

The Gospel of John

Chapters 13–21

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(1986–1987 Study)

The following notes on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13–21, were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1986–1987. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
2. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord's help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
3. Finally, Bro. Frank has not reviewed the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1987)

John 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

In the type the lamb was slain on the 14th of Nisan, and the Feast of Passover began on the 15th, that is, at 6 p.m. From the time setting here in verse 1, Jesus' death would occur the next day at 3 p.m.—less than 24 hours away. The Memorial emblems were instituted on the 14th of Nisan and Jesus' death also occurred on the 14th—because the 14th began at 6 p.m. according to Hebrew reckoning.

Jesus had certain problems on his mind:

1. He knew he would die the next day at 3 p.m. The normal reaction would be to want to withdraw into seclusion and pray about *one's own situation*—to be concerned with *one's own fate*. Jesus knew that his betrayal was imminent and that crucifixion is a dreadful death to face.
2. A betrayer was sitting at the table with him and about to partake of the Passover meal and then the Memorial emblems. Being sensitive, Jesus was concerned about Judas.

In spite of these two problems, Jesus was more concerned about his apostles, whom he loved “unto the end” of his earthly course. He even showed the same love for Judas in this setting (with the sop, for example). Hence this verse is inserted to show the burdens on Jesus' mind.

John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

The *Diaglott* and Revised Standard Version read: “And supper being *served*.” In the *Berean Manual* is the comment “supper being served, ready for the meal to begin.” The thought is that the lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, etc., had already been served.

Satan had put the thought to betray Jesus into the heart of Judas, but at this point Judas could still have changed his mind. If the actual betrayal had already taken place, then it would have been a contradiction for Jesus to show love toward Judas in giving him the favored sop to prick his conscience (John 13:26). True, Judas had already made the arrangements, but he had not carried them out yet. Thus there is a difference between a sin and *sinning* a sin. A sin in the mind is one thing, but a sin that results in an act is sinning a sin. To not properly understand this distinction with Judas could lead many to draw wrong conclusions. For example, we should not fraternize with, reason with, or show favors to one who is or should be Scripturally disfellowshipped for committing grievous, unrepented-of sins.

Comment: A *Reprint* article brings out a thought about the foot washing. None of the others present offered to wash the feet of the group assembled. This was a menial task usually performed by servants. Since Judas already resented the pouring of expensive spikenard on Jesus a little earlier, he probably now looked at Jesus with scorn when the Master stooped to do such a lowly task.

Reply: Yes, Judas probably was scornful because he was not in the right heart attitude to start with.

John 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

John 13:4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

The *Diaglott* has “he came from God, and was going to God.”

Jesus knew that the fate of the world was in his hands, for the Father had committed “all things” to him. He felt the responsibility for what he would do from now until the end of his course. Knowing that the Father had confidence in him and that as a reward he would be raised from death and return to the Father, Jesus rose from supper at this point to give the disciples a lesson. How remarkable! In spite of all the things on his mind—the nearness of his execution, the betrayal of Judas, the responsibility resting upon him—Jesus possessed the calmness of mind to realize the importance of instructing his disciples in a certain lesson here because they had failed to wash one another’s feet. Hence Jesus arose from supper to wash the disciples’ feet himself.

The setting seems to suggest that the meal was on the table but that they had not yet started to eat. Psychologically, Jesus waited until the very last moment to wash their feet, whereas, according to custom, the foot washing should have been done earlier, before the supper was served.

Picture the setting. Supper was served. Then the Master, the chief one, stood up, changed his apparel, took a towel, and put it around his waist. The disciples watched in amazement. Throughout his ministry Jesus did many things under a startling backdrop. For example, consider the circumstances under which he said to his disciples: “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:36–41). A “*great tempest*,” a “*great storm of wind*,” was raging and the waves were coming into the boat. Thus it was only natural for the disciples to wake up the Master and say, “Carest thou not that we perish?” Who would not have reacted similarly under those circumstances? But Jesus chose that very moment to make an incisive remark, to give a penetrating lesson.

Here Jesus did the same thing psychologically. As the disciples were ready to partake of the supper, he got up and prepared himself to wash their feet. It took time to get the water and pour some for each disciple. Jesus was behaving like a *servant*. The disciples were in the reclining position that was customary for eating. They did not get up, for they were too amazed. Remember that just a short time previous, James and John had asked to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand. *They* were desirous of *chief* positions, and now *Jesus* was serving them in a *menial* task.

Q: Was the order of events as follows: supper was served, foot washing occurred, supper was eaten, emblems were instituted? Proof that supper had not yet been eaten is that subsequently Jesus gave Judas the sop (John 13:26).

A: Yes, Judas was present for the foot washing and also to partake of the bread and wine emblems, but the foot washing occurred first. It is logical, according to Jewish tradition, that

the foot washing precedes the meal. Incidentally, the towel Jesus used was probably long, and it was wrapped around him like a girdle or an apron.

The thought might even have occurred to the apostles that their feet had not been washed, but none of them had the humility to perform the task. It was contrary to tradition for a superior person, especially the chief guest of honor, to stoop to washing feet. The apostles would certainly have been amazed.

The other Gospels omit Jesus' discourses on the way to Gethsemane as well as the foot washing earlier. John was very impressed with these events. In fact, the Memorial night had a deep scarring effect upon John—so much so that he even began to use that type of language in his epistles ("My little children"). And he repeated Jesus' commandment at the Memorial season to "love one another."

Chapters 13–19 of John all pertain to that one 24-hour day of the Memorial. In the other Gospels the percentage devoted to that day is much, much smaller. John inserted several chapters of Jesus' instructions to his disciples at that time. With the foot washing Jesus demonstrated a lesson on their need for humility.

John 13:5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

"He ... began to wash the disciples' feet." The *Berean Manual* comments: "The open sandals worn in Biblical times made the washing of the feet after a journey a necessity for personal comfort. The apostles at this time were insufficiently filled with humility, love, and thoughtfulness to volunteer this service for each other or even for the Master, and thus missed a great blessing."

John 13:6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

John 13:7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

John 13:8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

"Thou shalt never wash my feet." The *Berean Manual* says, "It is hard for some to realize that the Lord is the teacher and they are merely pupils."

Jesus said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast *no part* with me." His words were very startling, incisive, and strong. Peter had just spoken emphatically: "*NEVER* shalt thou wash my feet!" Jesus had to counteract that dogmatic utterance.

John 13:9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Then Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In the *Berean Manual* is the Pastor's comment: "Some are continually trying to be wise, good, and obedient in ways that the Lord has not dictated." Peter was trying to be "good," desiring *additional* washing beyond what the Lord required and instructed. Lesson: Sometimes we manufacture good deeds along lines that the Bible does not instruct. We should be the

pupil rather than the teacher.

These are hard lessons, but Peter was no doubt voicing what the others felt. Being outspoken just happened to be Peter's temperament, but no doubt the lesson was helpful to the others too.

John 13:10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

John 13:11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

For "He that is washed," the *Berean Manual* has the following: "Bathed, as all the disciples had previously been, in accordance with the Jewish requirements, at the beginning of the Passover season."

"But not all." The *Berean Manual* continues: "As it was God's goodness and mercy that hardened Pharaoh's heart, so it was the love and humility of Jesus that hardened Judas's heart." Jesus' statement "Ye are clean, but not all" refers to Judas. It is helpful to know Jesus was not taken by surprise. He knew Judas's heart condition all along and what was occurring.

Comment: Jesus said, "He that is [already] washed [that is, justified] needeth not save to wash his feet [to seek forgiveness daily for his daily walk]."

Other Gospels tell that the disciples had been debating who should be greatest in the Kingdom. This thinking had begun in Jericho when John and James asked to sit on Jesus' right and left hand in the Kingdom. The other apostles were angry at the nerve of the request, and the dispute that ensued continued up to this time. Meanwhile, Jesus had cleansed the Temple, cursed the fig tree, had his head and feet anointed, etc. The contention of desiring to be the greatest stayed with the disciples right up to the Memorial. With the foot washing Jesus was trying to squelch that attitude.

Jesus poured fresh water to wash the feet of each. Lesson: We get a fresh supply from the Master with each washing, with each application of forgiveness.

John 13:12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

Jesus finished the foot washing, removed the towel, and again took his place at the table to proceed with the supper. He then asked, "Know ye what I have done to you?" The lesson is in verses 13–17. Jesus had earlier said to Peter (verse 7), "You do not know what I am doing, but you shall know." Now comes part of the explanation.

John 13:13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

Jesus had a stark frankness in his expressions. In other words, "It is proper for you to call me Master and Lord." He did not have *false* humility. To have assumed a humble posture here would have diminished respect for the message to be given. Occasionally Paul said, "I am an apostle of the Lord. I speak to you thus." When important instruction was forthcoming, this manner of speaking was proper.

John 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

What a wonderful lesson in humility! The "example" Jesus gave was physical and literal, yet his point was not, "Because I have washed your feet literally, therefore you should wash one another's feet literally." The point of his demonstration was to bring an *attitude* to the surface. "As I have done to you" is the key thought. It is like his saying, "Forgive one another's trespasses and sins *in the way* that I forgive you." Jesus was referring not merely to what he did to the disciples that night but to what he did to them *throughout his whole ministry*. For example, he took them aside and said, "It is given unto *you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11). Consider also how he spoke to his disciples. When necessary, he rebuked them for wrong conduct. Of course, as the Lord, he could do this more officiously than we can. Nevertheless, if we have a "Thus saith the Lord" as to what should be done, we can give a stronger rebuke, for we would then not be acting on our own but would be giving the *Lord's* instruction.

If we are to "love one another, as I [Jesus] have loved you," we must review and be familiar with his *whole* life and ministry (John 15:12). Do not let someone in our movement get away with a statement such as, "Some in the nominal Church have been studying the Gospels and the Bible for years and what do they know, for they do not have the *Volumes*." We cannot study our Lord's life too much, just as we cannot be too consecrated. Jesus' love for his disciples was done in accordance with *principles*. It was not just an outpouring of sympathy, for under certain circumstances sympathy is wrong and can encourage wrongdoing. On the other hand, sympathy can be a wonderful balm poured on a wound when the person is in the right heart attitude to respond favorably to the Lord's instruction.

John 13:16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

"Neither [is] he that is sent greater than he that sent him." Notice, Jesus *again* brings in the Father. John repeatedly mentions Jesus' statements about the Father being greater. Either *before* Jesus refers to himself or *after*, he shows that the Father is above all.

John 13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

We need more than just head knowledge—we *must speak and act in harmony with that knowledge*.

After having made these remarks, Jesus ate the Passover meal. The paragraph symbol (§) before verse 18 indicates the translators felt there was a time interval here where Jesus ate the meal. After eating or toward the end of the meal, he was ready to resume speaking.

John 13:18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

"I speak not of you all [not of all twelve, only of *one*]." "I know whom I have chosen." God chooses the members of the family in the *original* drawing, but they are subsequently known as apostles of Jesus Christ because Jesus did have something to do with their selection. "Apostle" means "one sent out." However, even Jesus himself is called an apostle: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the *Apostle* and High

Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3:1). From that standpoint God Himself appointed Jesus. God does the calling of the Church, but Jesus did have some input in regard to selecting the twelve apostles.

When the twelve were originally called, Judas was not of the betraying disposition, for it would not make sense to accept the consecration of someone who was not sincere at that time. In other words, one can be thoroughly in the right heart condition at the time of consecration and then later deflect. Even Lucifer was perfect in the *beginning* of his ways, that is, when he was created (Ezek. 28:15).

By now 3 1/2 years had elapsed since Judas's consecration. In that time Jesus saw Judas developing unfavorably. Almighty God knew from the beginning that Judas would be the betrayer because His omniscience sees things before they happen. Jesus, on the other hand, did not have the divine nature at his First Advent and hence lacked that capability. What about Jesus' foreknowledge? His foreknowledge consisted of what he had *already learned*. However, being perfect and being enlightened, Jesus could see the change taking place in Judas, and by this time he knew Judas would be the betrayer. Therefore, Jesus' statement "I know whom I have chosen" meant "I am aware of certain things."

Jesus was referring to Psalm 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Judas was the "familiar friend." In other words, Judas was familiar with Jesus, and as an apostle, he accompanied Jesus. "Which did eat of my bread" was prophetically saying that Judas would eat the last meal, the Last Supper, with Jesus. The clause "in whom I trusted" proves that Jesus *fully trusted* Judas initially. Although God foreknew that Judas would deflect, Jesus fully accepted and trusted him. It is interesting that the betrayer is called a "friend" in Psalm 41 and that Jesus used "Friend" as a term of address for Judas at the time of the betrayal kiss. "*Friend, wherefore art thou come?*" (Matt. 26:50).

Some of the Psalms even express in advance Jesus' words and thoughts on the Cross and his innermost feelings at the very end of his ministry. For example, God predicted Jesus' thoughts on the Cross in Psalm 22. His ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel occupied his time and attention until the end of his ministry. Then he began to meditate more acutely on the time prophecies and the nearness of his death. Noticing the change in Judas, Jesus realized that apostle would fulfill Psalm 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." At this last meal Judas's lifting up his "heel" against Jesus became even more pertinent. While having previously eaten with Jesus, Judas would now set in motion certain actions resulting in the heel being "lifted up" so that Jesus would die.

Only the Father is omniscient in seeing *all* things in advance, but now that Jesus has the divine nature, he has some capabilities in this direction.

Q: Wasn't it a Jewish custom for the breaking of bread, the sharing of a meal, to make a bond between those present?

A: Yes. Guests were to be very respectful to the host and vice versa. While at the table together, enemies did not harm one another. Afterwards was another matter.

John 13:19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

Paraphrase: “Now I am telling you in advance so that when it happens, you may believe that I am the Messiah, that I am what I profess to be.” In other words, if Jesus was the Messiah, he certainly should know about his betrayal in advance and who the betrayer was. Had Jesus not known he would die, the apostles and disciples would have been hopelessly discouraged. They would have concluded that he was merely a prophet and that his plans had gone haywire. By hearing about the betrayal in advance, they would later realize it was just part of God’s plan. However, *at the time* the disciples were surprised about Jesus’ death, even though he had told them in advance a number of times. When he arose from the dead, they then remembered his earlier words—and of course the Holy Spirit assisted their recollection after Pentecost.

Trinitarians say this verse proves Jesus is Jehovah, for Jesus said, “Believe that *I am*.” But he simply meant “I am what I claim to be.” The words “I am” are not repeated as in Exodus 3:14, “I AM THAT I AM.”

John 13:20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Why did Jesus make this statement? He had said, referring to the apostles, “I know whom I have chosen.” Of those, one would betray him. With this same frame of reference, and going one step further, Jesus was preparing them for his absence. “Whoever receives those whom I send receives me.” Then he reversed the order: “Whoever receives me receives the Father who sent me.” Of course the last clause implied the seriousness to Judas, for lifting up the heel against Jesus was like a defamation of God Himself.

This Scripture shows the absurdity of the Trinity. If Jesus and God are the same being and yet God can send Jesus, then the apostles and Jesus must be the same being because Jesus can send them. And if *sameness of being* is the thought, then John 17:21 shows that the Father, Jesus, and the 144,000 are *all* the same being. Trinitarians tend to quote only part of a verse, or if they quote a whole verse, it is used out of context. Verses before and after are ignored.

That the Holy Spirit is a third God—coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Son—is an even weaker argument. To give the Holy Spirit a personalized application, Trinitarians are able to use *very few* Scriptures, and these are wrested. Hence they focus more on Father and Son. In regard to the term “Holy Ghost,” the word “Ghost” is from the Elizabethan era, being manufactured at the time of Queen Victoria or earlier.

John 13:21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Jesus “was troubled in spirit.” Several times at the end he tried to prick Judas’s conscience—for example, giving him the sop and the most favored position at the table (to Jesus’ immediate left). Therefore, even though Jesus knew the Scripture had to be fulfilled, it was sad for him to see one who would lose all life because of such a deed. And just as with Jesus, our highest concern should be that, ultimately, as many as possible get life. That is the Father’s plan too. “Choose life that ye may live” is the principle (Deut. 30:19).

Jesus knew that when Judas was first appointed as an apostle, he was a very desirable person. In fact, of all the apostles at that time, Judas was the most talented. He had

marvelous potential if he remained obedient and faithful. Therefore, Jesus was greatly disappointed to see Judas's gradual change into a betrayer who would lose life. Jesus was emotionally involved with Judas and felt very sad to see him make shipwreck of his faith. This feeling was probably a large portion of the reason Jesus felt grieved in spirit.

John 13:22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

The fact the apostles doubted would indicate that Judas's deflection was not obvious to them. At this end of the age, the situation will be the same with regard to the Judas class.

Stating the matter another way, Judas's good qualities so overrode the qualities that would cause his rejection that the disciples were unaware of the true situation. When John informs us that Judas was a thief, he is telling of certain unfavorable incidents that were only a fraction of his life. However, John does give us some insight into what the problem was with Judas. Greed and avarice led to his being a thief.

The character of Judas was camouflaged to the disciples right up to the end when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The apostles did not have time as a whole to discuss the giving of the sop. In the Garden of Gethsemane, eight of them were left behind, and three went a little farther with Jesus before he separated from them. John would have then told Peter that Judas was the betrayer, but between the giving of the sop and that time, the apostles were listening with such rapt attention to Jesus' words that they had no time to talk among themselves.

However, the fact that John did know Judas was the betrayer and could tell Peter later suggests that in the future some of the Little Flock will know the identity of the betrayal class ahead of time. *All* will know when the Judas "kiss" takes place and the "bands" apprehend the feet members—just as all eleven apostles knew Judas was the betrayer when these things occurred to Jesus. The kiss triggered the arrest, and they saw that Judas was part of the kiss.

In regard to the betrayer, the apostles doubted of whom Jesus spoke. It is rather touching when they sorrowfully asked Jesus one by one, "Is it I?" "Is it I?" (Mark 14:19). Judas had already made contractual arrangements, but the others were *unaware*. Thinking the betrayal could be something subtle, the others now asked, "Is it I?"

Jesus did give the apostles information about the betrayer but *not immediately*. Otherwise, they would all have known Judas was the betrayer, and verse 28 proves they did not know.

John 13:23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

John 13:24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

John, to Jesus' right, "was leaning on Jesus' bosom"; that is, John had his back to Jesus in the reclining position. Peter, who was next to Judas on Jesus' left and was therefore facing Jesus, beckoned to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was. Because Peter was not next to Jesus, he could not overhear the answer.

John 13:25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

John asked Jesus, "Lord, who is the betrayer?"

John 13:26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

Jesus answered John, "The betrayer is the one to whom I will give the sop." We might think that when the sop was given, the rest of the apostles would know Judas was the betrayer. Yes and no. The others still did not comprehend because when Judas left, they thought it was for another purpose (verse 29).

There are times with us too when we do not absorb what is going on, even though we are trying to pay attention. For example, we may be listening attentively to a talk and the next thing our mind wanders and we miss a point. As fallen beings, we have moments when our concentration does not hold.

Perhaps Jesus did not immediately give the sop. He could have instituted the Memorial emblems in the interim and then subsequently have given the sop. By that time the apostles would have forgotten Jesus' statement about the sop and thus would not have understood the significance. Other things were on their minds.

John 13:27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

We do not know how audibly Jesus spoke when he answered John's question with a comment about the sop. He could have answered privately in a whisper more or less, or in a regular conversational tone that just was not comprehended.

Verse 2 was preparing us, in advance, for the condition of Judas's heart at the time of the Passover: "The devil ... now put into the heart of Judas ... to betray him." Already Judas was following the leadings of the Adversary, although he did not seal his fate until the actual betrayal and kiss took place. Up until then Judas could still have changed his mind. Another reason verse 2 was inserted is to show that despite Jesus' awareness of the imminent betrayal, his thoughts were on his disciples, and "he loved them unto the end" (verse 1).

Jesus knew that he had to die and that Judas would betray him, but he could not dwell on these thoughts because he had other things to do. Nevertheless, whenever he did think on them, they went into him deeply. The thoughts did trouble him, but he had to put them aside and get on with the advice for his disciples.

Jesus said, "That thou doest, do quickly." Notice that Jesus did not say, "Betray me quickly" or "Do not betray me." The lesson is not to procrastinate but to make a decision and *act*. For instance, if we know something is radically wrong, we should act on it right away. If we parley the matter, we might succumb to it. An example would be for one to stay in the nominal Church even though he sees things are terribly wrong. Remaining there would erode the line between right and wrong. The longer one fraternizes with bad conduct, the harder it is to get extricated.

Jesus had given Judas every opportunity to repent. He had tried to prick Judas's conscience with kindness and favors, and he had also shown that a betrayal would be against Almighty

God. Then he told Judas to act *quickly*. Why? If Judas delayed, he would surely carry out the betrayal because he had already made a contractual arrangement. (In other words, procrastination can be dangerous.) However, if Judas had decided to do the wrong, he might as well get it over with.

John 13:28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

No one knew what Jesus meant by his statement “That thou doest, do quickly.”

John 13:29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

Q: Was it surmised that Jesus had told Judas to give something to the poor because that is what Judas ostensibly wanted to do, or was it customary for them as a group to give money to the poor? The question is asked because of Jesus’ statement “Ye have the poor with you always” (Mark 14:7).

A: The disciples probably did not give much thought to Judas’s leaving because he left so quickly. However, there might have been occasions when things were given to the needy. Perhaps the apostles had some problems in being separated from their families. The point is that the other apostles gave credit to Judas as having a legitimate reason for leaving.

Comment: Perhaps the apostles thought Judas was going to help some who were too poor to properly celebrate the feast.

John 13:30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

Judas did leave quickly but made the wrong decision.

The “sop” was a piece of unleavened pita bread that was used to soak up the succulent lamb juices. The giving of the sop marked the end of the supper.

In Mark 14:20 Jesus gave a clue as to who the betrayer was: “It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.” Hence the betrayer had to be one who was sitting at Jesus’ end of the table.

Q: Had the Memorial emblems been instituted? Weren’t they served *before* Jesus gave the sop, and then Judas left immediately after the sop?

A: Yes.

Q: In that case, is it possible Jesus answered, “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop,” and then instituted the Memorial emblems? If so, a time lapse occurred before the sop was given and the apostles would, consequently, not have made the connection that Judas was the betrayer.

A: Yes. The other Gospels show that Judas partook of the emblems. Then he left immediately after receiving the sop.

It is interesting that John added the detail “and it was night,” which shows the time lapse

from the foot washing through the eating of the lamb, etc. Also, being “night” added to the atmosphere, for Judas’s betrayal took place under cloak of darkness.

The sop—a material, temporal thing occurring after the Memorial—fits the antitype beautifully. The Judas class, after partaking of spiritual things, will revert to fleshly deeds and betray the feet members. At the time of the betrayal, the Judas class will be sensual.

The Luke account mentions the Memorial and then records the strife among the apostles over who should be greatest (Luke 22:24). The thought is that *previously* there *had been* this strife among them. To arrange all of the events chronologically in the four Gospels is not a simple matter. The strife had started down in Jericho. The other apostles were mad at James and John for their request to sit on Jesus’ left and right hand in the Kingdom, and this spirit of strife carried right into the Memorial supper. Moreover, the strife was aggravated by Peter’s not being at the head of the table—instead Judas was. Although Peter was not present when James and John made their request, the Scriptures do not single out Peter, for *all* of the apostles were concerned and strifeful.

Q: Do you wish to comment on the fact that the sop had to be given *before* Satan fully entered into Judas? Otherwise, there would have been an impropriety.

A: Some sermons teach that when we see others walking in forbidden paths such as adultery, we should give them love, mercy, and consideration. They say we should not excommunicate the offenders or do anything that would show a lack of love on our part. Then they use Judas as an illustration, saying that Jesus knew Judas would betray him, yet he had Judas partake of the Passover and the Memorial, he washed Judas’s feet, and he gave him the sop. This reasoning is WHOLLY WRONG because the sin was still only in Judas’s mind at that time. Judas could have gotten out of the trap if he had so desired. He could have extricated himself before *sinning* the sin. Thus there is a distinction between sin in thought and sin as a deed or action. The action took place later. Jesus would not have shown kindness and favor to Judas if Judas had already committed the betrayal. One who is fraternizing with evil (but not sinning the sin yet) can be forewarned, but when the grievous sin has once been committed, the sin must be dealt with Scripturally.

When Judas left that Upper Room, he got the 30 pieces of silver and a little while later gave the betrayal kiss. The kiss was the actual betrayal—because Judas could have led the soldiers to another place. Earlier, tacks were being put in the coffin, but when Judas kissed Jesus, the coffin was sealed.

John 13:31 **Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.**

The word “Therefore” (“*Therefore*, when he [Judas] was gone out”) suggests that Jesus wanted to give private counsel to the faithful eleven. Jesus purposely held back until Judas was absent, for psychologically—let alone from the standpoint of principle—one in our midst who is causing a troublesome spirit can adversely affect the whole atmosphere of a meeting. The following, then, is the special counsel of Jesus to the eleven apostles, all of whom were faithful unto death.

Jesus used a rather strange type of expression: “*Now* is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” These words were spoken *after* Judas departed. Jesus knew the wheels were being set in motion that would result in his crucifixion—dying being the very

purpose for which he came. But what did Jesus mean by the word “glorified”—“Now is the Son of man *glorified*, and God is *glorified* in him”? And notice that Jesus once again brought in the Father.

Jesus was taking a *futuristic* outlook. As we study his life from here on, we will see him go *back and forth* in his moods. It is unusual for God to disclose this secret information to us of the intricacies of Jesus’ thinking, of his mood or feelings as they fluctuated. A novelist would concentrate on one theme and lead up to a beautiful climax, but the account here is not that way—it is *choppy*. The conversation goes first in this direction, then in that direction, etc., which is really the way *life* is (not only with Jesus but with some of our experiences too).

John 13:32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

“If” means “since.” “Since God is to be glorified through what Jesus is about to do...” (paraphrase). John sums up, in a pithy statement, the net effect of Jesus’ ministry and of God’s special intent: “God so loved the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). That “giving” was not just Jesus’ being made a human—his being absent from the heavenly courts—but knowing that he would come down here and *die on a Cross*. That is how much God loved the world. He could have just cast us away, for we are all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but God, in His love and mercy, has made a way of escape for us all. That is God being “*glorified*.” When the picture was *finished*—after Jesus had died on the Cross and risen from the dead—Christians (now) and the world (in the Kingdom) get an insight into God’s character that they could never have gotten otherwise. Could God’s love be any deeper than giving His only begotten Son to come down here and *die* for sinful man? That is the *epitome* of love.

Thus God is glorified in seeing His Son suffer along this line. We know there is a wonderful purpose in connection with that suffering and death. In the *long term*, it could not be done better, but in the short term, it confounds us that He would do such a thing. Not only is God glorified by manifesting His love in this manner, but Jesus is glorified or honored too by his *subserviency* to the divine will and his willingness to do God’s bidding *unflinchingly*, always having the attitude “*Thy will be done*.” When God honors Jesus in the future and makes him prime minister of the whole universe, *nobody* in the billions of years from now can say that Jesus’ exaltation was favoritism. True, God favored Jesus in calling him, but Jesus *proved* his worthiness by dying on the Cross. “Worthy is the Lamb!” Therefore, from the *finished* standpoint, God is honored in having a Son who died faithfully on the Cross. We can see the *sterling merit* of Christ, and his merit is a reflection on the Father. Both are thereby honored and glorified.

Verse 32 shows that Jesus was very confident in his attitude at this time. He knew the wheels were being set in motion. He knew he would die and he even knew *when*. Therefore, the “if” was not a question mark. Of course the Father’s being glorified was conditional upon Jesus’ faithfulness, but Jesus was not questioning here whether he would be faithful (as he did a little later in the Garden of Gethsemane). Jesus was unburdened because Judas had left, and now he could pour out his heart to the eleven.

“God shall also glorify him in himself”; that is, God would give Jesus the divine nature. “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). God would share His immortality with Jesus *after* Jesus had finished his

sacrifice, *after* he had *proved* his worthiness. What a treasure, what a gift, for God to give Jesus immortality! From the human standpoint, that is the last thing one would do. Human reasoning would say: The Emperor is taking a chance in giving immortality to another being so that the being *cannot* be destroyed and is now able to give life to others. Not merely does a divine being have life *in himself*, but that life can come *out of himself* and be life and refreshment to others through the ability to *CREATE* life. God must have *complete confidence* in Jesus and in the ones who make the high calling, the 144,000. He must be absolutely sure of those beings to whom He grants immortality that *under no circumstance at any time in the illimitable future* would they ever deflect. Hence we can see the necessity for the consecrated Christian to be tested for worthiness.

Jesus was reflecting on what he was going to do and his *reward* for being faithful unto death. Both God and Jesus will be glorified ultimately in the eyes of others as Jesus' suffering the ignominious death of the Cross is understood. The deeds of Father and Son will attract an appreciation and recognition of their true merit.

“And shall *straightway* glorify him.” “Straightway” means “soon, a very short time.” Let us put ourselves in Jesus' place. First, he had to die the next day (*our* reckoning—the same day Hebrew reckoning). Then he would be in the tomb for parts of three days. After that would come his resurrection, but not his ascension for another 40 days. In all, in little more than 40 days, he would be glorified and again be with the Father—a *very short time*.

The Apostle Paul used this same principle when he said, “But this I say, brethren, the time is short,” yet 2,000 years of the Gospel Age lay ahead (1 Cor. 7:29). By measuring the temporal shortness and brevity of life *with eternity*, Paul makes the former seem short and the latter interminably long. However, Jesus' use of the word “straightway” truly was short; ie, in just 40-plus days he would be with the Father.

Verses 31 and 32 contain a tremendous amount of information. Jesus was determined and assured: “I have come to lay down my life, and nothing will deter me from this wonderful privilege. It will honor my Father and I will be honored too.” We should likewise deem laying down our life to be a wonderful privilege. Nevertheless, we have downs as well as ups in our Christian walk, just as Jesus did.

John 13:33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

How long was the “little while”? It lasted until Jesus' apprehension in Gethsemane. Hence the fellowship was really just here at the Memorial plus the walk to Gethsemane—a total of only four or five hours. Other than that, he spoke a few words to John from the Cross and gave Peter a look. Of course when he was raised from death, his on and off appearances during the 40 days prior to his ascension were also included in the “little while.” And Jesus' appearances were fairly brief except to the two walking to Emmaus.

“Ye shall seek me.” When? When he died, they certainly felt his absence. However, his death by crucifixion so startled them, *dashing their hopes*, that the apostles were not looking for his resurrection. When Jesus died, their hopes died (1 Pet. 1:3). Not until his resurrection were they rejuvenated. During the 40 days following his resurrection, he appeared to them several times, so it was not during that time period that they sought him. Therefore, the seeking occurred after his ascension. The apostles were waiting for the “soon” establishment of the Kingdom. In other words, Jesus was thinking ahead—he was

thinking of the long range—to the *finished* work and what it will signify to the Church and then to the world in the Kingdom. Incidentally, Jesus was referring to the world when he said, “Yet a little while, and the *world* seeth me no more” (John 14:19). His appearances after his resurrection were to *consecrated disciples* only.

The Father did not grant immortality—that immeasurable gift—when Jesus was first resurrected. He was raised from death “spirit” (a spirit being), and 50 days later the Father personally bestowed upon him the treasure of *His very own nature*. And He seated Jesus on His right hand as a confidant in the highest sense of the word—far higher than a messenger as the Logos. Now Jesus is of the family of God in the highest sense, not as an archangel but as a divine being. Thus in verses 31–33 Jesus was looking *ahead*. Even the angels would then see Jesus’ *worthiness*. They might have thought they could do all that Jesus did in his earthly course—until the Crucifixion and attending events occurred. Had Jesus not endured the agony and shame of the Cross, the angels would (or could) not give him the degree of respect and honor that is now possible. (Neither could we or the world.) The salvation of the human race is predicated upon Jesus’ faithfulness, and we can now see God’s interest in the world and in us as *individuals*. With confidence, therefore, Jesus is looking forward to the honor.

“Little children” is not a term Jesus normally used for his apostles. Apparently, his heart was especially *tender* to them at this time. He realized that very shortly he would not be with them anymore and that they still needed much development and maturity. He was going to give them last-minute instructions and counsel. The endearing use of “*little children*” is peculiar to this season, as he looked back over his 3 1/2-year association with them and was about to leave them.

If John’s Gospel were missing and we had only the first three Gospels, we would have the historical Jesus (what he said and did), but we would be lacking a lot. For example, without John’s Gospel we would miss chapters of counsel between the Memorial and Jesus’ apprehension. All *four* Gospels are needed.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

What is *new* about the commandment to “*love one another*”? We should *desire* to lay down our lives for the brethren, as symbolized by the foot washing done a little earlier. Just as the expression “*little children*” is peculiar to this season, so is the “*new commandment*.” Jesus’ previous admonitions were a generalized account of what might be expected. Consider Matthew 24, which outlines the history of the whole Gospel Age and was absolutely essential so that the Church would not be discouraged and the Christian religion die out through longevity of time. On a number of occasions Jesus told his disciples what not to do and of their need for faith, how to pray, etc.—general advice. For 3 1/2 years Jesus gave such advice, and now he was saying that to “*love one another*” is an essential ingredient for the Christian. It is a *crowning* phase. We should have a pure and undefiled conscience, etc., plus acquire *love*. Our love for Christ is manifested in our desire to serve the brethren and the truth. That is the only way we can show love for God and Christ because they are not down here.

Notice the clause “*as I have loved you.*” If we look back over the 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ ministry, we see that the bulk of instruction is what Jesus said about the scribes and Pharisees and others. Subtract that out and think what Jesus said to the *brethren*. Sometimes his words were not too complimentary. For example, when the storm was *raging* on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, “O ye of little faith. How could you doubt?” The boat was filling up with water and sinking, yet the Master reprimanded them for insufficient faith. His comment laid bare their need for *development*. Had Jesus soft-pedaled the matter, the lesson would have been lost. The very technique he used could not have been better, even though some might think a softer approach could have been used. It is not pleasant when someone laces into us for a fault we really know we have, but sometimes the experience is *good* for us. Receiving a reprimand can keep us in line and humble.

Jesus was looking out for the *long-term* interests of his disciples, not for short-term fellowship. Their future destiny was his utmost concern, and not the extolling of the individual—telling others how much we like them, etc. That is cheap! There are times when we must lose our fellowship with an individual for a long-term benefit. The “love” we should have is a concern for the *salvation* of others. And we must be careful of our own salvation. We should not wade into a grievous sin.

Q: Wouldn’t verses 34 and 35 also point forward to Jesus’ dying on the Cross and thus to his *literally* laying down his life in harmony with 1 John 3:16, “Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”? (The phrase “of God” was supplied by the translators and should be deleted.)

A: Yes, and sometimes that is not easy for us to do. It is pleasant to be always loving and forgiving—to just let everything go. Universal Salvationists are the sweetest people, but they do not have a *principled* love. They believe everybody will be saved, even Satan. In their midst there are no arguments, no reproofs—how nice!

Comment: Previously Jesus said that the greatest commandments in the Law were to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... soul, ... mind, and ... strength” and to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:30,31). But here Jesus goes one step further in the “neighbor” aspect: “Love your brethren *as I have loved you.*”

Reply: Yes, the Christian is to lay down his life for the brethren. That was not a requirement under the Law, yet if one truly loves God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, he will automatically obey this new commandment.

Comment: At the end of the age, the feet members will have a counterpart experience. If we love our brethren as Jesus loved us, we will not hesitate to do certain things even in the face of persecution. These verses are a caution to us not to deny or betray because we may all be tested very severely along the line of really loving our brethren.

Reply: When Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, “Do not apprehend my followers. It is me you want. Take me and leave them alone.” His concern was that they should not suffer for what he was doing. He was willing to shoulder his own personal responsibility.

John 13:36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

It would be a *long time* afterwards that Peter would be able to follow Jesus—not just when he finished his earthly course but in 1878, when the sleeping saints were raised.

John 13:37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Here is another case where Peter's heart was right, but he spoke too impulsively. Jesus had to, in a sense, rebuke him (verse 38). With the prediction about Peter's denial recorded in advance, we can better appreciate Jesus' insight into character and also how penetrating the experience was for Peter when, after the triple denial, Jesus looked directly at him.

This lesson applies to us as well. We should not be too boastful and overly sure of our relationship and loyalty to the Lord under circumstances of extreme duress. However, we should keep in mind that although Peter did vehemently deny the Lord three times, that was not his normal character. His action was not premeditated. He had intended to be loyal.

John 13:38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Mark 14:30 states Jesus' words to Peter a little differently: "Verily I say unto thee, ... before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." The word "twice" is missing in the Sinaitic Manuscript and should be deleted. Also, in Mark 14:68 the clause "and the cock crew" is spurious, as are the words "twice" and "the second time" in Mark 14:72. The Vatican Manuscript contains these words, but they are absent in the Sinaitic, and the Sinaitic is more reliable—although no currently available manuscript is perfect.

Evidently Jesus *repeated* his prediction that Peter would deny him thrice before the cock crowed. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the statement was made *after* the apostles had left the Upper Room to go to Gethsemane. But in John's Gospel the incident occurred *before* they left the room.

Mark 14:31 adds another detail: "But he [Peter] spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. *Likewise also said they all.*" Taking Peter's lead, the other apostles also said they would not deny Jesus.

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

This new chapter is still taking place at the scene of the Memorial. The word "also" shows *separateness* of personality between the Father and the Son—*two* personalities. The Revised Standard omits "ye" and puts "hearts" in the plural. The omission gives a slightly different thought. "Let not your hearts be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

Why did Jesus say this about their hearts not being troubled? Already there was confusion and he knew that doubt and confusion would increase subsequently when he was crucified. Their faith in him as Messiah would be shaken. He also may have been thinking about the betrayal, which was mentioned just a short time before. Judas Iscariot had left, so Jesus was addressing the faithful eleven when he said, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why did Jesus add these words? In John 13:36 Jesus said plainly that where he was going, they could not then follow him (in fact, not until 1878). In view of his coming crucifixion, it was important that they believe in him and in

the power of resurrection. The confusion at the table stemmed from several things: the betrayal, the coming crucifixion, the question as to who would be greatest in the Kingdom. All sorts of strange thoughts were going around in their minds on this solemn occasion.

The disciples were bewildered at the thought of separation from Jesus. For 3 1/2 years they had followed him and gone everywhere with him, forsaking homes and families. Now they were puzzled and confused to hear he would leave them. His absence was a troubling thought. Their expectations were being dashed. The multitudes had cried "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and the establishment of the Kingdom had seemed imminent. Now Jesus was saying everything to the contrary.

He was telling the eleven to cling to their faith, which would be needed in the difficult time immediately ahead. Their faith would be tried, not only in respect to Jesus but also in respect to God. They had thought God was using Jesus as His mouthpiece, for on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John had heard a voice say, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him!" (Matt. 17:5). There they had a contact with God, as it were, and they saw Jesus in resplendent, effulgent glory with his face and garments shining. Jesus' appearance, coupled with his tumultuous welcome on his Triumphal Entry, had enkindled *great* hope, but now all hope was turning dark. Jesus would be betrayed and crucified, and Peter would deny him three times.

All of these factors led to Jesus' statement in verse 1 about their hearts and believing in God and him. A very troublesome situation indeed existed among those who were there. Jesus realized the apostles were about to go through deep waters and would need every ounce of faith to carry them through his crucifixion, etc. He was saying, in effect, "No matter what happens from here on, keep your trust and confidence in God—and also trust in me."

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Why did Jesus make this statement? For one thing, the dispute had recently occurred regarding who was greatest. Therefore, Jesus was assuring the eleven that he was making preparations and there would be room for all of them. Also, this statement explains one reason for his long subsequent absence. Rather than be a sign of disinterest in them, his absence indicated his *continued* interest in them to prepare a place for when they would later follow him.

What is the thought of "many mansions"? In the good or favorable sense, there are various planes of existence or strata of society in the heavenly realm: angels, principalities, and powers. In fact, there are five planes of spiritual being, and in each plane the Father has many mansions, houses, and dwelling places. However, at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, a place had not yet been prepared for the Church in glory. Jesus was saying that he would *personally* superintend the preparing of that mansion.

We can actually think of this specially prepared residence as a house—a *spiritual* house. The Scriptures show that after the Kingdom Age the Church will be in a *place*. During the Kingdom the Church will be down here in earth's atmosphere to reign over the earth, but afterwards they will go to their residence. And even during the reign the Church (and Jesus) will not be fettered here, for they will go to the heavenly throne from time to time as ambassadors and for further instruction. The word "mansion" implies both a *place* of residence and a *condition* of being.

Comment: During Jesus' ministry the apostles left homes and families. For all practical purposes they did not know where their next meal would come from or where they would sleep from night to night. The word "mansions" would arouse their attention because it implied a permanent home.

Reply: Yes, and the superiority of the coming residence would make anything down here seem paltry and insignificant. Although conjectural, it seems that an entire universe will be assigned to each member of the Little Flock in the future. Each member will have various spheres of influence. Moreover, the implication is that, for expediency, each one will be assigned a place of residence in the respective universe. The additional abode is comparable to wealthy people now having more than one residence. Therefore, the word "mansions" would include not only a particular place where the Little Flock could meet with Jesus but also a private residence—or possibly even several.

In the absence of Jesus during the 2,000 years, guardian angels and sub-guardian angels have been watching out for the interests of the consecrated. Of course difficult problems are taken to Jesus or even the Heavenly Father. In the meantime, Jesus has been preparing this place along with gardens, brooks, trees, flowers, etc. The spirit realm is even *more real* than what we think is terra firma. Wouldn't the God who created the scent of flowers on earth have a sense of smell? Wouldn't He look on variety in the heavenly realm since He created variety down here? If there are flowers in the physical realm, aren't there flowers in the spiritual realm? It would be very strange indeed if the divine nature were merely a mental state and none of these spiritual counterparts were necessary. Jesus has a nice wedding gift for all who make their calling and election sure.

"If it were not so, I would have told you." Why did Jesus say this? It takes time to understand John's Gospel. The other three Gospels are historical, whereas John writes on principles and deeper things. Here Jesus' counsel, given exclusively to his apostles, requires consideration and analysis. Jesus was saying, "I would not have engendered these hopes in you and this love of being so closely associated with me if there were not a genuine reality of being with me in the future." Earlier Jesus had said the apostles would sit with him on 12 thrones in the Kingdom—and other fragmented comments also engendered the hope of being with him. Thus he gave prior promises regarding the faithful, and now he says he would not have engendered the hopes "if it were not so." In other words, Jesus is thoroughly honest and open in what he says, and whether or not we appreciate them, some of his statements have *great depth* of meaning.

John 14:3 **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.**

This statement clearly tells us not only that Jesus will go away but that he will come back to get the faithful. "I am going away to prepare a place for you. Although there are many mansions in my Father's house, I will create a new mansion for you. And when I come again, that house will be ready." The preparation of the mansion precedes Jesus' return.

Thus Jesus has a surprise in store for the 144,000. Instead of the usual custom for the woman to have a hope chest, the "man" (our Lord) is preparing one. To a certain extent we can add to the hope chest by laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt. But Jesus has a wonderful surprise in reservation for the faithful.

Psalm 45:13,14 tells us, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” The Bride is embroidering her garments and getting her bridal trousseau ready. She shall be brought to the King’s house in fine raiment of needlework, but her outer garments will then be of fine gold. The needlework represents personal development of character, but on top of this will be clothing of gold (the divine nature).

“I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jesus probably uttered this statement slowly and with great depth of feeling. It is interesting that only John recorded these words of the Master following the Memorial, and his Gospel was the *last* to be written.

John 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Jesus had told the disciples previously that he must go to the Father (John 7:33), but at this time his words had not fully sunk in. They knew about a coming Kingdom and that they were to rule (Matt. 19:28), but they did not comprehend the spiritual aspect. By saying, “whither I go *ye know*, and the way *ye know*,” Jesus was shocking them into paying more attention to what he was saying. Sometimes a professor who is teaching a subject that is apt to produce drowsiness in his hearers will make a certain statement to wake them up. Different methods can be used. For example, sometimes a misstatement is intentionally made to arouse alertness. Morally and ethically this technique is not wrong. Of course if the person making the misstatement died the next moment, then what he said would be a lie, but when the technique is used in the sense of *teaching*, it is not a lie. When Jesus said, “The way *ye know*,” they really did not know or understand what he meant. True, they were following him, but they did not know *where* he was going. Jesus uttered these words *to make them respond*—and Thomas did, asking the question that was in all of their minds (verse 5).

In other words, Jesus’ statement was a stimulus, and he often used a variation of this technique. In a parable, for example, Jesus would make a statement to shatter our sense of values. We expect the natural conclusion to be so-and-so, but he said, “No, it is the opposite!” Sometimes he explained why, and other times he did not. One such statement is Mark 10:31, “Many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” This is a different type of thinking.

John 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Thomas’s question proves the disciples did not understand much about Jesus’ going away. “If we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?” In other words, one must know a destination before starting towards it.

Jesus’ response (verses 6 and 7) was what the disciples had been doing for 3 1/2 years—*they had been following him*. But as to where he was going, that was another matter. His technique of trying to wake them up makes us stop and think of the situation back there.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

These verses are deep expressions of truth—far deeper than the apostles could understand at that time. While Jesus’ statement “I am the way, the truth, and the life” can be related to the Tabernacle (the gate, the First Veil, and the Second Veil, respectively), the meaning is even deeper.

“I am the way.” In other words, “This is the way. Follow *me*.” Countless others down through history have claimed to be “the way.” Many divergent ways have been presented for finding and attaining life’s objective. Thinking people may say, “I will not be in this life too long. What shall I do to benefit self or fellowman?” They want to be gainfully employed with regard to their ideals, and many attractions exist. Thus Jesus’ words are very significant—that out of the multitude of those who profess similarly, *he alone* is the way.

“I am ... the truth.” When we first accept the truth, it is because *we know* it is true. When we consecrate, *we know* this is the truth. The hymn goes “I love to tell the story because I know it’s *true*.” And truth begets *hope*. We do not want to follow a dream or something that just sounds good. Authenticity is the building block of hope and faith.

“I am ... the life.” Barring an abnormality, everyone wants life. The Apostle John appreciated *everlasting* life very much, and several places in his writings he emphasized the *gift* of life even to those who run the race for the high calling but are relegated to the Great Company. Everlasting life, even if not the divine nature, is a *tremendous* hope.

These three ingredients are so essential—to be directed to the right path or *way*, and knowing that it is the *truth* and that it leads to *life*. The path to life is a *narrow way*, “and *few* there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14). Once the way is found, it must be *entered*.

Initially we are searching to find God (Acts 17:27). “Who are you, Lord? Where are you?” Our initial thoughts are not on the divine nature—that is a later and a higher hope. It is important to realize at the start that God has called *each one* of us *personally*. It is essential to know in the beginning that *Jesus* is the way, the truth, and the life.

Here again, in verse 7, Jesus ended his statement with something of a shocker: “If ye had known me, ye should have *known my Father* also: and from henceforth ye ... *have seen him*.” In other words, “You have seen God! You have seen the Father!” As intended, Jesus’ words brought a response. Therefore, if we just absorb the truth without questions, without interest and enthusiasm, we are not the class Jesus is really looking for. By putting out a leading statement, he aroused and stimulated those with the right heart condition.

Trinitarians claim that verse 7 proves Jesus and the Father are the same being. How would we refute this? John 1:18 tells us, “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*” And 1 John 4:12 says, “*No man hath seen God at any time.*” Notice that both of these Scriptures were written by the *same* apostle, whose Gospel we are studying. The apostles saw and were with Jesus but *did not literally see God*. These verses do not contradict John 14:7, for here Jesus is referring to God’s *character*. We both know and see God through Jesus’ *perfect* character: his words and actions.

Along this same line, two additional Scriptures rebut the Trinity. 1 Timothy 6:16 refers to Jehovah: “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*” Again the Apostle John’s words are pertinent:

“And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape” (John 5:37).

John 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Philip was the next apostle to respond. He was puzzled. Earlier Thomas was the spokesman for the group (verse 5). Now Philip expressed what the others were thinking. Verse 8 proves the eleven could not have comprehended the depth of what Jesus was saying until later, that is, not until after they received the Holy Spirit.

Just like the English word “show” (and “see”), the Greek word for “show” can be used either literally or figuratively. Context determines the usage. In 1 Corinthians 12:31 “show” is figurative: “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet *show* I unto you a more excellent way.” “Show” is also figurative here in John 14:8,9.

Philip certainly did not think Jesus’ remark in verse 7 meant that he and the Father were the same being, that he was the Father. That is why Philip replied, “Show us the Father.” Philip was looking for something more. Nevertheless, Jesus continued in the same vein in verse 9.

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

“Have you known me so long, Philip, and yet you ask me this question?” (paraphrase). Philip certainly did not think that in beholding Jesus visually, he was looking at the Father, but he missed the other point; namely, *if God were in the flesh, He would do exactly what Jesus was doing*. He would talk like Jesus, do works like Jesus, and instruct like Jesus. Hence the Son was a *character likeness* of the Father. To get across the point that the very things he was doing would be what God would do if He appeared in the flesh, Jesus repeated here in verses 7 and 9 what he had said earlier in John 8:19, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:7). Of course, as Emperor of the universe, God could not leave His throne and come down here to satisfy Philip—or anyone else.

John 14:10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Trinitarians think the Godhead consists of three persons and yet one person. How would we rebut this thinking regarding Jesus’ two statements in verse 10 “I am in the Father, and the Father [is] in me” and “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works”? We can use verse 20 of this same chapter: “I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” In other words, in whatever sense Jesus is in the Father, he was in the disciples too. The same apostle made both statements. The *same* dwelling of the Father that is in Jesus also takes place in the brotherhood, in the Church. This thought is repeated in John 17:21, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they [those who would become Jesus’ disciples all down the age] also may be one in us.” In fact, John 17:21 is the rebuttal for “I and my Father are one.” In other words, the *same unity* is to be in the Church. Therefore, any who think the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are a mysterious Trinity in one

must include the Church in that Trinity too. Jesus prayed that *as* (or *in the same way*) he and the Father were one, his followers would be one with both of them. Jesus desired to please the Father and thus had the *same purpose*, but they were two *separate* beings, just as husband and wife are considered “one” but are *separate* individuals.

The Holy Spirit that enabled Jesus to speak the words the Father gave him also operates in his faithful followers. And in the past God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets (2 Pet. 1:21). Hence they could speak “thus saith the Lord.” The Father’s instructions, which they voiced, were the indwelling of the Spirit—even if the words were mechanically uttered. God was “in” the messenger who so revealed His thoughts. And it is the same principle here with Jesus. He spoke and did the things *God* wanted.

The latter half of verse 10 (“the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works”) is similar to John 5:19. “Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” By repeating this theme, Jesus was indicating, “Stop and think about what I am saying.” The Apostle John set the tone in John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” In other words, we would not visually or literally see God, but Jesus would “declare” him.

John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Jesus was saying that the relationship he and the Heavenly Father had would also be *shared* by those who believe into Christ.

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Other Scriptures must be considered in order to clarify and moderate these remarks. A prayer should always have the condition “Thy will be done” even if it is not expressed. And certainly we should not pray for material wealth.

James 4:3 reads, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Of course we should not utter selfish material prayers. However, a circumstance might arise where we would ask for something material predicated upon “if it be thy will.” We might explain to the Lord in prayer why we are making such a request—that it is not for self-use but for some other purpose. In such a case, the Lord might grant the petition.

On the other hand, God will not refuse us if we ask to develop the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits are what He wants us to request.

1 John 5:14,15 reads, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we

ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” Again the Apostle John is speaking. What he recorded Jesus as saying in his Gospel he restated slightly differently in his epistle. The first epistle of John also states the requirement for having prayers answered: “that we *keep his commandments*” and do the things that are pleasing in God’s sight (1 John 5:3). *Obedience* and *effort* are required on our part in order to receive. The principle is the same with truth. We are to search for truth as for hid treasure, as for silver and gold.

To ask in a pleading or opportuning sense is pleasing to God. Just as a natural father would give bread to a child who pleaded for it, so the Heavenly Father is pleased to grant proper requests (Matt. 7:9).

Q: We pray *to* God *through* Jesus, and we usually think of a petition being answered by the Father. How would we harmonize Jesus’ statement here that “If ye shall ask ... in my name, I will do it”?

A: Jesus *appears* to be the prime actor in verses 13 and 14, but the Father actually is. The answers to our prayers come *through* Jesus, who serves as our *Advocate*, but it is God who answers yes or no. We ask God through Jesus (or in his name). If God gives approval, He nods His head to Jesus. Then Jesus provides the answer. Jesus is more actively associated with the Church because the Father, as Emperor of the universe, has delegated certain prerogatives to the Son. The only reason we can seek the Father’s face is because we follow Jesus. When the high priest tended the candlestick, he was actually a representative of *God*.

Much must be read into the Apostle John’s remarks. The way he thinks and reasons can be more easily understood if his Gospel is considered *as a whole* and the *context* is studied. *We cannot take isolated statements* and build principles. To understand John, we must get the gist of his characteristic speaking manner. (That is true of Jesus too.) The repetition is necessary in order to get John’s point.

What is the distinction between Jesus’ being an Advocate and his being a Mediator? A mediator mediates between two opposing parties who are alienated—in this case, God and the individual. How is Jesus an Advocate? His merit is imputed so that the Christian can have a standing with God. (Incidentally, Evangelical churches pray to Jesus—they do not get the feeling of praying to the Father.) Stated another way, a mediator stands *between*; an advocate stands *beside*. An advocate is like a lawyer. A public advocate assists in getting petitions into the court system; he helps with grievances.

Certain Scriptures speak of Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Hence the role of Mediator relates to the Kingdom. (If Jesus were the Mediator *now*, we would have to be under the New Covenant *now*.) In the Kingdom the world will deal with Jesus more personally even in their prayer life. It is God’s Kingdom, but He turns it over to Christ. Jesus will stand in between mankind and God, but at the end of the thousand years, when the obedient of mankind will have progressed to what Adam was before the Fall, Jesus will step out and turn the Kingdom over to the Father, there being no further need for a Mediator.

John 14:15 **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

This thought is repeated in 1 John 5:3, the *same apostle’s* epistle. The repetition, plus other similarities, shows how poignant the evening’s experiences were to John—they scored his memory very deeply. Another example is the repeated phrase “little children.” Much of

John's Gospel is devoted to happenings on the night of the Memorial (Chapter 13 into Chapter 18). The other Gospels do not record Jesus' sermonette.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

A comparison of verses 15 and 16 reveals a *general* lesson that has applied down through the Gospel Age, namely, that sincere repentance and an attempt to conform to Jesus' instructions must precede consecration and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The Tabernacle Court shows progression; ie, prior to consecration, one is *in the way* of justification. When consecration does take place, the evidence that it has occurred is the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which is a bona fide seal that a contract has been made.

By stating that he would give the disciples "another Comforter," Jesus was implying that he would leave them. Of course he said he would be with them all down the age, but they would lose the *personal* contact of speaking directly with him, which they had enjoyed for the 3 1/2 years.

"I will pray the Father." When did Jesus "pray the Father"? In the Garden of Gethsemane. After he talked with the apostles, he had a long prayer with the Father concerning their welfare, and here he is saying that his intention was to pray for them—to pray that the Father would give them the Comforter. Certainly the glorified risen Christ, who is in heaven with the Father, no longer has to pray to Him in this sense. No, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The beseeching took place down here. He was telling his followers that he would ask the Father to send them a Comforter. If properly obedient unto death and raised to be with the Heavenly Father, Jesus would see to it that, in his stead, the Holy Spirit of truth would guide the Church. "Comforter" is the Greek *parakletos*, meaning "helper, sustainer, assistance, encouragement, strengthening."

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Changing the pronouns "he" and "him" to "it" is more accurate. Although the Greek language has a neuter gender, it uses male and female for a lot of things that we apply a neuter to in English. For example: "The sun [he] is warm." "The moon [she] is bright."

The Holy Spirit is not a personality any more than the spirit of fear, the spirit of envy, etc. *Volume 5* compares the numerous references of a *holy* Spirit versus an *unholy or evil* spirit. The comparison broadens our thinking to realize the Holy Spirit is not a personality.

Those who believe the Holy Spirit is a personality do not talk too much about the subject because there is a scarcity of information in the Scriptures. For the most part, it is hard to read into texts on the Holy Spirit that it is a personality. John 14:17 is an exception.

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

John 14:19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

Jesus said the world would not see him but his disciples would. What is the thought? The

general lesson is that only those who receive a *spiritual* resurrection will see Jesus, and they will see him *as he is* (1 John 3:2). But what was the thought back there at the time Jesus uttered the statement?

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more.” It is true that from the time Jesus was crucified and buried, the world saw him no more. However, there is a *dispensational* aspect. When Jesus was raised a spirit being, he appeared (that is, materialized) on and off for 40 days. The disciples did see him, but he did not appear as they had known him previously. Thus Jesus was saying in verse 19, “I must absent myself for a little while, but I will be back. Before I truly leave you and the Holy Spirit comes, you will see me for a brief interlude.” When Jesus appeared in different forms during the 40 days, the disciples recognized him by the characteristic mannerisms and /or words he used. For that *brief* period of time, they heard his voice and could even touch him—something his followers have not been able to do down through the age.

God permitted Jesus to materialize during the 40 days, but these materializations were an exception to the rule. If we consider all the times Jesus appeared to the disciples during the 40 days, and if we could calculate the hours exactly, the total would probably be *less than a third or a fourth of one day* because he disappeared for *long periods of time* after only brief appearances. He appeared just often enough and long enough to convince the disciples of his resurrection. The longest conversation was on the way to Emmaus.

To a large extent, our faith in Jesus is based upon the testimony of the apostles. They saw and talked with him both before and after his resurrection. John says, “*We know* this one came from God. We saw him. We touched him. We conversed with him” (1 John 1:1). The Holy Spirit helps us *to know* that the things recorded about Jesus are true. Through the apostles’ eyes, we see Jesus.

John 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

“At that day [that is, at Pentecost and progressively until the spirit birth takes place] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” If we consider this verse from the standpoint of Jesus talking to his apostles, they were overjoyed when they became *convinced* of his resurrection and realized that he had indeed risen from the dead. From that day forward, for the rest of their lives, they met all kinds of persecution, famine, homelessness, etc., in the security of that knowledge.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Certain words should be emphasized: “He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that *loveth* me.”

John 14:22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Notice that when the apostles Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot) questioned Jesus in verses 5, 8, and 22, they preceded the question with “Lord.” That humility, that recognition, that decorum, characterized them and it was proper. We should have the same attitude of not being too familiar with either God or Jesus. Nevertheless, we have the full freedom of

going to the throne of grace in joy, in sorrow, and in pain. Sometimes the disciples used "Master" instead of "Lord." Even the world used some decorum in addressing Jesus as "Rabbi."

Judas was referring to Jesus' comment in verse 21: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them ... loveth me: ... he ... shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and ... *manifest* myself to him." Judas misunderstood and was thinking of a *visible* manifestation.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

The peace of God dwelling in our hearts is evidence that the Father and the Son are abiding with us. In other words, having the peace of God is the practical effect of our dwelling in union with Jesus. It is through the Holy Spirit that God and Jesus abide with the Christian. We must read and meditate on—and thus understand—Jesus' words in order to obey them. Then the words become more life-giving because they are indwelling in us through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was tying in his thoughts in verse 16 about the Holy Spirit abiding in the Christian. He was saying that the Father would send the Holy Spirit (the "Comforter") to abide in those who keep his words. Here in verse 23 Jesus repeated that thought, and verse 26 again mentions the Comforter to be sent by the Father. Because the words were not penetrating the minds of the apostles at that time (they had not yet been begotten by the Holy Spirit), Jesus repeated them with slightly different phraseology. Following Pentecost the disciples understood Jesus' words.

John 14:24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

This verse refutes the Trinity. Jesus *was sent* of or from God, and hence *cannot be God*.

John 14:25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Spirit would truly be a Comforter, for Jesus' words were not penetrating at this point. And of course the Holy Spirit has been a Comforter to all Christians down through the age.

In the early Church, the Lord's words were more real than they are today. Not only during Jesus' ministry of 3 1/2 years but afterwards when the apostles went out evangelizing, his presence was especially manifested to them. The power of the Holy Spirit was very marked. For one thing, no stenographer was recording Jesus' words. Therefore, the spirit of remembrance of Jesus' actual words and deeds throughout his ministry was necessary. The Holy Spirit operated *mightily* on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Mark and Luke were the amanuenses of Peter and Paul, respectively). To remember what Jesus said and did for 3 1/2 years means there must have actually been a *sensation* of remembrance.

Paraphrase of Jesus' words: "I am present with you now and talking to you, but when I

leave, the Father will send another Comforter to teach you and enable you to remember all that I have said.” The coming of the Holy Spirit would mean the opening of their minds—a wonderful experience!—and they would realize it. The apostles’ experience would be somewhat like Jesus’ own experience when he was immersed in Jordan. The Holy Spirit came on him without measure, flooding his mind with the remembrance of his previous existence.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

How does the world “give peace”? (Jesus was saying, “My peace is different from the world’s peace.”) Worldly peace is transitory. The world translates peace as success in business, acclamation, honor of men, wealth, protection from certain harmful things, etc. But Jesus’ peace is *peace of the heart and mind*—an *inward* peace. His peace penetrates the soul. In Matthew 10:34, he said that he came not to bring peace, but a sword. Thus exterior-wise, the Christian may have many discomfiting experiences. This was especially true after Jesus departed and the apostles tried to witness to their fellow Israelites. They met a lot of opposition. Their initial experience with Jesus made them very bold and strong because while other Jewish Christians were being scattered, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem much longer (although not until the Dispersion in AD 70). With Peter, James, and others moving down from Galilee, there was a nucleus in Jerusalem.

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” What was the initial trouble and fear? The apostles were troubled by Jesus’ imminent absence and separation from them. He was preparing them for events that were coming. Seeing him crucified and then actually leaving, being transported up into heaven, would all happen in about 50 days. Just a short time before, crowds had followed Jesus, and he was acclaimed when he entered the city, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Then would come the exact opposite experience. The humiliation of the Cross would stigmatize his teachings and cause them to become like a stench in the nostrils of the nation. Jesus would be leaving at the time the apostles would feel they needed him most. Knowing what would happen, Jesus said unto them, “Do not let these things frighten you. If you really understood matters in their proper light, you would realize it is in your best interest that I go away, because something else will happen for your good.” One thing was their discipline (persecution), as hard as that was to accept. But the long-range outcome of their faithfulness would work out better for them than if Jesus remained in their presence and coddled them.

This same principle of not fearing has applied throughout the Gospel Age, and it will apply right to the end of the age. However, the heel members will have mixed experiences—just as Jesus needed diverse experiences at the end of his earthly ministry.

“Let not your heart be troubled.” Jesus used the same words to introduce the chapter. He was saying to have confidence in him. His leaving was for their good, and something would replace his absence, namely, the Holy Spirit. The apostles did not understand Jesus’ words at the time, but the spirit of remembrance helped them subsequently. When Jesus departed, no literal man abode with the apostles. True, Jesus had been *literally* present, but no man took his place. However, the Comforter was *literally* present as the *Holy Spirit*, not as a person they could talk to. The Holy Spirit was the miraculous power of calling things to remembrance and giving them the ability to understand and interpret. It will “teach you all things ... [as well as call] all things to your remembrance” (verse 26).

John 14:28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

This concept was hard for the disciples to grasp. They were naturally *sorry* to hear that Jesus was going away, and then he said, “If ye loved me, ye would *rejoice*.” The rejoicing was predicated on *faith*. We should take time to consider the clause: “If ye *loved* me.” To have the love of Christ meant to have complete confidence and faith in Jesus’ leadership—even though he was absent. He had schooled the disciples for his absence. First, he was in the boat with them during a storm, then he was on a mountain but came to them in another storm, and finally he went away to a higher “mountain,” that is, to heaven. All of this teaching was to help the disciples put their hands into the hand of God and to trust in God and in Jesus.

Verse 1 says, “Ye believe in God,” but it should read, “*Believe* ye in God; *believe* also in me [because I go to the Father].” We must have confidence in the Heavenly Father, who is *greater* than Jesus, and then have confidence in Jesus. If so, then Jesus says, “I will not forget you. The Father will send you the Holy Spirit in my name.” In other words, we must *pray* for the Holy Spirit. We must pray to the Father in Jesus’ name and *hunger* for the truth in order to be the recipient of a larger indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The source of the Holy Spirit (the oil) is God. We receive the Holy Spirit through Jesus, our High Priest. He supplies the oil as *God’s* minister.

Notice how Jesus *magnifies* the Father. Instead of supporting the Trinity, John’s Gospel does the opposite. For Jesus to go to One who is *greater than he*, and for *both* to come and make their abode with the disciples, would be an additional comfort. Acceptance of this reasoning would come with maturity of development.

John 14:29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Even in Old Testament times God used this principle. Noah was warned 120 years in advance of the coming Flood. Abraham was apprised of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah before it occurred. Israel was warned of coming trouble regarding both 606 BC and AD 69–70. And so, now, the feet members are given much information about the end of the age. It is up to us to use the information, to put on the armor. The slogan “Prophecy cannot be understood until it is fulfilled” is not true. We know in advance about the Kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, etc. The secret of the Lord is revealed to His disciples in whatever age (Deut. 29:29; Psa. 25:14; Amos 3:7).

Seeing Jesus’ crucifixion and the events leading to it was the lowest ebb of the disciples’ lives, but later, when the Holy Spirit helped them to remember that he had prophesied his death and many of his experiences, they were convinced that Jesus truly was the Messiah. Instead of having a weak faith and wondering whether he was the Messiah, they **KNEW** he was. Their faith had been strengthened. The purpose of telling in advance what will happen is to establish *faith* so that when the event does occur, one’s consecration will not be shipwrecked.

Real faith is not credulity but is based on the Word of God, and it requires a measure of understanding. One may have to go forward not knowing, but up to that point, the individual has an accumulation of experiences to draw on. Stated another way, one may

have to take a step into the unknown, but it is strengthening to have been led up to that point.

John 14:30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

Jesus gave the reason he would not henceforth talk much with the apostles; namely, he would be interrupted by the “prince of this world.” The eleven had just had a blessed hour or two of complete quiet with Jesus after Judas, the betrayer, left. Jesus talked heart to heart with them. However, from the time of his apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane until his death, he talked *very little* with them. He looked at Peter and committed his mother into John’s care. Even after his resurrection, Jesus did not talk much with them compared to previously.

The “prince of this world” came when Judas initiated the betrayal with a kiss. In the tumult and confusion that ensued, the disciples fled. John and Peter followed at a distance, after which Peter denied Jesus three times.

Satan “hath nothing in me.” Once the betrayal took place, Satan was incorrigible and without any hope of retrieval. Satan had nothing in common with Jesus. Jesus had complete love and obedience for the Father. His speaking the words the Father gave him was absolutely contrary to what Satan did. Therefore, if in the future at the end of the age, there is a false manifestation of the coming of Jesus, it will be short-lived because the Adversary has no love for him. Satan could not masquerade in that posture for any length of time. It would simply be as an opening wedge to lead into other error or deception. Such deception is reflected in the Roman Catholic religion, which is the religion of Satan, as it were. The emphasis is on the pope, Mary, and the saints, not on Jesus. Personal salvation seems to be completely absent. The false doctrines are characteristic of the one behind the false system.

John 14:31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Jesus was concluding his remarks at the Memorial table. Now he and the apostles would start for the Garden of Gethsemane. His subsequent experiences—his submission to them—would be recognized as a proof that he loved the Father. Jesus professed to be the Messiah, the sent One of God, yet he walked willingly to his death. Even the world admires Jesus’ fidelity to his views, the consistency of his behavior and doctrine. He was no coward.

Always in the back of Jesus’ mind, while he was talking to the eleven for an hour or two, the clock was ticking. He knew he had to get to Gethsemane in time for the betrayal, so he must end the lesson. The crucifixion process had to begin exactly at 9 a.m. Thus Jesus was bringing the session to a close, although he still talked as he walked to Gethsemane. (The distance between the Upper Room and Gethsemane was about one-half mile, so the walk would take a little while, especially because of the hilly terrain.)

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Indirectly, this verse is a great proof against the Trinity, for how could the vine be equal to the One who is *in charge* of the vine? Moreover, if Jesus is the “*true vine*,” this would suggest that there are other or *false* vines, which are not of the Father’s planting.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

God takes away every branch in Jesus that does not bear fruit. On the other hand, God prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it may bring forth even more fruit.

When a person consecrates, he is in the vine. Every individual who is called and accepts Jesus on the proper grounds is in the vine. Based on many other Scriptures, we know that most will not make the high calling. Of those who do not, two possible destinies remain: the secondary Great Company class or Second Death.

In this parable, what about the branch that is taken away—the branch that bears *no fruit*? Do overcomers (as opposed to *more* than overcomers) remain in the vine, or are they separated? Only the Little Flock remain in the vine. Those who are taken out of the vine will either end up in Second Death or have their flesh consumed by the Adversary to become part of the Great Company. In other words, although the Great Company do bear fruit, their fruit is not enough to remain in the vine in the sense of the parable.

As to whether the parable is emphasizing a Second Death or a Great Company destiny for those who are removed from the vine, even Pastor Russell wavered back and forth in his interpretation. In his early writings, he felt that the ones who are taken away do not necessarily go into Second Death. They simply fail to attain the Little Flock. He probably based his reasoning on 1 Corinthians 3:13–15, where the Apostle Paul says every man's work will be made manifest. The fire of that day will try the work, and the wood, hay, and stubble will all perish, yet the individuals themselves will be saved "so as by fire." In other words, in this illustration a class can be totally burned (have their flesh destroyed) and yet get life.

Thus two types of interpretation can be pursued for this parable. The fact that the cut-off branch "withers" creates a problem (verse 6). One explanation is that Jesus is considering only the Little Flock here and is ignoring the Great Company. The lesson would be that for one to stay in the vine in a particular arrangement with the Lord as his Church, he must bear fruit. That seems to be the better interpretation. However, the parable is difficult to interpret with definiteness. If a person is cut off from the vine, separated from fellowship with Christ, is there hope for him? The destruction would seem to be severe, but on the other hand, those who do bring forth fruit—even if not much—are pruned to bring forth more fruit. This parable has several dilemmas, but it is particularly concentrating on what Jesus is looking for, ie, the true Church.

The Pastor referred to those who are cut off as "suckers on the vine." Suckers are cut off so that more fruitage can be brought to the vine. Thus the branches that bear fruit must be pruned a certain way so that they will bring forth even more fruit.

Comment: The thought of "suckers" is interesting. Suckers are useless growths that sap the energy of the vine but do not produce fruit. They are meant to be severed from the vine. This principle would apply to the Lord's people. One who does not add to the body, does not serve and encourage the brethren, etc., but just takes and takes from others would be a "sucker." It is like the concept of lukewarmness, which pulls down the others rather than building them up. That is why those who are lukewarm will be spewed out of the Lord's mouth. Not only do they not contribute but they take away from the others.

Reply: However, this parable does not say that the Great Company remain on the vine. Notice how the parable ends. It does not say that the cut-off branches are destroyed—they are just burned. The point is that a class are separated from the vine and burned, but since they are not destroyed, the emphasis of the illustration is on the *fruitage*, not on the other particulars. Otherwise, the Great Company would have to remain on the vine. Those who do not produce fruitage are severed. Those who do produce fruit are pruned to produce more fruit. This parable seems to emphasize only the true Church. Even the destruction is not emphasized—just the true Church and their *fruitage*.

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Notice the term “*much* fruit” is used here. Only the true Church can be said to bring forth much fruit, not the Great Company. Jesus said, “If you abide in me, you *will bring forth* much fruit,” not “maybe you will.” The parable is referring to a closer relationship to the Lord than merely being faithful in the sense of not disowning him. The class who bear much fruit are very knowledgeable as to what the Lord’s will is. The emphasis is on the fruit, not the destiny. Only the Little Flock truly abide in the Lord, and the Lord truly abides in them.

Comment: The Little Flock are constantly on the alert to get rid of the defilement of the flesh, and to be as obedient as possible to the Father’s will.

John 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Surely verse 7 would not apply to the Great Company class. Only the Little Flock can pray and ask what they will and it shall be done accordingly, for they would not ask amiss. They would not pray selfishly and can be trusted because Jesus’ words abide in them. The Little Flock ask in harmony with God’s will. The “abiding” here is a *close* relationship, one the Great Company does not have.

Comment: Progression and growth of fruitage are shown. Verse 2 says that the ones who bear some fruit are pruned to bring forth *more* fruit. If they continue to abide, they will bring forth *much* fruit (verse 5).

This is a difficult parable, and it should not be blended with other pictures, which is easy to do. The ones who are rejected do not seem to go into Second Death.

Q: It is hard to see that the taking away of the non-fruit-bearing branch does not picture Second Death. Verse 4 says that the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine. This thought seems to correspond to the withering idea. The end of verse 5 says, “Without me [severed from me—King James margin] ye can do *nothing*.” It would seem that once the

branch is cut off, not only is there no more growth but there is a deterioration as well. If so, how could the parable apply to the Great Company, who are at least overcomers?

A: However, other pictures show that a burning is not necessarily a complete destruction. The Apostle Paul speaks of some who build with wood, hay, and stubble, which are not “fruit.” Gold, silver, and precious stones are the “fruit” in the mineral kingdom. The ores are separated from the ground and purified, usually through a process of refinement. With the wood, hay, and stubble, the destruction is also a process, but the individual is saved.

In the parable the arrangement is *two ways*: (1) If Jesus’ followers abide in him, and (2) if he abides in them. The Great Company abide in Christ, but he does not abide in them. Why not? Because they are not dedicated enough to know—and to want to know *fully*—God’s or Christ’s will concerning them. The emphasis seems to be on the fruit.

Comment: Dispensationally speaking, the Great Company will go into the “fire” at the end of the age, for they enter the great Time of Trouble as “tribulation saints” to wash their robes white. In another picture, the scapegoat will be taken into the wilderness condition to die.

After instructing his disciples for 3 1/2 years, Jesus told them, “If you *continue* to abide in me as you endeavored to do during my ministry, you will produce much fruit. As you are pruned and disciplined, you will develop more and more fruit.” After the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the fruitage would be produced. During the 3 1/2 years they were soaking in, like sponges, what Jesus was telling them. Instead of being exercised, they were being tutored. But after Pentecost they would have to go out and be Jesus’ representatives in a fuller sense.

Some seemingly simple subjects are more difficult to “mathematically” ascertain than other subjects that are a definite yes or no.

Q: Since some parables exclude the Great Company class, could that be the case here? Then this parable would show just the Church and the Second Death class.

A: When various *Reprint* articles on this parable are compared, certain problems surface. Notice, the “he” of verse 2 (the husbandman, ie, *God*) takes away the branch that does not bear much fruit. In trying to harmonize the parable, the Pastor said that those who take *themselves* away go into Second Death, as well as the ones the *Lord* takes away. Thus the Pastor did bring in a Second Death application for those who separate themselves from the love of God. But he also felt that those who are taken away do not necessarily go into Second Death.

Q: Would verse 11 be helpful here? “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be *full*.” John uses the thought of “full joy” in John 16:24; 17:13 and in 1 John 1:4. The Great Company will have joy, but would we say their joy was “full”? Since full joy is the goal here, wouldn’t the parable be slanted to the Little Flock?

A: The emphasis is on the *special* relationship of Jesus with the true Church class (the Little Flock). All others of the consecrated are separated regardless of ultimate destiny. Both the Second Death class and the Great Company will be burned in certain pictures.

One constructive lesson here is that of *fruit bearing*. The Father desires that *much* fruit be brought forth. Of course the pruning indicates discipline. In regard to pruning, the Pastor said that we might have certain cherished ambitions for a talent or talents in connection with what we would like to dedicate to the Lord, or for something else, but He might just lop them off. Instead of feeling frustration, we must resign ourselves to the Lord's will. We must accept that such was not the Lord's intention for us. The very thing we may want to do for the Lord may not materialize.

"If we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us," "If we obey his commandments," and "If his words abide in us"—these thoughts show the importance of instruction, of not merely wanting to do his will but of actually doing his will. What is "his will"? Jesus' will was exemplified in his life and in his teachings. Thus this parable shows the importance of instruction, pruning, and developing fruit—all constructive aspects. It is just the other area (being severed from the vine) that causes some difficulty. Perhaps we have been trying to bring in a class that is not meant to be dwelt upon; the Great Company are just passed over. There are alternate interpretations, and let us leave the parable there.

One other point, however. The Great Company class are separated from the Lord, but there are different kinds of separation. Examples of *temporary* separation are as follows: (1) On the Cross Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). That was a *momentary* feeling of separation from God because Jesus was a sin offering and had to be a curse. Separation was part of his development. (2) Another type of cutting off is like the scapegoat class in the wilderness. They will get a feeling of alienation and yet not be completely severed.

When we read the parable here in John 15, we are not sure what type of separation is indicated: permanent or temporary. Is it that God will have *nothing* more to do with the individual—is it that the individual has *no more life*? Both the Great Company and the Second Death class will be burned, but to *two* different destinations.

All who make a full, unreserved consecration go into the vine originally. To be part of the vine is a great privilege. In the years after consecration, self-examination is important. We can ask various questions: Do I love the Lord? If I could retrace or relive my life, would I again consecrate? Affirmative answers are very encouraging. To be several years in the truth is encouraging—showing that we still love the truth. These assurances will keep us from getting discouraged. Do I want God's will to be my will? Am I trying to please the Lord? Do I want to make my calling and election sure? These are helpful questions for judging ourselves. If we see some wavering on these simple questions, we know we need strength, personal prayer, fasting, prayers of others, etc. It is good to question our motives.

John 15:8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Verse 9 is *very tender*: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." In the present life we cannot fully appreciate the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the love

the Father has for the Son, yet Jesus said that *as the Father loves him, so he loves us*. Therefore, Jesus tells us to “*continue*” in his love. *By faith* we are to grasp that Jesus has a *personal interest* in *each one* of us as an individual.

Q: Verse 3 seems to have a bearing on what classes are being discussed in the parable about the true vine, the branches, and the husbandman: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Earlier this same night (of the Memorial and betrayal), Jesus had said (John 13:10), “Ye are clean, but not all,” referring to Judas when he was still present with them. In Chapter 15 Judas had left and Jesus was talking to the eleven. Jesus had hope—and actually knew—that the eleven would be faithful and bear much fruit. Would not the thought of the branch that did not bear fruit being taken away, withering, and being cast by men into the fire to be burned (John 15:2,6) refer to Judas specifically back there, indicating a contrast between the Little Flock and the Second Death class? We are not really considering the Great Company either in the much fruit bearing or in the destiny.

A: Yes, the bearing of *much* fruit was the focus of concentration, but we cannot be dogmatic in regard to the destiny of those who bear *no* fruit in the parable.

John 15:11 **These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

What is the “joy” of Jesus that he wishes will remain in his disciples and that he wants to *enhance*? Jesus talked about joy in at least three other places. (1) “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your *joy* may be full” (John 16:24). (2) “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they [the eleven apostles] might have my *joy* fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). (3) “And these things write we unto you, that your *joy* may be full” (1 John 1:4). All three of these Scriptures give the “joy” an application in the *present* life. Just before his execution Jesus was speaking of having this joy *himself* (“that *my* joy might remain in you”—the joy that he *then* had). Jesus wanted his disciples to have more fullness of joy in the *present* life. (Of course, an even greater joy awaits those who are faithful when they go beyond the veil.)

Jesus wanted his joy to *remain* in the disciples. In verse 10 he said, “If you *keep* my commandments, if you *abide* in this relationship of joy in committing your life to me and sitting at my feet to learn of me, you will have joy.” That is one aspect. “If you *retain* this relationship to the end of your earthly life, you will have the expectation of the reward I receive from the Father.”

In spite of the sorrows Jesus experienced at the Memorial table, he spoke of joy. His real joy was in knowing the Father and doing His will. That kind of joy and relationship are what Jesus was referring to here in verse 11.

In John 17 Jesus spoke about joy even though his agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane took place only moments later. And at the Memorial he said he was “exceeding sorrowful” (Matt. 26:38), yet he also spoke of joy. Thus the “joy” here is not the joy usually thought of. Joy is the opposite of sorrow, but there are different kinds of sorrow. For example, if we knew we were not doing God’s will, our sorrow would be worse than the kind of sorrow we would experience if we lost something, such as someone’s companionship. Sorrow from a serious transgression is much worse. Normally we think of things along human lines—joy is fun, having a nice social time (such as a birthday), etc.—but another kind of joy has nothing to do with the weather or external circumstances. It is the joy of communion with

God. Under that situation we could be anguishing and praying but be thankful that we have access to the throne of grace. Jesus was referring to that type of joy.

Comment: The husbandman (the Father) purges those who bear fruit so that they will bear more fruit. The purging and chastening experience may be hard, but when we realize it is proof the Father loves us, there is joy. If that relationship is maintained, we remain a branch on the vine.

Reply: While Jesus was giving his disciples information about how the husbandman prunes the vine, he himself was about to be pruned on the Cross. Although he was talking to his disciples, the principles and lessons apply to us too—usually. The secondary application can be very important.

The “joy” is like the joy David had: “I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psa. 40:8). “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). Whether pleasurable or not, we should want to do the Father’s will. “Send sorrow, send pain. Sweet will be their messengers, sweet their refrain.” These words of a hymn express the sentiment of one who is thoroughly consecrated. When shocking providences occur, we must be in a very consecrated attitude to accept them properly and say, “Sweet is their message, sweet is their refrain.”

Paul said that “no temptation for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous”; however, *afterward* it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb. 12:11). Experiences of sorrow and pain are better for us to have as long as we are rightly exercised and properly receive them. In other words, the *trial* of our faith is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tried by fire (1 Pet. 1:7). The fire or purging experience is extremely valuable even though it is not pleasant to go through. Hence we are to “think it not strange concerning the *fiery* trial which ... [trieth us], as though some strange thing happened” (1 Pet. 4:12). The tutoring and discipline of evil (unpleasant happenings) are more precious than gold.

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

The loving of one another is qualified: “*as I have loved you.*” We look to Jesus to see *how* he loved his disciples. For one thing, he criticized them. The Gospels do not emphasize politeness in the sense of Jesus’ being very careful in everything he said lest he offend. Words, thoughts, and messages were what he presented. We learn from these as well as from what he did NOT do with regard to his disciples. For example, consider how much time he spent in fellowship with them. He had many capabilities and could have gone off and done many other things, but he devoted *much* time to them. They were always tagging along with him. He fellowshiped with them continuously, trying to make them understand what God’s will was. This verse suggests we should be familiar with *Jesus*—with his parables, teachings, acts, etc. Sadly, many Christians give little thought to Jesus’ life and ministry, but they spend a great deal of time on other subjects.

We should *not* love according to our feelings. Very often we interpret love by what *we* think love is, but we can gain certain insights into the subject by studying *Jesus* and the *apostles*. We should meditate on these things. The Bible is the *foundation* of our faith. Special messengers can help us, of course, but they are not the same as the Word itself. Teachers should merely point us back to the Word. To love as Jesus commands requires an *understanding* of the Scriptures.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Although it is certainly commendable for someone to impulsively risk his own life to save another (such as plunging into ice-cold water to rescue a drowning man), that is not the love referred to here. That is *a* love but not *this* love. Here Jesus is referring to a sacrificial *daily* dying or laying down of life, which is *agape* love.

When Jesus died at Calvary, he died for the world, which included *enemies* who had persecuted him in ignorance. Yet here Jesus said the greatest love was to lay down life for friends. What is the explanation? For 3 1/2 years Jesus laid down his life for his friends. His love was not just the act at Calvary but a *continual* laying down of life and sacrifice. Paul said, "I die *daily*" (1 Cor. 15:31). Calvary was the culmination of a *period* of time.

The act of dying can be instantaneous and quick. It may be given without even weighing the thought, for some people instinctively do certain things. But when your life is *programmed to every day* do things in harmony with God's will, that is what Jesus is referring to here. Such love requires continuous concentration and doing.

Q: Specifically, how did Jesus lay down his life for his *disciples* for 3 1/2 years?

A: Miracles for the people did not occur every day for that period of time. Sometimes Jesus was in desert conditions while traveling from place to place. The majority of his days were spent with his disciples. They were with him *every day*, whereas *occasionally* others crossed his path. The principle is "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the *household of faith*" (Gal. 6:10). Jesus concentrated on teaching his disciples. He expended special effort to find some of the apostles (Matthew and Philip, for example). Also, he had a *master plan* of helping them, of *progressively* teaching them and helping them grow in faith and knowledge. That planning and helping was his *love* for them—his interest in and concern for their development. He used great wisdom in taking or teaching them step by step. This thinking—in spite of his own discomfort from performing miracles, receiving criticism, etc.—*cost* him something and showed his *love* for them. Jesus truly was a master teacher. He concentrated on his *disciples*, not on the world, which was secondary. While Jesus died for the world, there was a *primacy* with regard to his disciples. One lesson for us is that even with relatives (mother, father, sister, etc.), our main interest should be for *God's people*.

1 John 3:16 carries out this thought: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Romans 16:3,4 also picks up this idea: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Notice, "Ye are my friends, *if ye do whatsoever I command you*." Those who *do God's will* are Jesus' friends, mother, father, brother, etc. The closeness of the relationship all hinges on obedience to the Father's will.

Comment: It is interesting that Jesus used the word "friends" here, yet a little later he called

Judas “friend” (although a different Greek word). What irony! The one who was *supposed* to be his “friend” and close companion turned against him.

Reply: Paul did this too, where he seemed to make contradictory statements. Verse 15 says the disciples were not servants but friends, and other Scriptures called them sons. The word “friends” implies a more *personalized* affection and love than a servant. A servant might be respected and be dutiful and good, but a friend would be closer. The Bible often likens the Christian to a servant, but to be a friend is a closer term of endearment. *Phileo* (brotherly) love is a very high form of love. True *agape* (disinterested) love is the highest form, but even that requires a definition.

Others are our friends *if* we see in them a desire and effort to do God’s will. The more we see this, the closer the relationship—even closer than our natural family. If we see someone trying to do God’s will, our esteem for him is raised to a higher level. Verse 14 includes as “friends” all true Christians down through the age. During the 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he left an example and instruction for all of his footstep followers.

Jesus accepted those the Father drew—not from a personal standpoint but because the Father did the drawing. Hence Jesus can overlook certain idiosyncrasies, race, color, background, manners, etc. The key point is the desire to do the Father’s will. Such are drawn to Jesus (and vice versa) proportionately.

John 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

A servant or slave is just told to do certain things. He may be informed on some matters but on relatively little, for he is just a servant.

Q: In John 16:12 Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye *cannot* bear them now.” But here in verse 15 Jesus is saying, “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” How can these statements be harmonized? Is the tense correct in the King James for verse 15? Is it “*have made known*” or “*will make known*”?

A: The tense is correct.

Q: Could verse 15 be qualified in the sense that Jesus made known to the apostles all things needful for them to know at that time, prior to his crucifixion? Obviously, the Holy Spirit would reveal more things later.

A: Yes. Also (and mainly), before Jesus came down here, the Father gave him instructions of what he was to do and say. Therefore, what he disclosed to his disciples were all those things that the *Father* had wished them to know *prior* to Pentecost. In other words, Jesus was *required* to reveal certain things to them. Here is another example that many times in Scripture, the word “all” needs to be modified. Frequently, it does not literally mean “all.”

Jesus had already given his apostles his great prophecy of Matthew 24, which embraced the entire age. Hence he did tell them *many* things they did not understand at that time—not until Pentecost. From this standpoint Jesus had disclosed all that he was supposed to tell, all the necessary things, all that the Father had told him to reveal, even if they did not understand. For example, even with all the repetition about his need to die and return to

the Father, it was not until well into the sixteenth chapter that they began to realize he would die and leave them. They knew but they did not know, etc., etc. Finally, the thought began to sink in.

The Bible pictures the Christian as a servant or slave, as a friend, as a son, and as a brother of Jesus, and each description is in its own place or setting. During Jesus' ministry, the Christian was not called a brother or a son. Those terms were not used until Pentecost, for not until the disciples were begotten of the Holy Spirit were they considered family members. At that time they became sons of the Father and brethren of Jesus.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Jesus was not speaking here of all Christians but about the apostles, whom he selected and appointed. He knew them before they knew him. The word "apostle" means "one sent forth." Jesus appointed the apostles, gave them names on the mount, and later instructed them what to do. There were only twelve (Rev. 21:14). The instruction "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," etc., applied only to them (Matt. 18:18). Other Christians do not have such authorization in the Word. For example, Paul gave two different kinds of advice regarding old widows and young ones. This advice becomes binding in the sense that it is important and it is the thinking of an apostle.

Jesus chose the apostles that they should "bring forth fruit" and that the "fruit should remain." Of course the fruit bearing discussed in this chapter applies especially to the apostles. However, it is proper for *us* to draw lessons about *our* bringing forth fruit as well. Consider Jesus' words "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." To a certain extent, we apply these words to ourselves but add "according to *thy* will." There is no harm in asking if we add the qualifying clause. On the other hand, the apostles, who were charged with a very important work, made requests with an extremely high prerogative. No doubt they all prayed earnestly about their ministries because they had additional responsibility.

John 15:17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Why mention this again? For 3 1/2 years the apostles had been getting instructions from Jesus on what and what not to do. Now that he was about to depart, what was one of the immediate dangers? Jealousy or a feeling that one apostle was more important than the others. Hence the apostles were to always keep in mind that they were all equally apostles. They were to minimize what might *appear* to be contradictions. The earlier feelings of "Which one is greatest?" and "Which ones can sit on Jesus' right and left hand in the Kingdom?" must not be allowed to surface and continue.

In regard to Christians in other circles, we should give the benefit of the doubt to them if they claim consecration, if they profess to have made a commitment to the Lord. We should recognize them as brethren *as long as* their lives and conduct comport with that profession. But we are to note *false* brethren—wolves, tares (imitation Christians), etc.

However, the apostles were apostles, and the eleven plus Paul are to be specially regarded. Some who entered the early Church claimed (falsely) to be apostles because they had seen and known Jesus. The apostles Paul and John spoke of them and had to put some in their

place (2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). The *false* apostles had a high opinion of themselves and were presumptuous.

Here Jesus' telling the eleven to love one another indicates they had a lot to go through, even though they would make their calling and election sure. They would experience much tribulation before they finished their course.

Jesus' counsel in these last hours was primarily directed to the apostles. They had the greater need because they were the chosen leaders in his absence. When others came along and tried to take over their office, it was the duty of the true apostles to expose such presumptuousness.

Some feel that love precedes all other qualities—that no matter what an individual does, we should love him. They reason that since we all have failings, we should be ready to forgive almost anything. Others are highly incensed at what is taking place. The commandment to “love one another” *does not mean* we should wink the eye at gross sin. It is true that we should give the benefit of the doubt where one's life is not at variance with the profession. However, if one's life and behavior contradict the profession, we should take note of the matter and not love him according to the instruction in verse 17. Deeds are important and we are to judge conduct. We should be careful not to wish “God speed” to any who are living a hypocritical life. Verse 17 must not be given an abnormal application as a commandment to love no matter what happens. It is true that love covers a multitude of sins—but a *certain type* of sins, not cardinal sins.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

The world hates the Christian in different levels or degrees. Some may say nothing, but they shun our companionship. Either they think we are too fanatical, or they do not want to hear our disapproval of what they are doing. That is a lower level of hatred by the world. At any rate, *all* who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in some manner (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostles certainly incurred the world's hatred.

Today we live in a peculiar time. During the Dark Ages, communication between true Christians was much less frequent because of distance and poor travel conditions. In the past, real hatred was directed toward those identified with a certain belief (for example, Wycliffites, Luther's followers, and Waldensians). Today we have many more opportunities for fellowship and communication. And those brethren who work have much more contact with the world than those who, say, work at the Dawn full-time. The latter have relatively little contact with the world and a lot of contact with each other. Hence their trials would have to come largely from the brethren. Trials are absolutely necessary for development and for making our calling and election sure—just as iron has to be put into the furnace to become hardened as steel. We are to endure hardness as good soldiers.

Back there, just to be identified as a Christian was a problem. For instance, a Christian in Israel in the early Church encountered reproach, hatred, and stigma. At present we experience little of such persecution. Not until 300 years later, when the emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of the empire, did it become fashionable to be a Christian. But more than a thousand years later, during its period of power, the Roman Catholic Church persecuted and put Protestants to death; that is, those who were *ostensibly* “brethren” did the persecuting. Today we are not receiving open

persecution, although events in the near future will rekindle such activity. Currently many of our problems and our schooling and development take place right in the Bible Student movement. But in time the nominal Church—both Protestant and Catholic—will enter our lives in a very dramatic way.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

“I have chosen you out of the world.” The Church is called the *ecclesia* of God, the “called-out ones.”

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Here the word “kept” means “watched” or “observed.” “If they [the world] have kept [watched or observed] my saying, they will keep [watch or observe] yours also.” When Jesus preached the gospel, he had a lot of critics and opposition. In addition, he actually healed people—something we cannot do. Therefore, it stands to reason that if we are loyal to the truth, we will meet opposition. There is a saying: “The truth hurts.” The truth sometimes hurts us in the sense that we smart when we see our shortcomings. That is good, for it shows we have a conscience.

John 15:21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.

“For *my* [Jesus’] name’s sake” is the key phrase, for we could be persecuted for the wrong reason(s). Jesus received persecution because of faithfulness to his *Father* and in teaching his *Father’s* Word. Hence the persecutors did not know God.

Because of the certain persecution when Jesus was planning to go to Jerusalem, Peter said, “Be it far from thee, Lord” (Matt. 16:22,23). But Jesus rebuked Peter and said that the advice came from the Adversary, that Satan had used the *old man* of Peter, that Peter savored not the things of God but the things of the world. Satan has fallen and depraved tastes, but *anyone* who falls would have similar shortcomings even if Satan did not exist. Sin came on the human race because *Adam* sinned. *Adam’s* sin caused the penalty, not Satan’s sin. It is true that Satan sinned—he told a lie—but it was by “one man’s” (*Adam’s*) sin that condemnation came on the human family (Rom. 5:17–19).

In regard to the spirit that motivates the world, on one occasion Jesus said, “Ye are of your father the devil because you do his works” (John 8:44 paraphrase). The influence of Satan is reflected in the human race, but mankind would have done those things even without his influence because they are fallen. Sometimes the tendency is to blame everything on Satan, but such is not always the case, for many people, because they are fallen and weak, accept sin for the benefits of sin.

Comment: That is good reasoning because it shows why, even when Satan is bound in the Kingdom, the human race will have to *struggle* against their fallen propensities. It will not be easy just because the Adversary is restrained.

Reply: And any who then die will die for their own sin if they do not desert former habits.

Comment: The thought of suffering for Jesus is expressed in 1 Peter 4:14,16. “If ye be reproached for the name of *Christ*, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.... Yet if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

Reply: Peter was more or less quoting the principle Jesus mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. On that occasion Jesus spoke of suffering for righteousness’ sake and for his name’s sake—two different types of suffering.

Let us digress for a moment. The fighting in Ireland today is more political than religious. Earlier it was religious. Southern Catholic Ireland, which is three quarters of the country, wants the northern part to be incorporated in a parliament of *all* Ireland. But if that happens, the parliament will immediately be Catholic because they so outnumber the Protestants in the north. Some of the northern Protestants are quite enlightened (like Reverend Paisley). They know the history of Ireland and about the bitter religious persecution in the past. We in the United States, a country of many religious faiths, tend to ask, “Why can’t they get along together?” But history shows that the Catholics intended to exterminate the Protestants. Centuries ago England sent General Cromwell to Ireland. Against great odds, he had an outstanding victory and wiped out Catholic Ireland. The Irish Catholics have never forgotten that. England has subsequently sheltered and protected the Protestant colony to the north, knowing that if their army were withdrawn, the Protestants there would be annihilated. Thus England has tried to protect northern Ireland from being massacred and made an arrangement to send troops if needed. The point is that because history is not known today, the people are generally sympathetic to the IRA, who want a united, whole Ireland. They do not realize what would result if Ireland were unified. We are very generous in solving *other people’s* problems.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

For the most part, “they” would be the scribes and the Pharisees. However, the pronoun would also include those of the nation of Israel who personally saw Jesus’ miracles and heard his words and yet persecuted him. Thus there is a form of retribution—and different degrees of guilt. Those in the Galilee region incurred more responsibility because many of Jesus’ miracles were done there. He said, “It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee [Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee]” (Matt. 11:24).

The scribes and Pharisees who paid hush money to the guards who watched Jesus’ tomb are in far greater danger than those who merely criticized him during his ministry, for the former went against direct firsthand evidence. The guards were set by Pilate’s permission, but those comprising the guard were appointed by the Pharisees. The very fact the guard returned to the Pharisees to tell what they had seen proves whom they were influenced by and whom they were sympathetic to. Others, who based their judgment on hearsay, were less guilty than the Pharisees who acted contrary to firsthand evidence.

John 15:23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

John 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Many witnessed Jesus' miracles, which included raising from death at least three individuals.

John 15:25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

The Jewish nation rejected Jesus because they were influenced by their mentors. The very ones who hailed him "Hosanna!" took up the cry of their religious leaders to "Crucify him!" The latter was not a cold statement but an *emotional chant*—with *fervor*! When the people saw Jesus entering Jerusalem, he was their promised Messiah. He had been healing, raising the dead, and speaking as no other human spoke. But when he was crucified—when they saw him on the Cross—they thought he was cursed of God. Now they were just as emotional as before but in an *opposite* direction. They were emotionally directed by the religious leaders.

Much of what we do today is predicated upon what others say about somebody else. We should try to search out serious matters before we make decisions and not rely on hearsay evidence. We should get the facts.

Comment: A marginal reference for "They hated me without a cause" is Psalm 35:19. That Psalm expresses a sentiment of asking God to avenge injustice. These are the prophetic thoughts of Jesus and the Little Flock.

Reply: Yes, and Psalm 139:22 says, "I hate them with *perfect hatred*." What is a "perfect hatred"? Many people do not know how to judge. The chances in the Kingdom will be rather minimal for the radical conscience-hardened "graffiti" element because they have established a character of waste, destruction, and violence. No mere slap of the wrist will suffice. They will have to earn their way to life by retracting the things they have done to injure their fellowman. Individuals, no doubt, will truly reform, but as a whole, many will prove incorrigible. Those who wallow in sin and harden themselves are undermining their own characters. When the Psalm is read from this standpoint, a class is being addressed, and the wish is that they go into Second Death. Individuals are another matter, but our wish should be that society will be cleansed of the incorrigible as a whole.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

John 15:27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

"From the beginning" would be from the beginning of Jesus' ministry when the apostles began to walk with him. That seems to be a prerequisite for those who are apostles. Except for Paul, who had visions of the glorified Jesus, they all had to know Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. Paul's amanuensis, Luke, completely informed him of Jesus' past life, ministry, and sayings.

The clause "he shall testify of me" will be treated subsequently in a lesson about the Holy Spirit. This difficult subject can be treated better when we have the information that is presented in the sixteenth chapter of John. The way the subject is stated seems to have been providentially overruled because it will be a test. The wording is not as clear as it might be. The pronoun "he" is not in the Greek. Instead "that" (the Greek word *ekeinos*) is used: "that

shall testify of me." The word "that" is *impersonal*; it is not neuter, feminine, or masculine in gender. This complicated subject will be treated later.

John 16:1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

In what sense did Jesus mean "that ye should not be offended"? Jesus told the disciples "these things" so that they would not be *stumbled* when persecutions arose and also when he was crucified. The *Diaglott* uses the word "ensnared." This "stumbling" would be in a *very serious* sense.

John 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Why is this comment of our Lord helpful? It puts us on guard to be as generous as possible regarding the motive of those who persecute us. They might be acting out of conscientious conviction, or they might have an ulterior motive. We are not to be concerned which it is. We should just try to be faithful under the circumstances. Prior to his conversion, the Apostle Paul was an example of one who persecuted Christians while thinking "he doeth God service."

When a person of the world opposes us because of our devotion to God and to conscience, that is one thing. But when one who is ostensibly in the religious world opposes us, when one who claims to love God does the persecuting—one from the nominal Church—that is another matter. In the latter case, that would be persecution from the "synagogue." In other words, here Jesus is referring to a *religious* persecution in contradistinction to persecution from the world. From this standpoint, it would appear to be *God's* organization that ostracizes and persecutes us. If we are not stable in our convictions and beliefs, we might feel that those from the nominal Church are right and we are wrong. Our consciences might be so jumbled and scrambled that we would forsake the narrow way, fearing we have committed the sin unto death. Incidentally, some translations say, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God a *religious* service."

The Revised Standard and the *Diaglott* use "hour" instead of "time"; that is, "the hour cometh." Although this verse has applied all down the age, it seems a little more poignant to us to think of the "hour" as the coming hour of power during which we will be put out of the "synagogues." The Holy Inquisition was a dreadful period of persecution in the past.

In regard to what is yet future, this verse ties in with Revelation 13:17, which describes the condition when none may buy or sell save he that has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Since we are not part of the denominational Babylonish systems, we will be prevented from speaking. Revelation 13:17 is a prophetic text that takes the principle of verse 2. At that time it will be made mandatory for every man in the religious world to receive the mark of the beast or his image.

At least at present, one application of being put "out of the synagogues" is being denied an opportunity to teach, for example, among the Bible Students. This more subtle type of persecution occurs because one's *influence* is killed.

John 16:3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

This verse can be applied in various ways. *To what extent* does one not know the Father or Jesus? There are various gradations of intimate acquaintance with God and Jesus. This verse would apply more to the nominal system, for the Bible says that at the end of the age “a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand” (Psa. 91:7). However, this comment of Jesus was comforting and enlightening to Christians right after his death, resurrection, and ascension, and then a little later when fellow Jews, particularly the scribes and Pharisees and false teachers who arose within the Church, brought persecution on the disciples. Verse 2 suggests the primary persecution would occur in the “synagogues” by professing Christians.

John 16:4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

Take the first part: “But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.” These words were very comforting to the disciples then, and also all down the age, for when persecuting experiences do come, it is brought to remembrance that they were predicted beforehand as a test of faithfulness, and not as a punishment. Jesus is telling *beforehand* what will be *his* experience as well as what will be *their* (and *our*) experience. This verse proves that he could see in advance, that he had *foreknowledge*.

Now the second part of verse 4: “And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” Jesus knew his death had to occur at a specific time. For 3 1/2 years he did not have to *dwell* on the theme of his death (he did make *some* statements, but his death was not a theme earlier). Now the subject of his death was more pertinent. Also, for the 3 1/2 years he knew his apostles would be specially protected—their persecution would not occur until after his death. So now was the time for Jesus to tell them much.

The *dispensational* aspect of truth can be seen here. As events drew near to fulfillment, necessary knowledge was revealed proportionate to the need of the circumstance and hour. Earlier it was not needful for Jesus to discuss his death as a theme, but now it was.

This principle has applied *throughout* the age. Information has been supplied as needed, namely, meat in due season. It is *incorrect* to say that prophecy is not understood until it is fulfilled. Of course hindsight is clearer than foresight, but we should not use such a slogan. We should not say, “When it is time, we will know. The information will automatically be given.” We are enlightened *in advance* according to *our hunger and desire* and the light due at that time (just *how far* in advance depends on the situation). Otherwise, what is prophecy for? The Book of Revelation was given by God to help His servants to know things *before* they come to pass. The book was given as enlightenment *progressively*—to be understood and appreciated as needed throughout the age.

John 16:5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

Thomas did ask earlier: “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5 paraphrase). Thus the question had been raised in a certain way previously. Why, then, does Jesus ask this question here? The disciples did not ask at this point because of their sorrow and fear of the unknown. However, if they had been begotten of the Holy Spirit, they would have asked. The apostles, like us, were not perfect—and

particularly at this juncture.

The next verse proves sorrow was the overriding reason for their not asking Jesus where he was going. Their sorrow also explains why they were so sleepy in the Garden of Gethsemane. When we get very depressing news, it can exhaust us. And mental exhaustion can affect us physically. Some who are very depressed just want to shut out the depression by going to sleep. They hope to wake up refreshed.

John 16:6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

The disciples had hopes that Jesus would shortly establish his Kingdom, and now he kept emphasizing his departure. Sadness filled their hearts. In his great prophecy of Matthew 24, he had warned of a time interval, but they could not comprehend his words at that time.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

The “Comforter” or Helper (Greek *parakletos*) is the Holy Spirit. Why was it expedient for Jesus to go away in order that the Comforter might come? It was like his saying, “It is absolutely *necessary* that I go away. Otherwise, the Comforter will not come.” Why? Jesus had nurtured wonderful hopes in the disciples, but they could not be adopted as sons of God or even be eligible for the high calling unless he did go away. The technical recognition of them as sons of God—the spirit of adoption, of sonship—could not take place until the sacrifice of Christ had been completed and accepted.

Verses 7–15 seem to suggest that the Comforter is a personality, an individual. How would we refute this thought? How would we counteract the thought that the Comforter is one of the persons of the Triune Deity?

1. The Holy Spirit is shown to be subordinate to the Father and to Jesus. The Comforter does “not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 16:13). Earlier Jesus said he did not speak of himself but spoke and taught as the Father directed. Here the Holy Spirit is said to receive from Jesus (who receives from the Father) and then to transmit to the followers of Christ. The Father is higher than Jesus and the Comforter, yet the doctrine of the Trinity says that the three in the Triune Godhead are coequal and coeternal or everlastingly coexistent. Those who originated the thought of coequality really put their foot in their mouth, but the Trinity is in the creeds so frequently that it cannot be retracted. Other doctrines have been retracted because they were forgotten, but not this one.

The pope has called this year (1987) the “Marian year.” Interestingly, some Catholics have been turned off because they say, “Where is Jesus?” At least in some cases, a part of the Protestant message in regard to the need to accept Jesus as Savior has filtered through to Catholic thinking. To dedicate a special year to Mary offends the sense of *thinking* Catholics.

2. Suppose we lived back there and Jesus promised to send the Comforter. Then he died, arose, and was with the disciples on and off for 40 days. Next he ascended up to heaven, having said he would send the Comforter. The disciples waited for that Comforter, but there is *no historical evidence* that any such *being* dealt with them. The Holy Spirit is always referred to in vague terms—no personage appeared to them. The apostles saw and talked with Jesus, who was supposedly a part of this coequal Triune God, but where was the “Holy

Ghost"? There is no historical record of such a being—the Holy Spirit is always put in other terms: the spirit of truth, the spirit of love, etc., did such and such. Thus, from a *practical* standpoint, we see nothing that would represent a being.

John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

John 16:10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

John 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

John 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

John 16:14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

John 16:15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The use of the pronouns in these verses needs to be discussed. With regard to French and other languages (but not the Greek, which does have a neuter gender and uses it in an unusual way), nouns are considered either masculine or feminine, even when referring to inanimate objects. (The moon *she* is full; the sun *he* is hot.) An attempt is made to determine if there is a generative influence (like a father generating a son) or a nurturing or subordinate influence. The Greek is similarly influenced to a certain extent, although it does have a neuter gender. In the Greek the use of "he" and "him" can be correct, and in many cases where the Greek lacks a pronoun, the English translation inserts one—correctly or incorrectly.

Here in John 16, the Greek does have the masculine pronoun *auton*, but there is a way to countermand it. If we get into the semantics of the Greek with a theologian, we should remember that dictionaries and concordances (Young's, Strong's, etc.) are very disinclined to give the gender of the Holy Spirit, yet for other words or entries the gender is listed: masculine, feminine, or neuter. With the dictionaries omitting this designation for the Holy Spirit, it cannot be pointed out subsequently that the authors were wrong in calling the term masculine. Furthermore, the authors cannot be accused of premeditation.

In Greek the Holy Spirit is neuter. To prove this, the article that introduces it is *to* (pronounced "tow"). *To* is singular (*the* Holy Spirit), and there is no case where *to* can be masculine or feminine—it is *always* neuter. The word *pneuma* (translated "breath") ends with an "a." Other words that are feminine or masculine can also end with an "a," but not *to*—it is *always* neuter. Although some neuter words do end in "a," the article itself is the best proof, for theologians might give us words to show that an "a" can end masculine, feminine, or neuter words. However, the article *cannot be changed*.

In the Greek, when a noun refers to a *person*, there are no exceptions for the pronoun or the article. If the person is masculine, so are the pronouns and the article, and if the person is

feminine, so are the pronouns and the article. But if the thing referred to is *neuter*, the pronouns and the article can be masculine, feminine, or neuter. And that is the point with the term “the Holy Spirit,” which is *not another person*. The Father is a being, and so is the Son, but not the Holy Spirit.

The words “him” and “he” actually appear in the manuscript, but that does not prove the Holy Spirit is a person for the following reason. If the thought is *God’s Holy Spirit*, then the masculine would be correct because God is considered masculine, which has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit’s being a person. The masculine shows up *if* the context is related to the *Father*.

Q: When a word is neuter, can the article be masculine, feminine, or neuter?

A: Yes, so how do we decide which gender to use? By the *context*. And when it comes to context, an argument will ensue. Others will state, “That is what *you* say, but *we* say such-and-such.” Thus the issue is left up in the air. However, Trinitarians cannot get around to (“tow”) with “the Holy Spirit.” And in many cases where Trinitarians try to emphasize the pronoun, it is *not even in the Greek*, and another word is used—an adverb. That adverb is used frequently, but it is given a personal pronoun translation that is not in the Greek at all.

In the near future the true Church will be tested in regard to the Trinity. We are living in an age where knowledge is held up as a god or goddess. Therefore, when the test comes, we cannot argue theologically on the Greek but must do as Jesus did when the scribes and the Pharisees tried to trip him up. He took the initiative and changed the question. For example, “You asked me a question. Before I answer, let me first ask you a question.” He responded on *his own terms*. Therefore, when we are confronted on the Trinity, we cannot go back to the Old Testament where the word “Jehovah” is used or the New Testament where *Adonai* is used. Instead we should use *ordinary* reasoning such as “How can Jesus be God if ... ?” The public would appreciate this kind of reasoning more than if we get inveigled into a discussion of Greek and Hebrew. For example, “How can Jesus be God if he said, ‘My Father is greater than I?’”

It is like the word “godliness” in 2 Peter 1:6,7, which means “piety.” “And ... to patience [add] *godliness*; And to *godliness* [add] brotherly kindness.” The word “God” is not in the Greek in these verses. In certain cases “godliness” could be “God-likeness,” but Godlikeness would be at the very *top* of a listing of qualities for the Christian to attain. One cannot go higher than Godlikeness—that is the epitome. Unfortunately, that is the word used in the King James to translate the Greek in Peter’s second epistle for the sixth quality, and then two more qualities are listed subsequently. The Greek has the thought of *reverence and piety* toward God.

Thus the Trinity is a subject that cannot be debated in a scholarly way with theologians. However, theologians are nervous if the usage of the neuter singular article with “Holy Spirit” is brought in, for they know it is not referring to a being. There are the *Holy Spirit* and the *unholy spirit*. Bringing in the unholy spirit (the spirit of fear, etc.) shows the foolishness of claiming a personality for the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we should not get inveigled into a grammar discussion because theologians can steer it to their advantage. The public would think, “The theologians have gotten the degrees, so who are you to question?” We would then have to admit we lack that type of training. They could fire

questions as on the witness stand—making us answer just “yes” or “no” with no explanation. We must be BOLD when the time comes, and we must prepare *years in advance* (not the night before) with “How come this?” and “How come that?”

How does the Holy Spirit “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”?

Comment: The Pastor wrote that the consecrated of the Gospel Age are an example as they let their lights shine in the present life, but wouldn't this be only a *partial* fulfillment because many of the world have no contact with the truly consecrated? And even if there is contact, the consecrated are imperfect in the flesh. Therefore, wouldn't the main fulfillment of this verse be in the Kingdom when the Holy Spirit is poured on all flesh, that is, when it is poured out in a different way?

Reply: We should keep in mind that these verses are talking about the Holy Spirit reproving the *world*. In other words, the context limits the interpretation. Has the *world* been *convinced yet* of the error of their way? No. There are occasions where, on a certain issue, people might see that they are wrong, and perhaps a member of the true Church was instrumental in pointing out the wrong, but this would be an isolated circumstance. Generally speaking, the world is *not convinced* or convicted in the present life. If they were, they would respond like the Jews at Pentecost, who asked, “What shall we do?” and then consecrated. The next logical step after an individual realizes he is a sinner and in need of help is to repent and then consecrate.

Actually, from another perspective, verse 8 is a little of both applications: the present life and the Kingdom. Down through the Gospel Age, the Church has been witnessing, and as they witness, different ones of the world have had contact with the truth. In the Kingdom when mankind review their life and look back at their past actions and statements, they will be convinced *then* that they were in error and that the true Church was in the right. They will also then appreciate why God honored those who were in the right by giving them a spiritual resurrection. In the *future* the world will be convinced by the Holy Spirit but pertaining to their deeds in the *present* life as they look back. The enlightenment of the future will help the world to see. Then they will glorify God in heaven.

Verse 11 mentions Satan as the “prince of this world.” Because Satan is invisible, many do not presently believe he exists. But in the Kingdom all will know that he has been judged and that his fate is sealed. The tense in the *Diaglott* supports a future fulfillment: The world will know “the prince of this world *has been judged*” (a *past* action). The world will *look back* upon that judgment.

The world's awareness of sin, righteousness, and judgment is future, but it will be predicated upon the past because they will be given a review—not only of their personal lives but of the history of the world as a whole. They will then understand the reason for God's *righteous* indignation. Because evidences have been given of the existence of an intelligent Creator, because all have received some enlightenment (through nature, for example), God is justified in His actions. The world is *willingly* blind and ignorant.

The thought in verse 13 is as follows: The Holy Spirit “will guide you into all truth [*as it is due*].”

Verse 14: “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” The pronoun “he,” referring to the Holy Spirit, should be “it.” The implication of this verse is that after Pentecost the Holy Spirit, acting as a spirit of *remembrance*, would enlighten the disciples in regard to Jesus’ previous words (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit helps us to recall certain things. Jesus had said that the disciples could not understand the things he was telling them, but that later, at Pentecost and afterwards, the Holy Spirit would call to remembrance the things necessary to be understood—the words spoken during Jesus’ earthly ministry.

“For he [it] shall receive of mine” signifies “For it [the Holy Spirit] shall manifest my words unto you so that you might have the same disposition and desire to please the Heavenly Father that I have.” Jesus was God’s *beloved* Son because he did the things that pleased the Father.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). We must be familiar with Jesus’ teachings and *understand* them (through the Holy Spirit) in order to have the mind of Christ. We get the teachings from God’s Word. (The power of God’s Word to sanctify us is brought out in the next chapter.) “And shall show it unto you.” The word “it” refers not only to Jesus’ words but to the *lessons* he was trying to convey so that the disciples would be like him.

Trinitarians may make statements of three personalities, but they do not press the Holy Ghost aspect because there are problems. For instance, many texts on the Holy Spirit have nothing to do with personality. Moreover, there is an unholy spirit, and we do not think of the unholy spirit as a personality. The Holy Spirit pertains to character of *thought* and disposition. It is the disposition of God. “Ghost” is an Elizabethan term.

John 16:16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

“A little while, and ye shall *not see me*” refers to Jesus’ crucifixion, when he was removed from their presence. “Again, a little while, and ye *shall see me*” refers to his resurrection, when the disciples saw him on and off for 40 days. Jesus was saying, “While I must leave you now, do not worry. I will be back again after my resurrection.” And even after his resurrection he had to caution: “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). (Incidentally, “Because I go to the Father” is spurious in the Vatican Manuscript.)

John 16:17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

John 16:18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

Even though Jesus had told the disciples that he would be crucified, they were puzzled. And even though they were puzzled, notice that they did not voice their questions to Jesus. (Remember, he was addressing the eleven on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.)

John 16:19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do

ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

This verse tells us, in effect, that Jesus could read their thoughts. Now he will furnish a little more information.

John 16:20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Jesus was explaining his remarks of verse 16 but not in terms explicit enough for the disciples to know exactly what he meant. He told them they would be sorry and they would have grief and anguish when he was absent from them. And that is what did happen. The disciples' hopes were dashed when he was crucified. Later, when assured of Jesus' resurrection, Peter said, "We were begotten again unto a lively [living] hope" (1 Pet. 1:3). Earlier the disciples said, "We trusted he was the Messiah, but now we are not sure" (Luke 24:21). When the risen but disguised Jesus joined the two on the way to Emmaus, he inquired why they were so sad. They replied, "Haven't you heard? Are you a stranger in these parts? Don't you know about Jesus of Nazareth?" (Luke 24:13–19). At least two million Jews were in Jerusalem at the Passover, and they could see the Crucifixion from the Temple. Hence the two could not understand Jesus' inquiry, but he was goading them. The disciples said, "We trusted that he would deliver Israel, but he was a prophet." They had to admit he was a prophet, but his ignominious death ("Cursed is he who hangs on a tree") crushed their hopes of his Messiahship (Gal. 3:13). They were very discouraged. (Note: The Scriptures quoted in this paragraph are paraphrases.)

"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Jesus told the disciples not only that they would sorrow but that when he was resurrected, they would be *joyous*. In fact, when they were assured of his resurrection, they were almost like lunatics with joy. They wanted to witness to everyone, "Jesus is alive!" But, first, they needed more information from him.

John 16:21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

Jesus likened their coming sorrow to a woman in travail, which is a tender illustration—something probably all of them had witnessed. If we put ourselves in the disciples' place, we can understand their emotions. For 3 1/2 years they heard Jesus speak as no other man spoke, and they witnessed his miracles. Next, they saw him on Calvary's hill, naked, on a cross, exposed to the whole nation. Wouldn't we be confused too?

During his ministry Jesus did not explain the necessity, the reason, for his death—that he must die in order to redeem. Jesus had many things to tell his disciples but could not reveal at that time because they did not have the Holy Spirit yet. Only *afterwards* did he explain and on the occasion when he joined the two on the way to Emmaus. Still later, the Apostle Paul explained the rationale: When Adam sinned, another perfect man had to die in his stead in order to redeem the human race.

John 16:22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

After Jesus' resurrection the disciples' joy was so great that no man could take it from them.

They were willing to die for their faith.

The Jewish world back there rejoiced when Jesus was crucified. Similarly, during the period of the Holy(?) Inquisition, the populace rejoiced.

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

This verse shows there was a larger fulfillment than just what immediately happened after his resurrection. The fulfillment continues to the present day.

Verse 23 must be *qualified*. If we ask according to the *Father's will*, our prayer will be answered, but not if we ask amiss. Spiritual requests will be answered if we obey and progress in what we learn. Also, we must ask *in faith*—faith based on God's Word. The Father "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We should ask ourselves, "Do I *diligently* seek the Father?" We must examine ourselves continually if we want the crown. We must *run* as if there is only *one* winner.

John 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

If we ask for *spiritual* things—and depending on the intensity of that desire—our joy will be full in the *present* life. "Joy" means *spiritual* joy, for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). A fiery trial may be grievous, but if we are patient and persevering, looking to the Lord, we will see a lesson in the experience. *Sometimes* a stumble can be a stepping-stone.

Incidentally, we pray in *Jesus' name* to the Father. In praying to the Father, we recognize His supremacy, but we must pray in Jesus's name, that is, in *his righteousness*.

John 16:25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

Ever since Pentecost Jesus has not spoken to Christians in proverbs and parables. While he used many parables during his earthly ministry, he has subsequently provided information through the New Testament to those who ask. That is how he speaks "plainly." We can read the parables, but we can also get the explanation.

John 16:26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

John 16:27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

John 16:28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

What a comforting thought for all Christians! We can ask in Jesus' name and actually pray to the *Father*, and why? Because "the Father *himself* loveth you"! And the Father loves us because we love Jesus. No man comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him. The high

calling is of God, but it is in Christ in the sense that we are drawn *through* Jesus but *by* the Father. The Father chooses the Bride for the Bridegroom.

“The *Father himself* loveth you.” The disciples knew that Jesus loved them—they were with him for 3 1/2 years, and during that time he gave many demonstrations of his love. Now he was saying, “The *Father* loves you too, because you love me.” They were two different personalities: the Father was in heaven and Jesus was down here. In John 17:11,21,22 Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one with him as he and the Father were one. All of the Church are to be at one with God—with the same love, joys, sentiments, and appreciation of the principles of right and wrong. In other words, we want the mind of God and the mind of Christ.

The Father loves us because we love Jesus and because we believe Jesus came forth from Him. It is almost mathematical, very precise: “I came from the Father into the world; I leave the world to go to the Father.” “I came from Him, and I am returning to Him.” God sent His Son here on a mission to redeem man.

John 16:29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

This comment is based on verses 25–28. To us verse 28 seems so simple (Jesus came into the world, and he left the world), but the disciples still could not fully grasp the situation at this time.

John 16:30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Other versions give the thought that “Before we ask a question, you seem to be able to read our minds; this capability convinces us you are who you say you are [that is, the Messiah]” (RSV, Jerusalem Bible, Living Bible). In other words, the capability of audibly producing the question in advance showed Jesus knew what the disciples were thinking. What brought their conviction was that Jesus needed no man to ask him a question—he already knew.

John 16:31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

Jesus’ question is interesting. The disciples had just said, “We believe.” Then Jesus replied, “Do you *really* believe?” In John 14:1 Jesus said, “Believe in God, believe also in me.” He had been preparing them, yet the belief did not sink in deep enough for the subsequent experience. The Holy Spirit would bring these things to remembrance later.

John 16:32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

Compare this verse with the end of verse 30: “By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” Verse 32 reminds us of Peter’s boast: “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). In spite of his words, Peter later denied Jesus. Here in verses 31 and 32 Jesus was saying, “That is what you say now. Even at this very moment things are being triggered where you will be tested on that point and you will fail momentarily.” “You will be scattered; every man will go his *own* way” is the thought.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the

world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”? In what sense could the disciples be of good cheer because Jesus overcame the world? Because he overcame the world, he could succor the apostles (and us) in trials and give the proper counsel and advice. Jesus’ own experience in tribulation, including being put to death, qualifies him to help us as a sympathetic high priest.

In the Greek the word “tribulation” means “pressure.” Thus Jesus was contrasting peace and pressure. Some translators use “threshing” in the sense of harvesting grain. Threshing separates the food content (wheat germ) from the kernel, or even the wheat from the stalk.

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

This prayer of John 17 occurred outside the Garden of Gethsemane, en route, before Jesus crossed the brook Cedron (John 18:1). The eleven disciples were with him and heard him. Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven as he prayed (as he did when Lazarus was raised).

Notice Jesus’ humility. He wanted to be glorified only so he could, in turn, glorify the *Father*. He recognized the supremacy of His Father in all matters.

But in what way would Jesus glorify God by being glorified himself? The redemption work and God’s plan could be carried out. During his earthly ministry Jesus glorified the Father, giving credit to Him, always teaching His doctrine, etc., but now, if raised from death and given the great capability of the new nature, he would be able to continue to glorify the Father but on a higher and grander scale.

John 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

In this context Jesus’ “power over all flesh” will occur *future*, when he reigns as King of earth and exercises his power. However, the words Jesus uttered after his resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” applied then and had a *different* meaning (Matt. 28:18). He meant that *at that time* all power had been *secured*, not exercised. Jesus has the potential; he has proven faithful. Therefore, all of the promises are his, but he cannot exercise the power until the Church is complete and the Father says, “All right, *now* you can do it.” Jesus waits until then.

The Bible was written not just for us but for ages and ages into the future—hence the seemingly incongruous tenses. It will be a textbook for other planets and generations. All will know that Jesus came to *earth*, to *this* planet. He died on Calvary here *on earth*. Therefore, even the simplest statements are fraught with meaning. The lessons can be deeper than we realize.

The first part of verse 2 mentions “all flesh”; the second part mentions the disciples. The *Father* gave Jesus the disciples, and Jesus trained and taught them—the eleven at that time. But all of the Church are called of God and come to Him through Jesus. Thus Jesus again used past tense (“thou *hast* given”) for something mainly futuristic from the time of utterance.

The phrase “eternal life” is characteristic of John’s Gospel and his epistles. This expression means *everlasting life*, which is a boon, let alone immortality. It would embrace immortality (the Little Flock) but includes also the Great Company.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The Living Bible is good: “This is the way to have eternal life—by knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth!” In other words, our initial conversion is not sufficient to get eternal life. We must spend however long we have here in the flesh getting to *know* God and Jesus, which means knowing God’s Word and obeying. We must learn as much about their characters as we can. Emphasis: We must know *God* (and Jesus Christ, whom *God* sent).

Even if we lived *forever*, we still would *not fully know* God; that is, it would take an *eternity* to know God because He is so great. There are so many facets of His love, power, wisdom, and justice that just as an eternity never ends, so God’s attributes can never be fully plumbed. God’s qualities, depth of character, etc., will always be on the increase. (Certain translations stress this thought.) Some of Jesus’ simplest statements are the hardest to fathom. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).

John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Notice the tense. Jesus had finished his public ministry of educating his apostles and others. Following this prayer, he would not be talking much with them. (And even after his resurrection he spoke only with his disciples.) Yet his greatest work lay ahead: suffering the death on the Cross. Therefore, verse 4 is both “yes” and “no” depending on the perspective.

This verse reveals something about Jesus’ character; namely, he intended to *fulfill* the work given to him, for he had *to die* in order to glorify God. He would have alternating experiences of deep sorrow followed by firm determination, but his *will* was crystallized like iron. In other words, even though one’s character is crystallized, it does not mean his emotions are frozen. Jesus knew what lay ahead, and he was determined to see it through. Hence when he said, “I have glorified thee on the earth,” he was thinking not only of his completed earthly ministry but of the upcoming crucifixion where he would be a public spectacle. He spoke of his crucifixion as past tense, but it was future.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Jesus was asking to be restored to the glory he had as the Logos—not for anything additional. His great humility here is interesting despite his talents and capability. With us, just to see the Father and have life will be a blessing. True, we must run the race to win it; we must run as if we had to beat out all other contenders. Such motivation, concentration, and effort are needed in order to attain the prize of the high calling. Nevertheless, to get life even as Great Company will be a great joy and blessing.

“With thine own self” means “in thine own *presence*.” Jesus wanted to be with the Father as formerly. He longed just to be in the Father’s presence—to hear His voice and to see Him.

(See the RSV, New English Bible, and Phillips Modern English.)

John 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Jesus was *audibly* praying and *all the time* looking heavenward. The eleven were listening. He was thinking not only of the disciples present but of those who would become his down through the age. This would have been a mentally exhausting prayer.

Verse 6 is touching, for it shows that *Almighty God* opened our eyes of understanding to see Jesus as the Savior. Here Jesus is speaking especially of the apostles, but other Scriptures show that all of the Church are called of God. Up to this point the eleven had “kept” God’s Word—and they would till death, we find out later. These eleven, plus Paul, are the twelve foundations of the Temple.

One can be of a tender age and make a sincere consecration. However, parents should not push or pressure their children into consecration. The motive can be *pride*—wanting children to be “in the truth.” The old heart can be deceitfully wicked and deceptive. Such pressure is a sad and *scary* thing. We can reason with our children regarding consecration and hope they will dedicate their lives, but we should not pressure them. The Lord “loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Hence consecration should be a *natural* outpouring.

John 17:7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

“All things whatsoever *thou* hast given me are of *thee*.” Jesus always gave credit to God.

John 17:8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

John 16:30 records the apostles’ affirmation of this belief that Jesus came out from the Father. “Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” In the next verse, Jesus replied, “Do ye now believe?” In other words, “Do you *really believe* in me?” Jesus uttered these words for future reference. He was aware of the depth of despondency that would come over them because even if they did not deny him like Peter, they forsook him. Their forsaking would hit them hard. Jesus’ question shows he was aware of the forsaking in advance and it was just about to occur. His words in John 17:6, “They have *kept* thy word,” were intended to be a comfort or solace to the apostles lest they become so despondent they would think they had committed the sin unto Second Death. Some forsake the Lord because of a wave of depression that comes over their soul. They cannot see that they can be forgiven. Thus it is important to note that care and concern are in the Word.

John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

Jesus’ prayer continues. He was still en route to Gethsemane. Notice that he made a clear-cut distinction between the consecrated and the unconsecrated. Jesus prayed for his disciples, for those the *Father* had given him. The expression “*Thou* hast given me” is used

repeatedly in Chapter 17, and it shows the *Father's* superiority. "Thou hast sent me," another expression used frequently in John 17, also shows the superiority of the Father. Thus John 17 is excellent for refuting the Trinity. In his prayer to the Father for the disciples, Jesus showed that the union is not triune but 144,000 + 2 (the Father, the Son, and the Little Flock are "one").

John 17:10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

As the consecrated manifest faithfulness to Jesus in the present life, he is "glorified" in them. This verse applied primarily to the disciples, the apostles, but secondarily to the whole Church. "Glorified" means "honored." The Church in the present life honors Jesus as Jesus has honored the Father.

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Jesus knew he was about to leave the world, so he spoke of the future as the present. Some misunderstand John, especially in his epistles, where he used tense (past versus present versus future and vice versa) as Jesus did.

"Holy Father, keep ... those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are.*" This is a *powerful* Scripture—it is good proof against the Trinity and one of the best Scriptures to show the Church would have the *same type of union* that the Father and the Son have. The Church are one with God and Jesus in the same sense that they are one with each other.

In regard to the designation "Holy Father," it is bad enough that the pope is considered Christ's vicegerent on earth, but when he assumes a title due the *Father*, it is blasphemy of the most repulsive kind. The pope, *a human being*, usurps this prerogative of *God Almighty Himself*.

Again, God's superiority is shown. Jesus was *asking* (not ordering), praying to the *Father*. It was up to the *Father*. Moreover, the apostles were comforted to audibly hear Jesus utter this prayer, petitioning the Father on their behalf.

John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

The "son of perdition" was Judas, and the term implies a Second Death destiny. This verse indicates that Jesus knew about the heart condition of Judas even prior to the actual betrayal. It also shows Jesus' intimate acquaintance with the Father and the Father's plan. He knew that eleven apostles would make their calling and election sure and that one would fail utterly.

Verse 12 is proof that Judas went into Second Death, for "perdition" signifies complete destruction or extinction, from which there is no return. The beast that goes into the "lake of fire," which is called Second Death, is also spoken of as going into perdition (Rev. 19:20; 20:14; 17:11).

It is helpful to consider other Scriptures that indicate Second Death. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3,

the man of sin is called the “son of perdition.” Hence both Judas, an individual, and Papacy, a system, go into utter extinction. Psalm 41:7–9, speaking of Judas, says that “he shall rise up no more”; ie, his fate is utter extinction (Second Death). And Matthew 26:24 reads, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” If Judas had not been born, he would not be rendered infamous throughout eternity for having betrayed Jesus. All other beings, when created in the future on other planets, will read the story of Jesus here on earth and know Judas was the traitor. Therefore, it would have been better for *Judas* if he had not been born and another had done the betraying.

John 17:13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Jesus had checkered emotions at the end of his life. During the Memorial Supper, he said his soul was exceedingly sorrowful almost unto death. Now he was speaking of his joy, for as soon as the wave of depression was lifted, he came back to his normal feelings. Yet later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prostrated himself and prayed that, if possible, the cup would be withdrawn from him. Many Christians try to say that joy should be *ever present*, but that is *wrong!* Jesus and the Apostle Paul both had mixed experiences. Paul said, “Now no chastening [tribulation] for the present [while going through it] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb. 12:11). However, if we are rightly and patiently exercised, it does work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Some writers say Paul contracted a sickness in his travels that had recurrences. Physical ill health does affect us. When sick, we are not the same as when we are healthy. If one part of our body hurts, the whole body hurts. Even the brain is affected.

2 Corinthians 1:8,9 proves Paul had “down” experiences: “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” Paul and Jesus both despaired of life at times.

We are not to be stoics—impervious to pain, etc., through mental conditioning. What we should do is fix our determination so that NOTHING will deter us from our goal. But we cannot go through life without some emotion.

John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Interesting! During his 3 1/2-year ministry, the apostles were “hated” too, as well as Jesus, probably by some friends and neighbors along the way who thought they were fanatics to leave their professions and families. Jesus appreciated the apostles’ suffering up to that time in espousing him and his cause. When the twelve were sent out, and the 70 later, they no doubt suffered.

John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

This verse is a reminder of part of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus prayed that God would keep his followers “from the Evil One [Satan]” (see *Diaglott*). Verse 15 is also proof that the Christian

should not isolate himself from the world—he should just keep himself unspotted by it.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

In spite of the imperfections of the eleven apostles, Jesus could appreciate their loyalty.

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

Sanctification is *progressive* and ongoing throughout our consecrated life. If we are to live by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, it means a *continual* imbibing until the end of our course. The initial *act* is called consecration (although consecration can also mean a process). The *process* is usually called sanctification, which is the transforming power and the keeping of that consecration alive.

Notice, “through *thy* [God’s, not Jesus’] truth.” Again a verse in this chapter is a proof against the Trinity, for it shows the Father’s superiority.

“Thy truth” would be *all* of God’s truths: character lessons, principles, chronology, doctrines, etc. This term is broader than just a creedal thought. The humblest child who hungers and thirsts for truth and righteousness will be filled.

In our consecrated walk, we do make discriminations between teachers and fellowship. A teacher should *at least* be a little above the average—and certainly on the subject that is being studied. However, even in fellowship, we should try to get information wherever we can.

If the leadership and instruction are not sufficient in our local ecclesia and we pray earnestly about the matter, God will provide. If we *hunger and thirst* to be fed, spiritual food will be supplied. Jesus said, “I will be with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20 paraphrase). One problem could be, Do we have the courage to leave our present class where we are not being fed? We should make a break and go where there is more spiritual food. We are not to be bound by family or the fear that we will hurt feelings. It is the same principle as coming out of nominal Christendom. We should want to grow in grace and knowledge.

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). There comes a point at the end of the age when the salt is leaving. Therefore, the general counsel will not always be the best counsel. As the Little Flock in the flesh gets less and less, the judgment of the majority is less sound. Many heads are not necessarily better than one head.

John 17:18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Neither Jesus nor the Christian is *forced* to go into the world. A proposition was presented, and Jesus and the apostles *voluntarily* went into the world—so should we.

Again the *Father’s* superiority is shown in that *He* sent Jesus. Similarly, Jesus sends us and he is our superior. Order of authority: Father ⇒ Jesus ⇒ disciples.

The invitation was given to Jesus by the Father. However, once the invitation was accepted, it became a command. First Jesus, of his own free will, gave his heart to the Lord God. *Then*

he was commanded. The same is true with us. We are instructed to sit down and count the cost *before* we consecrate, but once we take the step of consecration, certain things become mandatory. Although there are degrees of importance, some things are absolutely required. For instance, now the Abrahamic Covenant is *unconditional*, but *originally* it was *conditional*. God told Abraham that *if* he left the country he was living in and went to a country God would show him, he would be blessed. Once Abraham went to Palestine, then the covenant, which previously had conditions, became *unconditional*. Once Abraham fulfilled his part of the agreement, God was required to give him what was promised. After consecration come “commands,” as shown in Acts 10:42, “And he *commanded* us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.”

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

In what way did Jesus sanctify himself for the Church? Jesus not only separated himself so that he could bless the world of mankind in due time, but he was willing to *share* this honor with others who would consecrate and be faithful unto death during the Gospel Age.

To “sanctify” means to set apart. We must be set apart from sin, let alone other things. Jesus did not have this problem with sin because he already was perfect. Therefore, his sanctification was of another nature. Jesus was so committed to the Father’s plan that there was no jealousy in regard to his followers sharing his honor. However, since we have the problem of imperfect flesh, our sanctification or separation from sin is a progressive, slower process, whereas Jesus, being perfect, was already sanctified.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

“Neither pray I for these alone [the eleven apostles primarily and other believers at *that* time secondarily], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” This verse broadens the picture and gives us hope that we are included in these promises. “Their word” would be the apostles’ word, that is, the Gospels plus the epistles—the New Testament.

John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The first part of this verse is very important for refuting the Trinity—it *shatters* the arguments of the Trinitarians. The 144,000 will *all* be “one” with God and Jesus. It is a oneness of purpose, intention, mind, spirit, and disposition.

Notice the last part of the verse: “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Suppose there had been no zealous apostles or believers back there. How much would we know about Christ? The apostles and disciples were so moved that they wrote the Gospels and epistles. As a result, not just their contemporaries but future generations, after their demise, would know the truth. Just as Jesus prayed for those who would believe in future days through the teachings of the apostles, so the apostles had the same motivation. They were concerned that a record be left to inform future generations. It was important that knowledge of Jesus’ ministry be perpetuated so that the world might believe that God had sent him. If that word had not gone out, who would know about Jesus’ life and ministry?

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

This “oneness” refers to both the present and the future life. However, in regard to the subject of “glory,” Jesus spoke of the *future* as present. We receive the “earnest” now, and the reality comes later when, if faithful, we will be born to the spirit nature (2 Cor. 1:22). This principle is shown in the Apostle John’s words in 1 John 2:13, “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” In what sense did the “young men,” who had not known Jesus in the beginning of his ministry, “overcome the wicked one”? These young men were not necessarily faithful unto death, so what did John mean? They had been faithful in respect to a *particular trial* by siding with the Apostle John. We should always keep this principle in mind with John, for he is the most misunderstood apostle in his writings. Thus here in verse 22, where John recorded Jesus’ words in regard to “the glory,” he was speaking in an *anticipatory* sense of a class who would respond faithfully but who had not yet finished their course. Beyond the veil, in the fullest sense, the “oneness” is in *nature*—the divine nature.

What “glory” did God give Jesus? The HOPE of glory. But Jesus was so determined to be faithful that he laid hold of something *future* as if it were *past*. Jesus had not yet secured that glory. Later he had a low point and wondered if he had been faithful. But neither Jesus nor the Christian can be judged by a low point—it may not be characteristic of normal behavior.

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

How do we know God loved Jesus? A voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). The Father answered Jesus’ prayers for healing and raising the dead. Also, Jesus himself was raised from the dead. And how do we know God loved the apostles? Historically, we can look back and see that, except for Judas, they made their calling and election sure.

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

“Before the foundation of the world” means “before the ordering of earth’s surface.”

John 17:25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

John 17:26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

This is Jesus’ last statement to the disciples before his crucifixion. He had faithfully declared his Father’s name and would yet do it through being faithful in the Crucifixion.

The seventeenth chapter of John uses two wonderful titles for God: “Holy Father” (verse 11) and “righteous Father” (verse 25). This is a very good chapter to keep in mind for the future in regard to refuting the Trinity as well as for pointing out that the pope usurped God’s title, let alone Jesus’. Based on this chapter, even the humblest saint can speak confidently on the relationship of the Father and the Son. We should concentrate on the

simple statements and avoid semantics, for there are many Greek scholars. The unity is between Father, Son, and the Church.

The sum and substance of Jesus' ministry was to honor his *Father*. What he spoke and did were with the authority, power, knowledge, and instruction of the Father. Christendom has not known the Father. The emphasis is on Jesus, and then the matter is beclouded with the Trinity.

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

This verse is proof that the preceding prayer and discourse of Chapters 15–17 were uttered by Jesus *before* he entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

John 18:2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples.

As a general rule, when Jesus went to Jerusalem for feast days, he slept in the Garden of Gethsemane. He also went there in the evenings of the last week of his ministry. "And he came out, and went, *as he was wont*, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him" (Luke 22:39). "And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives" (Luke 21:37).

John 18:3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

A "band" was a fairly large number—more than 15 or 20. Included was a special group of soldiery that was attached to the Temple but was allotted to the Jews by the Roman ruler as permitted. In other words, those who came to apprehend Jesus were Jews, even the soldiery (John 18:12). The band, sent at the instigation of the chief priests and Pharisees, came with lanterns, torches, and weapons (swords and staves). Although a mixed group, the band consisted of a nucleus of officers assigned to police duty. Some were part of the household of Caiaphas; among these was Malchus, the high priest's servant (John 18:10).

Previously during his ministry, Jesus had evaded the Pharisees. This time, with *light* at night, *weapons*, and *numbers*, the band took no chances of his escaping.

John 18:4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

Jesus knew in advance that his time for capture had come.

John 18:5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

John 18:6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

When Jesus said, "I am he," the account does not say his apprehenders "fell backward." They first went backward and *then* fell. His words were like a repelling force. This dramatic scene showed that Jesus had the power to resist arrest but did not utilize that power.

By identifying himself, Jesus was protecting his followers from molestation through mistaken identity. He said, "I am he" twice (verses 6 and 8), the first time strongly with a repelling effect. The second time, which was after his apprehenders had regained their composure, he probably used a little different tone of voice, reminding them of what he had said.

John 18:7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

John 18:8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

The band's mission was to apprehend Jesus, and Jesus purposely shielded his disciples. His prayer in Chapter 17 was that he would lose none (except Judas) because they had a ministry to perform. It was noble of Jesus to protect his disciples.

John 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

John 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Peter probably intended to decapitate Malchus, but the sword was divinely guided to cut off only the ear. Perhaps the servant's name was given because he became a disciple later.

John 18:11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

The sword was providentially taken to the Garden of Gethsemane by the disciples to afford Jesus the opportunity of forbidding them to fight on his behalf. This incident also showed that Jesus' servants were willing to fight for him. In other words, not only did Jesus have magnetic or charismatic powers to repel the band, but his disciples could have been allowed to resist his apprehension. To state the matter another way, he *submitted* willingly.

In addition, Matthew 26:53 records that Jesus could have prayed for 12 legions of angels to rescue him. Thus there were three means of defense: (1) the Father's angels, (2) the disciples fighting for Jesus, and (3) Jesus' personal power.

Jesus referred to the prayer he had uttered previously there in the Garden regarding the cup the Father had given him to drink (Matt. 26:39–44). He was showing his resignation, for he had prayed that, if possible, the cup would be taken from him.

John 18:12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Jesus was led away *bound*, probably with his hands behind his back.

John 18:13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

Both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests at the same time (Luke 3:2). Jesus was led to Annas first to show deference, for Annas was the older of the two. High priests served for life, and for centuries there was a second high priest, an alternate, in case one was

indisposed.

John 18:14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

John 11:47–50 shows that the chief priests and the Pharisees had consulted together earlier in regard to Jesus. Psalm 2:2 tells us, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.” In other words, the leadership (both religious and civil) took counsel together; that is, Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod.

“Caiaphas ... gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.” The Holy Spirit moved Caiaphas to prophetically make the statement about Jesus’ dying for the people. Saul was similarly moved, and so were Balaam and Balaam’s ass (Num. 24:15–24; 1 Sam. 10:1,6,9–13). Thus the Holy Spirit can overrule to cause a statement to come forth *even though the speakers are evil*.

Caiaphas might have been moved to make the statement from the standpoint that if Jesus became too popular as a king, the Romans would clamp down on the Jews with far greater severity. Rather than have the nation suffer, Caiaphas felt it was expedient for Jesus to die. This statement was recorded for history—far into the future. The sentiment will be, “Yes, it was expedient that Jesus die lest the whole race of Adam perish.” Sometimes profound wisdom comes out of the mouth of babes.

Comment: The Sanhedrin envied Jesus and feared he would take away their prerogatives of leadership, so they went along with the suggestion of Caiaphas.

John 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

“Another disciple” was John. Should some try to say “another disciple” was not John because he referred to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” we can cite John 20:2, which uses both expressions: “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.”

In what way was he “known unto the high priest”? There was a family relationship, probably through marriage. A daughter of Zebedee might have married a kin of the high priest. Anyway, John was allowed right into the palace, and it is important to realize that both John and Peter followed Jesus when the other apostles fled. Their action was noble. The “palace,” the personal home of Caiaphas, was near the Temple but southwest of it. The houses of Annas and Caiaphas were very close to each other, just across a courtyard.

John Mark is probably the one who lost his robe (Mark 14:51,52). Not an apostle, he was like Peter’s right-hand man for a number of years. At the close of Peter’s ministry, John Mark went over to Paul. He had been with Paul earlier but was barred for desertion. Later he was reinstated, but in the meantime he united with Peter. Thus the Gospel of Mark is sometimes called the Gospel of Peter. Mark merely wrote what Peter dictated.

John 18:16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

There is a little pathos in regard to Peter's standing "at the door without" while John went into the palace. By John's speaking to "her that kept the door," the girl might have suspected Peter was a disciple, but she obeyed John and let Peter in.

John 18:17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

"Art not thou *also* one of this man's disciples?" indicates that John, as well as Peter, was known as being one of Jesus' disciples. However, because Jesus was the focus of attention and the chief priests were so happy he was in their custody, they ignored John. This verse is Peter's first denial.

John 18:18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Jesus was crucified the beginning of April, a time of year when Jerusalem was quite cold—although milder than our area. When the apostles slept in the Garden of Gethsemane, they could have had a fire and bundled themselves up to withstand the coolness of the night.

Notice the setting: servants and officers were standing right there. Their presence made Peter's test more difficult when he denied Jesus a second time (verse 25). At this point Peter must have been something like a zombie, for he had already denied Christ once. Lesson: Peter's experience is recorded to warn us lest we do likewise when we have a similar experience at the end of the age.

John 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

The questioning was hypocritical, for the high priest knew perfectly well what Jesus had taught. He (and the others) had probably all heard Jesus' teachings with their own ears, and they also had spies listening.

In their asking Jesus to tell "of his doctrine," it would be like asking us to explain in short order what our beliefs are. Under such conditions of brevity, Jesus would be more apt, they thought, to state something they could use as grounds against him. Hence the motivation for asking Jesus was *hypocritical* and faultfinding. They wanted him to incriminate himself; then they would not need other witnesses. Someday in the future we may be similarly confronted.

John 18:20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

John 18:21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

Despite the question about the disciples (verse 19), the high priest was particularly centering his attention on *Jesus*, whom he and the others were trying to implicate. Jesus' reply (verses 20 and 21) seems to suggest that the high priest viewed him something like the nominal systems view us. Those in the Truth movement are cast as being associated with a cult, a rather *secret* cult. The nominal systems say: "This group has strange views. They do not vote, go to war, etc." The implication is that we are a nefarious group. The same applied to

Jesus. The high priest was suggesting that the sentiments he harbored were of a revolutionary nature—that his disciples could potentially be soldiers for his mysterious Kingdom. The insinuation was that Jesus was hiding something, but he replied, in effect, “I have nothing to hide. What I have taught has been taught openly. Everyone should know my views. There are no secret doctrines.”

John 18:22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

Jesus’ answer (verses 20 and 21) was taken as an offense by the high priest. No matter how delicate the reply, it would have been resented by the high priest. Hence one of the officers struck Jesus.

Jesus did not want to expound about what he believed, who his disciples were, or what his doctrine was. One reason may have been that he did not want to delay matters too long, for he had to die at a particular hour and there remained certain experiences to go through.

John 18:23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

Jesus gave a clever reply. By asking a question and turning the tables around, he put his opposers on the defensive. He often used this technique. Earlier he had said, “If one smites you on the cheek, turn the other cheek also” (Matt. 5:39).

Evidently, Jesus wanted the chief priests to present a legal charge for arresting him and holding a trial. His replies forced the high priest to get witnesses. In other words, Jesus wanted the chief priests to bring forth a charge that would be more recognizable by Pilate, for Jesus, knowing the Scriptures in regard to the necessity of death by crucifixion, wanted to die by Pilate’s hand. By making them think along these channels, Jesus knew they would be better prepared to give a charge when they subsequently went to Pilate. As they saw that their answers did not work, they brought up a charge that would: treason. They later hypocritically said, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

Thus Jesus was forcing the chief priests to develop a charge that would be irrevocable—for he knew this was his time to die. He did not want to either slow down or speed up matters—3 p.m. was to be the hour of his death. The trials had to be finished by early in the morning so that he could be brought to Pilate in time and the charges made. He had to die the next day from the Gentile standpoint, the same day from the Jewish standpoint.

Jesus’ reply in verse 23 was in harmony with the Scripture about his being brought to the slaughter as a lamb. He was meek, especially in the trial with Pilate; he witnessed a good confession and would not defend himself *publicly*. (*Privately*, however, he said to Pilate, “You speak the truth. My kingdom is not of this world.”)

Notice that although Jesus did not defend himself here, he did try to have the accusation clarified. We should do the same if our circumstances are similar. We can simply ask, “What is the charge?” One purpose in asking for the clarification was for the benefit of the hearers, who could then see the trumped-up nature of the charge. For example, Nicodemus might well have been in the room. Thus Jesus did speak, but he did not try to defend himself. He just wanted the charge clarified.

John 18:24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Caiaphas was considered the determining factor, for it was he who gave the advice, "It is expedient that one man die lest a nation perish" (John 11:50 paraphrase).

John 18:25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

John 18:26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

John 18:27 Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus had predicted that Peter would deny him thrice before "the cock crew." Although "cock crow" was the term for a watch in the night, there may have been a simulated sound as well. It would be like the town crier or Moslems in their minarets crying the hour.

Tradition says that after repenting, Peter woke up every morning at that hour and thanked God for repentance. Anyway, Peter's denials were certainly scarred in his mind. His repentance benefited not only him but all other Christians. As a result of his repentance and growth, his epistles became more meaningful.

Probably Peter did not remember Jesus' prediction until the Lord looked at him. That look must have penetrated his very soul, for in that look there would have been love and compassion as well as sternness. In addition, Jesus' face would have been bruised at that time. He could have walked on by without looking at Peter, but despite the pressures, he took time out to show concern for Peter—and for his mother too.

John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

The "hall of judgment," which was off the Via Dolorosa, was part of Pilate's house or residence. It was outside on the lower level. In some pictures Pilate is seen leaning out over a balustrade to say, "I find no fault in this man" and "Behold the man." That probably was the case, but the charges were brought down below by the Jews. Pilate sat on both levels depending on what he was doing. On the lower level he listened to the charges. On the upper level he pronounced judgment.

"It was early"—6 a.m. Jesus was led from Caiaphas to the Hall of Judgment at that early hour. The Jews did not go into the Hall of Judgment, but they had to communicate with Pilate. It was an open area, but they did not step down into the hall proper lest they get polluted for the Passover.

This is the fourth Passover in the Gospel of John. Only John's Gospel enumerates the four Passovers, thus proving Jesus' ministry was 3 1/2 years long. The reckoning is as follows:

6 months from October to Passover No. 1	=	1/2 year
12 months until Passover No. 2	=	1 year
12 months until Passover No. 3	=	1 year
12 months until Passover No. 4	=	<u>1 year</u>
Total		3 1/2 years

John 18:29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

John 18:30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

John 18:31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

Right away Pilate wanted to brush this matter off, for he realized the Jews did not have a real charge. To say Jesus was a malefactor but not specify the charge was not convincing to Pilate. The Jews had expected Pilate to take their word for Jesus' "wrongdoing."

After the Passover feast the Jews could have put Jesus to death themselves—that is when they stoned Stephen—but they did not want to wait a week lest the matter cool off. Therefore, they said to Pilate, "It is not lawful [according to Roman law] for us to put any man to death."

The priesthood wanted to have clean hands in regard to Jesus' death because he was popular. At this Passover season the multitudes had just cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hence the priesthood had to tread softly. As for the culpability of the priesthood, the false witnesses were brought up before the *religious* authorities, not the civil authorities. Two false witnesses were procured to get a *religious* consensus. (Under the Jewish law two witnesses were needed to condemn a man to death.) Once the religious consensus was obtained, the matter was taken to Pilate, and another strategy was pursued to persuade the reluctant civil authorities. John 11:48 is a proof of Jesus' popularity and the fact it was gaining momentum. "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

Caiaphas pictures the pope as spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church. However, the corresponding antitypical statement about it being expedient for "one man" (the feet members) to die may not be said to the public at large but may be spoken among the religious leaders. This possibility is shown in the agreement between Salomé and Herodias to get John the Baptist's head.

John 18:32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

That death was crucifixion, as mentioned in John 12:32,33, etc. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."

When Pilate saw that he could not dismiss the matter so readily, he called Jesus in for questioning. But the delay was just putting the noose around Jesus' neck, for the Jews would devise other ways of incriminating him.

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Pilate called Jesus into the Judgment Hall. This audience between Jesus and Pilate was relatively private. Pilate would have been aware that Jesus was being called the Messiah and a King, for it was his responsibility to know what was going on. As custodian of the

Roman Empire, he had to have eyes and ears throughout the realm. He knew Jesus was talking about a coming Kingdom and being the Messiah (or King/Emperor as the Romans would view the matter).

John 18:34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Jesus asked Pilate why he had put forth the question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” In other words, Jesus was saying, “Did others prompt you to ask this question, or are you asking yourself?” Notice Pilate’s answer in the next verse.

John 18:35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Pilate had to get information in order to keep a record to show his superiors in case something happened. He saw that the chief priests meant business. He wanted to shirk his responsibility and not get entangled, but that was not possible. Hence, like a judge, he needed more information. If he were questioned later and said, “I do not know,” the emperor would not have been pleased.

Jesus did not answer the original question (verse 33), but countered with a question (verse 34). When Pilate responded (verse 35), Jesus gave another answer (verse 36) and eventually answered the original question (verse 37). The point is that Jesus answered later and *on his own terms*.

Verses 33 and 34: One reason Jesus questioned Pilate was to test his sincerity. The question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” could have been asked from one of two motivations: (1) Pilate wanted *personal* information. (2) Pilate wanted information for record-keeping purposes—for the *report* he would have to make to Caesar. The motivation was the latter. Pilate’s tenure in office depended on how well he discharged his responsibilities, so he needed information. In making his report, he had to be aware of any threat to Rome.

Of course Jesus knew what was in Pilate’s heart, but there was a beneficial effect in asking; namely, the questioning focused attention on the real issue. For example, if one is insincere and that fact is brought to his attention, a purpose has been served. However, Pilate did have a sense of righteousness and justice in that he did not want to put Jesus to death. He could see through the envy of the chief priests, and that the charges against Jesus were trumped up, not worthy of death. But Pilate was not personally interested in Jesus’ teaching. He was trying to find out if Jesus did, in fact, *consider* himself to be the King of the Jews. He did not want to know *if* Jesus were King but if Jesus *thought* he was King. Pilate could also have had in mind, as Jesus seems to be saying, “If it is true that you *purport* to be the King of the Jews, and if your followers believe you are the King of the Jews, that might constitute a threat to Rome.” Jesus’ reply in verse 36 allayed any such suspicions.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

In other words, “I have men who would be very willing to give their lives unto death, but my Kingdom is not of this age, so you do not have to worry along this line. My followers would defend me if I gave the word.”

“Now is my kingdom not from hence.” This statement puzzled Pilate. “You are King of the Jews, but your Kingdom *is not of this age?*” The words were very confusing to Pilate—and to most Jews too.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

“Art thou a king then?” It was hard for Pilate to rationalize this. “You are a King, but your Kingdom is future?” Jesus admitted, “What you say is true. I am a King. I was born for this reason, and I testify unto it.” Pilate’s next response is interesting.

John 18:38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Pilate was not very religiously inclined even to the Roman gods. He was not interested in philosophy and felt truth could not be proved one way or the other. His question “What is truth?” really signified, “End of matter.” The conversation was cut off at that point.

Pilate had no philosophical views. Evidently some previous experiences had soured him toward religion. “What is truth?” has been a quest all down through history. Many have become discouraged in their quest for truth. Furthermore, “What is truth?” signifies that truth is relative to the believer. There were different viewpoints, but Pilate would do what he felt was right and just. And he turned around and said to the Jews, “I find in him no fault at all.” His concept of truth was to make righteous judgments. Beyond that—that is, in regard to philosophical judgments—he was not concerned.

It is interesting that Pilate did not feel Jesus’ remarks constituted a threat. He could see that Jesus’ doctrine was philosophical, not insurrectionist. Probably, too, he was impressed by Jesus. Moreover, Pilate would have heard of Jesus’ teaching: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). Thus Pilate perceived that Jesus’ Kingdom was more theoretical and not a practical threat to the Roman Empire. Also, Pilate could see that envy was a motive of the chief priests in wanting Jesus’ death.

Q: How would John, who was not present, have received this account of Jesus’ exchange with Pilate?

A: After having a premonition or dream, Pilate’s wife warned, “Have ... nothing to do with that just man” (Matt. 27:19). She subsequently, in later years, may have confided in others. Since there were believers in Herod’s and Caesar’s households, there probably also were believers in Pilate’s household who could have reported the conversation to John—perhaps a maid or even Cornelius the centurion.

John 18:39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

John 18:40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate tried to provide a way out. Since it was customary to release a prisoner at the time of Passover, he suggested that Jesus should be the one released. This way out would have allowed the chief priests to save face, and Pilate would have deemed justice done. But the chief priests wanted Barabbas released, and they moved the people accordingly (Mark 15:11).

Pilate's *reluctance* to put Jesus to death is reminiscent of Herod with John the Baptist and Darius with Daniel concerning the lions' den. Herod did not expect John the Baptist's head to be requested when Salomé was offered a reward for dancing. Pilate did not expect Barabbas to be released when he mentioned the custom. Of course there will be some exceptions at the end of the age, but generally speaking, the civil authorities will be reluctant to prosecute the feet members. The fact that Pilate did try to dispense justice is shown by his publicly washing his hands (Matt. 27:24).

"It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" (John 19:14). The "sixth hour" of John's Gospel was 6 a.m. Roman time (the other Gospels use Jewish time). Thus Jesus was intentionally taken to Pilate very early in the morning, before the public was aware and would interfere. As the Passover Lamb, Jesus was slain between the two evenings. The seven-day feast followed the "day of preparation" (the feast began at 6 p.m.). The slaying of the lamb preceded the feast. Therefore, Jesus had to be removed from the Cross and put in the tomb before 6 p.m.

In addition to John's calling Barabbas a "robber," Luke 23:19 refers to him as a murderer and a seditionist: "Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison."

John 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Being reluctant to crucify Jesus, Pilate thought the scourging might satisfy the bloodthirsty cravings and he would be able to release Jesus. In other words, the scourging was a ploy or stratagem on Pilate's part to pacify the multitude.

The Prophet Isaiah (50:6) wrote prophetically of Jesus, "*I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*" Although Pilate tried to avert the Crucifixion by means of the scourging, he *unknowingly* was fulfilling prophecy.

John 19:2 And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

Notice how Jesus was decorated. A circular crown of thorns, woven in and out, was pressed down hard onto his head, and a purple robe was put on him. Matthew 27:28 describes the robe as scarlet. Probably the robe was both scarlet and purple, being lined with scarlet. Both colors could then be seen because of the cape-like nature of the robe.

The robe may have belonged to the centurion at the Cross. He was melted down by a process—a process of conviction. But earlier, at this time, the soldiers could have borrowed his cape.

All of these details were necessary in order for Jesus to fully pay the penalty for Adam. The crown of thorns was an offset for the curse put on Adam that he would have to till the

ground by the sweat of his brow and that thorns and thistles would spring forth. Also, Jesus had to die as a King because Adam was a king. In other words, Jesus did not just have to die as a perfect man for Adam, but other correspondencies had to occur. Adam was king over the animals as well as king over his own family and the potential future human race to come from his loins. With thorns being part of the curse, Jesus had to experience them also. The point is that in order to be the *corresponding* price, Jesus had to *feel* the curse as well as die as a perfect man.

John 19:3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Notice, it was the soldiery who put the crown of thorns on Jesus' head and a purple robe on him and mockingly hailed him as "King of the Jews." This suggests that soldiers were present as bodyguards for Pilate when he had the private audience with Jesus (John 18:33–37). Pilate had asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And Jesus had replied, "Yes." Thus the soldiers would have heard the exchange between Pilate and Jesus.

The mockery and ill treatment of Jesus show how cruel and hardened these soldiers were—and accustomed to doing such butchery as crucifixion and scourging. Their callousness was manifested even more later, at the Cross. They were sadistic.

John 19:4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Three times in John's Gospel, Pilate said publicly in regard to Jesus, "I find *no fault* in him" (John 18:38; 19:4,6). The repetition is impressive. And it is true, as the hymn goes: "Spotless Lamb of God was he." Pilate's words point out that the charges were false.

The mood that prevailed had a bearing on Jesus' experiences and intensified his suffering and shame. Although the soldiers alone did the scourging, the multitude could have cheered as they witnessed it. The mood was like a football stadium, a bullfight, etc., where the sadistic nature of the crowd comes out. The people like brutality and blood. Hence a mob spirit prevailed in regard to Jesus. No doubt Satan provided ideas for the occasion, such as the crown of thorns and the robe. Nevertheless, the soldiers were hardened to comply. The scourging usually involved 40 lashes save one. On the end of each strip of leather was a piece of metal, so that when the victim was hit, the flesh was ripped off his back as the leather strips were pulled back. "With [or by] his stripes we are healed" becomes very significant (Isa. 53:5). Jesus bore MUCH humiliation and shame with great patience so that Adam's sin could be forgiven (and thus ours and the world's). Technically, Jesus died for Adam, but in the process he was even helping those who had scourged him and the mob that had shouted, "Crucify him!"—for all will have the *opportunity* for life.

We see the temptation Jesus faced. He knew he possessed powers when he was taunted, "If you are really the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40 paraphrase). He patiently endured and went through the rigors of the Cross and death. In Matthew 26:53 he said, "Know ye not that I could call twelve legions of angels if I so desired?" (paraphrase). Over and over again we see that Jesus did not just die—it is the *manner* in which he died that is so significant.

John 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

John 19:6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

The chief priests and officers had a blind spot. No matter what Pilate said, they would not be dissuaded. The same was true of the Holy(?) Inquisition. Many thought they were doing God a favor by persecuting so-called “heretics.” Hence they were completely hardened to the cries and moans of the afflicted. *Reprint* article 2312 entitled “Jesus Before Pilate—‘Consider Him’” contains an interesting statement: “The hatred inspired by religious fanaticism is the deepest, wickedest, and most conscienceless of all.”

There were different groups of soldiers. One group, plus a motley crew of others, apprehended Jesus in Gethsemane. A different group of soldiers, Pilate’s own cohorts and bodyguards, scourged Jesus. Thus the priests had a contingent of soldiers to keep order during their services, and Pilate had his own soldiers. We know that the officers who later watched the sealed tomb pertained to the priests because when the resurrection occurred, the soldiers reported to the priests, and the priests, in turn, paid hush money to the soldiers.

“Behold the man!” (“*Ecce homo*”) included Jesus’ countenance, bearing, stature, composure, and dignity—in spite of all the humiliation. The way Jesus patiently accepted the situation impressed Pilate, and Pilate was a hardened individual. But there are people who, even though hardened, want *justice*. Roman governors, such as Pilate, had to be very careful lest they lose their office overnight at the order of the Emperor or someone higher up than they.

Pilate no doubt sensed that Jesus was *innocent*. If he consented too quickly to Jesus’ death, there might be repercussions. But he finally agreed when Caesar was mentioned. The chief priests said, in effect, “We want your approval to have him crucified. If you refuse, you know what Caesar will do” (John 19:12).

Pilate’s words “Behold the man!” showed the excellency of Jesus’ dignity as a *perfect man*. This is a good example for us to remember when we are on trial at the end of the age. We are to keep our dignity, even when *suffering* for the *Lord’s* cause. Pilate discerned the perfection of Jesus’ being. Although Jesus’ countenance was 90 percent of the situation (see Strong’s), everything about him contributed. (The word “countenance” can be used in either a large sense or a restricted sense.)

Pilate got his retribution in the present life. After the Crucifixion he was removed from office very quickly and had a sad ending. Thus in the next age, he will be dealt with a little easier. There were *degrees* of responsibility among those who contributed to Jesus’ death.

Pilate could see earlier, from his private audience with Jesus, that the latter posed no threat. Jesus had said, in effect, “You do not have to worry about me. My Kingdom is not of this world, or else my servants would fight” (John 18:36 paraphrase). He had a different calling, for some time in the *future*—and a very indefinite time from Pilate’s perspective.

Both Pilate and Herod represent civil authorities, who will be pawns in the hands of the religious leaders. Caiaphas and Herodias, picturing Papacy, were the respective connivers. Those in the Papacy will want the feet members put to death, but will not want to do the dirty work themselves. The civil authorities will be reluctant to act but will have their

hands forced.

In regard to *religion*, Pilate was not concerned, but when the subject turned to sedition against the government, he considered it more inflammatory. The same will be true in the future. Civil authorities will be concerned over the feet members' influence on the downfall of governments.

John 19:7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

Notice, Jesus "made himself the *Son* of God," not God or even God the Son. This verse is helpful in refuting the Trinity.

John 19:8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

Pilate's being "more afraid" shows he already was afraid previously. His wife, following a dream, warned, "Have nothing to do with that *just* man" (Matt. 27:19). This statement, plus looking at Jesus, made Pilate nervous—there were forces at play here. He could see that he was being railroaded by the chief priests and officers. Now, hearing the claim that Jesus was the *Son* of God, he was the more afraid.

Following the charge of the "Jews" that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God, Pilate may have foreseen what the next step would be (verse 12). "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend, for whosoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar" (paraphrase). Also, "son of God" was one of *Caesar's* titles. (Starting with Julius Caesar, this title was ascribed to the Roman emperor.) Pilate realized he would be pressured on this point. Although he still wanted an out for Jesus, he was frightened and suspicious of what would happen.

John 19:9 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Notice Pilate's strategy, for he deliberately took this moment to have Jesus come privately to him again. In other words, when the situation got delicate, he tried to distract attention or break the continuity of thought of the others by an intermission. He still did not want to crucify Jesus.

But notice what Jesus did next: he *refused* to answer. He did not want to defend himself to the point of being released, for he had come to *die*. Only after the second question did he answer. In other words, there are times to speak and times to be silent. It is hard to know when to do which.

Pilate knew the reports that Jesus was from Nazareth—he would have known Jesus' background. But upon hearing the claim that Jesus was the Son of God, he asked, "Whence art thou?" Pilate half expected to hear that Jesus' origin was another planet! In other words, he suspected Jesus was not really from Nazareth. However, Jesus did not answer because he did not want to be released. Because of their offices, Herod and Pilate both knew about Jesus' doings and whereabouts, and the possibility that there *might* be some truth to his claim (even though Pilate had asked earlier, "What is truth?").

John 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not

that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

John 19:11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Jesus knew what was in Pilate's mind. Therefore, not only did he correct Pilate's statement about power, but because of Pilate's fear, he made a statement about guilt and responsibility. He was saying, "Those who delivered me to you will be worse off." Jesus' response went to the core of Pilate's being and made him tremble even more.

Another point. Jesus' statement proves there are different degrees of responsibility. He did *not say* that Pilate had *no sin* but that the chief priests and officers had the *greater sin*. Whenever Jesus spoke—even if caught suddenly and off guard—he answered precisely and so true. His words were *astonishing*, for he was *always* prepared. He always had the appropriate reply (or nonreply).

Q: How do we harmonize John 18:31 where the Jews said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" with John 19:7 where they said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die"?

A: Their excuse was not that they could not put him to death, for they subsequently stoned Stephen, but that it was the Feast of Passover and they wanted to be ceremoniously clean. They did not even want to enter the Judgment Hall but stood in the open plaza. In other words, they conveniently used the Law to suit their own purposes.

At Passover *many* Jews were gathered in Jerusalem. The chief priests were nervous about all the people and hence did not want to be apparent as the murderers of Jesus, yet they were afraid to wait lest his popularity swell even more and their positions be in jeopardy. He had already chased the moneychangers out of the Temple, and they feared what else he might do. Hence they felt they could not wait any longer. And their trials (Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) were held at night while the people were asleep so that Jesus could be brought to Pilate at 6 a.m. the next morning. At that early hour they practically got Pilate out of bed and they demanded an audience, shouting into the recesses of his residence.

Angels have knowledge far superior to men, one reason being that they have lived so much longer. But even without the divine nature, as a *perfect human being*, Jesus was *far* superior even to the angels. Consider the parables. When Jesus was questioned on a matter, he often replied with a parable—a *deep* parable *packed* with wisdom. His wisdom far outshines Paul's logic. Paul is usually given the credit based on the fact that Jesus was somewhat limited because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, but the seemingly simple parables contained *very deep spiritual* lessons and, at the same time, satisfied the need to answer natural-minded men back there. Jesus did say there was much he wanted to tell but couldn't. Nevertheless, he gave forth great wisdom with far-reaching spiritual applications. And consider that he uttered the parables on the spur of the moment—not after an hour's private planning!

Nicodemus could not understand spiritual things when he went to Jesus by night, but Jesus used a helpful technique. He told Nicodemus something that stayed with him: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). Then, later, when Nicodemus saw Jesus on the Cross, his body naked and all deformed, twisted like a serpent, he got the point. Jesus had predicted that crucifixion

would be his fate—that he would be lifted up and draw all men to him. Now *Nicodemus* was drawn! He had been thinking of Jesus: “I know you are a wonderful Master with a lot of knowledge, but what is the Kingdom you talk about?” Nicodemus was borderline until he saw Jesus on the Cross and remembered the earlier statement. Jesus knew how to reach men’s hearts, so that if they were of the right caliber, they would respond. The original going of Nicodemus to Jesus was like being led of the Father to him. Even though it was at night, Nicodemus took the initiative, and he was rewarded for that step.

John 19:12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Pilate sought to release Jesus after the latter said there could be no power over him if it were not according to the Father’s will. Since Pilate was accustomed to having the power of life and death over his subjects, Jesus’ words must have made quite an impression.

Earlier the chief priests called Jesus a blasphemer. Now they changed the charge to treason. They cleverly turned the situation to their own advantage, knowing they had Pilate by the throat.

John 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Pilate came down from an upper court to the Judgment Seat below. The seat itself was elevated. Now came the time for a decision. The chief priests anticipated that Pilate would concur, for he was frightened by their mention of Caesar. The implication was “If you do not put Jesus to death, we are going to press charges to Caesar.” Hence Pilate was forced to make a judgment.

It is interesting that John used the Hebrew word for Pavement, *Gabbatha*, and the Hebrew word for Calvary, *Golgotha*.

John 19:14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

John 19:15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

It was a thorn in Pilate’s flesh to bring up Caesar again. How hypocritical! The chief priests despised the Roman government, wanted their freedom, and were looking for Messiah. What irony!

John’s observation of *repetition* is interesting. This is the third time Pilate, a *heathen*, called Jesus “King” (John 18:39; 19:14,15). John also observed the *repeated* efforts of Pilate to either shift responsibility back to the Jews or suggest a way out of putting Jesus to death (John 18:31,39; 19:1,4–6,12,14,15). The repetition points out the degree of responsibility and guilt that fell on the Jews, that is, on the Jewish *religious leaders*. John is also showing the *tenacity* of the Jews in pressing the charges. Every time Pilate brought up a point, he showed his desire to drop the charges. The account reveals the bloodthirstiness of the scribes and Pharisees to have Jesus put to death. For this reason the Jews hate the Gospel of John; they

consider John to be anti-Semitic.

Although John did not narrate all of Jesus' trials, he listed many of them: Annas, Caiaphas, Hall of Judgment (John 18:28), Hall of Judgment for private questioning by Pilate (18:33), Judgment Hall (19:9), and Judgment Seat (Pavement or Gabbatha) (19:13).

In regard to the reference to Caesar by the chief priests, they should not have entered into government matters, for there was separation of Church and State under the Jewish arrangement. They were wrong to try to trick Jesus earlier by showing him a coin and asking about paying taxes. Their attitude was "Why, if he were a loyal Jew, he should abhor paying tribute money to Rome!"

Since the "sixth hour" was 6 a.m. Roman time, the interchanges with Pilate did not take long. In a half hour they could have been over—scourging and all. Incidentally, the scourging was rhythmically done. The 39 stripes could have been administered in just 1 1/2 minutes. Hence the chief priests were very successful in getting the matter over with before the populace awoke and realized what was happening.

John 19:16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

John 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

The fact that John pointed out Hebrew words (19:13,17) proves his Gospel was written in Greek (not Aramaic). Jesus spoke in Aramaic for the most part, although he did speak Greek and Hebrew at times. The Gospels were all written in Greek. When Jesus performed one of his miracles, he said in Hebrew, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be [thou] opened" (Mark 7:34). No doubt the events have been photographically recorded. When they are viewed in the Kingdom, these key words will be repeated in the original Hebrew. Incidentally, when there is one language on earth, all will know the language spoken in Israel. In Jesus's day the Jews were forced to know two languages: Hebrew plus Greek for commerce and business. They had to know a smattering of Latin too because the Roman Empire occupied the land and all decrees and public legal pronouncements were in Latin. The same could be true in the earlier phases of the Kingdom even though one universal language will be gradually implemented. Hence the original Hebrew words will be meaningful.

Q: Before the Church is complete, will we see a remnant of Jews become spiritual in the sense of running the race for the Little Flock?

A: I am not inclined to think so, but it can be. However, some will be interested in truth from a natural and practical standpoint.

When the priests said, "We have no king but Caesar," they must have spoken very threateningly because right after that statement Pilate sent Jesus away to be crucified. The centurions, as Pilate's representatives, would have escorted Jesus to keep back the crowds. "Unto them" (verse 16) means "unto their wishes." Pilate gave Jesus over according to the desires of the chief priests, but Pilate had his own soldiers do the work.

The place of crucifixion looks like a skull. The hill has pocket cavities that resemble eyes and a promontory that projects out. Called Gordon's Calvary, the hill is north of the

Damascus Gate, a short distance away.

Originally, the skull was concealed underground. Then about 200 BC, the hill was dug out to make Jerusalem harder to capture. In the process the skull was exposed. No doubt Satan, who would like to bury all evidence, was behind the thought to fill that land in again subsequent to the Crucifixion. This happened in AD 135 when Hadrian made a ramp to capture the city. Then in 1874 the skull was again excavated. (Note: The Vespasian-Titus siege of Jerusalem was earlier, in AD 69. The last two fortresses fell in AD 73, one of which was Masada.)

As for the skull formation, it was fitting that Jesus paid the Ransom price for dead humanity on the very spot that resembled what he would redeem, figuratively speaking. Gordon described the topography as being the skull of a person lying on his back. The chest would be the Temple Mount proper. The neck was the gully that during the Hasmonean rulership era in Israel was dug out to make it more difficult for an army to conquer Jerusalem. (The wall, plus the gully, made Jerusalem harder to conquer.)

Originally, Skull Hill was part of Mount Moriah, the mount where Abraham offered up Isaac. The mount was like a loaf of bread before it was gouged out and the skull exposed. Just as Jesus bore his cross, so Isaac, picturing Jesus, bore the wood for the sacrifice. Both were willing sacrifices. In addition, Arabic tradition states that Mount Moriah is where Adam died—specifically at Golgotha. How appropriate that both the first Adam and the second Adam died on Mount Moriah or Golgotha!

Comment: God's *foreknowledge* is shown by His preparing earth's surface—ie, Golgotha, Skull Hill—*long before* Adam was created. God foreknew that Adam would sin, that he would die above the skull buried in Mount Moriah, that the skull would be unearthed, and that Jesus would die as Adam's Ransom price in the *very same place* with the skull exposed.

John 19:18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Jesus was crucified between two thieves, as prophesied. "He made his grave with the *wicked*, and with the rich in his death; ... he was numbered with the *transgressors*" (Isa. 53:9,12). In the Kingdom the Jews will be ashamed that with *so many* Old Testament prophecies predicting details about Messiah, they failed to recognize him.

Q: If it is true that five were on the hill, would two have been crucified earlier (that is, the day before) and thus already be there? Then two others were crucified at the same time as Jesus.

A: Piecing together certain Scriptures, the Companion Bible puts forth the theory that more than two others were there with Jesus on Calvary Hill. Two individuals definitely accompanied Jesus to Calvary and were crucified at the same time. These two would have been aligned with Jesus in front; others were in back, having been *previously* crucified.

John 19:19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John 19:20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

The writing on the Cross would have been fairly large. Some artists show it in script form. And—how interesting! The chief priests worked secretly at night to set the machinery in motion for Jesus' death, and now, in three languages so *all* could read, the *truth* was stated. It was like an open rebuke. Moreover, this was Pilate's way of getting back at Jesus' accusers. The chief priests resented the sign and wanted the writing reworded, but Pilate refused (verse 22), saying, "What I have written I have written." In antitype, when the feet members are put to death, the event will be *known universally*.

The place of the Crucifixion "was *nigh* to the city," not *in* the city. Hence verse 20 is a proof that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not the site of the Crucifixion, for it is *inside* the city walls—despite the fact that some have drawn the old wall with a peculiar indentation so as to put the Church of the Holy Sepulchre outside the wall. Moshe Dayan and others bent the facts lest they offend the Catholic view. In 1922 the wall of the Damascus Gate was found. To hold to the erroneous view, they said that wall did not exist in Jesus' day. But subsequently another wall was found *underneath*, and that wall did exist in Jesus' day. Jesus came out the original (lower) Damascus Gate when he was crucified.

John 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

John 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Pilate was saying, "You *forced* me to crucify Jesus, and now you will have to face the matter squarely." How *dramatic* this scene will be when viewed in the future! With the Crucifixion being one of the turning points of earth's history, the title on the Cross will be very meaningful for the world to see as the Ransom is dramatically testified to them in due time (1 Tim. 2:5,6).

John 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

Altogether, there were five parts. Four parts pertained to articles of clothing, one part for each soldier. Hence we know there were four soldiers, for each soldier got one garment. The fifth part, the coat "without seam," was more valuable and prized. Since it would not have made sense to cut the coat into four pieces and give each soldier a fragment, they cast lots for it (verse 24). The words "and also his coat" are apparently spurious.

Why were four soldiers on the scene? When the Crucifixion took place, one soldier held down Jesus' hand, another put the spike through the hand, a third soldier held the other hand, and a fourth put the second spike through Jesus' other hand. His feet were probably nailed last.

Q: Was a coat without seams unusual?

A: Yes. Josephus states that the high priest wore a garment without seams, so such a garment was unusual. It would be interesting to know who made the coat and under what circumstances.

Bro. Russell and other writers suggest that the coat represents the covering of the Church.

When we consecrate and become members of Jesus' body, the thought is not that the Ransom is parceled out to us. Instead, we come *under the Ransom*. In other words, the Ransom is not a piecemeal thing. This concept fits in with the garment being of one piece and without seam—it covers the *whole*.

As an *outer* garment, the coat covered the four other garments that were distributed. The four garments represent four classes of humanity (like the four rivers of Eden). All four classes are covered; all four are of Adam's race. Stated another way, the one Ransom is for all humanity, of which four classes are called. (Of course the consecrated of the Gospel Age have the Ransom on the basis of a mortgage or a loan.) The four classes are the Little Flock, the Great Company, the Ancient Worthies, and the world of mankind.

With condemned prisoners who were crucified, it was a practice for soldiers to parcel out the garments among themselves. In other words, the garments became the property of those immediately involved with the execution. Hence verse 23 states that when the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they parted his garments. After doing the dirty work—nailing the prisoner to the cross, lifting the cross up into position, and putting the cross in the hole in the ground—they disposed of the prisoner's goods. This is sordid. Hardness is suggested.

Q: After Jesus was scourged, were these clothes put back on him? If so, they would have been bloody, yet the soldiers wanted them.

A: Yes. In ancient times clothing was considered valuable. And no doubt the women made sure that the Master's clothing was kept clean and in excellent shape. We are used to washing our hands each time they are a little soiled, but such was not the case in olden times. With water not being readily available in many places, it did not mean much that garments were soiled and wrinkled. Moreover, Jesus was probably unusually meticulous as far as possible and convenient under those circumstances. Therefore, from a material standpoint, his garments were valuable despite the blood stains, perspiration, dirt, etc., for they could be washed.

John 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

The disposition of Jesus' garments was prophesied long in advance in Psalm 22:18.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

The fact that three Marys were on the scene at the time of the Crucifixion is unusual. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all four Gospels, whereas the others are mentioned sometimes and sometimes not. Mary Magdalene was present at the Cross, when Jesus' body was laid in the Garden Tomb, when the women came to anoint his body after the sabbath, etc. Her name is the most constant one.

The Greek is unclear whether "his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas" is one person or two. The family relationships are an involved study. It is possible for two Marys to be in the same family.

The name “Mary” had a great appeal to Hebrew women, for the Hebrew is Miriam. Traditionally, it was felt that the mother of the Messiah would be called Miriam. Hence Mary (or Miriam) was a very common name at the time of the First Advent. Many were afraid that not having that name would jeopardize their chances for being the mother of the Messiah. There are five Marys in the New Testament.

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

John 19:27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

John was at the Cross with the women. Notice that in verse 26 he described himself as “the disciple standing by, whom he [Jesus] loved.” Jesus committed his mother to the custodianship of John (only John’s Gospel shows this, among other details). The women and John went closer to the Cross than any of the others. A beautiful painting shows them kneeling and looking up at Jesus. The artist painted the picture as if he were behind the Cross and looking towards it. Thus the perspective of the person viewing the painting is that he is Jesus and looking down at the suppliants.

When Jesus was apprehended earlier, John and Peter followed him, and John got Peter into the palace of Caiaphas. Only John’s Gospel tells of this incident. John’s multiple additional details enrich the Gospels, for he provides insights that the other Gospels lack.

“Woman, behold thy son!” Jesus’ manner of address to Mary safeguards us against Mariolatry. It shows a certain *reserve*, and the reserve is proper because Jesus is Lord and Master. By calling Mary the “mother of God,” Catholics give her inordinate reverence and respect. Jesus alone is the Mediator—Mary is NOT the Mediatrix. Catholics wrongly pray to Mary, thinking that as a woman, she is more pliable and compassionate. They expect her to put in a good word for them to either God or Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity confuses the picture even more.

Then Jesus told John, “Behold thy mother!” And from that *very hour* John took Mary into his home. Jesus was making provision for his own—making sure Mary would be cared for in the best way. In spite of his suffering and his preoccupation with his own trials from the night before and on through the Crucifixion, when he saw Mary, he thought of *her* welfare.

Why did Jesus give Mary to John—especially when two of his stepbrothers were apostles? Jesus recognized certain qualities in John that led him to make an important decision concerning the welfare of his mother, and that decision was above the natural family relationship. The arrangement would profit Mary spiritually and affectionately, as well as provide stability in temporal matters. Moreover, John would be comforted in having charge of Mary while he felt the loss of Jesus so keenly. John would feel that what he did for Mary he was doing for Jesus.

Jesus made only a brief statement to John and Mary in their grief—and yet they understood the meaning of the words “Behold thy son!” and “Behold thy mother!” Certain factors suggest that Mary was more compatible with John than with her own sons. When we are consecrated, we look at our natural families in a different light. Despite her great age, tradition says that Mary went to Asia Minor. John’s type of ministry was better suited to taking care of Mary, and generally speaking, the circumstances of his life were more stable.

For the most part, we have to rely on tradition to know the whereabouts of some of the other apostles later on—what nations they went to, how they died, etc. Among the nations Peter traveled to were Babylon, Iran, and Iraq. He was the chief spokesman until Paul appeared on the scene. Moreover, Peter was of a different disposition than John, although both were fiery. John's emotionalism was of a different type.

John 19:28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Psalm 69:21 is the Old Testament prophecy Jesus referred to: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Jesus knew this Scripture still needed fulfillment, so he said, "I thirst." Had he not thus spoken, he might not have been given the vinegar. *Extreme* thirst is a problem with crucifixion.

John 19:29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

A hyssop reed or branch was needed to reach Jesus' mouth, for he was probably 2 1/2 to 3 feet off the ground with his mouth about 9 feet up.

Vinegar was another form of cruelty, for it does not assuage thirst. In fact, it exacerbated Jesus' symptoms. Offering the vinegar shows the sordid, sadistic nature of the soldiers—and others of humanity. An element of society gets a thrill from hurting people or their property. Psalm 69 gives Jesus' thinking. Although he died for the world of mankind, the incorrigible will not be saved; they will not get life. That element must be weeded out of earth—weeded out of the Church, the Great Company, and the world. Thank God, the permission of evil is not forever! In time there will be a *cleansed* universe. Psalm 69:28 expresses those sentiments: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous"; in other words, "Let the incorrigible go into Second Death."

Q: On many other occasions a prophecy about Jesus was fulfilled inadvertently by a certain event or incident happening. We know that Scriptures were brought to Jesus' mind in Gethsemane and on the Cross to strengthen him. Is that the basis for assuming he was aware of the prophecy of Psalm 69:21? Then, knowing that it needed to be fulfilled, he intentionally said, "I thirst."

A: Yes. Jesus' "checklist" showed that all Scriptures had been fulfilled regarding what others would do to him except this one. The vinegar *intensified* his thirst, yet he uttered these words and accepted the vinegar uncomplainingly just to fulfill prophecy.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

A person being crucified would normally have his head bowed all along from the pain, agony, and weariness, but Jesus held his head erect. He saw what was happening (for example, he saw his mother). Even though he was on the Cross, he held up his head like a king. Despite all the agony, he tried to keep his composure, but he had no control over his body. Referring on the Cross to his naked and twisted body, Jesus said, "I am a worm." (These words were prophetically recorded in Psalm 22:6.) Jesus could not do anything about the pitiful state of his body, but what he could do, he did. He maintained his composure, even under *excruciating* pain.

Q: What is the significance of the hyssop?

A: Hyssop, a purgative, represents cleansing and discipline. At the time of the first Passover, a sprig or branch of hyssop was dipped in the blood so that the blood could be *splashed* on the doorposts of the houses. The splashing of the blood suggests punishment, hardship, and severity.

This nineteenth chapter of John suggests that Jesus *felt* the *burden of sin* that is on the human race. People who are *thoroughly innocent* of a crime, but sensitive by nature, may *feel guilty* if they are suspected of that crime and there is substantial evidence. Jesus had this experience. Isaiah 53:5 reads, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” There is a lot of meaning behind the thought that Jesus bore our sins—not only pain and humility but the weight of sin itself. Jesus felt the guilt just as Adam did. Adam hid *behind a tree*, Jesus was nailed *in front of a tree*. Adam had a feeling of guilt when he heard the Logos walking in the midst of the Garden of Eden, calling “Adam! Adam!” The sensation of guilt was part of the Ransom. Using a scale to illustrate the corresponding price may show *justice*, but it is too cold to portray the *depth* of Jesus’ sufferings in taking Adam’s place. The crown of *thorns* around Jesus’ brow corresponds to the curse in Genesis 3:18 about the *thorns* and thistles. Adam was a *king*, and the charge of “*King*” was nailed to the Cross. There are many other correspondencies as well. The point is that the guilt aspect was significant—Jesus really FELT the guilt.

Psalm 69:8 is a prophecy that some of Jesus’ stepbrothers would reject him until later, until after his resurrection. “I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.” Seeing Jesus cursed and put to death by the nation, they rejected him as Messiah, but when they subsequently got *proof* of his resurrection, they did believe.

Jesus’ very terse statement “It is finished” was his last. We would be missing a lot if Jesus had not concluded with these words about his finishing the Ransom sacrifice. In a *loud* voice he cried out with a note of *triumph* (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37). As he pronounced the words in this moment of excitement, his heart ruptured.

Jesus had checkered experiences of depression and exhilaration. Hence we should not expect a Christian to always be calm and gentle, for we too have mixed experiences.

John 19:31 **The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.**

“It was the preparation” for the Passover, the preparation day being the 14th of Nisan. The next day, the 15th, began the seven-day Feast of Passover. In both type and antitype, the slaying of the lamb took place on the 14th. The lamb was slain “between the two evenings,” that is, at the midpoint of 3 p.m., which was between 12 noon and 6 p.m. Jewish time (Num. 9:3 King James margin). In other words, 3 p.m. was three hours before sundown, and sundown marked the beginning of the next day, the 15th. The lamb was slain, flayed, and prepared for roasting on the day of preparation.

“That sabbath day was an high day.” The regular sabbath day is a Saturday, which begins the day before (Friday) at 6 p.m. and ends Saturday at 6 p.m. In other words, Jesus died *before the*

sabbath, before the “high day” began. He died three hours before Saturday—on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m., April 3, AD 33.

In regard to the Passover Feast, both the first and the seventh days are “high days.” For the year that Jesus died, the first day of the Passover Feast happened to occur on a *regular* sabbath day. However, *all* high days in the Jewish festivals are sabbaths, and they can occur on any day of the week, including Saturday, the regular sabbath. The year of Jesus’ death, the “high day” festival sabbath fell on a regular sabbath. Fifty-two regular sabbaths occur in a calendar year but only three or so high sabbaths.

The Jews did not want Jesus’ body to remain on the Cross, for that would defile their sabbath. It was 3 p.m. and they wanted his body removed before they observed the Passover, the Feast of Passover, on Saturday. In other words, the Jews’ Feast of Passover, in which they ate the lamb at the time Jesus died, was a Saturday, a sabbath.

When the Jews have their Passover, they do not reckon the 14th. Instead they start with the 15th day of Nisan. However, we as Christians attach far more importance to the 14th, the day of preparation, the day *before* the feast.

It is erroneous to say that Jesus was in the tomb for three *full* days and that, therefore, he died on Wednesday. John 19:31 is proof that he died on *Friday*, for he died on the “day of preparation,” on the *day before* the (Saturday) sabbath—three hours before. In other words, Jesus ate the Passover on the 14th of Nisan and also died on the 14th. He ate after 6 p.m., *after the 14th of Nisan had begun*, and he died the next day, which was still the *same day*, the 14th, according to Jewish reckoning. In order to fulfill the type, he had to die on the 14th.

John 19:32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

Two had *already* been crucified and were on the hill of Calvary at the time Jesus brought his cross, and two *more* were crucified with him at the same time. Thus *five* were there, with Jesus in the middle. The soldiers went down the row, as it were, and broke the legs of the first individual—one of the two who were already there. Then they broke the legs of the person who was next to Jesus, that individual being one of the ones crucified with him. Next they came to Jesus, who was put in the center or middle to specifically point him out.

	2		3		4
			Jesus		
1					5
			the two crucified with Jesus		
			the two who were crucified earlier		

By analyzing the Gospels, we know that four others were with Jesus on Calvary, for their conversations reveal this fact. First of all, two others were crucified with him at the *same time* (John 19:18; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:32,33). Now notice the conversations of the individuals who were crucified on Calvary. Matthew 27:44 says that the two “thieves” who were crucified with him “cast the same [mockery] in his teeth.” But Luke 23:39–43 provides other information. “One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him.” (The account does not say that the malefactors were crucified at the *same time*.) “But the *other* [malefactor] answering rebuked him [the first malefactor], saying, Dost not thou fear God,

seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then he asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his Kingdom: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus responded that he would. Thus the Scriptures prove that *four* were with Jesus, for three of them cursed Jesus and/or had nothing complimentary to say. Only one individual supported him. With different Greek words describing the two pairs, the suggestion is that their crucifixions were done on a different basis. Incidentally, people who are crucified can be on a cross for days before they die.

The legs of two of the others were broken before the soldiers arrived at Jesus in the center. A note in the Companion Bible says there are places in history, such as in a small French village, where five crosses are shown with Jesus in the center. The fact that the five crosses are *old* suggests a factual basis.

What did the breaking of the legs accomplish? How did it cause the death of those who were crucified? Shock killed them immediately. And if, because of the way they were hanging, they had to lift their legs to breathe, then broken legs would interfere with breathing.

John 19:33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

This verse shows that the soldiers climbed the hill and started at one end, breaking the legs of the first and then of the next one, who was more immediate to Jesus. Then "they came to Jesus" in the center, but he was already dead. From there the soldiers went on to the third individual and then the fourth.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

The blood and water show Jesus died of a broken heart. His heart actually ruptured, and the pericardium sac outside the heart became filled with blood and water. When the spear punctured that sac, blood and water came out. The thought of a broken heart is bolstered by Jesus' words "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Jesus was so weak from the emotional trauma that even though he cried out victoriously and loudly, "It is finished," the energy expended to make that pronouncement was more than his heart could take and it burst. The soldiers came along a little later and one pierced his side.

Let us consider the blood and the water from another standpoint. "Water" is a symbol of truth, the truth that comes through Jesus. It is a miracle to understand the measure of truth that we have because Satan has blinded the minds of men lest they believe (2 Cor. 4:4). The truth is from Jesus, from his side. Of course "blood" refers to his death. BOTH truth and Jesus' death are needed by the Christian.

John 19:35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

The pronouns "he" (used three times) and "his" refer to John. Instead of his saying "I" and "my," the use of third-person pronouns indicates humility and modesty. In his second and third epistles, John called himself "the elder." In Revelation 1:2, he used the same words "bare record."

John 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

Jesus was already dead when the soldiers got to him (verse 33). Thus they did not have to break his legs and the Scripture was fulfilled that not a bone of him would be broken. Having no broken bones enabled him to be an antitype of the Passover lamb. Also, the nails were driven through the wrists and ankles so that no bones would be broken. (Since the Greek language has no words for wrists and ankles, the words for “hands” and “feet” included these parts of the body.)

John 19:37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

An additional reason why one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side was to fulfill Zechariah 12:10. Of course there will be a further fulfillment of that Scripture in the future, but the nation of Israel had to see him pierced at that time too (Rev. 1:7).

John 19:38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

John 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

It is interesting that John *tarried* at the Cross to see these things happen, for when the soldiers came, it was after 3 p.m., the time Jesus died. Between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate beseeching Jesus’ body. Joseph returned with Nicodemus and removed the body from the Cross. Thus John remained for some time *after* Jesus’ death. And now we can see why John felt it essential to write about Nicodemus in his Gospel (the other Gospels mention Joseph but not Nicodemus). Only John recorded the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. Here is another example showing that *all four Gospels* are needed for a rounded-out picture.

“*Being* a disciple of Jesus,” Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate for the body. In other words, Joseph was fully convinced of Jesus’ Messiahship *before* he went to Pilate, but he had not disclosed his conviction previously. Now that Jesus was dead, Joseph was strengthened in character to beseech Pilate for the body, even though doing so would make him a public spectacle—and Nicodemus too. Initially Joseph and Nicodemus, who went to Jesus secretly by night, were fearful. Both were probably on the Sanhedrin, and both were men of means. Joseph provided the tomb and Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes that weighed 100 pounds. The mixture would have been very expensive because the myrrh came from Arabia. The number “100” pictures perfection.

Joseph was “an honourable counsellor” (Mark 15:43); “a good man, and a just [man]” (Luke 23:50); and “a rich man” (Matt. 27:57). Although he was present at Jesus’ trial, he did not consent to the evil deeds and counsel. In other words, he voiced his opposition to the majority thinking. And he “waited for the kingdom of God” (Luke 23:51).

While Jesus was alive, Joseph and Nicodemus were fearful. Therefore, it would seem logical that after his death they would be even more fearful to identify themselves with

him. But at this very point in time, they manifested supernatural character in taking his body. Moreover, removing the body from the Cross would have been a gory ordeal. A *Reprint* article states that it was a sacrifice on the part of Joseph and Nicodemus to even touch the dead body, for this act made them unclean for Passover, one of the highest feasts of the year.

John 19:40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

The *Diaglott* has “linen cloths.” The customary burial manner was to use several cloths ultimately sewn together into one long, narrow winding bandage to wrap the body—and then the head was wrapped *separately* with a “napkin” (John 11:44; 20:7). The cloths were very long, relatively narrow strips. When one cloth was used up, another was started, etc. This method of wrapping made the subsequent extraction of Jesus’ body even more miraculous; that is, it was miraculous that all the separate pieces of cloth held their position, not being unwrapped.

How appropriate that white linen was used, picturing righteousness! Although the custom was to wrap with separate cloths, it was not customary to use white linen, for the latter was expensive. Joseph of Arimathea supplied the white “fine” linen (Mark 15:46).

Because the custom was to wrap the legs separately, Lazarus could walk when Jesus “cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Lazarus climbed the winding staircase up out of the tomb.

Evidently Joseph was a believer, but out of fear for his position, he did not declare his belief openly—not until Jesus’ death. Then he showed great bravery in going to Pilate and begging the body. In that sense he did even more than Nicodemus.

Isaiah 53:9 reads in part, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” The Hebrew word translated “grave” is not necessarily the tomb itself but a condition. Jesus fulfilled this Scripture by dying on the Cross between the thieves and then being laid to rest in a rich man’s tomb.

John 19:41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

The Crucifixion and the sepulcher were in close proximity. The Garden Tomb beautifully fits this description. In this tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, places had already been prepared for two adult-length bodies and then a small one at the top or head. The fact that one of the places had been enlarged shows God’s foreknowledge that Jesus would be crucified nearby; that Joseph, a man of good heart condition, would obtain the property and build a tomb there; that the tomb would not be used prior to Jesus’ death; etc. And God made sure that the tomb would be carved out of rock with only *one* entrance which could be sealed by a stone. “And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed” (Matt. 27:59,60).

It is interesting that both Jesus’ birth and his death occurred in a carved-out rock. He was born in a *cave* stable (illustrated by the Grotto in the Pyramid) and laid to rest in a *hewn-out rock* tomb (illustrated by the Coffin in the Pyramid). Moreover, he is called the Rock.

John 19:42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

Jesus' body was not put in a tomb bed but was laid in the antechamber, which originally had a shelf protruding from the wall. (The large number of visitors since 1874 has worn the shelf down.) The antechamber is about 5 feet by 5 (or 4) feet.

John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

The "first day of the week" would be Sunday. Mary (and other women) came *before sunrise*. Probably they were up all night grieving and then came as soon as possible after the sabbath and yet toward morning when it was starting to get light.

John 20:2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Mary *ran!* Peter and John were probably together at this time. Since it was John who earlier let in Peter to the place of trial, John evidently had more access to living quarters in Jerusalem. And after Pentecost, Peter and John were the ones who spoke and preached. They were close from this time on, that is, from their experiences at the trial.

John 20:3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

John 20:4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

John outran Peter because he was younger. However, his tender conscience kept him from rushing into the sepulcher. Out of propriety and deference to Peter, John waited, for he realized Peter was at a higher level than himself. Even though Jesus had repeatedly taken Peter, James, and John aside during his ministry, John no doubt noticed the special deference given to Peter as a natural leader. Although both apostles preached on the Day of Pentecost, Peter did most of the talking.

John 20:5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Outrunning Peter and arriving at the tomb first, John looked in and saw the linen cloths lying there. Perhaps this initial view was not as clear as when he subsequently entered. He may have even thought at first that the body was still there because of how the cloths lay.

John 20:6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

When Peter arrived, he did not stop—he *rushed right in!*—just as he impulsively jumped out of the boat on another occasion.

John 20:7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

John 20:8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and

he saw, and believed.

John followed Peter into the tomb. Both saw the linen cloths, but only John got the point—it dawned on him what had happened. Perhaps Peter was too overcome with anxiety to reason on the way the linen grave cloths and the separate napkin were still *intact but empty*. Peter may have been in a trauma, and being older, he was probably tired from running as well. These factors would have affected his power of observation and reason.

The form of the linen wrappings was intact but hollow inside. The wrappings had been like a cocoon around the torso, legs, and arms. They still retained their shape, but John could see that the body was missing. In other words, the body had been miraculously and instantly dissolved into gases and extracted, leaving cocoon-like wrappings in their original position.

When people are in an emotional trauma, they cannot observe certain things. For example, it is impossible to reason with an intoxicated person with any degree of complexity, but that is true with other emotions as well—for instance, anger. The senses become dull. Excessive sorrow also numbs the senses and can keep one from observing what would normally be seen. When Stephen died, his countenance glowed, but those who stoned him would not have noticed. Being “blind” with hatred, they could not see Stephen’s face shining like an angel.

John 20:9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

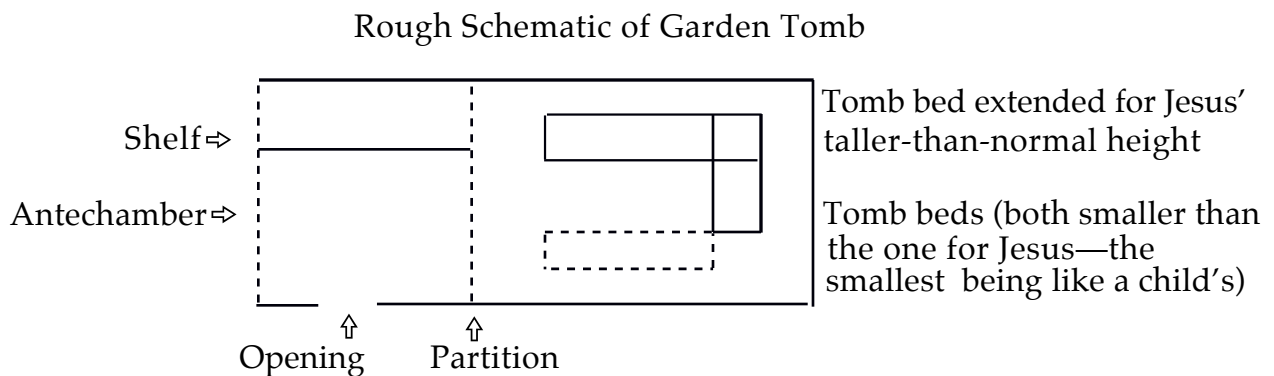
Notice how this verse is worded: Peter and John did not know “the *Scripture*” that Jesus would rise from the dead. Yes, Jesus had told them he must die, but they did not know the Scripture. If they had, it would have helped them to believe.

John 20:10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

“Their own home” would be where they were residing in Jerusalem. John and Peter may have gone back to the same house, however.

John 20:11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

John had stooped down and looked into the sepulcher earlier when he outran Peter to the tomb (verse 5). Now Mary did likewise while she was weeping. Incidentally, the original opening to the Garden Tomb was smaller and near the bottom.



Jesus' body never got into the tomb bed but was left on the shelf in the antechamber. The women intended to prepare the body further after the sabbath and then have it placed in the tomb bed. Visitors to the Garden Tomb see two small windows through which the sun shines onto Jesus' (intended) tomb bed. These windows were carved out following Jesus' resurrection.

When Peter and John entered the tomb that Sunday morning, they saw the empty linen grave cloths lying there (verses 6 and 7). The head napkin was "by itself" (that is, separate), so it was obvious the body was gone. The grave clothes were folded together, not in the sense of being unwrapped and folded but in the sense of being collapsed.

The cloths were like wide tape strips. When one cloth ended, the next one was started, overlapping a little. The arms, torso, and legs were wrapped individually, not mummy style.

John 20:12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

The sequence of events was as follows:

1. Mary went to the sepulcher. Seeing the stone rolled away, she ran to get Peter and John (verses 1 and 2).
2. Peter and John ran to the tomb. John got there first and waited for Peter. Peter arrived and rushed in; John followed. They saw the linen cloths and the head napkin lying there empty. John believed (verses 3–8).
3. Mary had returned to the tomb (behind Peter and John). She lingered when they left and was weeping. When she looked in the tomb, she saw two angels *but not the linen grave cloths* (verses 11 and 12).

Why is there no mention of the linen cloths in verse 12? Because they too were *dissolved into gases* and thus had disappeared lest man make a relic out of them. Stated another way, their miraculous removal prevented a subsequent worshipping of the grave cloths.

The two angels were sitting, one at the place where Jesus' head had been and the other where his feet had been. There was a small slab or ridge to sit on at the ends of the tomb bed proper. (Normally a marble slab was placed over the tomb. Held up by ridges, the marble slab covered the body.) But the antechamber also had shelves, and it was on these shelves that the angels were sitting.

John 20:13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

Mary Magdalene was distraught. When she saw the two angels in white, did she recognize them as angels? No. Luke 24:4 calls them "men." Only afterwards, in retrospect, did she realize they were angels. If one is emotionally disturbed with tremendous grief, anger, happiness—any emotion in the extreme—his senses are benumbed, and that is what happened to Mary. She was *consumed* with grief and the thought "Where is my Master?" Hence she was oblivious to the details a more rational person would observe. "Where is my Lord?" was the focus of her concentration.

John 20:14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

What is unusual? Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, *a woman*. This priority was appropriate because a woman represents the Church. Also, because Mary Magdalene's grief was *so intense*, she deserved the honor of seeing the risen Jesus first. Notice that he was standing behind her. She turned *partially* and saw but did not recognize him.

John 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Notice the pronouns: "Sir, if *thou* have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and *I* will take him away." Mary *herself* would take the corpse. This shows *how deeply* she loved Jesus. Formerly, she had seven spirits in her. When she came to Jesus and was forgiven, her life changed *radically*. The principle is that he who is forgiven much loveth much (Luke 7:47). (This forgiveness pertains to *before* consecration.)

At the end of Jesus' life, Mary Magdalene was mentioned frequently and in every instance where women (plural) were named. She was mentioned more than Mary, the mother of Jesus; more than Mary and Martha; more than Joanna; etc. This shows the *tremendous affection* she had for Jesus.

John 20:16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

When Jesus (the gardener) addressed her in the familiar, recognizable tone "Mary" (*just one word*), she instantly knew him and *immediately turned around completely*. Jesus was risen! In a nanosecond (*one billionth* of a second), she remembered his words about rising again and recognized him!

"Rabboni" means "my Master," "my Teacher." When Jesus said "Mary" in the familiar way, she responded in her customary way.

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

"Touch me not" signifies "*embrace me not*." Jesus must have said this very *quickly*, for as Mary turned, she would have wanted to *fling* herself at his feet. "I am not yet ascended" means "I *will* ascend, but first, I will *remain* here for a *little while yet*."

Jesus was clearly implying that the disciples' dealings with the *raised* Lord were to be different than when he was in the flesh. Their deportment should be different. There was a marked change, and he wanted to impress that fact on them. Although he *appeared* as flesh, he was really *spirit*—that is what they had to grasp. Jesus was now a *spirit being* who used flesh or an accommodated body to prove he was risen.

"Go to my brethren." What is unusual about this instruction? The term "*my brethren*"—here Jesus used this expression for the first time. Formerly he had called them servants, friends, etc., but not brethren. The *resurrected* Lord addressed Mary in this fashion.

(Although Hebrews 2:11 says of Jesus, “He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*,” these words were written much later by the Apostle Paul.) Being called Jesus’ “brethren” right after his resurrection was encouraging to the disciples. While he now had a reserve as the risen Lord—Mary could not embrace him—yet the tone of his voice in saying “Mary” was very affectionate and penetrating, and he used the familial term “brethren.”

What a *blessing* for Mary to be given something to do by and for the Master! She had come to the tomb wanting to prepare his body, and now he asked her to take a message to the others.

“I ascend unto *my Father*, and your Father; and to *my God*, and your God.” John’s Gospel *repeatedly* shows Jesus’ acknowledgment of the *superiority* of the Father. His words are *strong* proof against the Trinity. Jesus had to go to *his* Father and *his* God—that is, to the One who was *his* superior.

What is unusual about Jesus is that while he was emotional, tender, compassionate, and considerate, he retained his bearings. He knew just *what* to say and *how* to say it. In the first part of the verse, he used the words “*my Father*.” Then he repeated the words but added others: “*my Father, and your Father; ... my God, and your God*.” Jesus brought in his relationship to the disciples, his “brethren,” but that could not change his affection for the Father. The Father was, is, and always will be first. Nevertheless, the relationship that exists between Jesus and the Father also exists between Jesus and the Church. Chapter 17 of John’s Gospel emphasizes this oneness.

John 20:18 *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

No doubt the disciples thought she was so distraught that she had *hallucinated*. Yes, John had seen and believed, but his conviction did not persuade the others.

John 20:19 *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

“The *same* day,” “the first day of the week,” was Sunday—the day Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. However, other events happened between his first appearance to her and what is described in verse 19 (for example, his appearance to the two on the way to Emmaus). The same day, Sunday, was the resurrection day.

The disciples were assembled behind shut and bolted (locked) doors because they feared the Jews. The disciples’ fear was a proof that they did not really believe Mary’s report of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus had appeared to the other women too, saying, “All hail,” etc., but that report also was not believed (Matt. 28:5–10).

The fact that Jesus appeared suddenly in their midst, through bolted doors, proved he was no longer a human being. Physical walls do not encumber a spirit being at all, for their molecules can be adjusted to go through the porosity of walls. They can also adjust their size, even being reduced to just a pinpoint. As an illustration, a *legion* of demons were in Legion—showing they can compact themselves. That which is ethereal and spiritual is *more real* than the physical. An *invisible* God made the *visible* earth.

“Peace be unto you.” Jesus tried to calm them and play down the emotion. He wanted to show them he was not a ghost or apparition. He purposely appeared in diverse forms after his resurrection in order to appeal to their natural minds in a calm, serene circumstance. That way the disciples got the feeling that he was actually raised. If he had appeared only in dramatic ways, they might have had second thoughts later on.

John 20:20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

When the disciples first saw him, they thought, “It looks like Jesus.” He was probably wearing a white robe. All they saw initially was his face—they did not notice his hands. Then he said, “Look at my hands,” and he drew aside the robe to show his wounded side. This further impressed upon the disciples that he was the *same* Jesus but *not a human being* because he came through a locked door. He was the same and yet not the same. Because Pentecost had not yet come and they could not discern spiritual things, he was trying to appeal to their natural minds.

John 20:21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

As the Father sent Jesus at the First Advent—from Jordan to Calvary in particular—to get disciples, preach the Kingdom, etc., so Jesus now sends us on a mission to preach to others. And there was a more *immediate* sense too. As the Father sent Jesus to the disciples at that moment to convince them of his resurrection, so Jesus would send the disciples to convince others. The Father sent Jesus for 3 1/2 years, and Jesus likewise sends us for our lifetime—until death. This thought can be extended to the whole Church.

John 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Jesus “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” He did this in pantomime form to impress upon the disciples that the power was not from themselves but was an external power coming from the Father and through him. Of course the disciples did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until later, when they were gathered in this room on the Day of Pentecost. Then the Holy Spirit came down to them in a visible form as tongues of flame that sat on each of their heads, and they were given miraculous ability, such as understanding languages they did not know. By doing this now in pantomime form, Jesus was telling them what would occur as a result of his resurrection and *through him*. He is our Advocate. Only through Jesus do we have this relationship. The Holy Spirit is *from God* and *through Jesus* the Head.

John 20:23 Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Jesus continued to speak, but his words in this verse apply only to the *apostles*. The point is that we *cannot* teach love, mercy, forgiveness, etc., except by spiritual guidelines, and these spiritual guidelines come through the writings of the *apostles*. While Jesus talked on these subjects, he did not talk at length except in parable form. But the apostles, especially Paul, laid down *many* guidelines to fit various circumstances. We are told when not to fellowship, on what grounds, what the degrees of fellowship are depending upon the nature of the sin, and so forth.

However, we can say to one who has not consecrated, one whom we are trying to interest in the truth, “No matter what your past sins, you will be forgiven if you openly confess both the sins and your need for Jesus’ redeeming grace. If you comply with those terms, you will be freely forgiven.” But even in this case, we can utter these words only because the Holy Scriptures tell us so, especially the apostles.

Caution: Do not be free with forgiveness that is not Scriptural. It is easy (but wrong) to be free with other people’s money, goods, and feelings. We can be very magnanimous, but we are amiss if we do not obey Scripture. Papacy erroneously uses verse 23 as a basis for obtaining forgiveness. The system instructs, “Go to the priest and confess your sins. He will then tell you how many “Hail Marys” to say and/or how many candles to burn.”

In regard to the trespass offering, Pastor Russell said, “For every wrong, restitution must be made with interest and accompanied by repentance and asking forgiveness from the Lord.” If we speak according to Scripture, we can speak authoritatively.

“Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained [not forgiven].” Peter used this power with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10).

When the 70 were sent out earlier, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit in regard to physical healings, not in regard to the forgiveness of sin (Luke 10:1–16). That event too was prior to Pentecost. What is the difference? It is one thing to be *begotten* by the Holy Spirit and another thing to be *mechanically moved* by the Holy Spirit as the 70 were.

John 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

John 20:25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

This experience is the basis for the term “doubting Thomas.” Jesus had previously appeared in the midst of the ten apostles (minus Thomas) through a locked door (verses 19–23). Thomas did not simply say that he had to see Jesus *as he appeared to the ten*, but that he wanted to see *and touch* the wounds. In other words, in order to be convinced, he wanted *more* than an identical experience.

Thomas’s statement “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” is missing in some of the ancient manuscripts, but we can accept it because of what is stated subsequently in verse 27, where Jesus voiced Thomas’s attitude, thoughts, and words. Obviously, Jesus would not have enjoined Thomas to reach forth his finger and hand to touch the nail-print wound and side, respectively, if Thomas had not doubted.

Thomas wanted more effectual evidence—and so do some Christians. This attitude is not to their discredit in some respects. It is just a slower process to fully confirm and assure them of certain things in Scripture. Such Christians have a harder time accepting particular statements in Scripture just as they are written.

“Didymus” may refer to a town called Didymus, although the town could have been named for him at a later date. “Didymus” means “twin.” We do not know who the other

“twin” was. He was not an apostle, but perhaps he was a disciple.

John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

This appearance to the eleven (including Thomas) was on a Sunday eight days later. In other words, the phrase “after eight days” refers to the following *Sunday*, a *week* later. The expression “eight days,” like “three days,” is a Hebraism that can throw us off, for they were not full days. (Jesus was in the tomb for just *parts* of three days.) The intervening week would have seemed interminable to the apostles. Jesus’ appearances on *Sundays* were one reason why the early Church decided to break bread on Sunday. Another reason is that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday. Thus the early Church—that is, during the first three centuries—put a greater emphasis on Sunday as they separated from the Jewish influence of the sabbath.

Jesus appeared to two on the way to Emmaus. The two returned to Jerusalem speedily to report the appearance only to learn that he had also appeared to the ten in the interim, on the same day.

Q: Jesus said three times “Peace be unto you” (verses 19, 21, and 26). Does this repeated statement relate to his title “Prince of Peace”?

A: Since this statement was made *after* his resurrection, it would seem to be related to the title.

John 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Thomas would not have thought the ten, Mary Magdalene, and others were lying about the earlier appearance of Jesus, for it was too serious a subject (verses 19–23). He knew they had seen something but thought that it was a deception, that someone was assuming Jesus’ posture. Hence he wanted more evidence.

Thomas never did thrust his hand into Jesus’ side—just seeing Jesus with the wounds was enough. In fact, one reason Thomas did not have to thrust his hand into Jesus’ side in order to believe is the miraculous nature of Jesus’ *sudden* appearance through *locked* doors. In this and the earlier instance, Jesus said, “Peace be unto you,” because such a sudden appearance would tend to frighten the apostles and cause them to think they had seen an apparition. Moreover, Jesus’ manner of address showed Thomas he knew what the apostle had previously said about seeing him, that is, when Jesus *was not visibly present* with them. Jesus’ words impressed Thomas and helped to convince him.

Thomas’s exultation “My Lord and my God” is recorded by John in the *same* chapter where Jesus said earlier (verse 17), “I ascend unto my Father ... and to my God.” Trinitarians use verse 28 to *prove* the Trinity, but the same chapter *refutes* it. In the context here, John shows a *chain of command*. Just as Thomas has a “God” or superior in Jesus, so Jesus has a “God” or superior in the Father. A similar principle was used by David when he wrote, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool”

(Psa. 110:1).

Moreover, the fact Thomas made the statement does not prove that Jesus is God, for Thomas had not yet been begotten by the Holy Spirit—Pentecost was future to this event. Thomas uttered the statement on an *emotional* basis when Jesus made his *surprise* appearance. Prior to Spirit begetting, the apostles made some incorrect statements; for example, Peter denied Jesus three times, and surely Peter's statements were not true. Thus a statement uttered before Pentecost is not to be considered true just because it came from an apostle, for the apostles made several unbecoming or unfavorable statements before they were Spirit-begotten.

According to Young's *Analytical Concordance*, the word "God" in verse 28 (Greek *theos*) means "a god, object of worship." This same Greek word is used in 2 Corinthians 4:4 to refer to Satan: "In whom the *god of this world* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." And *theos* is used in Philippians 3:19, "Whose end is destruction, *whose God is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

Knowing the capability of spirit beings to materialize, we might find Jesus' resurrection hard to accept except that the *number* and *variety* of appearances, plus the techniques used and his conversations, give us the assurance. We need these multiple references. The tenor, thinking, and method of appearance are characteristic of Jesus. Also, an unholy angel would not be happy to appear as Jesus or to be with him. Earlier two unclean spirits said to Jesus, "Art thou come hither to torment [judge] us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). And James said, "The devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). Hence the attitude of the fallen angels proves Jesus' appearances were not deceptions. Fallen angels are called "familiar spirits" because they impersonate the dead. To avoid being deceived in the future, we need to be armed by the Holy Scriptures and dispensational truth (such as the *Second Volume* chapter "The Manner of Our Lord's Return and Appearing").

John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

This statement was a rebuke to Thomas. John gave *balanced* clues to Thomas's character, for he also recorded Thomas's favorable, positive statement (11:16), "Let us also go [to Jerusalem], that we may die with him [Jesus]."

After this incident a stigma may have attached to Thomas in some respects. Those who want to find fault with Thomas use this incident, but it is not a fair assessment of his character. He is an *apostle*, and at Pentecost the Holy Spirit sat on him, showing he had divine approval.

John treated certain personalities more closely than the other Gospel writers. An example is Mary Magdalene, for we get a deeper insight into her at the Cross and the tomb. John also gave us an insight into Nicodemus both earlier and at Jesus' death, the latter showing the courage aspect of his character. John felt that certain things should be brought out, and he wanted to set the record straight. We learn about the woman of Samaria at the well from John's Gospel. He zeroed in on particular personalities and omitted perhaps three quarters of the events recorded in the other Gospels, including the Memorial emblems. Instead John dwelled on discussions; he recorded Jesus' discussions with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, and the disciples the night of the Memorial en route to Gethsemane. John's different

temperament beautifully complements the testimony of the preceding three apostles. Thus *all four Gospels* are needed. In reality, “*the gospel*” is the four Gospels.

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The “blessed” ones are those in the days following Jesus’ resurrection as well as those down through the Gospel Age and during the Harvest period.

Luke 24:39 emphasizes the fact that Jesus appeared in flesh and *bone*, not flesh and *blood*. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not *flesh and bones*, as ye see me have.” With the human nature, the life is in the blood rather than in the outer covering. Hence spirit beings appear with the same skeletal framework and with flesh but not with blood (Lev. 17:11,14).

Q: Wouldn’t the angels who materialized at the time of the Flood and had offspring through human females have had bodily fluids and blood?

A: Yes, they could simulate blood, etc., as well as flesh and bone, but they should not have done so. The sperm that create life are of the blood.

The genetic aspect is very technical. It is the same with the soul. In previous studies we have shown that the body and the breath are really but the *vehicle* in which the soul resides. We can understand this today through the illustration of a tape recorder, plus there are Scriptures to indicate the distinction. And certain Scriptures give us clues about the blood. Blood *outside* the body is a symbol of death. Blood *inside* the body is a symbol of life.

The unholy angels *left their first estate*, so more was involved than just their coming down—they established a residence. But perhaps the information in Jude 6 that they “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” also indicates the thought of their procreation of children and intermingling with the human family (Jude 6).

Q: Would the implication be that when the holy angels materialized on various errands or even when Jesus materialized after his resurrection, not having divine nature yet, they were to just *simulate* human nature? Part of the sin committed by the disobedient angels prior to the Flood was that they not only materialized as human beings but took on the *entire* aspect of that nature.

A: Yes.

Comment: When angels materialized, they were never to have blood, and that was part of the sin committed by those who left their first estate. To have just flesh and bones was the *normal* way to materialize in *any* age.

Reply: Yes. Originally the angels appeared without the blood and simply simulated human beings. Then, considering the fallen angels had children, we see that in leaving their first estate, they simulated human *blood*, which was strictly forbidden. Perhaps that sin was even the kernel of the matter in leaving their first estate and living down here.

Q: Didn’t a newspaper article report that cattle were found missing some of their organs and blood in the Midwest?

A: Yes, the blood had been drained. These mutilations were never explained. The cattle were dropped from high altitude down into the mud. Many things are going on that we are not fully cognizant of. The study of genetics being pursued by scientists today is, unbeknownst to them, following the lines of the Adversary. Dedicated and noble-minded scientists do not consciously worship or cooperate with Satan, but he is interested in science. In the pre-Flood days Satan tried to produce a new human race that would not die. Earth was his domain and he saw that the human race of Adam was dying. He reasoned that if an angel, who never dies (as far as he knew, for none had yet died), had offspring through a human female, the progeny would not die. Although Satan may have been right in his reasoning, that method was stopped by the Flood and the incarceration of the fallen angels themselves.

Here, now, was another way of creating life apart from Adam. Very remarkable things are being discovered today about the genes, but behind this quest is the desire to make man like a god, able to manipulate his own destiny. Satan is very interested in genetic engineering. Perhaps the blood was taken from the cattle by the fallen angels to pursue studies—by spirit scientists, as it were, who are intensely interested in this subject. Satan is still trying to circumvent a dying race.

Comment: Adam (on behalf of the human race) was given a simple test of obedience: Do not eat of the grove of life, the forbidden fruit. The angels were given a simple test of obedience: Do not simulate blood/body fluids in materializing. In *both* cases Satan thought God was *depriving* the beings of something.

John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Some have suggested that these verses finish John's Gospel from one standpoint and that the next chapter is an addendum by the apostle, written postscript. This premise seems reasonable. An authenticity in the next chapter also stamps it as being truthful and of John. Authors, ancient and modern, sometimes furnish an addendum. For instance, a person may give a comprehensive sermon or treatise and then find he has omitted a thought that needs to be included in order to straighten out a misconception surfacing afterwards; he then attaches an addendum.

Chapter 21, which was written after the Apostle Paul's death, helps us to understand certain things that Paul said. John lived to be a centenarian, whereas Paul died before AD 70. The entire Gospel of John was written after AD 70.

John 21:25 is missing in the Sinaitic Manuscript. Is it spurious? "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John 20:30,31 is a similar thought, but verse 25 is such an exaggeration that it smacks of being spurious—like the end of Mark.

The Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts are the most helpful in trying to see what the original Bible actually said. Although neither manuscript is infallible, yet both are vastly superior to other manuscripts, which are riddled with interpolations. The other

manuscripts are perhaps 90 percent correct versus the Vatican and Sinaitic being 98 percent correct. Constantine had the Sinaitic Codex compiled from another manuscript. In the copying process, a *few* errors crept in, but that older manuscript has been lost.

As the last of the four Gospel writers, John was very different from the other three. He was very choosy in what he wrote, omitting much material because it had already been covered.

John 21:1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself.

Jesus had previously shown himself, after his resurrection, to the apostles on two occasions, one where Thomas was absent and one where he was present, suddenly appearing in their midst through a locked door (John 20:19–29).

John 21:2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

On this occasion at least seven were gathered, of whom at least five were apostles: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael (Bartholomew), and James and John Zebedee. John probably specifically mentioned Thomas, Peter, and Nathanael *by name* because elsewhere in his Gospel, he wrote about discussions and incidents with them. John told about Nathanael on multiple occasions, and Thomas too. He also recorded the interview with Nicodemus and then what Nicodemus did at the Cross. And details about Mary Magdalene were given. Thus John *followed through* on the personalities and characters of various individuals.

John 21:3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

Two weeks, and possibly three, had passed since Jesus' last appearance. The length of time was one reason Peter suggested returning to their former business pursuit. Although Jesus appeared on and off during the 40 days, many of the appearances occurred on the *first* day. After the eighth day there was a gap of time, during which the apostles left Jerusalem and went up to Galilee, called the "sea of Tiberias" in verse 1.

We get a clue about Peter's personality here. As a man of *action*, he was prone to be impatient and not sit around. This trait is a good one if properly channeled; it is the opposite of being slothful. Moreover, this trait showed that Peter was a leader—a highly respected leader. Hence the others joined him in the suggestion to go fishing.

No time was wasted. Peter was quick and impulsive. He got into the ship *immediately* and the others followed. The "ship" was large enough to easily hold seven or more fishermen.

They fished *all night* and caught *nothing*. This was a psychological downer, for the Sea of Galilee was teeming with fish in those days and it was unusual not to catch any.

They caught nothing on their own, but when Jesus told them to cast the net on the *right* side of the ship, they caught MUCH (verse 6). This is a lesson about God's providence. When the disciples caught nothing, some may have been a little conscience-stricken. They might have associated the lack of fish with Jesus' instruction to go to Galilee where he would appear to them. Instead of being in an attitude to receive him, they were out fishing.

The incident would seem to represent a lack of faith, but actually, that is not the case.

John 21:4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

John 21:5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

John 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Jesus' posture—he "stood on the shore"—must have been very striking for John to mention it. The disciples were in the boat, going to shore, when they noticed Jesus. They were 200 cubits (300 feet or 100 yards, a little less than the length of a football field) from shore (verse 8). Jesus would have had a very powerful voice to talk to them from that distance.

Picture the scene. The apostles had fished all night and caught nothing. Now it was morning and they were weaving their way back. Then they observed an individual standing on the shore, and he called to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" Next Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship and they would catch fish, "right" being the *favorable* side. Jesus was teaching the disciples that they had to do things in *his* way. In addition, a general lesson would be for Christians to expend their energy in the most profitable direction in harmony with the Bible.

When the apostles tried to pull the net out of the water, there was a great deal of resistance, for the net was *FULL* of fish—153 fish, we are told later.

Q: When Jesus called to the disciples, "*Children*, have ye any meat?" was that a common form of address back there?

A: For one to use that manner of address, he would have to be a *superior*. We know from details recorded and from John's use of the expressions "children" and "little children" that he was extremely observant of Jesus' last days and his resurrection (John 13:33; 1 John 2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). Of course we know too that John was older when he used these terms.

The apostles and disciples were strong characters and yet childlike in some respects. Their humility and naiveness show forth. For example, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see the Lord because he was short. If we had fished all night and caught nothing and then someone told us to cast the net on the right side of the boat, it would take humility to obey. As already mentioned, for the apostles to notice Jesus at a distance of 300 feet, his appearance must have been unusual and impressive. They were not told the one on the shore was Jesus, but they knew his identity once they started to pull in the net. And John announced, "It is the Lord!" (verse 7). Jesus would have had an authoritative posture or appearance.

John 21:7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

John 21:8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

John 21:9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

John 21:10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

When the great numbers of fish were caught, John said, "It is the Lord." John recognized Jesus based on what the Master had done very early in his ministry (Luke 5:4–11).

Once again we get insight into Peter's character and striking personality. He was "naked" (the account does not say how naked), for he did not want to be encumbered by clothing. He was ready for work and activity.

Verses 3 and 8 contrast a "ship" with a "little ship." The apostles had two boats, a larger one from which they fished, and a smaller one to haul the net.

Even prior to John's announcing, "It is the Lord," it is possible the apostles were getting a little nervous. When they fished all night and caught nothing, their consciences may have bothered them. Things were strange. And then they saw the stranger on the shore. If they did not recognize Jesus right away, at least they were getting very close, and of course John was sharp in his observations. Later, at and after Pentecost, Peter and John were companions in declaring the gospel message. The two apostles were regarded by the others as the leading lights, but John never mentioned his own name directly. After all, John was a "son of thunder," so we know he was a strong personality (Mark 3:17). That strength was channeled into courage for the truth and for expounding it.

When the disciples got to shore, they observed a fire already burning, with coals glowing, and then fish and bread. This tells us that Jesus produced the food miraculously (for he had *not been fishing*), similar to the feeding of the 5,000 with fish and bread earlier. Jesus did not need the apostles. And that is a good lesson for us to remember too; namely, the Lord does not need us, but we need him. Hence we should not regard ourselves or our ministry higher than we should.

The bread and fish were already prepared for the disciples by the Lord, yet he said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Why did Jesus do this? The entire incident is a spiritual lesson to show that the Lord can perform his work—whatever is necessary—*without* the apostles and us. While he impresses upon us our own *lack of importance*, yet he *will accept* our services. He shows us our proper place but, nevertheless, invites us. He will accept of our fish and bread—he condescends to accept the sacrifices of his people. And even though the disciples caught fish, they did so *only after he instructed them what to do*.

John 21:11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

John 21:12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

John 21:13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

John 21:14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

When Jesus told them to “bring of the fish,” Simon Peter was again the *first*. He was impulsive and also strong *physically*, as shown by his drawing the “net to land full of great fishes.” The account does not say that Jesus ate of the apostles’ fish, but he wanted them to realize the importance of their work and thus asked for some of their fish.

It is miraculous that the net did not break. In the earlier incident of Luke 5:1–11, the net did break. Only John wrote of this later incident. The things he observed are very significant.

What does the catch of 153 “great fishes” represent? To count out the fish was unusual, and the *exact number* is given, not an approximate one. Since we are living in between two ages, certain things may be happening of which we are unaware, for example, possibly a preparatory harvest with Israel.

Comment: The fact the fish are called “great” seems to imply that they represent part of the Little Flock. Perhaps 153 of the feet members will come out of Babylon at the very end of the age, as opposed to those who have had dispensational truth right along.

Reply: That suggestion cannot be denied, for the 153 is a strange number.

When the net broke in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, the disciples were untaught, immature, and inexperienced in the work *he* had in mind for them. That was the beginning of their call, and they were babes at that time. But now, after 3 1/2 years of instruction, they were much further advanced in understanding about Jesus, even without the Holy Spirit, for they had lived and talked with him during that time. Thus Jesus had accomplished in them what he wanted to. His prayer in John 17:12 contained the words “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” The eleven he did not lose were instructed, and they were now ready to proceed into the ministry once they got the Holy Spirit. (Of course Jesus still had to deal with Peter, as will be seen in the next few verses.)

When Jesus said, “Come and dine,” the apostles obeyed. All of them knew Jesus was the “stranger,” but no one wanted to say anything. That is human nature, and their reaction gives a stamp of authenticity to the narrative.

“This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples”; that is, it was the third time he showed himself to a group of apostles, as opposed to Mary, the women, the two going to Emmaus, Peter alone, etc. Incidentally, it was characteristic of John to *count* days, incidents, number of Passovers, and so forth. He observed things and kept them in remembrance like a library. This talent is what urged him to write a Gospel.

The number 153 is very important. If we add 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5, etc., up to 17, the total is 153. Also, 153 is a multiple of 17 (17 x 9 = 153). Moreover, the multiple of 17 is in the Great Pyramid but in a modified sense. Hence 153 is a mystical number. These “great fishes” may be true ones, that is, individuals or souls that are drawn in and make the Little Flock. The fish were all larger than normal. Usually there is a mixture and a variety of fish in the net, so this uniform catch is unusual. Each of the 153 was *large*. This incident contrasts with the Parable of the Dragnet, for that net contained good and bad fish and required sorting (Matt. 13:47,48). Here *all* of the fish were salvable, for whatever purpose.

John 21:15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love

thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” According to a *Reprint* article, the word “these” could refer to either the other apostles or the fishing business. Probably the reference was to the other apostles. However, the Pastor gives the other view, the thought about the fishing business, for which there is merit. For one thing, Peter is the one who said, “I go a fishing,” and the others followed. They followed his leadership because they respected him. But it is more likely that the word “these” refers to the apostles. Peter had said, “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise” (Mark 14:31), yet the denial occurred three times. Peter also said, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). Because of these boastful statements, Jesus was singling out Peter in regard to his love for Jesus versus his love for the apostles. Peter responded, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

This was the first of *three* times that Peter was asked to reaffirm his love, based on his previous *three* denials of Jesus. All three times Jesus addressed Peter as “Simon, son of Jonas.” Some have felt this address was a form of coolness, but other Scriptures seem to indicate that that was not the case. For example, earlier, during his ministry, when Jesus asked, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter responded quickly with “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona [*son of Jonas*]: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:15–17). Hence the use of that phrase here in John 21:15–17 is not a sign of coolness but a sign of directness. Jesus singled out Peter and addressed *him*.

Q: Why did Jesus use *agape* love (“Lovest thou me more than these?”) and Peter respond with *phileo* love (“Thou knowest that I love thee”)?

A: Bible Students have been taught from the platform that *agape* love is a higher form than *phileo* love. That is a correct view under certain circumstances. *Agape* love is a detached love predicated on principle. But with those who are already in the family—those who are consecrated—there is a tender, *more affectionate* type of love, *phileo* love, as well as a principled *agape* love. Thus there are times when *phileo* love is a better expression than *agape* love. God and Jesus exercise *agape* love to the world. They are so principled that they will give the world a chance even though mankind has not listened to them in this age. The very fact God has the mercy to resurrect the human race and give them an opportunity for life is *agape* love, a higher form of principled love. But Christians, who have come into the family, are loved *even more*. The *context* must be considered.

Hence Peter was saying, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I *dearly* love thee.” Yet there are other *phileo* love texts where the insertion of “dearly” would not fit either the mood or the context. Peter was reaffirming his love: “Yes, I love you. I *affectionately* love you.” Peter’s response was more intense, for Jesus had merely asked, “Do you love me?” using the thought of plain love.

Jesus then told Peter, “Feed my lambs.” What does this instruction suggest? Upon denying Jesus, Peter lost his discipleship, so now Jesus was beginning to *reinstate* him as an apostle, starting with “Feed my baby Christians.” Peter knew he had denied the Lord. When Jesus was resurrected, it was only natural that Peter would question where he now stood with him. Before, Peter had boasted he would never forsake Jesus—the old Peter was prone to be a little boastful. After his resurrection Jesus reaffirmed his interest in Peter both in a private appearance and with these remarks about “feeding.” Jesus was reinstating Peter as an

apostle to be used in a teaching capacity, but with a little reserve at first—hence the words “Feed my *lambs*.” It would be like saying to one who was previously an elder, “You can now teach Sunday school.”

Verse 15, then, was a *limited* reinstatement—*after* Peter said, “I dearly love thee.” Jesus was now free to give Peter a limited acknowledgment and reinstatement. Just as with Peter, the Lord sometimes helps us with our lack of understanding of a particular principle. By initiating a situation, God can extract certain statements from us. The Lord wanted to reinstate Peter, but it had to be predicated upon *repentance*. The leader Peter had denied the Lord three times, and now, as a form of repentance, it was necessary for him to be humiliated three times in front of the other apostles.

Of course Jesus knew Peter loved him, for Peter was the first to jump into the water when the Lord was recognized on the shore. Nevertheless, the confession had to be made publicly and audibly because the denials had been so given. And Jesus knew Peter (and John) had run to the tomb. In other words, Peter’s confession was a necessary form of *decorum* in view of what had previously happened. Peter’s weeping *bitterly* was not enough—public retraction and reaffirmation were essential.

A principle is involved here. *Private* sin can be *privately* confessed to the Lord because it has not harmed others. But to the extent that sin reaches out and touches others, it incurs correspondingly more responsibility.

John 21:16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

At this point Peter probably did not realize what was happening, namely, that Jesus would ask him three times as an offset to the three denials. Jesus used the same question, form, and words. And Peter gave the same response. Jesus again used *agape* and Peter *phileo*. The only difference was Jesus’ “feeding” instruction, which this time was “Feed my *sheep*.” With the word “sheep,” Jesus went up another rung of *reinstatement* for Peter. He now gave Peter a little larger custodianship. “Shepherd my sheep” is the thought. This is the second of a cumulative, progressive reinstatement. Instead of little lambs, now the older, more mature sheep were to be fed. “Shepherding” and what it involves will be considered when the third response is discussed.

Jesus’ emphasis the second time could have been on *himself*: “Lovest thou *me*?” This would tie in with his caution to the Church of Ephesus about leaving their “first [*personal*] love” for him (Rev. 2:4). The phrase “more than these” was omitted the second time, suggesting Jesus’ emphasis was now on Peter’s love for *him*. This emphasis was a little more embarrassing and humiliating to Peter. Like a surgeon, Jesus was probing *deeper*. Each subsequent question, although essentially a repeat, went deeper.

When Jesus asked Peter, “Do you [*agape*] love me?” Peter purposely replied with *phileo* love because he felt that *phileo* love was more intense. The point is that depending on context, either *agape* or *phileo* love can be superior. Here *phileo* love is higher.

Jesus so (*agape*) loved the world that he gave his life on their behalf. To have concern for *others* besides yourself is a *better* quality of love, but where the *consecrated* “family” is concerned, *phileo* love is more important, for it is a *personal* love, not a cold, detached love.

Jesus did not personally love each individual in the world. No, those in the world are astray—they do not know Jesus and do not want to. The *personal* love Jesus has for a Christian is far superior to his love for the world. Hence Peter felt he was reaffirming his love in a more *intense* way with *phileo*. *Agape* love is the *usual* word for love. *Phileo* contains the thought of brotherly or sisterly love.

Jesus did not just *carte blanche* forgive Peter. His words and method were carefully thought out. The caution to us is that we should not be more loving than the Father or Jesus. If someone does a real injury to another, the injured party should not just brush off the matter, thinking he is being so magnanimous.

John 21:17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Even though the questioning was a form of rebuke to Peter, it was also an encouragement, for it reinstated him as an apostle—and in front of the other apostles.

Here, the third time, Jesus used *phileo* love. He took Peter's remarks—Peter's own words—to phrase the question "Do you *affectionately* love me?" Jesus now pressed the matter deeper and made it a little more searching. "Do you *really affectionately* love me as you stated?" At this point Peter would realize the question was being asked *three* times because he denied Jesus *three* times. Peter was *grieved* to be asked the third time, and this time in his reply, he added, "Thou knowest *all* things." Peter knew Jesus could search his heart.

Many mistakenly think that even if the sin was grievous, the grander love is to forgive as soon as one says, "I am sorry." Should Jesus have forgiven Peter because he knew Peter wept, ran to the tomb, and jumped out of the boat? No! The three denials had to be *publicly* countermanded. However, Jesus did this in a gentle manner, for each time he asked if Peter loved him, Jesus gave added assurance in regard to feeding or shepherding lambs or sheep.

Compare: Verse 15: "Feed my lambs."
 Verse 16: "Shepherd my sheep."
 Verse 17: "Feed my sheep."

In verse 17 the thought of "feed" is more important than "shepherd," and the instruction about sheep transcends that of lambs. In other words, the advice in these instructions is cumulative. To "shepherd" means to give counsel as a leader in the sense of technical advice. Elders may have a lot of common sense along *practical* lines but not be deep thinkers along spiritual lines. In other words, some today who guide and influence Christians—and not just in the Truth movement—may not be the deepest, spiritually speaking, yet they have needed capabilities (for example, evangelizing or how to get things done). Giving advice and providing leadership ("shepherding" the sheep) is one thing, but in addition, Peter was to "*feed*" *advanced* Christians.

This last instruction reinstated Peter in the minds of the other apostles, and until Paul came on the scene, they looked to him as a leader in more advanced thinking. When Paul began to teach, Peter humbly acknowledged Paul's superiority. In fact, Peter's humility was outstanding.

Roman Catholics have used Peter's commission to feed lambs and sheep to support his being the first pope. However, they ignore Paul's reprimand to Peter and Peter's acknowledgment of Paul's superiority.

John 21:18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

John 21:19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Verse 18, as proved by verse 19, indicated Peter would die by crucifixion. Tradition says he asked to be crucified upside down when the time came.

The entire incident showed Peter that he needed to be more humble because he was accustomed to being impetuous and impulsive, doing what *he* wanted in a macho way. Jesus was giving Peter a reflective view of his own nature as it *had been*, but *now* Peter realized he must be *on his guard* and do things *Jesus' way*. Jesus' words "Follow me" suggest, "Peter, now you have to control yourself."

Regardless of the reasons Peter denied Jesus earlier, the fact that he would be *crucified* would be a form of retribution and it would remind Peter of both Jesus' experience and his own failure. But Jesus' words here were also an encouragement to Peter in that they indicated he *would be faithful*. Jesus' words were like a little chiding. He was saying: "In the past you did things in your *own way*, but in the future you must watch that tendency and hearken unto *me*. You will be faithful, but you will meet with a fate of crucifixion." When that time came, Peter would be encouraged by remembering Jesus' words. He would also remember his three denials and his progressive reinstatement—the whole incident.

In 2 Peter 1:14 Peter referred back to John 21:18,19. "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, *even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me*." Peter was probably crucified shortly before Paul's death—maybe a year earlier.

John 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

John 21:21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Peter turned around and saw John. Then he asked Jesus what John's fate would be.

This observation by John about Peter's "turning about" is helpful. A very focused conversation had just taken place between Jesus and Peter, culminating with the Master's prediction that Peter's life would end with crucifixion. Now Peter saw John and changed the subject to John's fate. Peter wondered, "Would John meet with the same fate? Would John be crucified?" Peter was interested to know John's fate.

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter and John were paired for quite a while, so it was natural for Peter to be concerned about his "partner." There was a growing affinity between these two. At the Memorial supper, Peter had asked John to inquire who would betray Jesus. As time went on, Peter became more attached to John than to Andrew, his brother. Hence Peter was

more concerned about John's fate than about the fate of the other nine apostles.

Notice how in verse 20 John used almost an entire verse to avoid giving his name. The term "the disciple whom Jesus loved," which John used several places, is here definitely pinned down as referring to John by the added description about the Memorial supper.

John 21:22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

This was a prophetic statement that the John *class* would tarry until the Lord's Second Presence. Then when John *personally* tarried, he became a good picture that the John class are the feet (or latter) members of the body of Christ.

The following is a paraphrase of Jesus' reply: "If it is my purpose or my Father's purpose that John should tarry, it really is no concern [or no business] of yours. Follow thou *me*." Jesus' reply is a lesson for all of us to be careful that we are following *the Lord*. Regardless of any dealings, trials, etc., that *others* have, we are to follow the Lord through our *own* experiences and not to compare our trials to the trials of others. "Follow the *Lord's* instruction" is the rule. Thus Jesus inculcated a principle and also manifested a little reserve—just as he did with his statement "Touch me not" when Mary Magdalene wanted to embrace him (John 20:17).

It seems reasonable to assume Jesus knew that John would have the privilege of recording the Book of Revelation and that through that book and by the Holy Spirit, the John class would be carried down to the end of the age.

John 21:23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

From the natural standpoint, John did tarry, for he outlived the other apostles by a considerable length of time. In fact, John did not even write his Gospel until a fairly late date. However, once his Gospel was written and other brethren became aware of this private conversation of Peter, John, and Jesus and then observed that John was living into his 90's, they began to think maybe he would live until Jesus' return. Thus John had to squelch the false rumor circulating that he would live on into Jesus' return, that Jesus would return in his lifetime.

Paul had to combat (in Thessalonians) the erroneous thought that the resurrection was past and that the invisible Second Presence had already occurred. Of course the Thessalonians understood that the Second Presence would be *invisible*. Otherwise, Paul would have used the argument "You do not *see* him, so of course he is not here." Instead, he had to use the argument about the man of sin, etc.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, they thought he was hinting that Jesus had returned. He later said (paraphrased), "By word of doctrine from my mouth or by my pen, do not get the thought that I meant in my first letter Jesus is here. No, he cannot come until, first, there is a falling away and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:1-3). Some erroneously thought Jesus had already come. The Greek word used does not mean "nigh" in the sense that the Second Advent was near but that Jesus was *present*, that he was actually *here*.

The Matthew account about sleeping saints arising in the earthquake at the time of Jesus' crucifixion is true (Matt. 27:51–53). Some falsely concluded that the resuscitation of the sleeping saints was an evidence the resurrection was past. And the apostles thought Jesus would restore the Kingdom after his resurrection. The theme of the Second Advent was so exciting that many overread certain statements. In their zeal they misread providences.

John 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of 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, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

These two verses were appended to the Gospel of John in some of the ancient manuscripts. It is possible that verse 24 is authentic, but internal evidence proves that verse 25 was an interpolation and is thus spurious. One internal evidence is the change of pronoun from “we” in verse 24 to “I” in verse 25. The word “I” does not harmonize with John’s characteristic manner of always referring to himself indirectly.

John’s Gospel was finished while he was yet alive, but in the transcription of the original document and its incorporation with the other books of the New Testament, this exaggeration was added. Some try to justify verse 25 by saying it was Hebrew hyperbole (see the *Diaglott* footnote). Although the Scriptures do contain such hyperboles—for example, “The cities are great and walled up to heaven” (Deut. 1:28) and “There we saw the giants, ... and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers” (Num. 13:33)—the pronoun “I” proves the verse is not authentic. The *Berean Manual* says that verse 25 is not in the Sinaitic manuscript. Certainly John did not write it.