy works within the hearts of the world
 - The enemy has dominion over fallen humanity as their slave master
 - Hebrews tells us that the enemy has enslaved sinful men through fear of death
 - Every unbeliever is a target for the enemy's agents to indwell and possess
 - And even before he takes that step, the enemy can influence the thoughts and the unbeliever, as we see here
 - We find another useful example in the book of Acts

[Acts 13:6](#) When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-jesus,

[Acts 13:7](#) who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

[Acts 13:8](#) But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

[Acts 13:9](#) But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

[Acts 13:10](#) and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

- Knowing that the world is the playground of the enemy is important to conducting ourselves in a wise and discerning manner
 - The enemy has real power, but the Lord has infinitely greater power
 - Paul was filled by the Spirit, which was the source of his power against the enemy
- And this moment at the Passover also reflects that hierarchy
 - Satan is already at work striving to bring the end of his enemy, Christ
 - But his progress is entirely dependent on the Lord permission's
 - At the end of the age, the Lord brings Satan to his final reckoning, but not until the Lord has used Satan to accomplished everything the Lord desires
- Then in v.3 John says that despite knowing that Jesus had come from the right hand of God almighty and that all Creation had been given to Him, nevertheless Jesus begins to serve

John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

John 13:4 got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

John 13:5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

- Jesus laid aside His garments
 - This means he dressed himself as a slave, removing his outer cloak
 - Jesus stood only girded at the waist while the disciples remained reclined at the table
 - Remember, the table would have been on the ground, with the disciples reclining on the ground
 - Their feet would have been stretched out behind them
- And then Jesus took a towel and a basin of water and began to wash the disciples' dusty feet

- In a proper home, a servant of the home's master would have had the duty of washing the feet of the guests before the meal
- But there were no servants in this room...just Jesus and the disciples
- Perhaps a few of the disciples noticed that there was no one in the house to perform the traditional foot washing service prior to the meal
 - Clearly, none of the disciples would condescend to perform that duty for the sake of their brethren
 - Luke records that only a few moments earlier, these same men had been arguing among one another over who would be the greatest in the kingdom
 - So it seems they were too prideful to address the need and were resigned to go without
- So instead, their rabbi takes it upon Himself to wash their feet as a lesson
 - Warren Wiersbe makes an excellent observation about Jesus' lesson of humility

"We today, just like the disciples that night, desperately need this lesson on humility. The church is filled with a worldly spirit of competition and criticism as believers vie with one another to see who is the greatest. We are growing in knowledge, but not in grace..."

- As Jesus reaches Peter's feet, he is the first to object

John 13:6 So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

John 13:8 Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

John 13:9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

John 13:10 Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."

John 13:11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

- Peter is disturbed at the notion of Jesus washing His feet
 - Jesus tries to explain that the meaning of Jesus' actions won't make sense now but will in the near future
 - Jesus is performing a simple physical act to teach an important spiritual lesson
 - Jesus's concern wasn't for the cleanliness of the disciples' bodies
 - Nor was Jesus worried about satisfying Jewish dining customs
 - Nor was this merely a lesson in humility or service, though it obviously carried that message as well
 - Jesus is creating a beautiful picture of the meaning of His death on the cross
 - First, there is a picture created by their dirty feet
 - But by Jesus' sacrificial death, He will make His disciples spiritually clean
 - Our dirt of our sinful walk is removed by Jesus' sacrificial act on the cross
 - He will wash away their sins by His own blood
 - Notice when Peter objected to Jesus' cleansing, Jesus told Peter it was the only way He could be cleansed
 - Without this cleansing, Peter could not be a part of what Jesus was working to achieve
 - We must be cleansed by the blood of Christ or else we will never see the Kingdom
 - Of course, Peter doesn't understand the spiritual dimension, just as Jesus said he wouldn't
 - So he tells Jesus to wash all of him
- Jesus then adds that this group is clean already, meaning they had already been forgiven by their faith
 - It still remains for Jesus to accomplish the atoning work on the cross
 - But like Abraham and all saints, these men have already been justified by faith in God's promises

- This statement is important because it reminds us that this physical cleansing was not the source of these men's salvation
- No one can argue that this washing or any other (like baptism) is required for salvation
- But nevertheless, this cleansing was necessary because it created a powerful picture that Jesus was determined to provide
- Notice also that John is careful to clarify that one of these men is not clean, meaning Judas
 - By saying Judas wasn't clean, we have our clearest evidence yet that Judas was not a believer
 - He was not saved by faith
 - He was an unbeliever attached to the group and brought into the inner circle so that a betrayer would be available
- Ironically, Peter's protest highlights the second lesson Jesus was teaching
 - Jesus is modeling the way Jesus' disciples will serve Christ's followers
 - Disciples are to set aside personal ambition and the pride that provokes such thinking to serve the needs of others
 - Peter's comments sound pious, but they are nothing but pride
 - Peter was to be seen as the one disciple humble enough to refuse Jesus' gesture
 - As we say, Peter was proud of his humility
 - And as Shakespeare wrote, "he doth protest too much"
 - His protest sounds hollow
 - We know Peter spoke up (when others didn't) as opportunity to stand out from his peers
 - He wanted his protest to reflect credit upon himself
 - His primary interest wasn't Jesus' honor, but his own
- So Jesus reinforces the second purpose in His washing by emphasizing the model of a disciple

[John 13:12](#) So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

[John 13:13](#) “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.

[John 13:14](#) “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.

[John 13:15](#) “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

[John 13:16](#) “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

[John 13:17](#) “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

[John 13:18](#) “I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’

[John 13:19](#) “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He.

[John 13:20](#) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

- Now the lesson begins, as Jesus asks them do they understand what He has done?
 - There’s no evidence they tried to answer, and I expect they weren’t going to, so Jesus moves directly to answering it for them
 - He says they acknowledge Him as the Teacher and Lord
 - These titles are accurate and there they are right to use them of Jesus
 - But these titles are not badges of honor that we all aspire to gain for ourselves
 - We don’t aspire to receive the honor that is uniquely due to our Lord
 - As another saying goes, there is a God, and you aren’t Him
 - So then Jesus asks them to consider what does it mean if their Lord and Teacher humbles Himself to wash their feet?
 - Clearly, if the Lord is not above performing acts of selflessness and sacrifice, then none of His disciples are either
 - As Jesus, a slave is not greater than his Master
 - Therefore, the lesson for Peter and the rest is to emulate Jesus’ attitude and actions in how they serve the church

- But then Jesus adds that knowing this principle is not enough
 - The disciples must be prepared to put it into action
 - Notice in v.17 that they will be blessed by God when they do what Jesus did
 - Many students of the Bible are smart enough to see that sacrificial service to the body of Christ is an imperative
 - But only those who make it a practice of their lives will receive God's blessing
- Once again, Jesus makes a distinction adding that He is not speaking equally to everyone: Judas isn't included
 - Jesus knew that what He was speaking simply wasn't being received by Judas
 - His ears were hearing the words Jesus' spoke, but they were words speaking to believers only
 - Jesus says He knew who He had chosen, but what does He mean "chosen?"
 - All 12 men had been chosen to be in the group of twelve
 - But Jesus means He knew the 11 of the twelve who were chosen for salvation
 - Judas had not been chosen to be born again
 - Instead, Judas was included so that the scripture would be fulfilled that one close to the Messiah would betray Him
 - Jesus quoted from Psalm 41:9 to emphasize that there was a purpose in selecting someone for His twelve who was not also selected for salvation
 - There must be at least one traitor among the twelve if God's plan for the crucifixion is to be carried out
 - As we'll see, the act of betrayal follows the eating of the Passover bread
- Since so many important and unexpected things are about to happen to Jesus, He tells the disciples that they will be told in advance of these things

- So that as they come to mind in the days and weeks after they occur, the disciples will have reason to ponder their meaning
 - When the Lord you love and follow dies at the hand of His enemies, it's hard to make sense of that outcome
 - The disciples might be tempted to conclude that Jesus wasn't truly God
 - Or that God isn't all powerful
- On the other hand, if Jesus tells you everything that's going to happen in advance, you have reason to reconsider the meaning of these things
 - It will become clear that Jesus intended for these things to happen
 - In fact, He said He must die
 - And he says how it will happen
 - So clearly, if He knew what was going to happen in advance, then He could have stopped it or avoided it
 - Since He didn't, it must have served His purpose
- And that line of thought eventually leads the apostles to a deep appreciation of what happened
 - So that as they become His representatives, they are in a position to convince others of the truth of His claims
 - Nevertheless, their success in that mission remains dependent on the Lord to work through them
 - Notice in v.20 the Lord says that those who would receive Jesus will likewise receive His ambassadors
 - When we have been born again by the Spirit we join a family of believers
 - And that family knows its own and receives its own
 - Like any other family, we may not always like one another, but we will always love one another
- Having referred to Judas and his purpose on several occasions already, Jesus decides its time to dismiss the traitor now

[John 13:21](#) When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me."

[John 13:22](#) The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.

[John 13:23](#) There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

[John 13:24](#) So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking."

[John 13:25](#) He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

[John 13:26](#) Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

[John 13:27](#) After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

[John 13:28](#) Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.

[John 13:29](#) For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor.

[John 13:30](#) So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

- Judas is being removed from the meal at this point, because what's about to follow is only appropriate for those who are truly Christ's disciples
 - So Jesus, fearful again of His coming death, puts the wheel in motion that we bring about his painful death
 - In keeping with His promise, he tells them in advance that He will be betrayed by one of His disciples
 - Naturally, to hear these words greatly perplexes the eleven, who can't understand how this would happen
 - They can't begin to guess who it would be
 - This detail in itself is surprising to me
 - We know Judas is a devil, as Jesus called him
 - John said earlier that Judas was stealing money from the money box
 - He is an unbeliever among men who know and love the Lord
 - And yet know one suspect Judas is the one to betray the Lord

- It's a sobering reminder that we can be surrounded by men and women who play the part well but have nothing in their hearts
 - The Gospel isn't a way of life to be adopted
 - It isn't a way of thinking to be argued
 - It's a spiritual rebirth that God alone accomplished in the heart of His children
 - It's prompted by the hearing of God's word
 - And it's consummated by the work of the Spirit
- At this moment, John reveals that he was leaning on Jesus, which means he was seated to the right hand side of Jesus
 - This is the first time John refers to himself as the disciple Jesus loved
 - This is a turn of phrase by John
 - He's not suggesting that he was Jesus' favorite or that he was loved more than the other disciples
 - It's a statement of God's grace spoken in humility
 - John is emphasizing that it was Jesus' love for him that was the foundation for his relationship with Jesus
 - And of course, this same thing could be said about every disciple
 - Ironically, John chose to refer to himself in this way rather than in the first person so as to diminish himself while emphasizing Christ's love
 - Therefore, John is seated next to Jesus
 - Traditionally, the Passover table was arranged so that the most honored sat at the right end of the table with the group arranged around the table
 - The one seated to the left of Jesus would have been the one presumed to have the next greatest honor
 - And so on around the table until you reached the other side
 - There was one except to this rule

- The youngest was positioned immediately to the right of the most honored person
- It was a position intended to preserve the youngest from always being away from the action
- Since men reclined on their left elbow, the youngest person would naturally recline against the one of highest honor
- So John must have been the youngest disciples in the group
 - He reclines next to Jesus, with his head practically touching Jesus' right shoulder
 - Peter must have been seated some distance from Jesus, perhaps directly opposite John
 - If so, then Peter has assumed a position of some humility at the table, seating himself a distance from Jesus
- Therefore, Peter wants John to solicit more information from Jesus, so he gestures to John since he was physically the closest to Christ
 - John relays the request to Jesus
 - To fulfill scripture, Jesus declares that the one who eats the morsel He dips is the betrayer
 - Jesus may have spoken this softly just to those next to him, not necessarily to the whole table
 - The bread was the Passover unleavened bread and it was dipped probably into the paschal stew or perhaps into the bitter herbs
 - If Jesus could reach Judas with this morsel, then it suggests Judas took the seat immediately left of Jesus
 - That would have been the most honored position after Jesus Himself
 - Another irony and indication of Judas' pride and self-deceit
 - We might also conclude that Jesus offered this seat to Judas for this very moment
 - As the saying goes, keep your friends close and your enemies closer

- John records that at this moment, Satan entered Judas
 - The word “entered” indicates an indwelling of Judas’ body by the enemy himself
 - This shows us how strongly Satan took interest in the destruction of the Messiah
 - Satan normally uses his agents to indwell and direct the bodies of unbelievers from time to time (including today)
 - It’s a rare event when Satan himself steps in
 - He does it here and later in the life of the antichrist to come
 - Matthew records that Judas reacts with surprise to learn he is the one to betray Christ
 - Perhaps he’s just feigning surprise
 - Or perhaps his role as betrayer wasn’t formed in his heart fully
 - And it required the indwelling of Satan to bring him to that point
 - The more we consider the interplay between Judas and the enemy, the more revealing it becomes
 - We know that Judas takes his own life after Jesus’ death, which suggests he felt regret at his actions
 - But these actions are not the same as saving faith, of course
 - Unbelievers can do the wrong thing and feel regret in the end without that repentance being evidence of God’s saving work in their hearts
 - Furthermore, we might conclude that without Satan’s direct influence, Judas might not have gone through with the plan
 - So taking all these possibilities into account, I arrive at the conclusion that Judas was placed within Jesus’ inner circle as a pawn available to Satan
 - Judas was an unbeliever living in the flesh and so he followed Jesus as far as flesh can follow God
 - He was drawn by the notoriety of Jesus, flattered to be chosen and remained committed for as long as it benefitted him

- He stole a little money along the way
- And generally understood Jesus' ministry as an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of something new and exciting
- But because he was without the Spirit of God, he was an empty vessel, spiritually speaking
 - Like every unbeliever, he was an asset that Satan controlled
 - And Jesus included Judas in the group knowing that Judas was the only one Satan could control
 - Remember, when Jesus taught on demons possession, He states that unless a person is under the control of the Spirit of God, he remains available to the enemy

[Luke 11:24](#) "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

[Luke 11:25](#) "And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.

[Luke 11:26](#) "Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

- So how do we see Judas?
 - He was an unbeliever susceptible to Satan's deceptions and authority
 - He was positioned by Christ so that God's plan would be accomplished
 - Though the Lord is never the author of sin, He knows how to put it to work to accomplish His good purposes
 - In this case, Jesus put to work Satan's desire to destroy the Messiah and Judas' desire to enhance his pocketbook and ego
 - And a dog returns to its vomit, as the saying goes
 - Judas was not innocent, but nor was he the mastermind nor even the agent of Jesus' betrayal
 - The blame always traces to Satan
 - And his antics pollute everyone he touches, including Judas
 - This is why the writer of Hebrews says

[Heb. 2:14](#) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Heb. 2:15](#) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Finally, Jesus tells Judas to do what he is about to do with haste, and as Judas departs the disciples are confused
 - It's obvious despite Jesus' words that they don't realize Judas is the betrayer and about to turn Jesus in
 - Even though Jesus called it out in advance, everyone missed it
 - How is this possible?
 - Other than lack of attentiveness, we might explain it as a supernatural act
 - Imagine what might have happened in the moment if one or more of the disciples knew Judas was leaving to betray the Lord?
 - Wouldn't they have tried to stop him?
 - Once again, we see the Lord orchestrating every detail to ensure His trip to the cross
 - And once again, we have to marvel at Jesus' obedience, knowing He could have stopped the plan simply by skipping one of these details...yet He didn't
- The disciples try to explain Judas' departure as an errand
 - They think he is going to get things to prepare for the Passover feast
 - This is further evidence that this meal was not the normal time for a Passover celebration
 - The normal Passover feast would take place on the following afternoon
 - So the disciples think Judas is going to make a purchase for the next day's meal (since he held the funds)
 - If this meal were the proper Passover meal, then they wouldn't have made that assumption

- Notice also it was nighttime as he departed
 - This is important for two reasons
 - First, it confirms our timeline that this meal is taking place on the 14th of Nisan after nightfall
 - And yet it's taking place too early to be the normal Passover meal, since the lambs haven't yet been sacrificed
- Secondly, it's one of John's classic devices to represent spiritual power
 - Darkness is the picture of the enemy and sin and death
 - And as Judas leaves the gathering, the world enters a period of extreme darkness spiritually
 - For a time, the Father is going to put His Son into the hands of the enemy and His agents
- For a time, the order of Creation will be flipped, in a sense
 - The enemy will take the life of God, so to speak
 - The Lord will subject Himself to evil scheme of Satan and darkness will fall upon the world
 - But in three days, the darkness will be defeated

[Phil. 2:5](#) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

[Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[Phil. 2:9](#) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

[Phil. 2:11](#) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 14A

- Let's return to the Passover night meal of Jesus and the disciples, now reduced to just eleven by the departure of Judas
 - Judas had just been dismissed in v.30 to betray Jesus
 - Jesus told Judas what you do, do quickly
 - It's important to note that Jesus didn't command Judas to commit his act of betrayal
 - Rather, Jesus simply dictated the moment of Judas' departure
 - The timing was important because Jesus is about to offer the disciples some of the most important and personal teaching of His ministry
 - Teaching that is only appropriate for His sheep
 - Not for wolves and imposters
- So we go back into the upper room on this Wednesday night

[John 13:31](#) Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

[John 13:32](#) if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.

[John 13:33](#) "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

[John 13:34](#) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

[John 13:35](#) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

- Beginning in v.31 and running until the end of chapter 16, we have the Upper Room Discourse, as it's come to be known
 - Jesus delivers His final words of instructions to the men He will entrust to begin the church of God
 - He begins with the first and most important rule of order for those leading the church
 - The Son is glorified

- In all that these men are to do on behalf of Christ, they must remember they are called to glorify the Son
- Furthermore, when the Son is glorified, the Father is glorified in Son
 - This concept is the essence behind Jesus' statements that He and the Father are One
 - Or that if you have seen me, you have seen the Father
 - To the extent that we bring Christ Glory, we are glorifying the Father
 - And likewise, to reject the Son is to reject the Father
- Jesus Himself was at work modeling this for the disciples
 - As Jesus will explain later in chapter 17, He was at work glorifying the Father by obeying Him in going to the cross
 - It brings glory to the Father as the world witnesses Christ's work of redemption on the cross
 - Just imagine the uncountable numbers of times someone has contemplated the plan of salvation in Christ and expressed thanks and praise to the Father
 - And this praise will last an eternity
- And then in v.32 Jesus adds that if Christ glorifies the Father, then we should expect the Father to respond by glorifying His Son likewise
 - The Father ensures that no name within His creation receives greater glory than the name of His Son
 - No power will stand, no enemy will survive
 - As the Psalmist says:

[Psa. 8:4](#) What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?

[Psa. 8:5](#) Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

[Psa. 8:6](#) You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,

- And then Jesus adds a final thought that allows Him to transition into the discourse proper
 - He says the Father is going to begin Jesus' glorification immediately
 - Jesus is referring to His passion, which paradoxically is a process of the Father glorifying the Son
 - The Father brought the beatings and scourging and the nails of the cross to give His Son glory
 - Because without the suffering and death, Jesus couldn't fulfill His mission
- This is a principle of scripture that can be difficult to understand and even harder to accept
 - As James says:

[James 1:2](#) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Trials brought by God are tests of our faith and obedience
- When we pass tests, we gain endurance in our walk of faith
- And endurance means greater potential in bringing glory to the Lord
- And by our endurance we may receive our reward in Heaven
- Jesus was glorified by His obedience to the Father's commands
 - To obey in the face of such a great trial merely served to magnify Jesus obedience
 - And as we magnify His obedience, we magnify His glory
 - So great glory requires great tests of obedience
 - And that test is about to begin for Jesus

- Jesus explains in v.33 that He was going away, meaning He was to die and then resurrect and finally ascend returning to the Father
 - Obviously, the disciples weren't able to follow Jesus as He departed
 - One day they will be with Him again, but not right away
 - And of course, Jesus can't take them right away, for they have a mission to perform in His absence
 - And this gives rise to Jesus second most important rule of order: love one another as Christ loved them
 - Jesus is simply reiterating the Old Testament rules for God's people
 - Love the Lord God and love your neighbor
 - Jesus calls this a "new" commandment
 - It's not entirely new, for Moses issued a similar command in the Law to Israel
 - But in the Law, the command was stated to love your neighbor "as you love yourself"
 - Jesus changes this standard by issuing a new commandment
 - In the new commandment, we no longer look to ourselves for the standard for love
 - Instead, we look to the example Christ set
 - And as Jesus will say in chapter 15, greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends
- Finally, Jesus says this new standard of self-sacrificial love modeled on Jesus will become the calling card of all Christians
 - Supernatural love, as given us by the Spirit living in each of us, causes us to stand out from the world
 - Obviously, a believer can live in their flesh rather than by the Spirit and thereby avoid showing Christ's love in this way
 - Nevertheless, they will be the exception in the body of Christ
 - The body of Christ will show His type of love

- And it will look very different than the world's love
- Have you not noticed the truth of this statement in your own life?
 - Have you not marveled at the self-sacrificial love of another believer for you at some point in your walk as a believer?
 - And as you have matured in your walk of faith, have you not experienced yourself drawn to making sacrifices of time, treasure and otherwise for the needs of another believer?
 - Whether you've been on the giving or receiving end of one of these moments, you've seeing Christ's words fulfilled by His Spirit
- At this point, Jesus' discourse is interrupted by Peter

[John 13:36](#) Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later."

[John 13:37](#) Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You."

[John 13:38](#) Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."

- Peter asks the question that must of been on the minds of all the disciples
 - Where are you going?
 - Peter probably expected Jesus to answer with some far away, exotic port of call like Tarshish or Ethiopia
- Jesus doesn't name the place, simply adding that Peter will eventually make it there, just not right away
 - Understandably, Peter has no idea Jesus is speaking of the throne room of God
 - So Peter boldly states he is ready to follow Jesus right now, not later
 - And in fact, Peter offers to lay his life down to save Jesus
- I think all guys like to think this and occasionally we even get the chance to say it

- We tell ourselves we will gladly put our lives on the line for those we love
 - We will take a bullet for our wives or children
 - We might even run into a burning building to save the life of a stranger
 - Guys are quite taken by the chivalry and bravery that such circumstances require
 - And we fancy ourselves equal to the task
- But when it comes time to cash the check, many come up short
 - Not for lack of love or sincerity
 - But for lack of strength courage in the face of great trial
- Peter loved the Lord
 - His life of obedience testifies to that love
 - But he was just a man
 - And the power of the enemy is great and the weakness of our flesh is no match
 - So Peter stumbled
- Jesus quiets Peter asking him will you indeed lay your life down for me?
 - Then Jesus gives Peter the disheartening news
 - He would deny Jesus
 - And not just once, but on three separate occasions
 - And he would do so very soon, before sunrise that very night
 - How could Peter have possibly understood these words?
 - I imagine Peter was utterly confused and hurt by Jesus' words
 - How could Peter possibly find cause to deny the Lord three times in that very night?
 - This scenario gives us a glimpse into how suddenly Jesus' circumstances changed that evening

- For the disciples, it must have felt as if the world was turned upside down in just a few hours time
- In less than 24 hours, everything they knew, everything they believed and expected appeared to be gone
- Peter's denials were just one moment of shock
- Each disciple faced his or her own many times over in the days that followed
- It took the resurrection to begin their healing process
- Therefore, knowing the pain and confusion that was about to envelope these men, Jesus sets about preparing them with instructions and words of encouragement
 - These words won't mean very much in the moment, but in time the disciples will recall them and understand and be comforted
 - Jesus begins the encouragement by expanding on His statement to Peter that one day the disciples will follow Jesus

[John 14:1](#) "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

[John 14:2](#) "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

[John 14:3](#) "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

[John 14:4](#) "And you know the way where I am going."

- He prefaces this revelation with the command do not be troubled
 - The disciples are about to experience great sorrow and be very troubled by what will happen to Jesus
 - But these events have a good and necessary purpose
 - And one day they will understand them in a new and better way
- Meanwhile, they can be assured that believing in God and Jesus is not misplaced faith
 - Jesus' death and departure from the earth is part of a plan
 - And understanding that plan is the key to not allowing your heart to be troubled

- Then Jesus explains the plan in broad strokes, beginning with His departure
 - He says in His Father's house there are many dwelling places
 - The Father's "house" is clearly a reference to the Heavenly throne room of God the Father
 - You can see read a description of the throne room in multiple places in scripture, including in Isaiah and Revelation
 - Furthermore, Jesus says He will be going to that place
 - Once again, it's clear what Jesus is talking about
 - He's referring to His ascension into Heaven
 - That's why they can't follow Him now, for only Jesus is going to ascend
 - Next, Jesus says that in this house there are many rooms, and Jesus is going to prepare rooms for His disciples
 - This description seems more than a little odd
 - It seems strange to consider the throne room of God having a floor plan
 - And though Jesus was the son of a carpenter, it seems far-fetched to imagine Jesus is literally in the throne room of God with hammer and nails hanging sheet rock
 - Obviously, we must understand Jesus to mean that Heaven is a big place, plenty big enough to accommodate all His disciples one day
 - But even so, why speak in such odd language?
 - Why use this particular metaphor of building rooms for His followers?
- Finally, notice in v.3 Jesus promises that after a time, He will come again to receive the church to Himself to be "where I am," Jesus says
 - Jesus will come back from the throne room of God, where He has been, and retrieve the Church, taking them back to the throne room
 - This description is particularly important
 - It tells us that Jesus is not speaking about His Second Coming to reign on earth in His Kingdom

- At the Second Coming to earth, the Lord sets foot on the Mt of Olives, according to Zechariah
- Then He gathers Israel into her land
- And He sets us a Kingdom on earth centered in Jerusalem
- And Jesus lives and rules upon the earth for 1,000 years
- Yet the description Jesus gives in John 14 is of a very different sequence
 - In John 14, Jesus says He is coming from Heaven and then returning to the same place (to where He is now)
 - And when He comes, He receives the church to that same place, meaning we leave the earth to follow Him back
 - Literally, these events are the opposite of the Second Coming
- For example, consider this description of Christ's Second Coming in Revelation 19

[Rev. 19:11](#) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

[Rev. 19:12](#) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

[Rev. 19:13](#) He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

[Rev. 19:14](#) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

[Rev. 19:15](#) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

[Rev. 19:16](#) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

- After the world has experienced seven years of tribulation, the moment arrives for Jesus to return and defeat the forces of Satan
 - Did you notice that as Jesus returns, He does battle on earth?
 - And furthermore, Jesus is accompanied by "armies" clothed in fine linen, white and clean
 - These are the saints – you and I – arriving to Earth with Christ

- That's very different from the events in John 14
 - In John 14 Jesus is returning to find us on Earth
 - And He's not coming to wage battle but to receive us and return to Heaven
 - As I said, these two moments can't be the same because they are literally opposites of one another
- Therefore, the promise Jesus gives in John 14 is of a different coming than the Second Coming
 - The return of John 14 is a return for the Church
 - It's a receiving of the church to Christ
 - And then the church is escorted by Christ into those rooms He has prepared in the throne room of God
 - That brings us back to this odd description of Jesus preparing rooms for us in Heaven
 - The terminology Jesus selected sounds odd to our ears
 - But it would sound very familiar to the ears of a first century Jew, like His disciples in the upper room
 - Jesus chose terminology taken from the Jewish wedding tradition practiced in His day
- In Jesus day, a wedding was a complex and multi-step affair lasting many months or years
 - Marriages were arranged by the father of the groom
 - The father who had a son of marrying age would initiate the process of finding a bride for his son
 - He often relied upon a servant or representative to appropriate candidate for his son
 - The son was not directly involved in the courting or selecting of his wife
 - He waited patiently while his father worked out the plan
 - The father dispatched his servant or representative to the home of a prospective bride with authority to strike a marriage deal

- When the servant and the bride's family came to an agreement, a price was paid for the bride and gifts were given to her
- From this moment, the bride was betrothed to her groom though they had never met
- In most cases, the servant wouldn't return with the bride
 - Instead, he leaves her to prepare for her wedding day
 - Meanwhile, the servant report back his success to his master
- Since a marriage has been officially formed, why didn't the bride travel immediately to her groom to begin married life in earnest?
 - The reason relates to Jesus' odd choice of words in his promise to the disciples
 - The marriage ceremony is on hold until a suitable dwelling place is prepared for the new bride
 - The dwelling place for the new couple will be a room or rooms built onto the house of the groom's father
 - In this culture, family grew around a patriarch
 - Brides became part of the groom's family, literally
 - Each son in a family would welcome his bride into the household of the son's father
 - And each son was responsible to build an addition onto the father's estate to house his new bride
 - Over time, the patriarch's estate would grow to accommodate the family of each of married sons
- So while the groom is busy building an addition onto the home, the bride waits patiently at her home looking forward to the day that her groom appears to claim her
 - The son began the construction right away, and this project could take many months or even longer than a year
 - Only when the room was ready to be occupied could the son claim his bride
 - So the wedding waited for rooms to be prepared

- Now we see the full sense of Jesus' choice of words in John 14
 - We know the New Testament calls Jesus our Groom and the Church is His Bride
 - Therefore, Jesus was making a comparison between the Jewish wedding practice and His return for the Church
 - Since He is our Groom and we are the Bride, He has gone back to His Father's house to prepare a place for us
- He isn't literally building rooms, but by using this terminology, Jesus is emphasizing several ideas at once
 - First, He's emphasizing the need for delay in being with Him
 - The disciples are confused as to why they can't accompany Jesus, but they could understand the need for delay in consummating a marriage
 - So Jesus refers to the marriage delay to help explain the need for our separation from Him for a time
- Secondly, by borrowing from Jewish wedding practices, Jesus implies that the timing of His return will be unpredictable
 - In the Jewish wedding, the bride waited for her groom to appear and retrieve her, but the timing of his return was a mystery
 - The son was only able to claim his new bride once the home he was building was ready to be occupied
 - And the final determination of whether the room was ready was the father's alone
 - The son was expected to work on the room until it met the father's satisfaction
 - And if the groom was unsure of his wedding date, the bride was even more in the dark
 - She was miles away at her home waiting for her groom to appear
 - She had no idea how long the delay would last
 - Furthermore, there was no way to communicate in real time
 - So the bride received no advance notice of the groom's arrival

- Knowing this practice, we can see Jesus was intimating that the timing of His return would be a mystery to His Bride, the Church
 - o We will not know when Jesus will return for us
 - It depends entirely upon the Father to say
 - As Jesus Himself explained in Matthew

Matt. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

- o So in a future day, the Lord will return to claim His bride
 - That day will come as a surprise and it will result in the Church leaving this world to join Christ in the throne room of God
 - It will be the day that the Bride meets Her Groom face to face
 - Jesus promised us that this day was coming to encourage the church to not be troubled in His absence
 - Though He has gone, we will see Him one day
- Jesus is speaking about a special day, not the Second Coming, but a day when he suddenly appears to claim the church
 - o Paul describes this day in two well-known passages

1Th. 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1Th. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

1Th. 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- Paul is teaching about the fulfillment of the promise Jesus delivered in John 14
- Notice in v.14 that like Jesus, Paul refers to Jesus’ death and ascension saying that we know we will do the same as He did

- First, at Christ's return for the Church, all those Christians who are "asleep" (meaning have died before that day) will return with Christ from Heaven
 - Paul teaches in 2Cor 5:8 that when we die, our spirit enters into the presence of the Lord
 - While our body goes in the grave
 - We remain with Christ waiting for the day that Christ promised in John 14
 - When that day comes, those spirits return with Christ to retrieve those in the Church who remain alive on the Earth
- And then Paul says that all His disciples, both those who have previously died and those who remain on earth will join Christ in the clouds
 - This is what Jesus was speaking about when He said He will receive the Church to Himself
 - He will collect the believers from all time, whether dead or alive, and bring them to Himself
 - And then He escorts us back to Heaven
- Then in 1Cor 15, Paul reveals another important detail of this moment

[1Cor. 15:50](#) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[1Cor. 15:51](#) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, [1Cor. 15:52](#) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[1Cor. 15:53](#) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- Paul reminds the church that the perishable, dying, corruptible flesh of our current bodies cannot enter into the pure, incorruptible eternal realm God has prepared
 - How can something that does not last forever inherit something that last for eternity?
 - Since we are assured to share in Christ's eternal inheritance, then we must dispense with these mortal bodies that cannot last for an eternity

- And in their place, we must receive eternal, incorruptible bodies
- Then Paul says that when that trumpet sounds to announce the Lord's return for His church (as Paul mentioned in 1Thess 4), the Church receives our new bodies
 - Those believers who return with Christ in spirit form will receive a new glorified body to accompany their spirit
 - Paul says that not all believers need die before the new body arrives
 - Those who are alive on earth on the day of the Lord's arrival for His Bride will be transformed instantly into their new bodies
 - As Paul says, not all believers will sleep (i.e., die) but all will be changed
 - Those Christians who have died already will receive new bodies first
 - Followed almost instantaneously by those who are alive on earth
 - Then this entire group of saints, in incorruptible bodily form, will go with Christ to the Heaven throne room
 - This important moment goes by several names
 - Jesus never names it Himself, simply referring to it here as His return for His Bride
 - Based on the text of John 14 and 1Thess 4, we could use the term "coming of the Lord"
 - In fact, whenever the phrase "the coming of the Lord" or the "the Lord's coming" is used in the New Testament, it's always a reference to this moment, when Jesus returns for the Church
 - Or based on 1Cor 15, we could call this moment the resurrection day, for that is what it is
 - This is the day when the Church saints will be resurrected into their eternal bodies
- But as you probably know, another label has become the dominant term describing the day of Christ's return to receive the Church into Heaven
 - In 1Thess 4, Paul wrote

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- In the Greek, the term “caught up” is the word *harpazo*
- When Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin Vulgate, the word *harpazo* becomes *rapturo* in Latin
- And from the word *rapturo* we move to rapture in English
- And so this moment has come to be known as the Rapture, the moment when the Lord returns to retrieve His Church suddenly and without warning
 - It’s the moment when all Church saints receive their new bodies and enter into glory
 - And it’s the fulfillment of Jesus’ promised in John 14, an assurance intended to comfort Christians
 - Remember Paul told the church in Thessalonica to understand these things so that they might comfort one another with these words
- Likewise, Jesus is speaking of these things to the disciples in the Upper Room to reassure them that all is not lost simply because Jesus departs without them
 - Like a groom preparing rooms in His Father’s house, Jesus is at work building the Church itself
 - So that in a day the Father determines, He will return
 - And we will be reunited with Him
- Then notice in v.4 that Jesus adds that these men knew where He was going
 - Jesus wasn’t saying these men were necessarily understanding Him in the moment
 - Almost certainly, they were utterly confused
 - Jesus means they have all the information they need to figure out what He’s saying
 - And so in the proper time, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will put the pieces together

- And in that moment, comfort will be the result
- Just as we know can receive comfort knowing that the Lord has promised to unite all the Church saints in a single moment
 - The moment is still imminent
 - At anytime, the Lord could return to fulfill this pledge
 - Therefore we should always be ready for it
 - Remember the Lord's words in the parable of the brides

[Matt. 25:1](#) "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

[Matt. 25:2](#) "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

[Matt. 25:3](#) "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,

[Matt. 25:4](#) but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

[Matt. 25:5](#) "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.

[Matt. 25:6](#) "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

[Matt. 25:7](#) "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

[Matt. 25:8](#) "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

[Matt. 25:9](#) "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

[Matt. 25:10](#) "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.

[Matt. 25:11](#) "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'

[Matt. 25:12](#) "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'

[Matt. 25:13](#) "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

- Once again, Jesus is interrupted by a question that reveals the disciples' lack of understanding
 - This time it's Thomas and Philip, since Peter is probably still smarting from Jesus' earlier rebuke

[John 14:5](#) Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

[John 14:6](#) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

[John 14:7](#) "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

[John 14:8](#) Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

[John 14:9](#) Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

[John 14:10](#) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

[John 14:11](#) "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

- First, Thomas interrupts and asks how will they follow Jesus if He's not willing to reveal the way
 - Obviously, they're thinking entirely in earthly terms, with no appreciation for the larger, spiritual matters under review
 - We shouldn't look down upon these men too quickly
 - Christians have been prone to making this same mistake throughout history
 - Believers often read the commands of Christ with temporal and earthly filters forgetting that most of Christ's words look into the eternal kingdom
 - Here's a classic example of the apostles making that very mistake
 - True to form, Jesus takes Thomas' question and redirects it into a spiritual context
 - Thomas asked to know the way to follow Jesus
 - Thomas meant a physical path, one that would result in moving their physical bodies from one point to another
 - But Jesus isn't concerned with our physical travel
 - He's concerned with our spiritual progress
 - So Jesus offers one of His best known, most quoted statements
 - He says He is the way and the truth and the life
 - Remember, Jesus just said He was going to the Father's house
 - So Thomas was asking what is the way to the Father's house?

- To which Jesus responds if you want to find your way to the Father's house, you only need to look to me
- Jesus is the way to the Father, because He is the truth about the Father and the life given by the Father
 - You can't find the Father if you don't know Who He is or how He may be found
 - Jesus is the only One Who has spoken for the true living God and has given us the truth about His expectations
 - Jesus is the Truth in that He is the one and only Spokesman for the Father
 - And we can't make our way to the Father if we can't stand in His presence
 - And that requires eternal life, which only comes through the Son
 - Without the life that Christ offers, no one will see the Father
 - Notice that Jesus doesn't show us the way; He is the way
 - Jesus is the one and only way a person may see Heaven
 - The disciples want a roadmap to Heaven, but Christ was telling them to follow Him
- In v.7 Jesus tells the disciples they have already come to know the Father because they have come to know Him
 - The start of the sentence should be translated "since" and not "if"
 - Since they have known Jesus, they have known the Father
 - Therefore, from now on, the disciples should say they know the Father
 - There is nothing more to seek
 - At this point Philip pipes up to ask Jesus to show him the Father
 - Philip's request is another typical response of immature believers
 - As we draw near to Christ, we yearn for something demonstrative that shows us we've found God
 - We want a miracle, a display, a proof of some kind

- Sometimes that desire can entrap babes in Christ in some very unhealthy and unbiblical practices
- But Jesus gives Philip – and all Christians who make a similar mistake – a strong rebuke
 - Jesus says if you have come to know Jesus, then you have come to know the Father
 - To the disciples, Jesus could say they had seen the Father as much as anyone can ever see the Father
 - And for us today, we have come to know the Father as much as anyone can know the Father
- We can't say show us the Father, as in show us more
 - Because there isn't more to be given
 - This is a central principle of of Christian theology
 - There is nothing more to be revealed of the Father than what has been revealed in Christ
 - And so when we seek for something beyond the word of God, we are repeating the mistake of Philip
- Finally, Jesus reminds the disciples of a truth that He has spoken already and will speak again
 - Jesus and the Father are one
 - Jesus is "in" the Father
 - And the Father is "in" the Son
 - An the Father abiding in Jesus is the reason Jesus was able to perform the miraculous works that He performed
 - So if you can't take Jesus at His word, then at least believe Him because His miraculous works prove that God is working in Him
 - The word abiding is an interesting word and one that will play a prominent role in the next chapter
 - It expresses how each Person retains a unique identity while at the same time is united
 - Jesus and the Father were united yet distinct

- Jesus abided in the Father and the Father abided in the Son
- Meanwhile, Jesus will use the rest of the chapter to instruct the disciples on how He will minister to them in His absence
 - By His Holy Spirit

John 14B

- Last week Jesus declared He was leaving for a time, to a place the disciples could not follow, at least for a time
 - As you remember, the disciples didn't possess the wherewithal in that moment to understand Jesus, so they asked questions
 - But they asked the wrong questions
 - They wanted to know more about Jesus' circumstances...where He was going and why He was leaving
 - Instead, they should have been asking how they were going to serve as His representatives in His absence?
 - Questions like, "How will we know what to do?"
 - "How do we advance the program of the Kingdom without your power and teaching?"
 - Fortunately, Jesus recognized that they need to know these things even though they didn't think to ask
 - So while they continue to recline around the table in the Upper Room, Jesus began to explain how they will perform their responsibilities without His physical presence
 - His first counsel was be encouraged, I will return for you
 - So believe in Christ, meaning in His words, and remember He speaks for the Father in all that He taught
- Next, Jesus explains His disciples' access to His wisdom and power in this age as they seek to serve Him in the world

[John 14:12](#) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

[John 14:13](#) "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

[John 14:14](#) "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

- Jesus says they will do the same works that He did, and in fact, they will do “greater” works because Jesus goes to the Father
 - Jesus’ reference to works means, broadly speaking, all the meaningful accomplishments of His ministry
 - First, Jesus is referring to the delivery of His message
 - Jesus declared the message of the Gospel and the opportunity to enter the Kingdom
 - And now the apostles are going to do exactly the same thing in Jesus’ absence
 - They will become the first ambassadors of the Church declaring that Jesus is Messiah
 - And as they do so, Jesus says the disciples will experience greater success that Jesus did
 - Jesus saw a measure of success in His preaching of the Gospel
 - But God purposed for His Son to die, which necessitated that His message be rejected by those He sought
 - By the same token, the Father has purposed for the apostles to persuade many
 - And we know from Acts that the apostles experienced large crowds converted by their preaching (i.e., Pentecost)
 - Obviously, Jesus isn’t suggestion that men are more capable than He was
 - He’s explaining how the Father will use the church to spread the Gospel much farther than was possible in the three years of Jesus’ ministry
- Secondly, Jesus performed miraculous works to validate His message
 - He performed many dramatic miracles
 - Including raising dead bodies, feeding crowds, walking on water, etc.
 - As Jesus said in v.11, His works were the convincing proof that the Father and Jesus are One

- Jesus promised the apostles would perform many of these same miracles in their own ministries
 - The book of Acts is a partial record of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to these men
 - These signs and wonders validated their message just as they did for Jesus earlier
 - In fact, these powers were in and of themselves proof that they held the office of apostle
 - The gifting of apostle included these supernatural powers
- And like the teaching, Jesus said the apostles would perform greater miracles than He did
 - Once again, Jesus doesn't mean they will exceed His power or the magnitude of His miracles
 - Jesus meant greater in the sense of frequency and effect
 - Compared to the three short years of Jesus' ministry, the apostles performed many more miracles over the course of many decades
 - And while Jesus' miracles mostly attracted crowds of unbelievers, the apostles' miracles resulted in thousands of believers entering the early church
 - So in both teaching and in miracles, Jesus's promise was fulfilled in the lives of these men
- Jesus adds that their works will be greater because Jesus goes to the Father
 - Jesus was incarnate, so He could only operate in one place at a time on earth
 - So Jesus' departure necessitated the sending of the Spirit to accompany the Church in His place
 - Obviously, the Spirit operates unconstrained by flesh, so He can work within every believer simultaneously
 - And that's why Jesus says His departure brings opportunity for even greater works to be done on earth

- At this point, we should ask to what extent Jesus' promise applies to us today?
 - For example, should we expect every believer to perform supernatural miracles equal to and greater than the ones Jesus performed?
 - The answer is yes and no
 - Yes, we can expect to share in these things to a degree
 - But no, we cannot assume that the specific gifts and opportunities assigned to the apostles will be common to all believers
 - In general, we must guard against confusing something DDescriptive for something PRescriptive
 - Most scripture is descriptive, in the sense that it describes people and events
 - Those descriptions are useful to teaching us something about God and ourselves
 - But they do not become prescriptions for every individual
 - For example, in the Old Testament the Lord issued promises to King David concerning his future opportunity to rule within Israel in the Kingdom
 - The Bible describes those promises as specifically spoken to David
 - Therefore, it would be read that promise as if the Lord were prescribing something for all men in Israel
 - Clearly, not all men in Israel will rise to position of king
 - Still, David shares many things with all faithful Jews, including life in the Kingdom
 - Those shared expectations are the result of specific prescriptions God gave to all Jews
 - So we see that God can make specific promises to individuals while also making promises to large groups
 - Therefore, while all Christians share in the Holy Spirit and in the word of God, not all Christians are called to be apostles and to share in their supernatural powers

- Here we see John describing what Jesus spoke to these eleven men in the Upper Room
- Jesus' words include experiences common to all believers as well as unique promises intended only for these men
- While we share in some aspects of Jesus' promise, that doesn't mean all aspects were intended to be shared
- The context of scripture, the history of the church and our own experiences in the faith allow us to separate the prescriptive from the descriptive
 - After the last apostle died, the power of miracles shared by these men ceased in the body of Christ
 - The apostolic gift had served its purpose in bridging the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament scriptures
 - Once the word of God was available through the Apostle's writings, the need for signs and wonders to drive the Church was past
 - In their place was the eternal word of God, which alone testifies to the truth of Christ without need for signs and wonders
 - The absence of apostolic power since the first century is further confirmation that Jesus was commission these men in a unique way in this moment
 - False teachers have tried and are still trying to convince believers that they possess such powers
 - But it's easy to show they are frauds, since they cannot demonstrate their power except in fraudulent and carefully orchestrated spectacles
 - On the other hand, this does not mean that God is never at work performing miracles today, including of the sort the apostles performed
 - God is always free to accomplish the supernatural, and on occasion He still may do so today
 - Nevertheless, we cannot turn to John 14 as proof that we should expect to see such things routinely
 - Nor are these abilities universally available within the body merely because a handful of men at an early time were granted such things by Christ

- Moving ahead, Jesus' next promises must be understood from a similar perspective
 - Jesus adds that whatever these men ask in His name, He will do so that the Father may be glorified
 - The phrase "in my name" is a very specific concept that explains what Jesus is proposing
 - In that culture, to act in the name of someone meant to act with their full consent and legal authority according to their direction and desires
 - It's like a Power of Attorney today
 - It doesn't mean compelling a person to perform own desires
 - It means carrying out another person's desires on their behalf
 - So when Jesus says the apostles are to ask in Jesus' name, He is saying they have His authority to act according to His desires in His absence
 - Jesus was issuing a Power of Attorney to the apostles
 - Again, we see this truth reflected in the book of Acts
 - The apostles were the authority of Christ in the early church
 - They acted in His place, because Jesus went to the Father
 - His absence required that He empower these men in these unique ways
 - Just like a Power of Attorney allows someone's representative to act in their absence
- Obviously, for Jesus to keep His promise to deliver on the apostles' requests, they must make requests that are according to Jesus' desires
 - The apostles couldn't ask Jesus for whatever they imagined expecting Jesus to respond like a genie in a bottle
 - Those requests would not be "in His name," and therefore they would not gain Jesus' agreement
 - Once again, it's worth noting that false teachers commonly promote this very idea, that we can pull Jesus' strings and get what we want

- But clearly, that's not what Jesus intended
- Also, we can't satisfy Jesus' expectations merely by adding the phrase "in the name of Jesus" at the end of our prayers
 - It's not wrong to end our prayer in this way, so long as it reflects our understanding that by the intercession of Christ, we know the Father hears our prayers
 - But if we're using them like magic words to compel the Lord to act according to our desire, then we should drop the phrase altogether
 - It doesn't substitute for making requests according to the will of God, which is what the phrase "in His name" requires
- So how did the apostles discern the will of Christ? They relied on the inspiration of the Spirit to reveal the will of God
 - By operating in the Spirit, they could make requests that Jesus wanted them to make and which He intended to grant
 - By their gifting as apostles, the Lord moved their hearts and directed their thinking so that as they prayed, they made requests certain to receive Christ's approval
- In other words, Christ worked through these men as if He were still on Earth personally
 - So Jesus wanted to encourage these men to act boldly
 - They were called to encounter great challenges in their ministries
 - And on many occasions the only way they could escape their predicament and turn the tables on their enemies was by making public requests of Christ
 - Those requests were to be made in the Spirit and under the authority Christ gave them
 - And when Jesus fulfilled His promise, these men were publicly vindicated
- So we understand that Jesus didn't issued this promise to imply the apostles could operate as if they were God

- Rather, He is promising us the mind and power of God in His absence
- Notice Jesus reiterates in v.14 that if you ask anything in My name, you will receive it
 - The key is understanding that when we operate outside the will of God, we should expect nothing from Christ
 - On the other hand, when we are operating in the will of Christ, we can do anything
- Now on to Jesus' next reassurance...

[John 14:15](#) "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

[John 14:16](#) "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

[John 14:17](#) that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

- In v.15, Jesus establishes a basic precondition for serving Jesus as His representative
 - He says if they love Him, then they will keep His commandments
 - Commandments refers to the all the instructions Jesus delivered in His years of ministry with these men
 - And it includes the revelation that would follow later by the Spirit
 - And likewise, it includes at the truth revealed in the word of God
 - If you love Jesus, you live according to His word
 - The sentence is written in the third class Greek, which is the neutral class
 - This means that the statement makes no assumption about whether the person will obey or not
 - It's an open question, in other words
 - Jesus isn't questioning whether these men feel love for Him or not
 - I'm sure He knew that these men did love Him
 - His point is love is not a noun, its a verb

- You love Christ by obeying Him
- And conversely, you are not loving Him when you disobey Him
- It's literally impossible to say you love Christ while at the same time living in disobedience to His commands
- You may "feel" love for Him, but Jesus doesn't perceive you as loving Him
- If loving Jesus is the result of keeping His commandments, then this statement begs two big questions
 - First, how were the apostles to know all His commandments?
 - I like to think that as Jesus spoke these words to the apostles, Peter leaned across the table to John and whispered, "I knew I should have taken better notes."
 - These men must have wondered how they were going to remember all the things that Jesus had spoken and commanded then over the course of three momentous years
 - They needed help recalling everything He taught
 - Secondly, even if they could remember everything, how can anyone have enough discipline and self-control to live according to the commands?
 - Even those with the best of intentions will fall short
 - The flesh is weak and the enemy is strong
 - So how can anyone say they love Christ given that we all disobey from time to time
 - We need help not only to know His commands but also to obey
- Anticipating these needs, Jesus promises the solution
 - He says He will ask the Father to send the Helper to each of His children
 - Jesus clarifies in v.17 that the Helper is the Spirit of God
 - The term in Greek is *parakletos* which has a very specific meaning in the Greek language
 - Some English Bibles translate it this word *counselor*, which is accurate, though only if used in the legal sense

- The Greek word means a legal advocate or legal assistant who assists in a court proceeding
- In my English Bible, the word *parakletos* is translated Helper, and that name fits well with the context of this conversation
 - The Spirit helps us know and understand the commands of Christ
 - And the Spirit also helps us to obey what we learn
- Notice also that this statement is clear evidence of the Trinity in the Godhead
 - Early, we heard Jesus, the Son, saying He's One with the Father
 - And then we see Him asking the Father to send the Spirit, speaking of the Spirit in the third person
 - This is a great verse showing that Jesus spoke clearly of the Trinity
- Once again, we need to understand there is a distinction between the way this promise impacted the apostles as compared to the rest of the church
 - For the apostles, the Spirit brought to the apostle's minds the text of scripture, which now forms the New Testament canon
 - Have you ever wondered how it is that these men could recall so specifically the conversations and words of Jesus from years earlier?
 - How is it that the Gospel contain so much detail about events decades earlier?
 - The answer is the Helper, Who brought to mind what Christ wanted them to remember
 - It's this unique gifting that enabled the Church to distinguish between true scripture and false counterfeits when assembling the canon
 - True scripture is authored in every case by an apostle
 - And an apostle is, by definition, a man personally (i.e., in person) appointed by Christ to represent Him and empowered by the Spirit to reveal scripture

- Obviously, the Helper is still working in believers today, albeit in lessor ways than for the Apostles
 - First, the Spirit isn't working in us to author new scripture, but He is working in us to explain the scripture we already have
 - The Spirit is the Teacher for all believers
 - In fact, without the Spirit's counsel, we can't understand the Bible
 - Even though the words on the page are written are in our native tongue and we may be excellent readers, nevertheless we will find the text inaccessible unless the Spirit is at work in us
 - I can remember picking up the Bible as an unbelieving teenager
 - I tried to read it, but it was utterly hopeless
 - It was impenetrable...and I was a smart kid
 - It required the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life in my late twenties before I was in a position to know the deep things of God
 - Therefore, our ability to know and understand the word of God is continuing evidence of Christ keeping this promise to the Church
 - Furthermore, the Spirit empowers us to live according to those commands
 - As Paul says

Rom. 7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Rom. 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

- Before the Spirit came, God's commands accomplished the useful purpose of conviction and awareness of sin
- But this knowledge did us no good, because our flesh, by it's nature, took opportunity to arouse new ways for us to sin in conflict to the Law
- Paul says:

[Rom. 7:10](#) and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me;

[Rom. 7:11](#) for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

- It was the nature of the problem, that sin living in us desires to rebel against God at all times
 - So as I become aware of the demands of God, the flesh seeks to act contrary to those laws
 - But when we were born again by the Spirit, we are released from the Law and empowered to act according to God's desires
 - The Spirit brings the power to confirm to Jesus' commands if we seek to follow the Spirit instead of the flesh
- In fact, this ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian is so fundamental that it defines our identity as Christians
 - Paul says in Romans

[Rom. 8:14](#) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

[Rom. 8:15](#) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

[Rom. 8:16](#) The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

- This is what Jesus means in v.17 when He says the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth
- They do not see Him or know Him
- From the perspective of an unbeliever, the Holy Spirit doesn't exist
- And without faith, this will forever remain their experience
- Jesus says we will know the Spirit because He will abide in us
 - This is the clearest mention of the Spirit's indwelling ministry in the Gospels
 - When the Spirit comes, He will live in all believers
 - Which is why Paul said the indwelling of the Spirit is the defining characteristic of true Christians

- Now, in the next section, Jesus repeats these main points though with a new emphasis

[John 14:18](#) "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

[John 14:19](#) "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

[John 14:20](#) "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

[John 14:21](#) "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." [cont...]

[John 14:22](#) Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

[John 14:23](#) Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

[John 14:24](#) "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

- Just as the chapter began with Jesus promising that He would return, here again Jesus issues His promise to return
 - Jesus says after a little while, the world will not see Him
 - But notice Jesus doesn't say that the apostles won't be able to see Jesus
 - Only the world will not see Him
 - In v.19, Jesus says the apostles will see Him
 - Obviously, we know they see Jesus after He is resurrected
 - More importantly, Jesus means the Church will see Him in the way His Spirit lives on in them
 - He has revealed Himself to us by His Spirit
 - This statement repeats the earlier one to Philip concerning how Philip had known the Father because he had known Jesus
 - Now Jesus is saying to see the Spirit (at work) is to see Christ
- In v.21 Jesus repeats the need to obey what Jesus says to demonstrate love for Him
 - But this time Jesus puts the relationship in the reverse order

- He says those who keep His commandments love Him
 - Once again, this is statement about obedience, not faith or salvation
 - When we do what He says, we demonstrate love toward Him
 - When we demonstrate love in this way, will see the love of the Father and Son evidenced by the way Christ discloses Himself to us
- Jesus is presenting us with a biblical principle of reciprocation
 - The degree of our intimacy with and understanding of the Father and Son depends on the degree of our obedience

Charles Spurgeon said, 'Little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul'

This truth is illustrated in the experiences of Abraham and Lot, recorded in Genesis 18 and 19. When Jesus and the two angels visited Abraham's tent, they felt right at home. They even enjoyed a meal, and Jesus had a private talk with Abraham. But our Lord did not go to Sodom to visit Lot, because He did not feel at home there. Instead, He sent the two angels. . . . [Wiersbe]

- When we obey, the Lord delights to reveal Himself in greater ways to us
 - He will grant us greater understanding of Himself and His plan
 - Greater insight to recognize His counsel and direction in our lives
 - Greater opportunity to see Him working through us and in us
- On the other hand, when we live in disobedience, the Spirit switches over from disclosing to disciplining
 - As the writer of Hebrews says:

[Heb. 12:7](#) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

[Heb. 12:8](#) But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

[Heb. 12:9](#) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

[Heb. 12:10](#) For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

[Heb. 12:11](#) All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- Until we have learned the lessons of disobedience and been trained by God's discipline, we aren't in a position to receive greater things
 - If you have a child in rebellion to your authority, do you disclose greater opportunities for fellowship and service to them?
 - Would you award them a greater role in your business?
 - Would you share more of your plans and invite them into that opportunity?
 - Probably not
 - More likely, you would remain focused on correcting the rebellious behavior, watch for repentance and obedience, and then move forward once the fruit of your discipline is evident
- Once we have returned to obedience, to loving Christ, we should expect see the fruit of righteousness
 - And that fruit includes the Father and Son disclosing themselves to us in greater ways
 - Isn't that a great incentive to obey?
- At this point, it's another disciple's turn to ask the dumb question
 - The other Judas asks what is causing Jesus to stop be disclosing Himself to the world?
 - In fairness, it's not a bad question
 - Jesus has been publicly declaring the Gospel and publicly demonstrating that He is God for three years
 - So Jude's asking Jesus to explain why that's about the change
 - On the other hand, the question reveals their ignorance
 - Jesus has already told them what's going to happen

- Back in the Galilee, Jesus said specifically that He would be handed over to the chief priests and be crucified
- So they should understand what's about to change
- Judas' question also misunderstood Jesus' words, in the same way that Peter and Philip misunderstood Jesus earlier
 - Jesus *wasn't* saying that He wouldn't disclose Himself to anyone
 - He was saying that He wouldn't disclose Himself to the unbelieving world
 - He will disclose Himself to the saints in a mighty way by His Spirit
- That's the essence of the disconnect between Jesus and the disciples at this point
 - Jesus is speaking about the differences between those in the body of Christ and what they will experience in His absence...
 - As compared to the unbelieving world and what they will experience
 - Jesus was going to reveal Himself to those who are His children
 - But to the rest of the world, He will remain an enigma
- Jesus responds to Judas repeating that those who love Him and keep His commandments will be loved and the Spirit will make His home in them
 - We know Jesus is still at work disclosing Himself to men because we see men living according to My word
 - Conversely, when we see people failing to keep the word of God, then we know they are not Christ's
 - We must be careful with this statement to not take it out of its context and thereby misapply it
 - Jesus isn't saying that only those who live perfect, sinless lives are qualified to be called Christians
 - If this was truly Jesus' intent, then who could be called Christian?
 - Not even the apostles Paul and Peter could pass this test, according to the testimony of scripture
 - Jesus is speaking in general terms, about the direction of a person's life

- Does a person seek to live in conformance to the word of Christ?
- Do they see the word of God as an authority in their life?
- Do they experience conviction when they fail to live according to its precepts?
- They they belong to Christ, and to the extent they obey, they are demonstrating their love for Him
- On the other hand, if someone does not share these views of scripture and of Christ, then they are not of Christ
 - Therefore, they are not loved by the Father
 - And this is not simply something Christ has said
 - But He adds that this is the determination of the Father
 - The Father will only love those who love His Son Whom He sent
- Therefore, the defining characteristic separating all mankind is how one responds to Jesus
 - Those who know and and love and obey Christ are those who have the indwelling of the Spirit
 - While those without the Spirit will not know
 - Jesus' point is that there is no third category of humanity
 - You are either in one group or the other
- Finally, Jesus enters into the last part of preparing the disciples for His departure, repeating the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit

John 14:25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you.

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

- Again, Jesus uses the word abiding
 - The word means to remain or stay
 - Jesus has stayed with these men for three years
 - Now He's about to depart

- But He will continue to abide (remain) with them by virtue of His Spirit, the Helper
- The Spirit indwelling each of us today is the fulfillment of Christ's promise to remain with us forever
 - And as before, Jesus emphasizes the Spirit's role as a teacher
 - And for the apostles specifically, the Spirit will bring back to their minds all that Jesus spoke so that scripture is written accurately

[John 14:27](#) "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

[John 14:28](#) "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

[John 14:29](#) "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.

[John 14:30](#) "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

[John 14:31](#) but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

- These men have devoted three plus years of their lives to following Jesus
 - And now He's talking about leaving them behind
 - And going to some strange place without them
 - And sending a Helper to teach them
 - It's all so mysterious and disconcerting
 - So Jesus says I leave you with peace
 - Jesus says He gives these men "His" peace, not what passes for peace in the world
 - The word in Hebrew is shalom, of course, and it was a customary greeting and farewell in Jewish society
 - Jesus is using it here as a farewell
 - His is also promising them a type of peace as part of their inheritance
 - His peace is the peace of having the Spirit ever-present and ready to assist

- That is a peace that passes all understanding

[Phil. 4:7](#) And the **peace** of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- First and foremost, the Spirit assures us of our eternal, heavenly destiny

[Eph. 1:13](#) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, [Eph. 1:14](#) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

- The Spirit is our guarantee that the Lord will not go back on His promise
 - No matter what we encounter in this life, we have His guarantee that we will resurrected into new life
 - Notice Paul says that the Spirit is God's pledge that we will receive our inheritance in the Kingdom
 - While we experience the ups and downs of this life, it's a tremendous source of peace knowing that our eternal future is secure
- Secondly, the Spirit brings us peace through understanding scripture
 - As we come to understand more of the God's purposes and His plan for eternity, we gain an ability to look beyond our present circumstances
 - By gaining eyes for eternity, we can find peace in times and circumstances when the world lacks peace
 - This is a core reason why disciplined, life-long study of the Bible is crucial to enjoying the fullness of our life in Christ while we await our glorification
- Finally, the Spirit speaks to us, guiding us and leading us out of trouble and the things that would bring us pain and suffering because of sin
 - A believer who lives in the counsel of the Spirit is going to avoid many of the troubling moments of life that vex unbelievers or disobedient Christians

- Obviously, Christians may still suffer persecution and other calamity, but when God brings the trial, it is accompanied by peace
- When we bring our own trials because we have been living in disobedience to God, we will lack peace at least for a time
- Just as the Law of Israel gave Israel a course to follow to avoid the treachery and violence of a sinful world, so does the Law written on our heart preserve us from such harm
- If only we consult it and follow it
- Jesus wraps up the conversation with comments that we know were intended to jog their memories in a future day
 - He says you should rejoice that I am going away to the Father, not be surprised or saddened
 - The apostles were sad to hear of a departure, because they were looking forward to the Kingdom's arrival
 - But had they understood that Jesus' departure was for the purpose of atoning for sin at the Heavenly mercy seat, then they would gladly let Him go
 - They wanted the fruit of righteousness, that is the Kingdom, without recognizing the need for atonement for sin
 - This is the classic problem among all religious people
 - We love to hear about Heaven and the rewards of following God
 - But we easily overlook the price required for sin and the sacrifice needed to reconcile men to God
 - As Christians, we've come to understand both sides
 - But until we're taught by Christ, we will naturally only consider the first while overlooking the second
- At the end of the chapter, Jesus points out that they have heard of future events so that as they are fulfilled, they will believe
 - Notice Jesus specifically points out that they will not believe (meaning understand) what Jesus is saying until after these words come true
 - For the time being, the words do not make an impression

- They are merely seeds Jesus is planting in their hearts
- And only when the time is right will they blossom into true understanding
- Because the hours are passing quickly, Jesus has to cut the conversation short
 - Interestingly, Jesus says the ruler of the world is coming
 - He means Satan, of course, who is ruler of the unbelievers
 - The word world refers to the fallen world of unbelievers
- He is coming in the person of Judas Iscariot, who is about to return with the Roman cohort to arrest Jesus
 - Jesus says this enemy has nothing in me
 - This is a translated Hebrew idiom that means “he has no hold on me” or no legal claim on me
 - Even though Jesus will die at Satan’s hand, it’s not an indication that Satan has won a victory over Jesus
- Rather, Satan comes to take Jesus away so that the world may know that Jesus loves the Father
 - Jesus could have felled Satan with one word from His mouth
 - But because Jesus loved the Father and wanted to obey the Father, He didn’t resist Satan
 - This is the essence of what transpires at Christ’s Passion
 - Jesus went obediently, willingly to the cross, and Satan was merely His escort
 - With that, Jesus says let’s leave this room, because we need to talk elsewhere

John 15

- As we enter chapter 15, Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for His departure while they recline at the table in the Upper Room
 - Last week He explained how the disciples would find the power and knowledge to continue His work
 - The Lord said He would grant them the Holy Spirit
 - By the Spirit, they will have the necessary spiritual insight to make sense of Christ's words
 - The Spirit would bring to mind the words of Christ so they could relearn it and preserve it in scripture
 - Similarly, today, the Spirit continues that work by impress the truth of scripture upon our hearts
 - As we've seen from the start, the disciples are struggling with the notion of Jesus leaving
 - They can't yet understand why He is leaving or where He is planning to go
 - Consequently, though they are hearing His instructions, they probably aren't listening very well
- Adding to their confusion, Jesus is explaining these things in haste
 - He knows the time for Him to be handed over to the Romans by Judas is fast approaching
 - There are a lot of things He wants to say before He leaves
 - In fact, this discourse continues for another three chapters into the end of chapter 17
 - But Jesus is running out of time
 - In fact, at the very end of chapter 14, Jesus remarked that the ruler of the world was coming soon
 - Therefore, He said in v.31 that they needed to move out of the upper room quickly

- Naturally assume that the remainder of this discourse took place in some other location like the Kidron Valley
- However, we shouldn't make that assumption
- In fact, after the discourse ends chapter 17, we read this at the beginning of chapter 18

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

- It would seem Jesus' statement at the end of chapter 14 was merely a preparatory comment indicating they would be leaving very soon
- But before they actually Jesus continued to speak for a time longer
- Like a guest who remarks at some point that it was time to leave a dinner party but then stays a while longer to finish a conversation
- Therefore, as we enter chapter 15, I believe we're still in the Upper Room
- Finally, we need to remember the theme Jesus was emphasizing in chapter 14
 - He was preparing His disciples to function in His absence by relying on His power, His authority, His word and His name
 - They were His representatives
 - They were commissioned to serve His interests
 - He wasn't handing them a franchise or an independent operation under the name Jesus, Inc.
 - Jesus wanted them to realize He would be a hands-on manager of His Church even in His physical absence
 - He told the disciples He would exert His leadership and direction through the Spirit living in each of them
 - Therefore, they must love Him by following His instructions, which He called His commandments

- In fact, Jesus challenged the disciples by saying if they failed to obey His instructions, they do not love Him
 - Only by keeping His commandments could one demonstrate their love Jesus
 - For the one who does so, Jesus promised that He and the Father would disclose themselves to him
 - Meaning the Father and Son would reveal Themselves in greater ways to the believer, leaving that person stronger spiritually
- So keeping that context in mind, we move into chapter 15...but first, let's jump past chapter 15 for a brief moment
 - We've taken careful note of the context leading into chapter 15, and now we need to observe the context that immediately follows
 - In the first verses of chapter 16, Jesus summarizes His teaching from chapter 15 this way

[John 16:1](#) "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

[John 16:2](#) "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

[John 16:3](#) "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.

[John 16:4](#) "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

- Now we will examine these verse in greater detail when we get to chapter 16, of course
- So for now, notice the main point Jesus is making
- He says He spoke the things of chapter 15 to keep these disciples from stumbling, that is to avoid sinning
- Clearly, the topic of chapter 15 is being a better disciple, a stronger follower of Jesus
- Notice in vs.2-4, Jesus begins to describe the persecution that will come to the Church in the time after Jesus departs
 - Jesus tells the disciples of this coming persecution so they may face it properly

- Men who are facing severe persecution can respond in foolish ways, including compromising their beliefs
- So Jesus says His teaching in chapter 15 was intended to prepare the disciples to withstand the coming trials without stumbling
- Why did we look at the context of chapter 16?
 - Because we will need the context of chapters 14 and 16 to guide our understanding of Jesus' teaching in chapter 15
 - Did you notice that the context of Jesus' words in 14 and 16 are exactly the same?
 - In both case, Jesus is speaking to His disciples about how to perform well in their duties as church leaders during Jesus' absence
 - The themes are to serve well by relying on Him
 - He's speaking concerning things that only apply to His disciples, to believers
 - And His concern is for their stumbling, that is not serving Him well in the face of persecution
 - I'm emphasizing these details because there is considerable controversy among scholars and students concerning the meaning of Jesus' teaching in chapter 15
 - Personally, I find the controversy entirely unnecessary
 - Because as usual, the context settles the dispute easily
 - We'll explore this controversy in steps as we move through the text
 - But of course our first priority is to understand what Jesus says and why He says it
 - First, Jesus will teach that a disciple must abide or remain in Christ in order to serve Him well
 - Secondly, Jesus explains that the family of God must love one another since we will be universally rejected and hated by the world

- Jesus begins the chapter with the final of His “I AM” statements and a beautiful figure of speech

[John 15:1](#) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

[John 15:2](#) “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

[John 15:3](#) “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

[John 15:4](#) “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

[John 15:5](#) “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- First, we notice that Jesus is teaching using a figure of speech: a grapevine and the vinedresser who cares for it
 - The grapevine is one of three plants commonly used in scripture to symbolize Israel, the other two being fig and olive trees
 - Since Jesus and all the disciples are Jewish, the use of a grapevine is an appropriate metaphor
- But in this case, the lesson Jesus is teaching goes well beyond Israel proper
 - Therefore, we can’t say Jesus chose the metaphor of a grapevine to teach something about Israel
 - As we will see in the chapter, Jesus chose to use a grapevine for the peculiar ways vinedressers cultivate grapevines
 - So understanding how grapevines were dressed will be very important to understanding the lessons Jesus is teaching
- Jesus begins by identifying the Father as the vinedresser, while identifying Himself as the vine
 - To apply the metaphor, Jesus’ is saying that the body of Christ is the vine plant, while the Father is the one managing the growth and the production of that plant
 - Later in v.5 Jesus says His disciples are the branches
 - Notice Jesus doesn’t distinguish between the different types of branches in the metaphor

- This is the first of several details in the chapter we need to notice in interpreting Jesus' figure of speech properly
 - All branches are representative of all disciples of Christ
 - So therefore the different types of branches describe different types of disciples
- Moving to v.2 Jesus says that every branch in Christ that does not bear fruit, He takes away
 - The first thing to notice in this verse is Jesus' use of the phrase "in Me"
 - Given the figure of speech Jesus has chosen (i.e., a plant), the phrase "in Me" fits the context of the metaphor
 - Branches can said to be in the vine because they come forth from and receive their nourishment through the vine
 - Moving to a spiritual application, what does the phrase "in Me" say about the disciples?
 - In scripture the phrase "in Christ" has one consistent meaning that never varies
 - It always refers to someone who has been born again, as Paul says:

Rom. 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus.

- Once again, we find a second detail to confirm that all the branches of the vine represent Christ's disciples
- Even a disciple that does not fruit can still be "in Christ"
- What does it mean to bear or not bear fruit?
 - Bearing fruit is also a common figure of speech in scripture
 - It consistently refers to the by-product of a disciple's faithful and obedient reliance on the Spirit
 - When you walk in the Spirit, you bear fruit
 - When you walk in your flesh, you don't bear fruit
 - It's important to note that the word bear in Greek doesn't mean to show or to display; it simply means to produce

- Just as a branch of a grapevine produces fruit, so may a disciple produce spiritual fruit
- This distinction is important because the term “bearing fruit” in scripture doesn’t necessarily require an outward display or change
- The essence of bearing fruit living in obedience to Christ, which in most cases will be manifested in some way
- But visibility isn’t the goal... pleasing the Lord is the Goal
- Consider Paul’s teaching on bearing fruit, beginning in Romans 7

[Rom. 7:4](#) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

[Rom. 7:5](#) For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

- Paul says we have been joined to Christ by His Spirit so that we might bear fruit
 - But notice Paul says we are to bear fruit for God
 - Also notice Paul doesn’t say that we will bear fruit
 - He says only that we might bear fruit
 - In other words, some believers will bear fruit while others will not
- Also Paul says this:

[Col. 1:9](#) For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

[Col. 1:10](#) so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- Here we see the full process represented
 - First in v.9 Paul says his readers may be filled with the knowledge of His will, that is to know Christ’s commandments

- Secondly, with this knowledge they may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, that is to keep His commandments
- Finally, by keeping His commandments His disciples will bear or produce fruit in good works
- Notice this a process that only a believer can participate in, and yet the process isn't assured
- Paul's tone in Col1:9-10 clearly implies that a believer might not move through all three steps of this process
 - Which is why Paul is praying for this outcome in Colossae
 - It was an open question whether they would do so
- And so it is for all believers
 - Just as Jesus describes in the parable of the four soils in Luke 8, not all believers will bear fruit
 - Some are choked off by the pleasures and cares and pleasures of this life
 - Leading them to fail in their intended mission, which is to bear fruit
 - There very fact that Jesus speaks in v.2 both of branches (i.e., disciples) who bear fruit and of branches that do not bear fruit shows us that both possibilities can exist within the body
- Returning to chapter 15, Jesus explains what happens to the believer who fails to produce fruit
 - Jesus says that branch will be taken away
 - The Greek word for taken away is *airo*
 - My English Bible translated this as "taken away," but the Greek word has another, equally valid meaning
 - Instead of taken away, *airo* can be translated lifted up
 - This is where a knowledge of how vinedressers do their work is important to arriving at the correct understanding
 - On a grapevine, you can find three types of branches generally speaking

- First, there are the new branches that are too immature to produce fruit yet
- Secondly, you have mature branches that bear fruit consistently
- Thirdly, you may have fully-developed branches that fail to produce fruit reliably
- To maximize fruit on the vine, the vinedresser responds to each type of branch in different ways
 - In the case of the young, immature branches, in the springtime a vinedresser will lift them up, securing them to a trellis or other mature branches to give them support
 - His goal is to keep these immature branches from dropping and dragging on the ground, becoming diseased and distressed
 - In time, these immature branches grow to support themselves
 - Ultimately, the vinedresser hopes these branches may become fruit-bearing
- These are the branches Jesus is speaking about at the beginning of v.2
 - Every branch that does not produce fruit, the Father will lift up
 - No fruit plant produces fruit instantly
 - It takes time for every plant to grow strong enough to produce a crop
 - Anyone familiar with how grapevines were cultivated would have recognized Jesus' use of the term *airo* to mean the springtime practice of tying up young branches
 - And so it is with every believer
 - The Father ensures that immature believers are given an opportunity to mature through the Spirit and the Word
 - Young believers are lifted up and supported by the more mature members around us
 - And in time, babes in Christ may become stronger and may be expected to bear fruit
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- It's natural for Jesus to reference this type of branch first, since He was speaking to a group of relatively immature and fragile disciples
 - They needed encouragement and patience as Jesus waited for them to respond
 - He's supporting them even now
 - And in the days following His resurrection, He appears to them and teaches them all the more for the same reason
 - But in time He expects His loving care to be repaid with fruit
- Moving farther into v.2, Jesus mentions a second group of branches, those that do produce fruit
 - These will be pruned by the vinedresser so they will bear more fruit, Jesus says
 - Toward the end of the growing season, the vinedresser prunes branches that proved to bear fruit reliably
 - The pruning made those branches grow out even stronger in the next season
 - And as the branch becomes stronger, it has the potential to hold even more fruit
 - In this way, the pruning maximized the fruit the vine produced
 - In the same way, the Father takes note who among His disciples are reliably producing fruit
 - That reliable production is rewarded with pruning
 - Pruning is a metaphor in scripture for testing, trials, circumstances and challenges of one kind or another that strengthen us
 - We're not just talking about bad experiences like persecution, though certainly that is an example of pruning
 - We're talking about any opportunities the Lord may use to draw us out of our comfort zone so we might be strengthened spiritually
 - Like accepting new responsibilities to serve the Lord in the church or participating in a Bible study or a mission trip

- Volunteering for the church nursery
- Praying aloud for someone in a group setting
- Making a sacrificial financial commitment
- Taking a public stand for our faith
- Sharing the Gospel with a stranger
- Experiences like these can be sources of pruning that we will strengthen us to bear more fruit for Him in the future
 - Notice who receives this treatment...believers who already produce fruit
 - While we might have assumed that the Father would have directed His pruning at the unproductive Christian, the truth is the opposite
 - The disciples with the greatest potential and a good track record of obedience get the most attention
 - We should look at our pruning experiences as a vote of confidence from the Father
 - It's blessing even if it feels like a blessing in disguise
- Already by v.2, we can see clearly Jesus distinguishing between disciples based on the degree of fruit they produce
 - But unfortunately, some have overlooked these details and come away with the wrong conclusion
 - They conclude that Jesus is contrasting believers from unbelievers
 - If you produce fruit, you're a believer
 - If you fail to produce fruit, you're not
 - Jesus knew that some would read His words and arrive at this view, so He spoke the words of v.3 to make clear His point
 - In v.3 Jesus says that the disciples He's speaking about were already "clean" because of the words Jesus spoke to them
 - Being clean means to be spiritually clean, to be saved

- Jesus has broken out of His figure of speech to make this statement
- Which tells us how much Jesus wanted to settle this concern
- Simply put, His subject matter in chapter 15 doesn't concern unbelievers whatsoever
- His conversation is directed and is speaking about believers only
- Then in v.4 Jesus then gives His disciples the exhortation this chapter is so renown for...the exhortation to abide
 - Jesus says abide in Me
 - As I've said in past weeks, to abide means to remain or stay or endure
 - In chapter 6, Jesus used this word in reference to the eternal security of a believer
 - He taught that once we are joined to Christ by faith, we abide in Him forever
 - Now in this chapter Jesus uses the word abide in a different way, to describe another aspect of our relationship with Christ
 - While in chapter 6 the context was obtaining eternal life and the answer was abide in Christ
 - And in that context, remaining in Christ refers to our eternal union with Christ by faith
 - In chapter 15, the context is bearing fruit, and the answer is abide in Christ
 - In this context, bearing fruit is conditional depending on whether we abide or not
 - Since the outcome is in question in chapter 15, we clearly know Jesus isn't talking about salvation
 - This change in context from chapter 6 to chapter 15 tells us that Jesus has shifted his use of the word as well
 - For abide is a very general and common word in Greek
 - John alone uses it over 45 times in the New Testament

- In the context of chapter 15, Jesus uses it to mean remaining in His will by obeying His commands
- In V.5 Jesus begins to explain the road to successfully abiding in Jesus
 - First, Jesus says that we are His branches and He is our supply
 - The figure speech teaches disciples cannot expect to bear fruit apart from Christ
 - If a branch was damaged or cut, it could no longer be expected to bear fruit
 - Only by remaining connected to the vine and receiving nourishment can a branch produce fruit
 - What how do we apply the metaphor? What does abiding in Christ mean specifically?
 - It means relying on Christ for the work we accomplish
 - Receiving our nourishment, our supply from Christ as opposed to elsewhere in the world
 - He is our source of truth, our reason for hope and our focus in life
 - For example, why did you get up this morning? Was it to go to work or do housework?
 - Or was it to serve the Lord and find new ways to please Him?
 - And where do you turn for answers to life's questions? God's word or Wikipedia?
 - And when you seek to bear fruit by accomplishing something for God, do you approach the work by relying on your own power, through sheer force of ego and determination?
 - Or do you wait patiently for the doors to open?
 - Do you make 5-year plans and stubbornly pursue them to ensure that when those 5 years is over, you can claim success?
 - Or do you move gently by the Spirit, changing plans as He reveals your next step?
 - Abiding means acknowledging Jesus runs His church and allowing Him rule in your heart

- And most importantly, do you display godliness in your walk?
 - Do speak as Christ did, with grace and love, gentle and kind yet always speaking truth?
 - Do you give generously in all things, seeking nothing in return, with special concern for the weak and needy in the church?
 - Do you withhold judgment of others, submit to your elders, avoiding disputes and guarding your speech
 - Do you love others above yourself?
 - In other words, do you keep His commandments?
 - More than anything else, abiding in Christ means obeying Christ
- And what of those believers who don't abide?

John 15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

- I said earlier that there were three types of branches on a grapevine
 - The third type were those fully developed branches that failed to produce fruit
 - In the Fall season, the vinedresser would go through the field and cut off any branches that had not produced fruit by the end of the season
 - This is different than mere pruning, which is cutting off part of the branch and allow the rest to grow back
 - Cutting off means removing the branch altogether thus eliminating it from any possibility of bearing fruit in the future
 - A vinedresser understood that if the branch received nourishment from the vine all season without producing fruit, there was little chance it would produce fruit in the future
 - So the only proper response was to remove that branch to ensure it wouldn't consume resources in the next season
 - These cuttings were eventually gathered in the field and burned

- But now the disposition of these branches into a fire becomes a puzzling and polarizing detail in Jesus' figure of speech
- What does it mean that a disciples is "cut off" and in "fire"
- It leads some to conclude that Jesus must be speaking of unbelievers
 - They interpret fire to picture the judgment fires of Hell
 - Certainly, fire is used to picture the consuming judgment coming for unbelievers
 - On the other hand, fire is also commonly used as a picture of judgment for believers too
 - We see this in 1Cor 3 when Paul describes the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - So we can't automatically conclude that a reference to fire must mean Hell
 - Since fire can be used for both believer and unbeliever, it doesn't settle the question
 - Once again, we need to let the context of the chapter drive our interpretation
 - Once again, from everything we've seen in context, we must conclude that Jesus is talking about believers in chapter 15
 - In fact, Jesus' entire teaching in this chapter takes the form of an exhortation *to abide*
 - He warns of the possibility of doing otherwise
 - Clearly, this isn't a discussion of salvation, since we can't choose to move in and out of salvation
 - Therefore, everything points to a warning to believers and a consequence for believers
- So how do we explain the reference to burning for these unfruitful branches?
 - In short, we shouldn't make much too much of it
 - On the one hand, it makes perfect sense that Jesus included the detail of burning the branches in this figure of speech

- Because that's exactly how vinedressers disposed of unfruitful branches in the fall season...they burned the wood
- But the key to interpreting that detail is to understand why the wood was burned
 - grapevine wood has no good use
 - It's not used for building or for crafts or even to heat homes
 - It's literally useless material
 - Therefore, if a branch doesn't produce grapes, it's burned because that's what you do with trash
- So Jesus includes this detail to be true to the metaphor and to emphasize the uselessness of branches that don't bear fruit
 - Such a branch serves no purpose to the Father
 - We are useless to our Vinedresser in Heaven if we don't respond to His commandments with obedience and good works
 - How sad it is to consider that there are some within the body of Christ who serve no useful purpose for the Lord Who saved them!
- Remember James exhortation to the believer who doesn't abide

James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

- You have been granted salvation and new life in Christ so that you may abide in Christ for the purpose of glorifying the Father
- Just as a branch exists to produce fruit
- These branches will be cut off from the vine in the sense that they are removed from service to the Lord
 - Either by lack of new opportunity or the withholding of the Spirits' counsel or the denying of fellowship in the body, one way or the other the Lord cuts the disciples off
 - These are believers are still saved by grace, since the Lord remains faithful to His promises

- But He has no obligation to continue working with disciples who refuse to show love by obeying His commandments
- And as the Lord wills, such a Christian may be left to spiral downward into spiritual isolation
- This is the same situation the writer of Hebrews warns about in Heb 6

[Heb. 6:4](#) For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,
[Heb. 6:5](#) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
[Heb. 6:6](#) and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.
[Heb. 6:7](#) For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;
[Heb. 6:8](#) but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

- We can see the parallels easily
- A believer given all the advantages of faith, but then falls away from abiding in Christ
- That person is at risk of never coming back
 - They are ground receiving things from Heaven, but producing no fruit
 - It is worthless to God, close to being cursed
 - Like branches that serve no purpose it is burned
- Of course, we hope for better things in the body of Christ, so then Jesus moves to the opposite outcome: those who do abide

[John 15:7](#) “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

[John 15:8](#) “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

[John 15:9](#) “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

[John 15:10](#) “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

[John 15:11](#) “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

- For those branches who do abide in Christ, anything is possible
 - When we remain in close connection to Christ and when the word of God remains in us, then we are in a position to know His will and execute it on His behalf
 - Remember earlier Jesus said that if the disciples asked for anything in His name, they would see it done
 - We explained that doing things in the name of Jesus meant acting in accordance with His will and word
 - And so here again, those who abide in Christ and in His word are naturally in a position to know His will and act according to it
 - And in that close abiding, we can ask confidently knowing that our wishes are Christ's wishes
 - This is a blanket promise to any abiding disciple that as you raise up your petitions, Jesus will respond affirmatively because your petitions are Spirit-inspired
 - Also notice that v.7 is expressed as a conditional statement
 - Jesus says "if" you are abide in Christ
 - These men are already clean Jesus says, and yet here He says that there is a possibility they won't abide
 - The evidence just continues to pile up to show us that abiding is speaking of believers remaining in close fellowship with Christ
 - Jesus adds in v.8 that the Father is glorified when we we're working this closely with the Lord
 - We can accomplish much when we walk closely with Christ
 - And producing good works to glorifying the Father is what's it's all about

Matt. 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
Matt. 5:15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
Matt. 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- In fact, the model for how closely Christ wants us to walk with Him is the closeness He had with the Father
 - In vs.9-10 Jesus says He was loved for His obedience to the Father He abided in the Father's love
 - Jesus made His goal abiding in the Father's love
 - He was satisfied by the Father's approval and needed nothing more
 - If going to a Roman cross was pleasing to the Father, then that was what Christ would do
 - This is our model for abiding in Christ
 - Are we satisfied, even driven, to please Christ?
 - Do we crave His love or the love of the world?
 - Will we make obeying Him a greater goal than pleasing ourselves?
 - If we will, then His love will abide in us
- Now do you doubt this is the best course for your life?
 - Do you have a suspicion that this is a worse outcome in your life?
 - Oh yes, we understand it's the right thing to do
 - And of course, we should obey the Lord
 - But deep down inside something starts talking to us telling us that this won't be easy or fun
 - This is going to be hard and require great sacrifice
 - And so it may, but the lie is that we can't experience joy under these circumstances
 - The enemy lies by suggesting that the course the Lord prescribes robs us of joy and is intended to burden us
 - Remember the enemy's lie to Woman?

[Gen. 3:4](#) The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

[Gen. 3:5](#) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- So Jesus reminds His disciples that abiding in Christ brings great joy
 - In v.11 He says these things He's spoken so that we might know the joy Christ knows in serving the Father
 - And that our joy would be full
 - The joy we try to give ourselves is so incomplete and inadequate
 - If only we were to abide in Christ as He did the Father, we would know what full joy is like
 - It's not out of reach...it starts with keeping His commandments

[John 15:12](#) "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

[John 15:13](#) "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

[John 15:14](#) "You are My friends if you do what I command you.

[John 15:15](#) "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

[John 15:16](#) "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

[John 15:17](#) "This I command you, that you love one another.

- Serving Christ successfully depends on abiding in Him and loving one another in the body of Christ
 - And our love for one another is modeled on the love Jesus showed the Church
 - And the model Christ left us goes far beyond simply showing courtesy and extending a helping hand
 - It includes the greatest form of love
 - There is simply nothing more that a person can do for another person beyond place his life before another's

- Of course, Jesus was preparing to make this very sacrifice
 - Knowing this, Jesus tells the disciples that He calls them His friends if they obey Him
 - Remember, we know these disciples are believers
 - But Jesus says they are only “friends” if they obey Him
- Jesus isn’t saying He only dies for those who obey Him
 - For Paul tells us that Jesus died for us while we were yet His enemies
 - Jesus is saying that His sacrifice was intended to lead to an intimate relationship
 - And they can know that intimate relationship through obedience
- In vs.15-17, Jesus sums up and repeats the core message in His discourse
 - Our relationship with God changed at the cross
 - We are no longer slaves in the sense that we serve a faceless, mysterious master who commands us without intimacy
 - That was the relationship God and men knew prior to the cross
 - Only a few men knew God to any greater degree, like Moses the friend of God
 - But now with Jesus’ death, the door would open for men to know and experience God in a unique and special way
 - We can have an intimate, personal relationship with the Creator
 - We can hear from Him, see Him work in and through us
 - We can ask things of Him and see Him respond
 - Nothing like this has been possible since the Garden
 - What a privilege to be included in this period of grace
 - So what are we making of this opportunity?

John 16

- So we continue with Part IV of the Upper Room discourse, as Jesus continues to prepare the disciples for His departure and for their roles as leaders in the church
 - So far, Jesus has revealed that His disciples can expect the following:
 - They will see Jesus depart but then return for them in the future
 - In His absence, they will do greater works than He did, in the sense of quantity and reach
 - Their prayers will be heard and answered as they make requests in Jesus' name
 - They will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to equip them for representing Christ on earth
 - And the Spirit will teach them and remind them of Christ's words
 - Furthermore, all His disciples will enjoy a special relationship with God made possible by the propitiation of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit
 - We will be beloved by both the Son and Father
 - We will be friends of Christ, not merely servants
 - We can know Christ's plans
 - And we can participate in bringing His plans to fruition
 - Christ will give us His peace, and calls us to abide in Him
- These lessons comprise merely the first half of the Upper Room discourse
 - We still have a couple of chapters to go, including Jesus's High Priestly Prayer, as some call chapter 17
 - We rejoin the discourse near the end of chapter, as Jesus gives yet more promises and instructions to the disciples
 - And a warning to the disciples that their mission won't be easy
 - In fact, it will bring dangers including the likelihood of martyrdom

[John 15:16](#) " You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

[John 15:17](#) "This I command you, that you love one another.

- Jesus reminds the disciples that they have been enlisted, drafted in a sense
 - Jesus chose each of them to be His disciples and to be counted among the apostles
 - This designation is specific to these eleven men and the other select apostles that accompanied them
 - Jesus chooses and appoints apostles, and no man may assign this title to himself
 - These men carried special powers, and those powers extended to bearing fruit in unique ways
 - Therefore, these men had no choice but to respond to the Lord's instructions
 - As Paul teaches in 2Tim

[2Tim. 2:1](#) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[2Tim. 2:2](#) The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[2Tim. 2:3](#) Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

[2Tim. 2:4](#) No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

- Jesus' mission for His apostles isn't for the faint of heart
- So they will need to commit themselves to seeing it through
- Since the success of any military squad depends on cohesiveness, Jesus commands them to love one another
 - Every man has to watch another's back
 - If the body of Christ won't love itself, no one else will
 - They are about to enter battle with the enemy

- The enemy knows who his enemy is: anyone with the Spirit of God
- So let's show love to one another so that no one is pulled down or left behind in the battle
- And what a battle it will be at times

[John 15:18](#) "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

[John 15:19](#) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

[John 15:20](#) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

[John 15:21](#) "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

[John 15:22](#) "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

[John 15:23](#) "He who hates Me hates My Father also.

[John 15:24](#) "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

[John 15:25](#) "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'

[John 15:26](#) "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

[John 15:27](#) and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

- In v.18, Jesus presents an important and timeless principle that holds true for all servants of the Living God
 - The enemy hates God and those who love God, so he uses all the power at his disposal to attack God's people
 - Unbelievers are the "world" which Jesus says will persecute Christians, just as Cain persecuted Abel
 - He works in a variety of ways, including enlisting the hearts and minds of *unbelievers* against believers everywhere, whether family, friend or stranger
- Jesus' statement in v.18 may sound like a conditional relationship, as if the world's hate for God's people is in doubt
 - But the relationship is not conditional; it is always the status quo

- But notice Jesus adds in vs.19-20 that His disciples will be hated because of their association with Jesus
- So Jesus is using this Greek pronoun translated “if” to mean “as often as” the world hates you...
- So, even when a disciple is experiencing good times, relatively speaking, we should understand it won’t last
 - For example, Jesus Himself probably enjoyed many good days during His earthly ministry
 - But those days eventually gave way to times of mistreatment
 - Eventually Jesus faced crucifixion
 - So did most of His apostles
 - And we will be persecuted at some level as well
- Why does this principle exist?
 - Jesus explains why in vs. 20-21
 - Jesus says our mistreatment is a result of our association with Christ
 - We have nothing in us that the devil finds inherently worth his time to attack
 - Though He would prefer to attack God directly, Satan attacks us because we represent Jesus, and Jesus lies outside Satan’s reach
 - He attacks us as a means of preventing God from working through us
 - Because if Satan or his agents can dissuade us from following the Lord’s word and His Spirit, then he has obtained some measure of success
 - Furthermore, apart from demonic involvement, the world of unbelievers will respond in hatred to Christ’s disciples and the message of the Gospel
 - First, Jesus says in v.21 that they lack the knowledge of the Father

- And in vs.23-24, Christ says that since they are they are without a relationship with the Father, then they will hate Jesus and all Who come in His name
- Therefore, having rejected Christ, they remain in their sin and act as sin requires, which is to oppose God in all things
- Secondly, in v.22 Jesus highlights that unbelievers will experience conviction when they encounter the righteousness of God at work in the saints by the Spirit
 - Had God never brought this righteousness to earth, then the unbeliever could live in blissful ignorance of righteousness
 - And therefore, they would have had no source for conviction
- But as grace from God, the world can now know they are not right with God as they rub elbows with believers
 - When we live according to the word of God, we will naturally become a source of conviction in the world
 - Perhaps the Lord will use this force to bring repentance
 - But if their conviction doesn't lead them to repentance, it will lead to persecute those who bring conviction
 - Just as David wrote concerning himself in the Psalms, that they hated him without cause
- And just in case we think this principle has exceptions, Jesus reminds us that we are not "greater" than Christ
 - He means that we are not more important to the Father
 - Nor are we worthy of greater privilege than our Lord
 - Therefore, if the Father didn't spare His Son persecution, He will not spare us necessarily
 - We can't say that God loves us so therefore, He won't let bad things happen to us
 - Many prosperity and feel-good preachers repeat this lie
 - But Jesus is teaching an opposite principle
 - Bad things happen to good people for good reasons

- First, let's remember that what's "bad" from our point of view isn't necessarily bad at all
 - Persecution and various trials are tools of good purpose in the hands of a loving God
 - As James taught

[James 1:2](#) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- So we are told to expect the world to respond with hatred and persecution whenever we serve the Lord
 - Jesus has put His disciples and all of us on notice, so we have no excuse for not pressing forward in the mission
 - We can't use persecution or rejection as reason to abandon the work
 - We know it's coming because it's part of the deal
 - Furthermore, this principle implies that the degree of persecution we face is loosely dependent on the extent we reflect Christ
 - Standing firm in your faith and living it outwardly is a recipe to gain the enemy's negative attention
 - Consequently, the only way to avoid persecution is to shrink back from our witness as believers
 - In doing so, we voluntarily remove ourselves from the battlefield, so the enemy need not bother doing it himself
 - At the end of v.20, the Lord gives us a corollary truth, that those who "kept" His word will keep the disciples' word as well
 - Simply put, the world responds to us as it would to Jesus were He standing on the earth making the appeal personally
 - When they persecute us, they would have done the same to Jesus in our place

- And when a person repents and accepts the Gospel in response to our testimony, they would have done the same in the presence of Jesus
- In that sense, we operate in Jesus' absence with the same power and authority He has and by that authority we will see the same results
 - If your efforts to convert new believers or even to gain an audience for the Gospel seems fruitless, then remember Jesus' words
 - All believers are "found" in the same way: by the call of the Father and the movement of the Spirit to believe in the name of Jesus
 - Therefore, we can go out boldly knowing that whatever response we receive is a response to Jesus Himself
- Lastly, Jesus reiterates His promise to send the Spirit, the Helper
 - He's called the Helper here because Jesus is speaking about the disciples' work in the face of great opposition
 - They will need supernatural power if they expect to change hearts and lead the church in Christ's absence
 - And we know the Spirit is the One to make that possible
 - Notice Jesus speaks of the Spirit as an independent Actor in the Godhead
 - We've already seen Jesus declaring Himself One with the Father
 - And now He refers to the Spirit of truth as a third, independent Person
 - No book of scripture more clearly presents the truth of the Trinity than does John's Gospel in these chapters
 - Jesus says the Helper will allow the apostles to testify to the truth of the Gospel
 - He's referring to the unique and power displays of supernatural power that the Spirit assigned to the apostles
 - The book of Acts documents the power these men could demonstrate on occasion when moved by the Spirit
 - Miraculous healings

- Laying on hands accompanied by great displays of the Spirit
- Condemning the living to instant death while raising dead bodies
- These miracles were testimonies of the Spirit to the truth of the Gospel
 - But they were unique and purposeful displays reserved for the apostles
 - No other believer will possess such powers routinely
 - And in fact, Paul alludes to the unique quality of his apostolic powers when challenging imposters in Corinth

[1Cor. 4:18](#) Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.

[1Cor. 4:19](#) But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

[1Cor. 4:20](#) For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

[1Cor. 4:21](#) What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

- Paul challenges those claiming to be apostles to show their apostolic power
- Paul means that if they are truly apostles, then the Spirit will testify to that effect
- Later in 2Cor Paul called these false apostles out

[2Cor. 11:12](#) But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting.

[2Cor. 11:13](#) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

- So the apostolic gift was unique and limited in the history of the church
 - It was important to authenticating the early leaders of the church
 - And it helped the church fathers determine apostolic authority in assembling the canon of scripture

- Now that scripture is available, we have no need for apostles
- So the gift has disappeared
- Moving on, in v.27 Jesus says that the apostles themselves would also testify of Jesus
 - Jesus is referring to the apostles mission to preach the Gospel
 - As they communicated the message, they testified to it
 - And the Spirit worked in them to back up this message
 - Today, we perform a similar function, though without the need for apostolic authority
 - We communicate the same message the apostles did
 - And we possess the same Spirit they did
 - So in a sense, we still have the apostles with us testifying as well
 - Because they are doing so through the written testimony they left behind in the scriptures
 - And that testimony takes the place of signs and wonders today
- As we move into chapter 16, the conversation will become increasingly dire, as Jesus reveals more and more of what will come after He is gone

[John 16:1](#) "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

[John 16:2](#) " They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

[John 16:3](#) "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.

[John 16:4](#) "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

[John 16:5](#) "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'

[John 16:6](#) "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

- As chapter 16 opens Jesus informs the disciples that their future as disciples of Jesus holds some unpleasant things
 - Jesus is sharing this news now in the hope that they will be better prepared to face the trials without stumbling when the time comes

- First, Jesus says they will be kicked out of synagogues
- He's referring to the way these Jewish men will be rejected by their own people
- Ironically, they will be rejected by the Jewish people because they accepted the Jewish Messiah
- This news must have taken the disciples by surprise
 - It took many decades after Christ before the Jewish church fully realized they were no longer a part of Judaism
 - But it wasn't because the church rejected Israel or Jewish people
 - The separate came about because the Jewish people Christ, and with Him all who follow Him
- Secondly, religious people will gladly kill the apostles thinking they are doing God's bidding in the process
 - That process of killing began with the stoning of Stephen at the approving of Saul
 - Reminding us that the apostle Paul was once a zealous murderer of Christians
 - Once again, this thought must have shocked and terrified these men
 - They have seen Jesus doing nothing but good works
 - And they have been expecting Jesus to ascend to the throne of David
 - How could His followers suffer anything, much less death?
- They did these things thinking they served God by doing so, and in a very real sense, they were serving a god by their persecution
 - They serve a false god, Satan, who deceives them into thinking that these acts of hatred are right and proper
 - The unbelieving world can be very zealous in their false beliefs
 - They can be very sincere in what they hold to be true
 - But their conviction isn't a substitutes for truth

- They are sincerely wrong
- Jesus tells His disciples all these things to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead, and He picked His timing carefully for obvious reasons
 - Notice Jesus' somewhat comical statement that no one is asking where Jesus is going now, are they?
 - Now that they have heard that being His disciple will lead to their martyrdom, they aren't so eager to follow
 - Instead, the mood has become somber, as Jesus noted
 - It's no surprise that Jesus's words would have this effect, of course
 - But His point is that their willingness to follow and serve is still dependent on what's in it for them
 - They need to move beyond serving Christ for earthly gain and begin to understand the true mission of the church
 - So Jesus then moves to explaining the true perspective on the benefits of serving Christ under this arrangement

[John 16:7](#) "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

[John 16:8](#) "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

[John 16:9](#) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;

[John 16:10](#) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;

[John 16:11](#) and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

- Jesus is describing the importance of valuing eternal gain over earthly gain, a principle we find reinforced all over the New Testament
 - Because Jesus departs the earth, it becomes necessary for His disciples to take His place, which is a good thing for us
 - Because we take His place, we will receive the Helper to allow us perform the supernatural work of ministry in His place
 - Where before the disciples were on the outside watching Jesus work alone, now they can take part in ministry by means of His Spirit while experiencing the joy of that work

- Remember earlier in Jesus' ministry when He gave the disciples a preview of what it's like to serve Him with God's power?

[Luke 9:1](#) And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

[Luke 9:2](#) And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.

...

[Luke 10:17](#) The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

[Luke 10:18](#) And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

[Luke 10:19](#) "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.

[Luke 10:20](#) "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

- These disciples rejoiced at the miraculous powers the Lord gave them to minister on His behalf
- Now these apostles will experience this kind of opportunity daily
- And to a degree, this will be the experience for all Christ's disciples, because He leaves us here on His behalf
- Of course, with that joy comes all the same challenges and threats Jesus faced
 - If He was persecuted, so will we be
 - But we must understand that the principle benefits and rewards of working with Christ are spiritual, notwithstanding some earthly benefits along the way
 - And we must understand that if we operate in His place, we will receive the scorn He received
- By that same token, we must appreciate that there is eternal value in receiving persecution in Jesus' place
 - Just as Jesus was unfairly condemned, we will be unfairly mistreated
 - Similarly, just as He received a great inheritance for His obedience to the Father in the face of persecution, so may we share in a reward through obedience for facing persecution

- Then, Jesus says that having the Spirit working in us gives opportunity for three types of spiritual work to be accomplished through us
 - First, the Spirit will convict the world of its sin of unbelief
 - Jesus is describing the work of bringing salvation to the world through us
 - When the Spirit convicts a person of their unbelief, it leads to their repentance and salvation
 - As when the Spirit worked through Paul to bring conviction in Corinth

[2Cor. 7:9](#) I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

[2Cor. 7:10](#) For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- To be useful to God in bringing another person to saving faith is a singularly precious experience and perhaps the most important moment for any believer
- Secondly, Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world regarding righteousness
 - The Spirit working in us will show the world what righteousness looks like
 - He accomplishes this work by sanctifying the saints by His indwelling of us
 - BY conviction of sin and training in righteousness, the Spirit yields the fruit of righteousness in each believer
 - And the sanctified lives of the saints on earth will be a source of conviction for the world
- Finally, the Spirit will convict the world and its ruler at the last judgment
 - All believers participate in judging the world, the Bible says
 - And even now, we stand as witnesses against those who persecute us
 - We will even judge the fallen angels, Paul says in 1Cor 9

- So across all three areas, the believer plays an important role that is only possible because Christ has left us here to do this on His behalf
- Now, Jesus begins to wind down His instructions
 - First, he alludes to more information will be forthcoming in the future
 - Specifically, Jesus says the Spirit will be the One to fill in the gaps for the church after Jesus departs

[John 16:12](#) "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

[John 16:13](#) "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

[John 16:14](#) "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

[John 16:15](#) "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

- The Spirit repeats what He hears from Jesus
- Then the Spirit guides us to the truth
- He doesn't override us but seeks to work with us (or we can quench or disobey the Spirit)
- He teaches, He guides and He discloses
- Notice how Jesus emphasizes the respective roles of the Godhead working independently and yet as One
 - The Spirit's mission is to bring glory to Jesus, while the Son desires to obey and glorify the Father
 - The Father sends the Son into the world
 - Once Jesus returns from the world, the Son sends the Spirit in His place to the Church
 - And the Spirit works in the Church to glorify the Son
 - Yet the Spirit doesn't speak of His own initiative, meaning He doesn't decide what the Church should do
 - The Spirit communicates to the Church only what He learns or hears from the Son

- And the Son only does what the Father is doing, Jesus says
- So all play a role but toward a common purpose
- In all these details, a hierarchy emerges within the Trinity even as the Three remain One without beginning
 - The Father is above all
 - The Son is second under the Father
 - And the Spirit is third in line
 - This hierarchy is reflected throughout the New Testament, including in the declaration that accompanies water baptism
 - i.e., baptize in the name of the Father, Son, Spirit...
- It's been some time since any of the apostles have piped up in response to Jesus' comments
 - But at hearing Jesus talking again about leaving, they can't help but to ponder it out loud

John 16:16 "A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me."

John 16:17 Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"

John 16:18 So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about."

John 16:19 Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

John 16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.

John 16:21 "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.

John 16:22 "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

- Jesus alludes to both His coming death and His resurrection using terms like going away and a little while, which were guaranteed to confuse the disciples

- It seems Jesus wants them to know He predicted these outcomes in advance while withholding enough to keep them fuzzy on the details for now
 - Perhaps if they had known all the details, they might have tried to intervene to stop it
 - In any case, they're lost in the conversation, so in response Jesus tries to reassure them using an analogy
- Jesus says the coming separation will bring them great pain and sorrow followed by great joy like in childbirth
 - In childbirth, the woman first experiences a period of immense pain and even sorrow, in the sense of discomfort
 - But at the end of it all, she know tremendous joy
 - It's the only reason we don't have more families with only one child
 - So it will be with for the disciples with Christ's death and resurrection
- This comparison between Christ's passion and the process of childbirth gives greater meaning to God's decision to make childbirth painful for women
 - We could say it was a measure of grace to the woman, even as it memorializes her mistake
 - God placed in the womb and birth process a beautiful picture of Christ
 - In this case, when the Lord instituted pain in childbirth, He placed a living symbol of Christ's redemption in every woman's body
 - The woman's mistake contributed to the need for Jesus' death to redeem men from sin
 - And so we see Jesus using that picture here now
- So though a woman dislikes this aspect of childbirth, she is seeing evidence of God's faithfulness to redeem the earth
 - In this case, we are reminded of God's own pain and suffering, the world now knows great joy in salvation

- As we said earlier, earthly discomfort can seem bad to us, yet it can hold great spiritual benefit
- With the hour of His death at hand, Jesus moves to cease speaking in veiled terms, and begins to reveal the depths of what's coming

[John 16:23](#) "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.

[John 16:24](#) "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

[John 16:25](#) "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

[John 16:26](#) "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;

[John 16:27](#) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

[John 16:28](#) "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

- In v.23, Jesus notes that in the day of His departure, there will be no more opportunity to direct questions to Him directly
 - The disciples will have no choice but to rely on their access to the Father through prayer in Jesus' name
 - So though they have not asked anything of Jesus until this time, He encourages them to avail themselves of the privilege in the future
 - This is a command to all believers and it's one of the primary blessings of having peace with God through the blood of Christ
 - Jesus desires that we know His peace and joy and will
 - So He asks us to direct our needs skyward in His name, that is according to His will, so He may inform us freely
 - In this moment, the disciples never thought to question Jesus directly about where He was going...they're just asking each other
 - Jesus points this out to encourage them to begin thinking differently about how to move beyond questions and problems
 - They need to ask the Father directly now

- They have His ear
- More importantly, there will be no need for Jesus to use figurative language in answering them, Jesus says
 - Answers will come clearly from the Father
 - In His earthly ministry, Jesus began speaking in parables from the point Israel rejected Him as Messiah as recorded in Matthew 12-13
 - Prior to that period, Jesus spoke plainly
 - Now that He's about to be released from His ministry on earth, Jesus says He can dispense with the parables
 - The purpose of obscuring His message from Israel (so that they might continue in their unbelief) has run its course
 - From now on, the Father will give the disciples a clear understanding of what is coming
 - Beyond merely informing the apostles of coming event, Jesus' comment also refers to the apostles' collective gifting to author scripture
 - By their clear understanding, they will write the books of the New Testament so that all believers may benefit from their understanding
 - Remember that everything we understand concern Christ's life and death and its meaning comes from these men by way of the Spirit
 - The key concepts of our faith all came to us through the writing of the apostles
 - And that knowledge was itself the result of this promise to reveal everything clearly to these men for our sake
 - But once again, having received this teaching, we are to rest in it as it was recorded
 - There is no longer any need for someone to present us with "a word from the Lord" or new spiritual knowledge
 - Or for signs and wonders to show us the way

- These men were gifted to understand the Father clearly in order to sustain the church in the years while Jesus was away
 - Obviously, all believers share in this gift, at least to a lesser extent
 - We can't author scripture, but the same Spirit is the One explaining it to us
 - And we can see spiritual truths that are inaccessible to the unbeliever
- Then Jesus reveals the plain truth of His departure: He goes to the Father
 - But of course, Jesus doesn't say how He will be leaving the world
 - The disciples had heard it already and hadn't believed it
 - And when they see it play out, it will shock them
 - But for now, Jesus has at least told them what they need to know

[John 16:29](#) His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech.

[John 16:30](#) "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God."

[John 16:31](#) Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"

[John 16:32](#) "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

[John 16:33](#) "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

- The apostles react to Jesus' sudden transparency with surprise
 - They say "Lo," which is the ancient version of "Whoa!"
 - They're surprised to hear He's going back to Heaven
 - And they seize on this nugget to declare that now they know Jesus came from the Father and knows all
 - After all that they've seen Jesus do and heard Him teach over three years, *now* they are convinced to His claims
 - Jesus Himself responds incredulously with the biblical equivalent of "Really?"

- Their statement sounds forced to me, as if they were trying to demonstrate understanding in return for Jesus' willingness to speak plainly
- Like the person who says they understand you when they don't really understand at all
- Jesus knew they were playing along, because in mere hours they were going to run away at the sight of Him being arrested
 - Jesus says they will scatter
 - They will be so fearful for their earthly lives, that they all abandon the Lord in His time of distress
 - And as plain as these words were, each man still did exactly as Jesus predicted
- Nevertheless, Jesus tells them that He shares this news to give them peace
 - How is it peaceful to know about persecution or that they will abandon Jesus shortly?
 - It will become a source of peace when they reflect on this discourse because they will understand that Jesus knew it was going to happen
 - Since it wasn't a surprise to Jesus, then He won't be disappointed in their behavior
 - At least not to the extent that He holds it against them
 - The Lord in His sovereignty saw it coming and turned it to good
 - Therefore, when they face a trial they know it's part of God's plan so they can rejoice in it and face it with peace
 - Or when the apostles reflected on their abandonment of Jesus, they could understand it too played into God's purposes
 - And they were forgiven for it
 - And all these things are possible, because Jesus has overcome His and their adversary: the world
 - And if God is for us, who can be against us?

John 17

- With this chapter, we come to the end of the time in the Upper Room at the Passover meal
 - Jesus has delivered His final instructions to His disciples
 - He has spoken to them plainly about His plan to depart and return to the Father
 - He has explained a little of what their future holds
 - And He has promised to empower them in special ways
 - All things they have yet to fully understand
 - There is only one thing remaining to be done before they leave this sanctuary: to intercede with the Father
 - Jesus is returning to the Father where He will take up His role as intercessor for the Church
 - And His work as Intercessor begins even now, before He departs the earth
 - Which raises the thought that perhaps Jesus begins to intercede here for effect
 - Perhaps He's showing the disciples how He intends to work after He departs
 - Certainly, Jesus is teaching and modeling for the disciples even as He is speaking to the Father
 - Therefore, as we consider what Jesus says, we'll also consider how Jesus prays
 - For if Jesus intended His prayer to be a model, then we do well to consider the model
- Jesus' prayer comprises the entire seventh chapter of John's Gospel
 - And it can be divided into three parts
 - The first part of prayer focuses on Jesus' mission on earth

- The second part focuses on the eleven men seated around Jesus who will become the apostles of the early church
- And the third part Jesus prays for the church overall
- Looking at the first section, Jesus makes two general requests of the Father
 - The first request is in vs. 1-4

[John 17:1](#) Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

[John 17:2](#) even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

[John 17:3](#) "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

[John 17:4](#) "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

- Perhaps the first thing to notice is how Jesus addresses His prayer to the Father
 - Perhaps this seems obvious, since we might ask Who else would Jesus address?
 - But knowing this prayer forms a model as does the prayer Jesus provided in Matthew 6, we find the same pattern
 - When we pray, we're told to pray to the Father
 - Remember in chapter 16 Jesus had said this

[John 16:26](#) "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf;

[John 16:27](#) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

- Our prayers will go directly to the Father, Who hears us because of Jesus' intercession
 - Jesus says that He will not relay our prayer to the Father
 - Our Father loves us because of Jesus, so we have free access to the Father
 - And therefore, our prayers go directly to the Father because of Christ, not through Christ

- Jesus' agony and death was only hours away, so "the hour" refers to Jesus' time of passion
- Then Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him, which in this context means to bring Jesus through the crucifixion and into resurrected life
- We see in v.2 Jesus alluding to His resurrection when He says "even as You gave Me authority over all flesh..."
 - Jesus is given authority to judge the living and the dead
 - And all that the Father has given to Jesus, to these Jesus may grant eternal life
 - Notice again, Jesus reminds us that He is on a mission to save those the Father gives to Him
 - And eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son Whom the Father sent
- So Jesus asks the Father to glorify Jesus, by raising Jesus in the flesh
 - Having conquered death, Jesus would then have authority to judge all flesh
 - And in that judgment, Jesus will grant eternal life to those the Father elects
- Finally, Jesus explains that since Jesus has accomplished all the work the Father asked of Him, the Father is glorified on earth through His Son
 - Why is Jesus explaining this to the Father?
 - Once again, the answer is a model for prayer
 - Throughout this prayer, Jesus will offer the Father rationale for His requests
 - Perhaps the rationale is merely for the disciples' benefit
 - But it may also be true that the Father delights to hear His children revealing their reasoning for why they ask
 - This makes sense, since we know prayer is principally a means of aligning our hearts with God, rather than changing God's mind

- If we approach prayer with a expectation we should to explain our reasoning to God, then we will be required to work out our requests
- This is a healthy exercise, as we may find our requests changing as we think through what we truly wish God to do
- In this case, the Son's logic is perfect, as we would expect
 - He argues for the Father to resurrect the Son because doing so will ensure the Father's glorify is made complete on earth
 - Furthermore, the Son's resurrection will ensure He can deliver eternal life to God's elect, as the Father desires
 - Finally in v.4 Jesus says He has done what the Father asked, therefore Jesus is deserving of the Father's response
- Jesus second request is found in vs.5-8

[John 17:5](#) "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

[John 17:6](#) "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

[John 17:7](#) "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; [John 17:8](#) for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

- Now Jesus asks for the Father to glorify Him in another way
 - Jesus asks for the glory He once knew before Jesus became incarnate
 - In His preincarnate form, Jesus was the Shechinah Glory of God visible to men
 - But the Bible says that when Jesus became incarnate, He gave up that glory

[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

[Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- In v.7 when Paul says that Christ “emptied” Himself, Paul is describing how Jesus gave up the glory He knew beforehand
 - He came in the likeness of men, which necessitated leaving His glory behind
 - That’s why Jesus appeared so ordinary according to scripture
- And again, Jesus offers the Father reasons to restore Jesus to the state of glory He knew before
 - First, Jesus says He has manifested the name of God before men
 - The Greek word for manifest simply means to make visible or clear
 - And that’s what Jesus did when He gave up His glorified position at the right hand of the Father
 - By coming as a man, Jesus showed the world the Father, Who is otherwise invisible
 - As Hebrews says

Heb. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...

- But also notice that this manifestation was only made to those the Father chose from out of the world
 - Not all men are appointed to see the glory of God in Christ
 - Only those who belong to the Father are included in this revealing
 - As you and I have come to know the Father through Christ, we are showing evidence we belong to the Father by keeping the word of Christ
 - In this context, keeping the word means obeying the call of the Gospel
- Furthermore, Jesus says His disciples have come to know that everything Jesus has came from the Father
 - Jesus words and works were from the Father

- He spoke truth given Him by the Father
- He performed miracles to demonstrate the power of God
- By these things, the elect have come to believe that Jesus has come from the Father
 - Therefore, if Jesus gave up His glory to make the Father known to men, then Jesus should receive back His glory once that plan is accomplished
 - We see this promise fulfilled upon His ascension
 - In fact, In Revelation John had the privilege of seeing Christ in His glorified form
- Now we move to the second part of the prayer, when Jesus prays for the eleven men in the room with Him
 - This section can be further divided into three sections
 - The first section concerns their physical preservation while they conduct their important mission on earth

[John 17:9](#) "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

[John 17:10](#) and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

[John 17:11](#) "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

[John 17:12](#) "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

[John 17:13](#) "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

[John 17:14](#) "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- This section is directed at the apostles, as the context indicates (e.g., v.12)
 - Nevertheless, when Jesus turns to praying for all disciples in v.20, He adds that His concerns in these matters extends to the entire church

- In v.9, notice for the fourth time Jesus focuses only on the elect of God
- He says that He is not praying on behalf of the world, that is the unbelieving world
- Jesus asks on behalf those who belong to the Father
- Jesus prays this way to remain in the Father's will, praying for what He knows the Father wants
- Then, Jesus gives reasons for why the Father should preserve the apostles
 - These apostles belong to the Father
 - Since the Son and Father share everything, then Jesus' apostles are the Father's apostles
 - Therefore, the Father has a personal interest in preserving these men, as they are His disciples
- Secondly, Jesus says He is going to leave these men behind when He departs
 - Therefore, Jesus appeals to the Father to provide care in Jesus' absence
- Thirdly, at the end of v.11 Jesus asks the Father to make these men one
 - The Father should preserve these men so that they can act as a team, reflecting the unity that exist among the Godhead
- Fourthly, Jesus explains that the Father must care for these men to ensure none will perish
 - Jesus never allowed any to perish (except the evil son destined to perish)
 - That pattern is to continue for a time
 - Eventually, these men die, but Jesus is speaking of preserving them for the mission
- Finally, Jesus asks the Father to preserve the disciples because they will be like the prophets: carrying the word of God into a world that is hostile to that word

- Just as the world persecuted Jesus because He spoke the word of God, so will they persecute the apostles
- Jesus asks the Father to preserve these men so that they might accomplish this mission
- Next, Jesus prays for them to be physically and spiritually protected from Satan and his forces in the world

John 17:15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

John 17:16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- Jesus doesn't ask the Father to remove these men from earth, for that would put a stop to the church's growth and expansion
 - It would have accomplished the preserving of the men
 - But at the expense of the movement of the Gospel
- So they must remain behind for a time, but then Jesus asks the Lord to protect them from the enemy
 - And the reason Jesus offers to the Father is quite simple
 - The apostles are not from the evil one
 - In other words, these eleven men have been born again by faith and therefore aren't of the world like Jesus
- So if the apostles are not part of the world, then they are not citizens in Satan's Kingdom
 - Now they are citizens of the Messiah's kingdom
 - They have been adopted into the family of God
 - They do not belong to the enemy
 - Consequently, Jesus appeals to the Father to provide supernatural protection to the apostles from Satan
- Lastly, Jesus asks that these men would be sanctified, that is to be made increasingly godly and holy in the conduct of their lives

[John 17:17](#) "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

[John 17:18](#) "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

[John 17:19](#) "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

- The Lord calls for the Father to sanctify these men, and notice the way Jesus asks that sanctification would take place
 - In the truth, which is the word of God written for our behalf
 - And Jesus' reasoning for why the Father should honor this request is because of their unique mission to enter the world
 - As God's representatives, it's especially important that they carry a testimony of godliness
 - So Jesus asks that the Father sanctify these men
 - Furthermore, Jesus reminds the Father that He sanctified Himself for their sakes
 - Jesus lived an obedient, sinless life to ensure He could save them from sin
 - For only a sinless sacrifice could suffice to pay their penalty for sin
 - So Jesus argues that the Father has a self-interest and responsibility to sanctify these men by His word
 - To convict them of their sin
 - To instruct them in righteousness
 - To grant them the courage and desire to obey
 - So that as they become more holy, they become more effective in their ministry representing the Gospel
 - And the Father should do these things because Jesus did them first
- Isn't Jesus' approach to prayer fascinating? Have you ever considered organizing your prayer life in this fashion?
 - Here's a suggestion you might follow the next time you sit down to pray

- Make out a list of the requests you desire the Lord to meet
- Then write out 1 or 2 reasons why it would be righteous for God to give you what you seek
- And then incorporate those reasons into your prayers
- Instead of just asking God repeatedly with the same words or an extra “please” in front, ask Him as you would make a case to your boss or spouse
 - The first thing you’re bound to do is think more carefully about what you’re asking God for
 - You’ll notice when your requests are not easy to defend from the perspective of righteousness
 - You will probably modify your requests so that they are easier to defend on that basis
- And in those ways, your requests will more quickly come into alignment with the will of God
 - And as your requests align with His will, you are going to see your requests answered affirmatively more often
 - Also, you’re going to sense yourself growing closer to the Father, as your prayer life becomes less a rigorous, ritualistic enumeration of requests
 - And turns into a conversation, rich and deep with purpose
- Moving to the final section of the prayer regarding all believers, Jesus makes two requests of the Father, beginning in vs.21-23

John 17:20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

John 17:22 “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

- Jesus now makes requests of the Father for the body of disciples as a whole

- Notice Jesus defines clearly how His disciples are going to be made
- It will be those who believe in the word of God
- The growth of the church is dependent on the spread of the word of God
- Any time Jesus' disciples are engaged in bringing the word to the world, it is a worthwhile endeavor
- And then Jesus requests that this growing body would be "one" like the Son and the Father are one
 - Notice Jesus prays both for a specific outcome based on a specific standard
 - First, we are to be united in identity, as the Son was one with His Father
 - We are all made into one body by a common baptism of the Spirit, Paul says
- Secondly, we are of one mind, being taught according to the one and only word of God
 - There are not multiple ways into the faith that saves
 - There are not multiple sources of truth
 - Just as Jesus knew the Father's will and did it, so do all true Christians know the truth of Christ in His word (though to varying degrees)
- Finally, as Jesus did the works of His Father, so will believers be united in working to a common goal, which is the spread of the Gospel to the glory of Christ
 - Within the true body, the works we do are intended to bring about a shared desire
 - Which is for more men and women to know Christ and to glorify Him
- So Jesus asks the Father that the church would be united in identity, in knowledge of the truth and in works...and yet we see around us that this is not the case

- Within the body of Christ we seem to find many divisions, many differences of opinion, different agendas, don't we?
 - First, we have divisions called denominations
 - What is a denomination except a division?
 - And by these denominations, we assume different identities (I'm a Baptist vs. I'm a Methodist)
 - Certainly we can find different interpretations of scripture
 - And through these divisions, we also see different goals for the church
 - Some groups pursue social justice
 - Others pursue bettering the individual circumstances of believers
 - Still others emphasize biblical education or missions
- So are we to conclude that the Father hasn't given Christ what He requested in this case?
 - No, because we're judging these outcomes from human perspective
 - The enemy has certainly seeded division and confusion within the Church, as the Lord knew He would
 - That's why Jesus asked earlier that we would be kept from the evil one
 - And the Father has certainly answered that prayer
 - What the enemy has managed to accomplish in disrupting the Church is merely superficial
 - He has created the appearance of division
 - Baptists may think themselves different from Methodists and vice versa
 - But these divisions are illusions
 - They certainly cause friction but they are not impediments for the Spirit

- In reality, the Spirit creates harmony within the body despite these superficial divisions
 - For true believers, those born again by the Spirit, everything Jesus asked is absolutely true, though we may not see it ourselves because we have believed the enemy's lie
 - We have but one identity, which is Christian
 - When I travel and teach I associate with many different groups of believers, And it never ceases to amaze me how alike these groups are
 - Yet at the same time, these groups view themselves as unique and they can sometimes be suspicious of other groups
 - But every body of believers I've visited has the same Bible questions, the same desire to serve Christ, the same heart for God's word and the same struggles with sin
 - Yes, doctrinal differences do exist in the body, but that is just the consequence of varying degrees of spiritual maturity
 - We will always have this challenge in the body
 - Even within a denomination, you can find individuals who vary in their understanding of Christian theology
 - This isn't proof of division, just opportunity to teach
 - Paul was dealing with this problem in his own day even before denominations emerged

[Col. 2:6](#) Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
[Col. 2:7](#) having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

[Col. 2:8](#) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

- Naturally, if the maturity in our understanding of God's varies, so will our works
 - Those who are more spiritually mature will do the works that Jesus did and in the way He did...by the Spirit

- The Father's answer to Jesus' prayer is evident in the way mature Christians universally arrive at a similar pattern of serving Christ and ministering to the world in His name
- And as maturity varies, so will behavior, even to the point of some believers having few if any noticeable works of faith
- Once again, these variations are not evidence that Jesus' prayer wasn't answered
- They merely reflect the variation of maturity in the body
- Notice Jesus' reasoning to the Father for why He should grant this request
 - At the end of v.21 and v.23 Jesus says this request will ensure the world knows that the Father sent Jesus and loved Jesus
 - In other words, Jesus is saying that a unified Church will impress the world that this group of people have truly heard from God
 - Unity makes the church more effective at the mission of representing the Gospel and Christ to the world
 - Unity impresses in this way, because unity is so abnormal within sinful, selfish humanity
 - So that when it exists, it presents proof of a supernatural force binding the group
 - In a sense, this principle explains the attraction of cults
 - They are so unified (in an unhealthy way) that they impress prospective followers
 - Of course, the difference is that cults achieve this unity in an artificial way, through close control, strict rules, intimidation and peer pressure
 - Whereas the body of Christ remains unified across space and time, not by rules but the Spirit and the word
 - So what does it say when we seek division?
 - When we adopt denominational creeds?
 - When we label our gatherings by names other than simply "Christian"?

- Aren't we working against Christ's desires, creating divisions and thereby diminishing the witness of the church?
- Finally, Jesus asks the Father to accomplish the glorification of the church

[John 17:24](#) "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

[John 17:25](#) "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me;

[John 17:26](#) and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

- Jesus requests that the believers on earth would be granted the same glorification that the Father is prepared to grant to Christ following His crucifixion
 - Following the death of this body, believers will receive a new physical body, one we enjoy for eternity
 - Paul teaches in 1Cor 15 that this new body is incorruptible
 - Meaning that in this new body, we will be like Christ in that we will never die again and will not sin
 - This will be our glorified state

[Phil. 3:20](#) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

[Phil. 3:21](#) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

- We will be with Christ in this state, and we will witness Christ in His glorified state
- Our glory is different than Christ's glory though
 - Christ is inherently glorious, having one with the Father from all eternity
 - In fact, we know Christ gave up His glory to become like man, which tells us that humanity possesses a lessor glory than does Christ

- Before the Fall, Adam existed in the likeness of God's image
 - And by faith, we are made new again in that likeness

[Eph. 4:24](#) and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- Even after faith, however, our glory is but a reflection of His glory, not the fullness of it
- Like the way the moon reflects the sun's glory

[2Cor. 3:18](#) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- Jesus asks that every believer enter into this state of glory and once again Jesus lays out reasons why this should be the case
 - First Jesus says the believer must be glorified if we are to ever see and appreciate Christ's glory
 - This is a simple but profound truth
 - Unless we are like Him, we will never see Him again

[Heb. 12:14](#) Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

- The writer says the church should pursue the sanctification of men, without which none will see the Lord
- He means seek to be at peace with all men so that we might bring them the Gospel, the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord
- Jesus' argument before the Father is that God's entire plan of redemption was intended to reunite fallen Man and all Creation with the Creator
 - And this can only be accomplished by glorifying men
 - Without that glorification, they cannot enter into the presence of the risen Lord, as Paul explains

[1Cor. 15:50](#) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- The second reason Jesus offers the Father for glorifying the church is His love
 - The Son has made known the Father's name and His love for the Son
 - And now by the Spirit, the Son will place the love of the Father in each disciple
 - And therefore, the Father's love will be with each believer
 - Certainly, those the Father loves will be received by the Father
 - Christ tells the Father He should glorify the believers because of His love
 - As Paul says:

[2Tim. 2:13](#) If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- And so the prayer concludes
 - Jesus made His intercession public so that you and I would have encouragement to know that these outcomes aren't in doubt
 - Christ's intercession assures us that the Father will honor these requests
- At this point in John's Gospel, the scene in the Upper Room ends abruptly, and the last stage of Jesus earthly life quickly follows
 - This week, we will enter into chapter 18 just briefly to study the betrayal of Jesus

[John 18:1](#) When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

[John 18:2](#) Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

[John 18:3](#) Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

- When Jesus and the eleven disciples leave the upper room, they cross the Kidron Valley and walk up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and enter the Garden of Gethsemane

- According to the other Gospels, Jesus asks eight of the eleven to stand guard at the entrance of the garden and to remain in prayer

[Mark 14:32](#) They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed."

[Mark 14:33](#) And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.

[Mark 14:34](#) And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

[Mark 14:35](#) And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.

[Mark 14:36](#) And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

[Mark 14:37](#) And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

[Mark 14:38](#) "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- Notice that Jesus asks the apostles to pray for themselves that they might avoid temptation
- But they couldn't find the strength to do so, as Jesus finds them sleeping
- Clearly, they had no appreciation of the gravity of the situation
- But Jesus did, and His fear and anxiety is evident
 - How can we not sympathize?
 - Jesus knew what was coming
 - And He even asked the Father to seek a different solution if He could
- Jesus' request in Mark 14:36 is proof by itself that another solution for sin wasn't available for the Father
 - The only way to reconcile men to the Father was by the sacrificial death of Christ
 - And yet in His humanity, He is desperate for an alternative

- As Luke reports, the pressure Jesus felt was so great, it caused small blood vessels near his skin to break, leading Him to sweat blood
- John's account skips past these details, since they were already available in the other Gospels
 - For John, the emphasis will be on the manner of betrayal and the events that cascaded immediately afterward
 - Judas reappears as the betrayer
 - Here we see why a betrayer was required: someone was needed to lead the authorities to Jesus' location
 - Judas knew that Jesus spent the night in the Garden
 - And therefore, Judas could be useful to the Jewish authorities who want to arrest Jesus at the right moment
 - Timing was everything for the Jews and Romans
 - During the Passover week, the city was filled with pilgrims
 - Finding Jesus among the crowd was like looking for a needle in a haystack
 - During the day, Jesus would emerge and could be found teaching in the temple
 - But arresting Jesus in front of adoring crowds was a recipe for a riot
 - So capturing Jesus at night away from the crowds was key, but how would they find Jesus? They needed someone on the inside to give away His location
 - Judas was that betrayer
 - And this was the very reason Jesus included Judas in His inner circle
 - Judas is a great case study in the sovereignty of God in His conflict with Satan
 - Jesus picked Judas, Jesus orchestrated the timing of Judas' action and made Himself available when the time came

- God works through sin and the enemy as needed to accomplish His plan
- But when the Lord uses Satan for His own purposes, we can't jump to the conclusion that the enemy is winning
- God is never not in control of Satan, even as Satan thinks he has the upper hand
- This was true with Jesus and Judas and it will be true in whatever circumstances we face
- As Judas approaches, he brings with him a cohort of Romans soldiers (several hundred men) complete with torches (and maybe pitchforks)
 - All this show of force was not because Jesus was such a threat
 - Even the torches were unnecessary, since Passover takes place on a full moon
 - The concern was for what Jesus' disciples might do in response to the arrest
 - This is crowd control through intimidation arranged by Jewish enemies of Christ
 - Notice the soldiers are being led by officers of the priests, which refers to the Jewish authorities over the temple
 - It's also appropriate that Jesus would be arrested in darkness
 - For a moment, it would appear that darkness will reign
 - Luke records Jesus' words to those coming to arrest Him

Luke 22:52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?"

Luke 22:53 "While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."

- The timing of Jesus betrayal and arrest were also planned by the Lord to ensure the picture was complete
- We must understand this moment as the work of the enemy, the prince of darkness

- As we move into the trial and passion of Christ, John will highlight certain details, often overlooked by the other Gospels, which work to show Jesus as a voluntary participant in this process
 - Though the scene opens with a show of force and a formal arrest, none of what follows could happen without Jesus' willing consent
 - Jesus has the power to stop this process at any time
 - This makes His suffering and death all the more remarkable
 - And it reflects Jesus' obedience to the will of the Father
 - It's one thing to submit to a process in the beginning (e.g., to turn one's self into the authorities)
 - But it's another thing altogether to continually submit to severe abuse knowing you have the ability to stop it at any time
 - So now look at how John reveals Jesus' willingness to submit

[John 18:4](#) So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"

[John 18:5](#) They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am He." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.

[John 18:6](#) So when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

[John 18:7](#) Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

[John 18:8](#) Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

[John 18:9](#) to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."

- First, John says Jesus knew what was coming and therefore why these soldiers were here
 - At that point, Jesus voluntarily approached the men, not waiting for them to figure out Who Jesus was
 - We know from the other Gospels that Jesus is betrayed by a kiss from Judas
 - But John wants his readers to understand that it wasn't the kiss that resulted in Jesus being identified

- Jesus was intent on being found, otherwise He never would have remained in the Garden to begin with
- Secondly, notice that Jesus initiates the conversation, asking them Who they seek?
 - When they name Jesus, He identifies Himself plainly with “I am He”
 - Literally, Jesus said It is I, which is a natural thing to say in response to the question
 - But it’s also a statement Jesus has used in the past to identify Himself as deity
- Here it seems to have both the ordinary and supernatural meaning
 - For as soon as Jesus speaks the words, the entire contingent of men drew back and fell to the ground
 - Different views exists as to what happens in this moment
 - But it seems to me that since these men get right back up and arrest Jesus, it couldn’t be explained as a voluntary act on their part
- Instead, it seems to be the supernatural power of God’s word
 - As Paul says:

[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus **EVERY KNEE** WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

- The name of Christ puts these men on the ground at least for the moment
- John has recorded this detail to emphasize how little power this crowd truly had to accomplish what they sought
 - Had Jesus not voluntarily agreed to go with them, not even a cohort of soldiers could have arrested Him
 - In fact, notice Jesus has to prompt them to get on with their mission
 - He says in v.7 He asks them to repeat their purpose

- It's as though He has to remind them why they've come or else they might leave empty handed
- Then Jesus makes clear that He alone will be arrested in this moment
 - His disciples are not to be touched
 - And sure enough, not a single apostle is arrested or harmed during all the turmoil surrounding Jesus' death
 - This is highly unusual given what would have been expected
 - If a rogue rabbi is arrested and executed, his disciples would have been equally likely to be killed
 - But to fulfill the word that Jesus spoke in His prayer, not one of those given to Him were lost
 - Further proof to us of the effectiveness of the prayer Jesus spoke

John 18

- We continue with the arrest of Jesus in the Garden followed by His trial
 - Last week we stopped just as the Romans came to arrest Jesus
 - John described the entire scene to emphasize Jesus' ultimate authority and control over the circumstances
 - Even as Jesus declared His identity, His voice caused the entire contingent of soldiers to fall backward
 - So let's pick up where we left off

[John 18:7](#) Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

[John 18:8](#) Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

[John 18:9](#) to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."

[John 18:10](#) Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.

[John 18:11](#) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

- After knocking the soldiers to the ground, Jesus calmly asks again what do they want from Him
 - They answer, and then Jesus pointedly answers that since they want Him alone, they should not take the other disciples
 - His request makes perfect sense
 - First, this entire moment has been orchestrated by God for the sake of His Son's sacrifice, not to endanger the disciples
 - Secondly, Jesus Himself has told His disciples they will be left behind to conduct ministry in Jesus' absence
 - Finally, Jesus quotes Himself from John 6 where He said that of those the Father gives Him, He will not lose any
 - This quote presents a small dilemma

- John seems to imply that when Jesus said He wouldn't lose any sheep in John 6, He was speaking of the moment of Jesus' capture
- But this moment can't be the extent of Jesus' point in John 6
- In John 6, Jesus said:

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

- Notice Jesus spoke of raising up those given to Him by the Father "on the last day"
 - The last day refers to the last day of the church age, when all saints will be resurrected into new bodies as Paul describes in 1 Cor 15
 - But the term raising up implies a laying down
 - In other words, resurrection requires a death, and so Jesus wasn't promising that none of His disciples would come to harm
 - He was promising that in the end all will enter the glory of the Kingdom
- But now in chapter 18 John says that Jesus' promise was fulfilled in this moment
 - How do we resolve this question? The answer is deceptively simple
 - John isn't saying that this moment was the final fulfillment of Jesus' comment
 - Notice John only quotes the first part of Jesus' words
 - Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one
 - But John left off the part about raising up on the last day
- John is simply showing that when Jesus promised He wouldn't lose any of His disciples, He was testifying to His commitment to watch over His sheep at all times
 - A shepherd's job was to maintain careful watch over the flock at all times

- The ultimate measure of His success is that all of the flock return to the fold
- But even before that point, the Lord will work for our behalf and grant us protection as needed to ensure we accomplish His purposes
- As Paul says so eloquently

Rom. 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- In this moment, Jesus was at work to turn a very bad situation to good for those who loved Him
- Impulsive Peter was not content to rest in Jesus' words, so he takes matters into his own hands
 - He withdraws a dagger, and in a sudden, aimless thrust, he manages to injure a slave of the High Priest
 - It's interesting that John names Peter as the instigator
 - All four Gospels mention this moment, but only John names Peter
 - As we reflect on John's Gospel, we find John calling out Peter time and time again, in ways the other writers overlooked
 - It seems John wanted to put Peter in a more human position
 - Perhaps he was working against false teaching that wanted to elevate Peter to unrealistic importance
 - And what do we make of Peter's actions?
 - First, he was violating the accepted Jewish rules of the day
 - It was considered unlawful to carry a weapon on a feast day
 - And the result is nothing less than pathetic
 - He injures a slave in a non-lethal way
 - What exactly was he expecting to do against a cohort of soldiers?

- Assuming Peter wasn't a fool, we must conclude he was trying to start a melee
 - He cuts an ear, the Roman soldiers respond by drawing weapons
 - Chaos ensues, and Jesus escapes in the confusion
 - Perhaps that's what Peter thought
- Regardless, Peter's actions reflect an immature perspective and ignorance of what is happening around him
 - Jesus corrects Peter reminding him that the process that's underway is according to the Father's will
 - Peter is literally fighting the Father, not men
 - The other Gospels record that Jesus responds by healing the slave in the moment, a final miraculous healing of His earthly ministry
 - Jesus' love for this man is evident in that Jesus didn't want the impact of His ministry to result in unfair injury
 - Had Jesus not healed the man, Jesus would have been liable for the actions of His disciples
 - By healing the man, Jesus remains without guilt

[John 18:12](#) So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

[John 18:13](#) and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

[John 18:14](#) Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

[John 18:15](#) Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

[John 18:16](#) but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.

[John 18:17](#) Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

[John 18:18](#) Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

- So the arrest proceeds, and Jesus is led bound to the high priest of Israel for a Jewish trial
 - The rule of law in Israel was a two part system under Roman authority
 - By Roman concession, the Jews were subject to their Jewish law and Jewish authorities
 - And then, all Jews were subject to Romans law and Roman authorities
 - If a Jew was accused of violating Jewish law, then they were to be persecuted by Jewish authorities
 - If a Jew was accused of violating Roman law, then they were subject to the Roman system
 - Only the Roman system had the right of the sword, that is the right to condemn a person to death
 - Though Jews still took liberty to stone a criminal from time to time when they could get away with it
 - In this case, the charge brought against Jesus was of violating the Jewish law, so the Roman cohort is acting on behalf of the Jewish authorities when they arrest Jesus
 - They deliver Him to the Jewish authorities for trial
 - Making the situation more confusing still, there are two Jewish authorities in this day...two high priests
- The legitimate high priest was Annas
 - He was the high priest the Jewish people recognized as the true high priest
 - He had been deposed by the Romans for failing to concede to Roman authority
 - In his place, the Romans placed first his five sons, one after another in the office
 - All his sons refused to concede to Romans demands, so each was deposed in turn
 - Finally, Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas as given the role

- Caiaphas seemed to have been open to Roman oversight, since he held the position for several decades
- It was Caiaphas who prophetically declared that Jesus needed to die for the sake of the Jewish nation, not realizing the full meaning of his words
- Since the Romans ruled the land, the people of Israel had no choice but to accept the Romans' choice of high priest
 - But the people still recognized Annas as the rightful high priest, since the Law of Moses states that a high priest serves for life
 - Therefore, when it came time to try Jesus, they give Annas the first opportunity to pass judgment upon Jesus
- Only John records the details of Annas' trial
 - On the other hand, John gives no attention to the trial before Caiaphas
 - Nor does John address the subsequent trial in front of the Jewish ruling council, called the Sanhedrin
- Instead, John focuses entirely on Annas and then jumps to the trial of Pilate
 - Since the Jews were accusing Jesus of a crime worthy of death, the final judgment must come from Pilate
 - The Jews couldn't execute Jesus without Roman approval
 - So the trial before Pilate was necessary if the Jewish leaders were to get their way in putting Jesus to death
- As Jesus is sent to Annas' house, Peter followed Jesus at a distance
 - Naturally, he's curious what will happen to Jesus
 - But Peter is also worried
 - He knows that if His rabbi is arrested by the Jewish authorities, then Jesus' disciples would be next on the list
 - So he attempts to blend into the crowd
 - Another disciple was more bold than Peter, willing to enter the High Priest's home to observe the proceedings

- Most believe this disciple was John, since he often refers to himself in the third person and without name
- Furthermore, John's mother was Salome, who was a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus
- So John was both a cousin of Jesus and a nephew of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist
- Zechariah was a priest who served in the temple, so it's not impossible for John to have had a relationship with Annas, as v. 15 says
- But John's focus is on Peter's denials
 - John record this scene in a similar manner to the other Gospels, alternating between Jesus and Peter
 - The contrast is between Jesus speaking truth knowing it will result in the loss of His earthly life
 - While Peter lies to protect his earthly life
 - R.E. Brown noted that as Jesus stands up to His interrogators and denies nothing...
 - Peter cowers before his interrogators and denies everything
 - John eventually gets permission to bring Peter into the courtyard of the house
 - And as Peter passes through the door, a slave girl asks Peter if he was not one of Jesus' disciples
 - Giving Peter the opportunity to make the first of his three denials, as Jesus predicted
 - John adds in v.19 that the officers of the temple were standing there at the time warming themselves by a charcoal fire and Peter was with them
 - John describes Peter as standing with Jesus' enemies
 - A charcoal fire wouldn't have put out a lot of heat, so it would have required that all these stand close together
 - We can assume that Peter wouldn't have cared what a slave girl thought

- But he would have worried what the officers thought
- And given the close quarters, Peter knew they could overhear the conversation
- Peter feared men more than he feared God

[John 18:19](#) The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

[John 18:20](#) Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.

[John 18:21](#) "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."

[John 18:22](#) When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"

[John 18:23](#) Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"

[John 18:24](#) So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

- All of Jesus' trials were little more than kangaroo courts
 - There were many, many violations of Jewish law committed by the Jewish authorities in the conduct of these trials
 - Basically, any rule they needed to ignore or bypass, they did in order to arrive at the verdict they desired
 - The entire proceedings were contrived to arrive at a certain conviction
 - Once again, Jesus is in control of these circumstances, and so they go forward despite the ridiculousness of the charges
 - When Annas asks Jesus what He's been teaching, Jesus responds by challenging Annas to explain why he would ask Jesus to repeat things said publicly
 - Jesus' point is that Annas is clearly on a fishing expedition
 - Annas knows what Jesus was teaching
 - He has asked Jesus to repeat Himself so that something in His words might be used against Him

- Furthermore, Jesus is challenging them on a point of Jewish law, since an accused was not permitted by Jewish law to testify against Himself
- So Jesus is pointing out Annas' violation of law in interrogating the accused
- Ironically, an officer strikes Jesus and accuses Him of speaking to the high priest with contempt
 - It's ironic because Annas is the one showing Jesus contempt
 - Furthermore, Jesus is the true High Priest of God
 - So this officer of the temple is striking the High Priest and rightful inhabitant of the temple
 - Even as he criticizes Jesus for showing disrespect
 - Notice that Jesus is not putting up a real fight at this point
 - Ignoring the fact that Jesus has the power to stop everything by His word, He's not even acting as a reasonable defendant
 - He's making no real effort to exonerate Himself
 - John is showing us that Jesus didn't have any desire to avoid the cross
 - On the contrary, Jesus will orchestrate events to ensure He lands on the cross as planned
- At this point, Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas, who lived in another part of the same structure
 - And Jesus was suffering the beginning of His abuse, Peter is busy saving his own skin

[John 18:25](#) Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not."

[John 18:26](#) One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

[John 18:27](#) Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

- Peter is still warming himself, listening but not showing himself to be associated with Jesus

- One of those at the fire ask Peter if he was a disciple
- This is the second opportunity for Peter to deny Jesus' prophecy
- And of course, Peter can't do it, so he denies once again
- And then in rapid succession, another slave recognizes Peter from the garden and makes the third accusation
 - Peter then issues his final, damning denial
 - And the rooster crows
 - In the other Gospels we learn that Peter's third denial was his strongest
 - And it was one Jesus heard from the other room, for Jesus caught Peter's eye at that point
 - And Peter left in shame, realizing that Jesus' words had been true
- At this point, Jesus' time with Caiaphas ends, as Caiaphas settles on a trumped up charge upon which Jesus will be tried before the Sanhedrin
 - Skipping over Caiaphas' interrogation and the Jewish trial, John takes us directly to the trial of Pilate, the man with the authority to put Jesus to death
 - John also ignores the brief time Jesus spends before Herod
 - The focus for John is Pilate's dilemma in condemning an obviously innocent man
 - The Sanhedrin eventually arrived at a charge of blasphemy because Jesus claimed to be the son of God
 - The problem was Rome wouldn't authorize a death penalty for such a crime
 - So the Sanhedrin also charged Jesus with sedition against Rome
 - They take Jesus to the Praetorium, which is the Latin word for the headquarters of a Roman military governor
 - Pilate was the procurator of the Judean province of the Roman Empire
 - His normal headquarters was in Caesarea, but he always moved his headquarters to Jerusalem during the feasts fearing uprisings

- His headquarters was mostly like Herod's former palace along the Western Wall of the city
- It's here that Jesus is interrogated and presented before the crowds

[John 18:28](#) Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

[John 18:29](#) Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

[John 18:30](#) They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."

[John 18:31](#) So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death,"

[John 18:32](#) to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

- Those who led Jesus here did not dare enter into the headquarters
 - Since this is the day of Passover, these Jewish authorities could not enter the place without being considered unclean
 - If they were declared unclean, they could not participate in the feast
 - This was not a specific requirement under the Law of Moses, but it had become the practice out of fear that a Gentile home might contain leaven, which wasn't permitted on this day
 - Again, here's another irony
 - They want to preserve their opportunity to participate in the Passover, a feast that pictures the sacrifice to take away sins
 - And all the while, they are conspiring to murder the Son of God, Who is preparing to die to take away sin
 - Notice also that they want to eat the Passover meal
 - This reminds us that the normal time for the Passover meal hasn't yet come
 - The normal time to eat the meal was before sundown after the lambs were sacrificed on the daytime of Passover

- This time has come yet, so they are working to remain ritually clean
- But this also confirms what we learned earlier, that the meal Jesus ate with the disciples was a meal outside the normal pattern for the Passover
- In fact, there would have been no literally lamb at their table, since none had yet been sacrificed
- At the Last Supper, as Jesus declared, He was the sacrifice at that table
- Because these men remain outside Pilate's home, it forces Pilate to shuttle between the priests and Jesus to conduct the trial
 - This back and forth becomes a powerful commentary on a man manipulated and vacillating between two powerful forces
 - Between evil and good
 - John's narrative diminishes Pilate in many ways, reflecting how little power this man truly had in the moment
 - He was beaten before he ever started
 - Pilate first asks these men what crime they are accusing Jesus of committing
 - They answer indignant that they must explain themselves to Pilate
 - They were probably expecting Pilate to rubber stamp their charges, after all he assigned a cohort to the arrest
 - When they realized he was going to retry Jesus, they withhold any further information fearing they couldn't prove it
 - So biding for time and hoping to sidestep a Roman trial, they tell Pilate if we didn't have a good reason to be here, we wouldn't be bothering you
 - Obviously, in this case it's an excuse for not having a legitimate accusation

- Pilate senses this and tells them to judge the man under their own law
 - But they object because they know they can't execute Jesus without running afoul of Roman law
 - So they reveal to Pilate that Jesus is accused of a capital offense
 - This would have surprised Pilate, leading him to take everything more seriously from this point forward
 - Also, John says the Jews' comment fulfilled the word of the Lord concerning the manner of Jesus' death
 - What John means is that Jesus wouldn't die according to any method approved by the Jewish Law
 - Jewish Law required death by stoning
 - But the Romans did not practice stoning as a method of execution
 - So when the Jews said we cannot kill Jesus, you must do it, they were unknowingly working to fulfill scripture
 - Specifically, Jesus Himself said He must be lifted up like the serpent as mentioned in John 3 & 12
 - And in Deut 21, God declared that anyone hung on a tree is deemed to be cursed of God, as Jesus was accursed for our sake according to Isaiah
 - Third, death by crucifixion pulls the body out of joint while generally avoiding breaking bones, which fulfills Psalms 22 & 34
 - Fourth, it brings both Gentiles and Jews together in the act of putting Jesus to death, so all humanity is responsible for His suffering
- So then Pilate returns to ask Jesus what's this all about

John 18:33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

John 18:34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

John 18:35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"

[John 18:36](#) Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

- Pilate begins by asking Jesus if He is the King of the Jews
 - Though John doesn't record it, the Jewish authorities provided this accusation to Pilate according to Luke 23:2
 - They chose to put those words in Jesus' mouth as an expression of His claims to be the Christ
 - But of course, they have framed the issue as a threat to Roman rule hoping to convince Pilate to charge Jesus with sedition
 - So Pilate asks Jesus if He intends to be King?
 - In the other Gospels, Jesus is said to answer affirmatively
 - And John records that affirmative answer in v.37
 - But John also wants us to know that Jesus spoke a few more things as well
 - In His response, Jesus asks Pilate what led him to ask this question? Did he arrive at this conclusion on his own or was he told
 - Why does Jesus care?
 - Jesus wants to know if Pilate was asking of his own curiosity
 - Or was he merely looking to trap Jesus by His own words
- Jesus needs to know so He can adjust His response
 - Presumably, had Pilate indicated some sincere curiosity about Jesus, then Jesus would have responded openly as He did in other situations
 - On the other hand, if Pilate shows he's merely working to confirm the Jewish leaders' accusations, then Jesus would not condescend to play their game
 - In the other Gospels, we're told that Pilate must shuttle between Jesus and the religious leaders multiple times to hear a barrage of accusations
 - But in this moment, Jesus just wants to know where Pilate stands

- Pilate's response is sarcastic, asking Jesus if he's a Jew, meaning do I really care who you are?
 - Pilate's interest is simply for the sake of the proceedings
 - Therefore, he's not interested in whether Jesus is Messiah
 - Because it's apparent Pilate is not interested in the truth, Jesus attempts to reassure Pilate with His answer
- Jesus says that His kingdom is not the Roman Empire
 - Jesus is telling Pilate that He has nothing to worry about when it comes to the power of the Roman Empire
 - By the time Jesus enters into His kingdom, the Roman Empire of Pilate's day will be long gone from the earth
 - As will all Gentile kingdoms
 - For Jesus' kingdom is of another world, a world yet to come but one that will one day be present on the earth
- Remarkably, Jesus isn't finished with His earthly ministry of saving souls even at this late hour
 - Remember, He said He came not to judge but to save
 - And as long as He is alive on earth, Jesus will continue to leave the door open for men to come to Him
 - Even men who are set about to condemn Him
 - Furthermore, Jesus says His followers were not presently fighting those who held Jesus
 - If Jesus and His followers had intended to compete with Rome for power, then when Jesus was arrested, His followers would have taken up arms to defend their king
 - But they were not fighting to free Jesus and defeat Pilate
 - Which means Christ's Kingdom isn't being put at risk because Pilate's actions
- Jesus is presenting an important principle for all His followers
 - But we can't confuse who our enemy is with who we are fighting for

- Jesus' followers fight against the enemy and for the Kingdom
- The enemy of the Kingdom is Satan and His demons, as Paul explained

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Ours is a spiritual battle, and so our tactics and weapons must be spiritual in nature
 - We fight through the sword of the spirit, through prayer and personal sacrifices
 - We understand that our enemy is strong but our King is stronger
 - So we enter the battle with confidence yet with wisdom
- The people we encounter who oppose Christ and His followers are *not* our enemies
 - We may contend with evil people at times, but we look past them individually
 - We understand they are pawns in a spiritual chess match
 - Such people are not our enemy; they are the reason we are fighting the battle
 - Humanity is our mission field, not our battlefield
- We must see unbelievers who oppose us as potential converts and treat them accordingly
 - That's why Jesus said we are to love those who persecute us
 - That is why Jesus responded gently to Pilate at first, seeking to know if He was open to the truth
 - Jesus was even now willing to look past the flesh to understand that the enemy is the real target
 - Later in chapter 19, Jesus will explain this truth to Pilate himself
- In this matter , there was nothing to be gained by Jesus or His followers resisting the will of the Jews or the Romans

- Spiritually speaking, these events were exactly as they should be to accomplish the will of God
- That's why Jesus explains that Pilate need not worry about Jesus' claims nor His followers

[John 18:37](#) Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

[John 18:38](#) Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

[John 18:39](#) "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

[John 18:40](#) So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

- Upon hearing Jesus refer to His Kingdom, Pilate says to Jesus, "So, you are a King?"
 - Pilate tries to trap Jesus into admitting something by which he could accuse Jesus
 - Jesus already denied being a threat to Pilate
 - But Pilate isn't convinced yet, so he's pressing Jesus for more
 - Jesus responds that Pilate has spoken correctly, and that Jesus' very life was intended to testify to the truth of His identity
 - To which Pilate famously and cynically replies, "What is truth?"
 - For a man who spent his life surrounded by politicians while judging cheats and criminals of various kinds, Pilate had no confidence in someone finding truth
 - His response is a mild mocking of Jesus, making Jesus out to be an idealist
 - And his perspective would have been correct had Jesus been just a man
 - But Jesus is the Truth, the One Who knows all things and is always true, in which there is no lie
 - But Pilate was a man who lived in the world, which belongs to the Father of Lies

- So after posing the question to Jesus, Pilate leaves before waiting for an answer
- Which is ironic, since Jesus is the one and only Person Who could have answered Pilate's question
- In the end, Pilate declares that Jesus is not guilty of anything, which is one of several such declarations
 - John greatly condenses this scene in his Gospel
 - In the other Gospels, we see multiple back-and-forth exchanges between Pilate and the Jewish leaders
 - More than once, Pilate tries to release Jesus but the Jewish leaders object intensely each time, demanding Jesus die
 - Their determination to see Jesus killed worries and confuses Pilate
 - He can't reconcile how Jesus could be so hated for seemingly no reason
 - Nevertheless, he begins to worry that releasing Jesus might cause bigger problems for him in Judea than if he killed an innocent man
- The scales begin to tip in favor of punishing Jesus once Pilate takes Jesus before the crowd
 - A crowd has gathered at Pilate's headquarters presumably to hear the result of Jesus' trial
 - Pilate thinks he can use this crowd to his advantage in settling the matter of Jesus
 - His plan is to take Jesus before the crowd and appeal to them on the basis of a recent tradition
 - Apparently, Rome would release one Jewish prisoner at Passover
 - This tradition is not mentioned in history outside the Gospel accounts but apparently this custom had developed around the time of Jesus
 - Pilate wants to use this tradition to bypass the pressure of the Jewish leaders and so he can take the temperature of the Jewish crowd
 - Pilate is worried about riots and unrest in Judea

- The Roman soldiers in Jerusalem are strong enough to put down any unrest in the end
- But Pilate can't afford any unrest
- Pilate came into his position of power because his predecessors couldn't keep peace in Judea and were removed from power as a result
 - The Caesar demands peace in Judea
 - So Pilate has strong incentive to avoid a riot at all costs
- So Pilate assumes that by bringing Jesus before the crowd in this way, he can orchestrate Jesus' release without risk of an angry mob
 - Pilate assumes that the people will want their "king" released
 - And if the crowd approves the release, who will be left to object?
- But Pilate makes a strategic blunder
 - In the other Gospels, we learn that the Jewish leaders have been secretly moving within the crowd influencing them against Jesus
 - By appealing to the crowd, Jesus is playing into the hands of the Jewish leaders
 - So when Pilate asks his fateful question, the crowd responds Barabbas, much to Pilate's horror
 - Interestingly, Pilate had chosen a well-known and little-loved mercenary, Barabbas as the alternative to Jesus
 - Again, he expected to make the crowd's choice easy and obvious
 - Barabbas seems to have been a career criminal
 - For example, John says Barabbas was a robber
 - Acts says he was a murderer
 - Luke says he led an insurrection against Roman authorities
 - Matthew says Barabbas was notorious, meaning everyone knew Barabbas was a troublemaker

- Nevertheless, the crowd chose Barabbas over Jesus, which was a strange choice to say the least
 - But the names of these two individuals reveals the true reason Barabbas is chosen
 - His name means son of Abba
 - Abba is the Aramaic word for father
 - So both Jesus and Barabbas are sons of their fathers
 - Jesus is the Son of the Perfect Father of Lights
 - He is a perfect representation of His perfection
 - And Jesus is the First Born among all the brethren
 - So that those who are born again by faith assume His likeness and eventually His perfection
 - And Jesus and His children will always be enemies of the world
 - Likewise, Barabbas is the son of his father, Satan
 - He is a perfect representation of Satan's and Adam's sinful nature brought into its fullness
 - He is a liar, thief, murderer, and usurper of thrones
 - He is poster child for all those who remain in their sins and are enemies of God
 - The choice before the crowd couldn't be more stark or representative of what was at stake in the moment
 - And as scripture teaches, the children of the bondwoman will always persecute the children of the free woman
 - Cain persecuted Abel
 - Ishmael persecuted Isaac
 - And Barabbas' people persecuted Christ
- The other Gospels tell us that Pilate put Jesus before the crowd twice in hopes they would choose Him over Barabbas, and both time the Crowd selected the wrong guy

- So at this point, Pilate resorts to one last ploy to gain Jesus some sympathy with the crowd
 - Jesus is scourged

[John 19:1](#) Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.

[John 19:2](#) And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him;

[John 19:3](#) and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.

[John 19:4](#) Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

[John 19:5](#) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

- John gives a single sentence to Jesus' scourging, but the punishment was especially cruel
 - To quote Arnold Fruchtenbaum:

The Roman custom of scourging was one of the cruelest forms of torture. Forty lashes were swung against the victim. The whip itself contained numerous leather straps, which had glass and pieces of sharp metal fixed at the end that would lacerate the flesh. The scourging was not limited to the back but was applied over the whole body. The flesh would be torn away and bone would be exposed. Quite often the prisoners died just from the scourging alone. Isaiah 52:14 prophesied the Messiah's scourging. The prophet stated that Messiah's person was so marred, so disfigured, that He no longer resembled a man!

- This was not intended to lead to the cross
 - This was done merely to bloody Christ to the point that when He would be re-presented to the crowd, they would grant Jesus mercy
 - To make Jesus look more pathetic, Pilate put a crown of thorns on Jesus and Herod's robe, which Jesus was given when Herod interrogated Him
- The crown of thorns is especially significant, because of its connection to the Garden of Eden
 - After the sin in the Garden, God pronounced a curse on all flesh and creation itself

- That curse included the decree that the earth would produce thorns and weeds, making life a hard endeavor
 - Men would live under that curse until the day the Messiah removed it
 - Here we see the Messiah bearing the curse for our sakes, as picture by Him bearing a crown of thorns on His head
 - Finally, Jesus is further mocked and slapped and beaten by the soldiers
- Then, Pilate brought Jesus out expecting to sock the crowd and calm their desire for blood
 - He says I have found this man guilty of nothing
 - Across all the trials and interrogations, this is the fourth time Jesus has been declared innocent
 - Finally, Pilate says, "Behold the man!"
 - The statement meant look at how pathetic this man is
 - While let's the phrase stand as testimony to us of the extent God had to go in condemning sin and rescuing mankind

John 19

- In tonight's teaching, we conclude the trial before Pilate and go directly into the passion of Christ on the cross
 - We've reached the moment where Jesus is standing before Pilate
 - He's bloodied, beaten and whipped beyond recognition
 - Pilate is trying to release Jesus, since it's clear that Jesus has done nothing wrong
 - Yet the crowd below, egged on by the Pharisees, continues to insist that Jesus would be crucified
 - It's a scene reminiscent of times when crowds encourage a would-be suicidal teenager to jump from the ledge of a building
 - It's pure bloodlust
 - And it's evidence of the evil and darkness of their hearts
 - Knowing how the enemy has been actively working to bring about this outcome from the beginning suggests his excitement must have been at a fever pitch
 - Imagine Satan's anticipation at putting Christ to death
 - There must have been a legion of demons in and around that crowd working to bring about Christ's death
 - How maniacal, how crazed they must have looked and sounded
 - Which explains why Pilate is so perplexed by their determination to see Jesus killed
- In the end, however, we know it's the Father orchestrating these events, through the agency of Satan and sinful men
 - Therefore, the enemy may be doing what he believes is best, yet he's playing right into the Father's hands
 - So now we rejoin Pilate and Jesus as they stand before the crowd

[John 19:5](#) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

[John 19:6](#) So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

[John 19:7](#) The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

[John 19:8](#) Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid;

[John 19:9](#) and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

[John 19:10](#) So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

[John 19:11](#) Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

- At the emergence of Jesus before the crowd, the call was to crucify Him
 - Not even Jesus' horrifying appearance was enough to satisfy the crowd's demands for blood
 - This is further evidence of their dark hearts
 - And of the enemy's powerful influence in that moment
 - They have no rationale explanation for wanting Jesus dead
 - He hasn't harmed anyone, sinned against anyone
 - He hasn't broken any laws
 - He has healed, He has taught, He has raised people from the dead
 - And yet here they are calling for Him to die
- Pilate isn't a very sympathetic figure in this drama, nor should he be
 - He's a man easily manipulated, he's timid and in the end he allows an innocent man to be murdered
 - Nevertheless, we can at least say he does seem hesitant to agree with the crowd's requests
 - We see him working very hard to convince the crowd not to demand Jesus' death

- In fact, this scene in John 19 is the fourth time Pilate has attempted to offer to free Jesus before the crowd
- After his fourth attempt is rebuffed, Pilate responds to the crowd in disgust, saying that they should crucify Jesus themselves
 - It's an empty offer, because the Jews could not crucify Jesus on their own
 - Therefore, we know Pilate was merely speaking out of frustration that they wouldn't relent
- What's truly important in Pilate's words is found at the end of his statement
 - Pilate, by his own admission, found Jesus guilty of absolutely nothing
 - Jesus is an innocent man according to Pilate's judgment
 - Nevertheless, Pilate has not released Jesus as any judge should do when faced with an innocent man
 - Moreover, Pilate has beaten and abused his Prisoner to within an inch of His life even though he knows Jesus to be innocent of all charges
 - Pilate is undoubtedly culpable in Jesus' murder
- In response to Pilate's comment, the crowd responds that their Law requires Jesus die for He calls Himself the Son of God
 - The Jews were referring to the charge of blasphemy leveled against Jesus by the Sanhedrin
 - Under Jewish Law, anyone claiming to be Messiah but who was not must be put to death
 - Jesus has been accused of this crime, yet He has vindicated Himself throughout His three years of ministry
 - The people and the leaders saw the evidence that Jesus was Messiah
 - Nevertheless, men preferred the darkness
 - The crowd's statement rattle's Pilate's cage all the more, and now he's fearful

- I suspect his fear comes from hearing that Jesus might be a god
- Though John doesn't mention Pilate's wife, the other Gospels tell us that Pilate's wife experienced a powerful dream that night
- She was so disturbed by it, she relayed what she had dreamed to Pilate in the middle of these proceedings
- Her message had come to Pilate just as he was offering Jesus and Barabbas to the crowd
- Imagine what Pilate must have thought when he received a note from his wife telling her husband to steer clear of Jesus, for He was a righteous man
 - His wife couldn't have known that Pilate was involved in these proceedings
 - Even less could she have appreciated the decision Pilate was facing at that moment
 - He must have wondered greatly over that warning
- And now he hears that Jesus is claiming to be a god
 - The Romans were pagans and polytheistic
 - They accepted the idea of multiple gods ruling and competing with one another
 - So the idea that Jesus was a god meant something very different to Pilate than it would to the Jews
 - Ironically, Pilate shows more concern for Jesus' claims than do the Jews
- Pilate goes back inside, and asks Jesus where He was from?
 - Pilate knew Jesus was from Galilee, so His question is targeting a deeper issue
 - He's asking Jesus whether He originated in a spiritual world or earthly world
 - In a round about way, Pilate is trying to understand if Jesus is a god
 - Interestingly, Jesus refuses to answer this question

- Why is Jesus willing discuss other points with Pilate but not this one?
- Isaiah says:

**Is. 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.**

- Isaiah foretells that Jesus would be oppressed and afflicted in misery and injustice
- And yet He won't open His mouth
- We've seen Jesus speaking all along the way during His various trials, so what does Isaiah mean when he says that Jesus didn't open His mouth
 - He means that Jesus never undertook an effort to defend Himself
 - Isaiah means that Jesus went to the cross willingly
 - He made no effort to stop the mistreatment
 - He said nothing to exonerate Himself
 - Pilate's earlier questions didn't hold the potential to persuade Pilate to release Jesus
 - But now that Pilate is fearful and wondering if Jesus is divine, Jesus clams up
 - He won't do anything to undermine the process the Father has put in progress
 - Can we even begin to imagine what this was like for Jesus?
 - Knowing He was on the way to the cross
 - Having already been beaten to the point of disfigurement
 - Already in unimaginable pain
 - And He suffers these things while having the power to stop it
 - And now we see He must play along to ensure it proceeds

- Jesus was so innocent and underserving of this death that He has to work at not being let go
- So in v.10, Pilate grows frustrated as Jesus' lack of cooperation, and in amazement he asks Jesus if He knows that Pilate is His only hope
 - Jesus says that Pilate's authority over Him was power given to Pilate from the Father
 - Notice Jesus doesn't say Pilate has no power
 - Jesus says that power has been given with a purpose from God
 - In fact, Paul tells us in Romans that all government exists by God's hand
 - And then Jesus adds that since Pilate is working under an authority given to him by God, his sin is not as great as the one who delivered Jesus to Pilate
 - Notice here that Jesus doesn't say that Pilate has no sin in this matter
 - On the contrary, Jesus implies that Pilate is sinning in how he is treating Jesus
 - But there is a greater sin in this process
- This statement is one we could probably explore all evening, though we won't
 - First, this statement teaches that there are degrees of sin
 - Any sin is enough to separate us from God, but some sin is worse than others
 - If all sin is offensive to God, then in what way can one sin be worse?
 - The answer is in the punishment it requires
 - All sin puts men in Hell apart from the grace of God in Christ
 - But some places in Hell are worse than others, so it would seem
 - Secondly, Jesus offers Pilate some consolation that he won't be in the hottest part of Hell; that's been reserved for those who handed Jesus to Pilate

- Who is this “one” that will receive a worse punishment for handing Jesus over to Pilate?
- We might assume he means Judas, but Judas didn’t hand Jesus over to Pilate directly
- And the chain of custody was filled with men from the priests to Annas to Caiaphas to Herod who could be blamed for handing Jesus over
- Therefore, I personally believe Jesus was referring to Satan, who was the ultimate authority behind Jesus’ betrayal
 - Satan was inside Judas when Judas betrayed Jesus
 - Satan was working through the Jewish leaders
 - And now Satan is influencing Pilate
- So while Pilate claims to hold all the cards, he doesn’t realize that he is a puppet being made to dance by a puppet master
 - Not even a warning from his wife can move Pilate
 - If Pilate has power to kill Jesus, it’s only because God has chosen to use Pilate for that purpose
 - But the true power working in Pilate and the others has been Satan
 - And even Satan is a under the Father’s control
 - As John is showing, this is Jesus giving up His life for us
- Having gotten no where with Jesus, Pilate returns to trying to persuade the crowd

John 19:12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

John 19:13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

John 19:14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!”

[John 19:15](#) So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

[John 19:16](#) So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

- The crowd would not let relent, and finally they happened upon a charge Pilate couldn't ignore
 - It wasn't a charge against Jesus; it was a charge against Pilate
 - The crowd said that if Pilate didn't crucify Jesus, then the people would say that Pilate wasn't a friend of Caesar
 - They were threatening to turn Pilate in as a disloyal leader, which could be fatal for Pilate as well
 - So Pilate is finished fighting, and he sends an innocent Man to His death
 - He has only his own interests in mind, not the cause of justice
 - Pilate comes out before the people with Jesus in tow and seats himself in a judgment seat
 - This seat, called the bema seat in Greek, is the formal place for pronouncing sentence
 - The chair is placed on a place called "The Pavement," an area of pavement stones forming a courtyard outside the Antonia Fortress
 - This would have been a place well known in John's day, even after the temple was destroyed decades earlier
 - Giving this detail gave John's readers a point of reference to make these events all the more real
- As the sentence of crucifixion is pronounced, John gives an important time reference
 - It's the sixth hour on the day of preparation
 - The sixth hour in Roman time keeping would be 6:00 AM
 - Mark's Gospel records Jesus placed on the cross at the third hour, according a Judean method of counting from sunrise, which would be 9:00 AM

- So it seems three hours passed between the moment the sentence is pronounced and the moment Jesus is raised up on the cross
- The day of preparation refers to the day before a Sabbath
 - Jews used this day to prepare for the day to come when no work could be done
 - This reference has led many to conclude that this day was Friday, since the Sabbath comes on Saturday
- But there was a second Sabbath on this week
 - The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is also a Sabbath
 - That Feast immediately follows Passover
 - So the day after Passover is always a Sabbath no matter what day of the week it lands upon
- Why does John mention this hour at this moment?
 - I believe he does so to connects Jesus' death directly to the events of Passover
 - On the day of Passover, the sacrifice of the spotless lambs began at daybreak in the temple
 - Many thousands of lambs were sacrificed on this day in the temple, so the work began early
 - It will continue all day until the mid afternoon when the national lamb is sacrificed
 - Then the people retreat to their homes to eat their lambs before sundown
 - So Jesus' death takes place during the time between the sixth hour when He is sentenced to death until He dies on the cross at 3:00 PM
 - This is the same period of time for the slaying of the Passover lambs
 - John is clearly demonstrating Jesus as the Lamb of God
 - While the people of Israel were preoccupied with sacrificing their lambs, the Father was at work sacrificing His Lamb

- John's reference to the day of preparation also gives us an important clue to arriving at the day of Jesus' death
 - Let's review what we find in scripture concerning Jesus' death, working backwards
 - First, Luke and Matthew tell us that Jesus was raised before sunrise on the first day of the week

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

Luke 24:2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

Luke 24:3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

- The first day of the week in Jesus day was the same as it is for us today: Sunday
- Matthew says the women went to the tomb before dawn and yet it was empty
- So Jesus rose before sunrise on Sunday
- Secondly, Jesus told us how long He would be in the tomb

Matt. 12:40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Jesus says He will be present in the tomb on three successive periods of daylight and darkness
- Counting full twelve-hour periods of daylight or darkness is not necessarily
- Jews commonly counted any part of a day or night as equally the whole
- So Jesus will spend some part of three days and three nights in the grave
- So let's count backward to find the day Jesus entered the tomb
 - We start counting with Saturday night, since Jesus was resurrected before dawn on Sunday

- Then we continue backward with Saturday day, Friday night, Friday day, Thursday night, and Thursday day
- Jesus must have entered the tomb on Thursday daytime (prior to sunset)
- In doing so, Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights
- We find confirmation in several ways
 - First, if Passover was a Thursday, then Wednesday night was the start of Passover
 - This corresponds to the days Jesus spent in the city prior to His death
 - Jesus entered the city on a Sunday and spent four days teaching in the temple according to the Gospels
 - This period corresponds to the four-day period for inspection of the Passover Lamb required by the Law
 - Those days were Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
 - This fits with a Thursday crucifixion
 - Secondly, the Passover always happens on the 14th of Nisan, which is timed to correspond to a full moon
 - As we look at the astronomical calendar for the first century, there is only one Passover that fits the chronology of the Bible
 - Jesus was born no later than 4BC, since He was born in the days of Herod who died in 4BC
 - And He was crucified at the age of 33 according to John
 - So Jesus must have died no later than AD 28 (there is no year “0” so subtract 4 from 32)
 - In AD 28, Passover occurred on April 28th, which fell on a...Thursday
 - All the data points to a Thursday crucifixion and burial
 - This illustrates how church tradition can supersede biblical truth
 - Today, the vast majority of believers are taught that Jesus died on Friday, though the Bible teaches otherwise

- As Pilate releases Jesus, he asks if he should crucify the Jewish king, but the leaders reply they have no king but Caesar
 - They speak more truth than they can know
 - They do not accept the Messiah as king
 - And so they reject Jesus in favor of an earthly king
 - They would not accept God ruling over them
 - John makes clear that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as Lord, and they did so with malice
 - These decision carried consequences for the nation
 - Jesus declared in Luke 13

Luke 13:35 “Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

- Because of their rejection of Jesus, this generation of Israel is rejected by the Father
- And they will see their nation judged in AD 70 by the very same Romans who they manipulated to kill their Messiah
- At this point Pilate released Jesus to the Roman soldiers to be crucified
 - John doesn’t record Jesus’ second scourging, which preceded crucifixion
 - This was even more brutal than the 40 lashes Jesus experienced earlier
 - Many prisoners didn’t survive this torment to even make it to the cross
 - Crucifixion is perhaps the most cruel form of death invented
 - It’s designed to prolong immense suffering
 - Leon Morris describes the process this way:

"It was so brutal that no Roman citizen could be crucified without the sanction of the Emperor. Stripped naked and beaten to pulpy weakness . . . , the victim could hang in the hot sun for hours, even days. To breathe, it was necessary to push with the legs and pull with the arms to keep the chest cavity open and functioning. Terrible muscle spasms wracked the entire body; but since collapse meant asphyxiation, the strain went on and on. This is also why the sedecula [a piece of wood that served as a small seat in some cases] . . . prolonged life and agony: it partially supported the body's weight, and therefore encouraged the victim to fight on.

- John now moves to the events leading up to Jesus' death

[John 19:17](#) They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.

[John 19:18](#) There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

[John 19:19](#) Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

[John 19:20](#) Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek.

[John 19:21](#) So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'"

[John 19:22](#) Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

- Jesus went out carrying the cross to His crucifixion place
 - When John says Jesus went "out" he means outside the city
 - This fulfills scripture which says that Jesus would be crucified outside the gates
 - Referring to the scapegoat, Leviticus says

[Lev. 16:27](#) "But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp, and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire.

- The exact place of the skull, Golgotha, is debated
 - The name probably came from the frequency of executions in that place during the first century under Roman authority

- There is no indication from scripture that it was a hill or high point, though it was common for Romans to choose prominent places for executions
- The location from tradition is at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which is a site selected by Constantine's mother
- Her selection was based on reports of locals living in the region whom she met when visiting the city in AD 326
- A more modern suggestion north of the city wall is even less likely
- Then Jesus is nailed to the horizontal cross beam of the cross and hoisted up until it rested atop the vertical beam permanently fixed in the ground
 - On either side of Jesus were two thieves crucified for their crimes
 - It's interesting to consider that these two men were also subject to this horrible punishment for merely theft
 - And yet the threat of such punishment didn't stop them from thievery
 - It's an interesting irony that the same punishment Jesus endured wasn't enough to deter these common criminals from their thefts
 - Further proof that we needed God to provide a solution to put an end to the cycle of sin and death
 - Roman tradition required that above each condemned person's cross, an inscription is placed to identify the victim's crime
 - The purpose was to allow the convict's cruel death to serve as a deterrent to others
 - In this case, Pilate faced an interesting dilemma in what to write, since he himself declared Jesus was innocent of all crimes
 - So left with nothing else, Pilate wrote Jesus, King of the Jews in three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek
 - Hebrew for the Jews
 - Latin for the Roman soldiers and officials
 - Greek for the common man

- The truth of Jesus' claims are made known to the entire world
- Naturally, the Jewish leaders object to this inscription because Pilate worded it as a statement rather than as a claim
 - Pilate is unwilling to correct what he wrote
 - Here again we see the sovereignty of God at work through the agency of an unbeliever
 - Pilate may have had his own reasons for what he did
 - Perhaps he was showing Rome's superiority over Israel by exhibiting the Jewish King crucified
 - Nevertheless, it was clearly God's intent that this sign read in the way it did for His purposes
- As Jesus hangs on the cross, John's narrative gives attention to a number of details largely overlooked by the other Gospel writers

[John 19:23](#) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.

[John 19:24](#) So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

[John 19:25](#) Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

[John 19:26](#) When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

[John 19:27](#) Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

- First, we have the soldiers dividing up Jesus' clothes
 - It was tradition in Rome for the executioners to receive the condemned's clothing
 - The victim was always crucified entirely naked, which was intended to shame the person, so all clothing was taken from him

- In this case, Jesus' clothing consisted of five items, probably including foot wear, head covering and outer clothing
- The soldiers each claimed one of the items, leaving just the tunic
- A tunic is the undergarment, and it is usually sewn together from sections of woven fabric
 - In such a case, the soldiers would have torn the garment at the seams to each obtain a section of woven cloth
 - But Jesus' tunic was a single woven piece of material
 - So they gambled to decide who should receive the tunic
- John points out this moment to show how it fulfilled scripture taken from Psalm 22:18
 - In fact, I encourage you to read that Psalm
 - Psalm 22 is an amazing description of crucifixion from h perspective of the condemned
- It's interesting for two reasons
 - First, it's written centuries before crucifixion was ever practiced
 - Secondly, it's the only description that exists from someone who has experience the event, since it's always fatal
 - Only a God who controls the future and survives death could write such an account
- While the Romans cast lots, Jesus is attended to by a group of women
 - By consulting all four Gospels, we find that four women were present
 - John mentions Jesus' mother, Mary
 - Matthew, Mark and John mention Mary Magdalene
 - John mentions another Mary, the wife of Clopas
 - This seems to to be the same Mary, mother of James and Joseph mentioned by Matthew and Mark
 - And John mentions Mary's sister, Salome, who is the mother of Zebedee's sons, including the Apostle John

- Standing with these women was John, who remembered this scene for obvious reasons
 - To picture the scene, do not imagine Jesus lifted high above the people
 - More likely, Jesus' feet are less than a meter above the ground
 - It would have been possible for someone to touch Jesus body, though His head was probably out of reach
 - There was a great deal more intimacy between victim and the crowd in this moment than is often portrayed in movie scenes
- Jesus gathers His breath and tells John to take charge over Mary
 - This meant John would have responsibility to care for Mary after Jesus' death
 - Since John was Jesus' cousin on his mother's side, John was the natural person to take charge in this way
 - Jesus chose John over His natural brothers presumably because John and Mary were believing in Him while Jesus' earthly brothers were not at this time
 - That reminds us that from God's perspective, our relationships in the body of Christ take precedence over earthly relationships
 - As Jesus said:

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- Jesus hangs on the cross from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, a total of six hours
 - The number six is the number for sinful man, and as Paul said

2Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Jesus hangs on the cross and dies in the place of sinful humanity
- And even the division of six becomes important in this period

- The first three hours of the cross represent Jesus experiencing the curse of sin
 - Jesus was exposed to painful consequences in His body as sin requires
 - He was treated as a criminal
 - He was mocked
 - He made plans for His own death, which sin requires
 - In all these things Jesus suffered things that only come upon a person because of sin
 - Yet Jesus suffered them without cause, for He had no sin of His own
- The second three hours on the cross were a period in which Jesus experienced the wrath of God against sin
 - Though John does not record it, the other Gospel writers tell us that at noon, the world experienced three hours of intense darkness
 - The darkness enveloped the entire earth, according to Luke
 - Records from other ancient cultures reflect this moment, including Niogenes in Egypt, who wrote that the “solar darkness was such that either deity Himself suffered at that moment of sympathized with one who did.”
 - Other such records note the exact timing and length of a great darkness upon the earth
 - These are three hours of Jesus’ separation from the Father, a kind of spiritual death for Messiah
 - In the other Gospels, we see Jesus crying out to the Father asking My God why He had been forsaken, in fulfillment of Psalm 22:1
 - That cry reflects Jesus’ separation from the Father
 - At this moment, Jesus experienced spiritual death, which is the separation from an intimate relationship with the Father
 - In fact, this is the only time Jesus addresses the Father as “My God” to reflect that they lacked a relationship for this moment

- That was a moment the Godhead had never previously known
- And the depths of that experience we will – thankfully – never know ourselves, by the grace of God
- Jesus spiritual death preceded His physical death, just as Adam's spiritual death preceded his physical death
 - Spiritual death is the penalty for sin
 - While physical death is the consequence of the curse on the earth
 - As Paul taught

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned –

- Jesus died spiritually speaking at noon
 - He was forsaken by God as will be the case for all who die under the penalty of sin
 - Jesus died the second death in our place, so we will never experience that second death
 - We will never know separation from God
- But then because Jesus had no sin, the Father could also be just in restoring fellowship to His Son, which the Father does at 3:00 PM

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."

John 19:29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.

John 19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- Jesus said everything had been accomplished
 - In other words, the work of redemption was complete at this moment
 - Jesus's spiritual separation from the Father ended at this moment
 - Jesus was no longer subject to the wrath of God

- He endured it for three hours and it is now finished
- Notice then Jesus said He was thirsty
 - Remember the response by the rich man in Luke 16 when he found himself separated from God in the afterlife?

Luke 16:24 “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’

- His first request of Abraham was for a drink as well
- So it’s significant that following His time of spiritual separation, Jesus’ first request is for something to wet His mouth
- It’s also significant that scripture always presents God’s mercy and grace as water to quench thirst
- How desperately must the lost desire for that relief when under judgment?
- The drink Jesus receives is sour wine, or vinegar we would say today
 - The vinegar was a common drink
 - And receiving it fulfilled scripture, specifically Psalm 69:21
 - Once again, John includes this detail to stress Jesus as fulfillment of OT prophecy concerning the Messiah
- There was also a practical reason Jesus requested the vinegar
 - Jesus was about to say two very important phrases from the cross
 - And so if His mouth was so dry He couldn’t speak, then He needed the vinegar to wet His mouth
 - Those statements were the one recorded here and those of the other Gospels
 - In both cases, they reflect the end of a process by which the Creation was redeemed from sin and the curse

- So if Jesus' separation from the Father ended before Jesus' physical death, then why does Jesus die at all – much less spend three days in the grave?
 - To answer this, first notice *how* Jesus dies
 - In v.30 we're told that Jesus gave up His spirit
 - In other words, Jesus brought Himself to death
 - The cross didn't take Jesus' life
 - Jesus handed over His Spirit to the Father
 - No one took Jesus' life
 - He died voluntarily
 - In the other Gospels, Jesus is recorded as saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit"
 - Notice once again, Jesus is calling God His Father, indicating that the spiritual separation has ended
 - Since Jesus had no sin of His own, He would have never died no matter how long He hung on the cross
 - Physical death is a product of the curse
 - Yet Jesus was not under the curse of God
 - But He bore the curse for our sakes
 - So Jesus' physical death was of His own accord, to take our place in receiving the curse for sin, though He had no sin of His own
- Secondly, Jesus' time in the grave was not a period of punishment or restitution in which He took our place in Hell
 - Some assume that Jesus was tormented in Hell in our place for three days
 - But this is not the teaching of scripture
 - First, Jesus' atoning work was finished on the cross, as Jesus declares in v.30
 - The Greek word here (tetelestai) is often found marked on invoices from that period, meaning an account is paid in full

- Secondly, if Jesus were to take our place in Hell, He would need to remain there for an eternity, since that would be our sentence
 - Third, scripture says that the wrath of God was satisfied in the death of Christ alone, which occurred on the cross

Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- Fourth, scripture never says Jesus experienced any torment while in the grave
- In fact, Jesus was spared from the misery of Sheol

Psa. 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.

Psa. 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

- Instead, Jesus time in the grave was intended to accomplish two things
 - First, the three days proved He truly died
 - So that at His resurrection His power over death would be evident
 - Secondly, Jesus preached to the souls in Sheol, and set free the saints held captive and awaiting the Messiah's atonement
 - Paul and Peter teach these truths in Eph 4 and 1Pet 3
- Therefore, as John says the process of atoning for sin was finished at the moment of Jesus' earthly death
 - He had experienced three hours of separation from the Father and now He suffered the penalty of the curse in our place
 - These things were sufficient to atone because the Father's wrath was appeased by them
 - Christ's death was the propitiation for our sins
 - Now the burial must take place in haste

[John 19:31](#) Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

[John 19:32](#) So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him;

[John 19:33](#) but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

[John 19:34](#) But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

[John 19:35](#) And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

[John 19:36](#) For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."

[John 19:37](#) And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

- Once again, John mentions that this is a day of preparation prior to the Sabbath that marks the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (notice John says this Sabbath is a High Day, meaning a feast Sabbath, not the Saturday Sabbath)
 - It was not considered proper to allow a body to hang on the cross over a Sabbath
 - So the Jewish authorities want to rush this process along so they may bury the bodies before sundown
 - Therefore, they request of Pilate that the legs of the prisoners be broken to hasten death
 - Without their legs to help them push up, they wouldn't be able to breath, so death would come quickly
 - Pilate evidently agrees, and the soldiers are directed to break the legs of all three prisoners
 - This was typically done by means of a large iron bar which the soldiers swung at the shin
 - As the bones broke, the person lost their ability to push against the nails in their feet
 - The two thieves saw their legs broken first, which resulted in Jesus' words to the repentant thief coming true
 - He found himself in paradise with Jesus that very day

- But John says in v.33 that as they come to Jesus, they find He has already died and therefore it was unnecessary to break Jesus' legs
 - Just to be sure Jesus was dead, a soldier pierces Jesus' side with a sword
 - Out comes blood and water John says
 - Various explanations exist for what John saw, including the escape of natural bodily fluids that resemble water
- The importance though is not physical but in the picture it creates concerning the meaning of Christ's death
 - As John repeats in 1John 5, our Savior saves us by means of blood and water
 - Notice in v.35 John speaks of himself in the third person saying he testified to these things and his testimony is true
 - Later, John echoes this thought explaining that these events all testify to Jesus as the sacrifice for our sin

1John 5:6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

1John 5:7 For there are three that testify:

1John 5:8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

- This scene is also recorded to demonstrate fulfillment of other OT scriptures
 - Specifically, Jesus' death without broken bones completes the picture of the Passover lamb, that was to be killed without breaking any bones
 - And it fulfills Zechariah 12 which says the Jewish people pierced their Messiah
- Lastly, John covers the burial of Jesus

John 19:38 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body.

John 19:39 Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

[John 19:40](#) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

[John 19:41](#) Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

[John 19:42](#) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

- With Jesus confirmed dead and the Sabbath fast approaching at sundown, something must be done to Jesus' body
 - At this point, two secret followers of Jesus come forward to claim the body and bury Him
 - This was incredibly risky
 - Notice that none of the eleven apostles come forward for the body
 - They probably feared that anyone who would publicly identify themselves with Jesus would share His fate
 - The first follower is Joseph of Arimathaea
 - From all the Gospels we learn that he was a righteous and good man who was wealthy and was a believing Jew
 - He comes from Arimethaea, a town about 21 miles northwest from Jerusalem
 - This is the same city where Samuel the prophet lived and was buried
 - A legend grew up in the church that Joseph later became an evangelist traveling to England, founding the first Christian church outside Judea in Glastenbury and is buried there
 - Joseph was also a member of the Sanhedrin along with Nicodemus
 - But scripture also says that neither of them were present at the moment the Sanhedrin voted for Jesus' execution
 - They were probably trying to hide their allegiance at that time
- But now they act boldly, stepping forward, probably at the loss of their careers to publicly identify themselves with Jesus

- These men claim the body, bound it up in strips of linen and spices hastily
 - And then they placed the body in a new tomb, one presumably constructed for Joseph's eventual burial
 - It was available and it was nearby, which were both important considerations since time was of the essence
- Joseph made a significant sacrifice in burying Christ
 - The tomb he had constructed was hewn out of rock
 - This was an expensive kind of burial that only the wealthy could afford the labor to build
 - The cost would have been close to the price of a small home
 - Yet Joseph willingly gave up that wealth for his Lord
- Joseph was fulfilling scripture by his obedience

**Is. 53:9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**

- Interestingly, Joseph saw that wealth returned to him when Jesus was resurrected
- His tomb could be reused
- Next week we look at the resurrection and appearance of Jesus as we conclude our study...

John 20

- The dark period of Jesus' death and burial is coming to an end
 - And in keeping with John's light-dark motif, chapter 20 opens with a new day dawning and Christ risen
 - So tonight we examine the resurrection of Christ
 - And His appearances to the disciples in the days and weeks after His resurrection

[John 20:1](#) Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

[John 20:2](#) So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

[John 20:3](#) So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

[John 20:4](#) The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;

[John 20:5](#) and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

[John 20:6](#) And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there,

[John 20:7](#) and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

[John 20:8](#) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.

[John 20:9](#) For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

[John 20:10](#) So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

- On the first day of the week, two groups of women arrived at the tomb of Jesus
 - John mentions Mary Magdalene arriving first, but the other Gospel writers mention other women
 - Beside Magdalene, we find Mary, the mother of James
 - And Salome, Mary's sister and John's mother

- Mary the mother of James is the same Mary who gave birth to Jesus, yet we notice that she is not identified as the “mother” of Jesus
 - The overemphasis of Mary as the mother of Jesus came much later as a result of teaching from the Catholic Church
 - But in the early church, Mary was no more special than any other disciple
 - As Jesus Himself said concerning Mary

[Luke 11:27](#) While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.”

[Luke 11:28](#) But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

- Jesus specifically contradicts the notion that the woman God selected to bear Jesus was blessed merely by that act
- On the contrary, He says you are blessed to hear and observe the word of God
- So John lists Mary as merely the mother of James, who was the half brother of Jesus
 - By the way, James also refused to identify himself as the earthly brother of the Lord in his letter
 - Once Jesus’ deity was understood, no disciple dared to claim a privileged relationship to God other than the one we all know by faith alone
- Luke also says there were also other women present but unnamed in the text
 - Interestingly, no man goes to the tomb
 - While we can make much of this detail, the truth is it wasn’t unusual for women to go alone
 - Women typically attended to the dead
 - And since Jesus’ body was prepared in haste on Thursday, they returned as soon as possible to anoint Him for a proper burial

- The women go out to the tomb on the first day of the week, which is Sunday
 - In Jewish reckoning of time, Sunday begins on sundown on Saturday nightfall, counted from the moment that three stars are visible in the night sky
 - The women have been prevented from visiting the tomb since Jesus' burial on Thursday because of back-to-back Sabbaths on Friday and Saturday
 - A Sabbath prevented a person from traveling more than short distances or from attending to a corpse
 - Since to do these things so would be considered work
 - So they waited in their homes for the Sabbaths to end
 - Once the sun set on Saturday, they were free to visit the tomb, but visiting a tomb in the middle of the night was not practical nor safe
 - So, John says Mary Magdalene left for the tomb early while it was still dark
 - And the Synoptic Gospels all say that Mary and the other women arrived at the tomb as it began to dawn
 - Dawn in Jewish reckoning refers to the moment light appears on the horizon before the sun appears
 - This is still part of the "night" but the day is about to begin
 - So the women timed their departure so that they could arrive at the tomb as soon as light began to appear in the sky
 - In Israel, dawn can begin as early as 4:00 AM with a clear sky
- It's interesting to consider what the women were planning to do once they arrived
 - In fact, in Mark's Gospel, they are quoted as wondering who will help them move the stone
 - The stone rolled over the entrance would have been much too heavy for them to move
 - Nevertheless, they went anyway
 - We could explain their thinking as hope against hope

- They didn't have a plan
- As the scene plays out, we can tell they were not expecting to see the Lord resurrected...no one was
- Which makes their dedication all the more remarkable
- They just had a desperate desire to minister to the Lord
- These women give us an example of the opportunities that obedience and dedication to the Lord can create
 - When we follow the Lord in spite of fear or uncertainty or the seeming impossibility of what lies ahead, we give the Lord opportunity to show us miracles
 - These women went expecting to encounter great barriers they couldn't cross
 - But they went nonetheless, trusting that the Lord would provide
 - Consequently, they were privileged to become witnesses to the greatest miracle of all
- According to John, Mary Magdalene went on her own, before the other women, and much to her surprise the stone was already rolled away
 - The stone was actually a large disc, like a wheel, cut from rock
 - It ran in a groove cut into the ground
 - It could be pushed back and forth to open or close the entrance to the tomb
 - But it would require several strong men and a fulcrum to accomplish the task
 - Matthew tells us that angels opened the tomb, and at their appearance the soldiers guarding the tomb lay stiff with fear
 - John says Magdalene left at once to report what she had seen
 - Mary never ventures inside the tomb
 - She assumes that the body of the Lord was stolen overnight
 - So she runs back to report to the apostles

- While Mary Magdalene is returning to the city, the second group of women arrive at the tomb and also see the stone moved
 - According to the other Gospel writers, these women investigate further and happen upon one of the angels in the tomb
 - This angel explains the circumstances to these women
 - The angel gives instructions to the women to return to the eleven disciples in the city
 - And they are to report that Jesus is arisen and that He will meet with the disciples in the Galilee
 - Eventually, all the women meet up with the disciples to give their reports
 - So these women return with this good news
 - According to the Gospels, the women's reports agree that Jesus' tomb is empty
 - Yet the disciples can't accept their reports, perhaps because they were women
 - Women weren't considered trustworthy witnesses
- So Peter and John run back to the tomb to see for themselves
 - John says he arrived first (highlighting he can run faster than Peter)
 - John doesn't enter at first
 - He merely witnessed the linen wrappings through the entrance
 - Peter entered the tomb and found only the body coverings used to prepare the Lord's body for burial
 - The description of the wrappings indicate they were not unwound as was done to free Lazarus after he was revived
 - Instead, the Lord resurrected through His wrappings
 - So clearly the Lord's resurrected state is one where His body is not bound by physics in the same way that it was before
 - As we'll see later in this chapter

- The resurrection of Christ consisted of the return of Jesus' Spirit to His physical body and a restoration of life to that same physical body
 - Jesus was all man even as He was all God
 - He had a sinless body and He was one in His spirit with the Father
 - When His body died, it was no less dead than when you and I suffer death
 - But that's where the similarities end
 - Jesus body didn't decay, even in the slightest

**Psa. 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

- It was dead but never deteriorated
- Because the deterioration process itself was something God instituted as a result of sin
- The curse on creation was the result of Adam's sin

**Gen. 3:19 By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return."**

- Since Jesus didn't share in Adam's sin, He didn't live under the curse
- So though He was dead, the body was not decaying back to dust
- What caused Jesus's body to die at all?
 - As we discussed last week, it was that His Spirit leaving His body
 - In Luke 23:46, Jesus says He committed His Spirit into the Father's hand
 - And remember the statement Jesus spoke earlier in John's Gospel

[John 10:17](#) "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

[John 10:18](#) "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

- When Jesus spoke these words, He was describing the timing and manner of His own death
- So Jesus' body sat in the tomb without decay while His Spirit spent three days in the depths of the Earth greeting the OT saints and preaching to the souls held under judgment
 - Jesus' Spirit spends three days separated from His body
 - During the third evening, Jesus was resurrected
 - The resurrection of the body is the moment when His Spirit returned and the body returned to life
 - Jesus' physical container (i.e., His body) was a suitable container for His spirit to return to the same body because it was not corrupted by sin
 - Resurrection must be different for you and I
 - Our spirit will must be resurrected into an entirely new body, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15
 - Our present physical bodies are corrupted by sin and under the curse of the Garden
 - The curse requires that our bodies must decay and return to dust
 - Therefore, God will resurrect us into new bodies, which takes place at the Rapture
- After Peter and John see the tomb empty, they return to their homes in the city
 - These disciples have seen evidence that the Lord had risen as promised
 - More over, they heard the testimony of the women who saw the angels
 - Their testimony included instructions from Jesus to leave Jerusalem and return to the Galilee where Jesus would meet them

- And that testimony confirmed Jesus' earlier instructions recorded in Mark 14 to meet Jesus in Galilee after He was raised
- Despite all these signs and instructions, the eleven refuse to accept that Jesus is alive again
 - So now begins a series of appearance of Jesus intended to provoke belief and obedience in these men
 - And appropriately, Jesus begins to work through the faithful women who have attended to Him throughout

[John 20:11](#) But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;

[John 20:12](#) and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.

[John 20:13](#) And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

[John 20:14](#) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.

[John 20:15](#) Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

[John 20:16](#) Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

[John 20:17](#) Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"

[John 20:18](#) Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

- After the meeting with the eleven, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb
 - In her grief, she's seeking a place to mourn, and the empty tomb was as good a place as any
 - This time Mary enters the tomb and Mary sees the angels still sitting in the tomb
 - It's like the Lord is holding an open house at Jesus' tomb, and these two angels were assigned to receive visitors
 - Apparently, Mary is unaware that these two were angels, seeing only two young men

- When they asked Mary why she weeps, she says she's looking for the Lord's body
- Before they can answer, the Lord appears behind her
- This is the first recorded appearance of the resurrected Jesus to anyone
- The fact that the first eye witness to Jesus' resurrection was a woman argues for the authenticity of the Gospel accounts
 - A woman would have been an unlikely choice for first witness of Christ's resurrection if the Gospel accounts were fraudulent records intended to prop up a lie
 - Using a woman as your witness in that day and culture made your story less believable
 - The author would only include such a detail if it were truly the way it happened
 - The Lord uses supposedly foolish things to shame the wise
 - As with the angels, Mary doesn't recognize Jesus at first and thinks he's just the man who attended to the garden
 - Only after she asks Him a question and He answers does she recognize this to be Jesus
 - When Jesus calls her name, she indicates she recognizes Jesus as Rabbi
 - The fact that Mary (and others) don't immediately recognize Jesus tells us something about His post resurrection appearance
 - We must assume that Jesus appears different in some way
 - Arnold Fruchtenbaum suggests this could be like two friends who haven't seen one another for decades and then meet again
 - At first, they don't recognize each other but after a moment, the recognition dawns on them
 - In that case, age accounts for the change in appearance
 - In this case, Jesus' resurrection must have produced physical changes in His body leaving Him to appear differently

- At this point, Mary attempted to embrace Jesus, which would have been a natural response to seeing Him, but Jesus forbid it
 - In my English translation, it says stop clinging to me, but that's not the accurate translation
 - In Greek, Jesus actually says "Touch me not"
 - So Mary was never allowed to touch Jesus
 - The reason Jesus forbids Mary to touch Him is because He has not yet ascended to the Father
 - Jesus is speaking about His ascension to cleanse the tabernacle In Heaven
 - In Hebrews we're told Jesus cleansed the tabernacle with His blood as part of His atoning work on the cross
 - The Jewish tabernacle on earth is patterned after this one in Heaven
 - It's in this Heavenly tabernacle that the first sin in all Creation occurred
 - Ezekiel describes this first sin

Ezek. 28:12 | "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezek. 28:13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.

[Ezek. 28:14](#) "You were the anointed cherub who covers,
 And I placed you there.
 You were on the holy mountain of God;
 You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:15](#) "You were blameless in your ways
 From the day you were created
 Until unrighteousness was found in you.

[Ezek. 28:16](#) "By the abundance of your trade
 You were internally filled with violence,
 And you sinned;
 Therefore I have cast you as profane
 From the mountain of God.
 And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
 From the midst of the stones of fire.

- The first sin was committed by Satan, who was the covering cherub
 - Remember that the covering cherubs of the earthly tabernacle were cast in gold and stood above the mercy seat
 - But this design is patterned after the Heavenly tabernacle, where real cherubs guarded the mercy seat
 - Satan was the chief cherub
 - When he fell, he brought sin into the holy of holies
- Therefore, it took Christ's blood to cleanse that place
 - In the Law, the High Priest went in once a year to cleanse the tabernacle in this way
 - And on that day, no one was allowed to touch the High Priest until he had completed that work
 - The annual cleansing process by the high priest in the Jewish tabernacle pictured the higher cleansing that would come through Christ
- So here Jesus tells Mary she is not permitted to touch Jesus, Who is our High Priest, because He had yet to ascend to the Father and complete His atoning work
 - We conclude that some time after this moment, Jesus ascended and brought His own physical blood into the tabernacle

- Notice, Jesus tells Mary to report back to the brethren that Jesus ascends to the Father
- Only after completing this work in the Heavenly tabernacle, Jesus returns to make further appearances with to the Disciples
- And in those later visits, the disciples are permitted to touch Jesus, as Thomas does eight days after Jesus' resurrection
- Now Mary returns to the disciples a second time, declaring that she has personally seen the risen Lord and telling them to meet Him in Galilee
 - John doesn't record the disciples' response to Mary, but according to Mark, the disciples flatly rejecting Mary's testimony
 - Once again, they are not accepting the possibility of Jesus' resurrection
 - And once again they disobey the Lord's instructions to leave the city and go to Galilee
 - At this point, John jumps to Jesus' final appearance in Jerusalem
 - But the other Gospels record several more appearances by Jesus, all in an effort to convince the disciples to believe
 - First, in Matthew 28 we're told that the other group of women encounter the risen Lord
 - In this encounter, they took hold of His feet and worshipped Him and Jesus says:

[Matt. 28:10](#) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me."

- Once again, Jesus' focus is on getting the disciples to believe in these reports and move to Galilee
- Secondly, Jesus appears to two disciples leaving the city on the road to Emmaus
 - These two men aren't part of the eleven, since Luke names one of them as Cleopas
 - In the course of that encounter, Jesus scolded these men for not believing that He was resurrected

- After these men recognized Jesus, they returned to report seeing Jesus to the eleven
- But Mark 16 says the eleven didn't believe the report of these two witnesses either
- Why do we suppose the Lord is working so hard to convince the eleven that He has truly risen through other witnesses?
 - He's giving these men a memorable lesson in how difficult it can be to convince others of the truth of Jesus resurrection – even when the one testifying is an eye witness
 - The eleven will be eye witnesses of the resurrection as well
 - And they will have a formidable task of convincing the world that their story is true
 - Even though they are eye witnesses, that experience in and of itself will not be convincing
 - The only thing that convinces a person that Jesus is Lord is the word of God
 - As Paul says:

1Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- As these spread the Gospel to others, they might have been tempted to rely on the power of their personal testimonies
 - They needed to think back to these moments to understand that even powerful eye witness accounts aren't a substitute for the power of God's word
 - That's why these men author the New Testament, which brings salvation by the power of God's word
- So, having refused to believe multiple reports, the Lord appears before the eleven, beginning with Peter
 - Once again, John doesn't cover this appearance in his Gospel
 - But Luke reports (and Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians 15) that the Lord appeared to Peter individually before the others

- Luke reports that the appearance to Peter happened at about the same time as the appearance to the disciples on the road
- In fact, Luke says that the two disciples returned from Emmaus found the eleven already discussing Peter's encounter with the Lord (Luke 24:33-34)
- Nevertheless, not even Peter's testimony will convince the other ten
- We know nothing more about Peter's appearing
 - But the fact that Jesus chose to appear to Peter before the others reminds us Peter was the leader Jesus appointed for the early church
 - But before he could lead, Peter needed to be restored in his position, both before God and before men
 - Jesus told Peter he would deny Him at the Passover meal, but later Jesus promised he would be restored

[Luke 22:31](#) "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; [Luke 22:32](#) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

- Jesus' personal appearance before Peter was a part of that restoration process
- The Lord willingness to appear privately to Peter reassured the apostle that the Lord still approved of Peter despite his denials
- And Jesus' decision to appear to Peter before the others cemented Peter's role as leader in the church
- I wonder if Peter's testimony of Jesus' private appearing was unconvincing to the rest of the eleven because the whole story seemed too convenient
 - How convenient that the one who denied Christ publicly should have a private audience with Christ, where he was assured that he would still lead the early church
 - Whatever the reason, Peter couldn't convince them, so another visit by Jesus is needed
- Sometime after Peter's encounter, the eleven were still locked in a room in Jerusalem fearful of the authorities

- In fact, we can see the wisdom of Jesus instructing the men to leave for the Galilee
 - These men are so afraid, they won't leave the house
 - How can they do anyone any good while remaining locked up?
 - Ironically, they don't go to Galilee *because* their fear leaves them unwilling to believe they will find Jesus waiting for them there
 - Despite seeing an empty tomb, seeing the bandages, hearing reports of angels and eye witnesses telling them of Jesus' appearances, nevertheless they refuse to accept His resurrection
- Because of the hardness of their hearts, Jesus makes a personal appearance before these men

[John 20:19](#) So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:20](#) And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

- So late on Sunday afternoon, still the same day as Jesus' resurrection, Jesus makes a fifth appearance to ten of the eleven men (Thomas isn't there)
 - Despite the door being locked, Jesus appears in the room, demonstrating that Jesus' resurrected body is different
 - And His first greeting is peace be with you, a greeting the disciples repeated commonly in their letters
 - He is calming them in a moment when they must have been shocked
 - In Luke's Gospel, we're told that the group was terrified and didn't believe it was Jesus at first
 - They thought it was spirit, as in a ghost or apparition
 - Despite Jesus standing there in the flesh, they can't accept the notion that a man might live again
 - Their collective response to Jesus' appearance demonstrated the problem
 - These men were bound by what they could accept in nature

- They weren't willing to consider God's supernatural power to transcend flesh, time and space
- John's narrative picks up with Jesus showing His body marking to these men
 - John then says the disciples rejoiced, but it wasn't that easy
 - In Luke's Gospel we learn that Jesus had to go a step further to convince them
 - He asked for a piece of fish to eat in front of them
 - They needed proof that He was really alive, not merely some vision
 - The fact that Jesus' body still bore the markings of the crucifixion at this point prove that the torture of the cross didn't take Jesus' life
 - For otherwise, how could we explain how His body could live on again with the same holes in his hands, feet and side?
 - I also wonder if the holes in Jesus body might have been the means by which He poured out His blood in the tabernacle?
 - In Israel, the high priest drained blood from the animal sacrifice at the altar
 - And then a bowl of that blood was carried into the Holy of Holies where it was sprinkled on the mercy seat
 - Perhaps Jesus performed that work in a similar manner, using His physical body as the source of that blood
- John's portrayal shows the extent to which Jesus had to go to bring these men to the point of acceptance
 - According to Mark's Gospel, this encounter was also the moment for Jesus' strongest rebuke in all the Gospel accounts
 - According to Mark, Jesus said:

Mark 16:14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

- This was exactly the problem...these men were hard-hearted

- Hard-heartedness in the Bible refers to the difficulty with which a person will accept spiritual truth
 - Unbelievers are by nature hard-hearted, until the Lord should choose to open that heart to the truth
 - They will repeatedly reject the truth of the Gospel because they are spiritually dead and unable to consider the message as truth
- But believers can also become hard-hearted
 - Pride, arrogance, stubbornness, anger, bitterness, apathy, laziness and the like can conspire to block spiritual truth from reaching a believer's heart
 - Bible teachers and pastor routinely encounter believers who had shut down to new truth
 - They only seem interested in hearing someone affirm what they already believe and will argue against anything different
 - The only way to penetrate that kind of hardness is by the sword of the Spirit, that is the word, cutting into the soul
- That's why it's a policy of VBVM (and my personal policy) never to engage in debates over the meaning of scripture
 - We strive to present an honest, accurate view, well-supported by the text of scripture
 - At the same time, we know we err occasional in our interpretation, as every teacher and ministry will at times
 - Therefore, we remain open to critique and consider all feedback carefully in light of scripture
 - We gladly answers sincere questions and explain our reasoning from scripture
 - But we never debate those who have unteachable, hard hearts
 - We teach those who have ears to hear and remain open to what God is prepared to deliver by His word
 - We trust in the Lord to open closed hearts

[John 20:21](#) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

[John 20:22](#) And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

[John 20:23](#) "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

- Having rebuked the disciples, Jesus then reiterates He is at peace with them
 - Jesus may not have been happy with their unbelief, but this doesn't mean they risk losing their peace with God
 - They have been saved by God's grace
 - So they will forever be at peace with God
 - Therefore, they still have a mission waiting
 - As the Father sent Jesus into the world, so He sends them
 - So let's ask *how* did the Father send Jesus?
 - Jesus was sent with a message of truth and with power to validate the message...but He was met by a skeptical and hostile audience
 - So it will be for the apostles
 - Their message is Christ's message, that of the Kingdom
 - And these men will possess Christ's miraculous powers by the Spirit to validate their message and authority
 - And like Christ, many of those who hear their message will doubt, disbelieve and react in anger
 - But these men can't fulfill that mission until they're willing to face the dangers that serving the Lord requires
 - Men prefer the darkness because the light reveals their evil deeds
 - Still, you can't be used by God to invade spiritual darkness if you're afraid to walk into the shadows

- At this point Jesus does something curious: He breathes on the ten men and declares they should receive the Holy Spirit
 - Was this the moment the men received the indwelling of the Spirit?
 - On the contrary, we can know this can't be the moment they received the Spirit for two reasons
 - First, these same men received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as described in Acts 2
 - If they had already possessed the indwelling of the Spirit here, then an additional indwelling would not have been needed
 - Secondly, any indwelling of the Spirit prior to Pentecost would violate the purpose of the Feast
 - Pentecost of Acts 2 was the fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost
 - The Jewish feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks commemorates the giving of the Law to Israel at Sinai
 - That law was written on stone and it was given to Israel 50 days after the Passover escape from Egypt
 - This feast pictures the giving of the Spirit to God's people
 - Exactly 50 days after Christ fulfills the Passover in His body, the Lord delivers a law to His people, a law written on their hearts
 - This law comes by way of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost
 - Just as Jesus had to die exactly on the day of Passover to fulfill that feast as God intended, so must the indwelling of the Spirit happen on the proper feast day
 - Therefore, the Spirit couldn't have come to the disciples in this moment of John 20...it had to wait for the Pentecost moment as it did for all believers
- Then what is happening here when Jesus breathes on them?
 - It helps to remember that the word for breath in Hebrew is the same word used at times for spirit
 - So breath or air can be used as a picture of the Spirit

- Just as Jesus used wind as a symbol for the Spirit in John 3
- Therefore, Jesus uses this gesture to promise things to come
- As Jesus commissions these men to take His place, He uses His breath as a symbolic gesture of the arrival of the Spirit, Who will empower them for that mission
 - The Spirit's arrival at Pentecost will fulfill this promise
 - And the disciples will remember that the Spirit was sent by the Son as like His breath
- Lastly, the Lord designates these men with the apostolic authority to bring men to salvation just as Jesus did by His personal ministry
 - Jesus gives a conditional command
 - If you forgive someone...they will be forgiven
 - We know that the power to forgive sins is God's alone and it comes based solely on belief in the Gospel

[Luke 5:20](#) Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

[Luke 5:21](#) The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

[Luke 5:22](#) But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

[Luke 5:23](#) "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"

[Luke 5:24](#) "But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," – He said to the paralytic – "I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home."

- So Jesus didn't say these men will *decide* who will be forgiven by God
 - Jesus is saying that the outcome of their ministry determines who are saved from those who are not
 - These men will use the same basis for determining forgiveness as did Jesus: belief in the Gospel
 - So to paraphrase Jesus, He said, "when you preach the Gospel and someone receives it, you can assure the person that God has forgiven their because of their faith..."

- “Likewise, when someone rejects the Gospel, you can assure them that they remain in their sins”
- This statement may seem obvious to us now, but it’s only became obvious after watching it work over centuries of evangelism
 - At the beginning of the Church, these men would have had little reason to understand that they possessed the power to bring salvation to other men
 - Until this point, they had only witnessed Jesus declaring that someone’s sins were forgiven
 - It would be easy to think that unless Jesus personally declared someone forgiven, no one could have that assurance
 - These men were to become instruments of God’s salvation and judgment working in Jesus’ absence
 - Paul says the same thing in Romans

[Rom. 1:16](#) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Rom. 1:17](#) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

- God’s salvation is revealed from faith to faith
 - As a person demonstrates faith in the message of the Gospel, they reveal God’s power to save
 - Their faith is proof of God’s work in their heart
 - And Jesus is explaining to His apostles that the citizens of the Kingdom will be found through them by this manner
 - Just as God multiplied the population of earth through a command for men to procreate, so now He reveals He will grow the Church through a command to men to preach the Gospel

[John 20:24](#) But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

[John 20:25](#) So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

[John 20:26](#) After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

[John 20:27](#) Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

[John 20:28](#) Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

[John 20:29](#) Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

[John 20:30](#) Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

[John 20:31](#) but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

- As I mentioned earlier, only ten of the eleven men were present in the first appearance of Christ, leaving Thomas still without that opportunity to see Christ
 - Thomas' hesitation to believe has long been held against him
 - We still have the saying "doubting Thomas" as a result of this scene
 - But to be honest, Thomas gets a bad rap here
 - All the disciples were equally doubting
 - Thomas was just the last man to see the proof he required
 - Thomas hears the reports of the others but demands to see it himself
 - This goes on for seven more days
 - Imagine the frustration of the ten trying for a whole week to convince Thomas that Jesus was raised
 - If ten apostles can't convince another apostle that Jesus has been resurrected, how hard will it be for them to convince others?

- On the eighth day, Jesus returns to the eleven when Thomas was present
 - Jesus grants Thomas the same opportunity to inspect His resurrected body
 - This experience convinces Thomas that Jesus is in fact God
 - To which Jesus says if seeing convinced you, how blessed are those who will be convinced seeing?
 - The blessing Jesus is describing is the blessing of God's grace poured out on people like you and me who have been granted eyes to see and ears to hear by faith
 - It's an eternal blessing that God opened our hearts and showed us the truth of Jesus as Lord
 - This is the only way anyone truly believes
 - So although these men ultimately became convinced by Christ's appearance, Jesus is saying this won't be the usual method
 - Jesus doesn't intend to make personal appearances
 - In fact, after He ascends to the Father, He will not appear again until He returns for the Church at the Rapture
 - In the meantime, we are blessed to receive the gift of faith by which we are saved
- With that, John essentially ends His Gospel
 - He explains there was much more He could say, but he's provided enough for his readers to know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God
 - And by believing in His name, we might have eternal life
 - This is the point of the Gospel John wrote and he feels he has accomplished his purpose
 - Then why do we have chapter 21?
 - John writes it as a footnote, a conclusion to show that these men eventually obeyed His instructions to leave the city
 - Also, John will combine many of the themes and storylines from the rest of His Gospel...can you find them all?

John 21

[John 21:1](#) After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way.

[John 21:2](#) Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

[John 21:3](#) Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

[John 21:4](#) But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

[John 21:5](#) So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No."

[John 21:6](#) And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

[John 21:7](#) Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.

[John 21:8](#) But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

- John calls the sea of Galilee the sea of Tiberias, which was it's Roman name and probably the more familiar name to John's Gentile readers
 - One day Peter decides to go fishing, and since many of the apostles were fishermen, six more decided to join Peter
 - It appears this is more than merely recreation
 - They appear to have returned to practicing their old profession
 - It would seem they lack an appreciation for their new commission nor are they eager to get started
 - Knowing how much the apostles did to spread the early church, it's remarkable to think they were dragging their feet at first
 - It seems that without this visit by Christ, they might never had started to preach and care for the saints
 - Of course, we know that wasn't going to satisfy Christ

- So He appears to make sure they stick the plan
- And the plan is to continue the work that Jesus began
- This is a reminder that we are all ambassadors and witnesses to Christ, though some of us are called into greater degrees of service
 - We are just here on earth killing time for the Kingdom
 - We aren't supposed to set our sights on grand earthly achievement
 - Or excessive wealth
 - Or even security and tranquility
 - We all like those things, but pursuing them runs counter to pursuing our mission to serve Christ on earth
 - We live here to present the Lord to a lost and dying world perishing in their sin
 - We only have a limited time to serve Him
 - So everyday counts
 - Jesus pulled these men away from their nets three years ago for good reason
 - But now they seem to have settled for the old life
- Thank the Lord that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, so Jesus wasn't going to let them become satisfied in fishing the sea
 - So as the story goes, these spend the entire night on the water attempting to fish, but they catch nothing
 - Here again notice they are fishing in the dark, at night
 - As we've seen over and over again, John emphasizes darkness to picture sin, unbelief, the enemy and rebellion
 - They worked in darkness and got nowhere
 - But then Jesus appeared on the shore of the Sea, though they don't recognize Him
 - This is Jesus last recorded appearance before His ascension

- It happened sometime in the 32 days between his appearance to the eleven in Jerusalem and His ascension on the 40th day
- Jesus addresses them with a Greek word that means young boy
 - So He calls out to them, Lads you don't them little boys, as if to suggest they were just playing games, pretending to be like adults
 - And He points out that they don't have any fish
- Then Jesus gives them some helpful advice to lower their nets again on the "right" side of the boat and they will find fish
 - You may remember that a similar moment happened three years earlier recorded in Luke 5
 - As Jesus was calling these men the first time, He found a number of them fishing
 - And though they weren't having any luck on that particular day, Jesus instructed them to place their nets in the water once more
 - And when they did, they received a great harvest
 - Jesus was showing them His power and their inadequacy
 - At that time, He told them to drop their nets and follow Him instead, which they all did
 - That was a courageous if impulsive decision
 - It led them to see and experience miraculous things
 - And yet here again they sit on a boat with their nets
 - They still need to make a committed decision to follow
- So when Jesus tells them to lower their nets again, I wonder if they sensed any déjà vu?
 - They do as Jesus directed, and immediately the net is filled to the point that they can't even pull it back into the boat
 - At seeing the full nets, John remembers the earlier time and puts 2 and 2 together
 - John says to Peter "It is the Lord!"

- Immediately, Peter puts his robe back on and dives into the water
 - Fishermen characteristically worked in their undergarments, which were shorter robes
 - Peter put his outer garment back on before leaving the boat
 - Normally, people strip down before jumping in the water rather than adding more clothing
 - John's description adds to a sense of chaotic thinking on Peter's part
- This is such a classic picture of these two men
 - John is usually the one with the quick insight but slow to act
 - While Peter is usually the one to act boldly but impulsively
 - Even John's choice of words suggests impulsiveness
 - John says Peter "threw himself into the sea"
 - If we could only combine the two personalities together
- The rest of the disciples see no reason to plunge into the sea and leave their boat and fish behind
 - So they patiently bring the craft into the shore to meet with Jesus and Peter
 - John's description seems to emphasize that Peter's impulsiveness left the rest of the disciples to labor without his help
 - They have about 100 yards distance to cover, which took a little time given the number of fish

[John 21:9](#) So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread.

[John 21:10](#) Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught."

[John 21:11](#) Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

[John 21:12](#) Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.

[John 21:13](#) Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise.

[John 21:14](#) This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

- By the time the boat reaches the shore and they secure the nets with the fish, Jesus and Peter have started a small charcoal fire and are cooking
 - It's interesting that there is a fish on the fire
 - When Jesus first greeted them from the shore, He asked if they had caught any fish, and they said no
 - So there were no fish on the shore
 - Furthermore, when the boat with the fish finally reached the shore, Jesus had already placed a fish on the fire
 - And with the fish, there was bread
 - Where do we suppose that bread and fish came from?
 - Jesus served the meal of bread and fish to the disciples as they returned from the fishing trip
 - And as Jesus is serving His disciples, they bring the net up on shore and count the fish
 - They count 153 fish
 - The count of the fish is a matter of much speculation...what does 153 mean?
 - The number 153 is oddly specific and yet it doesn't relate to any specific biblical pattern or event
 - When a number isn't part of pattern, we should avoid creating one
 - So to make too much of the specific number is to miss the bigger point John is making
- First, the fact that the men took time to count the fish is evidence of the significance of this catch
 - Fishermen have always been this way...numbers matter to fishermen, and the bigger the number, the better
 - This fact has led many a fisherman to embellish the number and size of his catch
 - Given the size of nets in this day, 153 fish is an extraordinary catch

- Secondly, it represents the bounty of God's harvest when these men fish under His direction
 - The large number of fish spoke to the disciples about the potential benefit of working under the Lord's commission
 - If the Lord could assure this kind of catch in the sea, imagine what He can accomplish in building His Kingdom
- After all seven disciples are present, the Lord took the bread and breaks it and gives it out to His disciples along with the fish
 - None of them say, "Who are you" because they know it's Jesus
 - You might ask why did John feel the need to point this out?
 - Apparently, Jesus' resurrected appearance is so different that you can't recognize Him on the basis of His physical appearance alone
- Instead, they can only recognize Him based on familiar words and actions
 - When He says or does something they recognize, then they know Him by His voice
 - In this moment, they know Him because He breaks the bread and fish in a manner they recognize
- John says this the third appearance of Jesus, counting the two in Jerusalem
 - Three appearances suggests a divine appointment, since three is the number of the fullness of Godhead working together
 - And in this third appearance, Jesus turns to Peter to complete the restoration of Peter following His denial of Jesus at the trial

John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs."

John 21:16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

[John 21:18](#) “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.”

[John 21:19](#) Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”

- After the meal, Jesus asked Peter if Peter loved Jesus more than these?
 - The word for love Jesus uses is in Greek is agape, which does not mean emotional or brotherly love
 - Rather it is the word for self-sacrificial devotion to another
 - Agape love means placing another’s interests and needs above your own
 - Agape is often accompanied by other forms of love like brotherly love or familial love
 - But it is different than those
 - And when Jesus says “than these,” who is He referencing?
 - Some have concluded Jesus was referring to the other six disciples
 - As in “Do you love me more than you love your brothers?”
 - Or perhaps “Do you love for me more than they love me?”
 - I think those interpretations are unnatural and ignore the context and the subsequent words of Christ
 - In my view, “these” refers to the fish in the net, which are the focus of context in this chapter
 - Christ is asking Peter “Are you more devoted to me than you are to catching fish?”
 - Was Peter prepared to set aside his fishing business to serve the Lord?
- Peter answers quickly, even indignantly saying yes
 - To which Jesus replies, tend my lambs
 - The term “tend” in Greek is literally the word for feed

- So Jesus is asking Peter to feed lambs or baby sheep
- In fact, Jesus asks a similar question twice more
- But each time He asks, the words are slightly different in the Greek
 - Jesus uses the Greek word lambs but then moves to sheep
 - He starts with feed then to shepherd and back to feed
 - By varying these words, Jesus never uses the same combination twice across the three statements
- Obviously, in all cases, Jesus is stating a metaphor for pastoring the Church
 - Lambs and sheep stand for believers, perhaps in varying degrees of maturity
 - And feeding is always a metaphor for teaching the word of God
 - While shepherding describes the overall care of God's people
- Jesus is essentially asking the same question three times, but He varies the language to avoid pure repetition while making His point
 - Peter was asked the same question in three different ways on the night Jesus was arrested
 - He gave the same answer each time, though with increasing insistence
 - Now Jesus gives Peter the chance to reverse that mistake in three like steps
 - And with each response, Peter is drawn deeper into his role as pastor of the early church
 - With Peter restored, Jesus pronounces Peter's future death, on a cross, and commands Peter to follow Him
 - Jesus prediction contrasts Peter's youthful independence and impulsiveness to the sobering constraints that come with serving God
 - Peter was eventually crucified as testified to by Tertullian and Origen, two early church fathers
 - Origen says Peter was crucified head down by his own request

- Peter lived with this prediction hanging over his head for over 30 years
 - And in 1 Peter, the apostle wrote that those who suffer death for following Christ bring glory to Him in their death
 - Peter carried a significant burden and did so faithfully
 - For all his youthful brashness, he learned patience in the end

John 21:20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

John 21:21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?"

John 21:22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!"

John 21:23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?"

- Once more, John focuses on Peter in his unique way, recording this quaint moment when Peter questions Jesus over John's future
 - The whole exchange sounds a little like brothers fighting over bedtime
 - Peter just learned that the price of serving Jesus was that Peter would face a death like that of his Master
 - And as usual, we find John nearby
 - As John describes himself, he was the one Jesus loved, which is a self-deprecating description
 - But it was probably also an indication of John's prominence within the group
 - So Peter sees John and wonders if John will likewise suffer as a result of being a prominent apostle
 - I like to imagine that after Peter heard his fate, John gave Peter a knowing look, as if to say I'm glad I'm not you
 - So Peter gestures to John and asks Jesus what will John have to suffer?
 - Jesus tells Peter that John's future is none of Peter's business, and in fact what if Jesus never wanted John to die?

- John tells us that this was not spoken literally, but simply to make a point to Peter
- Though because John lived so much longer than the rest of the disciples, rumors had developed in the early church that John would live forever
- Predictably, those rumors stopped soon after John's death
- With that, John ends this epilogue to his Gospel

[John 21:24](#) This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

[John 21:25](#) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

- As I mentioned earlier, the scene in John's final chapter weaves together many of the ideas and themes found in earlier chapters
 - How many can you find? Here's a partial list
 - vs.1-4 – Darkness giving way to light (see Chap 1)
 - v.2 – Collecting the first disciples (see Chap 1)
 - v.2 – The town of Cana (Chap 2)
 - v.3 – The apostles alone on a boat near the shore at night without Jesus (Chap 6)
 - vs.4, 12 – The sheep know their Shepherd by His voice (Chap 6)
 - v.9 – Peter at a charcoal fire with Jesus nearby (Chap 18)
 - v.9 – Jesus feeding the disciples with bread and fish miraculously (Chap 6)
 - v.13 – Jesus taking the bread and breaking it for the disciples (Chap 13)
 - v.14 – Jesus' resurrection (Chap 20)
 - v.15 – Jesus eating fish (Chap 20)
 - v.15 – Jesus' calling His followers His sheep (Chap 6)

- vs.15-17 – Peter’s three statements of allegiance (vs. his denials in Chap 18)
- v.16 – Peter’s original name, Simon (Chap 1)
- v.18 – A veiled reference to a coming crucifixion (Chap 12)
- v.19 – Jesus calling Peter to follow him (Chap 1)
- v.20 – John described as the one leaning on Jesus’ bosom (Chap 13)
- v.22 – The potential some believers some won’t see death (Chap 14)
- v.22 – The return of Jesus for the Church (Chap 14)
- v.24 – The testimony of John is true (Chap 20)