

Notes on “According to Johannes” by Frank Daniels

A Non-Ecclesiastical New Testament Translator’s Notes

Greek Text

The basis for the translation is the current Nestle-Aland text (26/27). If a particular manuscript (such as p⁴⁶) is being followed even when it disagrees with NA27, that fact is noted at the beginning of the writing.

Wherever an alternate reading is followed, the same notations are used in the translation as are used in NA27. For example, a left corner (⋈) is used to indicate the replacement of a word, an open circle (°) is used to indicate a word’s removal. Double brackets, [[]], are used to indicate the presence of notes or short, later additions. As has been the case in many translations, *italics* indicate words supplied in translation.

Two longer segments that were added to the Greek text during the Second Century appear here in their own sections. This choice was preferable to the options of including them in their usual locations for traditions’ sake or removing them entirely.

For the Second Century writings, the translator has attempted to mention whatever Greek text was employed – except in the case(s) where only one complete manuscript is extant.

Language Style

Typically, the present translation is as literal as the target language (contemporary English) will allow. Wherever possible, word groups (such as χριω and χριστος) are given similar translations.

Linguistic accuracy regarding gender is retained in this translation. For example, “the one who...” is used for a generic pronoun, and ανθρωπος is translated as “human being,” but words that indicate gender in Greek retain their gender in translation – rather than using “brothers and sisters,” for example, where the Greek word (αδελφοι) literally means “brothers.”

Chapters and Verses

The traditional chapter divisions arose somewhat randomly as readers of manuscripts marked the points where they had stopped reading. These markings became the sources of the “official” chapter divisions that were put into place in the XIII century by Catholic Archbishop Stephen Langton and Cardinal Hugh of St. Cher. The modern versification of the New Testament comes from the numbering system of Robert Estienne, who introduced them into his publication of the Greek Testament in 1551.

Since the division of the New Testament into chapters and verses has no connection either to the authorship of the writings or to their transmission in Greek, their use in this translation is avoided to the greatest extent possible. However, since the division into chapters is a handy tool for locating passages, chapter headings (sometimes more appropriately located) have been placed into the translation in italics – indicating that they were not part of the original text. Occasionally, and in particular when the narrative

changes, a verse indicator is shown at the beginning of the paragraph, but verse indicators do not appear in the middle of any paragraph in this translation.

The Divine Name

In every case where the Tetragrammaton appeared in a quotation from the Hebrew Bible (rendered Κύριος in the LXX), this translation employs the proper name, Yahweh. There are also other places in the NT where Κύριος without an article indicates the divine name. In these cases, too, the form Yahweh is employed.

Pronouns that appear to indicate God are not capitalized in this translation. Archaic forms of pronouns and verbs (e.g., Thou) are not used here, either.

To Translate or Transliterate?

The translator has translated nearly all Greek words into an appropriate English equivalent – instead of transliterating them from Greek into English or providing the English transliteration of a Latin word. He has done this most famously with regard to most of the “old ecclesiastical words,” such as ἀποστολος (envoy, rather than apostle) and διακονος (servant, rather than deacon or minister). The translations of specific words are noteworthy:

ἐκκλησια, from ἐκ + καλεω, is assigned a meaning as close to the intent in Greek as possible. Literally indicating “call out,” the verb may be used in that sense or (when addressing several people or a crowd) with the similar meaning of “assemble.” In earlier Greek, the citizens were called out (assembled) into an assembly in order to perform civil functions, such as voting on a matter. The use of the word in the NT is similar and was no doubt intended to provide an alternative for συναγωγη, a word that also indicates a gathering. The word “church,” apparently stemming from the Latin for “circle,” does not appear in this translation – since it is not a proper translation of any Greek word and since it has several meanings that are not found in any translation of ἐκκλησια into English.

βαπτίζω, stemming from βαπτω, has a specialized meaning in Jewish Greek. It referred to a certain washing ritual, or in metaphor to any sort of cleansing. This is unrelated to the form or mode of the washing and is therefore different from the secular usage which is connected with dipping. Consequently, it was necessary to transliterate the word group as “baptize,” “baptism,” etc.. This is a rare case in which it was necessary to transliterate a technical term.

Αἰων has a temporal meaning in Greek. In the NET the word is translated consistently as “age,” which can mean either a long time or a specific time frame. The related word, αἰωνιος, means literally “lasting for an age” or “lasting beyond the age.” In the NT, the word appears to have the same connotation as “eternal” and has been rendered as such in this translation.

Translations of Certain Names

The forms of a few names have been preserved in their traditional manner where they refer to the Anointed One (Jesus), the Baptizer (John), Jesus’ student (Peter), or the capital of Israel (Jerusalem). In order to distinguish the author from anyone else with the name, and because he wrote in Greek, the personal name of the son of Zebediah is rendered as Johannes.

Generally, the translator has rendered all personal and place names into a form that appears to well represent their original use, or their use during the First Century. For example, Paul appears as Paulus, Timothy appears as Timotheos, Mary is given as Miriam, and James appears as Jacob. Other people commonly called John have their names given in the Hebrew form of Yohanan. This pattern is true for most place names as well, so that Galilaiah appears instead of the more familiar “Galilee.”

God’s Message and the Torah

The Greek expression *λογος του Θεου* is translated here as “God’s message.” Both in the NT and in the LXX, the expression indicates the content of something that God said – from the verb *λεγω* (say). When *ο λογος* appears alone in the same context, it is rendered as “the message.”

Sometimes *λογος* is distinguished from *ρημα* – another word indicating speech. That word is translated here as “declaration,” usually meaning that something was spoken (rather than written).

Whenever *νομος* appears in connection to Jewish tradition, it is translated as Torah (rather than Law). The Hebrew word Torah indicates instruction rather than a legal code, but the word *νομος* does often indicate a “code,” whether legal or otherwise. Therefore, when it does not necessarily mean the Torah – or when it appears without the Greek article, *νομος* properly appears as “a code.”

Order of the Writings

Historically, the New Testament writings tended to be collected in four or more sets of documents. Each *corpus* circulated either independently or along with others. These groups included: the accounts of Jesus’ life; the Actions of the Envoys; the non-Pauline letters; the Pauline letters and Hebrews; Revelation.

As Christians began to compile complete testaments (in the III and IV centuries), the traditional order of the books was arrived at by placing the groupings in the following order: the accounts of Jesus’ life; the Actions of the Envoys; the Pauline letters; Hebrews; the non-Pauline letters; Revelation. The three “synoptic” accounts of Jesus’ life were placed together. The Pauline letters were arranged in order from largest to smallest. The other letters were also ordered by author and then by size. This being the case, there was no attempt to arrange the books chronologically.

In the present translation, the writings are arranged in the following order:

Accounts of Jesus Life; Actions of the Envoys; Early Non-Pauline Letters; Pauline Letters; Later Non-Pauline Letters; Revelation. Within each grouping the writings are ordered chronologically, allowing for a more or less chronological reading of the New Testament. The order of the accounts of Jesus’ life has been a matter of great discussion; therefore, you will find an introduction to that matter in the appendices.

About the Inclusion of Second-Century Writings

A Non-Ecclesiastical New Testament includes certain writings from the Second Century, including those that were formerly attributed to First-Century authors. The translator makes no statement regarding the “canonicity” of those writings, which appear here for historical reference. Although there are other Second Century writings, those that have been included here were afforded some form of widespread

acceptance. Writings such as the Gospel of Thomas and Acts of Paul, while interesting, were never regarded by Christendom at large with the same form of acceptance as the Later Works shown here.

About Doctrinal Matters

In this translation, the translator has made no attempt to promote, defend, or attack any particular doctrine or interpretation. Whether the translation appears to support a particular teaching is likely a coincidence, and the translator has made every effort to keep matters that were purely interpretive for the Commentary.

According to Johannes

Authorship and Date:

Tradition nearly unanimously ascribes the authorship to Johannes (Yohanan, John), son of Zebedeah, a wealthy fisherman whose family was friendly with the High Priest. However, there have been many scholars who have expressed doubts about the origins of the book.

Hugh Schonfield believed that the memoirs of a Jewish priest who had been a follower of Jesus were collected and expanded by a later person, perhaps "John the Elder" of the II century, and many nineteenth century scholars dated the work in its entirety to the II century. However, since the discovery of manuscript p⁵², a fragment of Johannes which dates to c. 110 CE, scholars have had to back off on II century dates of composition. Most scholars now believe that the document was composed c. 90 - 95 CE by an unknown author, whom many presume to be the son of Zebedeah.

Much of the tradition surrounding the authorship appears to come from within the Johannine writings themselves, rather than being based on actual outside information. For example, many speculate that this account of Jesus' life was written while the author was an old man in exile on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). The "fourth gospel" never mentions Patmos, however. The idea that Johannes was an old man when he wrote the writings attributed to him comes from an interpretation of Jn 21:20f. If we remove all speculation based on interpretations of Biblical passages, we see that none of the early "fathers" had any direct knowledge of the author's fate, with some even believing that he had been martyred.

John A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament, The Priority of John*) posited the theory that the composition of *According to Johannes* was made before 40 CE, within ten years of Jesus' death and resurrection. If the reference in 10:16 to "other sheep" is taken to refer to Hellenists or dispersed Jews rather than gentiles, then the fact that the writing presumes some knowledge of Judaism takes on a more profound meaning. Perhaps indeed it was written prior to the introduction of gentiles into the New Covenant. The thrust of the work is largely Jewish, and the account has been called the most thoroughly Jewish of the four. When the destruction of the temple is alluded to, it is done so in vague terms throughout the NT (often relating it to the desecration by Antiochus IV or its destruction c. 587 BCE) rather than describing it in the details of 70 CE. It is thought, then, that the work was certainly composed prior to 70, and, Robinson believed, before any of the other accounts.

Comparison to the "third" account, that attributed to Lukas, reveals that Lukas and Johannes share a common timeline. It is much easier to fit Johannes and Lukas together than Lukas and Matthaiah, for instance. Lukas claimed that some of his sources were those of eyewitnesses, so why not a completed copy of Johannes? As *The Priority of John* indicates, it is quite easy to view Johannes as a source for Lukas (instead of the other way around). Kenneth Gentry (*Before Jerusalem Fell*) certainly has bolstered support for Robinson's theory with his books on the dating of Revelation.

In addition, there is enough "Johannine thought" intersecting the material found at Qumran that it is easy to realize now that similar ways of thinking were circulating during the second quarter of the first century CE. Given the direction of the work (toward Hellenistic Jews), we accept the thesis that the book was composed very early, prior to the admission of gentiles into the New Covenant (c. 42). The author's sometime rivalry with Peter appears fresh as well; it is unlikely that he would use such description if the work were composed 50 years later, after Peter's execution.

The author makes no claim to identification with Johannes, referring to himself only as "the student whom Jesus loved." However, a reading of chapter 21 reveals that Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedaiiah, and two others were present. Given the use of "two others," it is likely that the author simply could not remember who had been present. However, the sons of Zebedaiiah – so prominent in the synoptics – are entirely absent from the rest of this account. The author also indicates (21:7) that he himself was in the boat. Since the author has already distinguished himself from Peter and Thomas, and probably Nathanael (ch. 1), that makes the author out to be one of the sons of Zebedaiiah – Jacob or Johannes. If the author were Jacob, then the book is certainly written before the time of Acts 12, when Jacob was executed. This, however, is where we give the unanimous attribution to Johannes some weight and identify the author as Johannes, son of Zebedaiiah.

Structure

While many have attempted to separate sections of the work from the whole (e.g., chapter 21, 1:1-18), the composition appears to this commentator as a literary whole. The author is largely concerned with establishing Jesus as fulfilling all roles of the Messiah: successor to the prophets and patriarchs; paschal lamb; Ezekiel's shepherd; Davidic king.

Additionally, the book has several central themes, nearly all of which are introduced in the so-called Prologue. These central themes are "talking points" for the author, who provides his reader-student with a review and examination near the close of the book. We can conclude, then, that the writing is intended as a teaching tool. We shall see that the author is very time-conscious, and although his Greek is somewhat rudimentary, he makes use of it very well, reproducing word games and waxing poetic as well as theological.

Text and Commentary

Introduction

ONE

In the beginning was the message,
 And the message was directed toward God,
 And "God" the message was.
The same one was directed toward God in the beginning.
Through it all things were done.
And without it nothing was done.
 What has been done in it was life.
 And the life was the light of humanity.
 And the light shone in the darkness.
 But the darkness did not understand it.

In this commentator's judgment, this is the most misunderstood passage in the entire Bible, yet this is logically the place to commence discussion.

When other translators employ "Word" for *λογος* in the Prologue, they are doing so because of their presupposition that Johannes intended for *λογος* to represent a pre-incarnate Jesus. The present translator does not suppose this. The expression "God's message" (the *λογος* of God) is used throughout the New Testament to represent the spoken message about the Messiah and his teachings. That usage is in full agreement with the use in the LXX, where the expression normally indicates "what God said." Rather than propose a new significance for *λογος* here, the present translator indicates that the usage in Johannes is the traditional Jewish usage of the word. Thus, sayings such as "Your message is truth" (17:17) are affirmations of the coming of the Messiah.

That the author should represent God's communication to humanity (which here includes the Torah and all of what God has said to the prophets) in such a theoretical manner should be no surprise, since divine Wisdom is personified (female!) in certain Proverbs and since one traditional view of Torah is to represent Torah as God's daughter.

"Moshe did not know that the skin of his face was radiant, since he had spoken with Him."
And there are purchases that the one who sells them is sold along with them -- the Holy Blessed One said to Israel, 'I sell to you My Torah, and (as if such a thing could be) I am sold along with it,' as it is said "And they shall bring me gifts" (Exodus 25:2). This is similar to a King who had an only daughter. One of the kings came and took her and sought to go back to his land to marry her. He said to him, "My daughter who I have given to you is my only one. I cannot bear to separate from her, but to tell you that you cannot take her is also impossible since she is your wife. Rather, do me this favour, that everywhere you go make me a small room [*kiton*], so that I can live with you, for I cannot leave my daughter." So said God to Israel: 'I have given you the Torah. I cannot bear to separate from her, and to tell you not to take her is also impossible. Rather, everywhere you go make me one house so that I can live within it' as it is said "And make me a sanctuary.""
(Exodus Rabbah 33:1)

As the "daughter" of God, the Torah is both apart from and a part of its parent. In God's giving the Torah to Israel, part of the Giver is given with the gift.⁹ The Torah is Israel's beloved, Israel's spouse, the touchstone of meaning for Israel's life. As the rabbis put it, "When a man loves the Torah, he loves life itself. Thus Scripture says, 'Enjoy life with the wife you love' " (Ecclesiastes 9:9; Midrash on Psalms 119:40). ("Law and Love in Jewish Theology", Byron L. Sherwin, *Anglican Theological Review* 64 (1982): p. 471)

It is said that Torah has always existed in the mind of God.

"The Torah is interpreted by the talmudic rabbis to be the architect's design for reality: God looked into the Torah and created the world, just as an architect follows his prior design in raising a building. A single, whole Torah underlies the one, seamless reality of the world." ("The Glory of God is Intelligence: A Theology of Torah Learning in Judaism," Jacob Neusner, *The Glory of God Is Intelligence: Four Lectures on the Role of Intellect in Judaism* (1978): p. 4)

When God created the universe, he had the Torah in mind, so that when God delivered the Torah to Moses, he was not creating something new, but fulfilling his plan. The author of this work, Johannes, applied the same reasoning to all of God's communications with us, culminating in the deliverance of his complete message by sending the Messiah. We find another author writing about the same consistency of the message in Hebrews 1:

In ancient times, in many parts and in many ways, God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets. At the last of these days, he has spoken to us by a son....

Johannes communicated to his readers that God's message was consistent since the beginning, and that God did everything according to a plan and purpose. The passage begins in the heavens as creation is happening. From the very beginning, the author writes, God has been communicating with humanity. In reality, there has only been one message. Thus, the author begins with a review of Genesis 1. "Ἐν ἀρχῇ" begins the LXX account of Genesis, and those are the same words here. "In the beginning" leaves no room for doubt in the minds of Greek-speaking Jews. The author means "at creation," and the readers are meant to recall everything they have learned about that creation account. God has been communicating with people since creation began.

Genesis starts with "In the beginning, God created the sky and the land."

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

The next line of Genesis 1 picks up the thought with what the land was like. "The land" is an expression that is used frequently to refer to the area around what would be called Israel, but here it means the "dry place" below the sky as opposed to the things that are found in the sky.

Now the land was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the depths of space, and God's spirit moved over the fluid.

The natural meaning of ἀορατός, translated "unsightly," is *invisible*. Whatever is unseen is called by that adjective. However, the term may be employed to mean "obscure" or (intellectually) difficult to comprehend. This appears to have been the meaning gleaned from the Hebrew *tôhû*, which otherwise

indicates a wasteland or something worthless. The author was likely conveying that the state of affairs prior to God's organization of his creation was not valuable to God (hence "unsightly") and difficult to understand.

In Hebrew, the word game of *tôhû bôhû* is essentially removed in Greek, but the meaning is preserved in using the word ἀκατασκευαστος. Σκευαστος indicates the state of being prepared. Its opposite might indicate something raw. The author uses the intensifier κατα– to indicate that the creation was totally undecorated. The two terms together point to a necessity for action on God's part. He was not going to leave it that way.

The creator has only been referred to as *Elôhîym* or Θεος. This is all we know of the prime mover. The Hebrew word is a majestic plural form of *Elôha*, which indicates someone or something powerful. The Hebrew author depicts the creator of the universe as a royal, mighty being. The Greek word may have come from a word meaning "observer," but by the time the LXX was translated the word certainly had the meaning of a divine being. The English word, God, is a fair translation of each into English.

At the time there was only darkness, which later scholars would equate with intellectual ignorance. The "deep" refers to any unfathomable depths and usually indicates water or fluid. In Genesis 1, the word indicates the depths of space. The motion of God's spirit like a wind may indicate that action is about to take place.

Now consider that in Johannes' account, he was writing about the same scene. God was about to do something as majestic as creating the universe, but the author wants to remind us that the Torah – God's instruction, purpose, and plan – was always there. There is a certain poetic structure present in the Greek text of Johannes, which the present English text reproduces. Generally, each phrase ends with the notion or concept that begins the following phrase. This is interrupted only by a pair of opposites, and dichotomy proves to be an important instructional tool for the author. Thus, "in the beginning" starts a complete thought which terminates with "in the beginning."

What does it mean for the message to be "directed toward God"? The author has established that there has been a single ongoing communication between God and his people since creation. What was the **purpose** of this message? The purpose of this creation was to lead people to him. It was "directed toward God"; it pointed at him. The use of "with" for προς is unjustified and indicates bias, for when the preposition is followed by the accusative case (προς τον Θεον), it means "toward", not "with". The passage never says that Jesus is **not** God, but neither does it put forth the notion that he is/was a personality of God. Instead, the author has indicated that the purpose of this great communication ("the message") is to point us in the right direction.

"God" the message was indicates the *content* of this message. God is the content. God has been communicating himself, explaining himself to people all of the years since Adam. The author summed this idea up simply by telling his readers that the message was God. He is not personifying the message as God; rather, he indicates its content, much as we might say, "Joe called. His message was, 'Meet him at Freddie's place.'" He sums up the content of the message by telling us that it was God. God has been telling us **everything** about himself: as he first taught Adam; as he spoke to Abraham; as he sent the Torah; as he gave warnings to Isaiah and the others; and finally, as the Messiah came.

Some have attempted to use the fact that Θεός (God) appears without an article to indicate that the author intended to say that the message was "a god." Believing the message to be Jesus, they write that "the Word was a god" indicates that Jesus was a lesser divinity, or at the very least a lesser personality of God. However, the poetry of the passage has created a stumbling-block for these exegetes. The structure points out that the concept which ended the line before, God, should begin this line. Since Θεός is not the subject of the sentence, however, it cannot have the article attached to it. In Greek, when word order is nonstandard, the article is used as a mark to indicate the subject of the sentence. Since "message" and not "God" is the subject of the sentence, Θεός appears without the article.

At the end of the first section, the author indicates that the message has been unchanging. "The same one was directed toward God in the beginning." The promises to Abraham, the message in the Torah, the warnings to the prophets and prophecies in the psalms -- these were the same message that would later come to us through the Messiah.

*Through it, all things were done.
And without it nothing was done.*

The punctuation of this section has been proven in recent times, evidenced by the existence of punctuation on certain papyri. This is Johannes' first pair of opposites; many more will follow. The author will attempt to force his student-reader to make a choice. Either Jesus was the Messiah, or he was not. He will attempt to remove all ambiguity to make the choice an obvious one. The use of dichotomies is one of his strategies.

Here, he writes that everything God ever did, everything that ever happened, was with the sending of the Messiah (and completion of the message) in mind. His first pair of opposites sets up a point of emphasis: God has done nothing without the Messiah in mind.

What has been done in it was life.

The structure (present earlier) continues. The author is now ready to bring us down to earth, so to speak, out of the land of theoretical concepts. "What has been done..." no longer refers to what happened in ancient times through the prophets. The author intended for his readers to understand that he was writing about what had occurred recently. God had sent "life" through the message that he had been speaking consistently since the beginning.

The Genesis 1 account of creation can be summed up in two words: "life" and "light." These two elements are also present in Jn 1, bringing the reader back to Genesis once more. If God did everything with this communication in mind, what did he do? Life and Light. But unlike the biological life brought about in creation, this life is a spiritual, permanent, life. Johannes foreshadows many of his central topics here; the life will be fleshed out for his readers later on.

And the life was the Light of humanity.

For the first time, we encounter Jesus, described only as the Light of Humanity. That the Light represents a human being will be seen later; for now it is just Light. The author wants to point out that this life for all Jewish people comes in the form of "the Light," and we see that this light here represents God enlightening his people through a human being. As we also see in 1J 1:5, *"And this is the announcement that we heard from him and that we are declaring to you: 'God is light, and no darkness is in him at all.'"*

God's light had come recently through a human being. How did this Light bring the life? For now, he does not say.

*And the light shone in the darkness,
But the darkness did not understand it.*

The darkness represents the total of all the forces surrounding the religion of Priestly Judaism. This is the opposition to the Messiah, and to God's message. Ignorance belongs to the darkness, along with stubborn rejection, and the kind of self-blindness that accompanies the mentality of orthodoxy. The Messiah encountered many minds who were turned away from him because they wished to cling to an existing, comfortable, system. They dwelt in darkness, refusing to come into the light. We see the idea in Genesis as well, *And God divided between the light and the darkness.*

Light and darkness are first pair of opposing *concepts* found in Johannes; much more is written about them later. Here, we discover that the darkness did not understand the Light. This too is an important theme, which the author employs as a teaching tool. Whenever Jesus explained an important concept, our author chose an example wherein someone **misunderstood** what was being said. The reader was expected to take note of what is being explained whenever a misunderstanding occurs.

1:6 It happened that a person whose name was John was sent from God.

This is not the beginning of an entirely new section; rather, the author has begun to explain what he meant by the things that had occurred recently. In this section, the poetry becomes more prosaic, although there is still quite a bit of structure. Coming down out of the heavens of Genesis 1, life and light have been made to appear, and just as the creation account concludes with humanity, so also our author brings us down to one person, simply called John. The single sentence, "It happened that a person whose name was John was sent from God," speaks far more than its simple words.

This man John was the beginning of the end for First Covenant Judaism, although this author is primarily concerned with him as the forerunner of the Messiah. The author was very much concerned with the issue of Identity. Before proceeding to identify the Anointed One (Messiah), he has introduced another figure – a precursor. An identification of this person was in order, and the author was giving it.

This one came as a witness, so that he might testify about the light, so that all might trust through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

For the author, John's purpose was clearly established: he was a witness to the Light (to the Messiah). Witnesses were necessary in Jewish legal thought, and this man John would provide one witness to the identity of the Anointed One. The author testified that John himself was "not the Light". There appear to have been people who believed that John the Baptizer might have been the Anointed One; the author testified that this was not the case.

This was the light, the True Light which enlightened everyone as it came into creation. In creation it was, and the creation happened through it, and yet the creation did not know it. He went into his own domain, and his own people didn't receive him.

Before continuing to describe the role of John, the author took the time for an aside to describe in slightly more detail who the Light (Anointed One) was. The True Messiah was not John but someone else. Turning

to a common theme among Jewish writers (e.g., Paulus), Johannes indicated that "the creation happened through" the Messiah. "Through" does not indicate agency but rather purpose. The author has identified the sending of the Messiah as the thrust of God's communication (message) from 1:1f.. Everything that happened has happened with the Anointed One in mind. Some call this "historical redemption": from the first teaching to Adam and Eva in the garden to Johannes' own time, God's actions toward people had the sending of the Anointed One in mind. Even the beginning happened with the Messiah in mind.

Here, though, the author used the term "creation" in a restrictive sense. The creation here was the milieu of Judeans and other Yahweh-worshippers. That it happened with the Anointed One in mind is somewhat like saying God had planned to send the Messiah at the time of Abraham – something that Jesus would explain to people later on. The creation, however, was dominated by the system of Priestly Judaism. Therefore, the author explained that the Messiah was part of the Judean circle, but by and large, they didn't know who he was. Simply, he went into his own domain, and his own people didn't receive him. That Judean sphere that was his own, that was the "creation" in John 1.

But to as many as did receive him, he gave them authority to become the children of God – to those who trust in his name, who were born not of blood, nor out of sexual desire, nor of a man's wishes, but from God.

The Messiah went to Israel ("his own domain"), and the Jewish people at large ("his own people") did not accept him. But just as one Messianic title (not yet introduced) was "God's son," so also the Messiah brought with him the authority for Messianic Jews to be God's children. This was one of God's basic promises to Israel: that they would be God's own (e.g., Ex 19:5).

"This is what you will say to the house of Jacob, and announce to the sons of Israel:
"You have seen the things that I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. And now, if you hear my voice and guard my covenant, out of all the nations, you will be a people for my own possession, for all the land is mine. Now you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the declarations that you will speak to the sons of Israel." (Ex 19:3-6)

Who are these children? Lest the reader mistakenly believe that by Abraham's lineage we are made children of God, Johannes commented that these are children "who trust in his name." Well, don't the Jewish people trust in the name of Yahweh? But these are children "not of blood"; Abraham's descendants were reckoned by physical lineage. These children were not born by physical means at all; they were "from God." The Messianic Jew was born "from God" (in terms that we read later in Johannes, "from above"); the concept is foreign to the reader who might think only in terms of lineage through Abraham. For the whole Jewish identity was based on physical lineage, but the identity of the Messianic Jew was going to be established through the Anointed One alone. It was a philosophical distinction rather than a physical one.

And the message was embodied and lived among us, and we observed its glory: glory like from a father's only son, full of favor and truth.

The author has come full circle, establishing the identity of the Anointed One (to some degree) and his people. The Messiah is the very embodiment of the message. That is, whatever God has had to communicate to us, he expressed it to and through the Messiah. The readers will discover later that the Anointed One never erred; he always did what God wanted. By examining his life and his teachings, the

student could know God better. While the Light was here, the people didn't observe the message *itself* (a communication) – like those who read the words of the Torah read an expression of the message. Instead, people saw the glory (beauty, brilliance, radiance – light!) of the message. The Messiah showed us how wonderful the message was.

This is "glory like from a father's only son". How beautiful is this teaching from God? It is like the pride that a father expresses in his only son – a great thing to any Judean man. Yet again the author is foreshadowing a concept that he will visit later, for the sonship possessed by the Messiah was something special indeed, and in a sense, all of his followers could become God's children.

When the Anointed One came, he was "full of favor and truth." I defer the explanation of these two things for a moment.

John testified about him, crying out and saying, "This is the one about whom I said, 'The one who comes after me has become before me; because he is my superior.'" Because out of his fullness, we all received *one* favor instead of *another* favor.¹ For the Torah was given through Moses; the favor and the truth happened through Anointed Jesus.

Returning to the storyline about recent events in Judea (featuring the Messiah's forerunner), the author provides us some of the content of his testimony. John said two things here: first, that the Anointed One was going to appear on the scene very soon after his own advent; second, that no matter what they might observe in John, they must realize that the Anointed One is his superior. John was the last of the great prophets and a humble man, preferring that no attention be drawn to him or to his calling of reformation but to the Messiah whom he was introducing.

We know from the other three accounts of Jesus' life that John's message about the coming of the Anointed One focused on his relationship to God's judgment against Priestly Judaism – which was imminent. At this point, the present author only indicated that the Anointed One would appear soon and be his superior. This would have left the reader wondering exactly what the prophet John was telling people about the role of the Messiah.

For the last time, and more briefly, the author returns to his introduction about the Light (the Messiah). In shifting back and forth, the author has eased his readers into the concepts at play here and the drama that he would begin to unfold for them.

The Messiah was superior to John because he brought "one favor instead of another favor" from God. A direct comparison followed, about which Paulus would have much to write. The Torah had come through Moses, and it was part of God's overall message, but it was incomplete without a proper explanation, and so God's people came to embrace it as a code of actions rather than as a set of internal principles. It took the coming of the Messiah, the culmination of God's message to his people, to bring "the favor and the truth" that were mentioned earlier. The favor is generosity. The reader should contrast God's generosity with living life under a legal code. Moses brought the legal code, but Jesus explained its guiding internal principles. These principles would simultaneously supersede and explain that code. This internal explanation of the Torah is "the truth" and its result is "the favor." There ought to be no more legalism, as the Judeans were experiencing under the religion of Priestly Judaism. What is nature of this truth? The author begs the reader's patience.

¹ That is, the Torah had been a generous gift; Jesus' explanation of it was one gift in place of another.

Here is the first time that the central player is identified. Look back, and you will see that Johannes has not yet given a name to the Messiah. Here, the author is matter-of-fact in his introductions. The name "Anointed Jesus" is simply thrown in the reader's direction. The reader should not have been entirely surprised that Johannes has been describing the Anointed One, but here that Messiah is given an identity: he is not just "the Anointed One" but "Anointed Jesus." In his first identification of the Messiah, Johannes has been clear. And still, the readers have seen nothing of this Anointed One, for the author has said too much for now. He will appear later.

1:18 No one has ever seen God. God's unique one, the one who is at the Father's bosom, has related him.

Johannes simply wrote, "No one has ever seen God," expecting that his readers would realize that he was referring both to the fact that God was not a physical being and to the account in Genesis 33. There, Moses had asked God to guide the wandering Israelites with his presence, and God agreed to do it.

Then [Moses] said, begging, "Show me your glory."
And [God] said, "I will cause my glory to pass in front of you, and I will call my name, Yahweh, in your presence. And I will be merciful to whomever I am merciful; I will be compassionate to whomever I am compassionate." And he said, "You are not able to see my presence, for no human being is able to see my presence and live."
And Yahweh said, "Look at the place next to me. Stand on the rock. Now when my glory is passing by, I will place you in a crack in the rock and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. And I will take away my hand, and then you will see the things that I leave behind, but my presence will not be seen by you." (Ex 33:18-23)

What Moses saw wasn't a part of God's metaphorical body. It was like a trail, and afterglow of the enormous brightness that had briefly passed by. God had chosen to reveal himself as an intense, blinding light – something that we might call radiation today. Observe how this fits Johannes' discussion of light. God is like an intense light; in him there is no darkness. However, God chose a human being to reveal God to his people: the Light of Humanity.

This Greek text has been disturbed. Metzger comments that the reading that appears correct has no logical reading within Jewish thought. On the other hand, the reading which makes the most sense is almost certainly not the original reading.

If μονογενης θεος is the original reading, should it be understood as a separate sentence, "God is unique"? If not, then the absence of the article would make θεος either a predicate nominative or a singular object, "a god." If we have a predicate nominative, then it cannot belong with either the sentence before or after it (since "to be" is not the verb in either sentence). If "a god" is intended, then how is "a unique god" to be understood? There are groups who formulate one of their central doctrines from this anomalous expression. Manuscript \mathfrak{p}^{75} has the article in that reading: "the unique God" or "God is unique". The reading "God's unique one" has been proposed, and while this is possible it has little support except in patristic citations. Later manuscripts emend this to "the unique son", but the evidence by far is against the reading. The latest translation sides with Irenaeus and Origen, taking the "God's unique one" conjecture. Here, the author introduces the unique relationship between the Messiah and his God. He is "at the Father's bosom"; metaphorically, he is close to God, enjoying his protection and intimacy.

John's Testimony About Himself

And this is John's testimony:

When the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" he affirmed and did not deny. And he affirmed, "I am not the Anointed One."

And they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?"²

He said, "I am not."

"Are you 'the prophet'?"³

He answered, "No."

Then they said to him, "Tell us who you are, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

He said, "I am 'a voice calling out in the desert, 'Make Yahweh's way straight,'" as Isaiah the prophet said."⁴

"This is John's testimony" signifies that John the Baptizer had declared things about himself as though he were in a legal setting. He had testified. The author introduced information about the Baptizer's identity. Exactly who or what did he claim himself to be?

Johannes indicates that the Baptizer "affirmed" that he was not the Anointed One – not the Messiah. The use of "deny" would have indicated that he really had been the Messiah but lied to those who came to question him. Instead, the author indicates that John merely stated the facts: "I am not the Anointed One."

Why had John been put in the position to testify about himself? The expression *Ιουδαῖοι* in Greek most commonly refers to Judeans, but it has more restrictive meanings. In Johannes, the expression "the Jews" often indicates the religious leadership of the Judean people: various rabbis, priests, and sometimes scribes. They claimed to represent the people in "spiritual" matters, and so Johannes was quick to label them simply "the Jews." Members of this leadership group had heard that a so-called prophet was out in the wilderness baptizing people into a covenant of forgiveness of sins (see Mt 3); consequently, they sent someone out to question him. The author gives his readers the impression that those who questioned would-be prophets did so with the intent of catching them in a false statement. If John had claimed to be someone whom they thought was an answer to prophecy, they would be able to grill him about it.

Based on an interpretation of Zechariah 13, it was widely believed by this time that genuine prophecy had ceased.

Yahweh Almighty says this: "In that day, it will happen that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirits from the land. And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You will not live, for you have

² "Look, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and majestic day of Yahweh comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers toward their children and the hearts of the children toward their fathers – lest I come and smite the land with a curse." (Mal 4:5-6)

³ "Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. You will listen to him." See Dt 18:15-22.

⁴ Isa 40:3

spoken falsely in Yahweh's name;' and his father and mother who gave birth to him will impale him when he prophesies." (Zech 13:2-3)

With the idols gone from the land, they were convinced that there were no genuine prophets. Therefore, if John the Baptizer were to claim himself to be some sort of prophet, then they would try to trap him. In 65 CE, the Jewish leaders used this interpretation to exclude from the canon any Jewish writings made from the time of Ben-Sira (c. 132 BCE) onward.

"The gospels and the books of heretics do not defile the hands, the book of Ben Sira, and all the books which were written from that time onwards do not defile the hands." (Tosefta Yadaïm)

After John affirmed that he was not the Anointed One, they asked him whether or not he considered himself to be the successor to Elijah. The author presumes that the reader knows who all of this figure was.

"Look, I will send you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and majestic day of Yahweh comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers toward their children and the hearts of the children toward their fathers – otherwise, I will come and smite the land with a curse. Remember the Torah of my slave, Moses, according to the arrangements and judgments as I gave him the precepts at Horeb for all of Israel." (Mal 4:4-6, from the LXX)

Malachi 4 was written during the fifth century BC – before the reconstructions of Nehemiah and reforms of Ezra, and it is quite likely that the advent of Ezra was the coming of the Elijah figure. With reference to Horeb, Elijah had traveled to the mountain in search of God because he was jealous to practice God's teachings – a devotion that he did not see in the people around him.

[Elijah] said, "I have been very jealous for almighty Yahweh, for the sons of Israel have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. Now, I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." (1 Kgs 19:10)

Afterward, God sent Elijah back to the people to make arrangements for them. Notice that similar wording appears in reference to Ezra's devotion to God, and that Ezra 7 explicitly mentions the "arrangements and judgments," as we read in Malachi.

For Ezra had set his heart to study Yahweh's Torah and to practice *it*, and to teach *his* arrangements and judgments in Israel. (Ezr 7:10)

Ezra's reforms put an end to many of the bad things that Malachi had observed happening. So, Ezra was the Elijah figure that Malachi predicted. However, by the First Century, the rabbis were looking for another Elijah figure to come. The New Testament writers pick that up, taking the "great and majestic day" of judgment to be the upcoming destruction of the Temple. John appears to have held one of two interpretations of this passage – that Elijah himself would return. Many other Judeans believed that not Elijah but a figure **like** Elijah would come in advance of the Anointed One. Jesus himself related John the Baptizer to this Elijah figure (see Mt 11:14). In Mark, the Elijah/Elisha relationship between John and Jesus takes a prominent role. According to Malachi, the Elijah figure would herald the end of an age (see Mt 3); in the NT, this corresponds to the destruction of the Temple. Additionally, the Elijah figure would proclaim a need for reformation. John the Baptizer was doing both of these things, so although he was not Elijah himself, he was an Elijah figure that they understood would precede the arrival of the Messiah.

Next, when Moses was identifying the role of the Levitical priests (Dt 18:15-22), he foretold that, *"Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. You will listen to him."* The account continues:

"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put my declarations in his mouth, and he will tell them every precept that I give him. And the person who does not listen to those declarations of mine that he will speak in my name, I will judge him. But the prophet who impiously speaks a declaration in my name which I have not arranged for him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet will die. Now if you say in your hearts, 'How may we know the declaration that Yahweh has not spoken?' – when a prophet speaks in Yahweh's name, if the saying does not happen or come to be, that is a declaration that Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it impiously. Do not be afraid of him." (Deut 18:18-22)

Observe that God was not telling Moses about one specific person, and no one else. Instead, this passage was about the transition to the period – in the promised land – that would exist after the death of Moses. The first such leader of the Israelites was Joshua. He was followed in turn by the judges. Following them, there were other genuine prophets as well who spoke in Yahweh's name and who told the people the things that God gave them to say. We sometimes call this passage "The Test of a True Prophet," for it identifies that predictions made by a genuine prophet will come true during his lifetime; otherwise, the people were to ignore him. And yet, the religious leaders at the time of Jesus were looking for "that prophet" like Moses.

The story of Moses concludes by saying *"And there has not yet arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face."* Instead of merely indicating the closeness of Moses' relationship to God, many of the religious leaders believed that the two passages together predicted the coming of a specific successor to Moses – who was someone different from the Anointed One. Twice in Johannes' account (6:14; 7:40), people profess Jesus to be "the prophet", believing him to a successor to Moses. Later Christian thought merged the two figures (Anointed One and prophet) with one another. John freely acknowledged that he was not this Moses figure.

At this point in the conversation, the priests and Levites had learned that John did not claim to be any sort of prophet whom they might acknowledge. They admitted to him that the religious leadership had sent them to question him, and they then asked a better question of him. Instead of asking whether he was the Messiah, etc., they simply asked him how he regarded himself.

John's reply was that he considered himself to be in the same role as second Isaiah: "a voice calling out in the desert, 'Make Yahweh's way straight.'" The sixth-century (BC) prophet was living during the Exile, looking ahead at the redemption of a faithless people. Here is what we see in Isaiah:

A voice says, "Call out."

And I said, "What shall I call out?"

"All flesh is grass, and a human's faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers, and the flowers fall off, [as Yahweh's breath blows on them. Indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall off,] but what God declares endures for the ages."

You who are announcing a good message to Zion, go up high on a mountain.

You who are announcing a good message to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up.

Do not be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, "Look, it is your God!" (Isa 40:6-9)

Like the prophet's role, John's was to announce God's majesty and presence – in advance of things that he was about to do.

21 And those who had been sent out were of the Perushim, and they asked him, saying to him, "Why then do you baptize, if you are neither the Anointed One, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

A *perush* was an educated scholar – a stickler for important details and religious observance. These were Perushim (the plural of *perush*); therefore, they also asked John a question about his practices. Why was he baptizing?

The baptism of the period was a form of ritual washing. From what we read in the other accounts of Jesus' life, the people who came to John realized that the Judean people needed to escape the bonds of ritual religion. They stepped down into the Jordan River to their waists and symbolically washed themselves – as though they were bathing. This action indicated cleansing themselves of Priestly Judaism, the religion of temple-worship.

In Matthaiah's account, immediately before and after John indicated that his role was like that of Isaiah, the reader sees the rationale for his work. John was "heralding in the desert of Judea, saying, 'Change your minds, for the kingdom of the heavens is near.'" His message was focused on something that was about to happen. And what of his baptism? Baptism was an acknowledgement of the error associated with the ritual religion. Therefore, when some of the religious leaders approached John, he chastised them about it:

But when he noticed many of the Perushim and Zadokites coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who pointed out to you to flee from the coming anger? Therefore, make fruit worthy of the mental change, and do not think to say among yourselves, 'We have Abraham as a father.' For I am telling you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones!⁵ But the axe is already lying toward the roots of the trees. Therefore, each tree that does not make nice fruit will be chopped down and cast into fire." (Mt 3:2, 7-10)

The ritual washing that John administered was a call to reformation, in advance of an upcoming judgment on Judea. The people who were perpetrating the evil were about to fall subject to that judgment, as the whole system was destroyed (cast into fire).

Lukas' account adds a detail concerning the time when these things were happening. John first appeared, he says, during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius began his reign on August 19th, AD 14. After ruling for two years together with his predecessor, Augustus, twelve full years passed with Tiberius as emperor. Therefore, Lukas indicates that the time of the beginning of John the Baptizer's work was sometime between August 19, 28, and August 18, 29. Tiberius died in the year 37. The account of Jesus' life according to Johannes places the start of Jesus' work at perhaps a month or two prior to Passover (in AD 29), which might make John the Baptizer's advent a few months earlier in the fall of 28.

⁵ This is a word game. The Aramaic word for "children" (sons) is "banim," while the word for "stones" is "abanim."

John answered them, saying, "I am baptizing in water. In your midst stands the one who is coming after me, whom you do not know. I'm not worthy even to loosen the strap of his sandal."

These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John viewed his own mission in relation to the coming of the Anointed One. If people thought that John was a prophet, then they needed to be aware that the Anointed One would be far greater. In fact, he was already "in their midst."

This completed the testimony about John, fleshing out the description in the Introduction, for the author affirms him to have been a true prophet and forerunner to the Anointed One. At this point, the Anointed One has not appeared on the scene, but Johannes' readers are ready to hear what John said about Jesus.

John's Testimony About the Anointed One

29 On the next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him, and he said, "Look! God's lamb, who is taking away the whole creation's error! This is the one about whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who has become before me; because he is my superior.' And I didn't know him, but I have come baptizing in water for this reason: that he might be shown to Israel."

Our author is again very conscious of the passing of time. The day after the religious leaders showed up to question John, Jesus showed up at the place where John was baptizing. This was where the reformation was going to begin.

In his first appearance, Jesus walks, but he doesn't even speak. The author's focus is still on John, who applies the first title to Jesus, given to him by any other person. That title was "God's lamb." It is important that this statement is first, because John establishes the Anointed One as an antitype of the Passover lamb. The "killing of the Passover (lamb)" is an event symbolic of Jewish identity. If the time of year was around the Passover, this application made even more sense – and parallels the last week in Jesus' life.

Taking away everyone's error doesn't mean that every individual was changing their minds about following God. It meant that God was about to use Jesus to remove the religion of Priestly Judaism. This was an announcement of justice. Through Jesus' demonstration of love, the religion would be powerless, and God would remove it. God was removing the legalism that gave rise to the concept of error in response to a legal code.

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am Yahweh. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. The plague will not touch you to destroy you when I strike Egypt." (Ex 12:12-3)

John's reference to the Passover lamb points again to the upcoming destruction of the Temple that was about to happen. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Judeans reflected on their flight from Egypt as God's destroying messenger slew the firstborn children of all those households which had not prepared the lamb sacrifice. The sacrifice of the lamb, then, represented the rescue of the faithful, and so by identifying Jesus as God's lamb, the Baptizer was indicating that Jesus would be slaughtered and that his death would bring about the rescue of the faithful. Those who trusted in the Messiah would be rescued out of the coming anger (the destruction of Priestly Judaism).

Here we read in John's own words that he acknowledged the Anointed One as prominent, as a superior. Indeed he "didn't know" who the Messiah was. According to Lukas they were cousins, yet until God sent the proper sign to John, he never realized that Jesus was God's Anointed One. Once again, John identified his purpose -- to introduce the Messiah to Israel.

And John testified, saying, "I observed the Spirit coming down like a dove out of the sky, and it remained on him. And I didn't know *who* he was; but the one who sent me to baptize in water told me, 'The one on whom you notice the Spirit coming down and remaining on him, this is the one who baptizes in holy breath.' And I have seen and have testified that this is God's son."

Even though we recognize that John was a prophet, how can we be sure that his identification of Jesus as the Anointed One was correct? What sign came which proved this?

God had told the Baptizer that a man would come to be baptized, to publicly identify himself with the reformation movement. And as he was being baptized, something miraculous would happen. A representation of the holy Spirit – God in communication with human beings – would come down and light upon Jesus. The other accounts represent this as a shape which resembled a dove, and as a voice. God had told John that when this happened, he would know that this person was the Anointed One. For every anointed one in the OT had an anointing; this was Jesus' anointing by God – his dedication for his work. The Messiah would baptize not in water but in "holy breath"; that is, he would be responsible for certain miracles. Lukas' two writings indicate that the so-called baptism in holy breath happened twice: in Acts 2 and Acts 10. John's testimony of Jesus was that he was "God's son" – a synonym for the Messiah.

Jesus' First Students

35 On the next day, John again was standing with two of his students. And after looking at Jesus walking, he said, "Look! God's lamb!" And the two students followed Jesus when they heard John say that. Now Jesus turned around and watched them following him. So he said to them, "What do you seek?" To him they replied, "Rabbi," [which, translated, means "teacher"] "Where do you live?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." Then they went and saw where he lived, and they stayed with him that day.

The events in vv. 1:29-34 happened one day after the Judean leaders came to question John. Here it was one day later. From the first day mentioned until the showing of the first sign (Jn 2), the author marks out six days. Given the introduction, it is also possible that these are intended to mirror the six days of creation. Indeed, the revelation of the Messiah slowly builds during these six days until finally he displays the holy breath granted to him by God.

On the day following Jesus' anointing as Messiah, Jesus remained near the site of his baptism, and John was pointing him out to others, including his own students. One of those students is normally considered to have been the author himself, for the author appears anonymously throughout the book. The other, as we will see shortly, was Peter's brother, Andreas.

As Jesus collects his core group of students, they call him by progressively greater Messianic titles. The first with which they label him is "Rabbi." Johannes introduced the Aramaic word for teacher, then translated it into Greek for the reader. The title is important, for in using it the two students were

recognizing Jesus as a superior and a teacher. Realizing his importance, they followed Jesus to his home and stayed with him from that time on.

39 It was about the tenth hour. Andreas, Simon Peter's brother, was one of those two who had heard from John and followed Jesus. The first thing he did was to find his own brother Simon. And he said to him, "We have found the Messiah." [which, translated, means "Anointed One"] He brought him to Jesus. After looking at him, Jesus said, "You are Simon, the son of Yohanan. You will be called Kefa." [which, translated, means "Rock"]

Later that same afternoon, Andreas sought out his brother, Simon, who had not been present to see Jesus' anointing. Once again translating from Aramaic, the author revealed that Andreas believed Jesus to be "the Messiah." Again the word is important. Whenever the Greek-speaking Judeans heard the word "Messiah," they should recognize that it referred to Jesus, and that the word itself meant that Jesus had been anointed by God. Jesus was the promised Anointed One, just as John the Baptizer had also proclaimed. At this point, Andreas has become the second witness to Jesus' identity.

The account indicates that Simon and Jesus met one another for the first time, and that Jesus recognized in that short time Peter's great character. And so, he nicknamed him "Kefa." This too was important, for the readers might very well have heard Simon referred to as Kefa. Translated into Greek, "Kefa" signifies "Rock" – a testimony to Simon's personality. Of course, "rock" has the same meaning as the name by which most people know him, "Peter," and the author will normally use "Peter" from now on.

43 On the next day, Jesus wanted to go out into Galilaiah. And so he found Filippus. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

Now Filippus was from Bethsaida, the city of Andreas and Peter. Filippus found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one written about in the Torah by Moses, and in the Prophets: this Jesus, Yosef's son, from Nazareth."

Another day has passed. This time, Jesus traveled further out into Galilaiah and located a man named Filippus (the name means "loves horses"). The author's comment that Filippus was from the same city as Andreas and Peter hailed from may be an indication that Peter or his brother had suggested their friend to Jesus; the author says nothing about this directly. At any rate, Filippus spent some time talking with Jesus and also discerned who he was; he had the same reaction as Andreas had had. Filippus went to find Nathanael, referring to Jesus by yet another title of distinction. Jesus is the one that Moses and the Prophets predicted would come; he is a fulfillment of prophecy. To be more precise as to Jesus' civil identity, this is "Yosef's son, from Nazareth," and the author included this statement because Jesus (Yeshua) was a common enough name. Indicating his father's name and town of residence made for a more precise identification. In case his readers might have such a question, the author has pointed out the precise person who was the Anointed One.

And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" And Filippus replied to him, "Come and see."

Jesus noticed Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Look! A true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael said to him, "Where do you know me from?" Jesus replied, saying to him, "Before Filippus called you, I noticed you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered, "Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the King of Israel."

Nathanael's reply to such a strong statement by Filippus was one of skepticism. In reply, he quoted a popular saying, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" Yet he followed Filippus to meet Jesus, to see if indeed he was the Messiah. Upon his arrival, Jesus removed all skepticism. While it is possible that Jesus had been literally observing Nathanael, the author and the reaction of Nathanael give us the impression that Jesus had seen a vision of Nathanael. Realizing that Jesus was a gifted prophet, he proclaimed him "God's son" (i.e., the Anointed One) and a new Messianic title: "King of Israel." The Davidic king was the most majestic of all the figures for whom the Judean people were waiting. This is the most powerful title that any Judean man might lay on any other, for Nathanael recognized Jesus not only as a superior teacher ('rabbi') but also as all of Israel's God-ordained leader.

In the few days that have passed, Jesus' growing group of students has labeled him with progressively greater titles, but Jesus was about to describe himself.

Jesus answered, saying, "You trust because I told you that I noticed you beneath the fig tree. You will see greater things than this." He continued, "Indeed I assure you, you will see heaven opened, and God's messengers ascending and descending on the Son of Man."⁶

Jesus' reply to Nathanael praises Nathanael's insight and assures him that he would "see greater things." That is to say, Nathaniel would see spiritual things. He would be able to perceive God's messengers waiting on the Messiah. It is quite possible that Jesus intended this to be taken as a metaphor: Nathanael would be able to perceive just how important the Anointed One was; his knowledge of Jesus was going to be intimate.

Also of note here is Jesus' humble reference to himself. Borrowed from Ezekiel, the term "Son of Man" was also taken as a Messianic reference. However, the term literally signifies "a mortal." After being called "King of Israel," Jesus refers to himself simply as "mortal." As we read the term in Ezekiel, God uses it not only for humility – indicating Ezekiel's mortality – but in recognition of Ezekiel's role as a dutiful servant. Usually, God employed that term whenever he was telling Ezekiel something to do next, and whatever he asked, the prophet did. For example:

[God] said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the breath entered me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what Yahweh Almighty says.'

And whether they listen or fail (for they are a rebellious house), they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.

And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though sticks and thorns are all around you, and you are living among scorpions. Do not fear what they say or fear them, even though they are a rebellious people. You will speak my sayings to them, whether they listen or fail, for they are rebellious.

And you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." (Ezek 2:1-8)

⁶ "son of man," a term used in Ezekiel, means "mortal."

Jesus' role was that of Ezekiel – a servant who was announcing a warning to a stubborn people.

The First of the Signs

TWO

2:1 And on the third day, there was a marriage feast in Kana of Galilaiah. Jesus' mother was there. Now Jesus and his students were also invited to the marriage feast. And when the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine."

At first, John wrote only philosophically. Then he merely told his readers about Jesus. Then the author showed Jesus standing around John – not even speaking. Following that, the readers see Jesus walking around and talking – collecting his students. Until now, he has done nothing. In this section, Jesus **does** something.

The action involving Jesus has built toward this event. The author describes a situation briefly and matter-of-factly, as though the background was common enough that the readers would understand what was going on. The event was a marriage feast. Normally, "weddings" as religious ceremonies did not exist back then. At most, the father might accompany his daughter to the groom's house – indicating that he approved of the relationship. Instead of a wedding ceremony with vows and a religious figure, they usually threw parties in celebration of the relationship (similar to what we call a "reception"). Those festivities might last a whole week, as we observe briefly in Genesis 29, where we read that there was a weeklong festival for Jacob's marriage to Leah, and another celebrating his marriage to Rachel.

Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. But in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he slept with her... Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Complete this one's week, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." Jacob did this, and completed her week, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. (Gen 29:22-28)

Johannes has indicated that there was one such festival, has explained when it was, and where it was.

Why was Jesus at this party? His mother, Miriam, had been invited and had been allowed to bring guests, so Jesus and his students had also been invited. A problem developed, "They have no wine." It was Jesus' mother who reported this to her son, indicating not only that of the two she was the primary guest but also that she realized who her son was.

Jesus said to her, "Oh woman, what do you want with me? My hour has not yet come."

Jesus' reply shows that Miriam had expected her son to announce his presence to all of Judea, but if he had done that, it is quite possible that he might have been put to death before he disseminated God's message. Still, a mother's pleading carries considerable weight, and so he agreed to solve the problem.

When Jesus said, “oh woman,” it was a term of respect – like “sir” or “ma’am.” He was being a dutiful and loving son.

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he might tell you to do."

Although the author has mentioned Jesus' father by name, again he has referred to Jesus' mother simply as "his mother." This is Johannes' normal form of address for her; out of respect, he never calls her by name. Johannes reports later that Jesus' mother was entrusted into his care after Jesus' death; it would not have been appropriate for him to refer to Jesus' mother by her first name.

Here, Miriam instructed the servants of the feast to do as Jesus might instruct. Some have mentioned this point as a possible indication that Miriam was more than just a guest at the reception; she may have had a role in preparing the feast. If this is the case, then it may have been her responsibility to see to it that the guests were well fed. If this were so, then her son's gesture in bringing wine for the guests helped his mother to save face.

Now there were six stone water pots, set down according to a Jewish cleansing ritual, each holding two or three measures. Jesus told them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they filled them to the top. And he told them, "Now draw some out and carry it to the ruler of the feast," and they carried some to him.

The author viewed it as quite appropriate that the water pots used for the water/wine had been set aside for a cleansing ritual. In a manner of speaking, this "sign" was going to serve as Jesus' own ceremonial preparation for his work for God. The "ruler of the feast" was a chief steward – the "toastmaster," whose role it was to discharge the wine. Therefore, he or she needed to approve of anything that was being served at the festival.



The pots were empty at the start of this segment of the story. Therefore, when Jesus directed people to fill the pots with water, everyone knew exactly what was going into those pots: water. In a few seconds, though, those same people would be amazed.

Now when the ruler of the feast tasted the water (which had become wine), and didn't know where it was from (although those servants who drew out the water knew), the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone puts out the good wine first, and when the guests are drunk, he puts out the cheaper wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This first of the signs Jesus did in Kana of Galilaiah, and he displayed his glory, and his students trusted in him.

Once again, Johannes has understated the situation, indicating only as an aside that a miracle had occurred: the water had suddenly changed into wine! He felt no need to put any emphasis on what had happened; the reader would know immediately that this was something astonishing. This was a sign to which the servants of the feast could readily attest, for they knew that they had put water, not wine, into the jars. The toastmaster's remark was one of social convention. Normally, the best-tasting wine was poured out at the beginning of the feast. Once the guests had drunk enough wine that they could no longer distinguish better wine from cheap wine, a substitution would be made. The toastmaster remarked, however, that contrary to form, the best-tasting wine had been saved until late in the party. Naturally, Jesus had provided the best wine.

This was "the first of the signs" for Jesus, proving that he was indeed the Messiah. Prior to this, he had not provided a demonstration of the power that God had granted him, and as a result, his (twelve) students trusted in him.

If *According to Johannes* is regarded as being divided into sections, then the first division ends here (or, one might reckon, after v. 12). The author has introduced his readers to both John and Jesus, and he has established the basic framework of a proof of Jesus' identity. In the section that follows, Jesus would demonstrate himself to be a fulfillment of elements of the Torah and Prophets.

The Money-Changers and the Temple

12 After this, Jesus and his mother and his brothers and his students all went down to Kafar-Nahum. But they didn't stay there for many days. The Passover of the Jews was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And in the temple courts, he found money-changers sitting there, along with those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves. So he made a whip from rushes and drove them all out of the temple court, including the sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money-changers' coins and overturned the tables. And to those selling doves he said, "Take these things away. Don't make my Father's house a marketplace." And his students remembered that it was written, "Jealousy for your house will consume me."⁷

The expression translated "they didn't stay there for many days" might also be rendered "stayed there for not many days." Either way, the intent is to indicate that he spent only a short time in "Nahum's village". Again, Johannes' time-conscious nature is evident, as one of the feasts, the Passover, was near. Consequently, Jesus wanted to go to Jerusalem to be part of the feast there.

Jesus "cleansed the temple" on at least two occasions. This cleansing occurred near the beginning of his work and was an act of great symbolism. A new order was coming, and it was necessary for the temple to be "cleansed" to make way for the Messiah. Jesus' actions are also indicative of the state of affairs that had necessitated the sending of prophets (in the past and in Jesus' day). We recall the situation in Malachi, where the sacrifices had become little more than symbolic for the people, and where animal salespeople have set themselves up in order to profit financially – even stooping so low as to sell blemished animals for the sacrifices. Jesus objected to more than simply the blemished beasts of Malachi. The very concept of greed entering the temple courts was more than he could stand. "Don't make my Father's house a marketplace," he called out, as he drove them from the courts. The people claimed to believe that the Temple was God's house, but they didn't act that way. If they really thought that the Temple was God's house, then it should not be a means of making money.

Oh, God, you know my mindless things, and my mistakes are not hidden from you.
Don't let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me, oh almighty Yahweh.
Don't let those who seek you be shamed because of me, oh God of Israel.
For it is for your sake that I have carried reproach – that shame has covered my face.
I have become a stranger to my brothers
a foreigner to my mother's sons,
because jealousy for your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult
you have fallen on me.

⁷ Psa 69:9

When I humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. But as for me, my prayer is to you, oh Yahweh. At an acceptable time, oh God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answers me. (Psa 69:6-13)

The citation is from Psa 69:9. In context, the psalmist had done some bad things – things of which the people were aware. At the time when he wrote the song, he seemed to be compensating for those bad things with a great deal of religious fervor. The psalmist's newfound devotion has driven away even his family members – but particularly those who were not devoted to Yahweh.

Johannes indicates that Jesus' students remembered how the psalmist's emotion for God had driven people away, but how strongly he loved God. They applied that same sense of devotion to Jesus, with only the Anointed One standing up for God's honor. Even this early, Jesus and his followers regarded Jesus among the Judean religious leaders in such a fashion. Lukas reports the rejection that he was already facing at this time (Lk 4).

Then the Jews answered, saying to him, "What sign will you show us to justify your doing these things? Jesus answered, saying, "Knock down this temple, and in three days I will raise it." Then the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and in three days you will erect it?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body: therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his students remembered that he had said this, and they trusted the writing and also the saying which Jesus had said.

Driving the moneymakers from the temple naturally raised quite a few eyebrows, causing some of the Jewish leaders to question him about it. Since Jesus' students had applied the psalm to Jesus, they certainly considered that the psalmist was writing about people who were hostile toward him because of his devotion to God. That same sort of hostility was evident here. If Jesus were going to do such a thing, he must have authority. Having no authority from the priests, they demanded to know whether he could present a sign to prove his authority from God. His reply was the greatest of his predictions: "Knock down this temple, and in three days I will raise it." The author pointed out in advance for the reader that Jesus was predicting his own return from the dead, less than three days from the date of his death.

Here we see our first *misunderstanding*, for both the religious leaders (who were vocal) and Jesus' own students (who only understood later) believed that he was talking about the temple structures that surrounded them. Although it is true that Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, that event was not in view here. Instead, Jesus was using "temple" as a metaphor for his own body, giving the "cleansing" in the previous section perhaps a new meaning. At any rate, Jesus was planning to give them the greatest sign of all: he would return from the dead. Jesus' students remembered this later on, reminds Johannes, and then they knew to what extent Jesus really was jealous to see God honored. Remember, the reader should make note of what Johannes is trying to say through the misunderstanding: that Jesus would raise from the dead.

Nicodemus at Night

THREE

23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, many trusted in his name, viewing with wonder the signs that he was doing. But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew

them all, and because he didn't need anyone to testify to him about humanity, for he knew what *motivates* people.

While Jesus was staying in Jerusalem, that first Passover, he gained many followers and performed signs proving his identity. Did he trust them with his fate? No, for it is likely that they would have either tried to kill him or to make him into a military leader. It was commonly believed that a Davidic king would come to "restore the kingdom," a phrase that they understood to signify a long period of Jewish self-rule. Most of them likely believed that at that time, Judea would be out from under the Romans, the Seleucids, the Greeks, the Persians, and the Babylonians. Jesus knew what their motivations were, and so he did not entrust himself to them, or they might have tried to crown him king.

3:1 And there was someone whose name was Nikodemos, from the Perushim. He was a ruler of the Jews. This one came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, because no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him."

Once again, the writer has presumed that his readers knew who the Perushim were, and that they were devoted to legalistic study of the Torah. In contrast to the people who would have tried to make him king was a certain man called Nikodemos, a Perush, one of the leadership. Here was a man who was sincerely trying to understand the role of the Messiah.

His approach to Jesus at night has been commented on by more than a few commentators. Normally, it is written that Nikodemos approached Jesus at night because he feared retribution from his fellow Perushim. After all, Jesus was already regarded as somewhat of a rebel, theologically. While this may very well have been Nikodemos' reason for sneaking in at night to see Jesus, the author appears to have been making a theological statement: Nikodemos comes out of the darkness in order to visit the light. When he met Jesus, Nikodemos was in utter ignorance – complete darkness. The readers will soon find out, however, that the darkness within him does not understand the light. Nikodemos does comprehend one thing: he knows that God must be behind this Messianic movement of Jesus'. The signs have him convinced, but can he grasp the teachings?

It is also interesting to note that Johannes has only referred to a single sign: the miraculous conversion of water to wine at the wedding feast. In this chronological account, there were no other signs until later – and the author will refer to the next sign as Jesus' second. It did not take much to convince Nikodemos that God was guiding Jesus; perhaps he was also aware of the encounter at the Temple. Even if that is not the case, Nikodemos had enough wisdom to perceive in Jesus the guiding hand of Yahweh.

Jesus responded, saying, "Indeed I assure you, unless someone is born from above, he is unable to notice God's kingdom."

Nikodemos said to him, "How can someone be born if he is old? He can't enter his mother's womb a second time and be born!"

Many authors have written of this section of Johannes that "Jesus doesn't respond to what the person is actually saying; he responds to what is in their hearts." Indeed, when Nikodemos comments that he knows Jesus must have been sent by God, Jesus branches from there to what it means for someone to be from God. It is not about signs and wonders that one might work – being from God means experiencing a spiritual birth. Still, it is not accurate to say that Jesus ignored what Nikodemos was saying and introduced a new thought. No, Jesus **was** answering Nikodemos directly. Since God was with Jesus, as Nikodemos acknowledged, he must have something important to say.

In saying what he said, Jesus used an expression that literally means "from the top" – an expression by which he means to say "from God". Jesus was talking about experiencing a spiritual "birth" – an awakening of sorts that would begin your honest inquiry into God. Nikodemos, you must be God's child in a spiritual sense, or you won't even be able to notice "God's kingdom"; you won't even notice where God is or what he is doing.

But Nikodemos interpreted this temporally. By "from the top," does he really mean "all over again?" You can imagine his confusion at trying to contemplate being stuffed into his mother's womb and being born a second time! The reader should be tipped off to this misunderstanding and should look for the spiritual truth that is the source of that misunderstanding.

Answered Jesus, "Indeed I assure you: unless someone is born of water; that is, spirit, he is unable to enter into God's kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh; and whatever is born of the spirit is spirit. Don't wonder that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows wherever it wants to, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it's going. This is how it is with everyone who has been born of the spirit."

Maybe a more direct explanation would do, so Jesus explained what he meant by "born from above." You must experience a spiritual birth. Now surely, Nikodemos would understand what he meant. Jesus used "water" to signify "spirit" here, mentioning it only briefly. This is typical of the foreshadowing present in Johannes; a fuller explanation would come later (chapters 4, 7). Suffice it to say that Jesus did not use "water" to signify "baptism", nor does "water" represent "physical birth" (so Fairfield, 1893). Rather, "water" is to be regarded as a metaphor for "spirit".

Jesus' explanation was somewhat simplistic, as though he were speaking not with a Perush but with a novice: you need a physical birth to become a physical being; so too you need a spiritual birth to become a spiritual being. Therefore, Jesus added, it shouldn't be a surprise that Jesus had used the metaphor of spiritual birth – of being "born from above."

In further elaborating on this spiritual birth, Jesus lit upon the results of spiritual birth – namely, spiritual freedom. This basic concept is something that the reader needed to take home: that there is no spiritual freedom in conventional religion, but the Messiah was bringing spiritual birth, which leads to true spiritual freedom.

The words "wind," "spirit," and "breath" are all related concepts (and nearly identical words in Greek or Hebrew). Therefore, the blowing of the wind wherever it wants is likened to the freedom experienced by the person who accepts the spiritualized Torah – the person who has been born spiritually. People may not understand the ones who are led spiritually, but they will go wherever they want to. "This is how it is." Jesus has explained that a spiritual birth or awakening is necessary to make someone a truly spiritual person, a person who is indeed free. In a subtle way, he has contrasted true spiritual understanding with ritual religion. Jesus would say more about freedom later as well.

Nikodemos answered, saying to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus replied, telling him, "You are a teacher of Israel, and you don't know these things? Indeed I assure you that we are talking about what we know, and we are testifying about what we've seen. Yet you don't receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Remaining in complete ignorance/darkness, Nikodemos was still trying to contemplate a second spiritual birth, the wind blowing, and what spiritual birth might mean. He was clueless. Although he was open-minded to a degree, he was not yet willing to embrace a different way of thinking, and a new paradigm would be necessary if he was going to break free of legalistic Judaism.

It is clear from this portion of the narrative, though, that Jesus was trying to explain matters to Nikodemos quite directly; he wasn't trying to confuse. Nikodemos was a teacher – didn't he understand? Jesus had spoken in metaphor about birth and wind. If Nikodemos did not understand about the wind blowing, how could he indeed understand the truly deep spiritual concepts?

And no one has ascended into heaven except the Son of Man who descended from heaven.

Johannes inserted a comment: that the Messiah sees these spiritual concepts more clearly than anyone. In metaphor, he "ascended into heaven." This is not indicating his ascension after his resurrection but refers to the things that Jesus has just told Nikodemos. Jesus understood *all* of the spiritual concepts because God sent him. In Jesus' own metaphor, he was "from above."

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,⁸ in this way it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life."

After realizing that he struggled so much, Jesus' parting statement to Nikodemos was a prediction of his own death. Perhaps he might grasp this one final metaphor:

"Then Yahweh sent venomous snakes among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people went to Moses, saying, 'We have erred, for we have spoken against Yahweh and against you. Pray to Yahweh that he take away the snakes from us.'

"So Moses prayed for the people, and Yahweh told Moses, 'Make a venomous snake, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, will live.'

"So Moses made a bronze snake and set it on a pole, and if a snake bit anyone, he would look at the bronze snake and live." (Num 21:6-9)

In Numbers, the wandering Israelite people were complaining about the manner in which God was leading them from Egypt. Weren't they better off in bondage? The state of Israel then compared to the state of Judea in Jesus' time. Their religion was bondage, but God had intended to set them free. Just as God provided a means of salvation for Israel back then, so also the Messiah would be their salvation now. The bronze snake had been "lifted up"; Jesus himself would be mounted on a cross. Anyone who looked at the snake would live, and so any Judean living under Priestly Judaism who might trust in the Anointed One would survive the God-sent destruction of Priestly Judaism. Did Nikodemos understand? We do not know, but Nikodemos did become a follower of Jesus, so it is likely that he understood at some time.

16 For God loved creation so much that he gave the unique son, so that whoever trusts in him would not be destroyed, but would have eternal life. For God did not send the son into creation so that he might judge the creation, but so that the creation might be saved through him.

**Whoever trusts in him is not judged,
but whoever does not trust has already been judged,**

⁸ Num 21:6-9

because he has not trusted in the name of God's unique son.

Now this is the judgment: that the light has come into the creation, and people loved the darkness instead of the light; for their deeds were evil. For anyone who practices foul things hates the light and doesn't come toward the light, where his deeds would be detected. But the one who does the truth comes toward the light, so that his deeds may be displayed, because they have been done in God.

Johannes concludes the thought with theological commentary. Jesus was about to be crucified because God loved the Israelite people. To what extent? So much that he gave up his special anointed son to be crucified at other peoples' hands. For what purpose? To bring salvation to Israel during a time of Israel's judgment.

For judgment would soon come upon Judea, taking the form of the Roman armies, and the Judean state and temple religion were going to be destroyed. The follower of Jesus would not enter this judgment; in fact, Jesus taught his followers to leave Jerusalem to the Romans when they noticed the armies coming. But the one who clung to traditional Judaism and to the traditional view of the promised land would have that land taken from him; he would have no hope for salvation.

And so, Johannes indicated the verdict of the coming judgment: the Messiah was here, but people chose rather to follow traditional Judaism and remain in ignorance. Here, the writer returned to his "light and darkness" metaphor, with which he introduced the work and which subtly began the story of Nikodemos. At this point, the reader learns about the light and darkness. In Johannes' metaphor, the darkness of legalistic Judaism is only loved by those who refused to accept the Messiah. Anyone who retains an atmosphere of religiosity – a legalistic mentality – would not accept Jesus as Messiah, because his own hypocrisy would be detected. But anyone who really loved God would accept the Messiah and his interpretation of the Torah, knowing that the pure nature of his devotion toward God will be made known.

More Testimony from John

22 After these things, Jesus and his students went into the Judean land, and he stayed there with them and was baptizing. Now John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Saleim, because there were many springs⁹ there. And people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been thrown into prison).

There were many springs found at Aenon, and the author has referred to a place that his readers might know personally. This was a natural place for John to stay because people often used the area to replenish their water supply as they traveled. There was more than enough water there, also, for a washing ritual. The author presumed that the reader understands John's fate – that he had been imprisoned and executed; therefore, he only mentioned it in passing.

Jesus, or rather his students (who had been John's students) were baptizing people nearby. And so, the author indicated the degree to which the reformation was spreading.

A dispute then occurred between John's students and a Jewish *leader* about ritual cleansing. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The one who was with you beyond the Jordan – the one for whom you testified – he is baptizing, and everyone is coming to him."

⁹ Literally "many water places." This likely refers to having an abundant supply of potable water in the place.

John answered, saying, "No person is able to receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves are testifying to me that I said, 'I am not the Anointed One; but I have been sent before him.'

As Jesus and John were near one another, both making converts to the reformation of Judaism, one of the members of the Jewish leadership came by – intentionally stirring up trouble. Hoping that the Baptizer would become jealous that Jesus was converting more people to the reformation than he himself was, the troublemaker pointed this out to John. But John's reply indicated that he knew his role. All of the converts were from God, converting to Messianic Judaism because their hearts revealed it to them. He was only a catalyst in conversion. And the leader had approached John referring to Jesus as the one he'd testified about earlier; John throws this back at him. "You know who he is and what I said there? Then you know I said I'm not the Anointed One – he is."

"The one who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the bridegroom's friend, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice. So, my joy has been made complete in this.

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

The one who comes from above is above all things. The one who comes from the land is of the land and speaks of the land; the one who comes from heaven is above all things."

John clarified his role further, for the troublemaking leader (and for Johannes' readers). By comparison, he was "the bridegroom's friend" – the "best man". The Messiah is "the bridegroom." It is enough for the bridegroom's friend to participate in the joy of the groom. It is necessary then for the groom's friend to become less important, because the groom is more important – just as the Messiah was more important than his forerunner.

The next comments seem to be the author's, rather than John's. In the work, this is a second reference about being "from above." The one who is "from above" is "above all things." Anyone who has his heart set on following God – in this case Jesus – is above all other things. But the one who is "from the land" (or "from below," later) – the person who has his mind fixed on earthly matters, belongs here and can only speak of earthly matters. This refers especially to the people who regarded religious rituals as a path to God. The term "from above" (which Jesus employed earlier when he was talking with Nikodemos) is elaborated further here and is compared with "from the land." Being "born from above" and "born of the spirit" are the same thing in chapter 3, so the author's readers should know that there is no freedom in being "from the land." Those Judeans who maintained the Judaism of the rabbis were restricted "to the land" – to earthly matters. They will not even notice God's kingdom. "Speaking about the land" was also an expression for those whose concerns were such things as which government ruled the nation/state of Judea.

32 What he has seen and heard, this he testifies about, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony has set his seal that God is true. For the one that God has sent speaks the declarations of God; for he doesn't give the breath by measure. The Father loves the son, and everything has been given into his hand.

Whoever trusts in the son has eternal life;
whoever is not persuaded by the son will not see life,
but God's anger stays with him.

Being still more pointed in application, the writer went on to provide further information. Jesus had been testifying about being "from above" and "from below," but relatively few people (in extreme, "no one") was listening. Those who recognized the internal principles underlying the Torah – something that Johannes has only alluded to so far – knew that "God is true," that God is not a god who deals in purely physical matters.

God sent Jesus the Anointed One, and therefore what Jesus said came straight from God, who gave Jesus "breath without measure." That is to say, he had an unlimited source of inspiration. Rather than providing only limited inspiration, as with some of the prophets, God gave the Anointed One full inspiration. Jesus himself would return to this later, but here the author made a related comment that God had indeed given his son everything. In some respect, like the Davidic king, the Anointed One is God's heir.

The central dichotomy is expressed well here: "whoever trusts the Messiah has life"; "whoever doesn't will not see life." Every Judean who heard of the Anointed One must step down from off the fence – he was led to make a decision. Either Jesus was the Anointed, and he must acknowledge it, or he needed to decide that Jesus was not who he claimed to be, and behave accordingly. Those who were really following God would make the right decision. Those who remain in Priestly Judaism would experience the "anger" that was to come; they would see their religion destroyed by God. This refers again to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

FOUR

4:1 So when the Lord knew that the Perushim heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more students than John – though Jesus himself did not baptize, rather his students were the ones who did it – he left Judea and went again into Galilaiah. And it was necessary for him to pass through Samaria.

Here, the author has provided another detail about the person who visited John the Baptizer in prison: he had been one of the Perushim. The author reported that when Jesus got word that the Perushim were investigating his popularity, he headed north. It was still not time for him to openly proclaim his Messiahship. The necessity to pass through Samaria may have indicated that it was winter, when cold storms might have prevented easy travel, so that harsh weather prevented him from taking another route.

This is where Johannes points out that Jesus himself baptized no one. John's followers had brought along baptism as a means of identifying with the reformation. It was enough that they were baptizing; Jesus did not need to do it. He may have avoided personally baptizing anyone so that no one could later claim that their baptism was somehow special because Jesus himself had administered it.

Therefore, he went into a city of the Samaritans called Suchar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Yosef. And Jacob's well was there.¹⁰ Then Jesus sat down at the well because he had become tired from traveling. The hour was about the sixth.

In this section, the author demonstrates that Jesus was both greater than Jacob, and was his successor. The statement of the necessity for passing through Samaria would placate the consciences of any Palestinian Jews who read the work, because they normally had no association whatsoever with

¹⁰ See Gen 33:18-20; 48:21-22. Yosef was buried there, Josh 24:32.

Samaritans. Most Samaritans rejected the later writings altogether, retaining only the Torah. Since they lived outside of traditional Judaism, and since some had even intermarried, there were various superstitions that surrounded Samaritans. We will examine one of them shortly.

The author points out that the land had been given by Jacob to Yosef (Gen 33:18-20; 48:21-22 – Yosef was buried there, Josh 24:32), and more particularly that Jacob's well was the very location at which Jesus had chosen to rest. The Hebrew Bible does not mention the well explicitly, but it does mention Jacob going to a place near Shechem [in Samaria], where he bought lands and stayed – with all of his livestock.

And Jacob went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth. After Jacob left Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For one hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor (the father of Shechem) the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El-Elohe Israel. (Gen 33:17-20)

This was the field that Jacob gave to Yosef in Genesis 48. It seems to be the case that Suchar was a suburb of Shechem – located within easy walking distance of the well. The author mentioned that the time of day was noon, a likely time for Jesus to be thirsty. Jacob's well had already become a landmark. Its site is still known today; it is situated in land owned by Arabs. Supposedly, the well is 120 feet deep, and its water is cool and refreshing. Drinking from a well had already become symbolic of salvation: *"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."* (Isa 12:3)



A Samaritan woman came to draw out water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some to drink." (For his students had gone into the city to buy provisions.)

Again, the author has explained for his readers what could have been a sticky situation. Jesus was speaking with a woman in public, and a foreigner at that. Jesus only spoke to the Samaritan woman because his students were not with him. It had been necessary for them to leave, because the group needed more food. Jesus' comment was brief and to the point; he did not initiate a conversation. Instead, he merely said, "Give me (some water) to drink." Why was this a potential issue?

The Talmud records a few comments about speaking in public with women -- comments which are not flattering:

"He who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the Law, and finally earns Gehenna." (Mishnah Aboth 1,5). The sages taught that one ought to use as few words as possible. "Give me to drink" is short and concise.

And we have

"One is not so much as to greet a woman." (Talmud bBerakhoth 43b).

Rabbis in Jesus' day were expected not to meet with women, especially alone. Schonfield, Swidler, and others have indicated that the tradition was so strong as to forbid greeting one's own mother or sister in the street. As a rabbi, Jesus was expected to keep the traditions of the earlier rabbis. Although he was not always interested in their traditions, it is clear that Jesus was, at the same time, sensitive to them.

Further, since Samaritans did not keep the purification rituals in the same manner as Judean Jews, and since the accompanying social customs were different, when one did meet a Samaritan, it was considered impossible to discern whether or not they were ritually clean. A tradition which should interest the readers is the precept against coming into contact with a woman during her period (Lev 15:19f.).

"When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening." (Lev 15:19-23)

This was not merely a matter of tradition, but it was a teaching that Moses had transmitted to the people. Since Samaritans did not keep all of the customs that the Israelites and Judeans developed later on, how could someone tell whether a Samaritan woman was menstruating? Over the years, customs arose that Samaritans should be avoided altogether; these were later written down. So, we read:

"The daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradles." (Mishnah, Nidd, 4:1)

Therefore, the author presented his readers with a depiction of Jesus saying only what was necessary. He did not touch the Samaritan woman; however, he chose to allow her to draw the water for him. If she were indeed impure, then the bucket used to draw the water would be unclean, making the water itself ceremonially unclean as well. Although he kept what Moses himself had instructed, Jesus ignored the later tradition.

Then the Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Judean, are asking for a drink from me – a woman of Samaria?" (For the Judeans and Samaritans do not associate.)

The Samaritan woman, too, was well aware of the pervading superstitions regarding her people. The woman clearly recognized Jesus as a Judean. She wondered why he was behaving differently from other Judeans, and in that, she initiated a conversation. Her question was compound -- why are you asking for a drink from a woman, and a Samaritan no less? Jesus was violating two traditions, and the tradition which considered her unclean was particularly ruinous, socially.

Jesus answered, saying, "If you had known the gift of God and who it is who is speaking with you, you would ask him, and he would give you living¹¹ water."¹²

The Samaritans had very little tradition surrounding the Anointed One, since they did not regard the Prophets as having the same authority as the Torah. They did acknowledge such a figure, however (called *Taheb*, a restorer), and Jesus clearly hinted that he was the promised one.

¹¹ running

¹² See, for example, Jer 2:13: "...my people have...forsaken me, the fountain of running waters and have hewn cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

The use of the term "living water" is a play on words. First of all, it signifies "running water." Jacob's well came from a spring, which produced running water. Running water was regarded as ritually pure, whereas stagnant water was unclean. Jesus indicated that he would have given **her** some running water if she had only asked. He was about to be misunderstood again, and the reader should take notice of his explanation.

She said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. So where do you get the living water from? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well – which he and his sons drank from, and so did his cattle?"

The woman misunderstood Jesus' symbolic use of the word water. We may think that the misunderstanding here is quite natural, for they were standing by a well, and Jesus was receiving water from the woman. Still, Jesus was using the expression in the senses in which we find spring water being used in the Hebrew Bible – even if the Samaritans did not regard the later writings with the same reverence that they had for the Torah.

Jeremiah 2:13 reads, *"...my people have...forsaken me, the fountain of running waters and have hewn cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."* The running waters from a fountain symbolize the salvation that came from following God (as in Isaiah), whereas the stagnant waters (from a cistern) represented spiritual stagnation. Jer 17:13 also employs the metaphor.

Oh, Yahweh, the hope of Israel: all of those who abandon you will be totally disgraced. Those who turn away from you will be written in the ground, because they have abandoned Yahweh, the fountain of running water.

We also see running water used in a purifying manner in the Torah – such as in Leviticus 14-5 and Numbers 19: *In an open field, whoever touches someone who was slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a person's bone, or a grave, will be unclean seven days. For the unclean they will take some ashes of the burnt error offering, and running water will be added in a vessel.* (Num 19:16-7)

Even in her confusion, the woman gleaned more from Jesus than his being merely a Judean or a rabbi. "Are you greater than Jacob" was her next question – one that was quite appropriate. The author has established that in providing spiritual water, the Messiah was the successor to Jacob.

Jesus answered, saying, "Everybody who drinks this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never thirst. Rather, the water that I will give him will be in him a well of water springing into eternal life."

Jesus' answer seemed circuitous, but he indicated that, yes, he was greater than Jacob. Why? Because Jacob provided ordinary physical water: people drink it, but they still die. Jesus was willing to provide her with "water" that would quench her thirst forever. And what is more, the enlightenment (the water) provided by Jesus would convert her into a wellspring. There would be no more need for sacrifices or rituals; she would have permanent life. Thirst appears here as a motif; it would reappear later contrasted again with its opposite.

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I would not thirst, nor have to come to this place to draw." Said Jesus to her, "Go call your husband and come here." The woman answered,

saying, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have said correctly that you have no husband. For five husbands you have had, and the one that you have now is not your husband. This you have said truthfully."

Gleaning only partially what Jesus was telling her, the woman asked for physical water that would have such an effect. Once again, Jesus' reply may appear to be a *non-sequitur*. It was not. She asked for enlightenment, and he was about to provide it, but not in the way she expected. Her request prompted his answer: "Go call your husband." At first, Johannes presented this as simply an element of the conversation. The reader might question, "Do we know she's married?" The readers have been told nothing in advance, so that Jesus' miraculous knowledge would be more stunning.

Her reply that she had no husband was met with Jesus' analysis of her life. She had made commitments to five men, and had forsaken those men. Her current lover she will not commit to. Under the Torah, a woman could divorce her husband for certain reasons, and Jesus never addressed her reasons for separation, but they were causing her to lose all intimacy.

Did he say this to humiliate her? Not at all. He wanted to make her realize that the "living water" of which he spoke was something spiritual, something indeed that he as Messiah was bringing her – in answer to her request.

19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I observe that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped at this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship."¹³



Now realizing that Jesus was a true prophet – something greater than an ordinary scholar-rabbi – the woman posed a theological question. Since at least 400 BCE, the Samaritans had been constructing shrines on Mt. Gerizim. Gerizim held such a high place of import that it appeared on Samaritan coins. Possessing only the Torah, the Samaritans reasoned that the proper place to worship God was on the mountain.

"... I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the precepts of Yahweh your God, which I am giving you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the precept of Yahweh your God... When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, it will happen that you will place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal." (Dt 11:26-29)

Solomon's Temple stood in Jerusalem, and Judeans taught that the temple in Jerusalem was the place where God wanted people to worship. Knowing now that Jesus was a true prophet, she asked a hot-button question that underlay the foundations of her people's beliefs: "what is the proper place of worship?" Jesus knew that God was going to destroy Solomon's Temple in a short time, but his answer was more enlightening than a comment about the Temple. Had he spoken only of the Temple, she might have concluded that the Samaritans were right to worship God exclusively on Mt. Gerizim.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, trust me: an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you don't know. We worship what we know, because the salvation is from the Judeans. But an hour is coming, and is *here* now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit; that is, truth. For the Father is also seeking those who worship him that way.

¹³ This mountain refers to Mount Gerizim because of (Dt 11:26-29). Solomon's Temple stood in Jerusalem.

"God is a spirit, and it is necessary for those who worship him to worship in spirit; that is, truth."

Here, Jesus succeeded not only Jacob and rejected all forms of locational worship. When asked, "What is the place of worship?" Jesus did not say, "the temple," or "that mountain," or "a church building." Instead, Jesus made the first truly controversial statement of his career. In saying, "neither," Jesus removed the very *concept* of "places of worship!"

The use of "in spirit" signifies "spiritually," and so Jesus indicated that all worship **must** be done spiritually, that is, truthfully. Jesus equated spiritual and truthful later on (in Johannes' account), so that following the internal Torah is "truthful worship".

"An hour is coming" he said, because the end of Priestly Judaism was quickly approaching. "An hour is coming, and is here now" because God has always considered valid only worship from within. Where is the proper place of worship? Inside. No building or place is a "place of worship," but a heart devoted to God is the only place of worship.

Because I want mercy, and not sacrifice – the recognition of God over burnt offerings. (Hos 6:6)

Yahweh says this: "The sky is my throne and the land is my footstool. What house could you construct for me? And what is my place to rest? For my hand made all of these things; in that way, all of these things exist," says Yahweh. "However, I will look on someone who is humble and quiet of spirit, and who trembles at my sayings." (Isa 66:1-2)

Not only is this how "it is necessary to worship the Father," but also God is **seeking** for people who worship him internally. Here, Jesus was likely referring to Isaiah 66. Imagine the intimacy involved in true worship, when God actively seeks people with a worshipful attitude! For following the internal Torah, the readers will see, does not mean obeying various rules and participating in rituals; instead, it necessitates the right attitudes in the heart.

Jesus said that "worship" – literally the act of bowing down – must take place internally. One cannot kneel at an altar externally. It is not worship to sing praises unless you mean those words. It is not worship to sit in a synagogue or church as part of a ritual. For worship is not external but internal.

In the midst of these comments stands the sentence, "We worship what we know, because salvation is from the Judeans." Although the Samaritans possessed the Torah, they rejected other prophetic writings. Salvation from the "coming anger" was not going to come through the Samaritan notion of a Messiah but through a Judean one.

Said the woman to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming – the one called Anointed. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Jesus said to her, "The one that is speaking to you, I am he."

Speaking to a Judean, the woman used the Aramaic term "Messiah." Like the Judeans, the Samaritans had their own traditions about the Anointed One, who would come as a revealer. Up until now, Jesus had not made such a straightforward identification of himself, but here – to a woman and a Samaritan – he introduced himself plainly. "I'm the Messiah."

In doing so, he also introduced one of his own verbal devices (relayed to us frequently by the author): the "I am" statement. In Greek, the verb alone, εἰμι, is enough to identify one's self. Adding the pronoun

marks a point of emphasis. There is no special meaning to *εγω ειμι*; it merely means either "I am" or "it's me." It is the normal way to identify yourself. Some people have wrongly speculated that in using "I am" to describe himself, Jesus is identifying himself with God, for Ex 3:14 has God saying, "I am what I am" to describe himself. However, the descriptive in the Greek Old Testament – the divine name – is NOT *εγω ειμι*; it is *ο ων*, which literally means "the one who is" – the Self Existent One. When Jesus used "I am", he identified himself as Messiah in the context of this written work. This is normally the case, and here we experience the first occasion of his self-identification.

27 And when he said this, his students came, and they were wondering why he was talking with a woman.¹⁴ Still, no one said, "What do you seek?", or, "Why are you talking to her?"

Then the woman left and went into the city and said to the people, "Come notice someone who told me everything I ever did! Isn't this the Anointed One?" They went out of the city and were coming toward him.

Just after Jesus identified himself as the Anointed One, something that must have been truly shocking, his students returned from purchasing their provisions. The gender bias present at the time showed up immediately, for while his students might reasonably have assumed Jesus would be speaking with someone (who would have been Samaritan), they were still wondering "why he was talking with a woman." In fact, not only had Jesus treated this Samaritan woman like the equal human being that she was, but also he had spoken more plainly of himself to her than to anyone previously. He had answered all of her questions, and at this point in time, she understood who he was. Recognizing that their social prejudices were the cause of their wonder, no one dared to ask him why he was doing this.

The woman returned to her city and announced that the guy she'd met at Jacob's well was indeed greater than Jacob. He's the Anointed One. Natural curiosity overwhelmed her associates, and they came out to meet Jesus.

Now in the meantime, his students were offering food to him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

Then the students said to one another, "Has anyone brought him food?"

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is that I may do what the one who sent me wants and that I finish his work. Don't you say that, 'it is only four months until the harvest comes'? Look, I'm telling you: lift up your eyes and observe the fields – they are white to harvest already. The reaper receives a reward and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that both the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. For in this, the saying is true, that, 'One person is the sower, and another is the reaper.' I sent you to reap where you didn't labor. Some people labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Meanwhile, Jesus' students offered him some of the food they had just purchased, assuming that he must be hungry. The author mentioned this incident because it would provide the readers with another one of Jesus' analogies – food and hunger. Hunger and thirst will reoccur later. For now, there was misunderstanding. Jesus already had food? Didn't they run out? Who brought him food?

For Jesus, the metaphor of "food" is something internal (spiritual) rather than external (physical) food. The Messiah was fed by doing what God wanted him to do. Should Jesus take time to eat? There was work

¹⁴ See Mishnah Aboth 1,5: "He who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the Law, and finally earns Gehenna." Also, in Talmud bBerakoth 43b: "One is not so much as to greet a woman."

to do, and this was food enough. If the saying about the harvest that Jesus quoted was factual as to time, then the saying is probably about spring wheat, which is harvested in late spring; however, the saying may not be timely. Although Johannes never presents his readers with an account of the sending of the Twelve, this is his indication to us that they have been sent already by this time. The Twelve are depicted as reapers, gathering wheat where Jesus sowed. Jesus brought the message of the internal Torah, and the students had only to introduce them to more specifics of the new covenant. Jesus said, "I sent you," indicating to the reader that the Twelve had already been sent out. "Some people labored" probably referred to the prophets, who had taught some of the spiritual truths that Jesus was explaining fully. In gathering followers for the Anointed One, the Twelve entered into the labor of the prophets.

Now out of that city, many Samaritans trusted in him on account of the woman's message. She was testifying, "He told me everything that I've done." Therefore, the Samaritans came to him, asking him to stay with them. He stayed there for two days.

And many more trusted on account of his message and said to the woman, "We no longer trust on account of your words, for we ourselves have heard, and we know that this truly is the savior of creation."

Out of her own free choice, and not because anyone had sent her to do so, the Samaritan woman began telling people in her city about the Messiah, a man who had provided to her details of her private life. Wishing to hear such a person, many people in the city begged Jesus to remain there for two days. Since it is important that each person's trust be entirely personal to them, their remarks were preserved by the author: they weren't just taking her word for it any longer. They had verified for themselves that Jesus was the Anointed One, the one who was going to save the Israelites from the impending judgment – offering them permanent access to God.

A Second Sign

43 Now after the two days, he went out from there into Galilaiah *but not into Nazareth*, for Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. Therefore, when he came into Galilaiah, the Galilaians embraced him, having seen all that he did in Jerusalem at the feast, (for they had also gone to the feast).

The supplied words are necessary in order to understand the author's intent. Jesus circulated throughout the region of Galilaiah, but Johannes deliberately did not say that he returned home, because he had already proven that the people there did not accept him. This saying of Jesus was to have been known to the readers. But the people of the area did accept him for who he was, and many of them had seen him the preceding Spring in Jerusalem.

Jesus' testimony here was about himself, but historically, he was summarizing the treatment of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Samuel, Moses, Elijah, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others were rejected by the people – even though foreigners listened to some of them.

Then he came again into Kana of Galilaiah, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain courtier whose son was sick in Kafar-Nahum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilaiah, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die.

Therefore Jesus said to him, "If you all don't notice signs and wonders, you won't trust."¹⁵ The courtier said to him, "Oh sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go. Your son is alive." The man trusted the saying that Jesus said to him and went. And already, as he was going back, his slaves met him, saying that his boy was alive. Then he inquired of them as to the hour in which he was better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." Then the father knew that this was the time when Jesus said to him, "Your son is alive." And he and all of his household trusted in Jesus. This again, a second sign, Jesus did, after going from Judea into Galilaiah.

This second division of the work concludes where the first ended – in Kana – and like the first, it ends with a sign. Here for the first time in Johannes' account, Jesus expressed frustration that people were following him on account of the signs that accompanied his teaching. It was more important (as Johannes noted in the previous section) that people realize who he was and embrace his teachings. Thus, we have here a contrast between the people of Kana and the Samaritans of Suchar.

Signs and Wonders

The expression "signs and wonders" appears in John 4 at the earliest time in Jesus' life – and several other times in the New Testament. This expression hearkens back to the Israelites' departure from Egypt and indicates the purpose for the miracles that Jesus and his followers would perform in the presence of the unbelieving people. It means something specific.

In Hebrew, the words are *ôwth* and *môwphêth*, indicating something that appears (a sign) and proof of God's involvement (a beautiful or wondrous thing). If a *môwphêth* concerns a future event the word is the rough equivalent of the English word "omen." In the Septuagint and in the New Testament the words appear in Greek as *σημειον* (a mark or sign) and *τερας* (an omen or wonder). The verb associated with the interpretation of omens was *τεραζω*.

In the Bible as a whole the two words first appear together in Exodus 4, where the words are given as being synonyms for the same set of miracles:

"Take that rod with you, and use it to do the **signs**."

...

Yahweh told Moses, "When you get back to Egypt, see that you show Pharaoh all the **wonders** that I have given you the power to do, but I will make him stubborn so that he will not let the people go." (Ex 4:17, 21)

After that first time, the expression "signs and wonders" was used in the Hebrew Bible in several instances to refer to the miracles and plagues that God worked through Moses in Egypt: **Ex 7:3; Dt 4:34; Dt 6:22; Dt 7:19; Dt 13:1f.; Dt 26:8; Dt 29:3; Dt 34:11; Neh 9:10; Ps 135:9**. These are numerous enough that they demonstrate a consistent pattern of usage.

The use in Deuteronomy 29 connects the "signs and wonders" to the establishment of the Mosaic covenant.

"You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, **those great signs**

¹⁵ This refers to Exodus 4, wherein Moses was to perform signs (*σημεια*, v. 17) for the people that were also called wonders (*τερατα*, v. 21). Even after the signs and wonders, the pharaoh did not release the Hebrew slaves.

and wonders. But to this day Yahweh has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear. ...

You stand assembled today, all of you, before Yahweh your god... to enter into the covenant of Yahweh your god, sworn by an oath, which Yahweh your god is making with you today; so that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your god, as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob...

Along with the blessings to the faithful, God sent curses on all those who rejected his instruction. When people saw the divine judgment against those who had left God, they would know that the judgment was “because they abandoned the covenant of Yahweh, the god of their ancestors, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. They turned and served other gods... so Yahweh’s anger was kindled against that land, bringing on it every curse written in this scroll.”

It was possible that a so-called prophet could demonstrate what appeared to be a sign or a miracle, but they might not be in agreement with the covenant that God was establishing to Moses. In particular, they might lead others to serve false gods (Dt 13). In that case, God allowed the miracle to occur in order to provide a test for the people (v. 3). They were to follow Yahweh alone, and they were to execute the miracle worker for trying to lead the people astray.

We observe that the signs and wonders were proofs of God’s activity during the time when he was establishing the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah invokes Deuteronomy 29 and the signs and wonders in Exodus 4 when he points ahead to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem under the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and to the Exile that followed:

“Oh, Yahweh God! ... You showed **signs and wonders** in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all humanity, and have made yourself a name that continues to this very day. You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with **signs and wonders**, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, ... but they did not listen to your voice or walk in what you set down; they did none of all you directed them to do. Therefore you have made all these disasters come upon them”...

And it happened that Yahweh’s message came to Jeremiah, saying: ... “I am going to give this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of King Nabu-kadurri-usur of Babylon, and he will take it. The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will come, set it on fire, and burn it ... For the people of Israel and the people of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth; the people of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands,” says Yahweh. (Jer 32)

There were plenty of miracles in the Old Testament, but the use of the term, “signs and wonders,” was limited in its scope; they **confirmed** Moses’ giving of the Torah, and they accompanied **judgment** against the covenanted people who rejected God’s instruction. When Jesus brought up the signs and wonders, it was within a context similar to what we see in the Hebrew Bible. The Anointed One was the successor to Moses, heralding both a new covenant and an impending destruction of the faithless. Johannes refers to the conversion of water to wine as the “**first of the signs**,” for it was the first time that Jesus had demonstrated that he was the Anointed One (he “displayed his glory”) – the person charged with bringing a new covenant. That those signs indicated that he was a true prophet is something that we also encounter at the beginning of John 3: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, because no one can do **these signs** that you are doing unless God is with him.”

The only other occurrence of “signs and wonders” in the gospels is in connection with the false anointed ones and false envoys. Those Jewish people, also claiming to be Moses’ successors, were going to *pretend* to perform signs and wonders. The performing of those so-called signs and wonders likewise would falsely seem to bring the new covenant. We read again about those people in 2 Thessalonians (see below).

After Jesus sent out his students, the miracles that *they* performed were referred to using the same language, signs and wonders, for their setting was the same. The use of the expression after Jesus begins in Acts 2, which refers to a prophecy of Joel. We will pick that prophecy up later. In that same context, though, we see that the identical usage of the two words continued:

Jesus the Nazarene was a man who was pointed out to you as being from God through powerful deeds, and **wonders**, and **signs**, which God did through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know. (Acts 2:22)

And fear happened to every soul, and many **wonders and signs** were done through the envoys. (Acts 2:43)

And now, oh Lord, look on their threats and grant to your slaves to speak your message with all freedom of speech, to stretch out your hand for healing, and to do **signs and wonders** through the name of your holy servant-boy Jesus. (Acts 4:29-30)

Now through the hands of the envoys many **signs and wonders** were done among the people. (Acts 5:12)

Now Stefanos, full of favor and power, worked **wonders and great signs** among the people. (Acts 6:8)

[Moses] led them out, doing **wonders and signs** in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and for forty years in the desert. (Acts 7:36)

Then for a considerable time they remained, speaking freely about the Lord; they testified to the message of God's generosity by giving out **signs and wonders** which happened through their hands. (Acts 14:3)

Now all the crowd was silent, and they heard Bar-Nabas and Paulus telling about what **signs and wonders** God did through them among the gentiles. (Acts 15:12)

For I won't dare to speak of those things that the Anointed One did not work out through me for the listening of the nations, with word and deed, with the power of his **signs and wonders**, with the power of **God's breath**. (Rom 15:18-9)

Indeed, the **signs of an envoy** were worked out among you with all endurance: **signs and wonders and powers**. (2 Cor 12:12)

For the secret of lawlessness is already working (until only the one who is holding back in the present should happen out of our midst). And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the breath of his mouth and deactivate with the appearance of his presence. The lawless one's presence is according to the working of the enemy: with all kinds of false power and **signs and wonders** and with all kinds of unjust deception for those who are being destroyed. (2 Thess 2:7-10)

This was first received through the Lord to be spoken by those who heard, and it was confirmed for us, with the co-testifying of God both by **signs and wonders**, and by various **powers**, and by distributions of **holy breath**, according to what he wants. (Heb 2:4)

We saw that in the Hebrew Bible, the signs and wonders had arisen in two contexts: confirming the covenant as the Israelite people left Egypt for the Promised Land, and in association with divine judgment against the faithless Israelites. In the New Testament, we observe again that the “signs and wonders”

were connected with Moses (Ac 7:36), with Jesus as Moses' successor (Ac 2:22), with the upcoming judgment on Priestly Judaism (2 Thess 2), and with proving that the new covenant was from God (the remaining citations). The use of "breath" or "holy breath" to refer to the miraculous signs is something that we observe here and elsewhere in the New Testament.

This time, Jesus proved that the powers given by God to his Anointed were so great that he need not even be present in order to cause healing. For the one who trusts, like the courtier, God would work wonders through the Messiah. The courtier had already known that the Anointed One could do such things, but the performance of the sign caused his entire household to realize who Jesus was.

Do You Want to Become Well?

FIVE

5:1 After these things, there was a feast of the Judeans, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem, by the sheep gate, a swimming pool, called in Hebrew Beth-saida, which has five covered porches. Under these a large number of sick people were lying, with the blind, lame, and withered. And a certain man was there who had been in feeble health for thirty-eight years.

Noticing him lying there, and knowing that he had been that way for a long time, Jesus said to him, "Do you want to become well?" The one who was sick replied, "Sir, I have no one who would put me into the swimming pool when the water is stirred up. But just as I am coming, another goes down ahead of me."

Jesus said to him, "Rise. Take up your mat and walk." And the man immediately became well, and took up his mat, and walked.

The feast mentioned in the passage was probably a minor feast, possibly even a new moon, since Johannes ordinarily mentions the important feasts. However, the festival of Purim was coming into widespread practice during the time of Jesus. Since it was a relatively new feast (no references to it prior to the 1 century BC), the author may have mentioned it simply as "a feast of the Judeans" – a feast that was not mentioned in the OT but which the Jewish leaders celebrated. At any rate, Jesus chose to celebrate the feast and returned to Jerusalem.

The location of the pool has been determined by archeological excavations. There are several pools in the area; this one is commonly known as the Probatic Pool. The first paragraph of the account provides us with a legend – that people might be cured at the pool (during the feast?).

Jesus observed a feeble man who had been sick for 38 years; thus, his physical state was well-documented. As long as the water remained stagnant, the people waiting by the pool were inactive, but the pool sat over an intermittent spring. When the spring brought forth water, the pool bubbled, and all of the people sitting beside it would leap in, believing that they would be healed while the pool was bubbling. The account indicates no truth to the superstition, although a later addition to the text attempts to mystify the superstition.

Once again, the author made use of the dichotomous analogy between stagnant and running (living) water; the people believed that only when the water was "living" could they be healed. But the Anointed One would provide the healing that the pool could not (since he possessed the true "living water"). Jesus had only to ask whether the man wished to be healed, and the man had only to listen and to trust God.

Jesus' simple instruction would have been useless to a man who refused to trust God: get up and walk. There was no need to try to slip into the pool while it bubbled; God had the power to heal at any time. The man believed Jesus, he arose, and he found himself able to walk after thirty-eight years of being feeble.

9 Now that day was a Sabbath. Therefore, the Jews said to the one who had been healed, "It is a Sabbath, and it is illegal for you to carry the mat."

But he answered them, "The one who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the one who told you to take it up and walk?" But the man who had been healed didn't know who it was, for Jesus had slipped out easily, since there was a crowd in the place.

Some of the religious leaders noticed the man carrying his mat out of the covered area. There were (and are) traditions as to how much weight one may carry and how far one may carry it on the Sabbath, and the leaders judged this man to be in violation of those traditions. For example, the Zadokite or Damascus document, part of which the Qumran community preserved in its caves ("the Dead Sea Scrolls"), reads in part:

As to the Sabbath to keep it according to its law, no one will do work on the sixth day from the time in which the globe of the sun is removed from the gate in its fulness for it is he who said, "Remember the Sabbath day, to make it holy." And on the day of the Sabbath No one will utter a word of folly. And surely none will demand any debt of his neighbor.

...

No one will walk in the field to do the work of his affairs on the day of the Sabbath.

No one will walk outside his city more than a thousand cubits.

No one will eat on the day of the Sabbath, except for what is prepared or dying in the field.

No one will eat or drink, except from what was in the camp.

But if he was on the way and went down to wash, he may drink where he stands, but he will not pour into any vessel.

...

No one will carry anything from the house to the outside or from the outside into the house, and if he is inside the gate, he will not carry out anything of it or bring in anything into it.

No one will open the cover of a sealed vessel on the Sabbath.

No one will carry on him spices to go out and come in on the Sabbath.

No one will move in the house on the day of the Sabbath rock or earth.

No nurse will carry the suckling child to go out or to come in on the Sabbath.

...

No one will deliver an animal on the day of the Sabbath.

And if it falls into a pit or ditch, he will not raise it on the Sabbath.

...

No one will bring anything on the altar on the Sabbath, except for the burnt-offering of the Sabbath, for so it is written, "Save your Sabbaths."

(Damascus Document, chapter 13)

These prohibitions do not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but by the II Century BC, the rabbis were developing lists of safeguards to prevent people from doing work on the Sabbath.

When the leaders questioned him, the man brought attention to his healing: "the one who made him well" told him to carry his mat. Surely this healing was from God; therefore, it was an exception to the traditions of the rabbis.

But this made the leaders all the more curious, not about the healing but about who might be going around telling people to violate the traditions of the Sabbath! Jesus was gone by this time, having made his way through the crowd, and so they were unable to question him about the directions he had given the formerly crippled man. At the same time, they completely overlooked the fact that the man could now walk on sound legs.

14 After these things, Jesus found him in the temple courts and said to him, "Look! You have become well. Err no longer, so that nothing worse may happen to you." The person went away and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. And for this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus: because he did these things on a Sabbath.

But he replied to them, "My Father works until now, and so I am working." Therefore, because of this, the Jews sought even more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but also he said that God was his own father, making himself equal to God.

Some time passed – possibly a few weeks – and Jesus encountered again the formerly lame man. This time, he was in the temple courts; possibly, he was there to praise God. In saying, "You have become well," the Anointed One pointed out that the man's healing was permanent. It had been no fluke that God had healed him. However, if this man wavered in his trust in God – if he took his healing for granted and began to ignore the Deity who had healed him – something even worse might happen to him.

Johannes related to his readers the impression that the man's reaction to the admonition was a poor one. He did not appreciate Jesus' warning and went straight to those who were hunting him, telling the Jewish leaders who had healed him. The author was careful not to say that Jesus "profaned the Sabbath," because he had not violated the Torah itself. Instead, he writes that Jesus "did ... things." Jesus had acted, but had he acted inappropriately?

The leaders tracked Jesus down, although the author says nothing of the beginning of his encounter with them, nor of the wording of their accusation. Instead, the account skips directly to Jesus' explanation of his actions. His reply was that since his Father, God, was working, so also would he work. None of them had said they were going to kill him, but Johannes explained that it was at this time that they began to consider the idea – not because he had violated the Sabbath, but that he claimed a special privilege. Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, who was called "God's son." He had claimed a relationship with God that was greater than their own. They *rationalized* that this implied that he was claiming equality with God, and anyone who put themselves equal to God must die. The author was showing his readers to what logical extremes these leaders would go in order to twist the Torah into convicting Jesus.

Then Jesus answered, saying, "Indeed I assure you: the son can't do anything of himself, except what he sees the Father doing. For whatever he may do, in the same way the son does these things as well. For the Father loves the son and shows him everything that he does. And he is showing him greater deeds than these, so that you may wonder.

Still, Jesus explained exactly what he implied of his relationship with God. Jesus only did what God wanted him to do. His understanding of fatherhood and sonship had to do with this sort of relationship.

Consequently, if Jesus was responsible for the healing, then it was only by God's own action. His relationship with God was an open one, where even God's motives were open to him – "the Father...shows him everything." And in predicting "greater things than these," Jesus alluded to his own resurrection, also providing Jesus with an analogy for his teachings: the dichotomy of life and death.

"For as the Father raises and makes alive the dead, so also the son makes alive whomever he wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the son, so that all may honor the son just like they honor the Father.

"Whoever doesn't honor the son is not honoring that Father who sent him. Indeed I assure you that whoever hears my message and trusts the one who sent me has eternal life and is not coming into judgment but has passed out of death into life.

The "Father makes alive the dead" is referring to a physical resurrection. God has raised people from the dead in the past. But the analogy is figurative, spiritual: the Messiah "makes alive whomever he pleases." Here, Jesus defined life in terms of genuinely following God. The Israelite who truly follows God (and therefore adheres to the teachings of his Anointed One) is "alive"; those who follow religious traditions are "dead."

It is within the scope of this analogy that Jesus brought up judgment. He said, "he has given judgment to the son." Later on, he will say that he doesn't judge anyone. What he meant here is something different. The son was not in a position of judge here. Instead, the Messiah was the basis for judgment (just as Moses and one's own words would be later on). In simple terms, there would be Israelites who accepted their Messiah, and those who did not. That decision (to honor the Messiah or not) would be the basis for their judgment.

Therefore, Jesus continued by saying that "whoever does not honor the son is not honoring [the] Father." More specifically, he added, "whoever hears my message and trusts the one who sent me has eternal life." Thus, no judgment would be passed against those who followed the internal Torah taught by the Messiah. So far, this internal Torah has still been barely alluded to in Johannes, whereas Matthaiah's account (for instance) shows that he had been teaching it all along. The reader was expected to have some degree of familiarity with the idea that the Torah can be understood as a set of internal principles; Johannes was going to bring up the basics of life by the Torah later on. For now, the necessity of living that life is the thrust of his thesis.

Anyone who remained with Priestly Judaism was in "death." Anyone who heard Jesus' message about a spiritual Torah and who changed over to those teachings would not be judged along with the Temple. Instead, that person will have "passed out of death into life."

25 "Indeed I assure you that an hour is coming, and is *here* now, when the dead will hear the voice of God's son, and those who have heard will live. For as the Father has life in himself, similarly he gave the son life to have in himself. Also he gave him authority, even to execute judgment, because he is a mortal.

"Don't wonder about this, because an hour is coming in which all those in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out: those who have done good things will come out to a resurrection of life; and those who have practiced foul things will come out to a resurrection of judgment.

An hour is coming – again because Priestly Judaism would soon vanish – and is here now – because the Messiah was present – when people who are stuck in their religion ("dead") would recognize God's son (i.e., the Anointed One) and give themselves over to the internal Torah.

"Those who have heard will live" – the teachings were going to provide salvation from the coming anger. In being able to teach the message of life, the son had "life in himself" in this sense, just as God has life in himself. God's teachings, which Jesus explained, were life.

The Messiah's authority here involves the discernment between those who have accepted his message and those who have not. Since he was human, God granted the Messiah such authority among his siblings. The teachings of the Messiah constituted an expression of that authority – for he wished that everyone accept the message.

Every Israelite who was alive in Jesus' day was "in the tombs," according to the analogy, because only the Messiah had the message directly from God. Therefore, their encounter with the Anointed One would produce in them a "resurrection," following which they would enter an "afterlife" (the word "afterlife" and "resurrection" are the same). This life, after their existence in spiritual death, would either be an afterlife of "life" – of salvation from the coming anger – or an afterlife of judgment – when the Israelites who did not accept their Messiah would have their religion as they knew it destroyed by the Romans.

Testimony About Jesus

30 "By myself I can do nothing. Just as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I am not seeking what I want but the wishes of the one who sent me. If I were to testify about myself, isn't my testimony true? Another person is testifying about me, and I know that the testimony that he gives on my behalf is true. You have sent for John, and he has testified to the truth.

"But I am not receiving testimony from a human being. On the contrary, I am saying these things so that you might be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for an hour in his light. But I have greater testimony than that of John, for the deeds that the Father gave me to finish, these deeds that I am doing testify about me: they testify that the Father has sent me.

"And the Father who sent me, he himself has testified about me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor have you seen his form, and you don't have his message dwelling in you, because you don't trust the one that he sent. You search the writings because you think that they have eternal life in them.

"And these are the ones who are testifying about me, yet you aren't willing to come to me so that you might have life.

With that, Jesus introduced a brief discourse concerning the testimony of various witnesses that would prove that he was the Messiah. The bridge between this concept and the previous one is the thought of judgment. Would Jesus indeed be judging? The Messiah can only do as God directs – after all, he was a perfect expression of God's principles for humanity. Therefore, any judgment that the Anointed One should bring would be a just judgment.

However, he recognizes that the testimony of two or three witnesses is necessary under the Torah in order to pass any judgment. Whose testimony was there, aside from his own, to prove that Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be? First there was John's. The Jewish leaders had already spoken to the Baptizer, who pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus explained, though, that his purpose for bringing this up in the first place was so that they would indeed know who he was – not merely to brag about the high opinions of others.

John was "a lamp" – because he too had some light in him, although he was not "The Light." Since they appeared to recognize that John was someone special, the religious leaders ought to put some weight on

the fact that he had testified about Jesus. Still, the deeds done by Jesus also provided testimony that he was who he claimed he was, for he had done nothing wrong – only doing what God had directed.

Finally, God himself had testified that Jesus was the Messiah. How? God himself had spoken at Jesus' baptism, and was providing the power to work miracles. Furthermore, Jesus followed the Torah itself according to its principles – God's principles. Therefore, the leaders were right in "searching the writings," because the Torah, Prophets, and other writings did have the teachings of life in them. But the teachings of life were not the regulations of the Torah; the true teachings of life were in the internalization of the Torah as God's chosen one had been explaining to them. Therefore, they should have seen that he had been following God, and they should have listened to his teachings. Thus, Jesus had three witnesses – his great deeds; John (a prophet); and God himself. Jesus has never used the word "Anointed," but he had just proven himself to be the Messiah.

"Glory from people I do not receive, but I have known you: you don't have God's love in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you don't receive me. If another came in his own name, you would receive him. How can you trust when you are receiving glory from one another and are not seeking that glory from the only God?

"Don't think that I will accuse you to the Father. Moses, in whom you have hoped, is the one who is accusing you. For if you trusted Moses, you would certainly trust me, since he wrote about me. But if you don't trust his writings, how will you trust my *verbal* declarations?"

"Glory from people I do not receive" – again Jesus reminded his opponents that his purpose in bringing these things up was not to talk about how great he was; he had a message to get across. That message, that internal Torah, is alluded to here for the first time: **love**. The whole reason why the Jewish leaders could not embrace his teachings was that they were more interested in "receiving glory from one another" – in being esteemed as great – than in living lives of love. Only this way would they receive the only glory that matters, glory from God.

Spelling out more about the "judgment" he mentioned earlier, he explicitly indicated that it would not be Jesus who accused them before God – it would be Moses, and Moses would not literally accuse them either. The reason why they were not accepting Jesus' teachings was because they did not really trust in Moses' writings. Jesus uses "Moses" here as an inclusive term for all of the inspired writings that the leaders claimed to follow. Those writings that they followed only externally were the reason why they would not trust the Messiah. They wanted rules. They wanted rituals. They wanted to follow a list of things to do and not do. These people would not accept the internal Torah, and so Moses would judge them. In refusing to understand the Torah on a spiritual level, they would not accept their Messiah, and so Jesus would judge them.

A Miraculous Feeding

SIX

6:1 After these things, Jesus went over the Sea of Galilaiah called Tiberias. Now a large crowd was following him because they had been watching with amazement the signs that he was performing on those who were sick. Now Jesus went into the mountain, and he was sitting there with his students. And the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and, watching a great crowd heading his way, said to Filippus, "Where will we buy loaves, so that these folks may eat?" Now this he said to test him, for he knew what he was about to do.

Filippos answered him, "Two hundred denarii *worth* of loaves is not enough for each one to receive a little!"

By now it was spring, and the second Passover week that Johannes mentions was near. Jesus was still in Galilaiah, not yet having gone down to Jerusalem for the feast (as would be customary). By this time, the fame of Jesus as a prophet who could work miracles was widespread, and "a large crowd was following him." Matthaiah writes of a different account where something similar happened, although Johannes makes it appear that this "feeding" occurred earlier.

Suddenly, Jesus asked something. His question to Filippos was a test. Did Filippos truly know that the Messiah is not limited by anything but his trust in God? The account was also a question for the reader. Does the reader realize now who Jesus was and how powerful indeed he was? Jesus and Filippos surveyed the crowds, and he asked, "Where will we buy loaves" to feed the crowd? Filippos failed his exam, for his reply was one of desperation – that they didn't have enough money to give even a morsel to each member of the large group. Filippos was still seeing limitations on his trust in God (and on Jesus' power).

A loaf of bread cost about 20 lepta back then, and 200 denarii would have been equivalent to over 25,000 lepta. Filippos was estimating that there were well over 1,250 people present. They simply didn't have enough money!

One of his students, Andreas, Simon Peter's brother, said to Jesus, "One little boy is here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are these for so many?"

Andreas' trust was slightly greater. He realized that perhaps Jesus might be able to do **something** with the boy's five loaves and two fish, but what? He seemed to have no idea. He wasn't thinking of such a vast miracle.

Said Jesus, "Make the people recline." Now there was a lot of grass in the place. Therefore the men reclined: they numbered about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves and, after giving thanks, distributed to those who were reclining. In the same way also he passed out what they wanted of the fish. And when they were full, he said to his students, "Collect the remaining pieces, so that none would be destroyed."

Jesus was not concerned with counting the loaves; his focus was on feeding the many. The wording of his instruction is not present in the account, but it is likely he simply told them to start feeding the crowd. For these people, shortly before the Passover, Jesus provided his own feast – a feast that he would use as a teaching tool – and so much food was available that after the crowd was full, there were baskets of bread left over! Being well fed was about to become a useful metaphor.

So they collected the pieces and filled twelve baskets with pieces from the five loaves of barley that were left by those who had eaten. Therefore, when the people noticed that sign that Jesus had performed, they said, "This truly is that prophet coming into creation." Then, knowing that they were about to come and take hold of him to make him a king, Jesus retreated again into the mountain alone by himself.

As the first part of this scene closes, the reader finds the crowd proclaiming Jesus as the successor to Moses. There had never been a prophet "like Moses" since Moses' own days, but the crowd recognized Jesus as being "that prophet" who had a relationship with God that was as strong as Moses'. Their desire

to crown him king is understandable, but it was still not time for Jesus to boldly announce who he was to all the people. (And notice that Jesus tells the crowd many things, but he never simply announces "I'm the Anointed One," as he did to the Samaritan woman.)

The Stormy Sea

16 And as evening occurred, his students went down on the sea and got into the boat. They were going over the sea into Kafar-Nahum. It had now become dark, and Jesus had not yet happened by them. And the sea was being stirred by a great wind that was blowing. Then, after sailing for about twenty-five or thirty stadia, they observed Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were afraid. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Therefore, they were willing to let him come into the boat, and immediately the boat happened to be at the land where they were going.

This interlude in the narrative shows that God had given his Anointed One power over the elements. Jesus had sent his students across the Sea of Galilaiah toward Kafar-Nahum. By Jewish reckoning, it was now the next day, for night had fallen. A storm whipped up as the boat was a few miles from shore – too far to simply sail or row back. The students were stranded on a large lake in the midst of a storm. With the wind whipping up, the ship might have capsized, killing them all. Suddenly they noticed Jesus walking toward the boat – walking on the water as though it were dry land. Jesus' reply "It is I; don't be afraid" has a double significance. They were not to be afraid because the person on the water was Jesus, but more importantly, they should not be afraid because he was the Messiah. This is another identification using *ἐγώ εἰμι* ("I am"). Jesus was also saying, "I'm the Anointed One; don't be afraid."

That was only the first of two miracles which occurred that night, for as they took Jesus into the boat, it teleported to the shore. Johannes writes this as though he were writing for a newspaper: "immediately the boat happened to be ... where they were going." For the author, this is simply a statement of fact; his reader should come to expect such things.

22 On the next day, the crowd that was standing across the sea noticed that no other boat was there but the one, and that Jesus hadn't gone with his students – but his students had gone away alone. [Now, other boats came from Tiberias near the place where they ate the bread when the Lord gave thanks.] So when the crowd noticed that neither Jesus nor his students were there, they themselves entered into boats and went to Kafar-Nahum, seeking Jesus. And, after finding him across the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, saying, "Indeed I assure you: you're not seeking me because you noticed the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were well fed."

When morning came, the crowd realized that Jesus had somehow vanished – or perhaps escaped during the night. They knew that Jesus' students had gone ahead to Kafar-Nahum, so they followed him there. Upon finding him, they were astonished that he had somehow slipped away to Kafar-Nahum, but even greater than their astonishment was their desire to have him work more miracles that benefited them. The crowd wasn't seeking Jesus because the signs and wonders had made them realize that he was the Anointed One. They only wanted more freebies, but Jesus was going to use their experience to build another lesson for them.

Food and Drink as Metaphor

"Don't work for perishable food, but for that food which remains into eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for the Father, God, has sealed him."

So they said to him, "What should we do, so that we may work the works of God?"

Jesus answered, saying to them, "This is God's work: that you trust in the one whom he sent."

Once again, the difference in the analogy is one of internal vs. external. There is no point in craving food that spoils, but there is spiritual food that will never spoil – it remains forever. Physical food feeds physical life, but this spiritual food feeds "eternal life". And God had anointed his Messiah to provide them with this spiritual food, if only they will listen.

The question from the crowd is the first one of import recorded by the author, for it seems they had been content simply to receive a meal on the previous day. "What should we do?" What does God want? Now at last they were recognizing him as the prophet that he was. Jesus' response was that they should trust in their Messiah. God wanted every Israelite to acknowledge their Anointed One for who he was and to follow his teachings.

30 Then they said to him, "What sign are you doing, so that we may notice and trust you?"

"What are you working? Our ancestors ate the manna in the desert, as it was written, "Bread from the heaven he gave them to eat.""¹⁶

They had heard Jesus speak of the internal principles underlying the Torah (although the author has omitted them for later), and they were unwilling to follow those principles. They preferred instead to see whether this would-be Messiah was willing to grant them more favors. Even though he had just fed them all, they asked what sign he would perform for them. After all, they said, Moses had given the Israelites manna. The author expected his reader to realize the similarity between Moses' prayers to God that had provided manna and Jesus' prayers to God that had provided food for the five thousand. Again we are driven to the crowd's own acknowledgement that the Messiah, Jesus, was the successor to Moses.

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The descendants of Israel said to them, "We were bound to have died by Yahweh's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate our fill of bread, but you have brought us out into this desert to kill all of this gathering with hunger."

Then Yahweh told Moses, "I will rain down bread from the sky for you, and the people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day, so that I will test them and see whether they will walk in my code." (Ex 16:2-4)

The manna (bread) that God sent to the Israelites was literally from the sky. However, "sky" and "heaven" are the same concept. The listener was about to hear that Jesus applied the two ideas together in using manna as symbolism for his teachings.

Then Jesus said to them, "Indeed I assure you: Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven. On the contrary, my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven. For God's bread is the one that descends from heaven and gives life to the creation."

They then said to him, "Sir, always give us this bread."

¹⁶ Ex 16:15 reads, "It is the bread from heaven that Yahweh gave you to eat." Psa 78:24 has, "he rained manna down on them to eat, and he gave them the grain from heaven."

Here again, Jesus internalized and spiritualized the expressions that he used. "The true bread" – which provides the spiritual nourishment "that remains" – is the Messiah. God gave them the Messiah directly; Moses only prayed for physical food. God's bread, the Messiah, gives spiritual life to those who realize who he is and follow the spiritual teachings. Their desire for the bread should remind the reader about how the Samaritan woman reacted when Jesus offered her an endless supply of running water.

Once again, though, there is misunderstanding, even though Jesus has emphatically declared "indeed I assure you" – literally, "A-mein, A-mein, I am telling you." A single "a-mein" was an attestation of truth; a doubled "a-mein" was an assurance on one's honor. Jesus staked his reputation on the fact that indeed the Messiah was the true "manna from heaven".

Thus, the food given to the crowd had only been symbolic of God's having provided them with the Messiah that was capable of filling them spiritually, with abundance left over. "I am the bread of life." Another "I am" indicating that he himself, as Messiah, was the true bread.

And at last Johannes returned to the coupling of hunger/filling and thirst/filling. The trusting Israelite who was hungering and thirsting for truth and what is right would find all he needed in his Messiah.

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will by no means hunger, and the one who trusts in me will by no means ever thirst.

"But, I said to you that you have even seen me, and you don't trust. All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out, because I have come down from heaven – not so that I may do what I want, but to do what the one who sent me wants.

"Now this is what the one who sent me wants: that I might not lose any of what he has given to me, but might raise it up in the last day.

"For this is what the one who sent me wants: that each one who observes the son and who trusts in him would have eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day."

Jesus bluntly confronted them with the fact that they were questioning his identity even though he had performed a sign for them. "You have seen me, and you don't trust." What sign could possibly convince them, if they were unwilling to accept his teachings? He explained further:

God had sent him, the Anointed One, to take in anyone who was ready to receive his teachings. No one would be turned away; everyone's spiritual needs would be met. For Jesus' purpose was to do what God wanted for him, and God wanted everyone who could accept the Messiah to be spared from the coming anger. Indeed "all who ... trust in him" would live not only past the destruction of the temple but (spiritually) forever, and they would be elevated even as Judaism was destroyed. "The last day" refers here to the end of their natural lives.

41 Then the Jews were grumbling about him because he said, "I am that bread that came down from heaven." And they said, "Isn't this Jesus, Yosef's son, whose father and mother we know? How then can he say this, 'From heaven I have descended?'"

Jesus answered them, saying, "Don't grumble with one another. No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day.

"It is written in the Prophets, "And they will all be taught by God."¹⁷ Everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned, comes to me." Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; this one has seen the Father.

¹⁷ Isa 54:11f., especially v. 13, which reads in part, "And all of your descendants will be taught by Yahweh."

But still there was misunderstanding, with the crowd refusing to accept the responsibilities of accepting their Messiah. Could this man be the Messiah? Isn't he just Yosef's son? The added disagreement here is over his saying that the Anointed One was bread "from heaven." Was he saying he came from heaven? Well, his teachings DID come from God, but their misunderstanding was so deep by this point that they were not going to see it.

As with all of these disagreements, Jesus did not intend to say literally that he had come from heaven. Instead, this was a figure to signify that God had sent him, and that as Messiah he always did what God wanted for him to do. Thus, he was "from above", "spiritual," "from heaven." Jesus replied by focusing them not on himself but on God, for anyone who truly sought to follow God would discover Jesus' identity and follow him as well.

Isaiah 54 was written during the Exile. The Babylonians had demolished the Temple, and it was not in use. With that in mind, Yahweh explained to the people that if they focused on him, he would teach them.

"O afflicted one, storm-tossed, [and] not comforted, Behold, I will set your stones in antimony, And your foundations I will lay in sapphires. 12 "Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, And your gates of crystal, And your entire wall of precious stones. 13 "All of your descendants will be taught by Yahweh; And the well-being of your sons will be great. 14 "In righteousness you will be established; You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; And from terror, for it will not come near you." (Isa 54:11-14)

The quotation describes the new covenant, brought by the Messiah. If only they would search with open hearts, they wouldn't need rituals, or clergy, or places of worship. They would be taught by Yahweh God if they decided to accept his Anointed One. In the section in Isaiah, God promised protection to those who accepted him and who allowed themselves and their children to be taught by him. The readers would remember the passage. Thus, those who entered the new covenant would be spared from the coming anger of the First Revolt.

No one has ever (physically) seen the Father, but whoever is "from God" has "seen" the Father in metaphor. The author does not elaborate here, nor did Jesus, but Jesus was indicating that whoever truly followed God would examine their Messiah, and anyone who does so openly will realize that the Anointed One was presenting God to them. As he would say later, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father."

47 "Indeed I assure you: the one who trusts has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, and they died. This is that bread which comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and may not die. I am the bread, the living bread, which has come down from heaven. If anyone should eat of this bread, he will live for the age.

"Now also, the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give on behalf of the life of creation."

"The one who trusts" (in the Messiah and his teachings) "has eternal life." Jesus could not have made it plainer, but the crowd was blinded, stumbling over his analogies. He attempted to explain the analogy again:

"I am the bread of life" – Jesus, the Messiah, was sent by God to bring spiritual life through his teachings. "Your ancestors ate the manna..., and they died." – Physical food, however miraculous, only brings temporary physical life. Why was the crowd seeking more physical food, when there was spiritual food, "true bread," available?

"This is that bread which comes down from heaven," – It comes from heaven because it is spiritual in nature. The Messiah was sent by God; his principles are not physical.

"anyone may eat...and not die." – Whoever follows the internal Torah will live forever with God.

"I am the ... living bread." – Jesus was alive, and he was about to allude to his sacrificial death. But those who heard him needed to "eat of the bread" (follow his teachings) in order to live and grow, spiritually.

"Now also," – Jesus was about to reapply the analogy of "bread" to something else.

"the bread ... is my flesh, which I will give...." – Passover was near, and so Jesus identified himself as the Passover lamb in the Passover that would come one year later. Accompanied by the emblem of bread, the lamb gave its flesh (Ex 12) to save the lives of his faithful ones, when God's anger was being poured out. It is this final identification that is the reason for the author's having mentioned the Passover. That he replaces the Passover lamb is also alluded to by the fact that the author does not provide an account of this Passover itself.

The Jews therefore were contending with one another, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"¹⁸

53 Then Jesus said to them, "Indeed I assure you: unless you should eat the Son of Man's flesh, and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day.

"For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and as I live through the Father, also the one who eats me, he will also live through me.

"This is that bread which has come down from heaven, not bread like the ancestors ate and died: the one who eats this bread will live for the age."

The Torah expressly forbade the eating of human flesh and the consumption of blood. This was so extreme as to demand that all blood be drained from a "clean" animal (Lev 11:1ff.) before it could be cooked and eaten. *"If any person of the house of Israel or of the strangers that stay among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you to make atonement on the altar for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, since it is the life."* (Lev 17:10-11)

Therefore, when Jesus said "the one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood," he was bound to disrupt the consciences of those Jews who were unable to internalize what he was saying. Yet he was referring to his teachings, which internalized the Torah. Here, Jesus was teaching the principle of spiritualization.

"The one who eats ... and drinks ... remains in me and I in him." If taken physically, this hearkens back to the notion of ritual impurity. If someone ate (or even touched) an unclean animal, that uncleanness passed on to the person touching it (Lev 11). But Jesus intended for the crowd to interpret "remains in me and I in him" in a spiritual setting: whoever embraced the teachings of the Messiah would have a connection with him. One remains in the Anointed One by holding to the proper attitudes, and in so doing, the Anointed One (through his teachings) remains in that person.

Still again, Jesus pointed out that by eating physical bread, even manna, one cannot live forever – "the ancestors ate and died" – but by eating the spiritual bread of the teachings of the Anointed One, one might live forever.

¹⁸ Lev 17:10-11. See also Lev 11:1ff.

59 These things he said as he taught in a gathering in Kafar-Nahum. Therefore many of his students who heard said, "This saying is hard. Who is able to hear it?"

But Jesus, knowing within himself that his students were murmuring about this, said to them, "Does this make you stumble? Then what would happen if you should observe the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

"The spirit is what makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. The declarations that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who don't trust." For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who were untrusting and who was the one about to betray him.

And he said, "Because of this, I have said to you that 'No one can come to me if it has not been given to him from the Father.'"

Not only the present crowd but even those who had been following Jesus for some time struggled with this admonition to cannibalize and drink blood. What could be more disgusting? Anyone who refused to internalize his sayings now, to think of them as analogies and not as literal, would surely be compelled to desert him, and the account says that many of them did.

Yet Jesus explained that he was teaching them the difference between internal and external: "the spirit is what makes alive; the flesh profits nothing." We cannot think of Jesus' principles externally, nor of this saying in physical terms. We must look at these things (and the Torah) as spiritual teachings. Thus, he added, "The declarations that I have spoken to you" (about eating flesh) "are spirit and life." They are not to be misunderstood as though he meant them physically; on the contrary, in order to understand his sayings, one must spiritualize and internalize. They couldn't possibly understand the mind of God with their attitudes, and that's where the Anointed One was "before" God anointed him and sent Jesus to the people.

The present struggle in some of their minds was summed up when Jesus said, "There are some of you who don't trust." Those who were following him for reasons other than his teachings were struggling and would continue to stumble over what he taught. "Does this make you stumble?" It certainly would, unless the listener had learned to spiritualize his sayings. And if this simple analogy was a cause for stumbling, what would happen if the full glory of the Messiah (in God's mind and plan) were revealed to them? They couldn't possibly comprehend it all! Jesus concluded rightly by repeating that "No one can come to me if it has not been given to them from the Father," for only the one who was truly seeking God's guidance could understand.

From this time, many of his students went back to the things they had left behind, and were no longer walking with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go, too?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Sir, to whom would we go? You have the declarations of eternal life, and we have trusted and have known that you are God's holy one." Jesus answered them, "Didn't I choose the twelve of you, and of you one is an accuser?" Now he was speaking of Judah, son of Simon Iscariot, for this one – who was one of the Twelve – was about to betray him.

Stumbling over the difficult principles of the Anointed One, many of his students returned to traditional Judaism – "the things they had left behind" – but his closest associates remained loyal. For the first time the author mentioned the Twelve as a group, and the reader would be expected to have heard of them already. When Jesus asked the Twelve whether they were leaving too, it was Simon Peter – Simon the Rock – who confidently answered that there was nowhere else to go. He and the others had believed for the past year that Jesus was indeed the Anointed One, so there really wasn't anyone else to turn to. He

was the one who possessed "the declarations of eternal life." They would listen to him and remain with him.

Also for the first time, Johannes referred to the coming betrayal by Judah, who one year later would turn against Jesus and hand him over to the Jewish leaders. He was already an accuser. He was already someone who was inclined to work for the enemy.

The Feast of Booths

SEVEN

7:1 After these things, Jesus was walking in Galilaiah, for he didn't want to walk in Judea; the Jews were seeking him to kill him. Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.¹⁹ Therefore his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that your students also may view with wonder the deeds that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret, and a teacher seeks to have freedom of speech. If you are doing these things, show yourself to creation." Not even his brothers trusted in him.

Then Jesus said to them, "My season is not yet present. But your season is always ready. The creation cannot hate you; but me it hates, because I am testifying about it: that its deeds are evil. You go up to this feast. I'm not going up to this feast because my season hasn't yet fully come." Saying these things to them, he remained in Galilaiah.

Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) occurs in late September or October just after Yom Kippur and just before the winter rains. The festival originally celebrated the end of the agricultural year. It had come to signify (Lev 23:33f.) a time of remembrance for the forty years that the Israelites spent wandering in the desert with Moses. For the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, Jewish males were expected to gather branches for the roof of a booth (sukkah) and to construct the booth, for every Israelite was to live in these booths for the seven days (Lev 23:42) to reflect on the time spent wandering (v. 43).

By this time in his career, Jesus had begun avoiding going to Jerusalem unless it was necessary, since a growing number of Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him. Yet it was still natural that he should participate in the feast. His brothers (whom we know as Jacob, Yosef, Judah, and Simon – Mk 6:2f. Mt 13:56 points out that he also had sisters) were encouraging Jesus to reveal himself publicly as Messiah at the feast. After all, if he were to do this, they reasoned, even his students would marvel at the signs he displayed! This statement illustrated disbelief on the part of his brothers. They were egging him on. After all, his students did trust him, but the brothers said, "If you are doing these things, show yourself." This was their way of saying, "So you're the Messiah, eh? Why not go down to the feast and work a bunch of miracles?"

They were right in saying that every teacher was expected to exercise free speech. This was true even among the Greeks, who reasoned that to fail to speak freely and openly was to be ignorant or ashamed of one's beliefs. Let's read about Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher, first.

¹⁹ See Lev 23:33-43.

For Philo, rhetoric is neither an activity nor an abstract ideal but a human reality, the nature of which is laid out in the Bible. Moses is the man who saw God in the Sinai, but he by himself would have been unable to speak to Pharaoh and persuade him to let his people go. Moses needed the presence of Aaron in order to obtain what he sought. Moses represents the metaphysical truth, Aaron its implementation in reality, akin to the two faces of *logos*: while the *logos prophorikos* is that of communication, the *logos endiathetos* is the internal world of thoughts, and each is impossible without the other... Another path of research is that of *parrêsia*, a complex term of political origin that appeared in the context of the Athenian democracy. In literary and philosophical texts, it means freedom of speech, frankness, and honesty. For Philo, however, *parrêsia* is neither a political ideal nor an individual achievement, but something given by God; and it must be used without harming relatives or friends. ("Philo of Alexandria," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: 2018, 2.2.4)

Some gentile philosophers also agreed about the importance of freedom of speech.

As for myself, I prefer to practice the freedom of speech in my study of nature and to speak the oracles that make sense for all people, even if nobody understands, rather than to accept the popular opinions and to harvest the lush praise that falls from the favor of the majority. (Vatican Saying 29, Epicurus)

While it is true that freedom of speech was of particular importance to teachers, and is necessary in a functioning assembly, Jesus pointed out that it was still not time for him to announce his anointing to all of Judaism; that time would come later. Therefore, he told his brothers that he would not be participating in the feast as Anointed One (although we discover shortly that he went to the feast, first in secret and then more openly, but never in the fashion that his brothers desired of him).

"The creation" is still the religious society, and in this case the passage hones in on its rejection of the Anointed One. The religious world hated Jesus because he was telling the truth about how their own religion was the people's enemy – an obstacle on their path toward God. A religious system is simply wrong: its deeds are evil.

10 Now when his brothers had gone up, then also he went up to the feast, not openly but in secret. Then the Jews sought him in the feast, saying, "Where is he?" And much grumbling about him existed among the crowds. Some said, "He is good." Others said, "But no. He is deceiving the crowd." However, no one spoke with freedom about him, because they feared the Jews.

In order to discover public opinion about him, Jesus waited until his brothers left and then went by himself, secretly. He discovered that opinions were mixed, but that the people were afraid to speak freely because they feared retribution from the Jewish leaders. If someone expressed an opinion in line with an orthodox school of thought, their participation in the synagogue could be made uncomfortable (politically). As an extreme measure, one might be expelled from the synagogue, although this early in the development of the Nazarene (Christian) group such a measure would be unlikely.

It is quite possible that Johannes used the metaphor of the feast to correspond to the mentality of the people about Jesus. If Sukkot stands for the Israelites wandering in the desert, then Jesus has found the people mentally wandering – seeking a "promised land" (the Messiah's kingdom, which is "not of this world") but not yet finding it.

14 Now when the feast was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple court and taught. And the Jews wondered, saying, "How does this one know how to write, without having learned?"

Then Jesus answered them, saying, "My teaching is not mine, but it comes from the one who sent me. If anyone wishes to do what he wants, he will know about the teaching, whether it is from God or if I am speaking from myself. The one who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of the one who sent him, this one is true, and there is no wrong in him.

This section of dialog indicates the confusion among the people. In the middle of the feast, Jesus began to teach some members of the crowd about the spiritual Torah ("my teaching"). The genuine accounts of Jesus' life mention in no other place Jesus writing, although the account of the Woman in Adultery also depicts him writing. Apparently, his teaching involved his use of Hebrew, possibly writing references in the sand. The Jewish leaders who were present realized that Jesus had not entered their schooling. How was it that he knew Biblical Hebrew?

Jesus answered their real question: where did this teaching come from? Although he probably taught himself Hebrew, he regarded his *scholastic* learning as coming directly from God, as his teachings had come. Instead of merely saying that his teachings came from God, Jesus referred to God as "the one who sent me," for the Messiah's role existed only in relation to God. Therefore, Jesus said that he never spoke his own opinions but only those things that God had given him to say. The rabbis often presented their own opinions or the opinions of other rabbis, so this was a slap at them. It would have been especially aggravating for them to hear him accuse them of "seeking their own glory" by holding up their opinions about the Torah as equal to the Torah. Jesus flatly added that the internal principles underlying the Torah were God's principles, which he was merely presenting. Therefore, there could be nothing wrong in what he was doing.

19 "Hasn't Moses given you the Torah? And none of you is following the Torah. Why are you seeking to kill me?"

The crowd answered, "You have a spirit being! Who is seeking to kill you?"

Jesus answered, saying to them, "I did one deed, and you all wonder. Through this Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is from Moses but from the patriarchs) and on a Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath so that the Torah of Moses will not be let go,²⁰ are you angry with me because I made a person entirely well on a Sabbath? Don't judge according to appearance, but judge a just judgment."

After this, Jesus made another flat accusation about the leaders: that none of them were following the Torah. He said this because the Torah contained spiritual principles (such as love for one another), and their traditions were all external or physical rules (such as their regulations regarding the Sabbath). The crowd, some of whom earlier acknowledged that the leaders were trying to have Jesus put to death, here began to wonder aloud whether Jesus was "possessed" for thinking that they were out to get him. Some believe that they did not yet recognize Jesus, for later on they would again acknowledge that he was the one whom they were trying to kill.

"I did one deed" – This refers to the healing of the crippled man at the Pool of Beth-saida. He had done a good thing on the Sabbath, and yet the leaders were angry with him. They were upset because their own regulations did not allow it. They had codified the Torah into a set of external laws, but even they

²⁰ Gen 17:12

recognized that circumcision was to be allowed on the Sabbath. And why was circumcision permitted? Because the Torah itself indicated that Jewish males must be circumcised on their eighth day of life (Gen 17:12). Although the Sabbath is not mentioned, the rabbis presumed that the circumcision was to take place on the eighth day, whether or not it happened to be a Sabbath or feast day, even on Yom Kippur. This is still the practice today, although there are exceptions (if the child is ill, if the delivery was by C-section, etc.).

Jesus implied that the purpose of the "exception" was the principle of doing something good. Ordinary work was forbidden, yes, but God allowed the healing of a person. The Sabbath was a time of rest, but the principle of honoring God on the Sabbath did not prevent someone from doing a good deed. Jesus urged the leaders to look past the externals (the fact that Jesus had healed and the man had walked on a Sabbath) and "judge a just judgment."

25 Then some of the Jerusalemites said, "Isn't this the one that they seek to kill? And look, he is speaking freely, and they are saying nothing to him. Did the rulers truly know that this is the Anointed One?"

"But this one, we know where he is from. But the Anointed One, when he comes, no one will know where he is from."

Then Jesus called out in the temple court, teaching and saying, "You know me, and you know where I am from. And I have not come of myself, but the one who sent me is true. Him you do not know. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me."

Seeing that Jesus was freely interpreting the Torah and that the leaders were discussing it with him rather than harassing him, they began to wonder whether even they believed he might be the Anointed One. Still, they had their theological objections.

The Hebrew Bible itself is quiet about the Messiah, but it was widely believed that the Messiah would spring up as if from nowhere. Some of the people began to object to Jesus' Messiahship on the grounds that his origins were known: he was the son of Yosef the carpenter. In response to that misperception, Jesus addressed the crowd directly, attributing not his **physical** origin but his sending to God. God had anointed and sent the Messiah, and therefore Jesus was "from him." Since the crowd was unwilling to accept God's Anointed One, they didn't "know God" – by the same argument Jesus had made earlier. Therefore, it followed that (in one sense) by not knowing God, the members of the crowd DIDN'T know where Jesus was from!

30 Then they sought to seize him, but no one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come. But many of those in the crowd trusted in him and said, "When the Anointed One, will he do more signs than this one has?" The Perushim heard the crowd grumbling these things about him, and the Perushim and the high priests sent officers, that they might seize him.

Many members of the crowd knew quite well what Jesus was intimating, and they were upset enough at his accusation (that they did not know God) to want to kill him. Again, though, the crowd stood divided, for some of them realized what he was saying about doing good on the Sabbath, and they knew that God must have sent him. Yet they were not ready to grasp the fact that he was Messiah. Metaphorically, they were still wandering in the desert. The leaders were not so confused; they sent people to apprehend Jesus.

Then Jesus said, "For yet a little time I am with you, and I am going to the one who sends me. You will seek me, and you will not find. And where I will be, you are unable to come."

The Jews said to themselves, "Where is this that he is about to go, that we won't find him? Is he about to go into the dispersion of the Hellenists, and teach the Hellenists? What is this saying that He said: 'You will seek me, and you will not find. And where I will be, you are unable to come'?"

Next came another point about which there was misunderstanding. Johannes' reader needed to read carefully to understand where Jesus was going. For he had said that he would be still be with them for a short time, but then he would go to God. The leaders would be "unable" to go to Jesus then because they will have rejected him. If they did not accept him as Messiah, they would never go to be with God. The leaders believed that he was implying that he was about to leave Judea and teach his radical teachings to the Hellenistic Jews who were scattered around the world. Indeed, they wouldn't have followed him there! The author leaves his readers with no response, and the scene immediately changes. The reader must watch for this issue to arise again later.

37 Now on the last, the great, day of the feast, Jesus stood and called out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come [to me], and let him drink."²¹ The one who trusts in me, as the writing said, "Out of his belly will flow rivers of living water."²² Now he said this about the breath, which those who trusted in him were about to receive. (For there was yet no breath, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.)²³

Then after hearing the message, many of the crowd said, "This is truly the prophet." Others said, "This is the Anointed One." Now some said, "The Anointed One doesn't come from Galilaiah. Didn't the writing say that the Anointed One is coming out of the seed of David and from the village of Beth-Lehem, where David was?"

In Jesus' day, celebration on the last day of the feast, the Hoshana Rabba, was characterized by singing and by ceremony, including a procession of water jars, for a golden vessel filled with water would be poured out – symbolizing Israel's dependence on God for the rains. There was also a burnt offering made on this day (Lev 23:36). Johannes' reader was already familiar with such customs, and therefore he did not refer to them explicitly.

However, as the golden water pitcher was carried to the place where it would be poured out, this was a natural time for Jesus to have "stood and called out" what he said. For they were providing water from pitchers, stagnant water, whereas Jesus was offering a drink of running (living) water for anyone who would embrace his teachings. I would note, though, that the rabbis taught that water poured from a pitcher did constitute "running water."

The admonition to come to the water and drink appears to have been taken from Isa 55:1f., which describes life without the Temple, under God's direct instruction.

Everyone who is thirsty come to the waters, and let the one who has no money come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without silver and at no cost.
Why spend silver on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not fill you?
Listen intently to me, and eat good things, and you will delight in the good food.
Lend your ears, and come to me.

²¹ Isa 55:1)

²² "On that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem." (Zech 14:8)

²³ See also Joel 2-3.

Listen to me, so that your souls will live.
I will make a covenant with you for the age: the pious, trustworthy things of David. Look,
I have given him as a witness to the nations, a ruler and commissioner of nations.
You will call on nations that you don't know,
and peoples that you don't trust will flee toward you,
because of [Yahweh] your God, Israel's holy one,
because he has glorified you.
Seek Yahweh while he may be found;
Call on him while he is near. (Isa 55:1-6)

The quoted section of Zechariah, though, comes from a less positive section of the Prophets. Zech 14 describes a judgment on Israel during which the city of Jerusalem would be overrun. In its original context, that chapter reflects on the events of Zech 12, which describe the situation in Judea at the end of the third century BC, when the forces of the Ptolemies (from Egypt) and Antiochus (from Syria) were warring with one another across the land. Zechariah predicted correctly that God would defend Jerusalem from both Egypt and Antiochus, so that it would not be destroyed.

That author uses weather extremes to symbolize the battles back and forth between the gentile forces that were running over the land. Instead of constant battle, Zechariah predicts that one force was going to rule the area for the foreseeable time. The Gihon spring was the source of natural spring water for Jerusalem. The temple, however, was supplied with water by Solomon's aqueduct, which ran from Hebron. It was blocked after the earthquake "in the days of Uzziah." The vision of Zechariah symbolically indicates that in place of the requirement of a spring, Jerusalem itself would be the source of running water for all of Judea. That is to say, Jerusalem would be a source of enlightenment for the nations. This is similar to the description of Eden from which rivers went out to water the land nearby.

Zechariah described the aftermath of those events – the coming time of peace – as a paradise, one which was an adaptation of Ezekiel 47. Ezekiel was describing the return from the Exile, beginning with the temple. The last two chapters of that book describe the effects of the restored temple on the nation of Israel, including the nation's boundaries. From God's throne in the temple would flow water: "issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar." (Ezek 47:1)

Ezekiel's vision continues in detail, explaining how this river from the temple would water the region, "And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live...everything will live where the river goes." (Ezek 47:9) The vision of Zechariah depicts the flowing waters going from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean. This represents God's teachings filling Judea, and so we read:

And Yahweh will be one king over all the land. On that day both Yahweh and his name will be one – in all the surrounding land from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem will remain in its high place from the Gate of Ben-Yamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hanan-El to the king's winepresses. And it will be lived in, for there will never again be a curse, and Jerusalem will live in security.

Immediately after Ezekiel's vision of the river, he describes the borders of Israel. Paralleling that description, this account does the same. Rimmon refers to Umm er-Rammamin, ten miles northeast of the more famous marker, Beersheba, which had in earlier days marked the southern point of the land.

Beersheba was abandoned some time before the Exile and remained as such through the date of Zechariah 14. Geba was the north-easternmost fort in the kingdom of Judah, and the expression "from Geba to Beersheba" appears in 2 Kings 23:8. Now we may return to Jesus' use of the passage.

Jesus' paraphrase made every person who accepted his Messiah's teachings into a source for this living water from Jerusalem. In the past (chapters 3-4), Jesus has not explained this living water metaphor, nor does he explain it here, but Johannes introduced an explanation for his reader: "Now he said this about the breath, which those who trusted in him were about to receive."

There were going to be miraculous signs surrounding Jesus' followers, which by the time of the destruction of the temple would divide Israel into Messianists and those who did not accept Jesus as Messiah. When we observe the context of the passages that he was citing, we see that Jesus' invitation was also an admonition to avoid the "stagnant waters" of Priestly Judaism and to receive the holy breath, as followers of the Messiah had been promised. Peter later would apply Joel 2-3 to the same situation. Both in Zechariah and in Joel there are references to the destruction of the temple and siege of Jerusalem – the terminus when Christianity alone would exist.

Some people who heard the message were willing to accept Jesus as the "prophet like Moses," while others were even willing to receive him as Messiah, although they stumbled over his origins again. The author explained that the Anointed One was supposed to come from Beth-Lehem; the reader is supposed to be familiar with the oral tradition that this was Jesus' birthplace. Thus, the reader can already answer the crowd's objection.

Then a division in the crowd occurred because of him. Now some wanted to seize him, but no one laid hands on him. Then the officers came to the high priests and Perushim, and these ones said to them, "Why didn't you bring him?"

Replied the officers, "Never has anyone spoken *this way*."

Then the Perushim answered them, "Have you been deceived too? None of the rulers trusted in him, nor any of the Perushim, but this crowd, who does not know the Torah, is cursed."²⁴

Then Nikodemos (the one who had come to him earlier), who was one of them, said, "Does our code judge anyone without hearing from him first and knowing what he is doing?"

They answered, saying to him, "Are you from Galilaiah, too? Search and notice that no prophet is arriving out of Galilaiah."

The earlier reference to the prophet like Moses was appropriate during Sukkot, for the author has represented the crowd as desperately needing a Moses figure to lead them out of their confusion. Some of the crowd believed Jesus was the Messiah, whereas others now wanted to kill him. It seemed to be one extreme or the other. The militia who were under the command of the Jewish leaders were confused also, refusing to apprehend Jesus because no one had ever seemed so openly Messianic to them. Certain leaders pointed out that none of **them** had accepted his claims – which the reader ought to recognize as ironic, since Nikodemos was among them, and he believed.

Nikodemos pointed to the fact that their own code specified that it was necessary to listen to Jesus first before judging him. "The one who answers a statement before he hears it, it is mindless and a reproach for him." (Prov 18:13)

²⁴ Deut 28:15ff.

The fact that they did not accept him was asserted as proof that he could not be who he claimed to be. Going further, they cursed the crowd. Assuming their own opinions of the Torah to be equal to the original meaning, they cited a passage in the Torah (Dt 28:15-68) that indicates that those who refuse to listen to God's voice through the Torah would be cursed.

All these curses will come upon you. They will follow you, and catch you, and slaughter you until you are destroyed, because you did not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God and keep the precepts and judgments that he gave you. This will be a sign and a wonder for you and your descendants for the age. (Dt 28:45-6)

At this point, the otherwise silent Nikodemos spoke up, apparently wondering why his fellow Perushim were passing moral judgment on the crowd as well as on Jesus, without listening to Jesus first. The others replied by saying that since Jesus had come from Galilaiah (and not Beth-Lehem), he could not be the Messiah. In fact, neither the Torah nor the prophets mentioned any prophet arising out of Galilaiah. Their retort to Nikodemos was that perhaps he too was Galilaian for suggesting such a thing!

Light and Darkness

EIGHT

8:1 Then again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of creation. The one who follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Then the Perushim said to him, "You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony isn't true!"

Jesus answered, saying to them, "If I were testifying about myself, my testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you don't know where I came from or where I am going. You are judging according to the flesh; I don't judge anyone.

"But even if I did judge, my judgment would be true, because I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me. Now also in the Torah – yours – it has been written that, "The testimony of two people is true." I am the one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me is testifying about me." Then they said to him, "Where is your father?" Jesus replied, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father."

These declarations he spoke in the treasury, teaching in the temple court, and no one seized him because his hour had not yet come.

"I am the Light" was Jesus' direct statement of Messianic identity, and of course, the author wants his readers to think about light and darkness as they appear in the document as a whole. Who was walking in darkness – in ignorance? The strongest advocates of Temple worship, and of the trappings of their religion. Anyone there who abandoned his legalism in order to follow a spiritual Torah would be out of darkness. His life would be enlightened.

The religious figures did not want Jesus to explain the Torah, for they did not want any of what they perceived to be his misguided teachings getting out. Therefore, they set out to distract him with a further talk about his authority. He had already presented witnesses to himself, and the author has provided the reader with still more (from chapter 1 on!). Yet, under the pretext of wanting testimony, the religious leaders demanded that it was necessary for him to present the testimony of others to support his view. Otherwise, under the Torah, his testimony about himself should be ignored. By this time, John the Baptizer was dead and could no longer speak up in Jesus' favor as he had done before.

Jesus' reply was directed at their concerns over his having "come from Galilaiah." "I know where I came from," he said, and "you don't know where I came from." Yes, he meant that he was born in Beth-Lehem, but he was also referring to the fact that God had sent him, but the religious people refused to see that – since they were in darkness. They had noticed that he lived in Nazareth, and that was enough. Again, they were thinking too physically ("according to the flesh") and making judgments based on what little they knew about him. Still, Jesus' point was that neither Nazareth nor Beth-Lehem were important, for God had sent the Messiah.

Jesus also knew "where he was going," for God had revealed his future to him, and it was certain that the religious leaders would have him killed, and that he would be resurrected and would go to be with God thereafter. Jesus knew this since God had sent him; therefore, he called on God as his witness: "the Father who sent me is testifying about me."

There was misunderstanding about this point, too. Thinking physically again, his opponents assumed that he was referring to his adopted father Yosef, who was probably dead by this time. No wonder they asked him where his father was! This would raise points later about sonship and fatherhood.

Here, Jesus said simply that if they knew him, they would know God. For to really know the Messiah would mean understanding his identity and his message. If they had been capable of understanding the principles underlying the Torah, and if they had observed that his behavior was indeed everything that God wanted, then they would have also known God. But they did not know God because they were rejecting the Messiah that God had sent, and whom God himself directed.

The account commonly called the account of the woman taken in the act of adultery does not belong here, having been inserted into Lukas and Johannes by later scribes who regarded it as an authentic tradition about Jesus. The NET treats that section as a separate writing.

10 Then again he said to them, "I am going, and you will seek me, and in your error you will die. Where I am going, you are unable to come." Therefore the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, that he says, 'Where I am going, you are unable to come'?"

Then he said to them, "You are from below. I am from above. You are from this world. I am not from this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your errors. For if you don't believe that I am the Anointed One, you will die in your errors."

"Then again" means here that the following event occurred at a different time. The time was slightly later – possibly sometime that fall. Once again there was misunderstanding over where Jesus was going and how. In Johannes, this continues all the way until his final dinner with his students, where he explains more fully that he is going to die and will go on to be with God. This time, the leaders rightly realized he was referring to death, but they believed incorrectly that he was going to commit suicide.

The notion of being "from above" appeared here again, which people read about earlier in Jesus' career (chapter 3). Here Jesus clearly contrasted "from above" with being "from below." Being "not from this world" and "from this world" occur as parallel concepts. Keep in mind that the world about which he was speaking is the religious society. Their paradigm restricted them from understanding him. Because of their way of thinking, they would not realize that their religion was the source of error for them. The person who was "from this world" (as Jesus himself said earlier) was only able to speak about life within the confines of the religious paradigm. He was unable to grasp deeper, spiritual concepts from the Torah. The

person who is "from above" was able to understand even God's deepest teachings, for he was seeking the spiritual meaning out of seemingly mundane things (i.e., Jesus' analogies about life).

Here again, Jesus used "I am" to refer to himself as Messiah. Unless the leaders were willing to recognize who Jesus was, they would die in their sins. Their religion, with all of its traditions, would soon become nothing.

14 Then they said to him, "Who are you?"

Jesus said to them, "Even what I told you from the beginning. Many things I have to say about you – and to judge – but the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him, these are the things that I am saying to the world." They didn't know that he was speaking to them about the Father.

Therefore, Jesus said [to them], "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he. And from myself, I am doing nothing, but I am saying these things just as my Father taught me.

Since his baptism, Jesus has been trying to explain himself, and as he explained, he has been exactly what he has claimed to be. Jesus wanted to say many things, but as he has said before, he has only said what God has told him to say. These teachings were the things that he had been explaining. Indeed, Johannes presents Jesus as explaining many of the same things over again, using analogies that become more plain the further we read in the account. The Jewish leaders misunderstood, but Johannes hopes that by now the reader will be answering, "He's the Anointed One," silently as he reads.

Some people interpret "lift up the Son of Man" to be a prediction of Jesus' crucifixion. However, Jesus' opponents did not realize that he was the Messiah when they crucified him. Instead, Jesus seemed to be explaining that once they realize what the purpose and role of the Anointed One really was, then they would know that Jesus was indeed that Anointed One – someone who was only teaching what God wanted him to teach.

"And the one who sent me is with me. He hasn't left me alone, because I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many trusted in him.

Most of the religious leaders didn't understand "who sent Jesus," but the people with reasonably open minds knew that he was speaking of God, and they came to trust in him. Maybe he was the Messiah after all!

20 Then Jesus said to the Jews who trusted him, "If you remain in my message, you are truly my students, and you will know the truth, and the truth will free you."

They answered him: "We are the seed of Abraham, and we have been slaves to no one ever. How can you say, 'You will become free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Indeed I assure you that everyone who commits an error is a slave to the error. Now the slave does not remain in the house for the age; the son remains for the age. Therefore, if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

To the ones who were listening, he imparted the power of the internal view of the Torah. If they would keep his message (the principle of love behind the Torah), then they would indeed be his students – because a student follows the teachings of his teacher. Furthermore, those who kept the message would be "freed" by this truth.

The people had grown up learning how the Israelites had been freed from slavery in Egypt, which brought them to a land promised to Abraham. These things were true, but they didn't understand what he meant by free. As Abraham's descendants, then, they were "free", weren't they? This misunderstanding is yet again a difference between internal and external – spiritual and physical.

"Whoever commits an error is a slave to the error." Most commentators believe that Jesus was talking about any problem or struggle that a person might have or might indulge in. But here, he was talking to pious Israelites who were seeking God. His comment was not about things such as sexual sins but about one thing and one thing only: the mentality brought on by adhering to the Torah as an external code. That was the error that enslaved. Paulus wrote a lot about this same topic. When one regards the Torah externally, then one's actions are seen as a violation of law – the code serves only as a reminder of error. The intent of the Torah, which Jesus has explained, is that no one be under a code of actions. Instead, the devout follower would be guided by the internal principles underlying the Torah. In keeping these principles but not being enslaved to a number of commandments, traditions, rules, regulations, and restrictions, the person born "from above" becomes entirely free of the guilt associated with the concept of error. He is "free."

Therefore, Jesus said that "the slave does not remain in the house for the age." The slave was the Israelite who continued in legalism. He wouldn't remain with God forever, because his way of devotion was going to be removed in a very short time. But a son, a person who truly follows his father (God), will remain forever. One became a son by following God's son: the Messiah. Therefore, if the Messiah makes you free, "you will be free indeed." The Messianic Israelite would become free of the guilt and sense of error, and his devotion to God would continue after the destruction of the Temple.

Fathers and Sons

26 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you are seeking to kill me, because my message holds no place in you. I am speaking about what I have seen from the Father, and so you are doing what you have heard from your father."

They answered, saying to him, "Our father is Abraham."

Jesus said to them, "If you were children of Abraham, you would do the deeds of Abraham. But now you are seeking to kill me, a person who has spoken the truth to you, which I learned from God. This Abraham didn't do. You are doing the deeds of your father."

Then they said to him, "We were not born out of prostitution. One Father we have: God."

Jesus said to them, "If God were your father, you would love me, for I came out from God and am now here. For neither did I come of my own will, but he sent me."

Jesus focused his address on those who listened but were rejecting what they were hearing. They still wanted to rely on their physical lineage from Abraham, but Jesus would teach them a lesson about fatherhood. For Jesus, one's father is whomever one follows. If you follow Buddha's teachings and example, then he's your father. Therefore, when Jesus said that he was speaking what the Father had shown him, he introduced what he meant by God being his father (in a spiritual sense). Whoever you're following is your father. He followed that by asserting that they were doing what **their** father taught them as well. This assertion would be later made clear. In dichotomy, there are ultimately only two fathers: God and the Enemy. The Enemy is a personification of all evils (as "Satan"), but in the New Testament the religious system was the great Enemy.

But the leaders asserted that Abraham was their father. The word "father" means also "ancestor," and so in their eyes they were stating a fact: that they were Israelites and therefore God's chosen people. But Jesus applied the higher standard of fatherhood: "If you were children of Abraham, you would do the deeds of Abraham." Abraham received God's teaching, but the Judean leaders were refusing to receive the teachings of the Messiah, whom God had sent. In rejecting the internal Torah, they proved that they could not be "Abraham's children" in a spiritual sense, even though physically they were his descendants.

Their retort indicates that they **did** comprehend what he was saying, at least partially. For while "we were not born out of prostitution" could be interpreted as simply a statement on lineage – "No, we really are Abraham's legitimate descendants" – their follow-up claim shows that they realized that he was accusing them of a form of idolatry. He had accused them of not following God through Abraham; they were following someone else. "Prostitution" and "adultery" are frequently-used metaphors of idolatry. Therefore, they logically asserted that God was their only father, the only one whom they worshipped.

Jesus was now ready to divide the fatherhood into two categories. Had God actually been their father, they would have accepted God's Anointed One instead of accusing him. Therefore, God was not their father. The reason God was not their father ran deeper than that. The real reason they could not accept Jesus was that they could not accept "his message" – the internal Torah. If they had been willing to receive that, then everything he told them would have made sense, for this was the message that God had sent his Anointed One to teach.

32 "You do not know my speech for this reason: because you cannot hear my message. You are from your father the Accuser, and you want to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he hasn't stood in the truth because there is no truth in him. When someone tells a lie, he speaks like his own family does, because his father is also a liar. But because I am telling the truth, you don't trust me. Which of you convicts me of error? If I am telling the truth, why don't you trust me?

"The one who is from God hears God's declarations. You don't hear for this reason: because you are not from God."

No, Jesus continued, there could be only one "father" for these people who were rejecting God. Jesus relates his opponents to the Enemy in his traditional role as accuser of God's people (see, e.g., Job 1), for this was precisely what the religious leaders were doing. Just as they were seeking to have Jesus executed, so also the Accuser's influence began with the murder of Abel by his brother. Speaking of the religious system, the religion had always murdered the prophets whom God had sent to them.

Knowing their hearts, Jesus recognized their impure motives. His opponents had been seeking to trick him and to accuse him falsely, at times pretending that they were willing to learn from him. Anyone who practices such deception is following their father, the father of all lies. Since Jesus' message to them (spiritualizing the Torah) was truth, these deceivers could not accept it. Lies and truth; the Accuser and God; below and above – to these pairs Jesus was about to add death/life. But first he summed up the defense of his teachings by saying that whoever was from God would understand. Therefore, since they did not understand, they were not following God. A most strong claim indeed, and one sure to anger.

Logically, we see this structure.

If you were from God, you would understand.

You do not understand.

Therefore, you are not children of God.

37 The Jews answered, saying to him, "Do we say well, that you are a Samaritan, and you have a spirit being?"

Having no exegesis of the Hebrew Bible to combat Jesus' assessment of them, and no way to refute his claim that they were trying to have him killed, the leaders responded by insulting him personally. They called him "a Samaritan," claiming that he was a half-breed and not a true Israelite.

They said he had a spirit being, that he had been driven mad by "possession."

The first insult allowed them to dismiss him because his lineage was corrupt; the second insult allowed them to dismiss everything he said because he was insane. Either he wasn't really a true Judean or he was crazy. Either way, they didn't need to listen to his instruction.

Answered Jesus, "I have no spirit being, but I am honoring my Father, and you are dishonoring me. Yet I am not seeking my glory. There is one who seeks and judges. Indeed I assure you: if anyone may keep my message, he will by no means behold death – for the age."

The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a spirit being! Abraham died, as did the prophets, and you say, 'If anyone may keep my message, he will by no means taste death – for the age.'

"Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died. Whom do you make yourself to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I were to glorify myself, my glory would be nothing. The one who is glorifying me is my Father, whom you say is your god. And you haven't known him, but I know him. If I were to say that I don't know him, I would be a liar like you are. But I do know him and keep his message.

"Abraham your ancestor rejoiced that he might notice my day: and he noticed, and was happy."

Then the Jews said to him, "You aren't even fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?"

Jesus said to them, "Indeed I assure you: before Abraham was born, I am."

Jesus ignored the insults, bringing the elements of life and death into the discussion. "I am honoring my Father, and you are dishonoring me." Therefore, the leaders were showing disrespect to God as well, by dishonoring the one whom God sent. Was Jesus claiming greatness? No, he was only pointing to God's own greatness. For God had promised eternal life to those who kept the message that God had given Jesus.

These religious leaders were likely only Perushim, for Zadokites would have engaged him in a debate about the afterlife. These people believed in an afterlife, but they misunderstood Jesus, thinking that he was talking about physical immortality. Consequently, they themselves asked him if he was Abraham's successor? Was he greater than Abraham – because even Abraham is dead? The readers would now ask if he was greater than Abraham, as he was greater than Jacob and Moses? "Whom do you make yourself to be?"

They thought that Jesus was claiming superiority for himself, and so he replied that there was no need for him to brag. Yahweh had made his Anointed who he was, and that was enough. Jesus slapped back at them that his Father was someone whom "you say is your god," for to Jesus, they only claimed to worship God. Jesus knew God, he said, because he kept the internal principles underlying the Torah, instead of adhering to legalistic rules.

Jesus was unable to deny who he was at this point. That would have made him a liar – just like they were liars about who their (spiritual) father was. Jesus followed God's teaching; therefore, he was God's son.

"Abraham your ancestor" – Jesus acknowledge that Abraham was their ancestor. In a traditional understanding, this meant that Abraham was their greater, their superior.

"rejoiced ... and he noticed, and was happy." – God had shown Abraham of things to come. God had revealed to Abraham that he would eventually send someone to complete his instruction. When Abraham realized this, it pleased him because he was following God – unlike the leaders who saw Jesus come and were displeased.

One might also say that Jesus was applying the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 to his situation. Through the test, Abraham realized that he himself was a dutiful son of God, and God blessed him for it. Abraham realized the importance of spiritual fatherhood and sonship, and he rejoiced. He had followed God, and he was glad. Jesus, too, did whatever God wanted him to do. In this sense also, Abraham saw what it would be like for Jesus.

"You aren't even fifty..." – The leaders misunderstood, thinking that Jesus was telling them that he existed in Abraham's day. This is important for the reader, because Johannes has been emphasizing misunderstanding. As with all of the misunderstandings, it would be an error to interpret Jesus as though he had been speaking of a literal existence.

Was he really claiming that Abraham was still alive to see Jesus born? Or that Jesus was alive at the time of Abraham? No, for they were understanding things literally and not figuratively. Jesus' final statement on the subject proved him Abraham's superior – because God had planned for the Anointed One even before Abraham. God was always going to send someone to complete his message to his people. Therefore, Jesus was the Anointed One (in God's mind and plan) before the time of Abraham. "I am" again indicates that Jesus was Messiah. He was the Anointed One even before Abraham was born. Naturally, the leaders misunderstood him to be lying – claiming to have existed in Abraham's day and failing to comprehend that he was talking about God's great plans for sending the Messiah.

Day and Night; Sight and Blindness

48 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus hid and left the temple court. And as he passed through town, he noticed a person who was blind from birth. And his students asked him, "Rabbi, who erred – this one or his parents – that he should be born blind?"

9:3 Jesus answered, "Neither did this one err nor his parents, but he is blind so that God's deeds may be displayed in him. It is necessary for us to work the deeds of the one who sent us while it is day. Night is coming, when no one is able to work. While I am in the creation, I am the light of the creation."

The leaders believed him to be a liar who says evil things. They thought he was claiming to be Abraham's superior because he was as old as Abraham. As they physically attacked him, he left the area. Passing through town with his students, they encountered a man who had been born blind. There were many superstitions about illness, one of which is that moral error was the cause of every sickness and malady. This perception may have come from an interpretation of the national curses that would come upon the Israelites if they did not follow the Torah.

Yahweh will make plague cling to you until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. Yahweh will strike you with wasting disease, with fever, and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. (Dt 28:21-22)

In particular:

Yahweh will strike you with insanity, with blindness, and mental confusion. (Dt 28:28)

This did not mean that all blindness was a response to rejecting God, but the students' question was a logical one for them, and it gave Jesus an opportunity to introduce yet another spiritual analogy.

"Who erred ... that he should be born blind?" Jesus' direct statement was that error did not always cause illness. In fact, this man had been born blind just so he might meet the Messiah!

"It is necessary to work...while it is day." Jesus brought the truth, and so he was the Light. Therefore, the time of Jesus' being on earth is "the day." The daylight is contrasted with "Night is coming" – Jesus would soon be dead and in the grave. He concluded by telling them flatly, "While I am in the creation, I am the light of the creation." Jesus was the light to the society of the Israelites because he had brought them the proper understanding of the Torah that God had given to his people.

Saying these things, he spit on the ground and made clay out of the spit and rubbed the clay onto the blind man's eyes, and he said to him, "Go. Wash in the pool of Siloam [which, translated, means "having been sent"]." So he went away and washed himself, and he came away seeing.

Then his neighbors and those who had beheld him before (because he was a beggar) said, "Isn't this the one who sits and begs?" Others said that it was he, but still others said that he only looked like him. He said, "I am he." Then they said to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

He answered, "The person who is called Jesus made clay and rubbed my eyes and said to me, 'Go into the Siloam and wash.' Then when I went and washed myself, I obtained sight."

Then they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know."

Jesus backed up his analogy of light and darkness, of day and night, with a physical demonstration. Notice that the physical was the analogy to the spiritual, and not the other way around. The Anointed One was bringing spiritual healing, spiritual food, and spiritual sight. In sending the man to a pool named "sent", through the power of God Jesus healed the blind man. This man was known among the community, so that when people realized that he was no longer blind, nor was he begging, they concluded rightly that he had somehow benefitted from a miracle. Some doubted, though. Maybe that wasn't really him? Maybe it only looked like him. When they questioned him, he made the same simple personal identification as Jesus did: "I am". He was exactly who they believed him to be: the blind beggar, but "the person who is called Jesus" had caused him to obtain sight. Alas! Jesus was gone.

13 They led the man who was once blind to the Perushim, and it was a Sabbath on the day Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Therefore (again) the Perushim also asked him how he obtained sight.

Now he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed myself, and I can see."

16 Then certain ones of the Perushim said, "This person is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can an errant person perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

Then they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, because he opened your eyes?" And he said that Jesus was a prophet.

Again, Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. His making of clay had been forbidden by the sages, and yet Jesus had done it. Although at first they acknowledged the fact that Jesus had performed a miracle, the Perushim began to ignore the supernatural because it conflicted with their religion. They were obsessed with the fact that he had made clay on the Sabbath.

The blind beggar himself was not so "shortsighted." If the man had performed such a miracle, then God must have sent him. The man testified publicly that Jesus was a prophet, not a Sabbath breaker.

18 Therefore the Jews didn't believe about him that he was blind and obtained sight, until they called the parents of the one who had received sight. And they asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how can he see now?"

His parents then replied, "We know that he's our son and that he was born blind, but how he now sees we don't know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him. He's an adult. He will speak about himself." This his parents said because they feared the Jews. (For already the Jews had agreed that if anyone should acknowledge him to be the Anointed One, they would be cast out of the gatherings. Because of this, his parents said, "He's an adult," and, "Question him.")

At the man's testimony that Jesus was a prophet, the matter became a huge political quagmire. Since in their minds it was impossible for someone who broke their traditions to be a prophet, the leaders refused to accept the fact that the man had ever been blind at all. Calling the man's parents together, they questioned the parents in a legal setting. The parents were bound to tell the truth, but their answer deliberately placed all legal obligation on their son. They didn't want to suffer the wrath of the religious leaders, but they knew the truth, so they made their comments brief before passing the proverbial buck. "He's an adult" signifies that he was legally qualified to answer questions, especially about what had happened to him. Additionally, they claimed no knowledge of the event. They weren't there when Jesus healed him, so they didn't know how he could see.

Johannes informed his readers that the leaders had circulated rumors that they would expel anyone from their gatherings who acknowledged Jesus as the Anointed One. As the Nazarene group grew, though, this became less possible, but the political tensions ran high. However, as the years passed and tensions increased further, Christians were indeed expelled from the Judean gatherings.

24 Therefore they called the person who was blind a second time and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this person is an errant person."

Then he answered, "I don't know if he's errant. One thing I know: I was blind; now I can see."

Then they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

He answered, "I told you already, and didn't you hear? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his students too?"

And they verbally abused him, saying, "You are his student! But we are students of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but this person, we don't know where he is from."

The man answered, saying to them, "Here's a wonder: that you don't know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes! We know that God doesn't hear an errant person. However, if anyone is God's worshipper and does what he wants, him God hears.

"From the beginning of this age it's unheard of that someone opened the eyes of someone who was born blind. If he were not a person sent from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."

They answered, saying to him, "You were born totally errant, and you are teaching us?" And they threw him out.

Questioning the man for a second time, and now convinced that Jesus had somehow cured his blindness, they demanded to know how he had done this. Perhaps they believed that he had performed some sort of trick. It couldn't have been Jesus, because the fact that he rejected religious traditions meant that he was errant. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was a moral influence. This confused the man, for he had already told them what Jesus had done. Maybe they wanted to learn more about Jesus so that they could follow him; after all, he was a prophet.

This brought verbal abuse from the Perushim, and they refused to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. Their retort was quite interesting:

"We are students of Moses" – Jesus has already asserted that none of them were truly following the Torah. "We know that God has spoken to Moses" – they knew this only from reading. They hadn't heard God speak to Moses. On the other hand, they had proof standing before them that Jesus had performed miracles, yet they would not believe.

Again they were upset because they didn't know where Jesus was from. The earlier accounts indicate that most of them thought he was from Nazareth – from which they were not expecting any prophets. However, the author's undertone is that by saying that they didn't know where Jesus was from, the religious leaders had revealed the fact that they were unable to recognize that God had sent him.

Once again, the beggar saw things more clearly, and he proceeded to exposit to them about God. "Whoever Jesus is, he healed me, so he must be from God, because the Torah teaches that God doesn't hear the errant." The logic was impeccable: "if he were not ... from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." The leaders became angry that this unlearned man was attempting to teach them about the Torah. Knowing he had been born blind, they equated this malady with a rejection of the Torah (error), and just as they had dismissed Jesus, they found themselves able to ignore this man's testimony because he was "born totally errant."

Who is Really Blind?

TEN

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and, after finding him, said to him, "Do you trust in the Son of Man?" He answered, saying, "And who is he, sir, that I may trust in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have even seen him, and he is the one who is speaking with you. I came into this world for judgment, so that those who don't see may see and those who see may become blind."

Those Perushim who were with him heard these things and said to him, "And are we blind?"

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any error. But now you say, 'We can see.' Your error remains.

Jesus had heard that the man had stood up for him in the legal proceeding. This beggar, then, was open to hearing the message and accepting Jesus for who he was. When Jesus met up with him, some members of the Perushim were still with him, perhaps escorting him home or rebuking him further.

Jesus' question presumed his own Messiahship. Did the man trust the Anointed One? The man's reply was one of slight misunderstanding, so that the reader should mark the question as an important one. "Who is he?" Jesus told him flatly, just as he had told the Samaritan woman, and Jesus gave him the final statement on spiritual sight and blindness: that there were people who simply lack an enlightenment from God. Jesus came for those people, so that they would be able to receive the Anointed One for whom they had been waiting. But there were also people who claimed to know God and who were "blind."

By this time, the leaders knew exactly what he meant: "are we blind?" He had implied that they could not know God. "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin." – In other words, had they known that they were merely ignorant, Jesus would have given you the truth, and then they would be fine. "But now you say, 'We can see.' Your sin remains." – They claimed to already know the truth. Therefore, they couldn't see the truth in the Messiah when he was right there with them. They would be judged by God for what they had done, and they would remain intertwined with the error of legalistic religion.

And so, it is often the case that when someone's paradigm causes them to believe that they already know the truth about something, it blinds them. It renders them incapable of learning.

The Good Shepherd

10:1 "Indeed I assure you: the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate but goes up another way, he is a thief and a robber. But the one who enters through the gate is a shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out.

"When he has called out all of the sheep, he walks in front of them. And the sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will by no means follow a stranger. On the contrary, they will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

The sheep were the Judeans followers of Yahweh. The only way for a human being to enter the sheep pen was for God, the gatekeeper, to open the gate for them. Some people had tried to act as leaders of the sheep, but they had (metaphorically) climbed over the fence. God had not let them in. God did not acknowledge their leadership. They were thieves and robbers.

The faithful people, the sheep, are the ones who listen to the voice of the shepherd. That is, they knew that Jesus was the Messiah and they followed his spiritual treatment of the Torah. He leads them and "walks in front of them," so as to protect them. Everyone who truly follows God will never follow a stranger – a religious teacher without authority from God.

6 This analogy Jesus said to them, but they didn't know what it was that he was saying to them. So Jesus said to them again, "Indeed I assure you that I am the shepherd of the sheep. All those who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't hear them.

The reading "door" in v. 7 is probably an error in transmission. A scribe most likely borrowed the reading from v. 9. "Shepherd" is supported in v. 7 by various non-Greek manuscript traditions and the important manuscript p⁷⁵. It is the reading adopted by the NET.

There had been false Messiahs, but Jesus was the true one. All those "who came before Jesus" had been impostors – religious leaders, perhaps, but with no approval from God. So, God did not open the way to the sheep for them. The true sheep, Messianic Jews, hear only the true Messiah's voice. This is a true analogy in terms of how sheep are able to recognize the voice of their shepherd. It is also a prophecy from Ezekiel that New Testament authors reapplied to the Anointed One.

In Ezekiel's prophecy, God sends a shepherd (a successor to David, 34:24) to tend his flock, largely because the would-be shepherds have been eating the flock (34:1f.)! All of this happens in the context of the new covenant (37:25-8), brought by a Davidic king. In citing it with reference to himself, Jesus identified himself as the successor to David.

"I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be made safe and will come in and go out of the sheepfold and will find pasture.

"The thief doesn't come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I came so that you might have life [and abundance].

Jesus made a secondary identification of himself with the door to the sheepfold. As the door, he was the way into the fold of believers. No one listening could enter the sheepfold (representing the true Jews) except through the Messiah, but whoever accepted the Messiah's teachings would find "pasture" or "life and abundance." The "life" signifies eternal, spiritual, life; the "abundance" probably represents the fact that this life would be free of the guilt accompanying sin.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life on behalf of the sheep. Since he is not a shepherd and the sheep are not his own, when a hireling observes the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees. Then the wolf snatches and scatters them, because a hireling is only a hireling. He doesn't care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I am laying down my life on behalf of the sheep.

"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. It is necessary for me to lead them also. And they will hear my voice. And there will be one flock, one shepherd."²⁵

Returning to the Davidic identification, Jesus identifies himself ("I am") again as God's Anointed One, as the shepherd (and the door, above), for to be the shepherd and the Anointed One are one in the same. This time, however, Jesus added elements to his application of Ezekiel to his own day. Ezekiel 37 had been about the restoration of Judea after the Exile. Here in Jesus' expansion, there are "hirelings." The good shepherd, the Messiah, is willing to die on behalf of his sheep – something that Jesus would soon do. The hireling, whom we may identify with the priests (those leaders who were sincere enough but whose status was chosen by lineage – not because of their concern for Israel), would be unwilling to die for the sheep.

Jesus presented it then as necessary that the Messiah (shepherd) die for his flock. This tied the Davidic figure together with the "suffering servant" of Isaiah, although he did not mention Isaiah at the time. Instead, he continued to allude to Ezekiel. The Hellenists ("other sheep"), who were not Judean (mainstream) Jews, would be brought into the fold, so that (as God promised) there would be only one flock, united under one Davidic shepherd (Ezek 37:24).

17 "Through this the Father loves me, because I am laying down my life so that I may receive it again. No one is taking it from me, but of my own free will I am laying it down. I have power to lay it down, and I power to receive it again. This precept I received from my Father."

Again a division took place among the Jews because of these sayings. Now many of them said, "He has a spirit being and is insane. Why are you listening to him?" But others said, "These declarations are not those of one who is affected by a spirit being. Can a spirit being open the eyes of the blind?"

Jesus knew that God loved him, for he would get his life back after laying it down. Once again, this time more overtly, Jesus predicted his return from the dead. Even more bluntly, he claimed power from God to give or take back his own life. God had told him that it was his choice to make.

This man Jesus had now claimed to succeed every major figure in Jewish history. Paulus would refer to him also as "second Adam." In order to accept these things, and the fact that he was going to suffer and die, someone had to truly trust in him as Messiah. As time passed, Jesus' sayings separated the crowds into believers and disbelievers; they had to choose. The attesting signs and wonders proved that he was from God, but his radical treatment of the Torah was hard to accept. Eventually, each person would be forced to make a choice: to accept his claims or reject them.

²⁵ Ezek 37:24

The Feast of Dedication

22 Then the Feast of Dedication happened in Jerusalem.²⁶ It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple court in Solomon's Porch. Then the Jewish *leaders* surrounded him and said to him, "When will you also stop holding us *in suspense*? If you are the Anointed One, speak freely to us."

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not trust. The deeds that I do in my Father's name, they testify about me. But you don't trust because you aren't my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I have them eternal life. And they will by no means ever be lost, even into the next age. And no one will snatch them out of my hand.

"My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than everyone: no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

As if symbolizing his own dedication, Jesus made his strongest Messianic claim during the feast, bluntly calling himself the Anointed One, God's son. As the leaders surrounded him, they demanded to know whether or not he claimed to be the Messiah. More likely, they were trying to trap him in a specific claim that they could refute. Once again, Jesus pointed not only to his own claims of anointing but also to his attesting signs which proved that God had anointed him. Still, the leaders would not believe because: "You are not my sheep" – The leaders were not God's people, for all of God's people followed and belonged to the Messiah. That is, they recognized the Anointed One when he came ("they heard his voice"); these so-called leaders refused to accept him.

"No one will snatch them out of my hand." – Those who truly knew that Jesus was the Messiah would never be dissuaded, not by these leaders or anyone else.

"No one can snatch them out of the Father's hand." – Jesus' followers were those Jews who really belonged to God, and God was powerful enough to keep them from going astray.

"I and the Father are one." – The Jewish leaders misunderstood Jesus as stating that he was deifying himself. Once again, though, this misunderstanding was included by the author to point to something spiritual. As "God's son," the Messiah, Jesus was intimate with God. He always did what God wanted him to do, always listening to God's voice. He was united with his Father. Jesus will later say that he wants for his own students to be one in the same way that he and his Father are one (17:11) Just as Jesus and God understood one another intimately, he wanted his followers to have intimate relationships with one another. Many commentators have fallen into the same trap as the Jewish leaders, misunderstanding Jesus' words as a claim of divinity.

31 Again the Jews picked up stones so that they could stone him. Jesus said to them, "Many good deeds I have shown you from the Father. For which of these deeds are you stoning me?"

The Jews answered him, "We are not stoning you regarding a good deed, but regarding evil speaking, and because you, a human being, are making yourself a god."

²⁶ The Feast of Dedication celebrates the restoration of the temple (165/4 BCE) after Antiochus IV had desecrated it. It lasts for eight days in mid-December. Today it is known mainly as Chanukah, after the ceremonial candle-holder that is lit during the feast.

Jesus answered them, "Isn't it written in your code, "I said you are gods."?²⁷ If them he called 'gods' to whom God's message came, and the writing cannot be dismissed, are you saying that I am speaking evil because I have said that I am God's son, I whom the Father set apart and sent into creation?

"If I am not doing the deeds of my Father, don't trust me. But if I am, and if you don't trust me, trust my deeds, so that you may know (and you do know) that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father."

Therefore, they sought again to seize him, and he went away out of their hands.

Returning to his earlier spiritualization of fatherhood and sonship, Jesus suggested that they apply it to him. He claimed that God had sent him and that he was doing God's deeds, making God his father. If he had been lying, they shouldn't trust him, but if he truly was doing the deeds of God (making God his father), then they should use those signs as a means for accepting him. For then they might understand that he and God had such an intimate relationship.

The advocates of religious orthodoxy acknowledged that God had told certain unholy rulers, "You are gods." Jesus was making the far lesser claim that by virtue of his following God's teachings, he was God's son. God had anointed and sent him into the Judean society (creation). If only they would acknowledge that God had empowered him with signs and wonders, they would realize that Jesus was united with God. They refused, and instead decided to try to kill him, but again he escaped.

The Afterlife and the Life

ELEVEN

40 And he went away again across the Jordan *River* into the place where John had been baptizing at the beginning, and he stayed there. And many people came to him and said, "John indeed performed no signs, but all of the things John said about this man were true." And many trusted in him there.

11:1 Now there was a certain sick man, Lazarus from Bethany, from the village of Miriam and her sister Martha. (Now it was the same Miriam who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick.) So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Sir, look. One whom you affectionately love is sick." Now when Jesus heard, he said, "This illness is not to the point of death, but is here on behalf of God's glory, so that the son may be glorified through it."

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed in the place where he was for two days. Then after this, he said to the students, "Let's go into Judea again."

The students said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews have sought to stone you, and you are going there again?"

Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours of the day? If someone walks in daytime, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of the creation. But if someone walks during the nighttime, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

By now it was late winter, and Jesus had come full circle, having returned to the place where he was baptized. Apparently, the people who approached Jesus while he was there had been followers of John, for they recognized him to have been a prophet. Unlike Jesus, John is not on record as having performed any signs. Instead, he had maintained the traditional role of prophet: warning Israel about something to come [the destruction of the temple] and calling the people to return to God. Just as many of Jesus' early

²⁷ See Psa 82:6-7: "I said, 'You are gods, and you are all sons of the Highest One. But you will die as human beings, and you will fall down as to princes.'"

followers (including some of the Twelve) had been part of John's reformation movement, now also during this last winter, Jesus gathered up many of John's group, who knew that John was heralding the coming of the Anointed One.

Jesus and his students might have spent the whole winter there; however, the death of a friend intervened. The author assumed that his readers were familiar with the stories of Miriam and Martha, for his introduction to them included only a reference to the event that he would record here later on. Like his two sisters, Lazaros lived in Bethany, although it seems that he did not live with them.

The verb translated "affectionately love" normally indicates a friendship, and so Jesus' friendship with Lazaros was well known. When word was sent to him that Lazaros was ill, he remarked that the illness would not ultimately result in his friend's death. Instead, Jesus was about to perform a sign from God revealing him to have power even over life and death. This sign would become a further indication that Jesus was the Messiah.

Oddly, Jesus waited for two days – long enough for Lazaros' condition to worsen. After this, he collected his students to travel to Bethany. This was risky on his part, because the Jewish leaders were now actively seeking to have him killed. When his students brought this up in discussion, probably trying to persuade him not to go, he replied that work must be done while there is still light. "Aren't there twelve hours in the day?" This refers to the traditional Jewish reckoning of daytime (6AM to 6PM), but Jesus' mentioning it continued his earlier analogy that the day was the time when the Messiah was on earth. He implied that although it was late in the day – although he was soon to die – it was still light, for he was still here. Therefore, it was necessary for him to keep working. While he was in the grave, he would not be able to work. "We must walk while there is still light," and so Jesus and his students walked to Bethany.

There were people who were stumbling around in the (philosophical) darkness, but the followers of Jesus were not among them.

11 These things he said, and after this he said to them, "Lazaros our friend has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up." Then the students said to him, "Sir, if he has fallen asleep, he will be safe." But Jesus had spoken about his death; they thought that he was speaking about the repose of sleep. So Jesus then said freely, "Lazaros has died, and I rejoice on your behalf that I was not there, so that you may trust. Now let's go to him." Then Thomas, who is called twin, said to his fellow students, "Let's go too, so that we may die with him."

Sleep was a common metaphor for death. For example:

Then David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. (1Kgs 2:10)

Look at me, and listen to me, Yahweh my God. Enlighten my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep *in* death. (Psa 13:3)

Jesus explained the reason for the trip: to wake up Lazaros. That is, Jesus intended to raise him from the dead. There was a slight misunderstanding, but Jesus explained the matter freely to his students. (Read the analogy of the sower in, e.g., Markus 4, where Jesus related that he always explained the meaning of things to his students but not to everyone.) Johannes expected for his readers to recognize here that Jesus would raise Lazaros, for God had given him power over death.

Assuming that Jesus was going to be murdered by the Jewish leaders, Thomas made a bold statement: "Let's go ... so that we may die with him." By this time, Jesus' students were so convinced of his identity

that they were willing to die alongside him. In fact, the readers have just seen (v. 8) that they fully expected for Jesus' opponents to attack him again if they went back into Judea. Yet they did not fully realize that he would return from the dead. In particular, this Thomas would be nicknamed "Doubting Thomas" because he refused to believe that Jesus had been raised.

17 Then as Jesus came, he found that Lazaros had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen stadia away. Now many of the Jews had come to Martha and Miriam to comfort them about the loss of their brother. Then when she heard that Jesus was coming, Martha met him. But Miriam was sitting in the house.

Then Martha said to Jesus, "Sir, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died, but I also know now that whatever things you may ask from God, God will give to you."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection²⁸, in the last day."

The Israelite people taught then and continued to teach that by the fourth day after death, a person was indeed truly dead – and his body had begun to decay. For example, we read in the VIII century tractate Semachot:

We go out to the cemetery to examine the dead within three days and do not fear [being suspected of] the ways of the Amorites. It once happened that someone was examined, and he lived for twenty-five years and then died. Another fathered five children before he died. (Semachot 8:1:1)

When the dead were buried in caves, they were able to inspect the body by entering the cave and (if necessary) lifting the lid of the coffin. However, on the fourth day, the body began to decay, and its scent was perceptible. Lazaros had been in the tomb that long, and so his body was in a state of decay. By contrast, Jesus' body would "not see decay" because he was going to be raised "during the third day" after his death.

Fifteen stadia measured a couple of miles. Since the distance was so short, a number of the Jewish leaders had gone to comfort the two sisters. Martha seems to have feared that these leaders would apprehend Jesus on the spot, for when she heard that he was on his way, she went out by herself to meet him.

Martha's trust in God was strong, for she had finally come to realize ("I know now") that the Messiah was powerful enough to do anything. She implied that she hoped for him to be raised from the dead, although she may have only hoped that Jesus would see to it that Lazaros went to be with God.

At any rate, there was some misunderstanding over the same point as earlier with his other students, when Jesus commented that Lazaros would rise again. The nature of the misunderstanding was different this time, for Jesus was about to raise his friend bodily from the dead. This would be done as a symbol of the spiritual and everlasting life brought by the Messiah.

However, Martha said, "I know that he will rise again," which expressed her confidence that her brother would go to be with God. "In the last day" means ultimately. Since Lazaros had died, if he was gone permanently, then he was in the afterlife. Finally, Lazaros would have spiritual eternal life, as the Messiah taught. Martha indeed listened to the Anointed One's teachings.

²⁸ the afterlife

The Greek word ἀναστασις, “resurrection,” has several senses, as follows:

The word literally indicates “standing up” and may mean, broadly, any condition of standing or rising up. With respect to the context of life after death, it may mean

“the afterlife” [the location or state to which one goes after death];

or “the act of entering the final state (or afterlife)”;

or “return to earth after death” [being placed back into one’s physical body].

In metaphor the word also indicates “the advancement to a higher or superior state.” The word occurs in each of these senses in the New Testament.

In this case, Martha used the word to signify the afterlife. She knew that Lazaros would live forever in the afterlife.

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who trusts in me will live even if he dies, and all who are living and who trust me will by no means ever die, even into the next age. Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes sir, I have trusted that you are the Anointed One, the son of God, the one who came into the creation." After saying these things, she went and called her sister Miriam privately, saying, "The teacher is here and is calling you."

Now when she heard, she rose up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him. Therefore, when the Jews who were with Miriam in the house comforting her noticed that Miriam got up quickly and went out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to cry there.

Jesus made another identification of himself as the Anointed One. “I am” meant that he was who and what he was claiming to be. As the Messiah, he was “the resurrection and the life.” That expression had three meanings here, based on the sense of the word resurrection. Since “resurrection” signifies also the act of being raised from the dead, Jesus was explaining that he was about to raise Lazaros from the dead. However, in the sense of “afterlife,” the Messiah was both the afterlife and the life: his teachings are everything important to spiritual existence. In the third, figurative sense, the Anointed One is “the resurrection” – the act of making alive the *spiritually* dead, something that he has already told his followers (5:25f.).

The two statements that follow are parallels.

“The one who trusts in me will live even if he dies” accompanies the similar sentence

“All who are living and who trust me will by no means ever die.”

The former spoke of physical death and life in the afterlife, and the latter spoke of spiritual death and life. No one who follows his teachings will ever die spiritually, and would enter the afterlife after he died. As the readers have seen, Martha was a good student of Jesus, and she expressed her firm belief that Jesus was indeed God’s chosen one. It is interesting to note that it is Martha’s affirmation and not Peter’s (Mt 16:16) which appears in this time frame in Johannes’ account. The testimony of women (the Samaritan, Martha, the women at the tomb) is important in Johannes.

32 Then when Miriam got to where Jesus was and noticed him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Sir, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Therefore, when Jesus noticed that she and those Jews who came with her were crying, he groaned in his spirit and became troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." Jesus cried.

Then the Jews said, "Notice how he affectionately loved him."

But certain of them said, "Couldn't he, who opened the eyes of the blind, have acted so that this one wouldn't have died?"

As Martha called her sister out to meet Jesus, the Jewish leaders who were accompanying her also followed her. Jesus could no longer approach them secretly, but at this solemn occasion the leaders chose not to be disruptive by apprehending Jesus. Like Martha, Miriam believed that Jesus was the Messiah, with the power to have saved her brother's life. However, she did not express the confidence that he could still raise her from the dead – even if she might have felt that way. Everyone was crying, and Jesus' own deep feelings for his friends caused him to cry also, so that even his opponents noticed what good friends Jesus and Lazaros had been. Admitting that Jesus had healed the blind man (chapter 9), they wondered (perhaps genuinely) why he did not have the power to save his friend's life.

38 Then Jesus, again groaning within himself, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying on top of it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the one who had died, said to him, "Sir, he stinks now, for it is the fourth day."

Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you would trust, you would see God's glory?" So they removed the stone. And Jesus lifted his eyes above and said, "Father, I thank you because you heard me. Now I knew that you always hear me, but I have spoken on account of those who are standing here, so that they might believe that you have sent me."

When he said these things, he called out with a loud voice, "Lazaros, come out!" The one who had been dead came out, still bound hand and foot with bandages, and his face covered with a head wrapping. Jesus said to them, "Release him, and let him go."

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Miriam and who observed what he did trusted in him. However, certain ones went to the Perushim and told them what Jesus had done.

As Jesus approached his friend's tomb, he was overwhelmed with emotion, even though he knew what he was about to do. "It is the fourth day" provided for everyone present (and the readers) another verbal affirmation that Lazaros' body was already decaying. It was giving off the stench of death; there was no way that he could have been feigning death. The readers would have known this.

"Didn't I tell you that if you would trust..." – The two sisters did trust God, and they earnestly believed that Jesus was the Anointed One sent by God. Jesus' public statement before Lazaros' return from the dead was spoken not for his own benefit, but as an indication that what he was about to do was a sign of his identity.

"Lazaros, come out!" – Some commentators claim that if Jesus had not spoken his friend's name, merely saying, "Come out," that all of the dead would have been raised! While this preaches well, it is quite unlikely that God's power could be accidentally unleashed in such a manner, for Jesus has already proven that he needn't even have been present in order to cause someone to become well. At any rate, he did not enter the tomb or touch a corpse. He merely called Lazaros by name.

When Lazaros emerged, he was pale with death, wrapped in the traditional wrappings of the dead. When this happened, even "many" of the Jewish leaders who were there changed their minds about Jesus and began to accept him, but some of them were aggravated even further and reported back to the Perushim.

47 Then the high priests and the Perushim gathered the Sanhedrin together and said, "What are we going to do? This person is performing many signs. If we let him do this, everyone will trust in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."²⁹

When the Perushim heard that God had given Jesus power over death, the high priests received word of this as well, so that they all gathered together. The priestly class were generally Zadokites, who did not believe in an afterlife. For them, return from the dead was impossible, since everyone ceased to exist at the moment of death. It is therefore distinctive that at this time they chose to join the Perushim (who disagreed with them on this issue) in the conspiracy against Jesus.

The Sanhedrin expressed one singular concern: they were worried that the signs and wonders would cause people to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Their wording is suspicious, for Johannes gave his readers the impression that these leaders realized who Jesus was but deliberately rejected him. This impression is backed up by their ultimate concern. They were not worried that people might follow a false Messiah. Instead, they were troubled that the Romans might "take away both our place and our nation." Look at what was mentioned first: the leaders' social standing. The nation of Israel, already subject to Roman rule, was regarded as of secondary importance. The author represents these certain Jewish leaders as being chiefly concerned with maintaining their own status. If Jesus were proclaimed the Messiah, they would lose their status. But note that some commentators believe that "our place" was a soft reference to the temple.

Ironically, within 40 years the Romans would do just as they feared. See the footnote on the previous page.

Now a certain one of them, Kaiaphas, who was a high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor are you considering that it makes more sense for us that one man die on behalf of the people, and not that the whole nation should be destroyed."

Now this he did not say from himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was about to die on behalf of the nation, and not only on behalf of the nation alone, but also so that he would gather into one the children of God who had been scattered.³⁰

So from that day, they were plotting to kill him. Therefore, Jesus no longer freely walked among the Jews, but went away from there into the country near the desert, into a city called Ephraim, and there he remained with his students.

Kaiaphas (in Aramaic form, Kaifa) was the high priest who eventually would preside over Jesus' condemnation to death. It was his suggestion in the council that they have Jesus assassinated. This was an official measure; by this time, the religious leaders were openly and actively plotting to have him arrested for whatever cause they could concoct.

²⁹ Within 40 years the Romans would do this, but not on account of Jesus proclaiming himself a king. The Zealot faction would become strong enough that they would stage a revolt. While Nero's reign was somewhat troubled, and while the Caesars after him failed to last very long, the command of Vespasian Caesar was strong militarily. Under Vespasian, Titus (who would later become Caesar) besieged the strongholds of the Zealots, overrunning Jerusalem and the temple and defeating the Judeans ultimately at Masada (c. 73-4 CE).

³⁰ "As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered far away, so I will seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all of the places where they have been scattered...." (Ezek 34:12)

Kaifa's prophecy was noteworthy, as the author indicated. For Jesus would indeed become one man dying on behalf of the nation of Israel. Not only would he die for the Jews living in Judea, but also for all Israelites everywhere. "Gathering the scattered sheep" (see the footnote) was a function that God would accomplish through his Messiah.

Since Jesus was unable to travel anywhere near Jerusalem without encountering hostile enemies, he retreated to Ephraim until the spring. In Johannes' account, his next visit to Jerusalem would be his last.

The Week Leading Up to Passover

TWELVE

55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up into Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. Then they sought Jesus and said to one another as they stood in the temple court, "What do you think? That he won't come to the feast?" Now the high priests and the Perushim had passed down a precept that if anyone knew where he was, he should show the Perushim how they could apprehend him.

As winter thawed and Passover approached, the leaders knew that Jesus would be returning to Jerusalem for the feast of Unleavened Bread (of which Passover was a part). They began to look for Jesus in the city approximately a week before the feast. It was customary to arrive at the feasts early, to ensure that one was ceremonially pure during the feast. For if someone was ceremonially impure at the beginning of the feast, then that person could not participate in the feast. Assuming that Jesus must be preparing to sneak into town, they passed the word around that anyone who saw him should report his location to them.

As a somewhat humorous aside concerning ceremonial purity at the time of the feasts, F.F. Bruce notes (*New Testament History*, p.62) that in 5 BCE, the high priest (Matthias) defiled himself immediately before Yom Kippur and therefore could not make the sacrifice on behalf of the people; a relative had to take his place. Consequently, he was removed from his position before the next Day of Atonement.

12:1 Then six days before the Passover, Jesus went into Bethany, where Lazaros was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.³¹ Therefore they made him dinner there, and Martha served. And Lazaros was one of those who were reclining with him.

From this point on, Johannes pinpoints the dates precisely for his readers. This is 9 Nisan ... six days before the day when the Passover dinner would be eaten. Although the term "Passover" was sometimes used of the day when the lamb was killed, and although by the time of Jesus the expression "Passover" had become synonymous with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Johannes always used the term in reference to 15 Nisan. As we shall observe more closely later on, this day was a Sunday.

³¹ This is 9 Nisan

Mariam, Martha, and Lazaros had invited Jesus and his entourage to dinner, at which Martha served. We discover in another account (Lk 10:38-42) that Martha was more comfortable providing table service in the traditional female role, whereas her sister was most interested in studying the Torah under Jesus.

Then after taking one litre of ointment of genuine – expensive – spikenard Miriam anointed Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the aroma of the ointment. Now Judah Iscariot, one of his students, the one who was about to betray him, said, "Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" Now he said this not because he was concerned about the poor but because he was a thief, and he held the money box and stole the things that were put in it.

Lukas 7:36ff. tells a similar story of a woman who had lived a sinful life anointing Jesus' feet. Details of the accounts, though, are very different. They represent entirely different events. This account resembles those told in Mt 26 and Mk 14 but is dissimilar to Lukas', although the other accounts are not chronological. This dinner took place in the house of Simon the Leper (according to Matthaiah and Markus). In this case, the ointment was **spikenard**, an herbal remedy and perfume still used today in aroma therapy. Extracts of the spikenard root were used in anointing the dying and dead.

For the first time, Johannes introduced the reader to Judah Iscariot. Judah was a familiar personage in the Jesus story, and so the reader's introduction to Judah is most brief. Here quite possibly, the author's emotions about Judah show through. It was Judah who objected to Miriam's "wasting" of the spikenard by anointing Jesus, with his explanation being that since it was an expensive ointment, she should have sold it and donated the proceeds to help the poor. Johannes flatly states that Judah's true motive was to embezzle some of the proceeds from the money bag, which he had been entrusted with carrying. According to the parallels, the value of the spikenard was approximately 300 denarii, which was ten months' wages for the common laborer.

Judah's last name may be a reference to his place of origin -- "ish-Kerioth," man of Kerioth – or it may signify his devotion to the Zealot cause if translated "man of the dagger." The Zealots were strongly committed to getting Judea out from under Roman rule. If Judah supported the Zealots, he might have been disappointed to hear what Jesus was about to say. Neither view is certain.

Therefore Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my embalming. For you will always have the poor with you, but me you won't always have."

Therefore a great crowd of the Jews knew that he was there, and they didn't come on account of Jesus alone, but also so that they might notice Lazaros, whom he raised from the dead. Now the high priests were plotting, so that they might kill Lazaros also, because many went away from the Jews and trusted in Jesus because of him.

Jesus' reply was a stern rebuke and an indication of what was to follow. Here, Jesus spoke of the act as a preparation for his death – Miriam would keep the rest of the spikenard in order to anoint his dead body. In Markus' account (14:3ff.), this is a pivotal point, since when Judah heard this, he left immediately in order to find a way to betray Jesus (Mk 14:10-11). If Judah supported the Zealots, Judah's intent may have been to force Jesus to claim his place as King of Israel, but Johannes said nothing about that story, perhaps assuming that it was already known via oral tradition.

This event brought notoriety to Miriam (see also Mt 26:13), and people became immediately attracted to the house, not only because Jesus was there but also because Lazaros was with him. The fact that the

priests were the ones plotting to kill Lazaros is significant, remember, because he was proof that there was an afterlife – he had returned from it!

12 On the next day,³² after hearing that Jesus had come into Jerusalem, a great crowd that had come to the feast took branches of the palm trees and went out to meet him, and they called out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of Yahweh, the King of Israel!"³³

Now after finding a young donkey, Jesus sat on it, as it had been written, "Do not fear, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a foal of a donkey."³⁴

The date here is significant. This is 10 Nisan, five days before the meal. Assuming that this was the daytime (and not the previous evening), Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem on Palm Monday corresponded precisely to the date when the Passover Lamb was to be brought into the household before its slaughter:

On the tenth day of this month, each man must take an animal from the flock, one for each family: one animal for each household...You must take into account how much each can eat in deciding the number for the animal. It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year old; you may take it from either sheep or goats. (Ex 12:4f.)

The readers being Israelites, they would have been familiar with the date; consequently, this represents subtle foreshadowing on the author's part. Jesus' death was imminent, at least from the moment he rode into Jerusalem.

The first quote is from the Hallel, a section of the Psalms which is read during the Passover meal. "The King of Israel" refers here to the Messiah, so that the crowd was openly acknowledging his identity.

Oh Yahweh, do save us, we beg you.
Oh Yahweh, we beg you, send us prosperity.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of Yahweh; we have praised you from Yahweh's house.
Yahweh is God; he has enlightened us.
Bind the festival procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.
You are my God, and I praise you;
You are my God, and I lift you up.
Acknowledge Yahweh, for he is good
For his mercy *lasts for the age.* (Psa 118:25-9)

The quotation (Psa 118:26) is followed by an admonition to "Bind up the festal procession with branches" (v. 27), and so the crowd spread palm branches in Jesus' path. "Hosanna" ("save") is found in verse 25 of the song, and is a cry to God. In the context of Jesus' arrival, they called on God to save them through his Anointed One. Readers of the psalm would be familiar with the "cornerstone" passage which immediately precedes this one (v. 22). The psalm identifies the author as a rejected sufferer. The parallel accounts indicate that some of those present spread out their clothes before Jesus as well; all of these offerings are expressions of adoration.

³² This is 10 Nisan, five days before the meal. See Ex 12:4f.

³³ See Psa 118:26, followed by v. 27: "Bind up the festal procession with branches."

³⁴ "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you; he is victorious and triumphant, humble and riding on a colt – the foal of a donkey." (Zech 9.9)

At least part of the procession took place while Jesus was riding a young donkey. In a traditional parade of triumph, the king would have been seated on the most majestic animal available, but Jesus arrived in humility. The quotation made in reference to Jesus' arrival comes from Zech 9:9, which reads in full: *"Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you; he is victorious and triumphant, humble and riding on a colt – the foal of a donkey."* In the original prophecy, the arrival on a donkey rather than a war animal signified that the king would ultimately bring peace. Historically, Zech 9:1-8 refers to a Greek king's conquest of western Syria, then Phoenicia, then the Filistine cities. As a unit, Zechariah 9-10 refer to the arrival of Alexander III (the Great) in the Middle East that lasted from 334 to 332 BC. In the imagery, Alexander's arrival brings about stability in the region – at least temporarily. In their application, the crowd compared Jesus to Alexander, although he was a philosophical conqueror and not a military one.

16 These things his students did not know at first. But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him, and that the people had done these things to him. Then the crowd that was with him testified that he called this one called Lazaros out of the tomb and raised him from the dead. For this reason the crowd met him, because they heard that he had performed this sign. Therefore the Perushim said among themselves, "Observe that you are gaining nothing! Look, the whole world is going away after him."

Johannes made another admission that he and his fellow envoys did not see the relationship between the Messiah and the roles of earlier kings until after their minds were opened to understand all of the writings about him. That happened after Jesus returned from the dead. While these things were happening, those members of the crowd who knew about the raising of Lazaros began to testify to everyone else about the event. They were unaware that he was about to perform an even greater sign: having himself resurrected from the dead.

The author spells out again the jealousy that existed among the groups of religious leaders. They began to argue with one another because none of their measures had caused Jesus to lose popularity. Rather than wondering who he must be (since he was able to raise Lazaros from the dead), they were concerned with the fact that he was gaining a wider audience for his radical teachings. The whole of Judean society was beginning to follow his teachings.

20 Now there were some Hellenists among those who were going up to worship during the feast. So these people came to Filippus from Beth-saida of Galilaiah, and asked him, "Sir, we want to view Jesus." Filippus went and told Andreas. Andreas and Filippus went and told Jesus. Now Jesus answered them, "The hour has come so that the Son of Man may be glorified. Indeed I assure you: unless the grain of wheat which falls to the ground dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

"The one who affectionately loves his life will lose it. And the one who hates his life in this world will keep it into eternal life.³⁵ If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be as well. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

³⁵ The Greek word used the first two times may mean "life" or "soul." A different word is used the third time "life" appears.

The peace brought by the Messiah would involve, in part, the gathering of all Israelite believers into a single fold (chapter 10). Therefore, Johannes relayed this account (which immediately succeeded the previous one) of Hellenists approaching Jesus. The details were incidental here, but they provided two "mainstream" Judeans as witnesses to Jesus' sayings about himself.

The first saying is a lesson in horticulture. A seed itself ceases to be a seed when it begins to grow into a stalk of wheat. In some sense, then, the seed must "die" in order for the grain to flourish. The explanation, to come, shows that this was an illustration of the necessity of Jesus' death. He was going to die, after which he would be forever different.

The saying about losing one's life has two meanings. First and foremost, Jesus was referring to himself. He was about to die, but his life would continue forever in a spiritual capacity. The secondary meaning is a teaching for all those who followed him. Just as he was about to die, and yet to live again, so also any of them who truly followed Jesus' teachings would have eternal life. Just as Jesus would go on to be with God, so also all those who followed his teachings would join him.

There is a word game here in Greek, and most likely in the underlying Aramaic. The word play revolves around two words for "life." The soul-life, animal life, is not to be treasured by Jesus' followers. The term is used, as in the Septuagint (LXX), for the life which ends at the moment of death. But those who are able to look beyond the physical life will receive not an eternal physical life, but an eternal spiritual life. The word ζωη in Hellenistic usage was an important word, in part equate with biological life. Using the LXX term ψυχη in contrast to it, Jesus separated the physical and spiritual concepts. Apart from the physical aspects, then, ζωη signifies a life force, the vitality which causes life. It has been called "the potency on which life rests." Ζωη, then, permeates and is necessary for physical life, but the concept transcends it. In some LXX manuscripts, "live" (ζαω) is interchanged with the word for "resurrect", indicating that some Hellenists did understand ζωη to go beyond biological life. Jesus depicts trading one's pursuit of physical life in for a life that transcends all things physical.

27 "Now, "My soul is troubled,"³⁶ and what shall I say: 'Father, save me from this hour?' On the contrary, I came to this hour for this reason.

"Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came out of heaven: "I both glorified and again will glorify." Then the crowd who stood and heard said, "Thunder has happened." Others said, "A messenger has spoken to him."

Jesus answered, "This voice has not happened on my account, but on your account. Now there is a judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I will draw all to myself, if I am lifted up from the ground." Now this he said signifying by what method of death he was about to die.

"My soul is troubled." This was a brief citation from Psa 6:3, which depicts the singer in conflict with others who appear about to take his life. *"Yahweh, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your rage. Have mercy on me, Yahweh, for I am weakening. O Yahweh, heal me, for my bones are troubled, and my soul is troubled severely. Yahweh, how long will you be?"*

The psalmist was a man who was pleading to God for his life, a feeling that Jesus felt during this last week in his own life. He wanted to be spared the death to come, but "what shall I say...?" Should Jesus ask to be spared when he knew that it was for this very reason – his death – that he "came to this hour"? The answer was no. Jesus would continue to do God's wishes, even over the instinct of self-preservation.

³⁶ Psa 6:3

At that point, Jesus displayed himself as being the ultimate example of seeking what is beyond this life rather than seeking the things of this life. Instead of sparing himself, he remained subject to God. Therefore, God himself spoke, not only glorifying his own name in so doing but also praising Jesus' perseverance, for "again will glorify" refers to the crucifixion. The suffering endured by Jesus would be a glory to God.

"Now there is a judgment of this world." – This refers to Judaism and should not extend beyond Judaism. The readers are already aware that "world" (κοσμος) is used by Johannes frequently to signify the Israelite society, and particularly those who supported the religion of Temple worship. Here, the Jewish leaders (and all following them) who were clinging to their traditions despite what the Messiah was telling them were about to be judged.

"The ruler of this world will be cast out." – The enemy was the religion itself. God was in the process of casting it down permanently. Personified as an Enemy, Jesus predicted the religion's ultimate defeat, starting with his own crucifixion and ending when God brought in the Romans to destroy the Temple.

"I will draw all to myself, if I am lifted from the ground." – As the author explained, this referred directly to the crucifixion of Jesus. The defeat suffered by the Enemy would first manifest in Jesus gathering more followers even as he died. Nazarene Judaism, unlike many movements of the past, would not disappear after the death of its founder. To the contrary, there would be many more followers after Jesus' death than before!

34 Therefore the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Torah that the Anointed One will stay for the age. So how can you say that it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

Then Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for yet a little time. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness may not overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he is going. While you have the light, trust in the light, so that you may become sons of light." Jesus spoke these things and went away, and he hid from them.

The crowd's reply illustrated the obstacles to their trust in the Anointed One. Jesus had not said, "the Son of Man" (i.e., the Messiah) must be lifted up. He said that **he** would be lifted up. They recognized Jesus as the Anointed One; that wasn't the problem. Their confusion arose over their tradition that the Anointed One would not die, but would remain physically on earth forever. Again, their interpretation was logical (given the predictions) but incorrect:

I will not break my covenant. I will not alter the things that went out from my lips. Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants will last forever. His throne will last as long as the sun in my presence; like the moon it will be established for the age. The witness in the sky is sure. (Psa 89:34-36)

However, the crowd's misunderstanding again arose out of the difference between a **physical** presence and a **spiritual** presence. Jesus would guide his followers through their keeping his principles. Their following the truth would lead them to him forever. Therefore, he answered their question directly: "The light is among you for yet a little time." He would be with them physically for only a short time – less than a week, in reality. He urged the crowd to continue to listen to him while he was with them, so that they might become "sons of light" after he departed. The term "sons" was used just as Jesus had defined the term before – as followers. His wish was that they would follow his own example.

37 Now although he had performed so many signs in their presence, still they didn't trust in him, so that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which said, "Lord, who has trusted our report? And the arm of Yahweh, to whom was it revealed?"³⁷

On this account they could not trust Jesus: because again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eye and has hardened their hearts, so that they may not view with the eyes, and understand with the heart, and turn back, and I should heal them."³⁸

As the dialog ended, Johannes interrupted the natural flow to make a point: that the real obstacle to their being able to accept him was not based in theological debate over minutiae of the Torah. The signs alone would have convinced them to listen to Jesus if that had been the case. Instead they were in the same situation that the author of Isaiah 52-53 described himself as being in: "who has trusted our report" (v.1). They reapplied that passage to the Messiah. That being the case, they already knew that the Messiah was to be a sufferer, but they did not believe Isaiah. Then what was the obstacle to their trust?

Their eyes had been blinded. Their hearts had been hardened to the point where they could not turn to God (Isa 6:9-10). Again, the author has brought back the concept of being spiritually blind, this time borrowing from an earlier prophet. Just as God had told Isaiah that when they heard his message, the people would ignore his message, so also the saying applied to the Messiah: there would be an obstacle to their learning. The passage in Isaiah continues: *"For how long, Lord?" And he said, "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate."* Originally the context referred to the siege of the land and destruction of the temple by the armies of King Nabu-kudurri-usur (Nebuchadnezzar), and so when Jesus applied it to his own culture, he explained that those Israelites who rejected the Anointed One that God had sent them would see everything they stood for ruined as the Roman armies took Jerusalem and Masada and as they destroyed the temple once again. Modern commentators observe also that the other three accounts of Jesus' life (notably Mt 24-25) also depict Jesus as predicting the devastation of Judaism during this last week.

41 These things Isaiah said because he noticed Jesus' glory and spoke about him. Nevertheless, many – truly, even some of the rulers – trusted in him, but on account of the Perushim they did not acknowledge this, so that they would not be put out of the gatherings. For they loved the glory of humanity more than the glory of God.

What had driven the people toward a stubbornness to receive their Messiah was the fact that they were afraid of the Perushim, those rabbis who were able to expel them from their gatherings if they were angered enough to do so. Rather than lose their place in society, many people rejected the Messiah as a social necessity. Johannes says that they loved to receive praise from human beings (the Perushim) rather than from God (as Jesus was doing); they refused to share in the persecution faced by Jesus.

44 Now Jesus called out, saying, "The one who trusts in me is not trusting in me, but in the one who sent me. And the one who observes me is observing the one who sent me.

"I have come into the creation as a light, so that everyone who trusts in me would not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my declarations and doesn't keep them, I am not judging him, for I didn't come so that I might judge the creation, but so that I might save the creation.

³⁷ Isa 53:1, and see Isa 52:13-53:12.

³⁸ Isa 6:9-10. The passage continues: *"For how long, Lord?" And he said, "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate."*

"The one who sets me aside and does not receive my declarations has this judging him: the message that I spoke, that will judge him in the last day. Because I didn't speak from myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a precept: what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his precept is eternal life. Therefore, the things I say, I am speaking as the Father has spoken to me."

Jesus made these remarks on another day, 12 or 13 Nisan, but they maintain the light/darkness theme mentioned earlier and return to the concept of the judgment of Israel which was coming soon. Throughout his career, Jesus has been creating a separation between receiving him as the Anointed One and rejecting him. In the end, there were only two options, and the Judeans would have to choose between Jesus and traditional religion. Therefore, his point was plain: to accept Jesus' teachings was to accept God. The character observed in Jesus' life was the loving character of God, even the author deliberately has not mentioned the word "love" yet. Jesus presented the choice as being clear...clear as light.

All along, Jesus has spoken about the basis for the coming judgment. Would it be Jesus himself? Only in metaphor, for his teachings would serve as the ultimate basis for judgment. Earlier, Jesus pointed out that in a manner of speaking, Moses would make the judgment as well, for he and the prophets had spoken of the coming of the Anointed One, but people did not receive him when he came. Now the focus has shifted to the core ideas of the spiritual Torah. If keeping Jesus' teachings or staying in traditional Judaism were the only options, then the internalization of the Torah would be the basis for escaping the coming judgment. This proved to be true, since Priestly Judaism was about to cease to exist.

Jesus flatly said that the reason that his teachings would be so important was simple: because God had told Jesus to explain the Torah in such a way, and it was God would be bringing the judgment on Israel. Finally, then ("in the last day"), God's message would be the basis for judgment, since this had been the message that God had been trying to communicate to humanity since the beginning (chapter 1). Keeping the message meant eternal life; rejecting the message signified national ruin. For the reader who was undecided, by now the choice should have been a simple one. The penultimate section of Johannes' writing has concluded.

An Early Passover Meal

THIRTEEN

13:1 Now before the feast of the Passover, knowing that the hour had come for him to depart out of creation to the Father, Jesus (who loved those of his own in the creation) loved them to the end.³⁹

And as dinner was happening, the accuser had already put the thought into the heart of Judah Iscariot that he should betray Jesus.

This information begins the final division in this written work, for Jesus has taught everything to the crowds that he will teach. The final teachings, including the complete revelation of the message, would be repeated for his students (and for the reader who is still willing to accept who Jesus was).

This section begins, then with the first direct statement that Jesus' love for his students was the motivation for everything he was doing and had done for them. The events that were to follow, including both the final advice to the Twelve and his journey to the cross were his way of "loving them to the end."

³⁹ The 13th of Nisan was just ending, and the evening that started 14 Nisan was beginning.

Judah had already gone to the Jewish leaders and arranged for Jesus' arrest, but Johannes mentioned this as though it were an aside. He wrote only enough information to remind his readers about what was about to happen.

The 13th of Nisan was just ending, and the evening that started 14 Nisan was beginning. Johannes clearly indicates that Jesus died at the time when the Passover lambs were slaughtered – the afternoon of 14 Nisan. Although others have attempted to claim that Jesus' death is timed differently in the other three accounts, this author contends that all four accounts are in agreement. For information about this subject, please consult my paper, *Passover and the Crucifixion*, which is available from my main religion page.

3 Knowing that the Father had given all things to his hands
 and that he came out from God
 and was going to God,
 Jesus rose from the table and took off his cloak, took a towel, and tied it around himself.
Afterward, he put water into the wash-basin and started to wash his students' feet and to wipe them with
the towel with which he was wrapped.

At the beginning of the meal, the author pointed out that Jesus was thinking about three things: that God had "given all things to his hands" – the choices were all his. He could serve God and die, or he could save his own life.

"that he came out from God" – His sending had been a genuine one. God had sent him with the message for the Jewish people, and he knew who he was.

"and was going to God" – This means more simply than Jesus realized he was dying. While that would certainly be the case if Jesus chose to continue on God's path, Jesus knew for certain that after his death he would enter the afterlife to be with God forever.

Knowing all of these things, Jesus expressed his love for his close friends by serving them. His humble attitude of serving others had always been there, just as he had always served God, but even as he was about to serve God completely in death, he chose a visible means of depicting his love for his friends as well: he would wash their feet.

Travel in sandals along dusty roads always soils the feet, and so it was normally the role of a household servant to wash the feet of those who were returning from travel. Jesus' "putting on the towel" was an immediate sign that he himself would fulfill the role of servant. Reducing himself to a person with no status whatsoever, he would wash the dirt-covered feet of his friends, all of whom recognized that he was their superior.

Then he came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, saying to him, "Now you don't understand what I'm doing. But after this, you will understand."

Peter said to him, "You will by no means wash my feet, even for the age!" Jesus answered, "You have no part with me unless I wash you."

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed has no need to wash anything but his feet, but he is wholly clean. And you are clean ones, but not all."

For Jesus knew the one who was betraying him. On this account he said, "You are not all clean ones." Then when he had washed their feet, he took his cloak, reclined again, and said to them, "Do you know what I've done to you? You call me 'teacher' and 'lord', and you say well, for I am these things. So:

if I, lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you are bound also to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example, so that you would also do as I did to you.

The Twelve were largely silent, although it is quite likely that they looked around at one another, trying to interpret Jesus' actions. Peter, here referred to as "Simon the Rock", was the first one to voice his concerns. Referring to Jesus as "Lord" (or "sir") – a term which denoted anyone in a superior position, Peter's question reflected his knowledge that Jesus was a superior performing the tasks of a social inferior.

Jesus knew that Peter would understand, because (except for Judah) these close associates of his had embraced the internal Torah. It would not be long before his attitude made perfect sense to them. At the moment, though, Peter experienced a misunderstanding. The reader was expected to take careful note of the point that Jesus was making. Jesus met Peter's refusal with a very strong, "You have no part with me unless I wash you." Service out of love is the very cornerstone of the internal Torah. If Peter had refused to allow such service, then he did not truly understand Jesus' teachings. Consequently, he would not have belonged with those who did understand.

Peter's next reaction was to take the "rocklike" leap of trust and suggest that Jesus wash his face and hands as well! He understood the connection between the act and the teachings of Jesus, but then he left behind the fact that the washing of the feet stemmed from their preparations for the Passover seder, which they were about to eat (one day earlier than usual). Therefore, Jesus replied in gentle correction that since Peter had already bathed, only his feet needed to be washed. He concluded by making a statement that had a double meaning: "you are clean ones, but not all." This meant that they had been wholly clean apart from their feet, but he also meant to suggest that in a spiritual sense, all of them except Judah were "clean," for Judah had betrayal on his mind.

The teaching that Jesus drew from the physical act is to be taken spiritually. It is the loving, giving attitude that he expected his students to follow. Therefore, he asked whether they understood what he had done. While he was physically washing their feet, it was the attitude of love for one another, to the point of putting the other person first, that Jesus was hoping they would understand by then.

They knew by this time (see also Mt 20:20-8; 23:1-12) that they were all equals, but Jesus was their superior. Since their superior had shown the serving attitude, and since they were only equals, none of them could claim that they were above loving one another genuinely.

16 "Indeed I assure you: a slave is not greater than his lord, nor is an envoy greater than the one who sent him. If you understand these things, you are blessed if you do them.

An inferior can never claim privileges that his superior does not possess. Since Jesus had served them, it was enough for them to treat one another as he treated them. Since this recognition of equality in rank, title, and importance was central to internalizing the message, any of the Twelve would be blessed if they understood that message and served the others humbly. Although Jesus' statements were specifically geared toward the Twelve, the author intended for the reader to understand that the teachings about love were meant for everyone; the specific applications, though, are situational.

"I am not speaking about all of you. I know the ones whom I chose. But so that the writing may be fulfilled, "The one who eats the loaf with me lifted up his heel against me."⁴⁰ I am telling this to you at this time, before it happens, so that when it happens, you may trust that I am *the Anointed One*.

The context of Psalm 41 is about enemies and false friends.

As for me, I said, "Oh Yahweh, be merciful to me; heal my life. Because I have erred against you, my enemies say bad things about me: "When will he die, and when will his name be destroyed?"

And when he comes in to see me, he says what is worthless;
his heart gathers lawlessness for itself.

When he goes outside, he tells it.

All those who hate me whisper together against me,
and against me they plan bad things for me.

A lawless saying is poured out on me: "When he lies down, he will not rise up further."

For even the person who was my peaceful *friend*,
in whom I had confidence,
who ate the bread with me,
has lifted up his heel against me.

But you, oh Yahweh, have mercy on, me and raise me up,
that I would repay them. (Psa 41:4-10)

Although some of the context of the psalm did not apply to Jesus' situation, Jesus has made it understood that he viewed himself as being in the company of a false friend. He would be betrayed by one of them – something that might have shocked them. The psalmist in Psalm 41 was someone who put all of his trust in Yahweh God. Even though his enemies were conspiring against him, and one of his friends betrayed him (v. 9), still he looked to God for vindication. At the end, then, he would triumph. The Twelve would see within a matter of hours that Jesus was prophesying that this same thing would happen, and that prophecy was going to be fulfilled – as further proof that he was the Anointed One.

20 "Indeed I assure you: the one who receives anyone that I send receives me. And the one who receives me receives the one who sent me."

This was a saying for the eleven who would remain faithful. God would be with them, and in the future, whoever accepted one of his friends would be accepting Jesus. As for Judah, in turning Jesus over to be killed, Judah was rejecting God.

21 Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in the spirit and testified, saying, "Indeed I assure you that one of you will hand me over."

The students looked at one another, wondering who he was speaking about. Now one of the students, whom Jesus loved, was reclining on Jesus' chest. So Simon Peter nodded to him to ask who it might be that he was speaking about. So he leaned back on Jesus' chest and said to him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "He is the one for whom I have dipped the little piece, and to him I will give it." And when he dipped the little piece, he gave it to Judah, son of Simon Iscariot. And after the little piece was passed, the enemy entered into Judah. So Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are doing." Now

⁴⁰ Psa 41:9

none of those who were reclining with him knew why he spoke to Judah. For some, seeing that Judah had the money box, thought that Jesus said to him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or said that he should give something to the poor.

Again and even more bluntly, Jesus asserted that one of his most trusted associates, all of whom were friends, would hand Jesus over to his opponents. The statement was stunning, and the degree to which the students began to wonder about this betrayal rapidly increased.

At this point and for the second time only, the author introduced himself. For the purpose of indicating that he had been a witness to all of Jesus' activities, the author had referred to himself as "another student" near the beginning of this account. Three years later, he referred to himself again, this time as "one of the students, whom Jesus loved." He was one of the Twelve, with whom Jesus had a close relationship. The other three accounts indicate that Peter, Jacob, and Johannes were his inner circle of friends. Since the author was in the position of favor – leaning on Jesus' chest as they all reclined together at the table – surely he was a member of that inner circle. The author's point in mentioning himself this way was to give a clue as to his own identity while still advancing the plot: who was going to betray the Messiah?

At the dinner, they would all likely be dipping matzoh into the bitter herb sauce. Therefore, unless they were watching Jesus constantly it is unlikely that they would notice something so small as his offering a piece to Judah. Therefore, although the others did not notice what happened, Judah was greatly upset when he received the piece of bread. With the things that had already been said, it appears that Judah was filled with emotion to the point where he left immediately to inform the Jewish leaders of Jesus' itinerary for that night. Johannes poetically described this as the enemy entering into Judah – he was now not his own, but he belonged entirely to God's enemy: the religion of Priestly Judaism. Just as all are made to choose, Judah had chosen.

The other students thought that Judah had left to spend money for something; they were still unaware that he was the betrayer.

30 So when Judah took the little piece, he went out immediately. Now it was night. So when he went out, Jesus said, "Just now the Son of Man was glorified, and God was glorified in him. And God will glorify him personally, and he will immediately glorify him.

"Children, for a little while still I am with you. You will seek me, and as I said to the Jewish *leaders* that, 'Where I am going, you are not able to come,' I say this also to you.

Judah got up and left, and Johannes points out that it was night, for Judah had left the light, having chosen to enter the darkness. He was going to miss Jesus' great discussion about love. After Judah's departure, Jesus explained something that would make more sense later that night:

"Just now the Son of Man was glorified" – In tipping Judah off so that he would set in motion the events of the day that was to come, Jesus embraced God's will for his life. Barring a miracle, the Messiah would now become the suffering servant that he was intended to be, dying a peaceful but humble death at the hands of the shepherds who made themselves fat by preying on the sheep of Israel.

Jesus also made sure his students understood that he was about to die. "You will seek me," he said, but he wouldn't be there for them any longer in any literal sense. He would only be with them in that capacity "for a little time."

34 "A new precept I give to you: that you love one another; that just as I have loved you, you would love one another. In this, all will know that you are my students, if you have love among one another."⁴¹

14:1 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me. In my Father's house are many dwellings. If it were otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going to prepare a place for you. And since I am going and am preparing a place for you, I am coming again, and I will receive you to myself, so that you may also be where I am. And where I am going, you know the way."

Although Jesus had expressed love, had indicated that love is characteristic of his followers, and had stated that God requires it of every faithful Israelite, so far he has not defined the word in terms of his actions toward them. More exactly, the author has deliberately suppressed providing a complete discussion of love until now. The "new precept" is the one that sums up the Torah and the Prophets. It is the single internal principle that underlies everything that God has communicated to humanity. Love is the message in one word, and that internal Torah is the truth – the expression of that message. Any student of the Messiah must practice love, because no internalization of the Torah could exist without it. Loving one another is all that there is; understanding this and putting it into practice are life's duty and purpose. He had told them that he was leaving them. He was going to die, and would go to be with God, but this should not worry them, because if they trusted God they would realize that the Twelve would occupy special places ("on thrones, judging the twelve tribes," according to the metaphor in the synoptics) alongside Jesus in God's spiritual kingdom.

"Where I am going, you know the way." – By this time, the Eleven knew that by following the principle of love (the internal Torah) they too would go to be with God in the afterlife. They knew the way.

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. If you knew me, you will know my Father also. And from now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Thinking of a physical road to a literal place, Thomas misunderstood what it meant for Jesus to be the way – reader, take note! Jesus' reply was straightforward. As the Messiah, he was the way. The Anointed One had been sent to them with the internal Torah, and Jesus himself had shown it to them by his attitude. Knowing Jesus, they did know the way to God. The message of the internal Torah is "the truth," for the Torah without its guiding principle is nothing. This is the message of life, just as the author has been writing since the beginning of his work. Spiritualizing the Torah brings life, but interpreting it as though it were the rites and activities of a religion profits nothing.

The Judeans who were living at that time had observed miracles that they could not dispute. Therefore, it was left to them only to choose. None of them could follow God any other way than "spiritually; that is, truthfully." It was necessary for them to spiritualize the Torah in order to have the life, and Jesus had brought that internal Torah. Mere ritual would not suffice. None of them would be able to reach God, except by following a spiritual Torah.

Filippos said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

Jesus said to him, "I have been with you for such a long time, and you don't know me, Filippos? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

⁴¹ A displacement, that arose during the copying of an early manuscript to another, seems to have occurred here. The verses that are normally found here appear later, enclosed in curly brackets.

"Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The declarations that I speak to you, I am not speaking from myself. But the Father dwelling in me is doing his deeds. Trust me because I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. But if not, trust me on account of his deeds.

Once again, the author used Filippus' statement as a teaching tool for the reader who was seeking to understand. "Show us the Father" – Filippus asked the impossible, that God himself be revealed, but by observing the character of Jesus, he should have known all that he ever wanted to know about God. "The one who has seen me has seen the Father." This signifies that Jesus always did what God wanted. He was a perfect example – so complete an example that they were learning about God merely by observing him. After all, "the declarations that I speak" (everything he said) had been told to him by God.

"I am in the Father, and the Father is in me." Yes, Jesus did everything that God wanted him to do. His relationship with God was so close that God guided his every action. Jesus would soon express his hope that the Eleven share the exact same kind of deep relationship.

12 "Indeed I assure you: the one who trusts in me, he will also do the deeds that I am doing. And greater than these he will do, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you may ask in my name, this I will do so that the Father may be glorified in the son. If you should ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.

This special message for the Eleven shows his close relationship with them. He had sent them out to work miraculous signs – just as he himself had been working. Therefore, if they only trusted, God would work even more wonderful things through them. "I will do it" refers to the time that was then present. As long as Jesus was alive, and since he knew that they were sincerely devoted to his teachings, he would do whatever they asked and whatever God would have him do for them.

15 "If you love me, you will keep my precepts, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advisor, that it may be with you for the age – the spirit of the truth – which the creation cannot receive because it neither beholds it nor knows it. You know it because it's dwelling with you and will be in you. I won't leave you orphans: I am coming to you. In just a little time, the creation will observe me no longer, but you will observe me. Because I live, you will also live. In that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Jesus directly connected love with the keeping of the internal Torah. If they truly loved Jesus, then they would live lives of love, as he knew that they would.

For the Eleven, Jesus' departure was to be followed by the coming of a miraculous advisor. God himself (in his role as holy Spirit – Yahweh in communication with humanity) would provide a miraculous reminder to those men of everything that Jesus had taught them during the time that they were with him. In a metaphorical sense, this would be for them just as though Jesus himself were still with them.

"The spirit of the truth" indicates the very essence of the internal Torah, which Jesus embodied. The Eleven knew the truth because they had spent time with Jesus, whose every moment of life expressed the Torah. Judean society, the creation, was unable to receive Jesus' teachings in the first place. No such miracles would accompany them. Therefore, this miraculous instruction would serve to separate them from Priestly Judaism.

"The creation will observe me no longer," because Jesus would be gone, physically, "but you will observe me." That is, the Twelve would have that continual reminder of Jesus' teachings, and so it would feel like

he were always with them, at least until the destruction of the Temple ("the conclusion of the age", Mt 28:20). "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." – The Eleven had such a close relationship with Jesus that it paralleled the relationship he had with God. So long as they continued in his teachings, this relationship would continue (so to speak), even though he were no longer with them, and they would realize that they now would have this close connection to God that he had.

21 "The one who has my precepts and keeps them, this is the one who loves me. Now the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will show myself to him."

This was the test of being a true student of the Messiah. People might come along claiming that they realized who Jesus was, but the people who truly loved Jesus were the ones who rejected human religion – with its places of worship, rules for living, and clergy system. These people followed a spiritual Torah, through living lives of Love.

"I will show myself to him." – Again, Jesus was speaking in metaphor to the Eleven. He would show himself to them not physically or even in visions but through his teachings. Jesus started the train of thought by saying, "The one who keeps my precepts." By keeping Jesus' teachings about love being the core of the Torah, they would be loved by God and would realize that Jesus would never really be gone from them, for everything that they believed and held dear was part of Jesus.

22 Judah (not the Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how has it happened that you are about to show yourself to us, and not to the creation?"

Jesus answered, saying to him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my message, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make a dwelling with him."

"The one who does not love me does not keep my sayings – and the message that you are hearing is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."

By referring to the other Judah as someone who was not Jesus' betrayer, the author subtly reminded his readers that Judah was somewhere else arranging Jesus' arrest. The action followed their train of thought. The Eleven were showing confusion at Jesus' statement. How was it, precisely, that the Eleven would be able to see Jesus, but the followers of Priestly Judaism would think he was invisible? Of course, this wasn't physical. Jesus' answer was the same as the one described above. In keeping the internal Torah, they would always have Jesus with them, for his whole person had been (metaphorically) an expression of the message. The message of love was everything that he stood for, and if they remembered his principles, then they were remembering him. Again, though, Jesus put the emphasis not on himself but on God, who had sent him to them with the message.

25 "These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the advisor, the holy Spirit – which the Father will send in my name – it will teach you all things and will remind you of all of the things that I told you."

"The advisor" is a legal term. In the Roman Judea of Jesus' time, the function of an advisor was to remind the plaintiff or defendant in a legal proceeding of the laws which related to his situation. The advisor did not argue on behalf of the litigants (as our lawyers do); instead, his role was to provide "advice" in pleading one's case. Thus, in addition to their own memories, the holy Spirit would endow the Eleven with a miraculous reminder of "all the things" that Jesus had taught them – so that as long as they were alive, they would be able to apply the teachings of the Messiah correctly.

"Peace I leave to you. My peace I am giving to you. I am not giving to you as the creation gives.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard that I said to you, 'I am going away' and 'I am coming to you'. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced that I am going to the Father, because my Father is greater than I.

"And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you would trust. I will not speak much more with you, for the one who rules the creation is coming, and he has nothing with me, but that the creation may know that I love the Father, and that I do just what the Father instructed me. Rise. Let's leave here."

His envoys were still struggling with the notion that he was leaving and would return through his teachings and through miraculous guidance from God. At this point, they had been able to perform various signs (Mt 10), but there is no indication that the Eleven were prophets who received guidance and warnings directly from God. Jesus' hope for them was that this knowledge would provide them with peace, rather than upsetting them. In fact, they should be rejoicing that Jesus was about to die, because his destination would eventually be heaven, and God would begin guiding them. If they appreciated *his* guidance, then God's guidance would be even better, for God was greater than Jesus – or any of them.

"The one who rules the creation is coming" – This is normally understood to be the enemy, seen as having control over the rebellion against God. Recall that the enemy is an *earthly* opponent, consisting of the religion of Priestly Judaism and its defenders and supporters. Given what the author has written about Judah, this referred to Jesus' impending arrest. Jesus warned the Eleven about his arrest ahead of time, but he wanted them to know that in the end, the result would be that people would realize that God had sent Jesus, and that Jesus was being convicted falsely – having always done what God wanted.

At this point in the conversation, the group left dinner and proceeded toward the garden called Gethsemane. The author has intentionally omitted any elements of the dinner, for to him Jesus himself was the true paschal lamb. Likely, though, the group had participated in a full dinner, including lamb.

The Walk to the Garden

FIFTEEN

15:1 "I am the True Vine, and my Father is the gardener.⁴² Each branch in me which doesn't bear fruit, he takes away. And each one that bears fruit, he cleanses, so that it may bear more fruit.

"You are already clean, through the message that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, if it doesn't remain in the vine, likewise neither can you, unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – he bears much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. If someone doesn't remain in me, he is cast out like the branch and is withered. (And people gather them and cast them into a fire.) And it is burned.

Israel is a luxuriant vine; its fruit thrives.

According to the fullness of its fruit, he built altars.

According to the goodness of its land, he constructed pillars.

Their hearts are divided; now they will be made unseen.

He will break down their altars;

He will ruin their pillars,

⁴² See, for example, Hos 10:1.

Since they say, "There is no king for us, for we do not fear Yahweh. And what would a king do for us?"

Speaking declarations under pretense;
in falsehood, they set down covenants.

So, judgment springs up like crab grass in the grasses of the field. (Hos 10:1-4)

In the writings of Hosea, God described Israel as a vine that was being overrun by crab grass. As Jesus and his students walked along toward a nearby garden, no doubt they passed various vines that grew in the area, making this a natural jumping off point for Jesus to further explain himself. Israel was the vine, and Jesus said, "I am the True Vine." In contrast to Israel, then, Jesus was the **true** vine. A vine provides sustenance to its branches, and only through their Messiah could Jews receive "true" sustenance.

[The seed] sprouted and became a low spreading vine, and its branches turned toward him, and its roots remained where it stood. Therefore, it became a vine, and brought forth branches and put out leaves.

But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and look, this vine bent its roots toward him, and shot out its branches toward him that he might water it. From the bed where it was planted, he transplanted it to good soil by abundant waters, that it might bring forth branches, and bear fruit, and become a noble vine.

Yahweh God asks, "Will it survive?"

Won't he pull up its roots and cut off its branches, so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither?

It won't take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots.

Look, when it is transplanted, will it survive?

Won't it wither completely when the east wind strikes it – wither away on the bed where it grew?" (Ezek 17:6-10)

Ezekiel was writing about the seed planted by Nabu-Kudurri-Usur and allowed to grow. That was King Zedekiah, whom he left to rule the Kingdom of Judah in Jerusalem. Zedekiah reached out toward Pharaoh Wahibre Haaibre (Hophra) of Egypt, hoping that Egypt would become Judah's ally. However, Zedekiah's defiance of Nabu-Kudurri-Usur prompted the Babylonian king to attack and conquer Judah, to scatter the people into Exile, and to demolish the Temple. Zedekiah winds up with his eyes gouged out.

"Each branch in me which doesn't bear fruit, he takes away." This parallels the judgment that we see in Ezekiel 17. Anyone who claimed to be a follower of the Messiah but who did not practice his teachings (by living a life of love) would not be sustained. However, everyone who did live in love – "he cleanses". In Greek, the word for "take away" and the word for "cleanse" are somewhat similar, so that a Hellenistic reader would recognize a word play. Also, "cleanses" and "prunes" signify the same thing, but "cleanses" has a greater significance (that Jesus made use of). The Israelite who was cleansed would become capable of loving even more.

"You are already clean." – Since the Eleven had already embraced the Messianic message internalizing the Torah, they were "already clean." They were already capable of such love. "Remain in me, and I in you" – already, the reader should have been able to spot the parallel between the Eleven's relationship with Jesus and Jesus' relationship with God.

"Apart from me you can do nothing" – Judaism without the Messianic interpretation of the Torah is meaningless. If the Twelve were to leave the Messiah, they would become "fruitless," practicing an

external religion like the others. The branches that left Jesus – the Judeans who had no Messiah, would have their whole religion destroyed, in the end signifying their own destruction. Fire is the traditional metaphor of destruction.

7 "If you remain in me, and my declarations remain in you, you will ask whatever you want, and it will happen. My Father was glorified in this, so that you might bear much fruit – and you will have become my students. As the Father loved me, and I loved you, remain in my love. If you keep my precepts, you will remain in my love, as I have kept the Father's precepts and remain in his love. These things I have spoken to you so that my joy may be in you, and so that your joy may be fulfilled.

This personal admonition to the Eleven went to the heart of their relationship with him. As long as they continued to live the internal Torah, God would grant them their every request. He would provide them the signs and wonders necessary to establish the Messianic message among the Jewish people. If they would indeed do this, then they would truly be Jesus' students (by following the teachings of their teacher) and would bring glory to God. Just as the love of God was shown and taught to Jesus, so also while he was on earth, he showed and taught love to the Eleven. His hope was that they continue practicing that love.

Therefore, Jesus continued by saying, "If you keep my precepts, you will remain in my love." This is parallel to what he said earlier: "if you love me, you will keep my precepts." Their continued close relationship with Jesus was entirely connected to whether or not they kept on living lives of love. Their continued love would result in joy for them.

12 "This is my precept: that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: that one should lay down his life on behalf of his friends.⁴³ You are my friends if you do what I instruct you. I no longer say you are slaves, because the slave doesn't know what his lord is doing. But I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

"You didn't choose me. On the contrary, I have chosen you – and set you down – so that you might go and bear fruit, and that your fruit may remain, so that whatever you may ask the Father in my name, he would give you. These things I instruct you so that you may love one another.

This is the central point of the entire written work. While Johannes has omitted much of the discussion of the Torah for dramatic effect, at this point, he has cut to the focus of Jesus' teaching – that the whole duty of humanity can be summed up in one principle: love. "Keep my precepts" signifies this one statement precisely – that they love one another. In the direct context, this love is what he wanted for the Eleven, but his next statement was a stronger principle: that everyone should strive to have "greater love." We learn from the other accounts that during this last week, Jesus summed up the Torah in the two precepts: "Love Yahweh" and "Love your neighbor." Of these, one cannot love God without loving others (see also Jacob's letter), and therefore, love for others is the guiding principle of life.

Jesus' commentary on the value of friendship was not unique. The philosopher Epicurus valued friendship in a manner to which Jesus could relate:

The wise person will set up images. Whether he has something will carry no significance. ... And he will be grateful to anyone when he is corrected. And he will found a school, but not so as to attract attention. And he will read in public, but only by request. He will be a

⁴³ Compare to the saying of Epicurus: "The wise man...at times he will die for a friend" (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book X).

dogmatist but not a sceptic. Now he will be the same even when asleep. And at times he will die for a friend.

("Epicurus," *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book X, Diogenes Laertius)

He also said, "The noble-minded person is chiefly concerned with wisdom and friendship; indeed, of these the former is a mortal good, but the latter is an immortal one" (Vatican Saying #78). Jesus' application at this point in Johannes' account never extended beyond the Eleven, who were his friends (so long as they lived in love).

Jesus must have stunned them by declaring that they were his friends. The terminology of "lord" and "slave" is used to indicate a relationship where one person is superior to another. The term "friend" connotes equality and is related to one of the words for "love." He had told the Eleven all about himself and felt that they understood him. Therefore, they were then indeed his friends. This triple sense of love, equality, and intimate knowledge is the cornerstone of Jesus' concept of friendship.

"You didn't choose me" – Jesus had selected twelve from among his various followers to become his closest associates (and friends). He had been confident from the beginning that all of them (except Judah Iscariot) would be able to retain his teachings, so that the message would continue to spread after his death, and God would provide the accompanying apostolic signs for them. Throughout their role, the goal was for them to be loving and so, Jesus admonished them to continue to love one another.

18 "If the creation hates you, you know that it has hated me before you. If you were part of the creation, then the creation would have affectionately loved its own, but because you are not a part of creation – on the contrary, I chose you out of creation – the creation hates you because of this.

He was about to leave the Eleven to face their Jewish opposition without him. They were to be prepared for this, because there was a rebellion against God, and they did not belong to that rebellion. While they lived in Judean society, they were no longer a part of that society, and for that it would hate them – even after Jesus was gone. "Affectionately loved" is the verb denoting close friendship. They were Jesus' friends, and so they could not be friends of the religious system that had hated him. In fact, the enemies of Jesus would hate them too, and already hated them.

"Remember the saying that I said to you: 'A slave is not greater than his lord.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my message, they will also keep yours. But they will do all of these things to you on account of my name, because they don't know the one who sent me.

"If I hadn't come and spoken to them, they would have had no error, but now they have no excuse for their error. The one who hates me hates my Father also. If I hadn't done the deeds among them that no other has done, they would have had no error, but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this is so that the saying which was written in their code may be fulfilled, that, "They hated me without cause."⁴⁴

Philosophers such as Aristotle treated slaves like property. In his *Politics*, he wrote, Accordingly, while the sovereign is only sovereign of the slave and does not belong to him, the slave is not only slave to the sovereign but also is wholly his property. (*Politics*, Aristotle, I:1254a)

⁴⁴ Unjustly, see Psa 35:19

Jesus referred a second time to the public perception that no slave is greater than his lord, this time in order to indicate that since the religious system persecuted the Messiah himself, nothing would prevent them from persecuting his students. This persecution was going to happen because of Jesus and because the Jewish leaders had opposed God. Parallel to this, those who had been willing to accept the internal Torah from Jesus would still be willing to hear the Eleven explain its principles.

"If I hadn't come" – Before the Messiah came and explained exactly how the Torah should be understood, Israel in general was not as accountable for understanding it properly. That is, Jesus was indicating that they followed God as well as they could, but they didn't realize that their religion was a system of error – something that took people away from God. However, since Jesus proved himself to be the Anointed One and explained the Torah, those Judeans who were rejecting his message were accountable.

The saying that Jesus quotes is not specifically from the Torah, so νόμος ought to be rendered "code". This is "**their** code" meaning that the religious leaders had it to read and were therefore without excuse as to what it said. Psa 35:17ff. is a call to God for rescue.

Lord, how long will you look on? Restore my life from their ravages, my unique *life* from these lions. I will praise you in the great assembly; among many people, I will praise you. Do not let my enemies gloat over me unjustly; don't let those who hate me without cause wink their eyes. They do not speak peacefully, but plot in anger against those who live quietly in the land. They open their mouths wide at me and say, "Aha! Aha! Our eyes have seen it." Oh Yahweh, you have seen this; do not be silent. Do not be far from me, Lord. Awake, and rise to my judgment – for my justice, my God and Lord. (Psa 35:17-23)

It is not the point of this Davidic psalm to mention that they hate the Messiah for no reason; rather, it was their unfounded hatred which caused his suffering. Jesus applied this as an indication as to the reason for their hatred. The Jewish leaders had no real (legal) cause for hating their Messiah, but the underlying reason behind their hatred was that he had pointed out their need to change from following an external code to living lives of love.

26 "When the advisor comes, which I will send to you from the Father – the spirit of truth which is coming out from the Father – it will testify about me. Now you will also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

After Jesus departed, the holy Spirit (God) was going to remind the Eleven of everything Jesus had taught them. The core message, the internal Torah, is "the truth", and thus they would receive the spirit of the truth. Jesus considered them qualified to deliver this message because they had been with him "from the beginning." We see in Acts 1 that the distinguishing feature between being a member of the Twelve and simply an envoy (apostle) was this very point: members of the Twelve had to have been Jesus' associates since the days when he was with John the Baptizer.

16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may not stumble. They will put you out of the gatherings, but an hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think that this offers service to God. And they will do these things because they know neither the Father nor me.

Again Jesus predicted the suffering that the Twelve would endure in his name. Just as his opponents were about to have Jesus killed, so also, they would persecute some of the Twelve to the point of death. Johannes mentioned only Peter in his account, but if tradition is remotely reliable on this point, then only

some members of the Twelve died a natural death. Jesus' warning to his friends as to how they would be treated was brought up in order to prepare them, for in being prepared they would be strengthened.

"But these things I have spoken to you so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you about them. And I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to the one who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

"But I am telling you the truth, it makes sense for you that I should go away. For if I don't go away, the advisor will not come to you, [but if I go, I will send it to you].

"And, when it comes, it will reprove the creation regarding error, and regarding what is right, and about judgment:

concerning error, indeed, because they don't trust in me;

and concerning what is right, because I am going to my Father,

and you will observe me no longer;

and concerning judgment, because the one who rules the creation has been judged.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you are unable to bear them now. But when the spirit of truth comes, it will lead you in all of the truth. For it will not speak from itself, but it will speak what it hears, and it will announce to you the things that are coming. It will glorify me, because it will take from what is mine and will announce to you. All things that the Father has are mine. For this reason, I said that it is taking from what is mine and is announcing to you.

"A little while and you will observe me no longer. And again a little while and you will see me."

The warning about their own persecution was intended to serve as a reminder in advance, because Jesus would no longer be with the Eleven and would therefore not be able to provide personal comfort for them later. Expanding slightly on what he already told them, Jesus simply announced that he was going to be with God. This time, he wondered why none of them had asked him anything about where he was going.

His coming departure had upset his friends, and the mood was certainly dark at this point in the conversation, but Jesus returned the focus to the future. The Eleven would not receive this divine guidance he had talked about unless Jesus were to go away. Therefore, Jesus' departure was necessary, and so the Eleven should not be so sad.

As the advisor, the reminder of Jesus, the spirit of the truth, God would bring reproof upon Israel. This reproof would come in three areas: error, right, and judgment. Directed to the Twelve, Jesus was explaining to them that they would be able to separate absolutely between right and wrong. Judgment on Priestly Judaism would come very soon, and ultimately the nation would be separated into those who were truly following God (by keeping the Messianic truths) and those who were not. The Twelve would be bearers of this message.

"concerning error, because they don't trust in me." – The Twelve would be sent to continue pointing out the sins of the Jewish leadership who deliberately rejected the Anointed One.

"concerning what is right" – Since Jesus was leaving, he would no longer be around to point out what was the right life to live, but the Twelve would be able to do this with the same sort of divine guidance that Jesus had received.

"concerning judgment" – "The one who rules this world" referred to their Enemy, the religious system. Since the enemy had been judged, all of its followers (the Judeans who rejected the Anointed One) were

going to be judged. The ultimate result would be swift judgment on Israel. Within forty years, God would tear the whole system down. Between this time and that time, though, the Twelve were going to announce that upcoming judgment.

"The spirit of truth ... will lead you in all the truth." The Twelve's knowledge of the internal principles of the Torah was still budding. God would lead them into a full understanding of the teachings that Jesus had brought. They would also receive warnings about the coming destruction of Jerusalem: "it will announce to you the things that are coming." Some people interpret this as a universal saying for all Christians – that everyone is guided into all truth – but the context shows that Jesus intended these statements for the Twelve only. Not all Christians have the miraculous guidance that gives them knowledge of the future. That "the truth" is intended once again to signify Jesus' teachings about the Torah are evident in his statement that "it will take from what is mine and will announce to you." The holy Spirit would remind them of what Jesus had taught – this is just what he had told them earlier. Also, Johannes would relate later on that by "the truth," Jesus means God's message (the internal Torah). The expression is used the same way throughout the work. Finally, his concluding statement about them seeing him (with their eyes) for a little while, then not seeing him, then seeing him again in metaphor was clearly intended for those people with whom he was speaking.

17 Then some of his students said to one another, "What is this that he is saying to us: 'A little while and you will not observe me. And again a little while and you will see me,' and that, 'I am going to the Father'?" Therefore they said, "What is the 'little while' [that he is talking about]? We don't know what he is talking about."

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him this, and he said to them, "Are you inquiring with one another about this because I said, 'A little while and you will not observe me. And again a little while and you will see me'?"

"Indeed I assure you that you will cry and mourn, but the creation will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will become joy. When she is giving birth, a woman has sorrow because her hour has come. But when she has given birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no longer, on account of the joy, because a human being was born into the creation.

"And therefore you now have sorrow indeed, but I will see you again. And your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. And in that day, you will ask me nothing. Indeed I assure you: whatever you may ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now, you asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Because of the existing confusion, Jesus explained himself again, using the metaphor of childbirth. The Eleven still did not understand that Jesus' death would be so close in coming. And how would they "see" him after he died? Jesus explained that although they were sad that he was going to die, they should be happy instead, because they would always have God's guidance with them, and God would remind them of everything that he had said and done while with them. Therefore, they would always have him in their hearts.

The birthing metaphor, then, is simple. The Eleven were "in labor" because they knew that Jesus was about to die. But once he had died, they would be happy, realizing that this was what must happen and knowing God in a more intimate way than ever before. "You will ask me nothing" – Jesus would no longer be an intermediary between them and God. Instead, whatever they (as his representatives) asked God, God would grant.

24 "These things I have spoken to you figuratively. An hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you figuratively, but I will tell you openly about the Father.

"In that day, you will ask in my name, and I am not saying to you that I will ask the Father about you: for the Father affectionately loves you, because you have affectionately loved me and have trusted that I came out from God. I came out from the Father and have come into the creation. Again, I am leaving creation and am going to the Father."

29 His students said, "Look! Now you are speaking freely, and you aren't telling even one analogy. Now we know that you know all things, and you don't need anyone to ask you. In this we trust that you came out from God."

Although Jesus had told them by way of analogy about his departure, he was just about to tell them bluntly that there would soon be no barriers between them and God. "I am not saying...that I will ask" – because they would be able to ask for themselves and receive answers from God. "The Father affectionately loves you, because you have affectionately loved me" – This is a stronger statement than at first it appears to be. Jesus had stunned them earlier by referring to them, his students, as his **friends**. Now he adds the more stunning notion that since they had been his friends, they were God's friends also! Recall that the verb "affectionately love" and the noun "friend" are related; Jesus was stating plainly that God was their friend. Just as God had sent Jesus with his teachings, so also now Jesus must go to be with God, and saying this provided a nice closure for these grieving friends who were sure to miss him.

All of them looked around at each other, probably signifying that they understood. Yes, Jesus was indeed sent by God, and yes, it was necessary for him to return. They understood and would have the closure that Jesus intended.

31 Jesus answered them, "Now you trust!"

13:36 {Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going, you are unable to follow me now, but you will follow me afterwards."

Peter said to him, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life on your behalf."

38 Jesus said, "You will lay down your life on my behalf? Indeed I assure you: by no means will a rooster⁴⁵ sound until you deny me three times.} Look, an hour is coming, and now has come, when you will be scattered – every man for himself – and will leave me all alone. And I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

16:33 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may have peace in me. In the creation, you have affliction. But be of good cheer! I have been victorious over the creation!"

The Eleven finally understood why Jesus must leave and how he would always be with them in memory, and so now Peter was prepared to ask about the immediate future (whereas earlier they had been unwilling to ask this). Jesus answered, "You are unable to follow, but you will follow me afterwards." It was not their time to die, but they would eventually join him with God.

Peter's strong personality leapt to the foreground. He knew what was about to happen and was prepared to die with Jesus. Peter would indeed die for Jesus (see also chapter 21), but for the time being, Jesus predicted, not only would Peter deny Jesus three times before a certain night watch trumpet blew, but also all eleven of them would abandon him at some point during the next few days, leaving him all alone. Still, God would be with him through the whole ordeal, and the warning should serve to remind them that

⁴⁵ or "watch trumpet"

as long as they lived in the Judean society among those who opposed God, they would have affliction. But Jesus had succeeded in explaining the spiritual Torah to others. He had defeated the religion and was about to save Israel.

The Prayer for the Twelve

SEVENTEEN

17:1 Jesus spoke these things and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, so that the son may glorify you, as you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to each one that you have given to him.

3 "Now this is the eternal life: that they may know you – the only true god – and Anointed Jesus, whom you have sent.

At this point, Jesus began his final prayer on behalf of his students and the world. Since God had told him that he was about to be apprehended, Jesus asked to be glorified (that is, to be given the strength to continue), so that God would be glorified. As the Anointed One, Jesus was a superior not only to John the Baptizer, but he also had authority over everyone, because the eternal life could only be offered by someone in a position of superior knowledge. The nature of the eternal life was in the internal Torah. In practicing the internal Torah, Jesus followers would have a relationship with God and would know that Jesus had been the Anointed One.

"I glorified you on the land. I have finished the work that you have given me to do. And now, Oh Father, glorify me alongside you – with the glory that I had, which was directed toward you, before the creation existed. I showed your name to the people that you gave to me from out of the creation. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your message. Now they know that whatever things you have given to me, all of them are from you, because I have given them the declarations that you gave me. And they received and knew truly that I came out from you. And they believed that you sent me.

Again Jesus indicated that his job was over – he was about to die. On the land means "on earth" and "in Judea." There, he had not been universally accepted, after he went to be with God he would have (in heaven and in the hearts of those who had known him) the glory that God had envisioned for his anointed one even as he was putting Adam into the garden. For it had always been part of God's plan to send a beautiful and unique son to finish teaching his people.

Next, he made special mention of his students, the Eleven. Referring to them as having been given by God, he praises the fact that "they have kept your message" -- that is, they learned about the spiritual principles behind the Torah and were practicing them. These are "the declarations that you gave me".

9 "I am asking about them. I am not asking about the world, but about those whom you have given to me, because they are yours. (And all of mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, and they are in the world, and I am coming to you.)

"Oh holy Father, keep in your name those whom you have given to me, so that they may be one as we are. When I was with them, I kept them in your name. I also guarded those whom you have given me. None of them was destroyed except the son of destruction, so that the writing would be fulfilled.

This building up of his students was for their own benefit, so that the Eleven would be confident of Jesus' belief in them. Furthermore, he urged God to take care of them after his departure from the earth. For the first time in this prayer, he sought for the Eleven to be one with one another *in the same way* that he and God were one. He hoped that they would have close and loving relationships with one another. And here, he was speaking of all of them except Judah, "the son of destruction," who was betraying him as he spoke.

"But now I am coming to you. And I am saying these things while in the creation so that they might have my joy completed in them. I have given them your message, and the creation has hated them, because they aren't part of the creation, just as I am not part of the creation.

"I am not asking that you should take them out of creation, but that you would keep them from the Evil One. They are not part of the creation, just as I am not part of the creation. Make them holy in the truth. YOUR MESSAGE IS TRUTH. Just as you sent me into creation, also I sent them into creation. And I am making myself holy on their behalf, so that they would also be made holy in the truth.

"Now I am not only asking about these ones, but also about those who trust in me through their message, so that all may be one – as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so that also they may be in us so that the creation may trust that you sent me. And I have given them the glory which you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one (I in them and you in me), so that they may be completed into one, so that the creation may know that you sent me and loved them as you loved me.

24 "Father, I want that those whom you gave me may also be with me where I am, so that they may observe my glory, which you gave me because you loved me before the laying down of the creation.

"Oh just Father, the creation did not also know you, but I knew you, and these ones knew that you sent me. And I made known your name to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Just as Jesus had told the Eleven that he wanted them to be joyous after his death, so also he prayed to God to make this happen. As usual, "the creation" (κοσμος) signifies here the Judean society whose religion, Priestly Judaism, was in rebellion against God. Jesus was in creation at the time, and so were his students, but "they aren't part of the creation" – meaning that none of them were participating in the opposition to God's plan.

What kept them out of this rebellion? The Truth. The internal, spiritual, Torah – that extended far more deeply than the ritualistic religion of the Jewish leaders. "Your message is truth" – this is another key saying, explaining the majority of Johannes' work. Jesus had brought the truth, although Moses had brought the Torah (ch. 1). Worshipping spiritually, truthfully, signifies worship from within (which can never be attached to a building or location). "Your message is truth" is second only to "Love one another" in this discourse. These two brief sayings explain the message.

Jesus sent the Eleven "into creation" – to the people who did not believe, into the darkness, to teach (as his envoys) just as he had taught (as God's envoy). Jesus' completing his mission on behalf of the message "made him holy" (truly God's own), and he prayed that God would make sure that the Eleven never deserted the message.

Expanding the application, Jesus hoped that all those who would come to hear the message of the internal Torah would put it into practice and would therefore have the same close relationship with one another and with God that he had with God. This love would be observed by others, who would then know that they were Jesus' and that God had sent Jesus.

Returning to his prayer for the Eleven, Jesus added the request and hope that they would remain to the point of death, so that they would be with him (their friend) when they died. In the afterlife, they would fully realize how wonderful the plan to send the Messiah really was – the plan that was present at creation. And Jesus would continue to fulfill his Messianic role, living a life of love until death, so that the Eleven would see and would share in God's love (just as he had).

With this touching prayer, Jesus prepared for his arrest. He had provided full instruction for his students, and thus the author has provided full instruction for his reader. The reader who sought the truth now should know everything that Jesus had been sent to teach. The reader could now know the kind of love about which Jesus had spoken.

The Arrest

18:1 After saying these things, Jesus went out with his students beyond the brook of Kedron, where there was a garden, into which he and his students entered. Now Judah – the one who betrayed him – also knew the place, because Jesus often met there, together with his students.

Therefore, after taking a manipule of soldiers from the high priests and officers from the Perushim, Judah came there with torches, and lamps, and weapons.

Then Jesus, who knew all of the things that were going to happen to him, said to them as he went out, "Whom do you seek?"

They answered him, "Jesus the Nazarene."

He said to them, "I am he."

Now Judah who betrayed him was also standing with them. Then when he said to them, "I am he," they went back and fell to the ground. Then again he asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

Jesus answered, "I told you I am he, so if you are seeking me, permit these ones to go," that the saying that he said would be fulfilled, "Of those whom you have given me, I lost none of them."

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. (Now the name of the slave was Malchus.) Then Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath. The cup which the Father has given to me, shouldn't I drink it?"

12 Then the manipule and the commander and the officers of the Jews apprehended Jesus, and bound him, and led him to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Kaiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Kaiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that, "It is better that one person should be destroyed on behalf of the people."

The departure into the garden called Gethsemane marks a transition in the work. In this section, the author will show that the remaining prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled and that his trial was unfair. Johannes was very particular about the path taken by Jesus and the location of his arrest, just as he recalled the name of the servant; again, this established the author as providing eyewitness testimony.

A manipule of soldiers had been placed by the Roman government under the command of the priests in order to defend the temple. There may have been 100 men combing the area for Jesus at this time; clearly the high priests and Perushim considered him a threat to their livelihood.

Jesus' answer to their request for him was stunning because they realized that he was identifying himself not merely as "Jesus the Nazarene" but as the Anointed One. They were looking for Jesus, and he stepped forward to announce that he was the Messiah. His surprising, bold action caused some to step back. Likely, they stumbled into one another and fell down. Instead of escaping, he gave them the time to regain their

composure, and again he identified himself. Earlier, Jesus had said that he would give his life up willingly. This is precisely what happened, for he prevented his students from using the swords that (the others report) he had told them to carry. In not defending himself, Jesus showed his students that he did have the power to fight, but that he had chosen rather to do God's will. "Shouldn't I drink the cup"?

It was Peter, always such a strong character, who leaped to his teacher's defense, but in front of those who arrested him – including Judah and some of the Perushim – Jesus stopped the bloodshed and healed Malchus. Allowing himself to be taken, Jesus went with the soldiers to defend himself before Annas the former high priest, who still had a great deal of influence.

The Triple Denial, and the Defense Before the Priests

15 Now Simon Peter and another student followed Jesus. Now that student was known to the high priest and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Therefore, the student (the other one, who was known by the high priest) went out and spoke to the door-keeper, and brought Peter in.

Then the servant woman, the door-keeper, said to Peter, "Aren't you also this person's student?" He said, "I am not."

Now the slaves and the officers, who had made a coal fire, stood by it and warmed themselves, because it was cold. And Peter was standing with them and warming himself.

Then the high priest asked Jesus about his students and about his teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken freely to the world. I always taught in a gathering and in the temple courts, where all of the Jews come together, and I have said nothing in secret. Why are you asking me? Ask those who have heard what I said to them. Look, they know what things I said."

22 Now after he said these things, one of the officers who was standing by threw a punch at Jesus, saying, "You answer the high priest in this manner?!" Jesus answered them, "If I have said a bad thing, testify about the bad thing. But if I said good, why are you beating me?" Then Annas sent him, bound, to Kaiaphas the high priest.

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "Aren't you also one of his students?" He denied, saying, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, who was a relative of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I notice you in the garden with him?" Then again Peter denied, and immediately a rooster⁴⁶ sounded.

Johannes himself was from a wealthy family, possibly even of priestly lineage, so he was permitted to enter the proceeding against Jesus. Although he would stand by Jesus at the cross, Johannes did not speak up to defend Jesus when others were falsely accusing him. As Jesus had predicted, even Johannes himself had left Jesus to his fate. In doing so, his behavior paralleled that of Peter somewhat.

Annas asked Jesus about his teaching – about his radical treatment of the Torah. Jesus refused to defend himself, and although Johannes was present to answer, he still said nothing. One of the officers (possibly a Jewish officer, not a Roman one) punched (or possibly slapped) Jesus for refusing to answer. The other three accounts point out that the leaders were also trying to twist Jesus' statements about 'destroying the temple' into a plot against the Torah itself.

Meanwhile, Peter was standing outside, in a position where he could watch from without and where Jesus could see him. Just as Jesus had predicted, when Peter was confronted with his association with Jesus, he

⁴⁶ or "watch trumpet"

denied it three times – more vehemently each time, for Peter was afraid of being mistreated like Jesus. The next several days would give Peter strength, however, and he would never deny knowing Jesus again. The author entirely omitted Jesus' trial before Kaiaphas, along with any formal charges against him. The author viewed those charges as being so spurious that he could omit them, and he was going to bring up the important matters shortly. Instead, he included only Jesus' statement that he had done nothing wrong.

Pilatus's Questions

28 Then they led Jesus from Kaiaphas into the Praetorium. Now it was morning, and they didn't go into the Praetorium, so that they would not be defiled but might eat the Passover meal. So Pilatus went out to them, and he said, "What charge are you bringing against this person?" They answered, saying to him, "If this one were not an evildoer, we wouldn't have delivered him over to you."

Then Pilatus said to them, "You take him and judge him according to your 'Torah'." The Jews said to him, "It is illegal for us to kill anyone," (so that Jesus' saying would be fulfilled, which he said pointing out by what method of death he was about to die).

This section consists of a test for the reader. Pilatus will ask several questions. The reader is expected to know the answers to these questions.

The hypocrisy of the priests and Perushim is the first thing that the author noted subtly – any Israelite reader would spot this. It was now the middle of the night, the day of the killing of the paschal lamb. In concocting a false trial, they were already defiled to the point where they could not participate in the feast. Yet their issue was an external one: they were concerned about treading on soil dedicated to the Roman gods.

"What charge are you bringing against this person?" The reader knows that there were no legitimate charges, but that Jesus was being tried because of his treatment of the Torah as a set of internal principles. He had rejected everything that made up the religion of Priestly Judaism, claiming instead that the true devotion to God was fully spiritual.

The religious leaders' response shows that they did not have any charges which would have condemned Jesus under Roman law. The author portrayed Pilatus as an innocent dupe in the proceeding, out to save his own skin. Already he realized that Jesus had not violated any Roman laws, but the leaders wanted to have him executed. There were certain executions that the Jewish leaders could perform without the blessing of the Roman state, but crucifixion for claiming to be the Messiah was not one of them. It was illegal for them to execute anyone for such a charge, and so they petitioned the Governor. This was Pilatus' title, but it was one which would be exchanged later for Procurator.

33 Then Pilatus went again into the Praetorium and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "Are you saying this from your own understanding, or have others told you about me?"

"Are you the King of the Jews?" We have retained the word "Jews" here, rather than "Judeans," because it is clear from both Pilatus' response and what we know of the accusation that he did not believe for one moment that Jesus was claiming to be the rightful king of the earthly kingdom of Judea. For Johannes, the question concerns whether or not Jesus was the Anointed One. The reader knows that the answer is more

than just "yes." The answer includes *all* of the roles of the Messiah, including the "suffering servant." Yes, Jesus was all of these things.

Jesus did not answer, but the readers were supposed to know the answer. Jesus' reply was meant to test Pilatus' own understanding of the expression that he had just used. Did Pilatus really know what it meant to be the Messiah?

Pilatus answered, "I'm not a Jew. Your nation and the high priests have turned you over to me. What did you do?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my officers would fight, so that I wouldn't be turned over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from this place."

No, Pilatus did not understand, for he was not a Jew. He was neither a Judean nor someone who devoted himself to Priestly Judaism. Pilatus asked another question.

"What did you do?" – The reader knows that what Jesus did was to explain the Torah in terms of internal principles, and Jesus' answer actually says this. "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom had nothing to do with Judean society, and it was not the sort of earthly kingdom that Pilatus would be inclined to understand. The reader would know that the kingdom is within, for God's rule through his Anointed One would be in the hearts of those who love.

There could never be an earthly "Christian nation," for if there had been such a concept, Jesus' own students would have fought to forge one out of Israel. But because they did not fight, but Jesus had gone willingly, Jesus had proven that he was not trying to establish an earthly kingdom.

Therefore Pilatus said to him, "Then you're not a king?"

Jesus answered, "You are saying that I am a king. For this I have been born and for this I have come into the creation: that I might testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice."

"Then you are not a king"? The reader was supposed to realize that Pilatus' misunderstanding comes from his failing to internalize Jesus' saying. While Jesus was not planning to rival Rome and establish Israel as a sovereign nation, Pilatus had been right in first claiming that Jesus **was** a king (in a spiritual setting). Jesus took the opportunity to point to what it was that made Jesus a spiritual king: "the truth." The subjects in Jesus' spiritual kingdom are those who adhere to "the truth."

38 Pilatus said to him, "**What is truth?**"

And saying this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find not one fault in him. Now it is a custom of yours that I release one prisoner to you during the Passover. So, are you willing that I release to you the King of the Jews?"

Then again they cried out, saying, "Not this one, but Bar-Abbas!" (Now Bar-Abbas was a robber.) So Pilatus then took Jesus and had him whipped. And the soldiers, braiding a crown of acanthus, placed it on his head. And they threw a purple cape around him, and they came toward him and said, "Hail! King of the Jews!" And they punched him.

As far as we know, Pilatus did not wait for an answer to his final question at trial, but this was the most important question of all. If the reader can respond by acknowledging the spiritual Torah, the message of love that God has been communicating to us since the beginning, then the reader is ready to leave ritual religion and become a true follower of the Messiah.

Pilatus did not grasp the entirety of what Jesus was teaching him, but he understood enough of it to realize that Jesus was a good man. Invoking a custom of clemency, he offered to release Jesus to the people. He referred to Jesus as "King of the Jews," at least realizing that Jesus did not intend to set up a physical kingdom.

The one that they preferred over Jesus was Bar-Abbas. According to the others, Bar-Abbas had been arrested during an uprising, and apparently, he was a looter and perhaps had killed someone. Jesus would take his place on the cross, alongside two thieves who were apparently his cohorts.

As Jesus was whipped and mocked (see Isa 53 and Psa 22), the soldiers did so in a way that mocked his kingship. Instead of providing the laurel wreath worn by the Caesars, the soldiers gave Jesus a crown made of acanthus. The acanthus is a stickered plant, but the purpose in placing it on Jesus' head was not to injure Jesus but to mock his claim of being a king. This was not a "crown of thorns," as people often depict it. Since purple and red were normally colors associated with royalty, the soldiers placed a purple cape on Jesus' back and struck him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

19:4 And Pilatus went out again and said to them, "Look! I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find not one fault in him."

5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the acanthine crown and the purple cape. And Pilatus said to them, "Look at the man." Then when the high priests and the officers noticed him, they called out, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilatus said to them, "You take and crucify him, for I don't find fault with him." The Jews answered him, "We have a code, and according to the code, he is bound to die, because he made himself to be a god's son."

The Governor's intent at having Jesus mocked and flogged was to appeal to the crowd's emotions. Possibly they would see the humiliation that Jesus had suffered and come to believe that he had been punished enough. Therefore, when Pilatus emerged and brought Jesus out, he repeated the judgment that Jesus was blameless. But the high priests stirred up the crowd, so that they began calling for Jesus' crucifixion.

8 Therefore when Pilatus heard this saying he was more afraid, and he went into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus did not give him an answer.

So Pilatus said to him, "You aren't speaking to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?"

At first, Pilatus stood up to the leaders, wanting no responsibility for Jesus' death, believing him to be an innocent man. When the leaders identified Jesus as "a god's son," a phrase which a Roman would think to signify "demigod," Pilatus became afraid. He knew that the leaders were trying to have him killed for no reason, but now instead of merely being a would-be pretender to the throne, Jesus was a demigod. This frightened Pilatus because he believed it was possible, and so he asked Jesus "Where are you from?" The reader is expected to know that the correct answer is that God had sent Jesus with a message for the Jewish people. Jesus did not answer, but the reader should know that God sent Jesus.

And Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over me if it had not been given to you from above. On this account, the one who delivered me up to you has greater error."

Pilatus claimed the authority to have Jesus physically released. He claimed the authority over life and death. But Jesus replied that he had authority from God. Jesus' authority was "from above," and the reader is supposed to remember that anyone who is born from above (by experiencing a spiritual birth, by internalizing the Torah) is above and beyond all physical things.

The readers see from Pilatus' reaction (below) to Jesus' assessment of the Jewish leaders that he believed Jesus and not them. If even this gentile believed Jesus, would the reader fail to believe?

The high priest had brought Jesus to Pilatus, knowing who he really was. The religious system was making a grave error that would cost them their "place and their nation."

12 From this time, Pilatus sought to release him. But the Jews called out, saying, "If you release him, you're not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself king is speaking against Caesar."

Then when Pilatus heard these words, he brought out Jesus and sat down on the Tribunal in a place called the Pavement [Gabbatha in Hebrew]. Now it was the Day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Look at your king!"

Then they called out, "Away! Away! Crucify him!"

Pilatus said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?"

The high priests said, "We have no king except for Caesar." So then he turned Jesus over to them so that he would be crucified.

The leaders began to goad Pilatus into having Jesus crucified, even passing a veiled threat to claim to his superiors that in supporting Jesus he was rivaling Caesar. If such a charge were proved, Pilatus would have been executed. Previously, the Jewish leaders and the crowd had been unwilling to accept responsibility for Jesus' death, but at the end of their dialog with Pilatus they acknowledged their own responsibility – the other accounts add "his blood be on us and on our children."

Although Pilatus continued to (correctly) identify Jesus as their king, the crowd refused to accept him, calling for his death. At this point, Johannes slipped in a note of the time. It was 14 Nisan (the Day of Preparation of the Passover). The time was around noon when Pilatus allowed them to crucify Jesus. In the other accounts, Pilatus made the symbolic gesture of washing his hands, freeing himself of any responsibility for the death.

16 Then they took Jesus, [and as he carried his cross,] he went out into the place that is called a Skull [which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha], where they crucified him – and with him two others, on the left and right, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilatus also wrote a title and placed it on the cross. And what was written was, "Jesus the Nazarene: King of the Jews."

Consequently, many of the Jews read this title because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. Also, it had been written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Then the high priests of the Jews said to Pilatus, "Don't write, 'The King of the Jews', but that he said, 'I am a king of the Jews.'"

Pilatus answered, "What I have written, I have written."

The Roman crosses at this time were shaped like a capital "T," the Greek letter *tau*. As we see in the second-century Letter of Bar-Nabas (chapter 8),

For the writing says that "Abraham circumcised three hundred eighteen males of his household." What then was the secret thing given to him? Notice that he says "eighteen"

first and then "three hundred." In the number eighteen,⁴⁷ "I" and "H" means "ten" and "eight." Here you have Jesus.

And because the cross was how *we would* have favor, he adds "three hundred."⁴⁸ So he revealed Jesus in the two letters, and the cross in the remaining one.⁴⁹

Those who were condemned to die would carry the crossbar, since the central pole was already at the place of crucifixion (in this case, "Skull Place"). Normally, the charge against an executed criminal was placed on a tablet around his neck as he carried the crossbar and then nailed to the cross above him, so that everyone would know why the man was being put to death. Pilatus wrote the accusation in several languages, with each of them clearly stating that Jesus was the Messiah. The high priests objected to his wording, preferring him to have written that this was his **claim** and not the truth. The Governor's refusal to change the wording indicates his realization that Jesus was whatever he claimed to be. Again, this put pressure on the Israelite reader to realize for himself that Jesus was the Anointed One.

23 Then when they crucified Jesus, the soldiers took his garments [and coat] and made four parts – a part for each soldier. But the coat was seamless, woven from the top through the whole. So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it, but let's cast lots about it, to determine whose it will be." So that the writing would be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments for themselves, and they cast a lot on my clothing."⁵⁰ So indeed the soldiers did these things.

Not only this portion of Psalm 22 but the remainder of the psalm was being reenacted at this time as Jesus was being crucified. Johannes only alluded to it, expecting the reader to realize the rest. The other three accounts indicated that Jesus noticed the similarity between the Davidic psalm and the things that were happening to and around him. Feeling as abandoned as the psalmist, Jesus called out the first line of the psalm – pointing to the fact that the same kinds of things were happening. Like the psalmist, though, Jesus realized that God would never abandon him.

Now his mother stood by Jesus' cross; also his mother's sister, Miriam the wife of Klopas⁵¹, and Miriam the Magdalene. Therefore, when he noticed his mother and the student whom he loved standing by, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, look at your son." Then he said to the student, "Look at your mother." And from that hour, the student took her into his own care.

It remained for Jesus (as firstborn son) to discharge his duty to take care of his mother as long as she lived. Had Yosef, his father, still been alive, this would not have happened; he was dead by this time. Instead of entrusting his mother (still not called by name) to one of his brothers, Jesus chose his closest student, the author, to take care of her from that point on, which Johannes claims that he did.

25 After this, Jesus (who knew that everything had already been completed) said, "I am thirsty," so that the writing might be fulfilled. A vessel full of vinegar was standing there. So they put a sponge full of

⁴⁷ One way to write 18 in Greek was IH = 10 + 8. The Greek word, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, Jesus' name, begins with those letters.

⁴⁸ The number 300 in Greek was expressed by a tau: T. This was the shape of the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

⁴⁹ Together, IHT makes 318. The author seems to say that "eighteen" is placed first, which indicates that in his text, IHT is the representation of 318, rather than TIH. This rearrangement of numbers was common below 1000.

⁵⁰ Read Psalm 22.

⁵¹ i.e., Alfeus

vinegar onto a "hyssop stalk" and brought it to his mouth.⁵² Then when he took the vinegar, Jesus said, "It has been completed!" And, nodding his head, he gave up the spirit.

By this time it was late afternoon. The others report that it was approximately three o'clock. Late afternoon on 14 Nisan was the correct time for slaughtering the Passover lamb. Jesus was still alive and receiving sustenance (from a Roman spear, "hyssop stalk") at this time, and so it was his own choice to declare that his mission was completed. The thirst and vinegar were an enactment of Psalms 69:21 -- *"They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."* No one took his life; even at the end he gave it willingly. Thus the wording, "he gave up the spirit," rather than simply, "he died."

31 Then, since it was the Day of Preparation, the Jews asked Pilatus to have the legs of those on the crosses broken, and to have them taken away, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a great one).⁵³ Therefore the soldiers came and indeed they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and noticed that he had already died, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water came out immediately.

And the one who saw these things has testified, and true is his testimony. And he knows that he is saying true things, so that you also might trust. For these things happened so that the writing might be fulfilled: "No bone of his will be broken."⁵⁴ And again another writing says, "They will see into the one whom they pierced."⁵⁵

Although Johannes deliberately did not say "Jesus died at the time when the lambs were slaughtered," because he preferred that the reader draw this conclusion, he provided so many clues that the reader should reach no other conclusion. It was 14 Nisan, it was the afternoon, and Jesus' legs were not broken so that the stipulation that the paschal lamb have no broken bones (Ex 12:46) would be fulfilled. From John the Baptizer's first declaration until this moment, the reader has had it in the back of his mind that Jesus would fulfill the role of the Passover lamb, dying not for one family but for all Israel.

The coming Sabbath "was a great one." That is, it was a normal Sabbath (Friday night and Saturday) and it was also the day when the Passover lamb would be eaten (which Johannes always calls "Passover"). The author points this out because Jesus had mentioned that he would rise again "during the third day" after his death.

The other writing stems from Zechariah 12:10. The passage continues into chapter 13, which is the one that begins, *"On that day there will be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."* The original prophecy had been about events that took place around 200 BC, but Johannes has observed the similarities with Jesus' death: the beginning of a new covenant with the slaughter of God's lamb. Some commentators have tried to glean something

⁵² Psalm 69:21 reads, *"They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."*

⁵³ It was 14 Nisan, it was the afternoon, and Jesus' legs were not broken so that the stipulation that the paschal lamb have no broken bones (Ex 12:46) would be fulfilled. The coming Sabbath "was a great one." That is, it was a normal Sabbath (Friday night and Saturday) and it was also the day when the Passover lamb would be eaten.

⁵⁴ Exodus 12:46

⁵⁵ *"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of mercy and request, so that, when they look into the one whom they pierced, they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn son."* (Zechariah 12:10)

from the "blood and water" that came from Jesus' side. Nothing was likely intended, however, since blood was not an important symbol for Johannes.

Finally, in this section the author provided his own eyewitness testimony to the events that took place at the cross, giving this testimony in the hopes that the reader would understand and trust Jesus.

38 Now after these things, Yosef from Arimathaia (who was a student of Jesus, although hidden on account of his fear of the Jews) asked Pilatus to allow him to take away Jesus' body, and Pilatus allowed it. Therefore, he came and took away his body. Now Nikodemos also came (the one who came to him by night at the first), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes – about a hundred litra in weight.

So they took Jesus' body and wrapped it with linen cloths – with the spices, just as it is customary for Jews to embalm. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb, in which no one had yet been placed. So they laid Jesus there, on account of the Preparation of the Jews, because the tomb was nearby.

As this section comes to a close, the readers are introduced briefly to the wealthy man whose tomb Jesus occupied. Nikodemos, whom we first met in darkness, made his third appearance here. The reader can see that he was now fully public in his acceptance of Jesus as the Anointed One, as he and Yosef made the public application to receive Jesus' body for burial. No mention was made in Johannes' account of the women bringing spices to anoint Jesus' body, but when they did arrive (below) that would be their purpose. Instead, Johannes pointed out again that it was still 14 Nisan when Jesus was laid in the tomb. By their own reckoning, then, 14 Nisan would constitute his first day in the earth.

The city of Yosef is transliterated into Greek (and now English) as Αριμαθαία (Arimathaia), which itself is an attempt at transcribing a Hebrew name. The city was probably Ramathaim-Zofim. The Hebrew Bible refers to the place as Ramah. It was the city where Samuel the Prophet lived and was buried (1 Sam 28:3).

The Empty Tomb

TWENTY

20:1 Now on the first day of the week, Miriam the Magdalene came early to the tomb – it was still dark – and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.⁵⁶ Therefore she ran, and she came to Simon Peter and to the other student (whom Jesus affectionately loved) and said to them, "They have taken the Lord away out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him."

The other accounts indicate that it was right around dawn when Miriam (and the women with her) went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. Significant for Johannes is that it was "still dark"; that is, the light (Messiah) had not yet been revealed to them as returned. The tomb was a cave, and over the door to the cave had been rolled a very large boulder – too large to be moved by a few people. The other accounts mention here the fact that the tomb had been guarded since the moment Jesus' body had been laid in it. Yet now it was empty.

This was the morning of the first day of the week; in other words, it was Sunday. Jesus had been put into the tomb on 14 Nisan, spending some of 14 Nisan, all of 15 Nisan, and some of 16 Nisan in the grave. This

⁵⁶ This is the morning of the first day of the week, Sunday. Jesus had been put into the tomb on 14 Nisan, spending some of 14 Nisan, all of 15 Nisan, and some of 16 Nisan in the grave. This was the third day since he expired.

was the third day since he expired. As the readers would soon discover, Jesus had raised from the dead at some time during Saturday night or early Sunday morning.

Miriam had seen the empty tomb. However, Johannes was providing his own eyewitness testimony, and he had not yet seen Jesus resurrected. When Miriam approached the author and Peter, they were all confused. It would be necessary for them to see for themselves what had happened.

So Peter and the other student went out, and they came to the tomb. Now the two ran together, and the other student ran ahead of Peter, faster, and came to the tomb first. And, stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there; however, he didn't go in.

Then Simon Peter following him reached the tomb and went inside, and he observed the linen cloths lying there, and the head wrapping which was on his head (not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a separate place). So then the other student (the one who had arrived at the tomb first) went in, and saw, and trusted her. For they didn't yet know the writing which said that it was necessary for him to rise from among the dead.

Johannes was younger, and therefore he outran Peter to the tomb. Again, this illustrates briefly the friendship between Peter and Johannes, which at times seems almost a rivalry. Johannes' refusal to enter may have been related to his priestly connections. Had he come into contact with a corpse, he would have been defiled. But Peter was not concerned with such a triviality; he needed to see what was going on inside the tomb. Lukas indicates that the other students did not believe Miriam's account and therefore did not go with her.

Inside, both Peter and Johannes discovered the wrappings that had been around Jesus' head and body. There was no corpse, but the cloths were neatly wrapped in two bundles, as our eyewitness tells us in detail. Still they did not understand fully how and when Jesus' resurrection would come. Maybe his body had been stolen.

The Resurrected Jesus and Miriam of Magdala

10 Then the students went away again by themselves, but Miriam stood just outside the tomb, crying. Therefore as she cried, she stooped down into the tomb and beheld two messengers in white, seated one at the head and one at the feet of where Jesus' body had been put. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

She said to them, "Because they took away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid him."

After saying these things, she turned around and beheld Jesus standing there; yet she didn't know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Whom do you seek?"

Assuming that he was the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you carried him off, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him away."

Jesus said to her, "Miriam."

Turning around, she said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" [that is to say, "Teacher!"]

Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Now go to my brothers, and tell them that I am going to ascend to my Father and your Father: that is, my god and your god."

Miriam the Magdalene came and announced to the students that she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.

Miriam was this author's focus, although the other women may have been with her: left alone by Peter and Johannes, she met two messengers and an unknown person who was actually Jesus incognito. Just as Jesus had said (ch. 10) that his sheep know him, and that he calls them by name, when Jesus called Miriam's name, she immediately realized who he was.

"Stop clinging to me" – This literally signifies that she hold him no longer. Why? Because although he was with them, this was not his final departure. He did not want his students to believe that he had "gone" and "returned" already. In following Jesus' admonition to tell the others, Miriam became the first person to receive an admonition from the risen Jesus to spread the message of his resurrection.

Receive Holy Breath

19 Then, since it was the evening of the first day of the week, and since the doors had been shut at the place where the students were staying (on account of their fear of the Jews), Jesus came and stood in their midst, and he said to them, "Peace to you." And after saying this, he showed them his hands and side. So the students rejoiced upon seeing the Lord. Then again [Jesus] said to them, "Peace to you. As the Father sent me, also I am sending you." And having said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive holy breath. Whoever's errors you let go, they will be let go. Whoever's errors you hold, they will be held."

By early evening (just before the second day of the week), Jesus had already visited with Cleopas and another on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24). Ten of the Eleven (all but Thomas) were gathered in the room where they had eaten their last meal with Jesus. The door was locked, yet Jesus suddenly appeared. Standing amongst them, he greeted them, "Peace to you." This was more than a mere greeting, though, for earlier he had comforted them by telling them that after he was gone, they should feel peace and joy. He provided for them a clear proof that he was Jesus and not an imposter, and they felt both the peace and the joy that he had promised.

At this time, Jesus renewed the commission of the Twelve. He would do this again shortly before leaving, for this passage is not parallel to Lk 24:45f., and so on this occasion his words were brief. As God had sent him, so also he sent them. Just as he had had the holy breath to work various signs, so also they would receive this holy breath. Jesus' act was symbolic: in breathing the Messiah's breath on them, he symbolically endowed them with the ability to perform the miraculous signs even in his absence. The "power of binding and loosing," which the Twelve had used while he was alive (Mt 18:18), was now explicitly allowed to them after his final departure. With the holy breath, his envoys could see into human motives, knowing absolutely whose were pure and whose were not (e.g., Hananiah and Sapphira in Acts 5). Thomas, too, and Matthaiah (who would replace Judah) were likely given the holy breath, although no account mentions it explicitly. For Johannes stating that would be unnecessary.

Thomas Sees and Trusts

24 Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called a twin, wasn't with them when Jesus came. So the other students said to him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will by no means believe."

And after eight days, his students were again inside, and Thomas was with them. After the doors had been shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and he said, "Peace to you."

Afterwards, he said to Thomas, "Bring your finger here, and look at my hands, and bring your hand, and put it into my side; and do not be distrusting, but trusting."

Thomas answered, saying to him, "My Lord, and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you trust. Blessed are those who haven't seen and still have trusted."

Jesus left, although the author only implies this, but given the author's time-conscious nature (see v. 26) it was probably still the same evening, although it may have lapsed into the second day of the week by the time Thomas arrived. The others announced confidently that they had seen Jesus. Thomas' "doubtful" comment is most likely based on the fact that the other ten had seen the nail marks in Jesus' hands and the point of the spear that had been thrust into his side.

Thomas flatly denied that the others had seen Jesus, believing that they were duping him, and they spent eight days without seeing him again. After this time had passed, Jesus appeared to all Eleven of them in the same place. Again Jesus bypassed the locked doors, and again he greeted them with peace. This time, however, he addressed Thomas directly, asking him to acquire whatever proof he needed. Although there had been Jewish leaders who had seen Lazaros resurrected and still did not believe, Thomas was one of Jesus' friends, and he came to trust in Jesus immediately – without the need to touch him.

Thomas' cry to God illustrates the instant humility and trust which overwhelmed him. Thomas would never doubt the power of God again, and his knowledge of Jesus' identity was secured – as it should be for the reader. It is for his reader that the author includes Jesus' statement to Thomas (which was not his final word that day) – that those who haven't seen and still have trusted are blessed.

And then indeed, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his students which have not been written in this scroll. Now these have been written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Anointed One – God's son – and so that, trusting, you might have life in his name.

Many commentators have mistaken this for the intended ending to the work, claiming then that chapter 21 is an "appendix." However, this is not so. It was the author's intent here to point out that while the Eleven were gathered together in the upper room, Jesus performed various signs in their presence, proving that he must be who he claimed to be. Only his miraculous appearance in the room (twice) and their witness to the nail marks and spear mark have been written down for the reader. These signs should be enough to convince the open-minded reader that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One.

The Catch of Fish

21:1 After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the students, on the Sea of Tiberias. Now he showed himself this way:

Simon Peter, and Thomas (the one called a twin), and Nathanael (the one from Kana of Galilaiah), and the sons of Zebedaiiah, and two of his other students were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going to fish." They said to him, "We're going with you too."

They went out and entered into the boat, and during that night they caught nothing. But after morning occurred, Jesus now stood at the shore. However, the students didn't know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any food?" They answered him, "No."

Now he said to them, "Cast the net off the right side of the boat, and you will find."

So they cast the net, and they were not strong enough to draw it up, due to the great number of fish. Then that student whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!"

Therefore, when he heard that it was the Lord, Simon Peter wrapped himself with his outer garment (for he was undressed) and threw himself into the sea. But the other students came by boat, dragging the net of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred paces away.

This event parallels one recorded by Lukas (Lk 5), an event with which the author did not assume his reader was familiar; such familiarity was unnecessary. Our knowing of that event will explain the students' reactions better, though.

First of all, the reader **was** expected to know the occupations of certain of the Twelve. Peter and the others were going fishing not for sport but because it was their occupation. For the first time, Johannes mentions "the sons of Zebediah." All of the other characters mentioned by name have been introduced to the readers before. His purpose in this late introduction was to identify himself, for the readers would shortly discover that he was among the fishermen.

Having spent some time apparently without gainful employment, the fishermen in the group went fishing in order to support themselves. They fished all night but "caught nothing." At morning, they saw a figure standing on the shore, calling to them. No, they had no food, for they had caught nothing.

"Cast the net," he instructed. At this point, they probably assumed that he was another man of their trade who knew where the schools were running. They cast their net, and it was filled to beyond capacity. Johannes remembered what had happened earlier – how they had once doubted Jesus regarding their catch of fish and how their net had broken on account of the great number of fish. This time, there was no doubt: Johannes realized right away that this man could only be Jesus.

Upon realizing that this was Jesus, Peter immediately dove into the water and swam to Jesus' location. Since they had been on the boat alone all night, Peter had undressed down to his underwear, and so he did take the time to clothe himself first. The others were more subdued, dragging the net alongside the boat as they piloted it toward the shore.

9 So when they went up onto the land, they saw a coal fire burning there, and a fish lying on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you caught just now." So Simon Peter went up and drew the net up to the land, full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. And though there were so many, the net was not torn.

There are two interesting things to note here. First, Jesus already had both bread and fish – the same two elements that had been used in the miraculous feeding (ch. 5). So that they might eat together, he directed that they retrieve some of their fresh catch. The second thing of note is that Johannes presented exact testimony to the catch, even counting the number of large fish. Unlike the time when they had doubted (Lk 5), this time the net did not break, even though the catch was so great.

The Triple Assent

Jesus said to them, "Come eat breakfast."

But none of the students dared to ask him, "Who are you?", knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread, and he gave some to them – and the fish likewise. This third time now Jesus showed himself to the students after being raised from among the dead.

15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Yohanan, do you love me more than these?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord. You know that I affectionately love you."⁵⁷

He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Yohanan, do you love me?"

He said to him, "Yes, Lord. You know that I affectionately love you."

He said to him, "Tend my sheep." The third time, he said to him, "Simon, son of Yohanan, do you affectionately love me?"

Peter was upset because the third time he said to him, "Do you affectionately love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I affectionately love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Indeed I assure you: when you were younger, you dressed yourself and walked where you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (Now this he said to signify by what *manner of death* he would glorify God.) And after saying this, he said to him, "Follow me."

This time, no one doubted. Everyone realized for certain that this was the resurrected Jesus. Their trust had come far in the few weeks that had passed.

There are several word plays in this section, and therefore we must take them one at a time. The most significant thing to recognize is that this account parallels Peter's triple denial that he was one of Jesus' students. Assuming "love me more than these" refers to the other ten, Peter was now able to confidently assert three times that he loved Jesus, even more than the others. Some have suggested that "these" refers to the boat, the fish, and the trappings of earthly life. Such a suggestion does not alter the fact that Peter affirmed his love for Jesus three times.

Word game: the words for "tend" or "feed" are changed each time Jesus phrases his response to Peter's affirmation. Feed, tend, feed. The implication is that "feed" and "tend" are used synonymously. Since Peter affirmed that he really does love Jesus, he must do as Jesus suggested they all do; he must love them. "Feed my sheep" signifies loving his fellow Christians.

Word game: the words for "sheep" or "lambs" are changed. "Lambs" was probably used as a term of affection, and therefore these words also were meant to be taken as synonyms. Peter was to love his fellow Christians, to help take care of them.

Word game: the words for "love" are changed. This is the most significant of the three word plays, for Johannes pointed out for his reader that Peter became upset at the way Jesus changed his own wording the third time.

The first two occasions, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me," using the verb αγαπω. This was the kind of love that Jesus had urged his students to have for one another. Both times, Peter replied that he was affectionate for Jesus – that he was Jesus' close friend (φιλεω). While Peter was affirming his love for Jesus, he was not quite willing to make the step to αγαπω. Thus, Jesus admonished him to love the others if he is going to truly love Jesus.

The third time, Jesus used Peter's own words. As the author pointed out, this change of wording upset Peter, for he was really trying to reach that level of love that Jesus had talked about. Jesus continued in

⁵⁷ In this passage, two words for tend/feed are used, two words for sheep/lambs, and two words for affection/love.

response to acknowledge that Peter indeed had and would continue to have that greater love, for there would come a day when Peter would die for Jesus.

Tradition has it that this reference indicates Peter carrying a crucifixion bar just as Jesus had carried (and that he was crucified upside-down). The passage here may only indicate that he would die in captivity.

About the Author

20 When Peter turned around, he noticed that the student that Jesus loved was following (the one who also reclined on his chest at supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who is betraying you?"). When he noticed him, Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, now what of this one?"

Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come back, what is it to you? You follow me."

Then this saying went out among the brothers that this student would not die. But Jesus didn't say that he wouldn't die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come back, what is it to you?"

24 This is that student who is testifying about these things, and who wrote these things. And we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did, which (if each one were written down), I suppose that not even the universe itself could hold the written scrolls.

"Follow me" (v. 19) had at first only the primary meaning. Taking Peter aside, Jesus wished to speak with him privately. As they were leaving the others, Peter noticed Johannes following behind and asked whether Johannes would die like Peter was being told he himself would die.

Jesus' answer was that what happened to anyone else was irrelevant. By the time of writing, people who had heard about that saying had passed it along to others, who mistakenly believed it to refer to eternal life on earth for Johannes. The author affirmed that this was not the intended meaning. All Jesus had been saying was that what happens to others is irrelevant, "You follow me." This time, the word "follow" is used in a spiritual sense, of course. At any rate, Jesus had only said that Johannes might live until the return in judgment in AD 70 – and apparently Johannes nearly did so.

Finally, the author testified for the last time that he was in a position to witness all of the things that he mentioned, and that these things were certainly true. The Israelite reader would recognize the solemnity of Johannes' offering his testimony on Jesus' behalf, for the false witness would be severely punished. The hyperbole at the end is a classic confirmation of someone's greatness. Jesus' tale was so great, our author tells us, that there haven't been enough scrolls made to tell it!

The reader leaves, then, with a decision to make: whether to believe the good things that they had heard about Jesus and to realize that he really was the Anointed One or to reject him despite so much testimony and so many signs. If they accepted him, they had to embrace a radical treatment of the Torah: that all worship is internal, so that the single precept underlying all of God's instruction to his people is simply love. This would mean rejecting the vast portion of the traditions that had been handed to them, but the truth-seeker would find the truth in this spiritual message that Johannes has painstakingly written down for him.