

# FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!**

## ***The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, 1, 2 and 3 John***

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?](#)

[A Guide to Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search for Verifiable Truth](#)

Commentary:

[Introduction to John](#)

<a href="#">John 1</a>	<a href="#">John 8</a>	<a href="#">John 15</a>	<a href="#">Introduction to 1 John</a>
<a href="#">John 2</a>	<a href="#">John 9</a>	<a href="#">John 16</a>	<a href="#">1 John 1</a>
<a href="#">John 3</a>	<a href="#">John 10</a>	<a href="#">John 17</a>	<a href="#">1 John 2</a>
<a href="#">John 4</a>	<a href="#">John 11</a>	<a href="#">John 18</a>	<a href="#">1 John 3</a>
<a href="#">John 5</a>	<a href="#">John 12</a>	<a href="#">John 19</a>	<a href="#">1 John 4</a>
<a href="#">John 6</a>	<a href="#">John 13</a>	<a href="#">John 20</a>	<a href="#">1 John 5</a>
<a href="#">John 7</a>	<a href="#">John 14</a>	<a href="#">John 21</a>	<a href="#">2 John</a>
			<a href="#">3 John</a>

Appendices:

[Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#)

[Textual Criticism](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Doctrinal Statement](#)

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# A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

## First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

## Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
June 27, 1996

# A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

## II. Inappropriate Methods

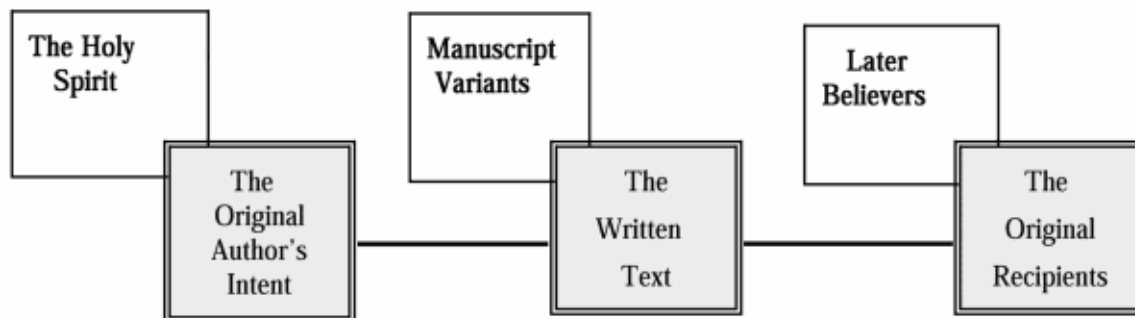
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
  - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - (1) Old Testament
      - a) Hebrew narrative
      - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - d) Law codes
    - (2) New Testament
      - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - b) Parables (Gospels)
      - c) Letters/epistles
      - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - (1) the author
    - (2) the date
    - (3) the recipients
    - (4) the specific reason for writing
    - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - (6) references to historical people and events
  - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
    - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - (3) contrasting concepts
  - c. List the following items
    - (1) significant terms
    - (2) unusual terms
    - (3) important grammatical structures
    - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances

- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - (1) study Bibles
  - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - (3) Bible introductions
  - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### **IV. Application of Bible Interpretation**

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### **V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation**

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:



1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:  
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."
  
2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:  
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."
  
3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:  
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

## **VI. This Commentary's Method**

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
  - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - a. literary context
  - b. historical, cultural insights
  - c. grammatical information
  - d. word studies
  - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
  - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
  - a. manuscript variations
  - b. alternate word meanings
  - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
  - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Matthew and Luke begin with Jesus' birth, Mark begins with His baptism, but John begins before the creation.
- B. John presents the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth from the first verse of the first chapter and repeats this emphasis throughout the Gospel. The Synoptic Gospels veil this truth until late in their presentations ("The Messianic Secret").
- C. Apparently John develops his Gospel in light of the basic affirmations of the Synoptic Gospels. He attempts to supplement and interpret the life and teachings of Jesus in light of the needs of the early church (late first century).
- D. John seems to structure his presentation of Jesus the Messiah around
  - 1. seven miracles/signs and their interpretation
  - 2. twenty-seven interviews and/or dialogues with individuals
  - 3. certain worship and feast days
    - a. the Sabbath
    - b. the Passover (cf. John 5-6)
    - c. the Tabernacles (cf. John 7-10)
    - d. Hanukkah (cf. John 10:22-39)
  - 4. "I Am" statements
    - a. related to the divine name (YHWH)
      - 1) I am He (John 4:26; 8:24,28; 13:19; 18:5-6)
      - 2) before Abraham was I am (John 8:54-59)
    - b. with predicate nominatives
      - 1) I am the bread of life (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
      - 2) I am the light of the world (John 8:12)
      - 3) I am the door of the sheepfold (John 10:7, 9)
      - 4) I am the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14)
      - 5) I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
      - 6) I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)
      - 7) I am the true vine (John 15:1, 5)
- E. The differences between John and the other Gospels
  - 1. Although it is true that John's primary purpose is theological, his use of history and geography is extremely accurate and detailed. The exact reason for the discrepancies between the Synoptics and John is uncertain
    - a. an early Judean ministry (early cleansing of the Temple)
    - b. chronology and date of the last week of Jesus' life
    - c. a purposeful theological restructuring
  - 2. It would be helpful to take a moment to discuss the obvious difference between John and the Synoptics. Let me quote George Eldon Ladd from *A Theology of the New Testament* on the differences:
    - a. "The Fourth Gospel is so different from the Synoptics that the question must be honestly faced whether it reports accurately the teachings of Jesus or whether Christian faith has so modified the tradition that history is swallowed up in theological interpretation" (p. 215).

b. "The solution that lies closest to hand is that the teachings of Jesus are expressed in Johannine idiom. If this is the correct solution, and if we must conclude that the Fourth Gospel is couched in Johannine idiom, this important question follows: To what extent is the theology of the Fourth Gospel that of John rather than that of Jesus? To what extent has the teaching of Jesus been so assimilated in John's mind that what we have is a Johannine interpretation rather than an accurate representation of Jesus' own teaching?" (p. 215).

c. Ladd also quotes W. F. Albright from "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John" in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube

"There is no fundamental difference in teaching between John and the Synoptics; the contrast between them lies in the concentration of tradition along certain aspects of Christ's teachings, particularly those which seem to have resembled the teaching of the Essenes most closely.

There is absolutely nothing to show that any of Jesus' teachings have been distorted or falsified, or that a vital new element has been added to them. That the needs of the early Church influenced the selection of items for inclusion in the Gospel we may readily admit, but there is no reason to suppose that the needs of that Church were responsible for any inventions or innovations of theological significance.

One of the strangest assumptions of critical New Testament scholars and theologians is that the mind of Jesus was so limited that any apparent contrast between John and the Synoptics must be due to differences between early Christian theologians. Every great thinker and personality is going to be interpreted differently by different friends and hearers, who will select what seems most congenial or useful out of what they have seen and heard" (pp. 170-171).

d. And again from George E. Ladd:

"The difference between them is not that John is theological and the others are not but that all are theological in different ways. Interpreted history may represent more truly the facts of a situation than a mere chronicle of events. If John is a theological interpretation, it is an interpretation of events that John is convinced happened in history. It is obviously not the intent of the Synoptic Gospels to give a report of the *ipsissima verba* of (the exact words) Jesus nor a biography of the events of his life. They are portraits of Jesus and summaries of his teaching. Matthew and Luke feel themselves free to rearrange the material in Mark and to report Jesus' teaching with considerable freedom. If John used more freedom than Matthew and Luke, it is because he wished to give a more profound and ultimately more real portrait of Jesus" (pp. 221-222).

## AUTHOR

A. The Gospel is anonymous but hints at John's authorship

1. an eye witness author (cf. John 19:35)
2. the phrase "the beloved disciple" (both Polycrates and Irenaeus identify him as John the Apostle)
3. John, son of Zebedee, never mentioned by name

B. The historical setting is obvious from the Gospel itself, therefore, the issue of authorship is not a crucial factor in interpretation. The affirmation of an inspired author is crucial!

The authorship and date of John's Gospel does not affect inspiration, but interpretation. Commentators seek a historical setting, an occasion that caused the book to be written.

Should one compare John's dualism to

1. the Jewish two ages

2. the Qumran teacher of righteousness
3. Zoroastrian religion
4. Gnostic thought
5. the unique perspective of Jesus?

C. The early traditional view is that John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, is the human, eye-witness source. This must be clarified because second century external sources seem to link others in the production of the Gospel:

1. Fellow believers and the Ephesian elders encouraged the aging Apostle to write (Eusebius quotes Clement of Alexandria)
2. A fellow Apostle, Andrew (the Muratorian Fragment, a.d. 180-200, from Rome)

D. Some modern scholars have assumed another author based on several assumptions about the style and subject matter of the Gospel. Many assume an early second century date (before a.d. 115):

1. written by John's disciples (a Johannine circle of influence) who remembered his teachings (J. Weiss, B. Lightfoot, C. H. Dodd, O. Cullmann, R. A. Culpepper, C. K. Barrett)
2. written by "the elder John," (one of a series of early leaders from Asia influenced by John the Apostle's theology and terminology) which is derived from an obscure passage in Papias (a.d. 70-146) quoted by Eusebius (a.d. 280-339)

E. Evidence for John himself as the primary source for the material of the Gospel

1. internal evidence

- a. the author knew Jewish teachings and rituals and shared their OT world view
- b. the author knew Palestine and Jerusalem in their pre-A.D. 70 condition
- c. the author claims to be an eyewitness

1) John 1:14

2) John 19:35

3) John 21:24

d. the author was a member of the apostolic group, for he is familiar with:

1) details of time and place (the night trials)

2) details of numbers (water pots of John 2:6 and fish of John 21:11)

3) details of persons

4) the author knew details of events and the reaction to them

5) the author seems to be designated as "the beloved disciple"

a) John 13:23,25

b) John 19:26-27

c) John 20:2-5,8

d) John 21:7, 20-24

6) the author seems to be a member of the inner circle along with Peter

a) John 13:24

b) John 20:2

c) John 21:7

7) the name John, son of Zebedee, never appears in this Gospel, which seems highly unusual because he was a member of the Apostolic inner circle

2. External evidence

a. Gospel known by

1) Irenaeus (a.d. 120-202) who was associated with Polycarp, knew John the Apostle (cf. Eusebius' *Historical Ecclesiasticus* 5:20:6-7) - "John the disciple of the Lord who reclined on His breast and himself issued the Gospel at Ephesus in Asia" (*Haer.*, 3:1:1, quoted in Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 5:8:4).

2) Clement of Alexandria (a.d. 153-217) - "John who was urged by his friends and

divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel" (Eusebius' *Historical Eccleasticus* 6:14:7)

3) Justin Martyr (a.d. 110-165) in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 81:4

4) Tertullian (a.d. 145-220)

b. John's authorship asserted by very early witnesses

1) Polycarp (a.d. 70-156, recorded by Irenaeus), who was bishop of Smyrna (a.d. 155)

2) Papias (a.d. 70-146, recorded by the Anti-Marconite Prologue from Rome and Eusebius), who was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia and reported to be a disciple of John the Apostle

F. Reasons used to doubt traditional authorship

1. The Gospel's connection with Gnostic themes

2. The obvious appendix of chapter 21

3. The chronological discrepancies with the Synoptics

4. John would not have referred to himself as "the beloved disciple"

5. John's Jesus uses different vocabulary and genres than the Synoptics

G. If we assume it was John the Apostle then what can we assume about the man?

1. He wrote from Ephesus (Irenaeus says "issued the Gospel from Ephesus")

2. He wrote when he was an older man (Irenaeus says he lived until the reign of Trajan, a.d. 98-117)

## DATE

A. If we assume John the Apostle

1. before a.d. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman General (later Emperor), Titus

a. in John 5:2, "Now in Jerusalem near the sheeppgate there is a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, which has five porticoes. . ."

b. repeated use of the early title "disciples" to denote the apostolic group

c. supposed later Gnostic elements have now been discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which show they were part of the theological jargon of the first century

d. no mention of the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in a.d. 70

e. the famous American archaeologist W. F. Albright asserts a date for the Gospel in the late 70's or early 80's

2. later in the first century

a. the developed theology of John

b. the fall of Jerusalem not mentioned because it occurred some twenty years earlier

c. John's use of Gnostic-type phrasing and emphasis

d. the early traditions of the church

1) Irenaeus

2) Eusebius

B. If we assume "John the elder" then the date would be early to mid second century. This theory started with Dionysius' rejection of John the Apostle's authorship (for literary reasons). Eusebius, who rejected John the Apostle's authorship of Revelation for theological reasons, felt he had found another "John" at the right time and in the right place in Papias' quote (*Historical Eccleasticus* 3:39:5,6), which lists two "Johns" (1) the Apostle and (2) an Elder (presbyter).

## RECIPIENTS

A. Originally it was written to the churches of the Roman Province of Asia Minor, particularly Ephesus.

B. Because of the profound simplicity and depth of this account of the life and person of Jesus of

Nazareth this became a favorite Gospel for both Hellenistic Gentile believers and Gnostic groups.

## PURPOSES

- A. The Gospel itself asserts its evangelistic purpose, John 20:30-31
  - 1. for Jewish readers
  - 2. for Gentile readers
  - 3. for incipient Gnostic readers
  
- B. It seems to have an apologetic thrust
  - 1. against the fanatic followers of John the Baptist
  - 2. against the incipient Gnostic false teachers (especially the Prologue); these Gnostic false teachings also form the background to other NT books:
    - a. Ephesians
    - b. Colossians
    - c. the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy)
    - d. 1 John (1 John may have functioned as a cover letter for the Gospel)
  
- C. There is the possibility that the purpose statement of John 20:31 may be understood as encouraging the doctrine of perseverance as well as evangelism because of the consistent use of the PRESENT TENSE to describe salvation. In this sense John, like James, may be balancing an over-emphasis of Paul's theology by some groups in Asia Minor (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16). It is surprising that early church tradition identifies John with Ephesus, not Paul (cf. F. F. Bruce's *Peter, Stephen, James and John: Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity*, pp. 120-121).
  
- D. The Epilogue (John 21) seems to answer specific questions of the early church
  - 1. John supplements the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels. However, he focuses on the Judean ministry, particularly Jerusalem.
  - 2. The three questions covered in the Appendix, John 21
    - a. Peter's restoration
    - b. John's longevity
    - c. Jesus' delayed return
  
- E. Some see John as deemphasizing sacramentalism by purposefully ignoring and not recording or discussing the ordinances themselves despite perfect contextual opportunities in John 3 (for baptism) and John 6 (for the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper).

## FEATURES OF JOHN'S OUTLINE

- A. A philosophical/theological Prologue (John 1:1-18) and a practical Epilogue (John 21)
  
- B. Seven miracle signs during Jesus' public ministry (chapters John 2-12) and their interpretation:
  - 1. changing water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1-11)
  - 2. healing the son of the officer of the court at Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
  - 3. healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1-18)
  - 4. feeding of about 5,000 in Galilee (John 6:1-15)
  - 5. walking on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:16-21)
  - 6. healing of the man born blind in Jerusalem (John 9:1-41)
  - 7. raising of Lazarus in Bethany (John 11:1-57)
  
- C. Interviews and dialogue with individuals
  - 1. John the Baptist (John 1:19-34; 3:22-36)

2. disciples
  - a. Andrew and Peter (John 1:35-42)
  - b. Philip and Nathanael (John 1:43-51)
3. Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
4. woman of Samaria (John 4:1-45)
5. Jews in Jerusalem (John 5:10-47)
6. crowd in Galilee (John 6:22-66)
7. Peter and disciples (John 6:67-71)
8. Jesus' brothers (John 7:1-13)
9. Jews in Jerusalem (John 7:14-8:59; 10:1-42)
10. disciples in upper room (John 13:1-17:26)
11. Jewish arrest and trial (John 18:1-27)
12. Roman trial (John 18:28-19:16)
13. post-resurrection conversations, 20:11-29
  - a. with Mary
  - b. with the ten Apostles
  - c. with Thomas
14. epilogue dialogue with Peter, John 21:1-25
15. (John 7:53-8:11, the story of the adulterous woman, was not originally part of John's Gospel!)

#### D. Certain worship/feast days

1. the Sabbaths (John 5:9; 7:22; 9:14; 19:31)
2. the Passovers (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; 18:28)
3. the feast of Tabernacles (John 8-9)
4. Hanukkah (festival of lights, cf. John 10:22)

#### E. Use of "I Am" statements

1. "I am 'He'" (John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,54-59; 13:19; 18:5-6,8)
2. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35,41,48,51)
3. "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5)
4. "I am the door of the sheepfold" (John 10:7,9)
5. "I am the good shepherd" (1John 0:11,14)
6. "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)
7. "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6)
8. "I am the true vine" (John 15:1,5)

## READING CYCLE ONE

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book.
2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single



sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

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# JOHN 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Word Became Flesh 1:1-5	The Eternal Word 1:1-5	The Prologue 1:1-5	The Word of Life 1:1-5	Prologue 1:1-18
1:6-13	John's Witness: the True Light 1:6-13	1:6-9 1:10-13	1:6-9 1:10-13	
1:14-18	The Word Became Flesh 1:14-18	1:14-18	1:14 1:15 1:16-18	
The Testimony of John the Baptist 1:19-28	A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28	The Testimony of John 1:19-23 1:24-28	John the Baptist's Message 1:19 1:20 1:21a 1:21b 1:21c 1:22a 1:22b 1:23 1:24-25 1:26-27 1:28	The Witness of John 1:19-28
The Lamb of God 1:29-34	The Lamb of God 1:29-34	1:29-34	The Lamb of God 1:29-31 1:32-34	1:29-34
The First disciples 1:35-42	The First Disciples 1:35-42	The Testimony of Jesus' First Disciples 1:35-42	The First Disciples of Jesus 1:35-36 1:37-38a	The First Disciples 1:35-39

			1:38b	
			1:39	
			1:40-42a	1:40-42
			1:42b	
The Calling of Phillip Nathanael	Phillip and Nathanael		Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael	
1:43-51	1:43-51	1:43-51	1:43-45	1:43-51
			1:46a	
			1:46b	
			1:47	
			1:48a	
			1:48b	
			1:49	
			1:50-51	

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-18

- A. Theological outline of the poem/hymn/creed
  1. eternal, divine, creator, redeemer Christ, John 1:1-5 (Jesus as Word)
  2. prophetic witness to Christ, John 1:4-5, 7-8, 15 (Jesus as Light)

3. incarnate Christ reveals God, John 1:10-18 (Jesus as Son)

B. Theological structure of John 1:1-18 and recurrent themes

1. Jesus was pre-existent with God the Father (John 1:1a)
2. Jesus was in intimate fellowship with God the Father (John 1:1b, 2, 18c)
3. Jesus shares God the Father's very essence (John 1:1c, 18b)
4. God the Father's means of redemption and adoption (John 1:12-13)
5. incarnation, deity becomes a man (John 1:9, 14)
6. revelation, deity fully revealed and understood (John 1:18d)

C. Hebrew and Greek background of *logos* (word)

1. Hebrew background

- a. the power of the spoken word (Isa. 55:11; Ps. 33:6; 107:20; 147:15,18), as in Creation (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24, 26,29) and the Patriarchal blessing (Gen. 27:1ff; 49:1)
- b. Proverbs 8:12-23 personifies "Wisdom" as God's first creation and agent of all creation (cf. Ps. 33:6 and the non-canonical *Wisdom of Solomon*, 9:9)
- c. the Targums (Aramaic translations and commentaries) substitute the phrase "Word of God" for *logos* because of their discomfort with anthropomorphic terms

2. Greek background

- a. Heracleitus - the world was in flux; the impersonal divine and unchanging *logos* held it together and guided the changing process
- b. Plato - the impersonal and unchanging *logos* kept the planets on course and determined the seasons
- c. Stoics - the *logos* was the "world reason" or manager, but was semi-personal
- d. Philo - he personified the concept of *logos* as "High Priest that set the soul of man before God," or "the bridge between man and God," or "the tiller by which the Pilot of the universe steers all things" (*kosmocrater*)

D. Elements of the developed Gnostic theological/philosophical systems of the second century a.d.

1. An ontological (eternal) antagonistic dualism between Spirit and matter
2. Matter is evil and obstinate; Spirit is good
3. The Gnostic system posits a series of angelic levels (*aeons*) between a high, good god and a lesser god who was able to form matter. Some even asserted that this lesser god was YHWH of the OT (like Marcion)
4. Salvation came by
  - a. secret knowledge or passwords which allowed a person to pass through these angelic levels on their way to union with God
  - b. a divine spark in all humans, which they are not aware of until they receive secret knowledge
  - c. a special personal agent of revelation that gives this secret knowledge to mankind (the Spirit of Christ)
5. This system of thought asserted Jesus' deity, but denied His real and permanent incarnation and central redemptive place!

E. The historical setting

1. Verses 1-18 are an attempt to relate to both Hebrew and Greek minds by use of the term *logos*.
2. The heresy of Gnosticism is the philosophical background to this highly structured introduction to the Gospel of John. 1 John may have been the cover letter to the Gospel. The theological system of thought called "Gnosticism" is unknown in writing until the second century, but incipient Gnostic themes are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Philo.
3. The Synoptic Gospels (especially Mark) veil Jesus' deity (the Messianic secret) until after

Calvary, but John, writing much later, develops the crucial themes of Jesus as fully God and fully man (Son of Man, cf Ezek. 2:1 and Dan. 7:13) in chapter one.

F. See Special Topic: John 1 Compared to 1 John 1 at 1 John 1:1.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. <sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. <sup>5</sup>The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

**1:1 "In the beginning"** This reflects Genesis 1:1 and is also used in 1 John 1:1 as a reference to the incarnation. It is possible that 1 John was a cover letter to the Gospel. Both deal with Gnosticism. Verses 1-5 are an affirmation of Jesus Christ's divine pre-existence before creation (cf. John 1:15; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-9).

The NT is described as

1. a new creation, not marred by the Fall (i.e., Gen. 3:15 fulfilled for mankind)
2. a new conquest (Promised Land)
3. a new exodus (fulfilled prophecy)
4. a new Moses (law giver)
5. a new Joshua (cf. Heb. 4:8)
6. a new water miracle (cf. Hebrews 3-4)
7. new manna (cf. John 6)

and so many more, especially in Hebrews.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ**

- ▣ **"was"** (thrice) This is an imperfect tense (cf. John 1:1,2,4,10) which focuses on continual existence in past time. This tense is used to show the Logos' pre-existence (cf. John 8:57-58; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:17; Heb. 10:5-7). It is contrasted with the aorist tenses of John 1:3, 6, and 14.
- ▣ **"the Word"** The Greek term *logos* referred to a message, not just a single word. In this context it is a title which the Greeks used to describe "world reason" and the Hebrews as analogous with "Wisdom." John chose this term to assert that God's Word is both a person and a message. See Contextual Insights, C.
- ▣ **"with God"** "With" could be paraphrased "face to face." It depicts intimate fellowship. It also points toward the concept of one divine essence and three personal eternal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at John 14:26). The NT asserts the paradox that Jesus is separate from the Father, but also that He is one with the Father.
- ▣ **"the Word was God"** This verb is imperfect tense as in John 1:1a. There is no article (which identifies the subject, see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 66) with *Theos*, but *Theos* is placed first in the Greek phrase for emphasis. This verse and John 1:18 are strong statements of the full deity of the pre-existent Logos (cf. John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 17:11; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1). Jesus is fully divine as well as fully human (cf. 1 John 4:1-3). He is not the same as God the Father, but He is the very same divine essence as the Father.

The NT asserts the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth, but protects the distinct personhood of the Father. The one divine essence is emphasized in John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30,34-38; 14:9-10; and 20:28, while their distinctives are emphasized in John 1:2,14,18; 5:19-23; 8:28; 10:25,29; 14:11,12,13,16.

**1:2** This is parallel to John 1:1 and emphasizes again the shocking truth in light of monotheism that Jesus, who was born around 6-5 b.c., has always been with the Father and, therefore, is Deity.

**1:3 "All things came into being through Him"** The Logos was the Father's agent of creation of both the visible and the invisible (cf. John 1:10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). This is similar to the role wisdom plays in Ps. 104:24 and Pro. 3:19; 8:12-23 (in Hebrews "wisdom" is a feminine gender noun).

▣ **"apart from Him nothing came into being"** This is a refutation of the Gnostic false teaching of angelic aeons between the high, good god and a lesser spiritual being that formed, pre-existent matter (see Contextual Insights, D).

**1:4 "in Him was life"** This phrase is emphasizing that "life" itself comes from the Son, the Word. John uses the term, *zōē*, to refer to resurrection life, eternal life, God's life (cf. John 1:4; 3:15,36; 4:14,36; 5:24,26,29,39,40; 6:27,33,35,40,47,48,51,53, 54,63,65, etc). The other Greek term for "life," *bios*, was used for earthly, biological life (cf. 1 John 2:16).

▣ **"the life was the Light of men"** Light is a common metaphor John uses for the truth and knowledge of God (cf. John 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). Notice the life was for all humans (possible allusion to Ps. 36:5-9)! Light and darkness were also common themes in the Dead Sea Scrolls. John often expresses himself in dualistic (contrasting) terms and categories.

**1:5 "the Light shines"** This is present tense, which means continuous action. Jesus has always existed, but now He is clearly manifested to the world (cf. John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). In the OT the physical or human manifestation of God was often identified with the angel of the Lord (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22; Zech. 3:1-2). Some assert that this was the pre-incarnate Logos.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD**

**NASB, NKJV** "the darkness did not comprehend it"  
**NRSV** "the darkness did not overcome it"  
**TEV** "the darkness has never put it out"  
**NJB** "and darkness could not overpower it"

The root meaning of this term (*katalambanō...ō*) is "to grasp." Therefore, it can mean either (1) to grasp so as to overpower (cf. Matt. 16:18) or (2) to grasp so as to comprehend or understand. John may have used this ambiguity to suggest both. John's Gospel is characterized by double entendres (e.g., "born again and/or "born from above," 3:3 and "wind" and/or "spirit," 3:8).

The verb (*katalambanō...ō*) occurs only twice in John's writings (the occurrence in John 8:3,4 is not original). In John 1:5 darkness cannot understand/overcome and 12:35 darkness that rejects the light (Jesus/gospel) will be overtaken. Rejection results in confusion; reception results in worship!

Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, p. 35, characterizes the human condition.

1. lostness, Luke 15
2. darkness, John 1:5
3. enmity, Rom. 5:10
4. separation, Eph. 2:15-17
5. ungodliness, Rom. 1:18
6. alienation from the life of God, Eph. 4:17-18
7. the best summary of human sin is found in Rom. 1:18-3:23

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:6-8**

**<sup>6</sup>There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to**

**testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the Light, but *he came to testify about the Light.***

**1:6-8** These verses and John 1:15 (a parenthetical flash back) record the witness of John the Baptist to Jesus. He was the last OT prophet. It is difficult to put these verses in poetic form. There is much debate among scholars as to whether the prologue is poetry or prose.

John the Baptist was the last OT prophet (in the sense of his message and perspective). He was the forerunner predicted in Mal. 3:1 and 4:5 (cf. John 1:20-25). John the Apostle may have inserted John 1:6-8 because of the early misunderstandings which developed around John the Baptist (cf. Luke 3:15; Acts 18:25; 19:3). John, writing later than the other Gospel writers, saw the development of this problem.

It is interesting to note that Christ is described in imperfect tense (pre-existence) verbs, while John is described in aorist (manifested in time) and perfect tense (a historical event with lasting results) verbs (cf. John 1:6). Jesus has always existed.

**1:7 "that all might believe through him"** This is a purpose clause. John's Gospel, like all the Gospels (a uniquely Christian genre), is an evangelistic tract. This is the wonderful offer of salvation to all who exercise faith in Christ, who is the light of the world (cf. John 1:12; John 3:16; 4:42; 20:31; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14).

**1:7, 12 "believe"** This verb is used 78 times in the Gospel of John, 24 times in John's letters. It is interesting that John's Gospel never uses the noun form, only the verb. Belief is not primarily an intellectual or emotional response, but basically a volitional response. This Greek term is translated by three English terms: believe, trust, and faith. It is parallel to "welcome Him" (cf. John 1:11), and "accept Him" (cf. John 1:12). Salvation is free in the grace of God and the finished work of Christ, but it must be received. Salvation is a covenant relationship with privileges and responsibilities.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST**

**1:8** It is possible that John the Apostle, writing much later than the other Gospel writers, recognized the problem which developed among John the Baptist's followers who had not heard or accepted Jesus (cf. Acts 18:25-19:7).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:9-13**

**<sup>9</sup>There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup>He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

**1:9 "the true light"** This is "true" in the sense of genuine or real, not just the opposite of falsehood. This may relate to all the false Christologies of the first century. This is a common adjective in John's writings (cf. John 4:23,37; 6:32; 7:28; 15:1; 17:3; 19:35 and 1 John 2:8; 5:20 and ten times in the Revelation). See Special Topics: Truth at John 6:55 and World at John 14:17. Jesus is the light of the world (cf. John 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; 1 John 1:5,7; 2:8,9,10). Believers are to reflect His light (cf. Phil. 2:15). This is in sharp contrast with the real darkness which is in the created order because of the rebellion of

1. humans
2. angels

■ **"coming into the world"** John often uses this phrase to refer to Jesus leaving heaven, the spiritual

realm, and entering the physical realm of time and space (cf. John 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28). In this verse it seems to refer to Jesus' incarnation. This is one of the common dualisms of Johanne literature (i.e., above vs. below).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"enlightens every man"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"gives light to every man"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"enlightens everyone"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"shines on all people"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"that gives light to everyone"</b>

This phrase can be understood in two ways. First, by supposing a Greek cultural setting, it refers to an inner light of revelation in every man, the divine spark. This is the way the Quakers interpret this verse. However, such a concept never appears in John. For John, "light" reveals mankind's evil (cf. John 3:19-21).

Second, it can refer not to natural revelation (that is God known through nature [cf. Ps. 19:1-5; Rom. 1:19-20] or an inner moral sense [cf. Rom. 2:14-15]), but rather to God's offer of enlightenment and salvation through Jesus, the only true light.

**1:10 "the world"** John uses the term *kosmos* in three distinct ways.

1. the physical universe (John 1:10,11; 11:9; 16:21; 17:5,24; 21:25)
2. all mankind (John 1:10,29; 3:16,17; 4:42; 6:33; 12:19,46-47; 18:20)
3. fallen human society organized and functioning apart from God (John 7:7; 15:18-19; 1 John 2:15; 3:1,13)

In this context #2 is applicable. See Special Topic at John 14:17.

■ **"the world did not know Him"** Neither the fallen Gentile nations nor the elect Jewish nation recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah. The term "know" reflects a Hebrew idiom of intimate relationship more than intellectual assent to facts (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (USING MOSTLY DEUTERONOMY AS A PARADIGM)**

**1:11 "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him"** "His own" is used twice in John 1:11. The first grammatical form is neuter plural and refers to (1) all creation or (2) geographically to Judea or Jerusalem. The second is masculine plural and refers to the Jewish people.

**1:12 "But as many as received Him"** This shows humanity's part in salvation (cf. John 1:16). Humans must respond to God's offer of grace in Christ (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 3:24; 4:4-5; 6:23; 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-9). God is certainly sovereign, yet in His sovereignty He has initiated a conditional covenant relationship with fallen humanity. Fallen mankind must repent, believe, obey, and persevere in faith.

This concept of "receiving" is theologically parallel to "believing" and "confessing," which denoted a public profession of faith in Jesus as the Christ (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; 12:42; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 John 2:23; 4:15). Salvation is a gift that must be received and acknowledged.

Those who "receive" Jesus (1:12) receive the Father who sent Him (cf. John 13:20; Matt. 10:40). Salvation is a personal relationship with the Triune God!

■ **"He gave the right"** This Greek term (i.e., *exousia*) can mean (1) legal authority or (2) right or privilege (cf. John 5:27; 17:2; 19:10,11). Through Jesus' sonship and divine mission, fallen mankind can now know God and acknowledge Him as God and Father.

■ **"to become the children of God"** The NT writers constantly use familial metaphors to describe Christianity: (1) Father; (2) Son; (3) children; (4) born again; and (5) adoption. Christianity is analogous to a family, not a product (ticket to heaven, fire insurance policy). Believers in Christ have become the new eschatological "people of God." As children we should reflect the Father's character, as did the "unique" (cf. John 1:14; 3:16) Son (cf. Eph. 5:1; 1 John 2:29; 3:3). What a shocking title for sinners (cf. John 11:52; Rom. 8:14,16,21; 9:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 3:1,2,10; 5:2; Hos. 1:10 quoted in Rom. 9:26; and 2 Cor. 6:18).



It is also interesting that of the two Greek terms for children, one is always used of Jesus (*huios*), while the other (*teknon, tekna*) is used for believers. Christians are children of God, but they are not in the same category as the Son of God, Jesus. His relationship is unique, but analogous.

The word "church" (*ekklesia, aeclesia*) does not appear in Mark, Luke, or John. They use family metaphors for the new dynamic individual and corporate fellowship of the Spirit.

■ **"those who believe"** This is a present active participle meaning "those who continue to believe." The etymological background of this term helps establish the contemporary meaning. In Hebrew it originally referred to a person in a stable stance. It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was dependable, loyal, or trustworthy. The Greek equivalent is translated into English by the terms ("faith," "believe," and "trust"). Biblical faith or trust is not primarily something we do, but someone in whom we put our trust. It is God's trustworthiness, not ours, which is the focus. Fallen mankind trusts God's trustworthiness, faiths His faithfulness, believes in His Beloved. The focus is not on the abundance or intensity of human faith, but the object of that faith. See Special Topics at John 1:7 and 2:23.

■ **"in His name"** In the OT the name of a person was very important. It was a hopeful/potential prophecy about their character or a description of their character. To believe in the name is to believe and receive the person (cf. John 2:23; 3:18; 20:31; 1 John 5:13). See Special Topic: The Name of the Lord at John 14:13-14.

**1:13**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV**

**"who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man"**

**TEV**

**"they did not become God's children by native means, that is, by being born and the children of a human father"**

**NJB**

**"who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man"**

Some early church fathers (i.e., Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine) see this phrase as referring to Jesus (i.e., singular), but the overwhelming Greek textual evidence has the plural (plural of this word is found only here in the NT; UBS<sup>4</sup> rates it as "A"), which means this verse is referring to believers in Jesus (cf. John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3,23), therefore, it refers not to racial privilege nor to human sexual descent (lit. "bloods"), but to God's electing and drawing of those who trust in His Son (cf. John 6:44,65). Verses 12 and 13 exhibit the covenantal balance between God's sovereignty and the need for human response.

The Greek verb (aorist passive indicative) is placed last in the Greek sentence for emphasis. This emphasizes the initiating and sovereign role of God in the second birth (i.e., "but of God," which is part of the final phrase, cf. John 6:44,65).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:14-18**

**<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" <sup>16</sup>For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.**

**1:14 "the Word became flesh"** John is attacking the false doctrine of the Gnostics, who were attempting to merge Christianity with Greek pagan thought. Jesus was truly human and truly God (cf. 1 John 4:1-3) in fulfillment of the promise of Immanuel (cf. Isa. 7:14). God took up residence as a man among fallen mankind (literally, "pitched His tent"). The term "flesh" in John never refers to the sin nature as in Paul's

writings.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (SARX)

■ **"dwelt among us"** Literally, this is "took up residence." It had a Jewish background from the wilderness wandering period and the Tabernacle (cf. Rev. 7:15; 21:3). The Jews later called this wilderness experience the "honeymoon period" between YHWH and Israel. God was never closer to Israel than during this period. The Jewish term for the special divine cloud that guided Israel during this period was "the *Shekinah*," the Hebrew term "to dwell with."

■ **"we saw His glory"** The OT *kabod* (glory) has now been personified, incarnated. This refers to (1) something in Jesus' life such as the transfiguration or the ascension (i.e., apostolic testimony, cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-17) is or (2) the concept that the invisible YHWH is now visible and fully known. This is the same emphasis as 1 John 1:1-4, which is also an emphasis on the humanity of Jesus in opposition to the false Gnostic emphasis on the antagonistic relationship between spirit and matter.

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kabod*, BDB 458 ) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales), literally, "to be heavy." That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (i.e., first on Mt. Sinai, the *Shekinah* cloud of glory, eschatological light, cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 24:17; Isa. 4:5; 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 1:14, 18; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (DOXA)

**NASB, NKJV "glory as of the only begotten from the Father"**

**NRSV "the glory as of a father's only son"**

**TEV "The glory which he received as the Father's only Son"**

**NJB "the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father"**

This term "only" (*monogenēs*) means "unique," "one of a kind" (cf. John 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9, see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 24-25). The Vulgate translated it "only begotten" and, unfortunately, the older English translations followed this (cf. Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb. 11:17). The focus is on singularity and uniqueness, not sexual generation.

■ **"Father"** The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father.

1. the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH's "son" (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17)
2. even earlier in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as father is used (Deut. 1:31)
3. in Deuteronomy 32 Israel is called "his children" and God called "your Father"
4. this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans)
5. it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9).

Jesus takes this analogy and deepens it into full family fellowship, especially in John 1:14,18; 2:16; 3:35; 4:21,23; 5:17, 18,19,20,21,22,23,26,36,37,43,45; 6:27,32,37,44,45,46,57; 8:16,19,27,28,38,42,49,54; 10:15,17,18, 25,29,30,32, 36 37,38; 11:41;12:26,27,28,49,50; 13:1; 14:2,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,16,20,21,23,24,26,28,31; 15:1,8,9,10,15,16,23,24,26; 16:3,10,15,17,23,25,26,27,28,32; 17:1,5,11,21,24,25; 18:11; 20:17,21!

■ **"full of grace and truth"** This coupling follows the OT terms *hesed* (covenant love and loyalty) and *emeth* (trustworthiness) which are used and expanded in Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8, both words occur together in Pro. 16:6. This describes Jesus' character (cf. John 1:17) in OT covenantal terms. See Special Topic on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (HESED)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Ã— A,Ã—A¾,Ã—A)

**1:15 "for He existed before me"** This is John the Baptist's doctrine of strong affirmation of Jesus' pre-existence (cf. John 1:1; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8). The doctrines of pre-existence and predictive prophecy affirm that there is a God above and beyond history, yet who works within history. It is an integral part of a Christian/biblical world view.

■ This verse is awkward and many scribal changes were made in an attempt to clarify and simplify the text. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 197-198.

It is also a good example on how the Greek verb tenses cannot be standardized. This is a past act recorded in the PRESENT tense. See Appendix One.

**1:16-18** One of the characteristics of John's Gospel is how the author breaks into the historical event, dialogue, or teaching session with his own comments. Often it is impossible to differentiate between Jesus', other persons', and John's words. Most scholars assert that John 1:16-19 are John the author's comments (cf. John 3:14-21).

**1:16 "fullness"** This is the Greek term *pleroma*. The Gnostic false teachers used it to describe the angelic aeons between the high god and lesser spiritual beings. Jesus is the only mediator (i.e., the true and only fullness) between God and man (cf. Col. 1:19; 2:9; Eph. 1:23; 4:13). Here again it seems John the Apostle is attacking an early Gnostic view of reality.

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"and grace upon grace"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"and grace for grace"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"giving us one blessing after another"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"one gift replacing another"</b>

The interpretive question is how to understand "grace." Is it

1. God's mercy in Christ unto salvation
2. God's mercy for the Christian life
3. God's mercy in the new covenant through Christ?

The key thought is "grace"; God's grace has been wondrously given in the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20).

**1:17 "the Law"** The Mosaic Law was not bad, but was preparatory and incomplete as far as providing a complete salvation (cf. John 5:39-47; Gal. 3:23-29; Romans 4). Hebrews also contrasts and compares the work/revelation/covenants of Moses and Jesus.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

■ **"grace"** This refers to God's undeserved, unmerited love for fallen mankind (cf. Eph. 2:8). This term grace (*charis*), so important in Paul's writings, is used only in this paragraph in John's Gospel (cf. John 1:14,16,17). New Testament writers, under inspiration, were free to use their own vocabularies, analogies, and metaphors.

Jesus brought into reality the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38.

■ **"truth"** This is used in the sense of (1) faithfulness or (2) truth vs. falsehood (cf. John 1:14; 8:32; 14:6). Notice both grace and truth came through Jesus (cf. John 1:14). See Special Topic at John 17:3.

■ **"Jesus"** This is the first use of the human name of Mary's son in the Prologue. The pre-existent Son now becomes the Incarnate Son!

**1:18 "No one has seen God at any time"** Some say that this contradicts Exod. 33:20-23. However, the Hebrew term in the Exodus passage refers to "afterglow," not the physical sight of God Himself. The thrust of this passage is that only Jesus fully reveals God (cf. John 14:8ff). No sinful human has seen God (cf. John 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12,20).

This verse emphasizes the unique revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. He is the full and only divine self-disclosure. To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus is the Father's ultimate revelation of Himself. There is no clear understanding of deity apart from Him (cf. Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3). Jesus "sees" the Father and believers "see" the Father through Him (His life, words, and acts). He is the full and complete revelation of the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the only begotten God"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the only begotten Son"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"It is God's only Son"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"The only Son"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"It is the only Son"</b>

See note on *monogenēs* at John 1:14. Jesus is fully God and man. See full notes at John 1:1.

There is a Greek manuscript variation here. *Theos*/God is in the early Greek manuscripts P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, B, and C, while "Son" is substituted for "God" only in MSS A and C<sup>3</sup>. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "God" a "B" rating (almost certain). The term "Son" possibly comes from scribes remembering "only begotten Son" in John 3:16,18 and in 1 John 4:9 (cf. Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* p. 198). This is a strong affirmation of the full and complete deity of Jesus! It is possible that this verse has three titles for Jesus: (1) only begotten, (2) God, and (3) who is in the bosom of the Father.

There is an interesting discussion of the possibility of a purposeful alteration of this text by orthodox scribes in Bart D. Ehrmans' *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 78-82.

■ **"who is in the bosom of the Father"** This is very similar in meaning to the phrase "with God" in John 1:1 and 2. It speaks of intimate fellowship. It could refer to (1) His pre-existent fellowship or (2) His restored fellowship (i.e., the Ascension).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"He has explained <i>Him</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"He has declared <i>Him</i>"</b>
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>"who has made him known"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"he has made him known"</b>

We get the English term "exegesis" (lit. "to lead out," aorist middle [deponent] indicative) from this Greek word used in John 1:18, which implies a full and complete revelation. One of Jesus' main tasks was to reveal the Father (cf. John 14:7-10; Heb. 1:2-3). To see and know Jesus is to see and know the Father (loving sinners, helping the weak, accepting the outcast, receiving children and women)!

The term in Greek was used of those who explain or interpret a message, dream, or document. Here again John may be using a word that had specific meaning to both Jews and Gentiles (like *Logos* of John 1:1). John is attempting to relate to both Jew and Greek with his prologue. The word could mean

1. to the Jews one who explains or interprets the Law
2. to the Greeks one who explains or interprets the gods.

In Jesus, and Jesus alone, humans fully see and understand the Father!

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 19-51

- A. This passage concerning John the Baptist deals with two early church misunderstandings:
  1. that which developed around the person of John the Baptist and is disputed in John 1:6-9, 20,21,25; and 3:22-36;
  2. that which involved the person of Christ and is dealt with in John 1:32-34. This same heresy of Gnosticism is similarly attacked in 1 John 1. 1 John may have been the cover letter to the

## Gospel of John.

B. The Gospel of John is silent about the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. The ordinances of the church, baptism and the Eucharist, are noticeably absent in John's account of the life of Christ.

There are at least two possible reasons for this omission:

1. the rise of sacramentalism in the early church caused John to de-emphasize this aspect of Christianity. His Gospel focuses on relationship, not ritual. He does not discuss or record the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper at all. The absence of something so expected would draw attention to it.
2. John, writing later than the other Gospel writers, used his account of the life of Christ to supplement the others. Since all of the Synoptics cover these ordinances, John only supplied additional information about the surrounding events. An example would be the dialog and events which occurred in the upper room (chapters 13-17) but not the actual supper itself.

C. The emphasis of this account is on John the Baptist's testimony concerning the person of Jesus.

John makes the following Christological statement:

1. Jesus is the Lamb of God, (John 1:29) a title for Jesus used only here and in Revelation
2. Jesus is pre-existent (John 1:30)
3. Jesus is the receiver and giver of the Holy Spirit (John 1:33)
4. Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:34)

D. The truths about the person and work of Jesus are developed by the personal testimony of

1. John the Baptist
2. Andrew and Simon
3. Philip and Nathanael

This becomes a common literary technique throughout the Gospel. It contains twenty-seven of these dialogues or testimonies about Jesus or with Jesus.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:19-23

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup>They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

**1:19 "the Jews"** In John this refers to (1) the people of Judea who were hostile to Jesus or (2) the Jewish religious leaders only (cf. John 2:18; 5:10; 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 18:12; 19:38; 20:19). Some scholars have asserted that a Jew would not refer to other Jews in this derogatory way. However, Jewish opposition to Christianity intensified after the Council of Jamnia in a.d. 90.

The word "Jew" basically comes from someone from the tribe of Judah. After the twelve tribes split in 922 b.c., Judah became the name for the southern three tribes. Both Jewish kingdoms, Israel and Judah, were taken into exile, but only a few, mostly from Judah, returned under Cyrus' edict of 538 b.c. The term then became a title for the descendants of Jacob who lived in Palestine and were scattered throughout the Mediterranean world.

In John the term is mostly negative, but its general use can be seen in John 2:6 and 4:22.

▣ **"priests and Levites"** Apparently John the Baptist was also of priestly descent (cf. Luke 1:5ff). This is

the only occurrence of the term "Levites" in the Gospel of John. They possibly were the Temple police. This was an official group of "fact finders" sent from the religious authorities in Jerusalem (cf. John 1:24). The priests and Levites were usually Sadducees, while the scribes were usually Pharisees (cf. John 1:24). Both of these groups were involved in questioning John the Baptist. The political and religious antagonists joined forces to oppose Jesus and His followers.

■ **"Who are you"** This same question is asked of Jesus in John 8:25. John and Jesus taught and acted in ways which made the official leaders uncomfortable, because they recognized in both men certain OT eschatological themes and terms. This question, then, relates to the Jewish expectation of end-time, New Age personages.

**1:20 "And he confessed, and did not deny, but confessed"** This statement is a strong, threefold denial that he was the expected, promised Messiah (Christ). For "confess" see Special Topic at John 9:22-23.

■ **"the Christ"** "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term "*māšîaḥ*," which meant "an anointed one." In the OT the concept of anointing was a way of emphasizing God's special calling and equipping for a specific task. Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed. It came to be identified with that special One who was to implement the new age of righteousness. Many thought John the Baptist was this promised Messiah (cf. Luke 3:15) because he was the first inspired spokesman for YHWH since the OT writers some four hundred years earlier.

At this point I would like to include my comments from Dan. 9:26 on "Messiah."

#### **Daniel 9:26**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the Messiah"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Messiah"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"an anointed one"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"God's chosen leader"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"An Anointed One"</b>

The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603):

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g. 1 Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g. Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God's special coming Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
  - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
  - b. house of Jesse (cf. 2 Samuel 7)
  - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of "an anointed one" with Jesus of Nazareth because of:

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in Daniel 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of "a son of man" in Daniel 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of Daniel 9:24 which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus' use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

**1:21 "What then? Are you Elijah"** Because Elijah did not die but rather was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:1), he was expected to come before the Messiah (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5). John the Baptist looked and acted much like Elijah (cf. Zech. 13:4).

■ **"I am not"** John the Baptist did not see himself in the eschatological role of Elijah, but Jesus did see

him functioning as a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (cf. Matt. 11:14; 17:12).

■ **"Are you the Prophet"** Moses predicted that one like himself (whom he called "The Prophet") would come after him (cf. Deut. 18:15,18; John 1:25; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). There are two distinct ways this term was used in the NT: (1) as an eschatological figure distinct from the Messiah (cf. John 7:40-41) or (2) as a figure identified with the Messiah (cf. Acts 3:22).

**1:23 "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness"** This is a quote from the Septuagint translation of Isa. 40:3 with an allusion to the parallel in Mal. 3:1.

■ **"Make straight the way of the Lord"** This is a quote from (Isa. 40:3) the literary unit of Isaiah (chapters 40-54) in which the Servant Songs occur (cf. Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). They initially referred to Israel, but in Isa. 52:13-53:12, the phrase has been individualized. The concept of straightening the road was used for preparation of a royal visit. The term "straight" is related to the etymology of the term "righteousness." See Special Topic at 1 John 2:29.

This whole paragraph may have served John the Apostle's theological purpose of depreciating John the Baptist because of the development of several heretical groups in the first century that took John the Baptist as their spiritual leader.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:24-28**

**<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know. <sup>27</sup>*It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*" <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

**1:24 "they had been sent from the Pharisees"** This text is ambiguous. It can mean (1) the Pharisees sent John's questioners (cf. John 1:19) or (2) the questioners were Pharisees, which is unusual in light of the fact that most priests were Sadducees (cf. John 1:9). It seems to refer to another group than John 1:19.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES**

**1:25 "Why then are you baptizing"** Proselyte baptism was normative in ancient Judaism for those Gentiles wishing to become converts, but it was highly unusual for Jews themselves to be baptized (the sectarian Jews of Qumran practiced self-baptisms and temple worshipers bathed themselves before entering). This text may involve Messianic implications from Isa. 52:15; Ezek. 36:25; Zech. 13:1.

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet"** It is interesting in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls that these three personages represented the Essene view that there would be three different Messianic figures. It is also interesting that some early church leaders believed that Elijah would come physically before the Second Coming of Christ (cf. Chrysostom, Jerome, Gregory, and Augustine).

**1:26 "I baptize in water"** The preposition "in" can also mean "with." Whichever option is chosen must match the parallel of John 1:33 concerning "the Spirit."

■ **"but among you stands One"** There are several textual variants related to the tense of the verb "stands." The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates the perfect tense as "B" (almost certain).

Bruce M. Metzger asserts that the perfect tense is characteristic of John and implies a Hebrew idiom of "there is One who has taken his stand in your midst" (p. 199).

**1:27 "the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie"** This refers to the slave's task of undoing his master's sandals as he entered his home (considered the lowliest, most menial task a slave could perform). Rabbinical Judaism asserted that the rabbi's disciple should be willing to do everything that a slave was willing to do except untie his shoes. There is also the unstated implication of removing the shoes and taking them to a designated place of storage. This was a metaphor of extreme humility.

**1:28 "Bethany"** The King James Version has the name "Bethabara" (MSS  $\kappa^2$ ,  $C^2$ ). This was due to the KJV's translators' reliance on Origen's misunderstanding (and allegorization of the place name) of the location of the city. The correct reading is Bethany (Bodmen Papyrus, P<sup>66</sup>)-not the one southeast of Jerusalem (cf. John 11:18), but the town across from Jericho, across the Jordan River (eastern side).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:29-34**

**<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>"This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' <sup>31</sup>"I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." <sup>32</sup>John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. <sup>33</sup>"I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup>"I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."**

**1:29 "Behold, the Lamb of God"** The feast of Passover was not far away (cf. John 2:13). Therefore, this probably refers to the Passover lamb symbolizing deliverance (i.e., salvation) from Egypt (cf. Exodus 12). John also places Jesus' death on the same day the Passover lamb was slain (i.e., "Preparation Day"). However, there have been other interpretations:

1. it may refer to the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53:7
2. it may refer to the animal which was caught in the thicket in Gen. 22:8, 13.
3. it may refer to the daily offering in the Temple called "the continual" (cf. Exod. 29:38-46).

Whatever the exact association, it was for a sacrificial purpose that the lamb was sent (cf. Mark 10:45).

This powerful metaphor for Jesus' sacrificial death is never used by Paul and only rarely by John (cf. John 1:29,36; also note Acts 8:32 and 1 Pet. 1:19). The Greek term for a "small lamb" (small because it was only one year old, the normal age of sacrificial offerings). A different word is used by John in John 21:15 and twenty eight times in Revelation.

There is one further possibility for John the Baptist's imagery: intertestamental, apocalyptic literature where the "lamb" is a victorious warrior. The sacrificial aspect is still present, but the lamb as eschatological judge is pre-eminent (cf. Rev. 5:5-6,12-13).

■ **"who takes away the sin of the world!"** The phrase "takes away" meant to "take up and bear away." This verb is very similar to the concept of "the scapegoat" in Leviticus 16. The very fact that the world's sin is mentioned alludes to the universal nature of the lamb's task (cf. John 1:9; 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). Notice that sin is singular, not plural. Jesus has dealt with the world's "sin" problem.

**1:30 "for He existed before me"** This is a repeat of John 1:15 for emphasis. This is another emphasis on the pre-existence and deity of the Messiah (cf. John 1:1, 15; 8:58; 16:28; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

**1:31 "so that He might be manifested to Israel"** This is a common Johannine phrase (cf. John 2:11; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:14; 1 John 1:2; 2:19,28; 3:2,5,8; 4:9), but it is rare in the Synoptic Gospels, only appearing in Mark 4:22. It is a play on the Hebrew term "to know," which speaks of personal fellowship with someone more than facts about someone. The purpose of John's baptism was twofold: (1) to prepare



the people and (2) to reveal the Messiah.

This verb "manifest" (*phaneroō*) seems to replace "reveal" (*apokaluptō*) in John's writing. Jesus clearly brings to light/sight the person and message of God!

**1:32-33** This is a threefold emphasis of the fact that John saw the Spirit coming and remaining on Jesus.

**1:32 "the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven"** This was Isaiah's (chapters 40-66) way to recognize the Messiah (cf. Isa. 42:1; 59:21; 61:1). This does not mean to imply that Jesus did not have the Spirit before this time. It was a symbol of God's special choice and equipping. It was not primarily for Jesus, but for John the Baptist!

The Jews had a worldview of two ages (see Special Topic at 1 John 2:17), the current evil age and an age of righteousness to come. The new age was called the age of the Spirit. This vision would have said to John the Baptist (1) this one is the Messiah and (2) the new age has dawned.

■ **"dove"** This was used

1. as a rabbinical symbol for Israel (i.e., Hos. 7:11)
2. as an allusion to the Spirit as a female bird "brooding" over creation in Gen. 1:2 in the Targums
3. in Philo a symbol of wisdom
4. as a metaphor of the manner in which the Spirit descended (the Spirit is not a bird)

■ **"remained"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS](#) at 1 John 2:10.

**1:33 "I did not recognize Him"** This implies that John the Baptist did not know Jesus as the Messiah, not that he did not know Him at all. As relatives, surely they had met at family or religious gatherings over the years.

■ **"He who sent me to baptize in water said to me"** God spoke to John as He did to other OT prophets. John was to recognize the Messiah by these specific acts which would occur at His baptism.

John's baptism suggested a religious authority. The official delegation from Jerusalem (cf. John 1:19-28) wanted to know the source of this authority. John the Baptist attributes that authority to Jesus. Jesus' Spirit baptism is superior to John's water baptism. Jesus' own baptism in water will become a sign of the baptism of the Spirit, the incorporation into the new age!

■ **"this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit"** From 1 Cor. 12:13 it seems that this concept relates to the initial inclusion of a person into the family of God. The Spirit convicts of sin, woos to Christ, baptizes into Christ, and forms Christ in the new believer (cf. John 16:8-13). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE](#) at 1 John 2:20.

**1:34 "I myself have seen, and have testified"** These are both perfect active indicative which implies past action brought to completion and then continuing. This is very similar to 1 John 1:1-4.

■ **"that this is the Son of God"** One wonders if the Greek word *paīs*, which is normally translated "servant," reflecting the Hebrew (*'ebed*, BDB 712) in the LXX, could be the background to "Son." If so, then Isaiah 53 (as is "the lamb" of God in John 1:29) is the OT allusion instead of Dan. 7:13. Jesus is both the Son and Servant! He will transform believers into "a child," not "a servant"!

This same title is used by Nathanael in John 1:49. It is also used by Satan in Matt. 4:3. There is an interesting Greek manuscript variant found in MSS P<sup>5</sup> and κ<sup>\*</sup>, which has "the Chosen One of God" instead of "the Son of God" (the UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "Son of God" a "B" rating). The phrase "Son of God" is common in John. But, if one follows the rational tenets of textual criticism, then the most awkward and unusual wording is probably original, then there is at least a possibility of the alternate translation even though the manuscript witness is limited. Gordon Fee discusses this textual variant in his article "The Textual Criticism of the New Testament" pp. 419-433, in the introductory volume to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

"In John 1:34, did John the Baptist say, 'This is the Son of God' (KJV, RSV) or 'This is God's

Chosen One' (NEB, JB)? The MS evidence is divided, even among the early text-types. 'Son' is found in the key Alexandrian witnesses (P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, B, C, L cop<sup>b0</sup>) as well as in several OL (aur, c, flg) and the later Syriac witnesses, while 'chosen One' is supported by the Alexandrian P<sup>5</sup>, κ, cop<sup>sa</sup> as well as the OL MSS a,b,e,ff<sup>2</sup>, and the Old Syriac.

"The question must finally be decided on internal grounds. As to transcriptional probability, one thing is clear: the variant is intentional, not accidental (cf. Bart D. Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 69-70). But did a second century scribe alter the text to support a kind of adoptionist Christology, or did an orthodox scribe sense the possibility that the designation 'Chosen One' might be used to support adoptionism, and so alter it for orthodox reasons? In terms of probabilities, the latter seems far more likely, especially since 'the Son' is not changed elsewhere in the Gospel to fit adoptionist views.

"But the final decision must involve exegesis. Since what John the Baptist said was almost certainly intended to be messianic and not a statement of Christian theology, the question is whether it reflects the messianism of such a passage as Psalm 2:7 or that of Isaiah 42:1. In light of the suffering, or paschal, lamb motif of John 1:29, it is surely arguable that 'Chosen One' fits the context of the Gospel" (pp. 431-432).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:35-42**

**<sup>35</sup>Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" <sup>39</sup>He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). <sup>42</sup>He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).**

**1:35 "two of his disciples"** Mark 1:16-20 seems to be a different account of the calling of these two disciples. It is uncertain how much previous contact occurred between Jesus and His Galilean disciples. There were specific stages of discipline involved in the process of becoming a full-time follower of a rabbi in Jesus' day. These procedures are spelled out in the rabbinical sources, but are not exactly followed in the Gospel accounts. The two disciples mentioned are Andrew (cf. John 1:40), and John the Apostle (who never refers to himself by name in the Gospel).

The term disciple can mean (1) learner and/or (2) follower. This was an early name for believers in Jesus Christ as the promised Jewish Messiah. It is important to note that the NT calls for disciples, not mere decisions (cf. Matthew 13; 28:18-20). Christianity is an initial decision (repentance and faith) followed by an on going decision of obedience and perseverance. Christianity is not a fire insurance policy or a ticket to heaven, but a daily servant/friend relationship with Jesus.

**1:37 "The two disciples heard him speak"** John the Baptist pointed beyond himself to Jesus (cf. John 3:30).

**1:38 "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher)"** This was a common title in first century Judaism to identify those who could expound the implications and applications of the Mosaic Law and the Oral Tradition (Talmud). It is literally "my master." It is used by John the Apostle as equivalent to "teacher" (cf. John 11:8,28; 13:13-14; 20:16). The fact that John explains his terms (cf. John 1:38,41,42) shows he was writing to Gentiles.

■ **"where are You staying"** This seems to follow the traditional procedures of the establishing of the unique bond between teacher and student. Their question implies that these two men wanted to spend more time with Jesus than just being able to ask a few questions on the road (cf. John 1:39).

The word *menō* (remain) occurs three times in John 1:38,39. It can refer to a physical place or a spiritual place. The three usages seem to imply another word play, bringing both connotations together, which is so common in John (i.e., John 1:1,5; 3:3; 4:10-11; 12:32). This purposeful ambiguity is characteristic of John's writings!

**1:39 "it was about the tenth hour"** It is uncertain whether John is using Roman time, beginning at (1) 6:00 a.m. or (2) day break, or Jewish time, beginning at 6:00 p.m. (twilight). When one compares John 19:14 with Mark 15:25 it seems to imply Roman time. However, when one looks at John 11:9 it seems to imply Jewish time. John possibly used both. Here it seems to be Roman time, about 4:00 p.m.

**1:40 "One of two who heard John"** The writer (the Apostle John) never names himself in the Gospel (i.e., 21:2). It is surely possible that one of the two disciples who heard John the Baptist make this declaration was John, the son of Zebedee (i.e., Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19).

**1:41**

**NASB** "He found first his own brother"

**NKJV, NRSV** "He first found his own brother"

**TEV** "At once he found"

**NJB** "the first thing Andrew did"

There is a manuscript variant that affects the translations. The options are

1. the first thing Andrew did
2. the first person he found
3. Andrew was the first to go and tell

■ **"the Messiah (which translated means Christ)"** See note at John 1:20.

**1:42 "Jesus looked at him"** This term refers to an "intensive look."

■ **"Simon the son of John"** There is some confusion in the NT concerning the name of Peter's father. In Matt. 16:17 Peter is called "son of Jonah" (*Iōnas*), but here he is called "son of John" (*Iōannēs*). The name John is found in MSS P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\tilde{A}$ — $\hat{A}$  and L. MS B has the same name but with only one "n" (*Iōanēs*). The name Jonah occurs in MSS A, B<sup>3</sup>, K and most other later Greek manuscripts. There seems to be no clear answer to this question. Variant spellings are common with transliterated names from Aramaic.

Michael Magill, *The New Testament TransLine*, p. 303, says, "'Jonah' and 'John' may be alternate Greek spellings of the same Hebrew name, like 'Simon' and 'Simeon.'"

■ **"you shall be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)"** The term Cephas is an Aramaic term for rock (*kepa*), which comes into Greek as *kephas*. The name would remind one of stability, strength, and durability.

This is one of many comments by the author of the Gospel to help explain the life and teachings of Jesus to Gentile readers of John 1:38.

It is interesting that the two later technical terms (verbs) for Bible interpretation appear in this chapter.

1. exegesis, to lead out, used in John 1:18
2. hermeneutics, to explain, to interpret, to translate, used in John 1:42

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 1:43-51**

<sup>43</sup>The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him,

**"Follow Me."** <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup>Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup>Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup>Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup>And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

**1:43 "The next day"** John includes chronological markers throughout the Gospel (cf. John 1:29,35,43; 2:1; etc). The general context (1) starts in John 1:19, which could be the first day; (2) John 1:29,35,43 have "the next day"; and (3) 2:1 has "on the third day."

▣ **"He purposed to go into"** John records an early period of Jesus' ministry in Judea which is not recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. John's Gospel focuses on Jesus' ministry in Judea and particularly Jerusalem. Here, however, He wants to go to Galilee possibly for the wedding at Cana (John 2).

▣ **"follow Me"** This is a present active imperative. This was a rabbinical call to be a permanent disciple. The Jews had set guidelines which defined this relationship.

**1:44 "Now Philip was from Bethsaida"** The name of this city means "house of fishing." This was also the home of Andrew and Peter.

**1:45 "Nathanael"** This is a Hebrew name which means "God has given." He is not referred to by this name in the Synoptic Gospels. It is assumed by modern scholars that he is the one called "Bartholomew," but this remains only a supposition.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CHART OF APOSTLES' NAMES**

▣ **"the Law and *also* the Prophets"** This refers to two of the three sections of the Hebrew canon: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (which was still discussed at Jamnia in a.d. 90). It was an idiom for referring to the entire Old Testament.

▣ **"Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"** This must be understood in light of Jewish usage. Jesus then lived in Nazareth and the father of the home was named Joseph. This does not deny Jesus' birth at Bethlehem (cf. Micah 5:2), nor His virgin birth (cf. Isa. 7:14). See the following Special Topic.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE**

**1:46 "Nathanael said to him, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth'"** Obviously Philip and Nathanael knew the OT prophecies; the Messiah would come out of Bethlehem (cf. Micah 5:2) near Jerusalem, not Nazareth in Galilee of the Gentiles, but Isa. 9:1-7 implies this very thing!

**1:47**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV** "in whom there is no deceit"

**TEV** "there is nothing false in him"

**NJB** "in whom there is no deception"

This means a straightforward man with no hidden motives (cf. Ps. 32:2), a true representation of the chosen people, Israel.

**1:48 "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you'"** Obviously Jesus used His supernatural knowledge (i.e., John 2:24-25; 4:17-19,29; 6:61,64,71; 13:1,11,27,28; 16:19,30; 18:4) to give a sign to Nathanael that He was the Messiah.

It is difficult to understand how Jesus' deity and humanity functioned. In some texts it is uncertain whether Jesus was using "supernatural" powers or human abilities. Here the inference is "supernatural" ability.

**1:49 "Nathanael answered Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God. . .King of Israel'"** Notice the two titles! Both have nationalistic Messianic implications (i.e., Psalm 2). These early disciples understood Jesus in first century Jewish categories. They did not fully understand His person and work as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53) until after the resurrection.

**1:51**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Truly, truly, I say to you,"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Most assuredly, I say to you,"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Very truly, I tell you,"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I am telling you the truth"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"In all truth"</b>

Literally this is "Amen! Amen!" Jesus' doubling of this term is found only in John's Gospel, where it appears twenty-five times. "Amen" is a form of the Hebrew word for faith (*emeth*) which meant "to be firm" (see Special Topic at John 1:14). It was used in the OT as a metaphor for stability and trustworthiness. It came to be translated "faith" or "faithfulness." However, in time it came to be used of an affirmation. In this initial position in a sentence, it was a unique way of drawing attention to Jesus' significant, trustworthy statements or revelation from YHWH (cf. John 1:51; 2:3,5,11; 5:19,24,25; 6:26,32,47,53; 8:34,51,58; 10:1,7; 12:24; 13:16,20,21,38; 14:12; 16:20,23; 21:18).

Notice the change to the plural (pronoun and verb). This must have been addressed to all those standing there.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN**

▣ **"you, you"** These are both plurals. Jesus is addressing all who were standing there and, in a sense, all humanity!

▣ **"the heavens opened"** This phrase has an OT Theophany ring to it.

1. Ezekiel, Ezek. 1:1
2. Jesus, Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21
3. Stephen, Acts 7:56
4. Peter, Acts 10:11
5. The Second Coming, Rev. 19:11

This is perfect active participle which implies they remained opened. The term "heavens" is plural because in Hebrew it is plural. This can refer to (1) the atmosphere above the earth as in Genesis 1 or (2) the very presence of God.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS AND THE THIRD HEAVEN**

▣ **"the angels of God ascending and descending"** This is an allusion to Jacob's experience at Bethel (cf. Gen. 28:10ff). Jesus is asserting that as God promised to provide all of Jacob's needs, God was providing all of His needs!

▣ **"Son of Man"** This is Jesus' self-chosen designation. It was an Hebraic phrase referring to a human

being (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). But because of its use in Dan. 7:13, it took on divine qualities. This term had no nationalistic or militaristic overtones because it was not used by the rabbis. Jesus chose it because it combined the two aspects of His nature (human and divine, cf. 1 John 4:1-3). John mentions Jesus using it for Himself thirteen times.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does the committee from Jerusalem ask John the Baptist if he is one of the three Old Testament personages?
2. Identify the Christological statement which John the Baptist makes about Jesus in verses 19-30.
3. Why do the Synoptics and John vary so much on the call of the disciples?
4. What did these men understand about Jesus? Notice the titles by which they call Him (verse 38).
5. What did Jesus call Himself? Why?

# JOHN 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Wedding at Cana 2:1-11	Water Turned to Wine 2:1-12	The Wedding at Cana 2:1-11	The Wedding in Cana 2:1-3 2:4 2:5 2:6-10 2:11	The Wedding at Cana 2:1-10 2:11-12
2:12		2:12	2:12	
The Cleansing of the Temple 2:13-22	Jesus Cleanses the Temple 2:13-22	The Cleansing of the Temple 2:13-22	2:13-17 2:18 2:19 2:20 2:21-22	The Cleansing of the Temple 2:13-22
Jesus Knows All Men 2:23-25	The Discerner of Hearts 2:23-25	2:23-25	Jesus' Knowledge of Human Nature 2:23-25	Jesus in Jerusalem 2:23-25

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:1-11

A. Jesus was so different from other religious leaders of His day. He ate and drank with the common

people. While John the Baptist was a private person from the desert, Jesus was a public person with the common people.

B. His first sign was so domestic, so familial! Care and concern for the common person characterize Jesus as His anger toward the self-righteous religionists reflects the other side of His character. The priority of people, not traditions or mandatory rituals, reveals Jesus' freedom, yet reverence for cultural expectations.

C. This is the first of seven signs which John uses to reveal Jesus' character and power (chapters 2-11).

1. water into wine (John 2:1-11)
2. healing of boy (John 4:46-54)
3. healing of lame man (John 5:1-18)
4. feeding of the multitude (John 6:1-15)
5. walking on water (John 6:16-21)
6. healing of blind man (John 9:1-41)
7. raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-57)

D. John's Gospel is not structured chronologically but theologically. Chapter 2 is a good example. Initially, John deals with Jesus trying to reach the Jews (both their leaders and the common people) but they would not believe/receive. Because of the entrenched unbelief and religious self-righteousness, Jesus rejected Judaism

1. the six washing jars, filled to the brim, represent Judaism which Jesus changes
2. the cleansing of the temple, (which chronologically happened at the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life) is recorded early as an initial theological marker of His rejection of the Jewish leadership.

Another good example of John's textual design is Nicodemus (Mr. Religion) of chapter 3 and the woman at the well (Miss Irreligion) of chapter 4. Here are "bookends" for all people.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 2:1-11

<sup>1</sup>On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup>and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." <sup>6</sup>Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And He said to them, "Draw *some* out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it *to him*. <sup>9</sup>When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when *the people* have drunk freely, *then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.*" <sup>11</sup>This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

**2:1 "there was a wedding"** Village weddings were major social events. They often involved the entire community and could last several days.

■ **"Cana"** This term is mentioned only in John's Gospel (John 2:1,11; 4:46; 21:2). We know some things



about it.

1. Nathanael's home town
2. site of Jesus' first miracle
3. close to Capernaum

There are four supposed sites (AB, vol. 1, p. 827)

1. Ain Qana, just one mile north of Nazareth
2. Kafr Kanna, about three miles northeast of Nazareth
3. Khirbet Qana, a tel about eight and a half miles north of Nazareth, on a hill
4. Cana on the Plain of Asochis, mentioned by Josephus (*Life*, 86, 206).

The location on a plain seems to fit the name Cana, which is Hebrew for "reed" (i.e., cane)

■ **"the mother of Jesus was there"** Apparently Mary was helping with the arrangements for the wedding. This can be seen in (1) her ordering the servants (cf. John 2:5) and (2) her concern over the refreshments (cf. John 2:3). These probably were relatives or family friends.

**2:3 "They have no wine"** It was a mandatory Hebrew custom for the guests to provide the wine. This wine is obviously fermented, as seen in (1) comment of master of ceremonies, John 2:9-10; (2) the Jewish customs in Jesus' day; or (3) the lack of hygienic processes or chemical additives.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

**2:4 "Woman"** In English this sounds harsh, but it was a Hebrew idiom, a title of respect (cf. John 4:21; 8:10; 19:26; 20:15).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"what does that have to do with us?"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"What does your concern have to do with Me?"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"What concern is that to you and to me?"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"You must not tell me what to do"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"What do you want from me?"</b>

This is a Hebraic idiom, literally "what to me and to you" (cf. Jdgs. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22; 1 Kgs. 17:18; 2 Kgs. 3:13; 2 Chr. 35:21; Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; 5:7; Luke 4:34; 8:28; John 2:4). This was possibly the beginning of Jesus' new relationship to His family (cf. Matt. 12:46ff; Luke 11:27-28).

■ **"My hour has not yet come"** This shows Jesus' self-understanding about His appointed purpose (cf. Mark 10:45). John uses this term "hour" in several ways.

1. for time (cf. John 1:39; 4:6,52,53; 11:9; 16:21; 19:14; 19:27)
2. for the end time (cf. John 4:21,23; 5:25,28)
3. for His last days (arrest, trials, death, cf. John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1)

**2:5 "Whatever He says to you, do it"** Mary did not understand Jesus' comments as totally precluding His acting on her behalf in this situation.

**2:6**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"for the Jewish custom of purification"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"according to the manner of purification"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"for the Jewish rites of purification"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the Jews have rules about ritual washing"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews"</b>

These containers of water were used for ceremonial washings of the feet, hands, utensils, etc. John makes this comment to help Gentiles understand the setting.

**2:6-7 "six stone water pots"** As so often in John, this seems to be a sign with dual purposes.

1. to help the wedding couple
2. it was ultimately a sign pointing toward Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism. The reasons behind this last statement may be
  - a. the number "6" is symbolic of human effort
  - b. Jesus' request to fill them up to the brim seems to have symbolic meaning, not just to provide more wine
  - c. the huge amount of wine, which was far too much for a local wedding feast
  - d. wine was a symbol of the abundance of the new age (cf. Jer. 31:12; Hos. 2:22; 14:7; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:12-14).

▣ **"containing twenty or thirty gallons each"** The measurement used was the Hebrew term *bath*. There were three different sizes of *baths* used in Jesus' day so the amount is uncertain, but this miracle involved a huge amount of wine!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (METROLOGY)**

**2:8**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the headmaster"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the master of the feast"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the chief steward"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the man in charge of the feast"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the president of the feast"</b>

This person could be either (1) an honored guest who was in charge of the festival or (2) a slave in charge of serving the guests.

**2:10** The point is that usually the best wine was served first. After the guests were affected, a poorer grade of wine was served. But here the best was last! This seems to be a contrast between the old covenant (old wine) in Judaism and the new covenant (new wine) in Jesus (cf. the book of Hebrews). Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (cf. John 2:13-25, apparently placed out of chronological order by John for theological purposes) may symbolize this truth.

**2:11 "This beginning of His signs"** The Gospel of John is built around seven signs and their interpretation. This is the first. See Special Topic: *Archē* at John 1:1.

▣ **"and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him"** The manifestation (see note on verb at John 1:31) of Jesus' glory (see Special Topic at John 1:14) was the purpose of the miracle(s). This miracle, as many others, seemed to be directed primarily at His disciples! This does not refer to their initial faith act, but their ongoing understanding of His person and work. The signs reveal the true person and work of the Messiah. It is uncertain whether the guests ever knew what occurred.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 2:12**

**<sup>12</sup>After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.**

**2:12 "Capernaum"** After Nazareth's unbelief (cf. Luke 4:16-30) this became Jesus' headquarters in Galilee (cf. Matt. 4:13; Mark 1:21; 2:1; Luke 4:23,31; John 2:12; 4:46-47).

▣ This is a unique glimpse into the ministry of Jesus toward His family, in light of this miracle at Cana.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:13-25**

A. There has been much discussion among NT scholars as to how many times Jesus cleansed the Temple. John records the cleansing quite early in Jesus' ministry, while the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45) describe a cleansing during the last week of Jesus' life.

However, it is surely possible that John structures Jesus' actions for theological purposes (i.e., John asserts Jesus' full Deity from chapter 1). Each of the Gospel writers had the freedom under inspiration to select, adapt, arrange, and summarize Jesus' actions and teachings. I do not believe they had the freedom to put words in Jesus' mouth or make up events. It must be remembered that the Gospels are not modern biographies, but evangelistic tracts targeted at select readers. The Gospels are not chronological, nor do they record the very words of Jesus (rather summaries). This does not imply that they are inaccurate. Eastern literature was based on different cultural expectations than western literature. See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.

B. The cleansing of the Temple fits into John's overall theological purpose of Jesus' dealing with the Jewish nation first. This can be seen in his discussion with Nicodemus in chapter 3 (orthodox Judaism). However, in chapter 4 Jesus begins to deal with a wider group (even a heretical group of sectarian Judaism), starting with a Samaritan woman.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 2:13-22

**<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at *their tables*. <sup>15</sup>And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; <sup>16</sup>and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But He was speaking of the temple of His body. <sup>22</sup>So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.**

**2:13 "The Passover"** This annual feast is described in Exodus 12 and Deut. 16:1-6. This feast is the only means we have of dating Jesus' ministry. The Synoptic Gospels imply that Jesus ministered for only one year (i.e., one Passover mentioned). But John mentions three Passovers: (1) John 2:13,23; (2) John 6:4 and (3) John 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28,39; 19:14. There is also a possibility of a fourth in John 5:1. We do not know how long Jesus' active public ministry lasted, but John's Gospel suggests that it was at least three years and possibly four or even five.

John structured his Gospel around the Jewish feasts (Passover, Tabernacles, and Hanukkah, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 135-139).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PASSOVER

■ **"and Jesus went up to Jerusalem"** The Jews always spoke of Jerusalem in this theological sense more than in a geographical or topographical sense.

**2:14 "in the temple"** Herod the Great's (an Idumean who ruled Palestine from 37-4 b.c.) temple was divided into seven different courts. The outer court was the Court of the Gentiles, where the merchants had set up their shops in order to accommodate those who wanted to offer sacrifices and bring special

offerings.

■ **"oxen and sheep and doves"** People traveling from a long distance needed to purchase sacrificially acceptable animals. However, the family of the high priest controlled these shops and charged exorbitant prices for the animals. We also know that if people brought their own animals the priests would say they were disqualified because of some physical defect. Therefore, they had to purchase their animals from these dealers.

■ **"the money changers"** There are two explanations of the need for these persons: (1) the only coin the temple would accept was a shekel. Since the Jewish shekel had long ceased to be coined, the temple accepted only the shekel from Tyre in Jesus' day or (2) no coin bearing the image of a Roman Emperor was allowed. There was, of course, a fee!

**2:15 "He made a scourge out of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple"** This whip is only mentioned here. Jesus' anger can be clearly seen in this account. The place where YHWH could be known was no longer a place of worship and revelation! Anger in itself is not a sin! Paul's statement in Eph. 4:26 is possibly related to this act. There are some things that should anger us.

**2:16 "Take these things away"** This is an emphatic aorist active imperative, "get these things out of here!"

■ **"stop making My Father's house a place of business"** This is a present imperative with a negative particle which usually meant to stop an act already in process. The other Gospels (i.e., Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46) quote Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11 at this point, however, in John these OT prophecies are not mentioned. This may be a possible allusion to the Messianic prophecy of Zech. 14:21.

**2:17 "His disciples remembered"** This statement implies that even in the light of Jesus' ministry and the help of the Spirit, these men saw the spiritual truth of Jesus' actions only later (cf. John 2:22; 12:16; 14:26).

■ **"that it was written"** This is a perfect passive periphrastic which is literally "it stands written." It was a characteristic way to affirm the inspiration of the OT (cf. John 6:31,45; 10:34; 12:14; 20:30). This is a quote from Ps. 69:9 in the LXX. This Psalm, like Psalm 22, fits Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus' zeal for God and His true worship will lead to His death, which was the will of God (cf. Isa. 53:4,10; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28).

**2:18**

**NASB** "What sign can You show us as your authority for doing these things"

**NKJV** "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things"

**NRSV** "What sign can you show us for doing this"

**TEV** "What miracle can you perform to show us that you have the right to do this"

**NJB** "What sign can you show us that you should act like this"

This was the central question the Jews had concerning Jesus. The Pharisees claimed His power came from the devil (cf. John 8:48-49,52; 10:20). They were expecting the Messiah to do certain things in certain ways (i.e. like Moses). When He did not perform these specific acts, they began to wonder about Him (cf. Mark 11:28; Luke 20:2), as did even John the Baptist.

**2:19 "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"** The Greek word for Temple (*hieron*) in John 2:14 and 15 refers to the Temple area, while the term (*naos*) in John 2:19,20, and 21 refers to the inner sanctuary itself. There has been much discussion about this statement. Obviously in Matt. 26:60ff; Mark 14:57-59; Acts 6:14 this is a reference to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. However, in this context, it must also relate somehow to the temple itself being destroyed in a.d. 70 by Titus (cf. Matt. 24:1-2). These two statements are related to the truth that Jesus was setting up a new spiritual worship focused on

Himself and not ancient Judaism (cf. John 4:21-24). Again, John uses a word in two senses!

**2:20 "It took forty-six years to build this temple"** Herod the Great expanded and remodeled the second temple (from Zerubbabal's days, cf. Haggai) to attempt to placate the Jews for his being an Idumaeen. Josephus tells us that it was started in 20 or 19 b.c. If this is correct, it means that this particular incident occurred in the year 27-28 a.d. We also know that the work continued on the temple until 64 a.d. This temple had become the great Jewish hope (cf. Jeremiah 7). It will be replaced by Jesus Himself, the new Temple. In John 1:14, He is depicted as the tabernacle and now the temple! What shocking metaphors for a carpenter from Nazareth! God and mankind now meet and fellowship in Jesus!

**2:21 "But He was speaking of the temple of His body"** At the time Jesus spoke these words the disciples did not realize this (cf. John 2:17). Remember John is writing decades later.

Jesus knew why He came. There seem to be at least three purposes.

1. to reveal God
2. to model true humanity
3. to give His life a ransom for many

It is this last purpose that this verse addresses (cf. Mark 10:45; John 12:23,27; 13:1-3; 17:1).

**2:22 "His disciples remembered that He said this"** Often Jesus' words and acts were for the benefit of the disciples more than for the ones He was addressing. They did not always understand at the time.

▣ **"they believed the Scripture"** Although the text itself does not state which Scripture, possibly Ps. 16:10 is the resurrection text that Jesus is alluding to (cf. Acts 2:25-32; 13:33-35). This same text (or theological concept-resurrection) is mentioned in John 20:9.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 2:23-25**

**<sup>23</sup>Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup>and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.**

**2:23 "many believed in His name"** The term "believed" is from the Greek term (*pisteō*) that can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." The noun does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the verb is used often. In this context there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

Apparently these superficial believers were drawn to Jesus by His miracles (cf. John 2:11; 7:31). Their purpose was to affirm Jesus' person and work. However, it must be noted that faith in the mighty works of Jesus was never adequate, persevering belief (cf. John 4:38; 20:29). The object of faith must be Jesus, Himself. Miracles are not automatically a sign of God (cf. Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 19:20). Jesus' works were meant to lead people to faith in Him (cf. John 2:23; 6:14; 7:31; 10:42); often people saw the sign but refused to believe (cf. John 6:27; 11:47; 12:37).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JOHN'S USE OF THE VERB "BELIEVE" (THE NOUN IS RARE)**

**2:24-25** This is one sentence in Greek. The significant term "entrust" (lit. imperfect active indicative of "believe" negated) is used in this context to describe Jesus' actions and attitudes. It means much more than initial assent or emotional response. The sentence also asserts Jesus' knowledge of the fickleness and evil of the human heart (reflects God's knowledge, cf. Gen. 6:11-12,13; Ps. 14:1-3). The paragraph is illustrated by Nicodemus in chapter 3. Even "Mr. Religious" was unable by his own effort, knowledge, standing, or lineage to be accepted by God. Righteousness comes only through belief/faith/trust in Jesus

(cf. Rom. 1:16-17; 4).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus turn the water into wine? What did it symbolize?
2. Describe the marriage customs of Jesus' day.
3. Can you draw the floor plan of Herod's temple? Can you show the probable location of the buyers and sellers?
4. Why do the Synoptics not record this initial cleansing of the temple?
5. Did Jesus predict the destruction of Herod's temple?
6. Define and explain the Greek word which is translated "trust," "believe" and "faith."

# JOHN 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus and Nicodemus	The New Birth	Jesus and Official Judaism	Jesus and Nicodemus	The Conversation with Nicodemus
3:1-15	3:1-21	3:1-10	3:1-2 3:3 3:4 3:5-8 3:9 3:10-13	3:1-8    3:9-21
3:16-21		3:11-15 3:16 3:17-21	3:14-17  3:18-21	
Jesus and John the Baptist	John the Baptist Exalts Christ	Further Testimony of John	Jesus and John	John Bears Witness for the First Time
3:22-30	3:22-36	3:22-24 3:25-30	3:22-24 3:25-26 3:27-30	3:22-24 3:25-36
He Who Comes From Heaven			He Who Comes from Heaven	
3:31-36		3:31-36	3:31-36	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; <sup>2</sup>this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

**3:1 "Pharisees"** The roots of this political/religious party go back to the Maccabean period. Their name possibly means "the separated ones." They were sincere and committed to keeping God's laws as defined and explained in the oral tradition (Talmud). Just as today some of them were truly covenant people (Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea), but some were self-righteous, legalistic, judgmental, "apparent" covenant people (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13). The heart is the key! The "new covenant" (Jer. 31:31-34) focuses on internal motivation (i.e., new heart, new mind, law written on the heart). Human performance has been shown to be inadequate, as it always has. The heart circumcision of Deut. 10:16; 30:6 is a metaphor for personal trust/faith which issues in obedience and a life of gratitude!

Religious conservatism and/or liberalism can be ugly things. Theology must issue from love and faith. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES](#) at John 1:24.

▣ **"Nicodemus"** It is surprising for a Jew in Palestine to have only a Greek name (as do Philip and Andrew, cf. John 1:40,43), which meant "conqueror of the people" (cf. John 7:50;19:39).

**NASB, NKJV** "a ruler of the Jews"

**NRSV, NJB** "a leader of the Jews"

**TEV** "a Jewish leader"

In this context, this is a technical phrase for members of the Sanhedrin (in other contexts it could mean a leader of a local synagogue), the seventy-member high court of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. Its authority had been quietly limited by the Romans, but it still had great symbolic significance to the Jewish people. See Special Topic below.

It seems probable that John uses Nicodemus as a representative of the orthodox Judaism of the first century. Those who thought they had arrived spiritually were told they had to begin again. Faith in Jesus, not adherence to rules (even godly rules, cf. Col. 2:16-23), nor racial background (cf. John 8:31-59), determines one's citizenship in the Kingdom. God's gift in Christ, not sincere, aggressive human religiosity, is the door to divine acceptance. Nicodemus' acknowledgment of Jesus as a teacher from God, though true, was not adequate. Personal trust, exclusive trust, ultimate trust in Jesus as the Messiah is fallen mankind's only hope (cf. John 1:12)!

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN](#)

**3:2 "by night"** The rabbis said that night was the best time to study the Law because there were no interruptions. Possibly Nicodemus did not want to be seen with Jesus so he (and possibly others with him) came to Him at night.

One always wonders in John's writings how often an interpreter should assume a double meaning. John is characterized by a recurring contrast between light and dark (see NET Bible, p. 1898, #7 sn).

▣ **"Rabbi"** In John this means "teacher" (cf. John 1:38; 4:31; Mark 9:5; 11:21). One of the things that bothered the Jewish leaders was that Jesus had not attended one of the rabbinical theological schools. He had no Talmudic study after local synagogue study in Nazareth.



- ▣ **"You have come from God"** This clause is placed first in the sentence for emphasis. This possibly alludes to the prophecy of Deut. 18:15, 18. Nicodemus recognized the power of Jesus' works and words, but this did not mean he was spiritually right with God.
- ▣ **"unless God is with Him"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential reality.

**3:3,5,11 "truly, truly"** This is literally "Amen, amen." It is from the OT word for "faith." It is from the root "to be firm" or "to be sure." Jesus used it to preface significant statements. It was also later used as a way of affirming truthful statements. The initial doubling is unique to John's Gospel. These repeated doublings of the term "amen" reveal the stages in the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at John 1:51.

**3:3 "unless one is"** This is also a third class conditional sentence, like Nicodemus' statement in John 3:2.

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**TEV** "born again"  
**NRSV, NJB** "born from above"

This is aorist passive subjunctive. The word (*anōthen*) can mean

1. "physically born a second time"
2. "born from the beginning" (cf. Acts 26:4)
3. "born from above," which fits this context (cf. John 3:7,31; 19:11)

This is probably another example of John's use of terms that have two meanings (double entendre), both of which are true (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gengrich and Danker's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 77). As is obvious from John 3:4, Nicodemus understood it as option # 1. John and Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23) use this familial metaphor for salvation as Paul uses the term adoption. The focus is on the Father's acts in begetting (cf. John 1:13). Salvation is a gift and act of God (cf. John 1:12-13; Rom. 3:21-24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

- ▣ **"he cannot see"** This idiomatic phrase is paralleled in John 3:5 with "cannot enter."

- ▣ **"the kingdom of God"** This phrase is used only twice in John (cf. John 3:5). This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus' parables). See Special Topic below. For John "eternal life" is a key term and metaphor.

The phrase relates to the eschatological (end-time) thrust of Jesus' teachings. This "already, but not yet" theological paradox relates to the Jewish concept of two ages, the current evil age and the righteous age to come which will be inaugurated by the Messiah. The Jews expected only one coming of a Spirit-empowered military leader (like the Judges in the OT). The two comings of Jesus caused an overlapping of the two ages. The Kingdom of God has broken into human history with the incarnation at Bethlehem. However, Jesus came not as the military conqueror of Revelation 19, but as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53) and humble leader (cf. Zech. 9:9). The Kingdom, therefore, is inaugurated (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:2,11; 11:20; 21:31-32) but not consummated (cf. Matt. 6:10; 16:28; 26:64).

Believers live in the tension between these two ages. They have resurrection life, but they still are dying physically. They are freed from the power of sin, yet they still sin. They live in the eschatological tension of the already and the not yet!

A helpful expression of the tension of the already-but-not-yet in John is found in Frank Stagg's *New Testament Theology*:

"The Gospel of John is emphatic about a future coming (14:3,18 f.,28; 16:16,22) and it speaks clearly of the resurrection and final judgment 'in the last day' (5:28 f.; 6:39 f., 44,54; 11:24; 12:48); yet

throughout this Fourth Gospel, eternal life, judgment, and resurrection are present realities (3:18 f.; 4:23; 5:25; 6:54; 11:23 ff.; 12:28,31; 13:31 f.; 14:17; 17:26)" (p. 311).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:4-8**

**<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again. <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'"**

**3:5 "unless one is born of water and the Spirit"** This is another third class conditional sentence. There may be a contrast (so typical of John's writings) between

1. the physical versus the spiritual (no article with "spirit")
2. the earthly versus the heavenly

This contrast is implied in John 3:6.

The theories for the meaning of "water" are

1. the rabbis use it of male semen
2. the water of child birth
3. John's baptism symbolizing repentance (cf. John 1:26; 3:23)
4. the OT background meaning ceremonial sprinkling by the Spirit (cf. Ezek. 36:25-27)
5. Christian baptism (although Nicodemus could not have understood it that way, first mentioned by Justin and Irenaeus)

In context theory #3-John's water baptism and John's statement about the Messiah's baptizing with the Holy Spirit-must be the most obvious meanings. Birth, in this context, is metaphorical and we must not let Nicodemus' misunderstanding of the terms dominate the interpretation. Therefore, theory #1 is inappropriate. Although Nicodemus would not have understood Jesus' words as referring to later Christian baptism, John the Apostle often interjects his theology into the historical words of Jesus (cf. John 3:14-21). Theory #2 would fit John's dualism of above and below, God's realm and the earthly realm. In defining these terms one must determine whether they are contrasting (#1 or #2) or complementary (#4).

D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, mentions another option: that both words refer to one birth, an eschatological birth following Ezek. 36:25-27, which describes the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34 (p. 42).

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, also sees Ezekiel as the OT allusion behind Jesus' words. It may even have been a reference to proselyte baptism, which Nicodemus, a noted rabbinical teacher, must also do! (p. 67).

■ **"the kingdom of God"** One ancient Greek manuscript (i.e., MS  $\kappa$ ) and many church fathers, have the phrase "the kingdom of heaven," which is common in Matthew's Gospel. However, the phrase "the kingdom of God" occurs in John 3:3 (John 3:3 and 5 are the only places this phrase appears in John). John, writing to Gentiles (as do Mark and Luke), does not use the Jewish circumlocutions for God's name.

**3:6** This again is the vertical dualism (above vs. below) so common in John (cf. John 3:11).

**3:7 "you. . .You"** The first is singular, referring to Nicodemus, but the second is plural, referring to a general principle applicable to all human beings (same play on singular and plural in John 3:11).

One is tempted to interpret this in light of the Jewish tendency to trust in their racial descent (cf. John 4:12; 8:53). John, writing toward the end of the first century, obviously confronts Gnosticism, and also Jewish racial arrogance.

■ **"must"** The Greek verb *dei* (lit. "it is necessary," (BAGD 172), present active indicative) is used three times in chapter 3 (John 3:7,14,30). It denotes things that must occur for the plan of God to move forward (cf. John 4:24; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9)

**3:8** There is a play on the Hebrew (and Aramaic) word (*ruach*) and the Greek word (*pneuma*) which means both "wind," "breath," and "spirit." The point is that the wind has freedom, as does the Spirit. One cannot see the wind, but rather its effects; so, too the Spirit. Mankind's salvation is not in his control, but is in the Spirit's control (cf. Ezekiel 37). It is possible that John 3:5-7 also reflect this same truth. Salvation is a combination of the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65) and the faith/repentance response of the individual person (cf. John 1:12; 3:16,18).

John's Gospel uniquely focuses on the person and work of the Spirit (cf. John 14:17,25-26; 16:7-15). He sees the new age of righteousness as the age of the Spirit of God.

Verse 8 stresses the enigma of why some people believe when they hear/see the gospel and others do not. John asserts that no one can believe unless touched by the Spirit (cf. John 1:13; 6:44,65). This verse reinforces that theology. However, the question of covenant response (i.e., human acceptance of a divine offer) still assumes the Spirit touches everyone. Why some refuse to believe is the great mystery of iniquity (i.e., the self-centeredness of the Fall). The older I get, the more I study my Bible, the more I minister to God's people, the more I write "mystery" across life. We all live in the dark fog (i.e., 1 Cor. 13:12) of human rebellion! Being able to explain or to put it another way, developing a systematic theology, is not as important as trusting God in Christ. Job was never told "why"!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BREATH, WIND, SPIRIT**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:9-15**

**<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup>so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.**

**3:9-10** Nicodemus should have understood Jesus' symbolic terminology in light of (1) Judaism's proselyte baptism and (2) John the Baptist's preaching.

This may have been a purposeful downplaying of human knowledge; even someone like Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not fully understand spiritual things. John's Gospel was written to combat incipient Gnosticism, a heresy that emphasized human knowledge as a means of salvation. Only Jesus is the true light (cf. John 3:19) for all, not just an elite group.

**3:11 "we speak of what we know"** These plural pronouns refer to Jesus and John the Apostle (cf. John 3:11) or Jesus and the Father, which fits the context better (John 3:12). The gospel is not speculation, but divine revelation!

■ **"you do not accept our testimony"** John often uses the terms accept/receive (*lambanō*) and its prepositional compounds in a theological sense.

1. of receiving Jesus
  - a. negatively (John 1:11; 3:11, 32; 5:43, 47)
  - b. positively (John 1:12; 3:11,33; 5:43; 13:20)
2. of receiving the Spirit
  - a. negatively (John 14:17)
  - b. positively (John 7:39)

3. of receiving Jesus' words
  - a. negatively (John 12:48)
  - b. positively (John 17:8)

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

**3:12 "If . . . if"** The first one is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. The second one is a third class conditional sentence which meant potential action.

■ **"you"** The pronoun and the verbs are plural. Nicodemus may have had students or other Pharisees with him as he came to Jesus, or this could be a general statement (i.e., Nicodemus as a representative of a group) to all unbelieving Jews like John 3:7 and 11.

**3:13** This verse is intended to confirm Jesus' revelation of the Father as true, complete, firsthand, and unique (cf. John 1:1-14). This is another example of the vertical dualism in John: heaven versus earth, physical versus spiritual, Nicodemus' origin versus Jesus' origin (cf. John 1:51; 6:33,38,41,50,51,58,62). This verse asserts (1) the deity; (2) the pre-existence; and (3) the incarnation of the eternal Second Person of the Trinity (for Trinity see Special Topic at John 14:26).

■ **"the Son of Man"** This is Jesus' self-designation; it had no nationalistic, militaristic, Messianic implications in first century Judaism. The term comes from Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4 ,where it meant "human being" and Dan. 7:13 where it implied deity. The term combines the paradox of Jesus' person, fully God and fully man (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

**3:14-21** It is difficult to know for certain where Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus stops and Jesus' or John the Apostle's later comments begin. It is possible that the Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' public teaching ministry, while John records His private sessions with His disciples. Verses 14-21 can be outlined as follows.

1. v. 14-15 relate to Jesus
2. v. 16-17 relate to the Father
3. v. 18-21 relate to mankind

Remember that whether it is Jesus or John does not affect the truth of the statements!

**3:14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent"** This is a reference to Num. 21:4-9 which narrates an experience of judgment during the Wilderness Wandering Period. The central truth is that humans must trust and obey God's word, even when they do not fully understand it. God provided a way for the Israelites to be saved from the snake bites if they would only believe. This belief was evidenced by their obedience to His word/promise (cf. Num. 21:8).

■ **"lifted"** This Greek word (cf. John 8:28; 12:32,34) was often translated "highly exalted" (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31; Phil. 2:9) and is another term John uses in two senses (double entendre, cf. John 1:5; 3:3,8). As God promised deliverance from death by snake bite to those who believed God's word and looked at the bronze serpent, so, too those who believe God's word (the gospel about Christ, the One lifted up on the cross) and trust in Jesus will be delivered (saved) from the snake (Devil, sin) bite of evil (cf. John 12:31-32).

**3:15-18 "whoever" (John 3:15) "whoever" (John 3:16) "He who" (John 3:18)** God's love is an invitation to all mankind (cf. Isa. 55:1-3; Ezek. 18:23,32; John 1:29; 3:16; 6:33,51; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). The offer of salvation is universal, but its acceptance is not!

**3:15 "believes"** This is a present active participle. Belief is an ongoing trust. See note at John 1:12 and Special Topics at John 1:7 and 2:23.

■ **"in Him"** This refers not only to facts (theological truths) about Jesus, but to a personal relationship with Him. Salvation is (1) a message to be believed; (2) a person to be received and obeyed; and (3) a life like that person to live!

The grammatical form here is unusual. It is the pronoun with the preposition *en* which is only found here in John; usually it is the preposition *eis*. It is just possible that it should be related to "may have eternal life" (cf. *The New Testament in Basic English* by Harold Greenlee).

**3:15,16 "eternal life"** This Greek term (*zoē*) referred to quality and quantity (cf. John 5:24). In Matt. 25:46 the same word is used for eternal separation. In John *zoē* (used 33 times, mostly in chapters 5 and 6) usually (the verb used of physical life, i.e., 4:50,51,53) refers to resurrection, eschatological life, or the life of the New Age, the life of God Himself.

John is unique among the Gospels in his emphasis on "eternal life." It is a major theme and goal of his Gospel (cf. John 3:15; 4:36; 5:39; 6:54,68; 10:28; 12:25; 17:2,3).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:16-21**

**<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup>He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup>This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.**

**3:16 "God so loved"** This is an aorist active indicative (as is the verb "gave"), which here speaks of a completed act in the past time (God sent Jesus). Verses 16-17 deal primarily with the Father's love (cf. 1 John 4:7-21, esp. John 3:9-10). "Loved" is the term *agapaō*. It was not used much in Classical Greek. The early church took it and filled it with specific meaning. In certain contexts it relates to the Father's or Son's love, however, it is used negatively of human love (cf. John 3:19; 12:43; 1 John 2:15). It is theologically synonymous with *hesed* in the OT, which meant God's covenant loyalty and love. In Koine Greek of John's day, the terms *agapaō* and *phileō* are basically synonymous (compare John 3:35 with 5:20).

Interpreters must keep in mind that all words used to describe God carry human (anthropomorphic) baggage. We must use words that describe our world, our feelings, our historical perspective in an attempt to describe an eternal, holy, unique, spiritual Being (God). All human vocabulary is to some extent analogous or metaphorical. What has been revealed is surely true, but not ultimate. Fallen, temporal, finite mankind cannot grasp ultimate reality.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHISM)**

■ **"so"** This is literally "in such a manner" (i.e., John 7:46; 11:48; 18:22). It expresses method, not emotion! God demonstrated His love (cf. Rom. 5:8) by giving (John 3:16) and sending (John 3:17, both are aorist active indicatives) His Son to die on mankind's behalf (cf. Isaiah 53; Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2).

■ **"world"** John used this Greek term *kosmos* in several senses (see note at John 1:10 and Special Topic at John 14:17).

This verse also refuted the Gnostic dualism between spirit (God) and matter. The Greeks tended to attribute evil to matter. For them matter (i.e., human body) was the prison house of the divine spark in all humans. John does not assume the evil of matter or flesh. God loves the world (planet, cf. Rom. 8:18-22) and human beings (flesh, cf. Rom. 8:23). This may be another intentional ambiguity (double entendre) so common in John (cf. John 1:5; 3:3,8).

■ **"only begotten Son"** This means "unique, one of a kind." It should not be understood as "only begotten" in (1) a sexual sense or (2) the sense that there are no other children. There are just no other children like Jesus. See fuller note at John 1:14.

■ **"whoever believes in Him"** This is a present active participle, which emphasizes initial and continuing belief. See Special Topics at John 1:14 and 2:23. This affirmation is repeated from John 3:15 for emphasis. Thank God for the "whosoever"! This must balance any overemphasis on a special group (racial, intellectual, or theological). It is not that "God's sovereignty" and "human freewill" are mutually exclusive; they are both true! God always initiates the response and sets the agenda (cf. John 6:44,65), but He has structured His relationship with humans by means of covenant. They must respond and continue to respond to His offer and conditions!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

■ **"shall not perish"** The implication is that some will perish (aorist middle subjunctive). Their perishing (*amollumi*, aorist middle subjunctive) is directly related to their lack of a faith response to Jesus (cf. John 11:25). God does not cause, direct, or will their unbelief (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Many have attempted to take this term literally and thereby suggest an annihilation of the wicked. This would contradict Dan. 12:2 and Matt. 25:46. This is a good example of sincere believers forcing the Eastern highly figurative literature into a Western interpretive format (literal and logical). For a good discussion of this term see Robert B. Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 275-277. See Special Topic: Destruction (*apolummi*) at John 10:10.

Again, note how John thinks and writes in dualistic categories (i.e., perish vs. eternal life). The vocabulary and theological structuring of Jesus' teachings are very different between the Synoptic Gospels and John. One wonders how much freedom (under divine guidance, i.e., inspiration) the Gospel writers had in preparing their evangelistic presentation of Jesus to their selected audiences. See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.

**3:17 "to judge the world"** There are several passages in John that assert that Jesus came as Savior, not Judge (cf. John 3:17-21; 8:15; 12:47). However, there are other passages in John that assert that Jesus came to judge, will judge (cf. John 5:22-23,27; 9:39; as well as other parts of the NT, Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Several theological comments are in order.

1. God gave judgment to Jesus as He did creation and redemption as a sign of honor (cf. John 5:23)
2. Jesus did not come the first time to judge, but to save (cf. John 3:17), but by the fact that people reject Him, they judge themselves
3. Jesus will return as King of Kings and Judge (cf. John 9:39)

**3:18** This verse repeats the theme of a free salvation through Christ versus a self inflicted judgment. God does not send people to hell. They send themselves. Belief has continuing results ("believing," present active participle) and so does unbelief ("has been judged," perfect passive indicative and "has not believed," perfect active indicative). See Special Topics at John 2:23 and 9:7.

**3:19-21 "men loved the darkness rather than the light"** Many people who have heard the gospel reject it, not for intellectual or cultural reasons, but primarily for moral ones (cf. Job 24:13). The Light refers to Christ (cf. John 1:9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) and His message of God's love, mankind's need, Christ's provision, and the required response. This is a recurring motif from John 1:1-18.

**3:19 "This is the judgment"** Judgment, like salvation, is both a present reality (cf. John 3:19; 9:39) and a future consummation (cf. John 5:27-29; 12:31,48). Believers live in the already (realized eschatology) and the not yet (consummated eschatology). The Christian life is a joy and a terrible struggle; it is victory after a series of defeats; assurance yet a series of warnings about perseverance!

**3:21 "practices the truth"** Since "the Light" (cf. John 3:19,20[twice],21) is an obvious reference to Jesus, it is possible that "the truth" should also be capitalized. Robert Hanna in *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* quotes N. Turner in his *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament*, who translates it as "the man who is a disciple of the Truth" (p. 144).

Theologically this verse expresses the same truth as Matthew 7. Eternal life has observable characteristics. A person cannot truly encounter God in Christ, be filled by the Holy Spirit, and remain the same. The parable of the soils focuses on fruit-bearing, not germination (cf. Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8. Also note John's discussion in John 15:1-11). Works do not earn salvation, but they are the evidence of it (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the meaning of the phrase "born again"?
2. What do you think "water" refers to in verse 5 and why?
3. What does "believe" (saving faith) involve?
4. Is John 3:16 a passage about Jesus' love for mankind or the Father's?
5. How is Calvinism related to John 3:16?
6. Does "perish" mean annihilation?
7. Define "the light."

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 22-36

A. John's emphasis on the full deity of Jesus Christ is communicated from the very beginning of the Gospel through dialogue and personal encounters. This chapter continues that format.

B. John, writing his Gospel toward the end of the first century, deals with some of the questions that had developed since the Synoptic Gospels were written. One of them has to do with the large following and apparent early heresies connected with John the Baptist (cf. Acts 18:24-19:7). It is significant that in John 1:6-8, 19-36 and 3:22-36 John the Baptist affirms his inferior relationship to Jesus of Nazareth and asserts Jesus' Messianic role.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:22-24

<sup>22</sup>After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. <sup>23</sup>John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized- <sup>24</sup>for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

**3:22 "came into the land of Judea"** This early ministry in both Judea and Galilee is not discussed in the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospels are not chronological biographies of Christ. See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.

■ **"He was spending time with them"** Jesus preached to the crowds but dialogued extensively with His

disciples. He poured Himself into them. This methodology is the focus of two wonderful books by Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* and *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, both of which emphasize Jesus' personal involvement with a small group!

■ **"and baptizing"** We learn from 4:2 that Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples did. Jesus' message was initially very similar to the message of John the Baptist. It was an OT message of repentance and preparation. The baptism mentioned here is not Christian baptism but a baptism symbolizing repentance and spiritual receptivity.

**3:23 "John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim"** The location of this site is uncertain.

1. some believe it was in Perea in the transJordan area
2. some believe it was in northeast Samaria
3. some believe it was three miles east of the city of Shechem

Because "*aenon*" seems to mean "stream," #3 fits best. Whatever the exact location, Jesus was ministering in Judea and John was somewhere a short distance to the north of Him.

**3:24 "for John had not yet been thrown into prison"** It is uncertain why this chronological item is added at this point. Some say it is an attempt to synchronize John's chronology with that of the Synoptics (cf. Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29). It functions as a means of dating this encounter in the life of Christ.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:25-30**

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. <sup>26</sup>And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him." <sup>27</sup>John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup>"You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' <sup>29</sup>"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. <sup>30</sup>"He must increase, but I must decrease.**

**3:25** "there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew" "Discussion" (NASB, NRSV, NJB) is a strong term for "controversy" or "confrontation." Some Greek manuscripts have the plural "Jews." The ancient Greek manuscripts are equally divided. Because the singular is more unusual (i.e., MSS P<sup>25</sup>, 2<sup>x</sup>, A, B, L, W), it is probably original. UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). The tendency of the ancient scribes was to harmonize and smooth out the text. It is also interesting to note that John's disciples probably instigated this argument.

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV, NJB** "about purification"  
**TEV** "the matter of ritual washing"

There have been several theories about the focus of this dispute (NKJV).

1. it is possible that John's followers were discussing the relationship between the baptisms of John and Jesus as they related to the Jewish tradition of washings; the same term is used in John 2:6.
2. some believe it relates to the immediate context where Jesus was teaching that His life and ministry totally fulfilled Judaism
  - a. John 2:1-12, the wedding feast of Cana
  - b. John 2:13-22, the cleansing of the temple
  - c. John 3:1-21, the discussion with Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews
  - d. John 3:22-36, the washings of the Jews and the baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus.



The fact that the context does not expand specifically on this particular discussion highlights the fact that it gave another opportunity for John the Baptist to witness about the supremacy of Jesus of Nazareth.

**3:26 "to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him"** The disciples remembered John's earlier testimony about the Lamb of God (cf. John 1:19-36), and they are apparently a little envious over the success (hyperbole) of Jesus. Jesus was also sensitive to any spirit of competition (cf. John 4:1).

**3:27 "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven"** This is a very straightforward affirmation that there is no competition in spiritual matters. Everything believers have is given to them by the grace of God. However, there has been much discussion as to the meaning of "it" and "him."

1. some say "him" refers to the believer and "it" refers to one coming to Christ for salvation (God initiates, humans can only respond, cf. John 6:44,65)
2. others believe the "him" refers to Jesus and the "it" refers to believers (cf. John 6:39; 10:29; 17:2,9,11,24)

The difference between these two views would be that the term "given" refers either to the salvation of the individual believer or that all believers themselves are a gift from God to Jesus (cf. John 17:2).

**3:28 "I am not the Christ"** John the Baptist affirms specifically, as he did in John 1:20, that he is not the Messiah, but the forerunner. This is an obvious allusion to the prophetic passages of Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6, combined with Isaiah 40 (cf. John 1:23). See note on "Messiah" at John 1:20 and Special Topic at John 4:25.

**3:29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom"** It is striking that there are so many OT allusions to this marriage metaphor describing the relationship between God and Israel (cf. Isa. 54:5; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; 23:4; Hos. 2:21). Paul also uses it in Eph. 5:22ff. Christian marriage may be the best modern example of a covenant relationship.

■ **"So this joy of mine has been made full"** The noun "joy" and verb "rejoice" are used three times in this verse. Instead of having a competitive spirit, John the Baptist obviously recognized his place and rejoiced in Jesus.

**3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease"** The term "must" (*dei*) here is significant. It has already been used in John 3:14 and 4:4. It is a strong affirmation of John's understanding of himself as simply a forerunner of the greater and more significant ministry of Jesus.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 3:31-36**

**<sup>31</sup>"He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>"What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. <sup>33</sup>"He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. <sup>36</sup>He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

**3:31-36** There has been much discussion among commentators over whether these verses are

1. John the Baptist's continuing verbal affirmations
2. the words of Jesus (cf. John 3:11-12)
3. of John the Apostle

These verses return to the themes of John 3:16-21.

**3:31 "He who comes from above"** It is significant that the two titles used for the Messiah emphasize His pre-existence and full deity (implied in John 3:31), and His incarnation and God-given mission (implied in John 3:34). The term "from above" is the same term used in the phrase "born again" or "born from above" in John 3:3.

This dualism of above and below, of God's realm and mankind's earthly realm, is characteristic of John. It is different from the eschatological dualism of the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is also different from the Gnostic dualism of spirit and matter. In John creation itself and the human body are not in and of themselves evil or sinful.

▣ **"above all. . .above all"** The first part of this verse alludes to Jesus' deity and pre-existence, coming from heaven (cf. John 1:1-18; 3:11-12). The second part of the verse affirms that He is over God's creation. It is uncertain from the Greek text whether "all" is masculine or neuter, referring to all mankind or all things. The second "above all" is missing in some Greek texts. The UBS<sup>4</sup> cannot decide on its inclusion, but textual criticisms presuppositions (see Appendix Two) would prefer its inclusion.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"The one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"he who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"he who is of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way"</b>

This is not a negative statement about John. The term for earth here (*gē*, John 12:32; 17:4; 1 John 5:8, but 76 times in Revelation) is not the same as the term "world" (*kosmos*), which is often used negatively by John. This is simply an affirmation that Jesus spoke out of that which He knows, heaven, while all human beings speak out of that which they know, earth. Therefore, the testimony of Jesus is far greater than that of any earthly prophet or preacher (cf. Heb. 1:1-4).

**3:32 "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies"** There is a play on the verb tenses in this verse: (1) "seen" is perfect tense; (2) "heard" is aorist tense; and (3) "testifies" is present tense. Jesus is God's ultimate revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:13-20; Heb. 1:2-3). He speaks out of (1) His personal experience with God the Father and (2) His own Deity.

▣ **"and no one receives His testimony"** This is an Oriental overstatement because John 3:23-26 indicate that many were coming to Him. This phrase refers to Judaism as a whole (cf. John 3:11), not just the immediate context.

**3:33 "He who"** This shows God's universal, unlimited love for all human beings. There are no barriers connected to God's gospel; one must repent and believe (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), but the offer is open to all (cf. John 1:12; 3:16-18; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14).

▣ **"has received His testimony"** Verse 33 is an aorist participle, while John 3:36 is a present participle. This shows that trusting in God for salvation is not only an initial decision, but it is also a life of discipleship. This same affirmation of the need for acceptance has been previously stated both in John 1:12 and 3:16-18. Notice the dichotomy between accepting the testimony (John 3:33) and continuing to walk in it (John 3:36). The term "accepting," like the term "faith," has two connotations in the NT.

1. personally receiving Christ and walking in Him
2. accepting the truths and doctrines involved in the Gospel (cf. Jude, 3,20)

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"has set his seal to <i>this</i>, that God is true"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"has certified that God is true"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"confirms by this that God is truthful"</b>

## NJB "is attesting that God is true"

When believers put their personal trust in Christ, they affirm that God's message about Himself, the world, mankind, and His Son, is true (cf. Rom. 3:4). This is a recurrent theme in John (cf. John 3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3; 1 John 5:20). Jesus is true because He ultimately reveals the one true God (cf. John 3:7,14; 19:11).

For the verb "seal" (aorist active indicative) see Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL

**3:34 "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God"** There are two parallel statements in John 3:34 which show that Jesus' authority comes from God

1. God has sent Him
2. He has the fulness of the Spirit

▣ **"for He gives the Spirit without measure"** This statement is literally in a negated form, but for English readers the positive form captures the meaning. There are two different ways of understanding this fulness of the Spirit: some believe that

1. Jesus gives the fulness of the Spirit to believers (cf. John 4:10-14; 7:37-39)
2. that the fulness of the Spirit refers to God's gift of the Messiah (cf. John 3:35)

The rabbis used the term "measure" to describe God's inspiring the prophets. The rabbis also added that no prophet had a full measure of the Spirit. Therefore, Jesus is superior to the prophets (cf. Heb. 1:1-2) and is, thereby, God's full revelation.

**3:35 "The Father loves the Son"** This affirmation is repeated in John 5:20 and 17:23-26. Believers' relationship to God is founded on His love for the Messiah (the unique Son, cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:5-6; 5:8; 7:28). Note the number of reasons stated in this context why humans should trust Jesus as the Messiah.

1. because He is from above and above all others (John 3:31)
2. because He was sent from God on a mission of redemptions (John 3:34)
3. because God continues to give Him the fulness of the Spirit (John 3:34)
4. because God loves Him (John 3:35)
5. because God has put everything in His hands (John 3:35)

There are several Greek words for "love" which denote different human relationships. *Agapaō* and *phileō* have a semantic overlap. Both are used to describe the Father's love for the Son.

1. John 3:35; 17:23,24,26 - *agapaō*
2. John 5:20 - *phileō*

There does seem to be a contextual distinction in Jesus' dialog with Peter in John 21:15-17. Remember, "context, context, context," not lexicons/dictionaries, determines word meanings!

▣ **"has given all things into His hand"** This is a perfect active indicative. This is a Hebrew idiom for power or authority over another (i.e., John 10:28; 13:3; Acts 4:28; 13:11). This is an extremely interesting phrase and has numerous parallels (cf. John 17:2; Matt. 11:27; 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:22).

### 3:36

NASB	"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life"
NKJV	"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life"
NRSV	"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life"
TEV	"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life"

## **"Anyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, but anyone who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life"**

These verbals are all present active which speak of ongoing action. Belief is more than a one time decision no matter how sincere or emotional it may have been (cf. Matt. 13:20). This affirms that without knowing Jesus, one cannot know the Father (cf. John 12:44-50 and 1 John 5:10). Salvation only comes through a continuing relationship with Jesus, the Son (cf. John 10:1-18; 14:6).

The present tense not only speaks of ongoing action, but the present reality of salvation. It is something believers have now, but it is not fully consummated. It is the dualism of the "already" vs. "not yet" of the two ages (see Special Topic: This Age and the Age to come at 1 John 2:17). See Special Topic: Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at John 9:7.

It is also interesting to note the contrast of "believe" and "obey" in this verse. The Gospel is not only a person whom we receive and a truth that we accept, but it is also a life that we live (cf. Luke 6:46; Eph. 2:8-10).

▣ **"but the wrath of God abides on him"** This is the only place in John's writings (except 5 times in Revelation) where the term "wrath" (*orgē*) appears. The concept is common and is usually related to the term "judgment." This is a present active indicative. "Belief," "obedience," and "wrath" are ongoing present realities that will be consummated in the future. This is the same tension that exists between the "already" and the "not yet" of the Kingdom of God. For a full biblical discussion on the wrath of God read Rom. 1:18-3:20.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is Jesus' early message like that of John the Baptist?
2. Is this baptism the same as Christian baptism?
3. Why are the words of John the Baptist emphasized so much in the opening chapters of John?
4. Describe the number and kinds of contrasts that John the author uses to describe the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus?
5. How is the term "accept" in John 3:33 related to the term "believe" in John 3:36? How does the term "disobeying" in John 3:36 relate to this discussion?
6. List the number of reasons mentioned why people should trust Jesus of Nazareth as their only hope of salvation? (verses 31-36)
7. Explain why the term "wrath" in verse 36 is a present tense verb.

# JOHN 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus and the Woman of Samaria	A Samaritan Woman Meets Her Messiah	Jesus and the Samaritans	Jesus and the Samaritans	Jesus Among the Samaritans
4:1-6	4:1-26	4:1-6	4:1-4 4:5-6	4:1-10
4:7-15		4:7-15	4:7-8 4:9 4:10 4:11-12 4:13-14 4:15	4:11-14 4:15-24
4:16-26		4:16-26	4:16 4:17a 4:17b-18 4:19-20 4:21-24 4:25	4:25-26
4:27-30	The Whitenes Harvest 4:27-38	4:27-30	4:26 4:27 4:28-30	4:27-30
4:31-38		4:31-38	4:31 4:32 4:33	4:31-38
4:39-42	The Savior of the World 4:39-42	4:39-42	4:34-38 4:39-40 4:41-42	4:39-42
The Healing of the Officer's Son	Welcome at Galilee	Jesus and the Gentiles	Jesus Heals an Official's Son	Jesus in Galilee
4:43-45	4:43-45	4:43-45	4:43-45	4:43-45
4:46-54	A Nobleman's Son Healed 4:46-54	4:46-54	4:46-48	The Cure of a Royal Official's Son 4:46-53

4:49

4:50-51

4:52-53

4:54

4:54

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-54

- A. There is a purposeful structure in chapters 3 and 4
  1. Mister Religious (Nicodemus) vs. Miss Outcast (woman at the well)
  2. Jerusalem-based Judaism (Orthodox) vs. Samaritan Judaism (heretical)
- B. The truths about the person and work of Jesus are further developed by
  1. dialogue with the woman at the well (John 4:1-26);
  2. dialogue with His disciples (John 4:27-38);
  3. testimony of the villagers (John 4:39-42);
  4. reception by the Galileans (John 4:43-45);
  5. sign/miracle of Jesus' power over sickness, John 4:46-54.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:1-6**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup>(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), <sup>3</sup>He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. <sup>4</sup>And He had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; <sup>6</sup>and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.**

**4:1 "the Lord"** John, recalling the incident in his mind (by means of the Spirit) years later, uses "Lord" and "Jesus" in the same sentence as referring to one person.

Several Greek manuscripts have "Jesus" twice in John 4:1 (i.e.,  $\alpha$ , D, NRSV, NJB, REB), but "Lord" is in MSS P<sup>66,75</sup>, A, B, C, L (NASB, NKJV). However, even with the far better manuscript attestation for "Lord"

UBS<sup>4</sup> put "Jesus" in the text and gives it a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

■ **"the Pharisees"** See Special Topic at John 1:24.

■ **"heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John"** Jesus left this area because of possible tensions between His followers and John the Baptist's followers stirred up by the Pharisees. The Synoptics say that He left because Herod Antipas had arrested John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:20).

**4:2 "Jesus Himself was not baptizing"** This is not a disparaging comment on baptism (cf. Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:33; 22:16), but a recognition of the egocentric nature of humanity (i.e., "I was baptized by Jesus" or Paul, cf. 1 Cor. 1:17). Apparently Jesus did baptize at the beginning of His ministry (cf. John 3:22), but later stopped. John is correcting the false statement of the Pharisees.

**4:3 "He left Judea and went away again into Galilee"** These are two Aorist active indicatives used to emphasize Jesus' geographical movements.

**4:4 "He had to pass through Samaria"** "Had" is the Greek verb *dei*, which is used several times in this context (cf. John 3:7,14,30). It is usually translated "must" or "necessary." There is a divine purpose in this route for Jesus. It is the shortest route; Josephus tells us that Jews from Galilee usually used this route. However, the Jews of Judea hated the Samaritans and would not walk through their land because they considered them religious half-breeds.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM**

■ **"through Samaria"** There was a great hatred between the Samaritans and the Judeans going back to the Eighth Century b.c. In 722 b.c. the Northern Ten Tribes, with their capital in Samaria, were taken captive by Assyria and were deported to Media (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:6). Other captured people were resettled in northern Palestine (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:24). Through the years these pagans intermarried with what was left of the Israelite population. The Jews considered the Samaritans religious half-breeds and heretics (cf. Ezra 4:1-4). This gives a context for John 4:9.

**4:5 "a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph"** (cf. Gen. 33:18, 19; Jos. 24:32). Many assume Sychar is Shechem, though this is not stated in the NT.

**4:6 "Jacob's well was there"** This was really a dug-out cistern about 100' deep. It was not running water (a spring), but collected rainwater. It is never mentioned in the OT but the name does link the area to a Patriarchal tradition.

■ **"Jesus, being wearied from His journey"** We see clearly the human nature of Jesus here (cf. Luke 2:52), but He was never too tired to love people!

**NASB, NKJV,**

**JB "It was about the sixth hour"**

**NRSV, TEV "It was about noon"**

There is much discussion about which method of reckoning time John used in his Gospel. Some references seem to be Jewish time and some Roman time. Jews begin the day at 6 a.m.; Roman time begins at midnight. Therefore, Jesus arrived at the well very early (i.e. 6 a.m.).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:7-14**

**<sup>7</sup>There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." <sup>8</sup>For**

His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. <sup>9</sup>Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? <sup>12</sup>You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" <sup>13</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

**4:7 "There came a woman of Samaria"** This woman had come alone to a distant well at an unusual time of day because of her social position in the village.

■ **"Give Me a drink"** This is an aorist active imperative which carried a sense of some urgency.

**4:8** This verse sets the stage for Jesus' private conversation with this outcast woman of a heretical sect of Judaism. This is another parenthetical note by John.

**4:9 "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman"** Jews were not even allowed to drink from the same bucket as a Samaritan (cf. Jewish traditions based on Leviticus 15). Jesus was ignoring two cultural barriers: (1) speaking to a Samaritan and (2) speaking to a woman in public.

■ **"(for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans)"** The parenthesis (NASB, NRSV), which is another explanatory addition from John, is missing in MSS  $\kappa^*$  and D, but is present in P<sup>63,66,75,76</sup>,  $\kappa^1$ , A, B, C, L. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its inclusion an "A" rating (certain).

**4:10 "If"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." A statement is made that is false to highlight a conclusion that is also false.

This is the only use of the word "gift" in John's Gospel. Here it refers to Jesus as the gift of God (cf. John 3:16) who gives eternal life. In John 7:38-39 and Acts it is used of the giving of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17). The focus is on the undeserved, unmerited grace of God which is revealed in Christ and the Spirit.

■ **"living water"** This term has an OT metaphorical background (cf. Ps. 36:9; Isa. 12:3; 44:3; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Zech. 14:8). Jesus uses the term "living water" as synonymous to "spiritual life." However, the Samaritan woman thought he was referring to running water, as opposed to rain water of the cistern. It is characteristic of John's Gospel that Jesus (the light of the world) is regularly misunderstood (i.e., Nicodemus). The earthly, fallen realm does not comprehend the heavenly realm (i.e., Jesus' message).

**4:11 "Sir"** This is the Greek term *kurios* in its vocative form *kurie*. It can be used as a polite address (sir) or as a theological statement (Lord) referring to Jesus as full Deity as in John 4:1 and Rom. 10:13. Here it is a polite address.

**4:12 "You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You"** The grammar expects a "no" answer. This is an obviously ironic statement. The Samaritan woman was claiming the greatness of her own descent which the Samaritans traced through Ephraim and Manasseh back to Jacob. The amazing thing is that Jesus' superiority was exactly what He was claiming!

This conversation addresses two theological issues.

1. God/Jesus' love for outcasts (i.e., Samaritans, women)



## 2. Jesus' superiority over Judaism and racial pride

**4:13-14 "but whoever drinks the water I will give him shall never thirst"** This probably had Messianic implications (cf. Isa. 12:3; 48:21; 49:10). This phrase is a strong double negative. There is a play on the verb tenses. The Present active participle of John 4:13 implies drinking again and again, while the aorist active subjunctive of John 4:14 implies a one-time drinking.

**4:14 "a well of water springing up to eternal life"** This is a present participle which means "continuously leaping" (cf. Isa. 58:11 and John 7:38). For desert people, water was a symbol of life and divine provision.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:15-26**

**15**The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." **16**He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." **17**The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." **18**Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." **19**The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. **20**Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." **21**Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. **22**You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23**But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. **24**God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **25**The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." **26**Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

**4:15** The woman, like Nicodemus, is still understanding Jesus on a very physical (literal) level. This was not unusual even for the disciples. They often misinterpreted Jesus by missing His metaphorical language (cf. John 4:31-33; 11:11-13).

**4:16** The UBS<sup>4</sup> does not even mention the possibility that the name "Jesus" was added (cf. NKJV, NRSV, NJB, REB). The NET Bible gives the manuscript evidence for its inclusion (p. 1903, i.e., MSS  $\kappa^*, c, A, C^2, D, L, \text{ and } W$ , but it is missing from MSS P<sup>66,75</sup>, B, C). Scribes tended to make the text clearer and easier to follow.

▣ **"Go, call"** This is a present active imperative followed by an aorist active imperative.

**4:17 "I have no husband"** Sin must be faced. Jesus does not condone but neither does He condemn.

**4:18 "you have had five husbands"** Jesus employs supernatural knowledge to shake the woman from the physical sphere to the spiritual sphere (cf. John 1:48).

**4:19 "I perceive that You are a prophet"** The woman had not yet come to a Messianic understanding. She was trying to skirt the major issue of her relationship with God by the use of a compliment (just like Nicodemus in John 3:2).

Other commentators see this as a Messianic reference from Deut. 18:15-22.

### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)**

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)

**4:20 "Our fathers"** This refers to Abraham and Jacob (cf. Gen. 12:7; 33:20). She is asserting her sense of covenantal inclusion (cf. John 8:31-59).

▣ **"worshiped in this mountain"** This refers to the theological argument as to where God (YHWH) should be worshiped. The Jews emphasized Mt. Moriah (site of Jewish Temple), while the Samaritans emphasized Mt. Gerizim (Samaritan temple destroyed in 129 b.c. by John Hyrcanus).

In our day this would be the attempt by people to whom we are witnessing to get away from the issue of their relationship with Christ by bringing up a theological red herring. Humans enjoy studying religion and philosophy as long as it does not affect them personally (cf. John 3:19-21).

**4:21 "an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father"** This must have been a shocking statement to her and also to His disciples. Where is not the issue, but who!

**4:22 "for salvation is from the Jews"** This is an affirmation of the origin of the Messiah (cf. Gen. 12:2-3; 49:8-12; Isa. 2:3; Rom. 9:4-5).

**4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is"** This may be an allusion to Mal. 1:11 about universal worship. It is obvious that Jesus brought the gift of eternal life during His lifetime as well as after His death. This statement reflects the tension which exists between the two comings of the Messiah. The two Jewish ages (see Special Topic at 1 John 2:17) have now been overlapped. The New Age of the Spirit is present, yet we still live in the old age of evil and sin.

Jesus is surely claiming that the new age had begun in Him. The age of the Spirit, the Messianic age, had been inaugurated!

▣ **"in spirit and truth"** The term "spirit" (see Special Topic at John 3:8) speaks of a worship that is not locally or physically based. The term "truth" was used in the Greek world to speak of a mental concept, while the Hebrew background was that of faithfulness or trustworthiness. See Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

▣ **"the Father"** It was very unusual to call God "Father" in the New Testament without adding a reference to Jesus as His unique Son.

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER](#)

▣ **"for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers"** God is actively seeking lost humanity (cf. Isa. 55; Ezek. 18:23,32; Luke 19:10; John 1:12; 3:16).

**4:24 "God is spirit"** There are several short clauses in John's writings which describe the character of God: (1) God is love; (2) God is light; (3) God is spirit. This can mean (1) not physical; (2) not limited to one locality; (3) not related to time sequence or (4) heavenly vs. earthly.

**4:25 "Messiah is coming"** The term Messiah occurs only twice in the NT, both in John's Gospel (cf. John 1:41; 4:25).

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#)

▣ **"when that One comes, He will declare all things to us"** This shows that the Samaritans were expecting a Messiah. It also shows they saw the Messiah as coming to reveal the fullness of God.

**4:26 "I who speak to you am He"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 52:6. It is a plain, open affirmation of His Deity (so different from the Synoptic Gospels)! It is a play on "I Am," which reflected the OT Covenant

name for God, YHWH (cf. Exod.3:12, 14). Jesus used this OT name for God as a way of referring to YHWH's self-revelation visibly and clearly in Jesus (cf. John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5 compare Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 46:4). This specialized use of "I Am" must be differentiated from the well known "I Am" statements of John, 6:35, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5, which are followed by qualifying nouns.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:27-30**

<sup>27</sup>At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" <sup>28</sup>So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, <sup>29</sup>"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?" <sup>30</sup>They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.

**4:27 "they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman"** Culturally this was just not done by orthodox Jews.

■ **"yet no one said, 'What do You seek' or, 'Why do You speak with her'"** This is an eyewitness comment from John. He must have remembered this shocking event well!

**4:28 "the woman left her waterpot"** This is such a beautiful eyewitness, historical note that showed the excitement of this woman as she rushed back to the village to testify (cf. John 4:29-30).

**4:29 "this is not the Christ, is it"** The grammatical form expects a "no" answer, but the context shows that she really did believe He was! Context trumps grammar!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:31-38**

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." <sup>32</sup>But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup>So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup>Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

**4:32** This is another allusion to the dualism of heaven vs. earth, the spiritual vs. the physical. Jesus was on an evangelistic, revelatory mission. People were/are priority!

**4:34 "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work"** John 17 is a clear expression of Jesus' understanding of what the Father wanted him to do (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; John 6:29).

The contrast between Jesus sent from above, from the very presence of God, the Father, as His mission to reveal the Father and do the work of the Father. This is the vertical dualism so characteristic of John (above versus below, spirit versus flesh).

There are two different terms used of Jesus being sent.

1. *pempō* (John 4:34; 5:23,24,30,37; 6:38,39,40,44; 7:16,18,28,33; 8:16,18,26,29; 9:4; 12:44,45,49; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5)

2. *apostellō* (John 3:17,24; 5:36,38; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,18,21,23,25; 20:21)

These are synonymous as 20:21 shows. It also shows that believers are also sent into a lost world as

representatives of the Father for the purpose of redemption (cf. 2 Cor. 5:13-21).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (THELĒMA) OF GOD**

**4:35 "There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest"** This is a metaphorical phrase showing that the opportunity for spiritual response was now! People were saved by faith in Him during Jesus' life, not only after the resurrection.

**4:36-38 "One sows, another reaps"** These verses are referring to the ministry of the prophets or possibly John the Baptist. This is used in 1 Cor. 3:6-8 for the relationship between Paul's ministry and Apollos' ministry.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:39-42**

**<sup>39</sup>From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I *have* done." <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>Many more believed because of His word; <sup>42</sup>and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."**

**4:39 "many of the Samaritans believed in Him"** John uses the verb "believe" in combination with several other terms: "believe in" (*en*), "believe that" (*hoti*), and, most often, "believe into" (*eis*) or put trust in (cf. John 2:11,23; 3:16,18,36; 6:29,35,40; 7:5,31,38, 48; 8:30; 9:35,36; 10:42; 11:25,26,45,48; 12:11,37,42,44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20). Originally the Samaritans believed because of the woman's testimony (John 4:39), but after they heard Jesus they personally received His testimony (John 4:41-42). Jesus came to the lost sheep of Israel, but His gospel was for all mankind: Samaritans, Syro-Phoenician women, and Roman soldiers (cf. Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

■ **"because of the word of the woman who testified"** If God used the witness of this heretical and immoral woman, He can also use mine and yours! This verse shows the significance of a personal testimony. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

#### **4:40**

**NASB, NRSV "asking"**  
**NKJV "urged"**  
**TEV, NJB "begged"**

This is a strong Greek term and should be translated "urged" or "begged." The intensity of this term can be seen in its use in John 4:47 (cf. Luke 4:38).

**4:42 "the Savior of the world"** This same universal title is used in 1 John 4:14. It is also used in the universal sense of God's love for all mankind (cf. 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). The promise of Gen. 3:15 has been fulfilled! In the first century this phrase was often used of Caesar. Roman persecution occurred because Christians used this title exclusively for Jesus. This title also shows how the NT authors attributed God the Father's titles to the Son: Titus 1:3 - Titus 1:4; Titus 2:10 - Titus 2:13; Titus 3:4 - Titus 3:6.

The Jews had rejected Jesus (cf. John 1:11), but the Samaritans quickly and easily received Him (cf. John 1:12)!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:43-45**

**<sup>43</sup>After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. <sup>44</sup>For Jesus Himself testified that**

a prophet has no honor in his own country. <sup>45</sup>So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

**4:43** This verse shows that Jesus moved more freely and more often between Judea and Galilee than one might assume from the Synoptic Gospels.

**4:44** This is a very unusual verse because it does not fit the preceding context. It may refer to the Galilean ministry that was about to begin (cf. John 4:3). This proverb is also found in Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24. In the Synoptics it refers to Galilee, but here it refers to Judea.

**4:45 "the Galileans received Him"** They had already experienced Jesus' teachings and miracles during an earlier Passover visit to Jerusalem.

The Galileans are also said to have "received" Jesus, but many of them did not follow through on that reception and later abandoned Him. "Believe" (cf. John 3:16) and "receive" (cf. John 1:17) involve more than an initial reception (cf. the Parable of the Soils in Matt. 13:18-23; Mark 4:12-20; Luke 8:11-15). See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at John 8:31.

▣ **"for they themselves also went to the feast"** The NET Bible marks this as another parenthetical comment of the author, as they do all of John 4:44 (cf. NRSV, NIV).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 4:46-54**

<sup>46</sup>Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. <sup>47</sup>When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring *Him* to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. <sup>48</sup>So Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe." <sup>49</sup>The royal official said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." <sup>50</sup>Jesus said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. <sup>51</sup>As he was now going down, *his* slaves met him, saying that his son was living. <sup>52</sup>So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." <sup>53</sup>So the father knew that *it was* at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household. <sup>54</sup>This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

**4:46**

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "a royal official"

NKJV "a certain noblemen"

TEV "a government official"

This was a governmental official in the service of the Herod family.

**4:48 ""Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe""** This is a third class conditional sentence with a strong double negative. Jesus addresses this man in the plural. The Jews were seeking signs (cf. John 2:18; 6:2, 30; Matt. 12:38; 16:1). But this servant of Herod believed before the sign was given.

**4:49 "child"** In three verses John uses three different terms.

1. John 4:49 - *paidion* (NASB, "child")

2. John 4:50 - *hyiōs* (NASB, "son")

3. John 4:51 - *país* (NASB, "son")

Obviously these terms were used synonymously.

**4:50** This verse catches the essence of John's Gospel-believe in Jesus, believe His words, believe His acts, believe in His Person! This man's faith is affirmed in His belief without sight of Jesus' promises.

**4:53 "he himself believed and his whole household"** This is the first of many accounts where one person's belief affected the whole family.

1. Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48)

2. Lydia (Acts 16:15)

3. the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-34)

4. Crispus (Acts 18:8)

5. Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16)

There has been much discussion about these household conversions, but it must be asserted that all members needed to personally receive Jesus for themselves. The Middle East is much more tribal and family-oriented than modern cultures. It is also true that the significant others in our lives affect our choices.

**4:54** The first public sign was the wedding feast at Cana (cf. John 2:1-11).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus leave the area of Judah?

2. Does John use Roman time or Jewish time?

3. Why is Jesus' talking to a Samaritan woman so important?

4. How does verse 20 affect the relationship between denominations today?

5. Explain the startling statement that Jesus makes in verse 26.

6. Did the Galileans exercise true faith?

# JOHN 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing at the Pool	A Man Healed at the Pool of Bethesda	Healing of the Lame Man on the Sabbath	The Healing at the Pool	The Cure of a Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda
5:1-9a	5:1-15	5:1 5:2-9a	5:1-6  5:7 5:8-9a	5:1-9a
5:9b-18		5:9b-18	5:9b-10 5:11 5:12 5:14 5:16 5:15-17 5:18	5:9b-18
	Honor the Father and the Son			
The Authority of the Son	5:16-23	Jesus' Relation to God	The Authority of the Son	
5:19-29		5:19-24	5:19-23	5:19-47
	Life and Judgment are Through the Son			
	5:24-30	5:25-29	5:24-29	
		Evidence of Jesus' Relation to God	Witnesses to Jesus	
5:30		5:30	5:30	
The Witness to Jesus	The Fourfold Witness			
5:31-40	5:31-47	5:31-38	5:31-40	
		Jesus Rebukes Those Who Refuse His Offer		
		5:39-47		
5:41-47			5:41-47	

### READING CYCLE THREE

## FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:1-9a

<sup>1</sup>After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, <sup>4</sup>[waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] <sup>5</sup>A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" <sup>7</sup>The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." <sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." <sup>9</sup>Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began to walk*.

**5:1 "a feast"** Some ancient Greek uncial manuscripts,  $\kappa$  and C, have "the feast," but the majority of manuscripts have "a feast" (P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, A, B, and D). There were three annual feast days which were mandatory for Jewish males to attend if at all possible (cf. Leviticus 23): (1) Passover; (2) Pentecost; and (3) the Feast of the Tabernacle. If this refers to a Passover, then Jesus had a four-year public ministry instead of three (cf. John 2:13, 23; 6:4: 12:1). It is traditionally held that Jesus had a three-year public ministry after John's baptism. This is ascertained only by the number of Passover feasts mentioned in John's Gospel.

■ **"Jesus went up to Jerusalem"** Jesus is said to have gone to feasts in Jerusalem several times in John (cf. John 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 12:12).

Jerusalem was built on seven hills and was higher than the surrounding land. So the phrase "went up" could be physically true. However, it seems to have been a metaphor idiom of preeminence. Jerusalem, because of the Temple, was the high place of the earth and center (navel) of the earth.

**5:2 "by the sheep *gate*"** This "gate of the flock" was on the northeast part of the wall of Jerusalem. It is mentioned in Nehemiah's rededication and reconstruction of the walls of the city (cf. Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39).

NASB, NKJV "a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda"  
NRSV "called in Hebrew Beth-zatha"  
TEV "in Hebrew it is called Bethzatha"



There are several alternative spellings of this name. Josephus also called it by the Hebrew name "Bethzatha," which was the name for this section of Jerusalem. It is also called "Bethsaida" in the Greek manuscripts. The Qumran copper scrolls called it "Bethesda," which means "house of mercy" or "house of double spring." Today it is known as St. Anne's pool(s).

In Jesus' day the Jews of Palestine spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. In John when it says "Hebrew" it means Aramaic (cf. John 5:2; 19:13,17,20; 20:16; Rev. 9:11; 16:16). All of Jesus' statements, such as

1. *Talitha kum*, Mark 5:41
2. *Ephphatha*, Mark 7:34
3. *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*, Mark 15:34 are in Aramaic.

**5:4** This verse (John 5:3b-4) is a later scribal commentary which tries to explain

1. the presence of all the sick people by the pool
2. why this man had been there so long
3. why he wanted someone to put him in the water, John 5:7

It is obviously a Jewish folk tale. It was not part of John's original Gospel. The evidence for this verse not being included is:

1. it is not in manuscripts P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, C\*, D
2. it is marked by an asterisk in over 20 additional later Greek manuscripts, showing that this text was thought not to be original
3. there are several non-Johannine terms used in this short verse.

It is included in several early Greek uncial manuscripts, A, C<sup>3</sup>, K, and L. It is also included in the Diatessaron (about a.d. 180), and the writings of Tertullian (a.d. 200), Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Cyril. This shows its antiquity but not its inclusion in the original inspired Gospel. It is included in KJV, NASB (1995 Update, with brackets), and NKJV, but omitted in NASB (1970), NRSV, NJB, REB, NET Bible, and NIV.

For a good discussion of the manuscript variant by an evangelical textual critic, see Gordon Fee, *To What End Exegesis?*, pp. 17-28.

**5:5-6** Exactly why Jesus chose this particular man is unknown to us. Possibly he had been there the longest. There is little faith required on this man's part. Apparently Jesus was trying to initiate a confrontation with the Jewish leaders. This gave Him the opportunity to assert His Messianic claim. The eschatological passage of Isa. 35:6 may be related to this Messianic healing.

Many of Jesus' miracles were not done primarily for the individual, but for those watching.

1. disciples
2. Jewish authorities
3. a crowd

The Gospels select certain miracles to clearly reveal who Jesus was. These events are representative of His daily actions. They are selected to show

1. His person
2. His compassion
3. His power
4. His authority
5. His clear revelation of the Father
6. His clear revelation of the Messianic age

**5:8 ""Get up, pick up your pallet, and walk""** This is a series of commands.

1. a present active imperative
2. followed by an aorist active imperative
3. then another present active imperative

The pallet was a cloth cushion that the poor used for sleeping. For these sick, lame, and paralyzed people it served as a sitting pad during the day (cf. Mark 2:4,9,11,12; 6:55; Acts 9:33).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:9b-18**

<sup>9b</sup>Now it was the Sabbath on that day. <sup>10</sup>So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." <sup>11</sup>But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" <sup>12</sup>They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up *your pallet* and walk?'" <sup>13</sup>But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place. <sup>14</sup>Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." <sup>15</sup>The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup>For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." <sup>18</sup>For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

**5:9b "Now it was the Sabbath"** The Jewish leaders did not even rejoice over the man being healed, but they were offended at Jesus breaking the Oral Tradition (later codified in the Talmud) connected with the Sabbath (cf. John 5:16, 18; Matt. 7: 1-23).

Jesus' healings on the Sabbath can be explained in two ways.

1. He healed every day, but controversies developed over the Sabbath healings
2. He chose this issue to cause a controversy as an opportunity to engage the religious leaders in theological dialog

Jesus often healed on the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 1:29-31; 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 14:1-6; John 5:9-18; 9:14). Jesus cast out demons on the Sabbath (cf. Mark 1:21-28); Luke 13:10-17). Jesus defended the disciples' eating on the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28). Jesus initiated controversial subjects in the synagogue on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 4:16-30; John 7:14-24).

**5:13 "Jesus had slipped away"** Literally this is "to bend the head to one side." Jesus looked like a normal Jew of his day. He just melted into the crowd.

**5:14**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** "do not sin anymore,"

**NKJV** "Sin no more"

**TEV** "so stop sinning"

This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which often meant stop an act already in process, but in this context this seems unlikely (cf. NET Bible, p. 1907 #8). Jewish theologians of the first century viewed sickness as related to sin (cf. James 5:14-15). This does not explain all sickness, as can be seen from Jesus' dealing with the man who was born blind (cf. John 9) and Jesus' words in Luke 13:1-4.

Jesus was still dealing with this man's spiritual life. Our actions do reflect our heart and faith. Biblical faith is both objective and subjective, both belief and action.

Today there is such an emphasis in the church on physical healing. God surely still heals. But divine healing should result in a spiritual change of lifestyle and priorities. A good question might be "why do you want to be healed?"

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD'S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?](#)**

**5:15 "The man went away, and told the Jews"** The exact motivation behind his informing the Jewish authorities is uncertain.

1. it seems to be a thoughtless, petty act which shows that healing did not always begin with faith or end with faith
2. Jesus told him to do so (cf. Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; 17:14)

**5:16 "because He was doing these things on the Sabbath"** The verb is an imperfect active indicative which denotes continual action in past time. This was not Jesus' first (or last) Sabbath healing!

**5:17**

**NASB "But He answered them"**

**NKJV, REV,**

**NRSV, NIV "But Jesus answered them"**

**NJB "His answer to them was"**

The scribes who copied the early Greek manuscripts had a tendency to

1. simplify the grammar
2. make specific the pronominal referents
3. standardize phrases

It is hard to know which form of John 5:17 was original.

1. "but He. . ." - P<sup>75</sup>,  $\chi$ , B, W
2. "but Jesus. . ." - P<sup>66</sup>, A, D, L
3. "but the lord. . ." or "the Lord Jesus" - Syriac translations

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #2 a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

■ **"My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working"** These are both present middle (deponent) indicatives. Jesus was stating that the Father does not stop doing good on the Sabbath and neither does the Son (for a good discussion of this verse see Manfred Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, p. 219). This, in a real sense, was an affirmation of Jesus' understanding of His unique relationship with the Father (cf. John 5:19-29).

The Jewish concept of monotheism (cf. Deut. 6:4) was practically expressed in a "one cause" explanation of events in this world (cf. Jdgs. 9:23; Job 2:10; Eccl. 7:14; Is. 45:7; 59:16; Lam. 3:33-38; Amos 3:6). All actions were ultimately the action of the one true God. When Jesus asserted dual agency in God's actions in the world, He asserted a dualism of divine causality. This is the difficult problem of the Trinity. One God, but three personal manifestations (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; Acts 2:33-34; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:18; 4:4-6; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at John 14:26.

**5:18 "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him"** There are two reasons the Jews wanted to kill Jesus.

1. He publically broke (lit. "loosed," imperfect active indicative, cf. Matt. 5:19) the Oral Tradition (Talmud) concerning the Sabbath
2. His statements showed that they understood Him to be claiming equality with God (cf. John 8:58-59; 10:33; 19:7)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:19-23**

**<sup>19</sup>Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. <sup>20</sup>For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. <sup>21</sup>For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even**

**so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. <sup>22</sup>For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.**

**5:19,24,25 "Truly, truly"** This literally is "Amen, amen." The term "amen" is a transliteration from Hebrew. It originally meant trustworthiness. It came to be used to affirm a truth. Jesus is the only one known to use this word at the beginning of a statement. He used it to preface significant statements. John is the only one to record the doubling of this initial term. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at John 1:51.

**5:19 "the Son"** There is a theologically significant repetition of the term "Son" in the next few verses. It is used eight times in this brief context. It shows Jesus' unique understanding of His relationship with the Father and reflects the titles "Son of Man" and "Son of God."

■ **"the Son can do nothing of Himself"** As is often true, the NT presents Jesus in paradoxical expressions. In some texts

1. He is one with the Father (cf. John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30,34-38; 14:9-10; 20:28)
2. He is separate from the Father (cf. John 1:2,14,18; 5:19-23; 8:28; 10:25,29; 14:10,11,12,13,16; 17:1-2)
3. He is even subservient to Him (cf. John 5:20,30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:28; 15:10,19-24; 17:8)

This is probably to show that Jesus is fully divine, but a separate, distinct personal and eternal manifestation of deity.

In the commentary edited by John Raymond E. Brown, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, a good point is made:

"The implication of subordination here should not be removed by undertaking Jesus' words to refer only to his human nature. . . It would also miss a fine point of Johannine Christology. Rather, Jesus is insisting on an absolute harmony of activity between Father and Son, which, of course, radically demands an identity of nature; the same process is used in John 16:12ff. to relate the Holy Spirit to the Son. But throughout this Gospel we never find the Trinity treated as a thesis of abstract theology; it is always approached from the standpoint of its relevance to soteriology" (p. 434).

■ **"unless it is something He sees the Father doing"** Mankind has never seen the Father (cf. John 5:37 and 1:18), but the Son is claiming intimate, personal, present knowledge of Him (cf. John 1:1-3).

■ **"for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner"** In the actions and teachings of Jesus humans clearly see the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15 Heb. 1:3).

**5:20 "the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing"** These are both Present active indicatives which speak of an ongoing action. This is the Greek term for love, *phileō*. One would have expected *agapeō* as in John 3:35. These two words for love had a wide semantic overlap in Koine Greek (see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 32-33 and F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 73).

■ **"greater works"** In context this refers to raising the dead (John 5:21,25-26) and executing judgment (John 5:22,27).

■ **"that you will marvel"** This purpose clause clearly shows that the purpose of the miracles is that Jews (plural you) believe in the unique Son (cf. John 5:23; Acts 13:41 [Hab. 1:5]).

**5:21 "the Father raises the dead. . . even so, the Son"** In the Old Testament YHWH is the only one who can give life (cf. Deut. 32:39). The fact that Jesus can raise the dead is equivalent to a statement of equality with YHWH (cf. John 5:26).

Jesus gives eternal life now (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:13) which is linked to a physical manifestation of life

in the new age in John 5:26 (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). It seems that John's extended encounter with Jesus is on an individual basis, while there still remains a future collective event (both judgment and salvation).

▣ **"so the Son gives life to whom He wishes"** To whom does the Son choose to give life? In context this is not a proof-text for Calvinism, but an assertion that belief in Jesus brings life (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). The tension comes from John 6:44,65. Does the Spirit choose "all" or "some"? I think it is obvious that fallen humans do not initiate in the spiritual realm, but I am biblically committed to the fact that they must respond (and continue to respond) to the Spirit's wooing by repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance! The real mystery is why some who hear the gospel say "No"! I call it the "mystery of unbelief." In reality it is both "the Unpardonable Sin" of the Gospels and "the Sin Unto Death" of 1 John. See Special Topic at 1 John 5:16.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE UNPARDONABLE SIN**

**5:22** The strong double negative and the perfect tense verb emphasize the fact that judgment has been committed to the Son (cf. John 5:27; 9:39. Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5). The apparent paradox between this verse and John 13:17 is explained by the fact that Jesus, during these "last days," judges no one, but humans judge themselves by their reaction to Jesus Christ. Jesus' eschatological judgment (of unbelievers) is based on their reception or rejection of Him.

The giving of eternal life vs. judgment was the theme of John 3:17-21,36. God's love in Christ, when rejected, becomes God's wrath! There are only two options! There is only one way to receive eternal life—faith in Christ (cf. John 10:1-18; 14:6; 1 John 5:9-12)!

**5:23 "so that all may honor the Son"** The inclusive term "all" may refer to an eschatological judgment scene (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

▣ **"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him"** This statement is very similar to 1 John 5:12. No one can know God who does not know His Son, and conversely, no one can honor or praise the Father who does not honor and praise the Son!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:24-29**

**24**"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. **25**Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. **26**For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; **27**and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. **28**Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, **29**and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

**5:24 "Truly, truly"** John's unique doubling (cf. John 5:25) of Jesus' words is a characteristic introduction to significant statements. See Special Topic Amen at John 1:51.

▣ **"he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life"** These are three present active verbals. This is an emphasis on belief (see Special Topic at John 2:23) in the Father that is exercised by belief in the Son (cf. 1 John 5:9-12). In the Synoptics, eternal life is often a future event to be hoped for in faith, but in John it is characteristically a present reality (i.e., John 8:51; 11:25). It is possible the term "hears" reflects the Hebrew term *shema*, which meant "to hear so as to obey" (cf. Deut. 6:4).

▣ **"who sent Me"** The verb *apostellō* (aorist active participle) is the root form of the word "apostle" (cf. John 5:36). It was used by the rabbis as "one sent as an official representative on an assigned mission." This term is used often in John for the Father sending the Son as His representative. See note at John

4:34.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)**

▣ **"but has passed out of death into life"** This is Perfect active indicative; that which has happened in the past and has now become a state of being. The Kingdom of God is present, yet future, so too, eternal life (cf. John 5:25-26; 1 John 3:14). Verse 25 is a strong statement of the presence of the Kingdom now!

**5:25 "an hour is coming and now is"** This is the kind of language that characterizes John's writings. Words and phrases often have two senses. In this case, "hour" means

1. hour of salvation
2. hour of judgment

The time frame is both present and future (cf. John 5:29; 6:39,44,54). What one does with Jesus now will determine what happens to him/her in the future. Salvation and judgment are both a present reality and a future consummation (cf. John 5:28).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOUR**

▣ **"when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God"** Verse 25 speaks of the spiritually dead; John 5:29 speaks about the resurrection of all of the physically dead. The Bible speaks of three kinds of death.

1. spiritual death (cf. Genesis 3)
2. physical death (cf. Genesis 5)
3. eternal death (cf. Eph. 2:2; Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire, hell (*Gehenna*).

This is a rare use of the phrase "Son of God." See Special Topic at 1 John 3:8. One reason this phrase was not used more often is because of the Greek religious view of the gods (Mt. Olympus) taking human women as wives or consorts. Jesus' status as God's Son does not reflect sexual generation or time sequence, but the intimate relationship. It is a Jewish familial metaphor. Jesus was affirming His Deity to these Jewish leaders in a very clear and specific way using OT categories (cf. John 5:21,26).

**5:26 "for just as the Father has life in Himself"** This is basically the meaning of the term YHWH from Exod. 3:14. This form of the Covenant name for God comes from the Hebrew verb "to be." It means the ever living, only living One. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at John 6:20.

In the OT only YHWH had "life" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16) and only He could give it to others (i.e., Job 10:12; 33:4; Ps. 36:9). Jesus claims that YHWH gives this same unique power to Him!

▣ **"even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself"** This is a strong affirmation of Jesus' Deity (cf. John 1:4; 1 John 5:11).

**5:27** The reason that Jesus is able (*exousia*, has authority, cf. John 10:18; 17:2; 19:11) to judge rightly is because He is fully God but also fully man. There is no definite article with the phrase "Son of Man" (cf. Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4). He fully knows us (cf. Heb. 4:15); He fully knows God (cf. John 1:18; 5:30).

It is surprising that in a context where Jesus calls Himself "the son" (cf. John 5:19 [twice],20,21,22,23 [twice],25,26) that in John 5:27 the title "son of man" (but without the usual definite article) is used. However, the same switch is in (1) John 3:13,14 vs. John 3:16,17,18,35,36; (2) John 6:27,53 vs. John 6:40; and (3) John 8:28 vs. John 8:35,36. Jesus used both titles for Himself interchangeably.

**5:28 "Do not marvel at this"** This is a present active imperative with a negative particle which usually meant to stop an act which was already in process. As shocking as Jesus' previous words to these Jewish leaders were, His next statement would also totally shock them.

▣ **"all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice"** This seems to reflect the shout of the Messiah at the Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16). Lazarus (cf. John 11:43) is a paradigm of this event. This does not negate the truth of 2 Cor. 5:6,8. It does assert the universal judgment and authority of the Son.

Much of this context relates to the reality of the spiritual life here and now (realized eschatology). But this phrase also asserts an end-time future eschatological event. This tension between the already and not yet of the Kingdom of God characterizes Jesus' teachings in the Synoptics, but especially in John.

**5:29** The Bible speaks of resurrection of both the wicked and the righteous (cf. Dan 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Act 24:15). Most passages emphasize the resurrection of the righteous only (cf. Job 19:23-29; Isa. 26:19; Jn 6:39-40,44,54; 11:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:50-58).

This does not refer to judgment based on works, but rather to judgement based on believers' lifestyles (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 5:16-21). There is a general principle in God's Word and world, humans reap what they sow (cf. Pro. 11:24-25; Gal. 6:6). Or to put it in an OT quote, "God will recompense humans according to their deeds" (cf. Ps. 62:12; 28:4; Job 34:11; Pro. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8 and Col. 3:25).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:30**

**<sup>30</sup>I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**

**5:30** Jesus, the incarnated Logos of God was subject to and submissive to the Father. This strong emphasis on submission also appears in John 5:19 ("the Son can do nothing"). This does not imply the Son is inferior, but that the Trinity has delegated the redemptive tasks among the three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 5:31-47**

**<sup>31</sup>If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. <sup>32</sup>There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. <sup>33</sup>You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. <sup>34</sup>But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup>He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. <sup>36</sup>But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of John*; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. <sup>37</sup>And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. <sup>38</sup>You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. <sup>39</sup>You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; <sup>40</sup>and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. <sup>41</sup>I do not receive glory from men; <sup>42</sup>but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. <sup>43</sup>I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup>How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only God*? <sup>45</sup>Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup>For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. <sup>47</sup>But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?**

**5:31** In the Old Testament there was a need for two witnesses to confirm a matter (cf. Num 35:30; Deut. 19:15). In this context Jesus gives five witnesses to Himself.

1. the Father (John 5:32,37)
2. John the Baptist (John 5:33, cf. John 1:19-51)
3. Jesus' own works (cf. John 5:36)
4. Scripture (cf. John 5:39)
5. Moses (cf. John 5:46) which reflects Deut. 18:15-22

See Special Topic at John 1:8.

■ **"If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action.

■ **"My testimony is not true"** This seems to contradict 8:14. Context shows that these statements are made in different settings. Here Jesus shows how many other witnesses there are, but in John 8:14 He asserts that only His is necessary!

For "true" see Special Topic: Truth in John at John 6:55.

**5:32 "There is another who testifies of Me"** This refers to God the Father (cf. 1 John 5:9) because of the use of the term *allos*, which means "another of the same kind" in contradistinction to *heteros*, which means "one of a different kind," although this distinction was fading in Koine Greek. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

**5:33 "You have sent to John"** This refers to John the Baptist (cf. John 1:19).

**5:34 "I say these things so that you may be saved"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. The passive voice implies the agency of God or the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Remember the Gospels are evangelistic proclamations (i.e., tracts), not historical biographies. There is an evangelistic purpose in all that was recorded (cf. John 20:30-31).

**5:35 "he was the lamp"** This is another emphasis on light, here John's preparatory message (cf. John 1:6-8).

**5:36 "the very works that I do-testify about Me"** Jesus' actions were fulfillments of OT prophecies about the Messiah. The Jews of His day should have recognized these miraculous signs-healing the blind, feeding the poor, restoring the lame (cf. Isa. 29:18; 32:3-4; 35:5-6; 42:7). The power of Jesus' teachings, lifestyle righteousness, compassion, and mighty miracles (cf. John 2:23; 10:25,38; 14:11; 15:24) bore a clear witness to who He was, where He came from, and Who sent Him.

**5:37 "He has borne witness of Me"** The "He" refers to the Father. In context this phrase seems to refer to OT Scripture (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). This would involve all the Messianic references in the OT (cf. John 5:39).

■ **"You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form"** Jesus was asserting that although the Jews should have known God through the Scriptures and personal experiences in worship, they did not really know Him at all (cf. John 8:43; Isa. 1:1-15; 6:9-10; 29:13; Jer. 5:21).

In the OT, seeing Deity was thought to bring death. The only person who spoke to YHWH face to face was Moses and even then the encounter was through the veil of the Cloud. Many have thought that Exod.33:23 contradicts John 1:18. However, the Hebrew terms in Exodus means "after glory," not physical form.

**5:38 "His word abiding in you"** These are two powerful metaphors in John's writings. God's word (*logos*) must be received, once received (cf. John 1:12) it must remain (abide, cf. John 8:31; 15:4,5,6,7,10; 1 John 2:6,10,14,17,24,27,28; 3:6,14,15,24). Jesus is God's full revelation (cf. John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-3). Salvation is confirmed by a continuing relationship (Hebrew sense of "know" cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and the affirmation of gospel truths (Greek sense of "know" cf. 2 John 9).

This term "abiding" is used in the sense of intimate, personal relationship with perseverance.

Abiding is a condition of true salvation (cf. chapter 15) It is used in several senses in John.

1. the Son in the Father (cf. John 10:38; 14:10,11,20,21; 17:21)
2. the Father in the Son (cf. John 10:38; 14:10,11,21; 17:21,23)
3. believers in the Son (cf. John 14:20,21; 15:5; 17:21)
4. believers in the Son and the Father (cf. John 14:23)
5. believers in the word (cf. John 5:38; 8:31; 15:7; 1 John 2:14).

See Special Topic at 1 John 2:10.



**5:39 "You search the Scriptures"** This can be a present active indicative or a present active imperative. Since it is in a list of witnesses that the Jews had rejected it is probably an indicative.

Here is the tragedy of the Jewish leaders: they had the Scriptures, read them, studied them, memorized them, and yet missed the person to whom they point! Without the Spirit, even the Scriptures are ineffective! True life comes only through a personal, obedient faith relationship (i.e., Deut. 4:1; 8:13; 30:15-20; 32:46-47).

▣ **"these that testify about Me"** This refers to the OT Scriptures, which Jesus fulfills (i.e., John 1:45; 2:22; 5:46; 12:16,41; 19:28; 20:9). Most of the early sermons of Peter (cf. Acts 3:18; 10:43) and Paul (cf. Acts 13:27; 17:2-3; 26:22-23,27) in Acts use fulfilled prophecy as an evidence of Jesus' Messiahship. All but one passage (1 Pet. 3:15-16), which affirms the authority of Scripture found in the NT (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), refer to the OT. Jesus clearly saw Himself as the fulfillment and goal (and proper interpreter, cf. Matt. 5:17-48) of the OT.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

**5:41-44** These verses seem to reflect the fact that the Jewish religious leaders enjoyed the applause from their peers. They gloried in quoting rabbis from the past, but because of spiritual blindness they missed the greatest of all teachers, who was in their midst. This is one of Jesus' strong denunciations of first-century rabbinical Judaism (also note the parable in Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19).

**5:41**

**NASB, NRSV** "I do not receive glory from men"

**NKJV** "I do not receive honor from men"

**TEV** "I am not looking for human praise"

**NJB** "Human glory means nothing to me"

The term "glory," *doxa*, is difficult to translate consistently (see Special Topic at John 1:14). It reflects the Hebrew, "glory," *kabodh*, which was used as a way to express God's radiant, brilliant presence (cf. Exod. 16:10; 24:17; 40:34; Acts 7:2) and to praise and honor God for His character and acts. A good verse that combines these connotations is 2 Pet. 1:17.

This brilliant aspect of God's very presence and character is related to

1. angels (cf. Luke 2:9; 2 Pet. 2:10)
2. supremacy to Jesus (cf. John 1:14; 8:54; 12:28; 13:31; 17:1-5,22,24; 1 Cor. 2:8; Phil. 4:21)
3. derivatively to believers (cf. Rom. 8:18,21; 1 Cor. 2:7; 15:43; 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:1,4)

It is also interesting to note that John refers to Jesus' crucifixion as His being glorified (cf. John 7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31). However, it can also be translated as "honor" or "thanksgiving" (cf. Luke 17:18; Acts 12:23; Rom. 4:20; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:15; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; Rev. 11:13; 14:7; 16:9; 19:7). This is how it is used in this context.

**5:43 "you do not receive Me"** Throughout the Gospel of John, the focus of believing in Jesus is not a prescribed theological creed but a personal encounter with Him (i.e., John 5:39-40). Belief begins with a decision to trust Him. This starts a growing personal relationship of discipleship that culminates in doctrinal maturity and Christlike living.

▣ **"if another shall come in his own name"** This is a third class conditional sentence.

▣ **"you shall receive him"** This is a play on the rabbis' study methods of comparing teachers from differing rabbinical schools from the Talmud.

Michael Magill, *New Testament TransLine*, has a good quote:

"The Jewish leaders will receive a human teacher or rabbi who does not claim to be sent by God.

With a human teacher, they are in a reciprocal relationship of peers, exchanging glory on an equal basis. With a prophet sent from God, they must be in a subordinate position, hearing and obeying. This has always been at the root of why God's prophets were rejected" (p. 318).

**5:44** See note at John 17:3.

**5:45-47** Jesus is asserting that the writings of Moses revealed Him. This is probably a reference to Deut. 18:15-22. In John 5:45 Scripture is personified as an accuser. It was meant to be a guide (cf. Luke 16:31). The guide rejected, becomes an adversary (cf. Gal 3:8-14, 23-29).

**5:46,47 "if. . .if"** Verse 46 is a second class conditional sentence called "contrary to fact," which asserts that Jewish leaders did not truly believe even in Moses' writings and that Jesus (the eschatological Moses [i.e., the Prophet of Deut. 18:15-19]) would be their judge on the last day. The "if" of John 5:47 introduces a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true (NIV has "since").

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is verse 4 omitted in our modern translations?
2. Why did Jesus heal this particular man?
3. Was faith involved on the part of this man in his healing? Does physical healing imply spiritual healing?
4. Was his illness related to his personal sin? Is all illness related to personal sin?
5. Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus?
6. List the functions of God in the Old Testament which are applied to Jesus.
7. Is eternal life a present reality or a future hope?
8. Is the last judgment based on works or faith? Why?

# JOHN 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Feeding of the Five Thousand 6:1-15	Feeding the Five Thousand 6:1-14	Feeding the Five Thousand 6:1-15	Jesus Feeds Five Thousand 6:1-6  6:7 6:8-9 6:10-13 6:14-15	Miracle of the Loaves 6:1-4 6:5-15
Walking on the Water 6:16-21	Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:15-21	Jesus Walks on the Sea 6:16-21	Jesus Walks on the Water 6:16-21	Jesus Comes to His Disciples Walking on the Waters 6:16-21
Jesus the Bread of Life 6:22-33	The Bread from Heaven 6:22-40	Jesus, the Bread of Life 6:22-24 6:25-40	The People Seek Jesus 6:22-24 Jesus the Bread of Life 6:25 6:26-27 6:28 6:29 6:30-31 6:32-33 6:34	The Discourse in the Synagogue at Capernaum 6:22-27  6:28-40
6:34-40	Rejected by His Own		6:35-40	
6:41-51	6:41-59	6:41-51	6:41-42 6:43-51	6:41-51
6:52-59		6:52-59	6:52 6:53-58 6:59	6:52-58  6:59-62
The Words of Eternal Life 6:60-65	Many Disciples Turn Away 6:60-71	6:60-65	The Words of Eternal Life 6:60	6:63

		6:61-65	
			6:64-66
			Peter's Profession of Faith
6:66-71	6:66-71	6:66-67	
			6:67-71
		6:68-69	
		6:70-71	

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO JOHN 6:1-71

A. The Gospel of John does not record the Lord's Supper itself, although chapters 13-17 record the dialogue and prayer in the Upper Room. This omission may be intentional. The church of the second century began to view the ordinances in a sacramental sense. They saw them as channels of grace. John may have been reacting to the sacramental view by not recording Jesus' baptism or the Lord's Supper.

B. John 6 is in the context of the feeding of the five thousand. However, many use it to teach a sacramental view of the Eucharist. This is the source of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (John 6:53-56).

The question over how chapter 6 relates to the Eucharist shows the dual nature of the Gospels. Obviously, the Gospels relate to Jesus' words and life, yet they were written decades later and expressed the individual authors' community of faith. So there are three levels of authorial intent.

1. the Spirit
2. Jesus and the original hearers
3. the Gospel writers and their readers

How is one to interpret? The only verifiable method must be a contextual, grammatical, lexical approach, informed by a historical setting and not vice versa.

C. We must remember that the audience was Jewish and the cultural background was the rabbinical expectation of the Messiah being a super-Moses (cf. John 6:30-31), especially in regard to the Exodus experiences like "manna." The rabbis would use Ps. 72:16 as a proof text. Jesus' unusual statements (cf. John 6:60-62, 66) were meant to counteract the crowd's false Messianic expectations (cf. John 6:14-15).

- D. The early church fathers did not all agree that this passage refers to the Lord's Supper. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius never mention the Lord's Supper in their discussions on this passage.
- E. The metaphors of this passage are very similar to Jesus' words used with the "woman at the well" in John 4. Earthly water and bread are used as metaphors of eternal life and spiritual realities.
- F. This multiplying of bread is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17)!
- G. Michael Magill, *New Testament TransLine* (p. 325) makes an interesting observation related to the different groups in Capernaum and their relation to Jesus' shocking words.
1. the crowd, John 6:24
  2. the Jews, John 6:41,52
  3. the disciples, John 6:60,66
  4. the Twelve, John 6:67
- Jesus had effectively
1. stopped the crowd from trying to make Him king because He fed them (John 6:15)
  2. challenged the Jewish leadership by His radical personal claims
  3. caused many peripheral followers to leave
  4. elicited a statement of continuing and deepening faith on the part of the Twelve (John 6:68-69)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:1-14

<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). <sup>2</sup>A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. <sup>3</sup>Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. <sup>4</sup>Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup>Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" <sup>6</sup>This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. <sup>7</sup>Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." <sup>8</sup>One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, <sup>9</sup>"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. <sup>11</sup>Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup>When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." <sup>13</sup>So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup>Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

**6:1 "the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias)"** This body of water was known by several other names. In the OT it was called Chinnereth, (cf. Num. 34:11). It was also known as Lake Gennessaret in Luke 5:1 and by the Roman name, the Sea of Tiberias in John 21:1. The parenthesis is another editorial comment by the author. It does show that John's Gospel was for people outside Palestine (cf. John 6:4,6,64,71).

**6:2** Notice the reason why the crowd followed Him.

**6:3** Jesus used the natural amplification of the water and hill side to project His voice. The fact that He "sat down" shows that this was an official teaching session with His disciples. One wonders if the mountain was meant to remind one of a Mosaic setting like Matthew 5-7.

In these large teaching sessions, Jesus often addressed different groups in the crowd. Encircling Him at His feet would have been His close disciples; beyond them, the curious, the rich and the common "people of the land"; and, in small groups, the religious leaders (Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, possibly even Essenes).

**6:4 "the Passover, the feast of the Jews"** The only way of determining the length of the public ministry of Jesus is the Passovers mentioned in the Gospel of John (first, 2:13; second, 6:4; and third, 11:55 & 13:1). If John 5:1 is also speaking of a Passover then we have at least three and one-half or four years public ministry. There is so much we do not know about the life of Jesus (cf. John 20:30; 21:25).

**6:6 "This he was saying to test him"** This Greek term here for "test" (*peirazō*) usually carries an evil connotation (see Special Topic at 1 John 4:1, cf. Matt. 4:1). This is a good example showing that modern interpreters try to force NT words to fit into one definition. Koine Greek was losing many of the grammatical and linguistic distinctions of Classical Greek (cf. note at John 5:20).

Jesus was testing Philip, but how?

1. on his faith in Jesus as provider?
2. on his knowledge of the OT (cf. Num. 11:13, on Moses' question to God about providing food)?
3. on his care and concern for the crowd?

**6:7**

**NASB, NKJV, "Two hundred denarii worth"**

**JB "six months' wages"**

**NRSV "two hundred silver coins"**

**TEV**

A denarii was a day's wage for a laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2) and a soldier. This would have been almost two-thirds of a year's wage.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: COINS IN USE IN PALESTINE IN JESUS' DAY**

**6:8-9 "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother"** This context is such a beautiful picture of Andrew's simple faith and trust in the ability and person of Jesus.

**6:9 "barley loaves"** This was considered the most inexpensive and least desirable bread. It was the food of the poor. Jesus did not use His powers to provide expensive food!

**6:10 "Have the people sit down"** People of this culture normally ate while either sitting on the floor or reclining at a low "U" shaped table.

▣ **"there was much grass in the place"** This is an eyewitness apostolic (editorial) comment.

▣ **"So the men sat down, about five thousand"** It is really a misnomer to call this "the feeding of the five thousand" because apparently there were more people there that day. The five thousand is a round number and refers to adult men (i.e., 13 and above) and does not include women and children (cf. Matt. 14:21). However, it is uncertain how many women and children would or could have attended (cf. Matt. 14:21).

**6:11 "and having given thanks, He distributed"** The miracle of multiplication must have occurred in Jesus' hands. In context of the Jews' Messianic hope this event would be the expected sign that Jesus was providing food as Moses provided manna.

The Greek term for "giving thanks" (*eucharisteō*) later became the name for the Last Supper (cf. 1 Cor.

11:23-24). Did John use it here with this future, technical definition in mind? The other Gospels which do not have the allusions to the Eucharist use a different term (*eulogeō*, cf. Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41). They do use the term *eucharisteō* (cf. Matt. 15:36; Mark 8:6; Luke 17:16; 18:11) but not consistently in a Last Supper setting. They do use the same term to describe Jesus' thanksgiving prayer in the upper room (cf. Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; and Luke 22:17-19). Therefore, since the usage is not uniform, John would have needed to make his allusion more specific if later readers were meant to interpret this in an Eucharistic setting!

**6:12 "lost"** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 10:10.

**6:13 "So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets"** The term "basket" here refers to a large hamper-type basket. It is significant that Jesus did not waste any of the multiplied food. Nor did He change the nature (or type) of the bread.

Does the term "twelve" have symbolic significance? It is difficult to be certain. It has been interpreted as a reference to the tribes of Israel (Jesus satisfies the OT) or one basket for each disciple (Jesus satisfies and provides for His disciples), but it may just have been an eyewitness detail (like John 6:19).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE**

**6:14 "the Prophet"** This is an allusion to the Messianic reference of Deut. 18:15-22 (cf. Acts 3:22; 7:37). The crowd recognized the power of Jesus but misunderstood the nature of His mission and signs.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:15**

**<sup>15</sup>So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.**

**6:15** The crowd was excited by Jesus' Messianic miracle of providing food. This verse may relate to the evil one's temptation of Matt. 4:3.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:16-21**

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

**6:17 "Capernaum"** This was Jesus' headquarters during His Galilean ministry because of the unbelief in His hometown of Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:28-29).

**6:19 "they had rowed about three or four miles"** They were approximately halfway across the lake when Jesus came walking to them on the water. Matthew expands this narrative to include Peter walking to Him on the water.

▣ **"they were frightened"** These disciples were still estimating Jesus by earthly standards. The disciples' fear is expressed in Mark 6:49. The collective weight of these "signs" forced them to reassess who He was.

**6:20 "It is I"** This is literally (*egō eimi*) "I Am" (cf. John 4:26; 8:24,28,54-59; 13:19; 18:5-6) which reflects the covenant name of God in the OT, YHWH of Exod. 3:12-15. Jesus is the visible "I Am," the full self-

revelation of God, the incarnate Logos (word) of God, the true and only Son. See D in the Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY**

**6:21 "and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going"** This apparently was another miraculous occurrence (cf. John 22-25) since Mark's Gospel indicates that they had rowed about half way across the lake (cf. Mark 6:47). However, it is not mentioned in the other Gospels (i.e., Matt. 14:32 or Mark 6:51).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:22-25**

**<sup>22</sup>The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup>There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup>So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"**

**6:23 "Tiberias"** This city was built by Herod Antipas in a.d. 22 and became his capital.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:26-34**

**<sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, *even* God, has set His seal. <sup>28</sup>Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." <sup>30</sup>So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? <sup>31</sup>Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup>Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup>Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."**

**6:26,32,53 "Truly, truly, I say to you"** "Amen," "Amen." This is a Hebrew phrase that has three distinct usages.

1. In the OT the word was used for "trust." Its figurative sense meant "to be firm" and was used to describe one's faith in YHWH.
2. Jesus' usage reflects the introduction of important and significant statements. We have no other contemporary usage of "amen" in this way.
3. In the early church, like the OT, it came to be a term of affirmation or concurrence.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at John 1:51.

- **"but because you ate of the loaves"** Their motives were physical and immediate, not spiritual and eternal.
- **"and were filled"** This term meant "to gorge," it was often used of animals (especially cows).



**6:27 "Do not work"** This is a present middle imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in progress. The OT background to this passage is Isaiah 5. This conversation has many similarities to the one with the woman at the well in John 4.

■ **"perishes"** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 10:10.

■ **"has set His seal"** This is literally "sealed." This was a sign of authenticity, ownership, authority, and security (cf. NEB and Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). TEV and NIV translate it as "approval" since it is used to assert God the Father's approval of Jesus' ministry. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL](#) at John 3:33, where it may refer to the Holy Spirit.

**6:28 "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God"** This was the central religious question of first century Judaism (cf. Luke 18:18). The religious Jew was assumed to be right with God based on (1) his lineage and (2) his performance of the Mosaic Law as it was interpreted by the Oral Tradition (Talmud).

**6:29 "that you believe in Him whom He has sent"** This is a present active subjunctive followed by an aorist active indicative. The word "believe" is crucial in understanding the NT teachings about salvation. See Special Topic at John 2:23. The word's primary orientation was volitional trust. The Greek word group *pistis* can be translated as "believe," "trust" or "faith." The focus of human belief must be "in Him" (cf. John 1:12; 3:16), not in human sincerity, commitment, nor enthusiasm. The immediate orientation of this passage is to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not orthodox theology about Him, expected religious ritual, nor even ethical living. All of these things are helpful but not primary. Notice that Jesus changes the plural "works" of their question to the singular "work."

For "sent" see Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**6:30-33** It must be remembered that this group had just participated in a miraculous feeding of the five thousand. They had already had their sign! Rabbinical Judaism thought the Messiah would repeat certain OT acts, such as sending of the manna (cf. II Baruch 29:8). The rabbis used Ps. 72:16 as a proof text for this view of a "super-Moses" type of Messiah (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22).

There is an important grammatical feature between the "believe in Him" of John 6:29 and "believe You" of John 6:30. The first focuses on John's usual construction of believing in/into Jesus. It is a personal focus. The second focuses on believing Jesus' words or claims which is a content focus. Remember, the Gospel is both a person and a message. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

**6:31 "as it is written"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive participle. It was the standard grammatical form to introduce Scripture quotes from the OT. It was an idiom affirming the inspiration and authority of the OT. This quote could refer to one of several OT texts or a combination: Ps. 78:24; 105:40; Exod. 16:4,15, or Neh. 9:15.

**6:32** Jesus addresses the Jews' traditional theology. They asserted that the Messiah must perform wonder-works like Moses because of Deut. 18:15,18. Jesus corrects their assumption at several points.

1. God, not Moses, gave the manna
2. manna was not of heavenly origin although the people thought it was (cf. Ps. 78:23-25)
3. the true bread of heaven was Jesus, who was not a past act, but a present reality

**6:33 "is that which comes down out of heaven"** This is a recurrent theme in John (cf. John 3:13). It is John's vertical dualism. In this context Jesus' descent is stated seven times (cf. John 6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58). It shows Jesus' pre-existent, divine origin (cf. John 6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58, and 62). It is also a play on "manna" which came from heaven as did Jesus the true Bread, the Bread of life.

This is literally "the bread of God is the one coming down out of heaven." Here the masculine present active participle refers to (1) "bread" or (2) a man, Jesus. Often in John these ambiguities are purposeful (double entendres).

■ **"gives life to the world"** This is the purpose for which Jesus came (cf. John 3:16; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). The goal is "new life," "eternal life," "new age life," "God's kind of life" to a lost and rebellious world, not to some special group (Jew/Gentile, elect/non-elect, conservative/liberal), but to all!

**6:34**

**NASB, NKJV "Lord"**  
**NRSV, TEV,**  
**NJB, NET,**  
**NIV, REB "Sir"**

These two terms both reflect different semantic usages of *kurios*. In this context the second option seems best. The crowd did not understand Jesus or His words. They did not perceive Him as the Messiah (also note 4:11; 5:7).

■ **"always give us this bread"** This is similar to the statement of the woman at the well in John 4:15. These Jews did not understand Jesus' spiritual metaphors either. This is a recurrent theme in John.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:35-40**

**<sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup>This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."**

**6:35 "I am the bread of life"** This is one of the "I Am" statements which is so characteristic of John (cf. John 6:35,41,48,51; 8:12; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5). John's Gospel focuses on the person of Christ. This is related to the Jews' Messianic expectations about manna and the new Law giver Who would bring a new exodus (from sin). See note at John 8:12.

■ **"He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst"** These are two strong Double negatives in Greek, "will never no never" (cf. John 6:37).

There is a parallel relationship between "comes" and "believes" (cf. John 7:37-38, similar to "sees" and "hears"). They are both present participles. Believers' coming and believing are not one-time decisions, but the beginning of a lifestyle of fellowship, friendship and followship.

■ **"hunger. . .thirst"** Hunger and thirst were often used to describe spiritual reality (cf. Ps. 42:1; Isa. 55:1; Amos 8:11-12; Matt. 5:6).

**6:36 "that you have seen Me"** Some ancient witnesses (MSS  $\kappa$ , A, and many Old Latin, Vulgate, and Syriac versions) omit "Me," making Jesus' statement refer to His sign (i.e., feeding the crowd). The pronoun is included in so many Greek manuscripts and versions that the UBS<sup>4</sup> could not decide which was original.

**6:37 "All that My Father gives Me will come to Me"** The primary emphasis of this passage is on the sovereignty of God. The two definitive passages on this theological truth are Romans 9 and Eph. 1:3-14. It is interesting that in both contexts mankind's response is required. Romans 10 has seven all inclusive phrases. This is also the case in Ephesians 2, where the discussions of God' grace in John 6:1-7 issue in a call to faith in John 6:8,9. Predestination is a doctrine for the redeemed, not a barrier to the unsaved. The

key to unlock the doctrine is the love and grace of God, not eternal decrees. Notice that all who God gives to Jesus also "come" to Him. God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65), but humans must respond (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). See Special Topic at John 3:16.

■ **"the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out"** This is another strong double negative. This emphasizes the truth that God calls and welcomes everyone to Himself through Christ (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23; 30-32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65), but humans must respond (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). What a wonderful passage on security (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

**6:38 "I have come down from heaven"** This is perfect tense which refers to the Incarnation (cf. John 1:1ff; Eph. 4:8-10), and its results remain. It also shows the heavenly origin of Jesus (cf. v. 41,62).

■ **"not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me"** The NT asserts both the unity of the Trinity (see Special Topic at John 14:26), example 14:8-9 and the personality of the three persons. This verse is part of John's ongoing emphasis on Jesus' submissiveness to the Father. See full note at John 5:19. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**6:39 "that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing"** There is an obvious relationship between the neuter singular "all that" of John 6:37 and the neuter singular of John 6:39. John uses this unusual form several times (cf. John 17:2,24). It apparently emphasizes the corporate whole (cf. John 6:40,45).

This is a great promise of God's keeping power, a source of Christian assurance (cf. John 10:28-29; 17:2,24, see Special Topic at 1 John 5:13). Notice that the verb tense of John 6:37 is Present tense, while in John 6:39 it is perfect tense. God's gift abides! Also the last two affirmations of John 6:39 are both aorist active; Jesus does not lose any of that which the Father has given to Him (John 6:37 and 39) and He raises all those who are given to Him on the last day (cf. John 6:44). Here are the divine promises of (1) election and (2) perseverance!

This concept of a day of consummation (both positive and negative) is called by several titles.

1. the last days, John 6:39,40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 3:3
2. the last time, 1 John 2:18; Jude 1:18
3. that day, Matt. 7:22; 2 Tim. 1:12,18; 4:8
4. a day, Acts 17:31
5. the great day, Jude 1:6
6. the day, Luke 17:30; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:4; Heb. 10:25
7. His day, Luke 17:24
8. the day of the Lord, 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2
9. the day of Christ, Phil. 1:10; 2:16
10. the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5
11. the day of the Lord Jesus, 2 Cor. 1:14
12. the day of Christ Jesus, Phil. 1:6
13. the day of the Son of man, Luke 17:24 (see also #7)
14. day of judgment, Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17
15. day of wrath, Rev. 6:17
16. The great day of God - Rev. 16:14

■ **"but raise it up in the last day"** This refers to resurrection day for believers but judgment day for unbelievers (cf. John 6:40,44,54; 5:25,28; 11:24 and 1 Cor. 15). Frank Stagg has a helpful statement at this point in his *A New Testament Theology*:

"The Gospel of John is emphatic about a future coming (14:3, 18 f., 28; 16:16,22) and it speaks clearly of the resurrection and final judgment 'in the last day' (5:28 f., 6:39 f., 44,54; 11:24; 12:48); yet throughout this Fourth Gospel, eternal life, judgment, and resurrection are present realities (3:18 f.; 4:23; 5:25; 6:54; 11:23

ff.; 12:28,31; 13:31 f.; 14:17; 17:26)" (p. 311).

**6:40 "this is the will of My Father"** This is Jesus' answer to the question of John 6:28, "what shall we do that we may work the words of God?" See Special Topic: The Will of God at John 4:34.

▣ **"that everyone who beholds the Son"** The present active participles of "beholding" and "believing" are parallel (like "comes" and "believes" in John 6:35, like "sees" and "hears"). These are ongoing actions, not one-time events. The term "beholding" meant "to gaze intently" at something so as to understand or know it.

I surely like the term "everyone" (*pas*), notice

1. that all might believe through him, John 1:7
2. enlightens every man, John 1:9
3. whoever believes may in Him have eternal life, John 3:15
4. that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3:16
5. that all may honor the Son, John 5:23
- 6.-9. John 6:37,39,40,45
10. everyone who loves and believes in Me shall never die, John 11:26
11. I, if I, be lifted up from the earth will draw all men to Myself, John 12:32
12. everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness, John 12:46

This is the mystery of sovereignty (cf. John 6:38-39; 17:2,24 vs. freewill). Both are somehow true. For me the theological concept of "covenant" unites them best!

▣ **"believes in Him"** Remember that salvation is primarily a personal relationship, not a creed, correct theology, or a moral lifestyle (cf. John 3:16; 11:25-26). The stress is on the object of one's faith, not the intensity. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

Notice the balance of the emphasis on God's sovereign choice in John 6:37a,39,44,65 and mankind's faith response in John 6:37b,40. These biblical tensions must be maintained. God's sovereignty and mankind's free will form the twin aspects of biblical covenant.

▣ **"may have eternal life"** This is a present active subjunctive; a response is required (cf. 1 John 5:11). Also note that John 6:39 is corporate, while John 6:40 is individual. This is the paradox of salvation.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:41-51**

**<sup>41</sup>Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." <sup>42</sup>They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."**

**6:41 "Therefore the Jews were grumbling"** This is an imperfect tense, which implies they started to grumble or grumbled again and again. The parallel with the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. and Num.) is striking. The Israelites of that day also rejected Moses, God's representative, who also provided them food.

**6:42** This shows that the Jews understood Jesus' words about Himself. He was clearly using Jewish idioms to claim to be pre-existent and divine! Jesus' words are still shocking coming from a Galilean carpenter! Jesus made such strong statements about Himself. He is then

1. the incarnate Son of God who brings eternal life by His words and deeds or
2. a premeditative liar or
3. a lunatic (taken from Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*)

The truthfulness of Jesus' claims is the issue of Christianity.

**6:43 "Do not grumble among yourselves"** This is a present imperative with Negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in progress.

**6:44 "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him"** God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:65 and 15:16). All spiritual decisions are the result of the wooing of the Spirit, not mankind's religiosity (cf. Isa. 53:6). God's sovereignty and a mandated human response are inseparably linked together by the will and mercy of God. This is the OT concept of covenant.

The balance to this "drawing of God" is found in John 12:32 where Jesus "draws all men to Himself." This drawing reverses the OT pattern of God's people not responding to His prophetic word (examples: Isa. 6:9-13; 29:13; Jeremiah). God now speaks, not through prophets to Israel, but through His Son to all mankind (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**6:45 "It is written in the prophets"** This is a quote from Isa. 54:13 or Jer. 31:34 which describes the internal (new heart, new mind) aspect of the "New Covenant."

▣ **"Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me"** It is impossible to claim to know God and reject Jesus (cf. 1 John 5:1-12).

**6:46 "Not that any man has seen the Father"** Jesus' affirmation is that only through Him can one really understand and know God (cf. John 1:18; 14:6,9). Even Moses never truly saw YHWH (cf. note at John 5:32).

**6:47** This verse summarizes Jesus' offer of a free salvation to all humans ("the one believing," present active participle; "eternal life" cf. John 6:51,58; 3:15,16,36; 5:24; 11:26; 20:31). Jesus is the only true revelation of God, the only true door to God (the exclusivism of the gospel, cf. John 10:1-6,7-9; 14:6), but this is available to all sons and daughters of Adam (the inclusivism of the gospel fulfills 1:4,7,12; 3:16; Gen. 3:15; 12:3).

**6:50** This verse, like 31-35, is a play on the meaning of bread, physical bread (manna) and heavenly bread (Jesus). One gives and sustains physical life, but must be repeated and eventually cannot stop death. The other gives and sustains eternal life, but must be accepted and nurtured and puts an immediate end to spiritual death (broken fellowship with God; intimate fellowship with sin and self).

**6:51 "I am the living bread"** This is one of the famous "I am" statements of John's Gospel (cf. John 6:35,48,51). It was a literary technique of Jesus to focus attention on His person. Salvation, like revelation, is ultimately a person.

▣ **"for the life of the world is My flesh"** This is a metaphor emphasizing that Jesus Himself, not some food supply, is our central need. This phrase obviously links back to 1:14.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:52-59**

<sup>52</sup>Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup>So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup>He who eats My flesh and

drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup>For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup>He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup>These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

6:52

NASB	"argue"
NKJV	"quarreled"
NRSV	"disputed"
TEV	"an angry argument"
NJB	"arguing"

The imperfect tense meant the beginning of something or the continuing of something in past time. This is a strong Greek term for fighting (cf. Acts 7:26; 2 Tim. 2:23-24; Titus 3:9) and used metaphorically in 2 Cor. 7:5 and James 4:1-2.

▣ **"How can this man give us His flesh to eat"** In John Jesus speaks in metaphoric language that is regularly misunderstood in a literal sense: (1) Nicodemus, John 3:4; (2) Samaritan woman, John 4:11; (3) Jewish crowd, John 6:52; and (4) disciples, John 11:11.

**6:53-57** The verbals in John 6:53 and 54 are very interesting. In John 6:53, "eat" and "drink" are aorist active subjunctives which speak of a volitionally potential initiating act. The verbals in John 6:54, "eats" and "drinks," are Present active participles which emphasize continuing action (cf. John 6:56,57,58). It seems that this confirms the fact that one must initially respond to Jesus and continue to respond (cf. John 6:44).

It must be remembered that to take this passage literally is to misunderstand the Jewish horror at drinking blood (cf. Lev. 17:10-14). To take Jesus' obvious allusions to the manna in the wilderness (cf. John 6:58), and use them as literal phrases connected with the Eucharist is a manipulation of the historical setting and literary context for liturgical purposes.

**6:54 "flesh. . .blood"** This is a Jewish metaphorical way of referring to the whole person, like "heart."

**6:55 "true food. . .true drink"** This is John's characteristic use of the term true/truth (see special topic below). John, writing later than the other NT writers, had seen the development of several heresies (overemphasis on John the Baptist, overemphasis on sacramentalism, overemphasis on human knowledge-Gnosticism).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" (THE CONCEPT) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS**

**6:56 "abides in Me and I in him"** This same truth is stated in John 15:4-7; 1 John 2:6,27,28; 3:6,24, see Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10. This is the ongoing NT emphasis on the perseverance of saints (cf. Gal 6:9; Rev 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21, see Special Topic at John 8:31). True response is validated by a continuing response. This emphasis on perseverance is the missing element in American evangelicalism. One must not only start in faith, but finish in faith (Hebrews 11). Jonathan Edwards said, "Sure proof of election is that one hold out to the end." W. T. Conner said, "The salvation of a man elected to salvation is from eternity to eternity certain in the mind and purpose of God, yet it is conditioned upon faith, and a faith that perseveres and conquers."

**6:57 "the living Father"** This phrase is unique, but the concept is used often in the Bible. There are several different ways to interpret the origin of this title for God.

1. the basic name of the Covenant God (cf. Exod. 3:12,14-16; 6:2-3, see Special Topic at John 6:20)

2. oaths by God, "as I live" or in God's name, "as the Lord lives" (cf. Num. 14:21,28; Isa. 49:18; Jer. 4:2)
3. as a description of God (cf. Ps. 42:2; 84:2; Jos. 3:10; Jer. 10:10; Dan. 6:20,26; Hos. 1:10; Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:10; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2)
4. the statements in John 5:26 that the Father has life in Himself and has given it to the Son and 5:21 where the Father raises the dead as does the Son.

**6:58** This is a comparison of the Old Testament and the New, Moses and Jesus. (See the book of Hebrews, esp. chapters 3, 4).

▣ **"the fathers ate and died"** This may also have served the theological function of denying salvation through lineage (cf. John 8:33-39) or through the Mosaic Law (Torah).

▣ **"forever"** See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER ('OLAM)**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:60-65**

<sup>60</sup>Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup>But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" <sup>62</sup>What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? <sup>63</sup>It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. <sup>65</sup>And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

**6:60 "Therefore many of His disciples"** This use of the term "disciple" has a wide connotation. In John this term and "believe" are used of both (1) true followers (John 6:68) and (2) temporary followers (John 6:64, cf. John 8:31-47).

▣ **"heard. . .listen"** There is a play on the word "hear" (*akouō*). They heard Jesus' words, but they did not understand them and act on them. In this sense this Greek term functions like the Hebrew *shema* (cf. Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 27:9-10).

**6:62** This is an incomplete first class conditional sentence with no conclusion. The implication is they would see it (cf. Acts 1). After Jesus' death/resurrection/ascension and the coming of the Spirit, much of Jesus' teachings and acts would make sense to them.

▣ **"ascending to where He was before"** This is the continuing emphasis on Jesus as "coming down out of heaven." It speaks of His pre-existence with the Father in heaven and His intimate fellowship with the Father in heaven (cf. John 17:5,24).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION**

**6:63** This verse, because of the larger context of chapter 6, may relate to a contrast between old covenant versus new covenant, Moses versus Jesus (cf. John 6:58; 2 Cor. 3:6, see the comparisons of the two covenants in the book of Hebrews).

▣ **"the Spirit who gives life"** This is one of many phrases that are used for both Jesus and the Spirit.

1. the Spirit is life-giving water (7:38-39)

2. Jesus is the living water (4:10-14)
3. the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
4. Jesus is the truth (14:6)
5. the Spirit is paraclete (14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
6. and Jesus is paraclete (1 John 2:1)

See Special Topic at the 14:16.

Notice in this verse that "spirit" (*pneuma*) is used in two specialized senses.

1. the Holy Spirit (cf. John 1:32,33; 3:34; 7:39; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
2. spiritual (cf. John 4:24; 11:33; 13:21)

In John 3:5,6,8 it is hard to know which is meant. Being John, possibly both.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (*PNEUMA*) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**6:64** This group of apparent but false followers is reduced to the false follower- Judas (cf. John 6:70-71; 13:11). There is surely mystery involved in levels of belief.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)**

**6:65** This expresses the same truth as John 6:44. Fallen mankind does not seek God on its own initiative (cf. Rom. 3:9-18 for a series of OT quotes which emphasize mankind's sinfulness and rebellion).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 6:66-71**

**<sup>66</sup>As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. <sup>67</sup>So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." <sup>70</sup>Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" <sup>71</sup>Now He meant Judas *the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.***

**6:67 "the twelve"** This is the first use in John of this collective term for the Apostles (cf. John 6:70,71; 20:24). See Special Topic at John 6:13.

**6:68 "Simon Peter answered"** Peter is the spokesman for the Twelve (cf. Matt. 16:16). This is not to imply they saw him as their leader (cf. Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46; 22:24).

■ **"You have the words of eternal life"** Christianity is both (1) truth contained in a message, "words of eternal life," and (2) truth expressed in a person, Jesus. The Gospel, then, is both a message and a person. The term *pistis* can relate to both (1) a message (cf. Jude 3,20) and (2) a person (cf. John 1:12; 3:15-16). See special Topic at John 2:23.

**6:69 "We have believed and have come to know"** These are both perfect active indicatives. Salvation here is in perfect tense which means a past, culminated act has become a settled state of being. True salvation involves all the Greek verb tenses. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at John 9:7.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** "You are the Holy One of God"

**NKJV** "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

**TEV** "You are the Holy One who has come from God"

There is a manuscript problem at this point. The shorter text (NASB, NRSV, NJB) is supported by the



ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, C\*, D, L, and W. Later scribes obviously inserted the additional words from Martha's confession of John 11:27 or Peter's of Matt. 16:16. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).

The phrase of "Holy One of God" is an OT Messianic title. It is alluded to in Luke 1:35 and Acts 3:14. It is the title by which the demonic addressed Jesus in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34. See Special Topic: at 1 John 2:20. This is another confession of faith by the Twelve, similar to Matthew 16.

**6:70 "Did I Myself not choose you"** This is another emphasis on the divine election of the disciples (cf. John 6:44 and 65). Notice Jesus' question of John 6:67. Divine election and human volition must remain in a biblical tension. They are two sides of a covenant relationship.

■ **"and yet one of you is a devil"** What a startling statement! It does not refer to one of the fringe disciples who turned back (cf. John 6:66), but to one of the twelve chosen apostles who claimed faith in Him. Many have linked this to 13:2 or 27. There are several questions related to our understanding of this verse: (1) why did Jesus choose a devil? and (2) what does the term mean in this context?

The first question has to do with predictive prophecy (cf. John 17:12; Ps. 41:9). Jesus knew what Judas would do. Judas is the ultimate example of the unpardonable sin. He rejected Jesus after hearing, seeing, and being with Him for several years.

The second question has two possible meanings.

1. some relate this to the devil (used with no article for Satan in Acts 13:10 and Rev. 20:2) entering Judas (cf. John 13:2,27)
2. possibly the term is being used generically (no article as in 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; and Titus 2:3) Judas was an accuser in the OT sense, as was Satan (see Special Topic at John 12:31). The Greek term implies a slanderer or tale-bearer. The Greek term is a compound, "to throw across."

**6:71 "Simon Iscariot"** There are several theories concerning this word (the word is spelled differently in various Greek manuscripts). It could refer to

1. a man of Keriath, a city of Judah
2. man of Kartan, a city of Galilee
3. the leather bag used to carry money
4. the Hebrew word for "strangling"
5. the Greek word for assassin's knife

If #1 is true he was the only Judean in the Twelve. If #5 is true he was a zealot like Simon.

There has recently been written a book that interprets Judas in a positive light. The book is entitled *Judas, Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996. My problem with it is that it does not take the comments in John's Gospel seriously.

■ **"betray"** This Greek term is widely translated and in most contexts is neutral. However, in connection with Judas handing Jesus over to the authorities, it takes on sinister connotations. See note at John 18:2.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is John 6 a discussion of the Lord's Supper? Why or why not?
2. What was Jesus' claim when He said, "I am the bread of life"?
3. Why did Jesus make such startling statements to this crowd?

# JOHN 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Unbelief of Jesus' Brothers	Jesus' Brothers Disbelieve	Jesus, the Water of Life	Jesus and His Brothers	Jesus Goes Up to Jerusalem for the Feast and Teaches There
7:1-9	7:1-9	7:1-9	7:1-9	7:1
Jesus At the Feast of Tabernacle	The Heavenly Scholar		Jesus At the Festival of Shelters	7:2-9
7:10-13	7:10-24	7:10-13	7:10-11 7:12-13	7:10-13
7:14-24		7:14-18  7:19-24	7:14-15 7:16-19  7:20 7:21-24	7:14-24
Is This The Christ?	Could This Be The Christ?		Is He The Messiah?	The People Discuss the Origin of the Messiah
7:25-31	7:25-31	7:25-31	7:25-27 7:28-29 7:30-31	7:25-27 7:28-29 7:30
Officers Sent to Arrest Jesus	Jesus and the Religious Leaders		Guards are Sent to Arrest Jesus	Jesus Foretells His Approaching Departure
7:32-36	7:32-36	7:32-36	7:32-34 7:35-36	7:31-34 7:35-36
Rivers of Living Water	The Promise of the Holy Spirit		Streams of Life-Giving Water	The Promise of Living Water
7:37-39	7:37-39	7:37-39	7:37-39	7:37-38 7:39
Divisions Among the People	Who is He?		Division Among the People	Fresh Discoveries on the Origin of the Messiah
7:40-44	7:40-44	7:40-44	7:40-44	7:40-44
The Unbelief of Those in Authority	Rejected by the Authorities		The Unbelief of the Jewish Authorities	
7:45-52	7:45-52	7:45-52	7:45	7:45-52

7:46

7:47-49

7:50-51

7:52

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-52

- A. The setting of chapters 5 and 6 is the Passover Feast. The setting of John 7:1 through John 10:21 is the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2ff).
- B. The Feast of Tabernacles was primarily a thanksgiving for the harvest (called Feast of Ingathering, cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22). It was also a time of remembering the Exodus experience (called Feast of the Booths, cf. Lev. 23:29-44 and Deut. 16:13-15). It occurred on the 15th of Tishri, which corresponds to our late September or early October.
- C. Chapters 7 and 8 show the hostility of the Jewish establishment against Jesus' Sabbath-breaking (John 5:16) and His claim to be one with YHWH (John 5:18). Notice the number of times the texts mention their attempts to
  1. arrest Him, John 7:30,32,44; 10:39
  2. kill Him, John 7:1,19,25; 8:37,40 (also John 11:53)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:1-9**

**<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. <sup>2</sup>Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. <sup>3</sup>Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be *known* publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world. <sup>5</sup>For not even His brothers were believing in Him. <sup>6</sup>So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup>Having said these things to them, He**

**7:1 "After these things"** This is a literary way of moving the account, not a temporal marker (cf. John 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 21:1).

▣ **"the Jews were seeking to kill Him"** In John "the Jews" often has a sinister connotation (cf. John 1:19; 2:18,20; 5:10,15,16; 6:41,52; 7:1,11,13,35; 8:22,52,57; 9:18,22; 10:24,31,33; 11:8; 19:7,12; 20:19). Their hatred and murderous intent is recorded several times (cf. John 5:16-18; 7:19,30,44; 8:37,40,59; 10:31,33,39; 11:8,53).

**7:2 "the feast of Jews, the Feast of Booths"** This was also called the Feast of the Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-17) because during the harvest the villagers lived in small shelters in the fields, which reminded the Jews of their Exodus experience. The ritual and liturgy of this feast provides a background for Jesus' teachings in John 7:1-10:21, as did the Passover feast in chapters 5-6.

**7:3 "His brothers"** This is the first mention of Jesus' family since 2:12. It is obvious they did not understand His motive, method, or purpose.

▣ **"Leave here, and go into Judea"** This refers to the annual caravan of pilgrims (cf. Luke 2:41-44) who left Galilee and made their trek to Jerusalem. Remember that John's Gospel focuses on Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem.

**7:4 "publicly"** See Special Topic following.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (PARRHĒSIA)**

▣ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective.

▣ **"show Yourself to the world"** Jesus picked up on their use of the term "world" in John 7:4 and commented on it in John 7:7. The world was not accepting and sympathetic to Him, but hostile (cf. John 15:18-19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13) because He revealed its rebellion and sin (cf. John 3:19-20).

Jesus' brothers' way for Jesus to reveal Himself (i.e., miracles) was very different from Jesus' way (the cross). This is where the prophecy of Isa. 55:8-11 comes into clear focus!

**7:5 "For not even His brothers were believing in Him"** This is another editorial comment by the author. It must have been very hard to accept Jesus as the Messiah when you have grown up in the same home (cf. Mark 3:20-21). Jesus cared for His half brothers and sisters. One of His post resurrection appearances was for the purpose of revealing Himself to them. They came to believe (cf. Acts 1:14)! James became the leader of the Jerusalem church. And both James and Jude wrote books included in the NT canon.

**7:6 "My time is not yet here"** The word "time" (*kairos*) is found only here (twice) and John 7:8 in John's Gospel and letters. BAGD gives three basic connotations.

1. - a welcome time (i.e., 2 Cor. 6:2)
  - an opportune time (i.e., Luke 4:13)
  - an appointed time (i.e., Mark 13:33; Acts 3:20; 1 Pet. 1:11)
2. a proper or favorable time
  - proper time (i.e., Matt. 24:45; Luke 1:20)
  - fixed time (i.e., John 7:8; 2 Tim. 4:6)
3. an eschatological time (i.e., Luke 21:8; Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:1; 2 Thess. 2:6)

Numbers 2 and 3 have a semantic overlap.

Jesus understood His mission (cf. 12:23; 13:1; 17:1-5). There was a divine timetable for these Gospel events to unfold (cf. Luke 22:22; John 7:30; 8:20; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28).

7:7 "the world" See Special Topic: *Kosmos* at John 14:17.

7:8

**NASB** "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to the feast"  
**NKJV** "You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast"  
**NRSV, NJB** "Go to this festival yourselves. I am not going to this festival"  
**TEV** "You go on to the festival. I am not going to this festival"

Several ancient Greek manuscripts ( $\alpha$ , D, and K) do not have the adverb "yet." It seems to have been an early scribal attempt to remove the apparent contradiction between John 7:8 & 10. The adverb is included in MSS P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, B, L, T, and W (NKJV, the Twentieth Century New Testament, NV).

This brief statement could be understood as

1. I am not going with you (nor for your purposes)
2. I am going in the middle of the eight-day feast (to reveal through feast symbolisms)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:10-13**

<sup>10</sup>But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. <sup>11</sup>So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" <sup>12</sup>There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." <sup>13</sup>Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

7:11 "the Jews" There are four separate groups in this chapter who interact with Jesus.

1. His brothers
2. "the Jews," which refers to the religious leaders
3. "the crowd," which refers to the pilgrims making their way to the Feast of Tabernacles
4. "the people of Jerusalem," who were local folks who knew the Sanhedrin and their plans to kill Jesus

7:12 "There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him" This is typical of what the gospel does in every crowd. It shows the differing spiritual abilities and levels of understanding present within mankind (cf. John 7:40-44).

■ "He leads the people astray" The verb *planaō* is used of

1. false teachers (i.e., Matt. 24:11; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 1:8; 2:26; 3:7)
2. false Messiahs (i.e., Matt. 24:4-5,24; in John of what the Jews thought Jesus was (cf. John 7:12,47; Matt. 27:63)
3. people deceiving themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 1:8) or
4. being deceived (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; James 1:16)

The word was used of the planets that did not follow the regular orbits of the constellations. They were called "the wanderers."

7:13 "the Jews" This whole crowd was Jewish. This clearly shows John's specialized use of this term to refer to the religious leaders in Jerusalem. See note at John 7:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:14-18**

<sup>14</sup>But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and *began to teach*. <sup>15</sup>The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" <sup>16</sup>So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His

**who sent Me. <sup>17</sup>If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. <sup>18</sup>He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."**

**7:14 "But when it was now the midst of the feast"** The exact reason for Jesus waiting until this moment is uncertain, but one could speculate that this allowed time for the pilgrims and towns people to discuss Him and His ministry. It also allowed time for the Jewish leaders to openly reveal their hostilities (cf. John 7:13).

■ **"teach"** Jesus' speaking events are characterized by

1. teaching, Matt. 4:23; 5:2,19; 7:29, etc.; John 6:59; 7:14,28,35; 8:20,28
2. preaching, Luke 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 20:1

These seem to be used synonymously to refer to Jesus imparting the truths of God to His human creation. The revelation was always meant to inform and reform. It demanded a decision accompanied by a change of lifestyle priorities. Truth changes everything!

**7:15 "How has this man become learned, having never been educated"** This simply means that He had not attended one of the official rabbinical schools, nor had He been a disciple of one of the noted rabbis. The use of the phrase "this man" has a connotation of disrespect (cf. John 18:17,29).

Jesus' teaching often surprised His hearers (cf. Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:22) because of (1) the content and (2) the form. Other rabbis quoted one another; Jesus claimed to quote God!

**7:16** Jesus again drew attention not only to His submission (see note at John 5:19) to the Father, but also to His unique knowledge of the Father. They had earthly teachers; He had the heavenly Teacher.

**7:17 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential or possible action. This is the paradox of the universal offer of the gospel (cf. John 1:12; 3:16) and the sovereignty of God (cf. John 6:44,65). The Spirit must open the heart (cf. John 16:8-13).

**7:18** Jesus asserts His own uniqueness in contrast with fallen mankind: (1) He does not seek His own glory; (2) He seeks the Father's glory; (3) He is true; and (4) He is sinless.

■ **"the glory of the One"** See note at John 1:14.

■ **"there is no unrighteousness in Him"** Jesus could die in our place because He did not need to die for His own sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus' sinlessness is a crucial theological issue. The issue is expressed often and in different ways.

1. Luke 23:41
2. John 6:69; 7:18; 8:46; 14:30
3. 2 Cor. 5:21
4. Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 9:14
5. 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22 (Isa. 53:9)
6. 1 John 2:29; 3:5,7

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:19-24**

<sup>19</sup>"Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" <sup>20</sup>The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" <sup>21</sup>Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. <sup>22</sup>For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on *the* Sabbath you circumcise a man. <sup>23</sup>If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses

**will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the Sabbath*?**  
**<sup>24</sup>Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

**7:19** The grammatical construction expects a "yes" answer.

■ **"yet none of you carries out the law"** This must have been a shocking statement to these Jews who were attending a required feast in Jerusalem.

The Law of Moses clearly prohibited premeditated murder, yet this is exactly what the leaders were planning. The local people knew of this but were unwilling to stop their plans or even complain.

■ **"Why do you seek to kill Me"** The question of John 7:20 does not come from religious leaders, but from the crowd of pilgrims who knew nothing of the plot to kill Him. Later, in John 7:25, the people of Jerusalem did know of the plot to kill Jesus.

The religious leaders also charged Jesus with being demon-possessed in order to explain away His power and insight (cf. Matt. 9:34; 11:18; 12:24; Mark 3:22-30; John 8:48-52; 10:20-21).

**7:20 "You have a demon"** It is obvious to everyone who encountered Jesus that He had spiritual power. The question was where did this power come from? The Jewish leaders could not deny Jesus' "signs/miracles," so they attributed the power to Satan and the demonic (cf. John 8:48-49,52; 10:20).

In this context the crowd of pilgrims attending the feast of Tabernacles uses the same phrase, but in a different sense. They are asserting that Jesus is acting in a non-rational, paranoid fashion.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (UNCLEAN SPIRITS)**

**7:22**

**NASB, NKJV** "(not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers)"

**NRSV** "(it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the Patriarchs)"

**TEV** "(although it was not Moses but your ancestors who started it)"

**NJB** "-not that it began with him, it goes back to the patriarch-"

The rite of circumcision did not begin with the Law of Moses (cf. Exod. 12:48; Lev. 12:3), but was given to Abraham as a sign of the special covenant with YHWH (cf. Gen. 17:9-14; 21:4; 34:22).

■ **"and on *the Sabbath* you circumcise a man"** The essence of Jesus' argument was that they were willing to put aside their Sabbatical rules so that a baby could be circumcised (cf. *Shab* 132a; *Sabh.* 18:3; 19:1-6), but were not willing to put aside their Sabbatical rules that a man might be made whole. It is significant to realize that Jesus was using the logic and thought forms of Rabbinical Judaism throughout this section.

**7:23 "If"** This is a First class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the Sabbath*"** This refers either to Jesus' healing recorded in John 5:1-9 or an unrecorded healing during the feast.

The Greek word "angry" (*cholaō*) is a rare word found only here in the NT. It is found sparingly in all Greek literature (BAGD, p. 883 and MM, p. 689). It is related to the word "gall" (*cholē*, cf. Matt. 27:34). The reason for Jesus' using this word (i.e., its connotation) is uncertain. It may denote a "divine anger" in the sense that they thought they were defending God's will and God's laws, which Jesus was violating.

**7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"** This is a present imperative with negative particle, which means stop an act in process. It is followed by an aorist imperative, which implies urgency. This may be an allusion to Isa. 11:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:25-31**

**25**So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? **26**Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? **27**However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." **28**Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. **29**I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." **30**So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. **31**But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

**7:25 "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill"** The grammatical form of this question expects a "yes" answer (cf. John 5:47;7:19). This is the first in a series of questions through John 7:36.

**7:26**

**NASB, REV,**

**NET** "He is speaking publicly"

**NKJV** "He speaks boldly"

**NRSV, NJB** "he is speaking openly"

See Special Topic: Boldness (*parrhēsia*) at John 7:4.

**NASB** "The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they"

**NKJV** "Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ"

**NRSV** "Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah"

**TEV** "Can it be that they really know that he is the Messiah"

**NJB** "Can it be true the authorities have recognized that he is the Christ"

This grammatical construction expects a "no" answer. However, it does express a possibility (cf. John 1:31; 4:29).

**7:27 "we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from"** This refers to a rabbinical Messianic tradition based on Mal. 3:1 that the Messiah would appear suddenly in the temple. This is found in I Enoch 48:6 and IV Ezras 13:51-52.

**7:28** In this verse Jesus makes two statements.

1. that God sent Him (cf. John 3:17,34; 5:36,38; 6:29; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,18,21,23,25; 20:21)

2. that they do not know God (cf. John 5:37,42; 8:19,27,54-55; 16:3)

John records that Jesus "cried out" (cf. John 7:37; 12:44; Matt. 8:29). Jesus raised His voice to be heard. In a sense, this functions in a literary sense like Jesus' use of an initial "Amen" or "Amen, Amen." He wanted these ironic statements to be emphasized! Verse 29 shows the problem! They think He is from Galilee (cf. John 7:41), but in reality, He is from heaven!

■ **"He who sent Me is true"** The Father is true (cf. John 3:33; 8:26; 1 John 5:20) and so is the Son (cf. John 7:18; 8:16). See Special Topic at John 6:55.

**7:29 "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me"** This is another example of the vertical dualism in John. This statement was considered blasphemy by the Jewish leaders and confirmed their need to have Jesus killed. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.



**7:30 "they were seeking to seize Him"** This is an imperfect tense verb which implies (1) they started seeking to seize Him or (2) they tried again and again to arrest Him but they did not want to cause a riot among the pilgrims who believed Him to be the Messiah.

■ **"because His hour had not yet come"** This is a recurrent prophetic idiom which asserts a divine timetable (cf. John 2:4; 7:6,30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1).

**7:31 "But many of the crowd believed in Him"** This was true faith in Jesus even though it was filled with misconceptions about His Messianic task. No one has "perfect" faith (cf. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the Twelve). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

This always happens when the gospel is presented. Some believe, some doubt, and some get angry. Here is the intersection of the mystery of

1. divine election
2. human sinfulness

There is mystery here. I am always shocked by unbelief in the presence of so much light. This is probably the origin of Jesus' words about setting family members against each other. The gospel brings peace to some and conflict to others!

■ **"When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He"** The Greek grammatical form expects a "no" answer.

In *A Theology of the New Testament*, George E. Ladd has an interesting comment on the use of "signs" to encourage faith in Jesus:

"The question of the relationship of the signs to faith is not easy, because the data seem to look in two different directions. Sometimes signs are designed to lead to faith in Jesus (2:23; 6:14; 7:31; 10:42). On the other hand, there were those who beheld the signs and did not believe (6:27; 11:47; 12:37). Furthermore, on occasion Jesus rebukes the Jews because they will not believe unless they see signs (4:48; 6:30). The answer must be found in a sort of tension between signs and faith. It requires faith to recognize the true meaning of the signs and their witness to Jesus; to those who had no faith, the signs are merely meaningless prodigies. To those who are responsive, the signs are the means of confirming and deepening faith. It is clear that Jesus' signs were not designed to compel faith. On the other hand, the works of Jesus are sufficient testimony to those able to see what is happening in his mission. Jesus' works will serve as a means of condemnation and confirming blind men in their sinfulness" (p. 274).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:32-36**

**<sup>32</sup>The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. <sup>33</sup>Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. <sup>34</sup>You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come." <sup>35</sup>The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? <sup>36</sup>What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"**

**7:32 "the chief priests and the Pharisees"** This refers to members of the Sanhedrin (see Special Topic at John 3:1). There was only one high priest, but since the time of Roman occupation, the office had become a political plum bargained for by several wealthy, Jewish families and passed from family member to family member.

■ **"sent officers to seize Him"** This refers to the "Temple Police" who would have been Levites. They had limited authority outside of the Temple area itself (cf. John 7:45,46; 18:3,12,18,22).

**7:33 "For a little while longer I am with you"** This is a common phrase in John (cf. John 12:35; 13:33; 14:19; 16:16-19). Jesus knew who He was, what would happen to Him, and when (cf. John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1-5).

■ **"I go to Him who sent Me"** This refers to the concluding events of Jesus' mission of redemption: the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and the restoration to pre-existent glory (cf. John 17:1-5; Acts 1).

**7:34** This wording is very similar to Jesus' discussion with the disciples in the upper room (13:33; cf. John 7:36 and 8:21). However, here it refers to unbelievers (i.e., the crowd, the Jerusalemites, and the Jewish leadership).

**7:35-36 "He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He"** The Greek grammatical construction expects a "no" answer. This is another use of irony. This has always been God's will (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Isa. 2:2-4). During the Feast of Tabernacles, seventy bulls were offered for the nations of the world. The Jews were obligated to pray for and bring light to the Gentiles. This may reflect the cultural setting of this statement. The term "Greeks" was used in the sense of "Gentiles." The term *disperia* referred to Jewish people living in Gentile lands (cf. James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). This is another example of the crowd misunderstanding Jesus' metaphorical language.

This is another example of Jesus' vertical dualism. The crowd has misunderstood Him because they interpreted His statements literally instead of the "above" and "below" categories of His teachings. He was from the Father and would return to the Father.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:37-39**

**<sup>37</sup>Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup>He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup>But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**

**7:37 "on the last day, the great day of the feast"** There is some question whether this was a seven-day feast (cf. Deut. 16:13), or an eight-day feast (cf. Lev. 23:36; Neh. 8:17; II Maccabees 10:60, and Josephus). Apparently in Jesus' day it was an eight-day feast, however, on the last day water was not taken from the pool of Siloam and poured at the base of the altar as it was on the other seven days. We learn of the ceremony from the Tractate Sukkah of the Talmud, which quotes Isa. 12:3. This may have been a visualized prayer for rain for the crops.

■ **"If"** This is third class conditional which means potential action.

■ **"anyone is thirsty"** The universal invitation to faith in Jesus! See note at John 7:17

■ **"let him come to Me and drink"** Jesus uses the same metaphor in John 4:13-15. This could possibly refer to Jesus as the Messianic Rock which provided water (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4). It is obviously related to the OT invitation of Isa. 55:1-3 and the cultural opportunity of the symbolic pouring out of water during the feast.

Some early ancient Greek manuscripts omit "to me" (cf. MSS P<sup>66</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , and D). It is included in P<sup>66c</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa^c$ , L, T, W, and it is implied by the context. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its inclusion a "B" rating (almost certain). In John people are urged to trust Him. The gospel has a personal focus.

**7:38 "He who believes in Me"** Notice this is a present tense. This shows an emphasis on the continuing

personal relationship involved in believing like John 15's "abiding." See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses used for Salvation at John 9:7.

▣ **"as the Scripture said"** It is hard to identify a specific Scripture for this quote. It could be Isa. 12:3; 43:19-20; 44:3; 58:11; Ezek. 47:1; Joel 3:18; Zech. 13:1; or 14:8, which refer metaphorically to eschatological water as a symbol of the presence of the Divine. In this case the promised water of the new age of agricultural blessing is altered to the metaphor of the internal nature of the new covenant. The Spirit will be active in the heart and mind (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38).

▣ **"From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"** There have been several theories as to the pronoun antecedent.

1. Jesus Himself (cf. the early church fathers)
2. the individual believers who have trusted Christ
3. Jerusalem. In Aramaic, "his" can mean "her" and can refer to the city (this is the position of the rabbis, cf. Ezek. 47:1-12 and Zech. 14:8)

There is a good brief, simplified discussion of the two theories based on how one punctuates John 7:37b and 38a in NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 683.

Jesus has called Himself the living water (cf. John 4:10). Now in this context it is the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:39) who provides and produces the living water in Jesus' followers. This is parallel to the Spirit's work of forming Christ in the believer (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13).

**7:39 "for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified"** Apparently this reflects John's later thinking (i.e., an editorial comment) on the significance of this statement (cf. John 16:7). It also shows the significance of Calvary and Pentecost both being viewed as a "glory" (cf. John 3:14; 12:16,23; 17:1,5). There are several scribal variants to try to explain what John meant by this brief statement.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:40-44**

<sup>40</sup>Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup>Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" <sup>43</sup>So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

**7:40 "This certainly is the prophet"** This is an allusion to the Messianic promise of Moses that is found in Deut. 18:15,18. Many recognized Jesus as a prophet (cf. John 4:19; 6:14; 9:17; Matt. 21:11). They recognized Jesus' power, but misunderstood His person and work. Islam also uses this title for Jesus, but misunderstands His message.

**7:41 "Others were saying, 'This is the Christ'"** This shows that the term "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew term "Messiah," which means "an anointed one." In the OT kings, priests, and prophets were anointed as a sign of God's calling and equipping. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#) in the Bible at John 11:2.

▣ **"Still others were saying, 'Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He'"** The Greek grammatical construction expects a "no" answer to this question. But what about Isa. 9:1?

**7:42** The grammatical construction of this question expects a "yes" answer.

▣ **"descendant of David"** (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Matt. 21:9; 22:42).

▣ **"from Bethlehem, the village where David was"** This is another use of irony (cf. Micah 5:2-3 and

Matt. 2:5-6).

**7:43** Jesus and His message always caused a division (cf. John 7:48-52; 9:16; 10:19; Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53). This is the mystery of the parable of the soils (cf. Matthew 13). Some have spiritual ears and some do not (cf. Matt. 10:27; 11:15; 13:9,15 (twice), 16,43; Mark 4:9,23; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 14:35).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 7:45-52**

<sup>45</sup>The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them. "Why did you not bring Him?" <sup>46</sup>The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks. <sup>47</sup>The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? <sup>48</sup>No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? <sup>49</sup>But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." <sup>50</sup>Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, <sup>51</sup>"Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" <sup>52</sup>They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

**7:46 "The officers answered, 'Never did a man speak the way this man speaks'"** John's irony again! This is a very startling testimony.

1. they did not mention their fear of the crowd which would have been a good excuse for them
2. these Temple Police were unanimous in their opinion about Jesus, while the crowd was divided
3. these men were accustomed to following orders, not giving their opinions.

**7:48 "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he"** The Greek grammatical construction in both John 7:47 and 48 expects a "no" answer. The term "rulers" refers to the Sanhedrin. Here we have the Sadducees and Pharisees (the entire Sanhedrin), who normally were very hostile to one another, uniting in their oppositions against Jesus (cf. John 11:47,57; 18:3).

**7:49 "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed"** This refers to "the people of the land" (*'am hā'āres*) who were looked down on by the religious leaders because they did not perform all the Oral Traditions (cf. Deut. 27:26). John's irony continues to be seen in John 7:51, where Nicodemus points out to them that they are also breaking the Law by their treatment of Jesus.

Oh, the tragedy of religiosity. The very ones who curse (*eparatos*, found only here in the NT) the common people are cursed themselves! If light has become darkness, how great is the darkness! Be warned, modern, conservative, educated religionists!

**7:51 "Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it"** The Greek grammatical construction expects a "no" answer (cf. Exod. 23:1; Deut. 1:16).

**7:52 "You are not also from Galilee, are you"** This shows the emotional opposition of the Sanhedrin against Jesus.

■ **"Search and see"** Search had the connotation within Judaism of studying the Scriptures (cf. John 5:39). This again shows John's use of irony. What about Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs. 17:1) and Jonah (cf. 2 Kgs. 14:25), Hosea and Nahum? They must have meant "the" prophet of Deut. 18:15,19; Gen. 49:10; 2 Samuel 7.

**7:53-8:11** See note at beginning of chapter 8.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the festival background to Jesus' words in chapter 7?
2. Describe and explain the purpose of the "Feast of the Tabernacle."
3. Why were the religious leaders so hostile to Jesus?
4. List the different groups that comment about Jesus in this chapter.

# JOHN 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Woman Caught in Adultery	An Adulteress Faces the Light of the World	The Woman Caught in Adultery	The Woman Caught in Adultery	The Adulterous Woman
7:53-8:11	7:53-8:12	7:53-8:11	7:53-8:11	7:53-8:11
Jesus, the Light of the World	Jesus Defends His Self-Witness	Jesus, the Light of the World	Jesus, the Light of the World	Jesus, the Light of the World
8:12-20		8:12-20	8:12	8:12
	8:13-20		8:13	A Discussion on the Testimony of Jesus to Himself 8:13-18
			8:14-18	
			8:19a	8:19a
			8:19b	8:19b
			8:20	8:20
Where I Am Going You Cannot Come	Jesus Predicts His Departure		You Cannot Go Where I Am Going	
8:21-30	8:21-29	8:21-30	8:21	8:21
			8:22	8:22-24
			8:23-24	
			8:25a	8:25a
			8:25b-26	8:25b-26
	The Truth Shall Make You Free		8:27-29	8:27-29
	8:30-36		8:30	8:30
The Truth Will Make You Free			The Truth Will Set You Free	Jesus and Abraham
8:31-38		8:31-33	8:31-32	8:31-32
			8:33	8:33-38
	Abraham's Seed and Satan	8:34-38	8:34-38	
Your Father the Devil	8:37-47			
8:39-47		8:39-47	8:39a	8:39-41a
			8:39b-41a	

			8:41b	8:41b-47
			8:42-47	
Before Abraham Was, I Am	Before Abraham Was, I Am		Jesus and Abraham	
8:48-59	8:48-59	8:48-59	8:48	8:48-51
			8:49-51	
			8:52-53	8:52-56
			8:54-56	
			8:57	8:57-58
			8:58	
			8:59	8:59

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **TEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO 7:53-8:11**

- A. John 7:53-8:11 was not part of the original Gospel of John.
- B. Evidence for this passage (one sentence in Greek) being omitted from the Gospel are
  1. External evidence
    - a. absent from the oldest Greek manuscripts
      - 1) papyrus - P<sup>65</sup> (early third century), P<sup>75</sup> (third century)
      - 2) uncials -  $\kappa$  (fourth century), B (fourth century), probably absent from A and C. These are damaged at this point in John, but when the surviving leaves of the manuscript are measured there is no room for this passage.
    - b. many of the later Greek manuscripts that include it mark it with a special sign or symbol, like an asterisk, to show it was not original
    - c. it is found in several different locations in different later manuscripts
      - 1) after John 7:36
      - 2) after John 7:44
      - 3) after John 7:25
      - 4) in Luke after 21:38
      - 5) in Luke after 24:53
    - d. absent from the ancient translations

- 1) the old Latin
  - 2) the old Syriac
  - 3) the early copies of the Peshitta (later Syriac)
  - e. there is no comment on this text by any of the Greek fathers (until the twelfth century)
  - f. it is present in codex D (Bezae), a western manuscript of the sixth century, the Latin Vulgate, and the later editions of the Peshitta.
2. Internal evidence
    - a. the vocabulary and style are more like Luke than John. It was placed in some Greek manuscripts after Luke 21:38 and in others after 24:53.
    - b. it totally breaks the context of Jesus' discussion with the Jewish leaders after the feast of Tabernacles, 7:1-52; 8:12- 59.
    - c. there are no parallels in the Synoptic Gospels
  3. For a complete technical discussion see Bruce M Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 219-221.

C. This account may be genuine oral tradition from Jesus' life. However, there are many accounts of Jesus' life that Gospel writers chose to not record (John 20:30-31). It is the Gospel writers themselves who were inspired. Later scribes had no right to include an account of Jesus' life, even if authentic, that was not included by the inspired original author. The original authors alone had the insight under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to select, arrange, and adapt the works and words of Jesus. This passage is not original and, therefore, not inspired and should not be included in our Bibles!

D. I have chosen not to comment on this passage because I do not believe it is from the pen of John and, therefore, not part of an inspired text (even if historical).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 8:12-20

<sup>12</sup>Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." <sup>13</sup>So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." <sup>14</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. <sup>15</sup>You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. <sup>16</sup>But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent Me. <sup>17</sup>Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. <sup>18</sup>I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." <sup>19</sup>So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." <sup>20</sup>These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

**8:12 "Then Jesus again spoke to them"** "The multitude" is not mentioned in this chapter. It may be that the Feast of the Tabernacles is over and Jesus remained in the Temple area trying to reason and witness to the Jewish leaders.

However, as Jesus used the water ceremony of the feast to reveal Himself, in this section He uses the lighting ceremony of the feast to reveal Himself. It is surely possible that 8:12-10:21 is still set on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths).

■ **"I am the Light"** Chapters 6, 7, and 8 seem to be related to the "wilderness wanderings" period of Israel's history, the source of the metaphors that Jesus uses of Himself.



1. chapter 6 uses "manna" and "the bread of life"
2. chapter 7 uses "water" and "living water"
3. chapter 8 uses "light" and "*Shekinah* glory."

This metaphor of light is repeated throughout John (cf. John 1:4-5, 8-9; 3:19-21; 9:5; 12:46).

There has been some debate as to exactly what this refers.

1. the ancient fear of darkness
2. a title for God in the OT (cf. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; 1 John 1:5)
3. the background of the Feast of the Tabernacles, lighting of the candelabra in the Court of the Women
4. an allusion to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory in the wilderness wandering period that symbolized the presence of God
5. the Messianic titles in the OT (cf. Isa. 42:6, 49:6; Luke 2:32).

The rabbis also used "light" as a title for the Messiah. The lighting of the huge lamps in the Court of the Women during the Feast of Tabernacle is the obvious setting for Jesus' statement. The Messianic implications of light and the special references in John 1:4,8 coincide with the ceremony in the Temple for Jesus to continue to reveal His true origin.

This is one of the seven "I am" statements in John (followed by a predicate)

1. I am the Bread of life (John 6:35,41,48,51)
2. I am the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9: 5; cf. John 1:4,9; 12:46)
3. I am the door of the sheepfold (John 10:7,9)
4. I am the good shepherd (John 10:11,14)
5. I am the resurrection, and the life (John 11:25)
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)
7. I am the true vine (John 15:1,5)

These unique statements, found only in John, point toward the person of Jesus. John focuses on these personal aspects of salvation. We must trust Him!

- **"of the world"** This term (*kosmos*, see Special Topic at John 14:17) shows the universal scope of the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:16).
- **"he who follows me"** This is a present active participle. It must be remembered that Christianity is not primarily a creed or a theology, rather, it is a personal relationship followed by a lifestyle of discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; 1 John 1:7).
- **"will not walk in the darkness"** This is an allusion to the theological concept of Satan "blinding the eyes of the unredeemed" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). There is a further allusion to the OT passages that speak of God's word such as a "lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (cf. Ps. 119:105).  
Those who accept "the Light" should live different lives (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7)!
- **"the Light of life"** Jesus possesses the life of God and gives it to His followers (cf. Matt. 5:14), to those whom God has given to Him.

**8:13 "Pharisees"** See Special Topic at John 1:24.

- **"Your testimony is not true"** The Jews were claiming a legal technicality of evidence (i.e., a requirement of two witnesses, cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15-21). Jesus had spoken earlier to this very objection (cf. John 5:31ff) and had given several witnesses. In this context His witness is the Father!

**8:14,16 "if. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences which mean potential action. Most of the conditions through chapter 8 are of this type.

- **"I know where I came from and where I am going"** This again is the "above and below" dualism. Jesus had a conscious memory of His pre-existence with the Father, an understanding of His mission, and

a sense of the prophetic timetable (cf. John 1:1-4, 14-18; 7:28-29; 13:1; 17:5).

▣ **"but you do not know where I come from or where I am going"** This must relate to chapter 7. They did not know Jesus' place of birth (cf. John 8:41-42) nor did they know where He was going (cf. John 7:34-36; 8:21). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

**8:15 "You judge according to the flesh"** This also is an allusion to chapter 7 (cf. John 8:24). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at John 1:14.

▣ **"I am not judging anyone"** Some see a contradiction here between John 3:17 and 9:39. Jesus came not to judge, but to give life. By the very fact of His coming, those who reject Him are judged (cf. John 3:18-21).

**8:16-18** Again this was the issue of two witnesses needed in a court case (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15). Jesus, in no uncertain terms, affirms His oneness with the Father (cf. John 7:29; 14:9). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

**8:16**

**NASB (1970),**

**NJB, REB "He who sent Me"**

**NASB (1995),**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**NIV "the Father who sent Me"**

Just as there is disagreement between two editions of the NASB, there is disagreement between the UBS<sup>3,4</sup>

1. UBS<sup>3</sup> gives "Father" a "C" rating (MS P<sup>39,66,75</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , B, L, T, W,

2. UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "Father" an "A" rating (MSS  $\kappa^*$ , D, and some Old Later and Syriac versions omit it)

Jesus is never alone! The Father is always with Him (cf. John 8:16,29; 16:32), except possibly on the cross (cf. Mark 15:34).

The joy and completion of fellowship is the essence of salvation. The purpose of creation was for God to have someone to fellowship with, so He (i.e., Christ, cf. Jn. 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) created them in YHWH's image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). This loss of fellowship is the penalty of sin. Its restoration is the goal of Jesus' mission!

**8:19 "Where is Your Father"** They were still understanding Jesus on a physical, literal level. Their preconceived and prideful minds were closed to the truth (cf. John 8:27). This misunderstanding is a literary characteristic of John's Gospel.

▣ **"if you knew Me, you would know My Father also"** This is a second class conditional sentence. It is often called "contrary to fact." "If you knew Me, which you do not, then you would know My Father, which you do not." This theme is repeated from John 5:37, see full note at John 7:28. It is difficult to outline John's Gospel because it is like a tapestry of recurring patterns or a symphony of repeated melodies.

**8:20 "He spoke in the treasury"** This verse is apparently another editorial comment from an eyewitness. The treasury was not a separate building. Rabbinical tradition (*Shekalim* 6) says there were thirteen trumpet-shaped containers, each marked for a specific purpose, located in the Court of the Women (cf. Mark 12:41), where the huge lamps were lighted during the Feast of Tabernacles.

▣ **"His hour had not yet come"** See note at John 2:4.

<sup>21</sup>Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." <sup>22</sup>So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" <sup>23</sup>And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." <sup>25</sup>So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you *from* the beginning? <sup>26</sup>I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." <sup>27</sup>They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. <sup>28</sup>So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. <sup>29</sup>And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." <sup>30</sup>As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

**8:21-22 "where I am going, you can not come. . . Surely He will not kill Himself, will He"** The question of John 8:22 expects a "no" answer. It is obvious from the context that although they misunderstood His statement (cf. John 7:34-36), they related it to His death. From Josephus we learn that suicide condemned one to the lowest parts of Hades. Their question apparently indicates that this is where they thought Jesus should be.

**8:21 "and will die in your sin"** This is literally "In the sin of you, you will die." The term "sin" is singular in John 8:21 and plural in John 8:24. This refers primarily to their rejection of Jesus as the Christ (cf. John 8:24). This is really the unpardonable sin of the Synoptic Gospels. Their leaders are rejecting Jesus in the presence of the great light from His words and signs.

See the following notes from my commentary on Mark.

**Mark 3:29 "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit"** This must be understood in its pre-Pentecostal historical setting. It was used in the sense of God's truth being rejected. The teaching of this verse has commonly been called "the unpardonable sin." It must be interpreted in light of the following criteria:

- 1.the distinction in the OT between "intentional" and "unintentional sins," (cf. Num. 15:27-31)
- 2.the unbelief of Jesus' own family contrasted with the unbelief of the Pharisees in this context
- 3.the statements of forgiveness in Mark 3:28
- 4.the differences between the Gospel parallels, particularly the change of "son of man," (cf. Matt. 12:32; Luke 12:10) to "sons of men," (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28).

In light of the above, this sin is committed by those who, in the presence of great light and understanding, still reject Jesus as God's means of revelation and salvation. They turn the light of the gospel into the darkness of Satan (cf. Mark 3:30). They reject the Spirit's drawing and conviction (cf. John 6:44,65). The unpardonable sin is not a rejection by God because of some single act or word, but the continual, ongoing rejection of God in Christ by willful unbelief (i.e., the scribes and Pharisees).

This sin can only be committed by those who have been exposed to the gospel. Those who have heard the message about Jesus clearly are the most responsible for its rejection. This is especially true of modern cultures that have continual access to the gospel, but reject Jesus (i.e., America, western culture).

**8:23 "You are from below, I am from above"** This is another example of John's vertical dualism (i.e., below vs. above, cf. John 7:35-36; 18:36).

John's contrast between Jesus who is from above and the Jews who are from below, forms a dualism that is unique among the Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) contrast the two Jewish

ages, the evil present age and the future age of righteousness. This difference is described by the terms horizontal dualism vs. vertical dualism. Did Jesus teach both in different settings? Possibly the Synoptics recorded Jesus' public teachings while John recorded Jesus' private teachings to the disciples.

■ **"you are of this world"** The world lies in the power of the Evil One (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; and 1 John 5:19). For world (*kosmos*) see Special Topic at John 14:17.

**8:24 "unless"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"you believe that I am He"</b>
<b>NRSV, JB</b>	<b>"believe that I am he"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"believe that 'I Am Who I Am'"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"believe that I am He"</b>

This is one of the strongest statements of Jesus' self-understanding of His own divine nature (or it is possible that in this context "the Messiah" is the referent). He uses the OT title for YHWH (cf. "I am" of Exod. 3:14). This is distinct from the famous "I am" statements in John. This has no predicate (cf. John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,25,58; 13:19; 18:5,6,8). See Special Topic: John's Use of "Believe" at John 2:23.

**8:25 "Who are You"** The Jewish authorities are looking for legal grounds for a charge of blasphemy (cf. Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65)! They want Him killed. They are not looking for information but for condemnation.

Jesus clearly reveals Himself in John (unlike the Synoptics)! His words (i.e., John 8:24) and His acts (i.e., healing on the Sabbath) clearly show His authority.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"What have I been saying to you <i>from the beginning</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Why do I speak to you at all"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"What I have told you from the very beginning"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"What I have told you from the outset"</b>

Originally the Greek manuscript had no spaces between the words. Therefore, the Greek letters can be divided in different places to make words that fit the context. The divergence of translations is not related to a manuscript variation, but word division. Here are the options.

1. *hote* - I have said to you from the beginning (NASB, NKJV, TEV, NJB, NIV)
2. *ho ti* as a Semitic idiom of exclamation - that I talk to you at all (NRSV, TEV footnote)

It is probably one of John's word plays that the term "beginning" is used in the Septuagint's translation of Gen. 1:1 (creation) and in John. 1:1 (His ministry). Jesus is from the "beginning" and has been telling them this all along by words and deeds!

**8:26-27** These themes are repeated in John for emphasis.

1. the Father sent Me (cf. John 3:17,34; 4:34; 5:36,38; 6:29,44,57; 7:28-29; 8:16,26,42; 10:36; 11:42; 12:49; 14:24; 15:21; 17:3,18,21,23,25; 20:21)
2. the Father is true (cf. John 3:33; 7:28)
3. Jesus' teachings are from the Father (cf. John 3:11; 7:16-17; 8:26,28,40; 12:49; 14:24; 15:15)
4. Jesus reveals the Father (cf. John 1:18; 8:26-29; 12:49-50; 14:7,9)

■ **"the world"** See note at John 1:10.

**8:27** Another editorial comment by the author. If they had understood His clear metaphorical and symbolic language, they, like other Jews, would have tried to kill Him (cf. John 5:18; 8:59; 10:33). His claims were not that hidden!

**8:28 "When you lift up the Son of Man"** This is an OT allusion to Num. 21:4-9, which is discussed in

John 3:14. This term, as so many terms in John, had a double meaning. It can mean "lifted up" as on the cross (cf. John 3:14; 12:32,34), but it is often used in a sense of "exalted," as in Acts 2:33, 5:31; Phil. 2:9. Jesus knew He came to die (cf. Mark 10:45).

■ **"the Son of Man"** This is Jesus' self-chosen title because it had no militaristic or nationalistic implications within rabbinical

Judaism. Jesus chose this title because it connects both the concepts of humanity (cf. Ezek. 2:1; Ps. 8:4) and deity (cf. Dan. 7:13).

■ **"then you will know that I am He"** Even the disciples (and His family) did not fully understand until (cf. John 7:39) after Pentecost! The Spirit came with eye-opening power to all who had spiritual eyes and ears!

For the unique grammatical affirmation "I am *He*" see the note at John 8:24. They will know

1. who He is (i.e., Messiah)
2. that He reveals the Father (cf. John 5:19-20)
3. that He and the Father are one (John 8:29)

**8:29 "He has not left Me alone"** Jesus' fellowship with the Father sustained Him (cf. John 8:16; 16:32). This is why the broken fellowship on the cross was so difficult for Him (cf. Mark 15:34).

**8:30 "many came to believe in Him"** There is great latitude in the use of the term "believe" in this passage. It seems to refer to shallow faith on the part of some hearers (cf. Matt 13; Mark 4). They were willing to concede that He was the Messiah based on their understanding of what that meant. The context of John 8:30-58 clearly shows that they were not true believers (cf. John 2:23-25). In John there are several levels to belief, not all lead to salvation. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 8:31-33**

**<sup>31</sup>So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup>They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"**

**8:31 "If you abide"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. This emphasis on continuing faith is also expressed clearly in John 15. This is the missing element in evangelical gospel proclamation. The word is to be believed (cf. John 5:24), obeyed, and abided in. See Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE**

■ **"in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine"** Jesus emphasized lifestyle obedience (to His commands, cf. John 8:51,52,55; 14:15,21,23,24; 15:10,20; 17:6; Luke 6:46; 2 John 9). In a sense this verse reflects the *shema*, a Hebrew word that means "to hear so as to do" (i.e., Deut. 6:4-6).

**8:32 "you will know"** This is used in the OT sense of "know," which meant "personal relationship," not in the sense of "cognitive truth" (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Truth is a person! This verse, which is so often found on institutions of learning, does not refer to accumulated human knowledge. That has proved to divide and bind, not free, humans. The "truth" spoken of here is the gospel and person of Jesus Christ. There is no truth, peace, or hope apart from Him!

**8:32,40,44,45,46 "the truth"** This is the key concept of the context. This term has two connotations.

1. trustworthiness
2. truth versus falsehood

Both connotations are true of the life and ministry of Jesus. He is both the content and goal of the gospel. Truth is primarily a person! Jesus reveals the personal Father. This verse is often taken out of context and used in educational settings. Facts, even true facts, even lots of true facts, do not set one free (cf. Eccl. 1:18). See Special Topic on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**8:32 "make you free"** Believers are free from legalism, ritualism, and performance oriented, human religiosity. Yet free believers bind themselves for the sake of the gospel (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:6; 1 Cor. 8-10).

**8:33 "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone"** It is amazing how blind racial pride can be. What about Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, and Rome?

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 8:34-38**

**<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup>I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. <sup>38</sup>I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father."**

**8:34 "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin"** Jesus was trying to lead them to the spiritual reality behind His previous phrase "make you free" in John 8:32, which the statement in John 8:33 shows they misunderstood. This statement is related to Jesus' strong accusations in John 8:21 and 24. His condemnations of these peripheral followers is consummated in John 8:44-47.

As Frank Stagg states in *New Testament Theology*, "the irony of man's plight is that bondage is the result of his attempt to be free" (p. 32).

The verb here is a present active participle, "doing," which denotes ongoing sin. Continuing sin is an evidence that one does not "know" the truth (Jesus). This same truth is expressed using the PRESENT TENSE verbs "sinning" in 1 John 3:6,9!

The question is, "Do believers still sin?" The answer must be "yes" (cf. Romans 7; 1 John). Christians struggle with sin, but the lost revel in it and do not recognize it!

The NET Bible (p. 1921 #21) adds a good comment that the contextual sin in John is "unbelief" (the unpardonable sin). This is not an ethical context but a "believe unto salvation context." The "sin" in 1 John is also unbelief (sin unto death)!

**8:35** This verse does not directly relate to John 8:34, but to John 8:36. Jesus, not the Moses of rabbinical Judaism, is the true son (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). Only faith in Him, not the performance of endless rules and rituals, can set one free (cf. John 8:32).

▣ **"forever"** See Special Topic at John 6:58.

**8:36 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action.

**8:37 "yet you seek to kill Me"** (cf. John 5:18; 7:1,19; 8:37,40; 11:53).

▣ **"because My word has no place in you"** This phrase can be understood in several senses. A helpful study aid is *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations*.

1. "because my word hath not free course in you" - American Standard Version

2. "gaineth no ground in you" - *The New Testament* by Henry Alford

3. "makes no headway among you" - *The New Testament: A New Translation* by James Moffatt

4. "findeth no place in you" - *The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation* by J. B. Rotherham

5. "because my words find no room in your hearts" - *The Four Gospels* by E. John 8:Rieu

Again, the problem is receiving or not receiving the gospel. It is an issue of salvation, not moral progress.

**8:38 "which I have seen"** This is a perfect active indicative which relates to Jesus' pre-existence and current fellowship with the Father (cf. John 8:40,42).

▣ **"you also do the things which you heard from your father"** The first mention of "father" could be a reference to Jewish tradition (cf. Isa. 29:13). However, in John 8:41-44 the subject is qualified to Satan/Devil. Their actions, motives, and words, supposedly supporting "Moses," clearly show their spiritual orientation. Humans do not/cannot initiate in the spiritual realm. There are two sources of influence (not a dualism) - God/Christ/Spirit or Satan/and His! How one responds to the gospel (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 10:1-18; 14:6) reveals the spiritual orientation!

There is some textual option related to this phrase.

1. both references to "father" could refer to YHWH (no pronoun "your")
2. the verb is an imperative, not an indicative

(see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p.225).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 8:39-47**

**<sup>39</sup>They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. <sup>40</sup>But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. <sup>41</sup>You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. <sup>44</sup>You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup>Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."**

**8:39 "Abraham is our father"** Jesus affirmed their physical descent from Abraham, but pointed out that they had family characteristics of Satan (cf. John 8:38,44). A personal faith relationship, not racial identity, made the Jews right with God (cf. Deut. 6:5,13; Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6).

▣ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence in form (in the protasis - PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE with *ei*), but it could be functioning as a second class conditional (cf. John 8:19 and 42). The Greek manuscript variants attempted to remove this mixed conditional form by changing the first verb to an imperfect. If so it would read, "If you were Abraham's children, which you are not, then you would be doing what Abraham did, but you are not." UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the mixed conditional form a "B" rating (almost certain).

**8:40 "a man"** Jesus not only understood Himself as a representative of YHWH, equal in divine essence with YHWH, but also as a true human being. This assertion refuted the Gnostic false teachers' assertion of the eternal dualism between spirit and physical things (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 4:1-4).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GNOSTICISM**

**8:41**

**NASB, NKJV** **""We were not born of fornication""**

**NRSV** **""We are not illegitimate children""**

**TEV** **""We are true children""**

This may be connected with the accusation of John 8:48 ("you are a Samaritan"). It seems that the Jews were asserting that Jesus was an illegitimate son, not a full blooded Jew. Later rabbinical sources would say Jesus was fathered by a Roman soldier.

■ **"we have one Father, even God"** This statement reflects the strict monotheism of the OT (cf. Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4-5) expressed in paternal terms (cf. Deut. 32:6; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8). Here was the dilemma: these Jewish leaders affirmed the oneness of God (cf. Deut. 6:4-5) and that obedience to the Mosaic Law brought a right relationship with God (cf. Deut. 6:1-3,17,24-25). Jesus came claiming to be one with God! Jesus claimed that right standing with God was based not on performance of law, but on personal faith in Him. Their confusion and reluctance is understandable, but here is where the insight of the Spirit and the mighty works of Jesus bring faith!

**8:42 "If"** This is a second class conditional sentence called "contrary to fact." "If God were your Father which He is not, you would love me, which you do not" (cf. John 8:47).

**8:43 "because you cannot hear My word"** This refers to spiritual receptivity and understanding. They had no spiritual ears (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 11:15; 13:9,15-16,43; Mark 4:9,23; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Acts 7:51; 28:26-27).

**8:44 "You are of your father, the devil"** What a startling statement to the religious leaders of His day (cf. John 8:47). This concept of shared family characteristics is expressed in a Hebrew idiom, "sons of. . ." (cf. Matt. 13:38; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:8,10).

For "devil" see Special Topic at John 12:31.

■ **a "murderer from the beginning"** This is not meant to imply the eternality of evil (i.e., dualism as in Zoroastrianism), but it reflects the concept of the spiritual temptation of Adam and Eve by the agency of a lying spirit indwelling a serpent (cf. Genesis 3). Notice the purposeful contrast between God who is True, Truth and the devil!

**8:46 "Which of you convicts Me of sin"** In context this refers to false testimony. Satan lies, but Jesus speaks the truth. Jesus invites these Jewish leaders to refute His statements or teachings, prove Him to be false! In this context this statement does not seem to relate to Jesus' sinlessness as a theological doctrine.

In John "sin" is more a principle of evil in a fallen world in rebellion against God than a specific act of sin. Sin is everything Jesus is not! The ultimate "sin" is unbelief (cf. John 16:9).

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 8:48-59

<sup>48</sup>The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. <sup>50</sup>But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. <sup>51</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death. <sup>52</sup>The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' <sup>53</sup>Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; <sup>55</sup>and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. <sup>56</sup>Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad." <sup>57</sup>So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am. <sup>59</sup>Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him,



## but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

**8:48 "You are a Samaritan and have a demon"** There is a possibility that the true contextual meaning is reflected in the Aramaic word translated by the Greek term "Samaritan," which meant "the chief of demons." Jesus spoke Aramaic. If this is true it fits in with the constant charge by the religious leaders that Jesus' power came from an evil supernatural source. It is also possible that to say someone had a demon meant they were lying (cf. John 8:52). To say Jesus was a Samaritan (cf. John 4:9) or had a demon (cf. John 7:20; 8:48,49,52; 10:20,21, see Special Topic at John 12:31) was a way of saying that one should not listen to Him or respond to His message. This then, like "Abraham is our father," was another excuse for not responding to Jesus or His message.

**8:49** One cannot believe in the Father and not the Son (cf. 1 John 5:9-12); one cannot know the Father and not honor the Son (cf. John 5:23). Although two separate external persons, they are one (cf. John 10:30; 17:21-23).

**8:50 "My glory"** See note at John 1:14.

**8:51,52 "if. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences which mean potential action. Notice obedience is linked to faith (see list of texts in John 8:48).

■ **"he will never see death"** This is a strong double negative. This obviously refers to spiritual death (cf. John 8:21,24), not physical death (cf. John 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25-26). It could refer to the fear of death (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57).

The concept of "death" (*thanatos*) is expressed in the Bible in three stages.

1. spiritual death, Gen. 2:17; 3:1-24; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 7:10-11; James 1:15 (the relationship with God is broken)
2. physical death, Gen. 3:4-5; 5 (the relationship with the planet is broken)
3. eternal death, "the second death," Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8 (the broken relationship with God is made permanent)

Death is the opposite of the will of God for His highest creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

**8:52** This shows that they misunderstood Jesus' statement (cf. John 8:51). They took it to relate to the physical life of Abraham and the prophets.

**8:53** This question expects a "no" answer. What a startling statement! But this was exactly what Jesus was claiming.

1. He was greater than Abraham, John 8:53
2. He was greater than Jacob, 4:12
3. He was greater than Jonah, Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32
4. He was greater than John the Baptist, 5:36; Luke 7:28
5. He was greater than Solomon, Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31

The whole book of Hebrews shows the superiority of Jesus over Moses, new covenant over old covenant (see my commentary on Hebrews free online at [www.freebiblecommentary.mobi](http://www.freebiblecommentary.mobi) ).

■ **"whom do You make Yourself out to be"** This was exactly the point! Jesus states the conclusion clearly in John 8:54 and 58 and they try to stone Him for blasphemy (cf. John 8:59).

**8:54 "If"** Another third class conditional sentence which meant potential action.

■ **"glorify"** It is used here in the sense of honor (cf. Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 12:26).

**8:55 "know. . .know"** The English term translates two Greek terms in this verse, *ginōskō* and *oīda*, which seem in this context to be synonyms (cf. John 7:28-29). Jesus knows the Father and reveals Him to His

followers. The world (even the Jews) does not know the Father (cf. John 1:10; 8:19,55; 15:21;16:3; 17:25).

**8:56 "Your father Abraham"** This is a startling statement. Jesus distances Himself from "the Jews," "the Law" (cf. John 8:17), "the Temple," and even the patriarch Abraham. There is a clear break from the Old Covenant!

▣ **"rejoiced to see My day"** This is an aorist middle indicative. How much did Abraham understand about the Messiah? Several translations translate this in a future sense. These options are taken from *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations*.

1. "exulted that he should see" - *The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation* by J. B. Rotherham
2. "rejoice that he was to see my day" - Revised Standard Version
3. "was extremely happy in the prospect of seeing" - *The Berkeley Version of the New Testament* by Gerrit Verkuyl
4. "of seeing my coming" - *The New Testament: An American Translation* by Edgar J. Goodspeed
5. "was delighted to know of My day" - *The New Testament in the Language of Today* by William F. Beck

Also, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* edited by Harold K. Moulton lists the verb as meaning "to desire ardently" from the Septuagint's usage (p. 2).

▣ **"he saw it and was glad"** This refers to one of two things.

1. that Abraham, in his lifetime, had a vision of the Messiah (cf. II Esdras 3:14)
2. that Abraham was alive (in heaven) and conscious of the Messiah's work on earth (cf. Heb 11:13)

The whole point of Jesus' statement is that the Father of the Jewish nation looked forward to the Messianic age with great joy, but the current "seed" (generation) refused to believe and rejoice! Abraham is the father of believers (cf. Rom. 2:28-29), not unbelievers!

**8:57** Again Jesus' hearers misunderstood His words because of their literalism! This confusion may have been purposeful! They did not see because they did not want to see or possibly could not see!

**8:58 "before Abraham was born, I am"** This was blasphemy to the Jews and they tried to stone Jesus (cf. Exod. 3:12, 14). They understood completely what He was saying, which was that He was pre-existent Deity (cf. John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,54-59; 13:19; 18:5,6,8).

**8:59 "they picked up stones to throw at Him"** Jesus' words were very plain. He was the Messiah and He was one with the Father. These Jews, who in John 8:31 are said to have "believed Him," are now ready to stone Him for blasphemy (cf. Lev. 24:16). It was so hard for these Jews to accept Jesus' radical new message.

1. He did not act the way they expected the Messiah to act
2. He challenged their sacred oral traditions
3. He confused their strict monotheism
4. He asserted that Satan, not YHWH, was their "father"

One must "stone" Him or "receive" Him! There is no middle ground!

▣ **"Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple"** This is one of those verses that have caused interpreters to speculate (and add phrases to the Greek text) on whether

1. this was a miracle (cf. Luke 4:30 and textual additions here)
2. Jesus melted into the crowd because He looked like all the other Jews in attendance

There was a divine timetable. Jesus knew that He came to die and He know how, when, and where. His "hour had not yet come"!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is John 7:53-8:11 an original part of the Gospel of John?  
Why or why not?
2. What is the background to Jesus' statement "I am the light of the world"?
3. Why were the Pharisees so antagonistic to Jesus?
4. Explain the use of the term "believe" in John 8:30 in light of the context that follows.

# JOHN 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Healing of a Man Born Blind	A Man Born Blind Receives Sight	Jesus Manifests Himself as the Light of Life	Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind	The Cure of the Man Born Blind
9:1-12	9:1-12	9:1-12	9:1-2 9:3-5 9:6-7 9:8 9:9a 9:9b 9:10 9:11 9:12a 9:12b	9:1-5 9:6-7 9:8-12
The Pharisees Investigate the Healing	The Pharisees Excommunicate the Healed Man		The Pharisees Investigate the Healing	
9:13-17	9:13-34	9:13-17	9:13-15 9:16a 9:16b 9:17a 9:17b	9:13-17
9:18-23		9:18-23	9:18-19 9:20-23	9:18-23
9:24-34		9:24-34	9:24 9:25 9:26 9:27 9:28-29 9:30-33 9:34	9:24-34
Spiritual Blindness	True Vision and True Blindness		Spiritual Blindness	

9:35-39	9:35-41	9:35-41	9:35	9:35-39
			9:36	
			9:37	
			9:37	
			9:39	
9:40-41			9:40	9:40-41
			9:41	

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-41

- A. Healing of the blind, a very frequent miracle in Jesus' ministry, is surprisingly accomplished by several different techniques.
- B. Healing of the blind was a Messianic sign (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; Matt. 11:5). The significance of these healings is seen in the immediate context of Jesus' statement that He was the Light of the world (cf. John 8:12 & 9:5). The Jews wanted a sign; they had several! Only YHWH can open eyes!
- C. This chapter is an acted-out parable of the physical blindness of a man and the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees (cf. John 9:39-41; Matt. 6:23).

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 9:1-12**

**<sup>1</sup>As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "*It was neither that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." <sup>6</sup>When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, <sup>7</sup>and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing. <sup>8</sup>Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup>Others were**

saying, "This is he," *still* others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." <sup>10</sup>So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup>He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." <sup>12</sup>They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

**9:1 "blind from birth"** This is the only example of a cure of this type. There was no possibility of a fraud.

**9:2 "His disciples"** This is the first mention of His disciples since chapter 6. This could refer to (1) the Judean disciples mentioned in chapter 7:3 or (2) the Twelve.

■ **"who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind"** This question has generated much theological discussion. We must interpret it in terms of ancient Judaism, not Eastern religions. There are several possibilities.

1. this refers to prenatal sins which the rabbis theorized from Gen. 25:22
2. this refers to sins of parents or immediate ancestors which affected the unborn child (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9)
3. this refers to the relationship between sin and sickness, so common in rabbinical theology (cf. James 5:15-16; John 5:14)

This has nothing to do with the eastern cyclical theology of reincarnation or the wheel of *karma*. This is a Jewish setting. For a good discussion of this issue see James W. Sire's *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 127-144.

**9:3** This verse gives Jesus' answer to the disciples' question in John 9:2. Several truths are implied: (1) sin and sickness are not automatically linked and (2) problems often provide the opportunity for God's blessing.

**9:4 "We. . .Me"** These pronouns obviously do not agree. Several Greek manuscripts have changed one or the other to bring grammatical agreement. They do seem to reflect the theological position that as Jesus was the light of the world, we are to reflect that light in our own day (cf. Matt. 5:14).

■ **"night is coming"** A comparison with John 9:5 shows that this is obviously metaphorical. The night can represent

1. the coming judgement
2. a period of opportunity closed
3. the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus

**9:5 "While I am in the world"** This seems to refer to the period of the incarnation, the time from Bethlehem to Calvary/Mt. of Olives. Jesus was here for only a limited time. His hearers must respond now to His message. This phrase is theologically parallel to John 9:4.

One wonders how much the "I am" implies in a context like this!

■ **"I am the Light of the world"** John often uses "light" and "darkness" as metaphors of spiritual realities. Jesus as the "light of the world" (cf. John 1:4-5, 8-9; 3:17-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) may reflect OT Messianic implications (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1,3). See note at John 8:12.

**9:6 "made clay of the spittle"** Saliva was a Jewish medical home remedy. It was not allowed to be used on the Sabbath (cf. John 9:14). The Gospels record three examples of Jesus' use of saliva (cf. Mark 7:33; 8:23; and here). By using this accepted, even expected, method of healing, Jesus was physically encouraging this man's faith, but also deliberately challenging the Pharisees' traditions and rules!

**9:7 "the pool of Siloam"** Siloam means "the One who has been sent." This pool was used in the ritual of the Feast of the Tabernacles.

■ **"(which is translated, Sent)"** The term "sent" was related to the fact that the water of the pool was piped in from the Gihon springs, which was outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. The rabbis connected the word "sent" with Messianic implications. This is another editorial comment by the author.

■ **"washed"** This was his act of faith. He acted on Jesus' words! Yet this was not yet "saving faith" (cf. John 9:11,17,36,38). It was faith in process. Of all the Gospels, John's reveals "levels" of faith. Chapter 8 shows a group who "believed," but not unto salvation (cf. Matt. 13; Mark 4; the parable of the soils).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (GREEK VERB TENSES)**

**9:8 "the neighbors"** There are three groups mentioned in this chapter as bearing testimony to this miracle: (1) his neighbors (John 9:8); (2) the man himself (John 9:11); and (3) his parents (John 9:18). There was disagreement among the neighbors, as there was among the Pharisees, over this healing.

■ **"Is not this the one who used to sit and beg"** This Greek question expects a "yes" answer.

**9:9 "I am the one"** This is the same Greek idiom Jesus uses in John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24,28,58; 13:19; 18:5,6,8. This context shows that this form did not automatically have divine connotations. There is much of the same ambiguity in the term *kurios* used in verses 36 (sir) and 38 (Lord) of this chapter.

**9:11-12** This conversation shows that this man's healing did not immediately involve spiritual salvation. This man's faith develops through his meetings with Jesus (cf. John 9:35).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 9:13-17**

**<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. <sup>14</sup>Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see. <sup>16</sup>Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup>So they said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."**

**9:13 "they"** This must refer to the neighbors.

■ **"the Pharisees"** The Jewish leaders go by two different terms in John. They are usually referred to as "the Jews" (cf. John 9:18, 22). However, in this chapter they are called the Pharisees in John 9:13, 15, 16, and 40. See Special Topic at John 1:24.

**9:14 "Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay"** The Jewish leaders' traditional rules (the Oral Traditions codified in the Talmud) took precedent over this person's need (cf. John 5:9; 9:16; Matt. 23:24). It is almost as if Jesus acted on the Sabbath intentionally for the purpose of entering into a theological dialog with these leaders. See note at John 5:9.

**9:16** The Pharisees might have been basing their judgement of Jesus on Deut 13:1-5.

■ **"there was a division among them"** Jesus always causes this (cf. John 6:52; 7:43; 10:19; Matt. 10:34-39).

**9:17 "He is a prophet"** This chapter shows the development of this man's faith (cf. John 9:36, 38). For "Prophet" see Special Topic at John 4:19.

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### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 9:18-23

<sup>18</sup>The Jews then did not believe *it* of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, <sup>19</sup>and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" <sup>20</sup>His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup>His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

**9:22-23 "if any one confessed Him to be Christ"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. The parents were afraid of these Jewish leaders. There are several witnesses who validated this healing: (1) the neighbors (John 9:8-10); (2) the man himself (John 9:11-17, 24-33); and (3) his parents (John 9:18-23).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

**9:22 "he was to be put out of the synagogue"** Obviously the parents were afraid of being excommunicated (cf. John 12:42; 16:2). This procedure may go back to Ezra (cf. John 10:8). We know from rabbinical literature that there were three types of exclusions: (1) for one week; (2) for one month; or (3) for life.

John, writing toward the closing years of the first century, knew well the excommunication from the Synagogue because of confessing Jesus as the Christ. These historical "curse formulas" were developed by the Pharisees after the 70 a.d. Jewish resurgence from Jamnia.

■ **"he should be put out of the synagogue"** This was a serious act of disfellowshipping (cf. John 12:42; 16:2).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 9:24-34

<sup>24</sup>So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup>He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup>So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup>He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" <sup>28</sup>They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." <sup>30</sup>The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. <sup>32</sup>Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." <sup>34</sup>They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

**9:24 "Give glory to God"** This was a formula of oath-taking to insure truthfulness (cf. Joshua 7:19).

**9:25** This answer must refer to John 9:16. The man does not want to argue theology, but he asserts the results of his meeting Jesus.

**9:27 "You do not want to become His disciples too, do you"** The Greek grammatical form expects a



"no" answer, but the very asking of the question was sharp irony and shows the wit of this blind beggar.

**9:28a "You are His disciple"** There is a real question as to what point in this chapter the man became a believer. It seems initially that Jesus' healing was not connected with this man's faith in Him as the Messiah; only later did Jesus confront him with His Messianic claims (cf. John 9:36-38). This episode shows that physical healing did not necessarily bring salvation.

**9:28b-29** This shows the difficulty that the religious leaders faced. They tried to equate the detailed, specific interpretations of the Oral Tradition (Talmud) with the inspired revelation to Moses. Their eyes were blinded by their theological prejudices (cf. Matt. 6:23). They were disciples of human traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13).

**9:29 "we do not know where He is from"** This is another example of John's irony (cf. John 7:27-28; 8:14). Jesus had come from the Father (cf. John 8:42; 13:3; 16:28) but in their blindness the disciples did not know

1. His origin
2. His birth place

**9:30 "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes"** This is another example of the sharp wit and biting irony of this blind beggar as he refutes the logic of the Pharisees.

**9:31-33** This uneducated blind man had better, more consistent theology than the religious leaders!

**9:33 "If"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." It should be understood as, "If this man had not come from God, which He did, then He could not have done anything like this, but He did."

**9:34 "You were born entirely in sins"** It is interesting to note that rabbinical Judaism has no concept of "original sin" (cf. Job 14:1,4; Ps. 51:5). The fall of Genesis 3 was not emphasized in rabbinical Judaism. The Jews asserted that there was a good and bad intent (*yetzer*) in every man. These Pharisees were asserting that this healed man's testimony and logic were invalid because obviously he was a sinner evidenced by being born blind.

■ **"they put him out"** This is literally "they cast him outside." The reference is to (1) membership and attendance in the local synagogue or (2) dismissal from the meeting. In context #2 seems best.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 9:35-41**

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup>He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." <sup>38</sup>And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him. <sup>39</sup>And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." <sup>40</sup>Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" <sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

9:35

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB      "'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'"

NKJV          "'Do you believe in the Son of God?'"

The ancient Greek uncial manuscripts A and L have "Son of God," but P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, D, and W have "Son of Man." From John's usage and the manuscript evidence "Son of Man" is a far more appropriate, and probably original. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "man" an "A" rating (certain). The question grammatically expects a "yes" answer.

**9:36**

**NASB, NKJV, "Lord"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB "Sir"**

We can see the theological development of the faith of this man within the chapter, as the man moves from calling Jesus

1. a man (John 9:11)
2. to a prophet (John 9:17)
3. to the honorific title of "Sir" (John 9:36)
4. to "Lord," in the full theological usage of this term (John 9:38)

The Greek word is the same in both John 9:36 and 38. Only context can determine the connotation. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at John 6:20. The Greek *Kurios* can reflect the Hebrew *Adon*, which became an oral substitute for YHWH.

**9:38** This is the climax of the account, as far as the salvation of the healed man is concerned. It is surprising that this verse is missing from a few ancient Greek manuscripts (P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , W) and the Diatessaron (an early combination of the four Gospels). It does contain two rare terms: (1) the phrase "he said" occurs only here and 1:23 and (2) the term "he worshiped" occurs only here in John. It is included in most modern translations.

**9:39 "For judgment I came into this world"** This seems to be in line with 5:22, 27 which speaks of end-time (eschatological) judgement. However, this seems to contradict 3:17-21 and 12:47, 48. This can be reconciled by the fact that Jesus came for the purpose of redemption, but humans who reject His offer automatically judge themselves.

▣ **"that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind"** This was a double fulfillment of prophecy especially from Isaiah.

1. the proud Israelite will not understand God's message (cf. Isa. 6:10, 42:18-19; 43:8; Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2)
2. the poor, outcast, physically affected who are repentant and humble will understand (cf. Isa. 29:18; 32:3-4; 35:5; 42:7, 16)

Jesus is the light of the world for all who choose to see (cf. John 1:4-5, 8-9).

**9:40 "We are not blind too, are we"** The Greek syntax expects a "no" answer (cf. Matt. 15:14; 23-24). These last few verses show that this chapter was an acted-out parable of spiritual blindness which cannot be healed (the unpardonable sin of unbelief, see Special Topic at John 5:21), and physical blindness, which can!

**9:41** This verse expresses a general truth (cf. John 15:22,24; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7,9). Humans are held responsible for the light they have or have been exposed to!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter deal primarily with physical healing or spiritual healing? Physical blindness or spiritual blindness?
2. How could this man have sinned before he was born?
3. At what point in this chapter does the man receive salvation?
4. Did Jesus come into the world to judge the world or to save the world?
5. Explain the background of the term "Son of Man."
6. List the points of irony in the blind man's responses to the Jewish leaders.

# JOHN 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	JB
The Parable of the Sheep Fold	Jesus the True Shepherd	Jesus, the Shepherd Who Gives His Life	The Parable of the Shepherd	The Good Shepherd
10:1-6	10:1-6	10:1-6	10:1-5 10:6	10:1-5 10:6
Jesus the Good Shepherd	Jesus the Good Shepherd		Jesus the Good Shepherd	
10:7-18	10:7-21	10:7-10 10:11-18	10:7-10 10:11-16 10:17-18	10:7-18
10:19-21		10:19-21	10:19-20 10:21	10:19-21
Jesus Rejected by the Jews	The Shepherd Knows His Sheep		Jesus Is Rejected	Jesus Claims to Be the Son of God
10:22-30	10:22-30	10:22-30	10:22-24 10:25-30	10:22-30
10:31-39	10:31-39	10:31-39	10:31-32 10:33 10:34-38 10:39	10:31-38 10:39
	The Believers Beyond Jordan			Jesus Withdraws to the Other Side of the Jordan
10:40-42	10:40-42	10:40-42	10:40-42	10:40-42

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

#### 1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." <sup>6</sup>This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.**

**10:1 "Truly, truly"** See note at John 1:51.

▣ **"but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber"** Notice there are some in the sheepfold who do not belong to the good shepherd (cf. Matt. 7:21-23 and "the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares," Matt. 13:24-30). The problem here is that some are trying to attain through personal effort what God freely offers through Christ (cf. Rom. 3:19-31; 9:30-33; 10:2-4; Gal. 2:16; 5:4). The Pharisees of chapter 9 are a good example.

**10:2 "But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep"** There is a very obvious mixing of metaphors in this chapter. Jesus as the door of the sheepfold, John 10:7, and also the shepherd of the sheep (John 10:11 and 14). However, this mixing of metaphors is not uncommon in John and the NT.

1. Jesus is the bread and the giver of the bread (cf. John 6:35,51)
2. Jesus is the truth and the speaker of truth (cf. John 10:8:45-46 and 14:6)
3. Jesus is the way and He shows the way (cf. John 14:6)
4. Jesus is the sacrifice and the one who offers the sacrifice (cf. the Book of Hebrews)

The title "shepherd" was a common OT title both for God and the Messiah (cf. Ps. 23; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 40:10-11; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The Jewish leaders are called the "false shepherds" in Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34 and Isa. 56:9-12. The term "shepherd" is related to the term "pastor" (cf. Eph. 4:11; Titus 1:5,7).

**10:3 "the sheep hear his voice"** Recognition and obedience are based on relationship. In John both "hear" (cf. John 4:42; 5:24,25,28-29; 8:47; 10:16,27; 18:37) and "see" (cf. John 3:3; 12:40; 20:8) are used of believing/trusting in Jesus as the Christ.

▣ **"he calls his own sheep by name"** Jesus knows His own personally and individually (as YHWH does, cf. John 10:29-31). Shepherds often had nick names for their animals, even in large herds.

It is theologically shocking that Jesus calls His true sheep out from among the false sheep of the nation of Judah. The covenant people were not the true people of God. This is the radical scandal of the New Covenant. One's faith, not lineage, determines one's future! Faith is personal, not national.

The Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus were not part of God's people (cf. John 10:26)!

▣ **"and leads them out"** This refers not only to salvation, but also to daily guidance (cf. John 10:4, 9).

**10:4** This may be a reference to the custom of keeping several different flocks in one enclosure at night. In the morning the shepherd would call and his sheep would come to him.

**10:5** The church has always had to deal with false shepherds (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 John 4:5-6; 2 Peter 2).

**10:6 "This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them"** This is not the normal term translated "parable" (*parabolē*), but it comes from the same root (*paraimian*). This form is found only here and in John 16:25,29 and 2 Pet. 2:22. Although it is a different form, it seems to be synonymous with the more common term "parable" (used in the Synoptic Gospels). The term "parable" usually means to place a common cultural occurrence beside a spiritual truth so as to help in understanding. It can, however, refer to the hiding of truth from spiritually blind eyes (cf. John 16:29; Mark 4:11-12).

▣ **"but they did not understand"** If chapter 10 is related in time to chapter 9, the "they" would refer to the Pharisees. They claimed to see (cf. John 9:41), but they did not see (cf. John 10:20). Religion can be a barrier, not a bridge.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:7-10**

**<sup>7</sup>So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup>I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."**

**10:7 "I am the door of the sheep"** This is one of John's seven famous "I am" statements. This metaphor highlights the truth that Jesus is the only true way (cf. John 8, 10; 14:6). This is often called the scandal of the exclusivism of the gospel. If the Bible is the self-revelation of God, then there is only one way to be right with God-faith in Christ (cf. Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). See note at John 8:12.

**10:8 "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers"** Because of the context of chapters 9 and 10, the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah (cf. John 10:22), it is possible that this refers to the messianic pretensions of the Macabees and their descendants during the inter-testamental period. However, it probably relates to the OT passages about false shepherds (cf. Isa. 56:9-12; Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34; and Zechariah 11).

This highly figurative language and ambiguous antecedents caused early scribes to modify or expand the text in an attempt to explain the meaning. One manuscript (MS D) simply omitted the inclusive term "all" and several early manuscripts (P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, κ<sup>\*</sup>) omitted the phrase "before me."

**10:9 "if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved"** This is a third class conditional sentence with a future passive verb. Jesus is the only way to God (cf. John 14:6). The verb "saved" in this context probably relates to the OT connotation of physical deliverance (i.e., the sheep are safe). However John often chooses terms that have two overlapping meanings. The concept of spiritual salvation is not lacking from this context also (cf. John 10:42).

**10:10 "The thief"** This shows the ulterior motives of false shepherds. It also reflects the purpose of the evil one! This attitude of the carelessness of hired workers can be seen in John 10:12-13.

▣ **"destroy"** See Special Topic following.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (APOLLUMI)**

▣ **"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"** This phrase is quoted so often as a promise of material things, but in context it relates to knowing Jesus personally and the spiritual blessings, not material prosperity, that He brings (it is parallel to 4:14 and 7:38). It is not having so much more in this life, but knowing and possessing true life!

As the Synoptics record Jesus' emphasis on the Kingdom of God, John records Jesus' emphasis on eternal life. One can have it now! The Kingdom has been inaugurated!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:11-18**

**11**"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **12**He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. **13**He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. **14**I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, **15**even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. **16**I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with one shepherd*. **17**For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. **18**No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

**10:11,14 "I am the good shepherd"** This was an OT title for the Messiah (cf. Ezek. 34:23; Zech. 11; 1 Pet. 5:4) and for YHWH (cf. Ps. 23:1; 28:9; 77:20; 78:52; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 23:1; 31:10; Ezek. 34:11-16).

There are two Greek terms which can be translated "good": (1) *agathos*, which is usually used in John for things, and (2) *kalos*, which was used in the Septuagint to refer to good as opposed to evil. In the NT it has the meanings of "beautiful," "noble," "moral," and "worthy." These two terms are used together in Luke 8:15. See note at John 8:12.

**10:11 "the good shepherd lays down His own life for the sheep"** This refers to the vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18). He voluntarily laid down his life for sinful mankind (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). True life, abundant life only comes through His death.

Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* has an interesting point on this verse:

"Instead of the expression 'to lay down one's life,' which is characteristically Johannine (10:15,17; 13:37,38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16), several witnesses (P<sup>45</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , D) substitute the expression 'to give one's life,' which occurs in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt. 20:28; Mark 10:45)" (p. 230).

**10:14 "I know my own and My own know Me"** This is the Hebrew sense of the word "know" (see Special Topic at John 1:10). As the Son knows the Father and the Father the Son, so too, Jesus knows those who trust Him and they know Him. They have "seen" and "heard" (cf. John 10:4) and responded (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). Christianity is a personal relationship (cf. John 17:20-26).

**10:15 "even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father"** This is a recurrent theme in John. Jesus acts and speaks out of His intimate relationship with the Father.

The surprising analogy in John 10:14-15 is that the intimacy between Father and Son is compared to the intimacy between Son and followers (cf. John 14:23). John focuses on the Hebrew connotation of "know" as intimate fellowship, not cognitive facts. Jesus knows the Father; those who know Jesus, know God!

**10:16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold"** This is an allusion to Isa. 56:6-8. The context seems to demand that this refers to (1) the Samaritans (cf. John 4:1-42) or (2) the Gentile Church (cf. John 4:43-54). This speaks of the unity of all who exercise faith in Christ. The new covenant unites Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13; also note 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)! Genesis 3:15 and John 3:16 merge!

■ **"and they will become one flock with one Shepherd"** This has always been the goal of God (cf.

Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). The theological aspects of this unity are discussed in Eph. 2:11-3:13 and 4:1-6.

**10:17 "For this reason the Father loves Me"** As the Son was not forced to lay down his life, the Father was not forced to give His Son. This should not be interpreted that God rewarded the man Jesus for his obedience (this heresy is often called adoptionism, see Glossary).

■ **"I lay down My life so that I may take it again"** This implies the resurrection. Usually in the NT it is the Father who raises the Son (cf. John 18b) to show His acceptance of His sacrifice. But here the power of Jesus Himself in the resurrection is asserted.

This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)

**10:18 "I have authority"** This is the same term used in John 1:12. It can be translated "authority," "legal right," or "power." This verse shows the power and authority of Jesus.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:19-21**

**<sup>19</sup>A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. <sup>20</sup>Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" <sup>21</sup>Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"**

**10:19** As there were divided opinions about Jesus in John 6:52; 7:12,25,43; 9:16; 10:19-21; 11:36-37, this theme continues through John. The mystery of some receiving the gospel and others rejecting it is the tension between predestination and human free will!

**10:20 "He has a demon and is insane"** This was a common charge made against Jesus from two different perspectives.

1. in this verse, as in John 7:20, it was used to say that Jesus had a mental illness
2. this same charge is used by the Pharisees to try to explain the source of Jesus' power (cf. John 8:48,52)

**10:21** There are two questions in John 10:21.

1. v. 21a has *ouk*, which expects a "yes" answer
2. v. 21b has *mē*, which expects a "no" answer

See James Hewett, *New Testament Greek*, p. 171. This verse shows, however, how difficult hard and fast rules are in Koine Greek. Context, not grammatical form, is the final determiner.

The healing of the blind was a Messianic sign (cf. Exod. 4:11; Ps. 146:8; Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). There is a sense in which the blindness of Israel (cf. Isa. 42:19) is being shown here as it was in chapter 9.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:22-30**

**<sup>22</sup>At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; <sup>23</sup>it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup>The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup>Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. <sup>26</sup>But you do not believe because you are not of My**



sheep. <sup>27</sup>My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup>and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are one."

**10:22 "the feast of the Dedication"** Josephus calls this the "Festival of Lights." It is known in our day as Hanukkah. It was an eight-day feast that occurred around the middle of December. It celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after the military victory of Judas Maccabeus in 164 b.c. In 168 b.c., Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was a Seleucid leader, tried to force the Jews into Hellenistic practices (cf. Dan. 8:9-14). He turned the Temple in Jerusalem into a pagan shrine with even an altar to Zeus in the Holy Place. Judas Maccabeus, one of several sons of the priest of Modin, defeated this Syrian overlord and cleansed and rededicated the Temple (cf. I Macc. 4:36-59; II Macc. 1:18).

John uses the feasts of Judaism as occasion for Jesus to use their symbolism to reveal Himself to the Jewish leadership, the citizens of Jerusalem, and the crowds of pilgrims (cf. chapters 7-11).

■ **"the portico of Solomon"** This was a covered area along the eastern side of the Court of the Women where Jesus taught. Josephus said it had survived the Babylonian destruction of 586 b.c.

**10:23 "it was winter"** This is an eyewitness detail.

**10:24 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. There are several first class conditional sentences in this context (cf. John 10:24, 35, 37, and 38). This usage in John 10:24 shows how this construction can be used in a literary sense. These Pharisees did not really believe Jesus was the Messiah; they were baiting him.

■ **"tell us plainly"** There are several things to discuss in this verse. First, Jesus taught in parables, figurative language, and ambiguous dualistic statements. This crowd in the Temple wanted Him to express Himself clearly. See Special Topic: *Parthēsia* at John 7:4.

Second, the Jews of Jesus' day did not expect the Messiah to be Deity incarnate. Jesus had seemingly alluded to His oneness with God on several occasions (cf. John 8:56-59), but in this context they are asking specifically about the Messiah. The Jews expected this Anointed One to act like Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15,19). Jesus had done exactly that in chapter six. His works fulfilled OT prophecies, especially the healing of the blind (chapter 9). They had all the evidence needed. The problem was that Jesus did not fit their traditional military, nationalistic expectations of the Messiah.

**10:25 "the works that I do in My Father's Name, these testify of Me"** Jesus asserted that His actions verified His claims (cf. John 2:23; 5:36; 10:25,38; 14:11; 15:24).

**10:26** What a shocking statement!

**10:28 "I give eternal life to them"** Eternal life is both characterized by quantity and quality. It is the life of the new age. It is available now by faith in Christ (cf. John 3:36; 11:24-26).

■ **"they will never perish, and no one will snatch *them* out of My hand"** This is a double negative with an Aorist middle subjunctive. This is one of the strongest passages on the security of the believer anywhere in the NT (cf. John 6:39). It is obvious that the only one who can separate us from God's love is ourselves (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Gal. 5:2-4). Assurance (see Special Topic at 1 John 5:13) must be balanced with perseverance (see Special Topic at John 8:31). Assurance must be based on the character and actions of the Triune God.

The Gospel of John asserts the assurance of those who continue to put their faith in Christ. It starts with an initial decision of repentance and faith and issues in lifestyle faith. The theological problem is when this personal relationship is perverted into a product that we possess ("once saved, always saved"). Continuing faith is the evidence of a true salvation (cf. Hebrews, James, and 1 John).

10:29

**NASB, NKJV** "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all"  
**NRSV** "What my Father has given me is greater than all else"  
**TEV** "What my Father has given me is greater than everything"  
**NJB** "The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone"

The question is what is the object of the phrase, "greater than": (1) the people God has given Jesus (NRSV, TEV) or (2) God Himself (NASB, NKJV, NJB). The second part of this verse implies someone may try to snatch Jesus' followers. Theologically the second option seems best. See Special Topic on Assurance at John 6:37.

This is a wonderful passage on the assurance of the believer based on the power of the Father! The security of the believer, like all biblical truths, is presented in a tension-filled, covenantal pattern. Believers' hope and assurance of salvation is in the character of the Triune God, His mercy and grace. However, the believer must continue in faith. Salvation begins with an initial Spirit-led decision of repentance and faith. It must also issue in continuing repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance! Salvation is not a product (life insurance, ticket to heaven), but a growing personal relationship with God through Christ.

The conclusive evidence of a right relationship with God is a changed and changing life of faith and service (cf. Matthew 7). There is such little biblical evidence for carnal Christians (cf. 1 Corinthians 2-3). The norm is Christlikeness now, not just heaven when we die. There is no lack of biblical security and assurance to those who are growing, serving, even struggling with sin. But, no fruit, no root! Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, but true salvation will issue in "good works" (cf. Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26).

**10:30-33 "I and the Father are one. . .the Jews picked up stones again to stone Him"** This is just one of the strong statements of Jesus' Messiahship and Deity (cf. John 1:1-14; 8:58; 14:8-10, esp. 17:21-26, which also uses the word "one"). The Jews understood completely what He was saying and counted it as blasphemy (cf. John 10:33; 8:59). They were going to stone Him based on Lev. 24:16.

In the early controversy over the person of Christ (i.e., *Arius* - the first born; *Athanasius* - fully God) John 10:30 and 14:9 were used often by Athanasius (see *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 444). For "Arianism" see the Glossary.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:31-39**

<sup>31</sup>The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" <sup>33</sup>The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God." <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? <sup>35</sup>If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), <sup>36</sup>do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? <sup>37</sup>If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup>but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." <sup>39</sup>Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

**10:31** This verse relates to Jesus' statement in John 10:30. Jesus answers their charges in a very unusual rabbinical argument. It basically is a word play on *Elohim*, which is the OT term for God (cf. Gen. 1), but in form is plural and often was used of both angels and human leaders (judges). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at John 6:20.

**10:32** The good (*kalos*) shepherd does good (*kalos*) works from the Father.

**10:33 "for blasphemy"** Jesus knew that they correctly understood His claim of oneness with the Father.

**10:34 "in your Law"** Jesus quotes from the Psalms but calls it "the Law" (i.e., Torah means "teachings," cf. John 12:34; 15:25; Rom. 3:9-19). The term Law usually referred to the writings of Moses (Torah), Genesis-Deuteronomy. This shows the wider use of the term to cover the whole OT.

■ **"you are gods"** Jesus used a quote from Ps. 82:6. It used *elohim* to refer to human judges (see *Elohim* in Special Topic at John 6:20). These judges (though wicked) are called "sons of the Most High." These Jews were attacking Jesus because although He was a man He claimed to be: (1) the Son of God and (2) one with God. Yet other men (cf. Exod. 4:16; 7:1; 22:8,9; Ps. 82:6; 138:1) were called "gods."

Jesus' rabbinical argument seems to follow this line: the Scriptures are true, men are called *elohim*, therefore, why do you call Me a blasphemer for asserting that I am the Son of God? The term *Elohim* is plural in Hebrew but translated singular and used a singular verb when referring to the OT Deity. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at John 6:20. This may be a typical Johannine word play: (1) a term that has two connotations and (2) a Greek question that expects a "yes" answer.

**10:35 "(and the Scripture cannot be broken)"** John often comments on Jesus' dialogues. It is uncertain whether this is a statement of Jesus or John. However, since both are equally inspired, it does not matter. The thrust of the quote is the trustworthiness of Scripture. Jesus and the Apostles viewed the OT and their interpretations of it as the very words of God (cf. Matt. 5:17-19; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16).

Bishop H. C. G. Moule in *The Life of Bishop Moule* says,

"He [Christ] absolutely trusted the Bible, and, though there are in it things inexplicable and intricate that have puzzled me so much, I am going, not in a blind sense, but reverently to trust the Book because of Him" (p. 138).

**10:36** In this verse Jesus claims that the Father chose (or "consecrated" or "sanctified") Him and sent Him (as Messiah). He surely then has the right to be called "son of God." As the judges of Israel represented God (cf. Ps. 82:6), He represents the Father in word and deed. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**10:37** This is exactly what John 10:19-21 are saying. Jesus' miracles reflected the activity of God.

**10:37,38 "If . . . if"** These are first class conditional sentences. Jesus did the works of the Father. If so, then they should believe in Him, being confident that He and the Father are one (cf. John 10:30,38). See Special Topic: Abiding in 1 John 2:10.

**10:39** This is one of several times that Jesus eluded those who tried to hurt Him (cf. Luke 4:29-30; John 8:59). It is uncertain whether these escapes were due to (1) a miraculous event or (2) Jesus' physical likeness to everyone else, which allowed Him to melt into the crowd.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 10:40-42**

**<sup>40</sup>And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. <sup>41</sup>Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." <sup>42</sup>Many believed in Him there.**

**10:40** This refers to the trans-Jordan area across from Jericho, close to a city called Bethany.

**10:41** Again John states John the Baptist's affirmation of Jesus (cf. John 1:6-8,19-42; 3:22-30; 5:33)! This may have been to counteract some heresies that had developed around John the Baptist.

**10:42** As the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, so many of the common people (people of the land) responded in faith to Him (cf. John 2:23; 7:31; 8:30). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does John mix his metaphors so often (Example: "Jesus is both the door of the sheepfold and the good shepherd")?
2. What is the OT background to John 10?
3. What is the significance of Jesus "laying down His life?"
4. Why did the Jews continue to accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed?
5. Why are Jesus' works so important?
6. How do we relate the "security of the believer" to the "perseverance of the saints?"

# JOHN 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Death of Lazarus	The Death of Lazarus	The Raising of Lazarus	The Death of Lazarus	The Resurrection of Lazarus
11:1-16	11:1-16	11:1-6	11:1-4	11:1-4
			11:5-7	11:5-10
		11:7-16	11:8	
			11:9-11	11:11-16
			11:12	
			11:13-15	
			11:16	
Jesus The Resurrection and the Life	I Am the Resurrection and The Life		Jesus the Resurrection and the Life	
11:17-27	11:17-27	11:17-27	11:17-19	11:17-27
			11:20-22	
			11:23	
			11:24	
			11:25-26	
			11:27	
Jesus Weeps	Jesus and Death, the Last Enemy		Jesus Weeps	
11:28-37	11:28-37	11:28-37	11:28-31	11:28-31
			11:32	11:32-42
			11:33-34a	
			11:34b	
			11:35-36	
			11:37	
Lazarus Brought to Life	Lazarus Raised from the Dead		Lazarus Is Brought to Life	
11:38-44	11:38-44	11:38-44	11:38-39a	

			11:39b	
			11:40-44	
				11:43-44
The Plot to Kill Jesus	The Plot to Kill Jesus		The Plot Against Jesus	The Jewish Leaders Decide on the Death of Jesus
11:45-53	11:45-57	11:45-53	11:45-48	11:45-54
			11:49-52	
			11:53-54	
11:54		11:54		The Passover Draws Near
11:55-57		11:55-57	11:55-57	11:55-57

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

The theological significance of chapter 11 is:

1. The display of Jesus' power and authority continues.
2. Lazarus' death is in the plan of God to provide an opportunity for Jesus to be glorified (cf. John 9:3).
3. Martha's dialog with Jesus provides an opportunity for her great confession and Jesus' further revelation of Himself (i.e., the resurrection and the life, John 11:25).
4. Jesus gives eternal life now (realized eschatology). This is symbolized in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus had control over death!
5. Even in the face of this powerful miracle, unbelief continues (i.e. the unpardonable sin, see Special Topic at John 5:21)!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:1-16**

**<sup>1</sup>Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death,**

but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." <sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days longer in the place where He was. <sup>7</sup>Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." <sup>11</sup>This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." <sup>12</sup>The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." <sup>13</sup>Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. <sup>14</sup>So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup>and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him. " <sup>16</sup>Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to *his* fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

**11:1 "a certain man was sick"** This is imperfect tense. This implies that he had been sick for a long period of time. However, the imperfect tense can be interpreted as "began to be sick."

- ▣ **"Lazarus"** This is the Hebrew name "Eleazer," which means "God helps" or "God is helper." John assumed that the readers knew of Jesus' friendship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (cf. Luke 10:38-42, which is the only mention of them in the Synoptic Gospels).
- ▣ **"Bethany"** This is a different location from the Bethany mentioned in John 1:28 and 10:40, which was close to Jericho by the Jordan River. This Bethany is about two miles southeast of Jerusalem on the same ridge as the Mt. of Olives. This was Jesus' favorite lodging place while in Jerusalem.
- ▣ **"Mary"** This is the Hebrew name "Miriam."
- ▣ **"Martha"** This is the Aramaic term for "mistress." It is unusual that Martha, the oldest, is not mentioned first; may relate to Luke 10:38-42.

### **11:2 "It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair"**

Verse 2 is another editorial addition by John (i.e., TEV, NET). This account of Mary's devotion (cf. John 12:2-8) is paralleled in both Matthew (cf. John 26:6-13) and Mark (cf. John 14:3-9). The woman mentioned in a similar anointing in Luke 7:36ff is a different woman.

This verse describes an event that has not yet been recorded in the Gospel. It is recorded in chapter 12. Many assume this implies that John expected his readers to know about this family from other sources.

### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#)**

**11:3 "the sisters sent *word* to Him"** They sent a message to Jesus, who was in Perea, across the Jordan.

- ▣ **"he whom You love, is sick"** This shows Jesus' unique relationship with this family. This is the Greek term, *phileō*. However, in Koine Greek, the terms *phileō* and *agapaō* are interchangeable (cf. John 11:5; 3:35; 5:20).

**11:4 "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"** This implies that Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick. He would allow him to die so that the Father could show His power through Him by raising him from the dead. Sickness and suffering are sometimes in the will of God (cf. John 9:3; the book of Job; 2 Cor 12:7-10).

▣ **"the glory of God"** The works of Jesus reveal the "glory of God." See note at John 1:14.

▣ **"that the Son of God may be glorified by it"** The genitive phrase "of God" is not in the ancient Greek papyri manuscripts P<sup>45</sup> or P<sup>66</sup>. The sickness would bring glory to both the Father and the Son. Jesus' glory in this setting is very different than one would expect. Throughout the Gospel John the term has referred to Jesus' crucifixion and His glorification. Lazarus' resuscitation will cause the Jewish leadership to call for Jesus' death.

**11:5** Another editorial comment by John (cf. John 11:36).

**11:6 "He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was"** Jesus delayed until Lazarus was dead! Jesus did not play favorites. There was a divine purpose in this illness (cf. John 11:15; 9:3).

**11:7 "after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again'"** The discussion that follows shows that the disciples were well aware that the Jews wanted to stone Jesus (cf. John 11:8; 8:54; 10:31,39). The disciples show a strange mixture of both faith and fear (cf. John 11:16). Thomas is often thought of as a doubtful disciple, but here he was willing to die with Jesus (cf. John 11:16).

Michael Magill, *NT TransLine* (p. 345 #43) makes a good observation that the "let's go" of John 11:7 is modified to the "but I go" of John 11:11. The disciples were afraid and doubtful, but Jesus was confident. It is Thomas who joins with Jesus (let's go) in John 11:16!

**11:9-10** This may be a way of linking the chapter back to chapter 8:12 and 9:4-5 (cf. John 12:35). Verse 9a expects a "yes" answer.

There is an obvious contrast between those who are following God's will (i.e., Jesus) and those who are not (John 11:10, the Jews). Jesus is not making a mistake in going where God leads Him, because He is the light of the world!

This contrast between light and dark was characteristic of Jewish Wisdom Literature and the writings of Qumran (i.e., "The Scroll of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness" or "War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness").

▣ **"If. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences which meant potential action.

**11:11 "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep"** The verb is Perfect passive indicative. The disciples often misunderstood Jesus because they took Him too literally (cf. John 11:13). Jesus' use of this metaphor for death reflects its OT usage (cf. Deut. 31:16; 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 1:21; 2:10; 11:21,43; 14:20, etc.). The English term "cemetery" comes from the same root as the Greek term "sleep."

**11:12 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"he will recover"** This is literally the term "saved" in its OT usage as "physical deliverance" (cf. James 5:15). Again the disciples misunderstood Jesus because they took His metaphorical language (i.e., sleep) literally. This misunderstanding of Jesus' hearers is a characteristic of John's Gospel (i.e., John 11:23-24). He is from above - they are from below. Without the help of the Spirit (ie. Pentecost), they cannot understand!

**11:13** This is another editorial comment by John.

**11:14 "Jesus said to them plainly"** See Special Topic: *Parrhēsia* at John 7:4.

**11:15 "and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe"** Jesus asserts that the raising of Lazarus was not because of His friendship with Lazarus or because of the grieving of Mary and Martha, but to (1) enhance both the disciples' faith (v.14) and to (2) encourage the faith of the



Jewish crowd (John 11:42). Faith is a process in John. Sometimes it develops (i.e., disciples, cf. John 2:11), sometimes not (i.e., the bystanders, cf. John 8:31-59).

**11:16** This verse clearly shows Thomas' faith. He was willing to die with Jesus. The disciples needed to be shown Jesus' power over death, the great fear of mankind.

The name Thomas reflects the Aramaic word for "twin" (another editorial comment), as Didymus does in Greek. The Synoptics list him as an Apostle (cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15); the Gospel of John speaks of him often (cf. John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29; 21:2). See Special Topic: Chart of the Apostles' Names at John 1:45.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 11:17-27**

**17**So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. **18**Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; **19**and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother. **20**Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. **21**Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. **22**Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." **23**Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **24**Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **25**Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, **26**and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" **27**She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world."

**11:17 "he had already been in the tomb for four days"** The rabbis said that the human spirit stayed close to the physical body for three days. Jesus tarried until after four days to assure that Lazarus was truly dead and beyond all rabbinical hope.

**11:18 "about two miles"** Verse 18 is another editorial comment by John. Literally this is "fifteen furlongs."

**11:19 "many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary"** This is an uncharacteristic neutral use of the term "the Jews," which usually in John refers to Jesus' enemies. However, in this context, it refers simply to the residents of Jerusalem who knew this family (cf. John 11:31,33,45). Jesus loved the people of Jerusalem and was trying to reach them through Lazarus' resuscitation.

**11:20 "Mary stayed at the house"** The usual position for Jewish mourning was sitting on the floor.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES**

**11:21,32 "Martha said. . .if You had been here, my brother would not have died"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." It would therefore be understood as , "If you had been here with us, which you were not, my brother would not have died, which he did." Martha and Mary's statements (cf. John 11:32) to Jesus are exactly alike. They must have discussed this subject often during these four days of mourning. These two women felt comfortable enough with Jesus to express to Him their veiled disappointment that He had not come earlier.

**11:22 "Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You"** It is uncertain exactly what Martha was asking Jesus to do, because in John 11:39 she was surprised at the resuscitation of Lazarus.

**11:23-24 "Your brother will rise again"** Martha had the same theological view of an afterlife as the

Pharisees, who believed in a bodily resurrection on the last day. There is some limited OT Scriptural evidence for this view (cf. Dan. 12:2; Job 14:14; 19:25-27). Jesus turns this Jewish understanding into an affirmation of His power and authority (cf. John 11:25; 14:6).

**11:24 "on the last day"** Although it is true that John emphasizes the immediacy of salvation (realized eschatology), he still expects an end-time consummation. This is expressed in several ways.

1. a judgment/resurrection day (cf. John 5:28-29; 6:39-40,44,54; 11:24; 12:48)
2. "hour" (cf. John 4:23; 5:25,28; 16:32)
3. a second coming of Christ (cf. John 14:3; it is possible that 14:18-19,28 and 16:16,22 refer to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances and not to an eschatological coming)

**11:25 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life'"** This is another of Jesus' seven "I Am" statements. In the face of Lazarus' death, Martha was encouraged to believe that he would live. This hope is rooted in the person and power of the Father and of Jesus (cf. John 5:21). See note at John 8:12.

Surprisingly an early papyrus manuscript (i.e., P<sup>45</sup>) and some Old Latin, Syrian versions, and the Diatessaron omit the words "and the life." The UBS<sup>3</sup> gives their inclusion a "B" rating, but the UBS<sup>4</sup> gives their inclusion an "A" rating (certain).

**11:26 "everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die"** There are several significant syntactical features of this text.

1. the universal pronoun "all"
2. the present participles, which show the need for ongoing belief (John 11:25, 26)
3. the strong double negative connected with death, "shall never, no never die," which obviously refers to spiritual death.

In John eternal life is a present reality for believers, not only some future event. Lazarus is meant to illustrate Jesus' words! For John, eternal life is a present reality.

**11:27 "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world"** This is stated in perfect tense. This is a powerful confession of her personal faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. It is theologically equivalent to Peter's confession at Caesarea (cf. Matthew 16).

She uses several different titles to express her faith.

1. the Christ (which was the Greek translation of Messiah, the Anointed One)
2. the Son of God (an OT title of the Messiah)
3. He who comes (another OT title of God's promised one to bring the new age of righteousness, cf. John 6:14)

John uses dialogue as a literary technique to convey truth. There are several confessions of faith in Jesus in John's Gospel (cf. John 1:29,34,41,49; 4:42; 6:14,69; 9:35-38; 11:27). See Special Topic: John's Use of Believe at John 2:23.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11: 28-29**

<sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she got up quickly and was coming to Him.

**11:28 "Teacher"** The NASB Study Bible (p. 1540) has a great comment, "a significant description to be given by a woman. The rabbis would not teach women (cf. John 4:27), but Jesus taught them frequently."

**SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:30-37**

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met

Him. <sup>31</sup>Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her *also* weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, <sup>34</sup>and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

**11:30** This is another eyewitness detail of the Apostolic author.

**11:33**

<b>NASB</b>	"He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled"
<b>NKJV</b>	"He groaned in the spirit and was troubled"
<b>NRSV</b>	"He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved"
<b>TEV</b>	"His heart was touched, and he was deeply moved"
<b>NJB</b>	"Jesus was greatly distressed, and with a profound sigh"

This is literally "snorted in the spirit." This idiom was usually used of anger (cf. Dan. 11:30 [LXX]; Mark 1:43; 14:5). But in this context a translation showing deep emotion is to be preferred (cf. John 11:38). Although some commentators see this strong emotion, possibly anger, directed at death, Jesus had truly human emotions (cf. John 11:33,35,36,38) and shows them here for his friends.

**11:35 "Jesus wept"** This is the shortest verse in the Bible. Death was not God's will for this planet. It is the result of human rebellion. Jesus feels the pain of the loss of a loved one. He feels for the life experiences of all His followers!

The weeping of Jesus was a quiet, personal kind, not the public wailing mentioned in John 11:33.

**11:37** This question expects a "yes" answer. This was Martha's opinion in John 11:21 and Mary's in John 11:32.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:38-44**

<sup>38</sup>So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been *dead* four days." <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup>So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." <sup>43</sup>When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth. <sup>44</sup>The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

**11:38 "a cave"** During this period in Palestine graves were either

1. natural caves (*Baba Bathra* 6:8)
2. caves dug into cliffs and sealed with circular stones rolled into trenches
3. pits dug into the ground and covered by large stones

From archaeological studies in the Jerusalem area option #1 fits best.

**11:39 "Remove the stone"** A large stone slipped into a groove was the method used to seal tombs from robbers and animals.

▣ **"he has been *dead* four days"** This is a Greek idiom, literally "a four day man."

**11:40 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means the action is possible. This verse is a question that expects a "yes" answer.

▣ **"the glory of God"** God's glory was revealed in Jesus' actions (cf. John 11:4). See fuller note at John 1:14.

**11:41 "Then Jesus raised His eyes"** The normal posture of Jewish prayer was the hands and eyes (open) lifted to heaven. This is an idiom for prayer (cf. John 17:1).

▣ **"that You heard Me"** Jesus "hears" the Father (cf. John 8:26,40; 15:15) and the Father "hears" Him. Those who "hear" Jesus have eternal life. This is the continuing word play on "see" and "hear" as parallel to "receive" (John 1:12) and "believe" (John 3:16). Lazarus "heard" the voice of Jesus and came back to life.

**11:42** This states the purpose of Jesus' prayer and miracle. Jesus often performed miracles to encourage the faith of the disciples, and in this case initiate faith in the Jews from Jerusalem.

Theologically Jesus again magnifies the Father's authority and priority in His works (cf. John 5:19,30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). This miracle reveals Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**11:43 "He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth'"** It has been said that if Jesus had not specifically mentioned Lazarus, the whole graveyard would have come forth!

**11:44** Bodies were prepared for burial by washing with water, then wrapping with strips of linen cloth interspersed with spices that helped with the odor. Corpses had to be buried within twenty-four hours because the Jews did not embalm their dead.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL PRACTICES**

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:45-46**

**<sup>45</sup>Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. <sup>46</sup>But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.**

**11:45 "Therefore many of the Jews. . .believed in Him"** This is the stated theme of the Gospel (cf. John 20:30-31). This phrase becomes a pattern (cf. John 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11,42). However, it must be restated that faith in John's Gospel has several levels and is not always saving faith (cf. John 2:23-25; 8:30ff). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

**11:46 "some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done"** It is amazing the degree of spiritual blindness in the face of such marvelous teaching and powerful miracles. However, Jesus divides all groups into those who come to trust Him and those who reject the truth about Him. Even a powerful miracle like this does not bring belief (cf. Luke 16:30-31).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:47-53**

**<sup>47</sup>Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let Him go on like this, all**

men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." <sup>49</sup>But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup>nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." <sup>51</sup>Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup>So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

**11:47 "the chief priests and the Pharisees, convened a council"** This refers to the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews in Jerusalem. It had 70 local members. The high priests were of the political, religious persuasion known as the Sadducees, who accepted only the writings of Moses and denied the resurrection. The Pharisees were the more popular, legalistic religious group that affirmed (1) the entire OT; (2) the ministry of angels; (3) and the afterlife. It is amazing that these two antagonistic groups would combine for any purpose. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES](#) at John 1:24. See Special Topic: The Sanhedrin at John 3:1.

▣ **"For this man is performing many signs"** The reference to Jesus as "this man" is a derogatory way of not mentioning His name. It is also amazing that in the presence of such great miracles, like the raising of Lazarus, that their preconceived bias had blinded their eyes so completely (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).

**11:48 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

▣ **"all men will believe in Him"** Jealousy as well as theological disagreement was the source of their distrust and fear of Jesus. The "all" may have referred even to the Samaritans and Gentiles (cf. John 10:16). There was also a political aspect to their fear (i.e., Roman control).

▣ **"the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation"** This is one of those ironic prophecies of John's Gospel, for this was fulfilled literally in a.d. 70 under the Roman general (later Emperor) Titus.

The political reality of Roman domination was an integral part of Jewish end-time (eschatological) hope. They believed that God would send a religious/military figure, like the Judges of the OT, to physically deliver them from Rome. Several Messianic pretenders started rebellions in Palestine to accomplish this very expectation.

Jesus claimed that His kingdom was not a temporal/political reign (cf. John 18:36), but a spiritual reign that would be consummated globally in the future (i.e., revelation). He claimed to fulfill the OT prophecies, but not in a literal, Jewish, nationalistic sense. For this He was rejected by most Jews of His day.

**11:49 "Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year"** The high priesthood was meant to be a lifelong position passed on to one's children (cf. Exodus 28), but after the Romans became the conquerors, it was sold to the highest bidder because of the lucrative trade available on the Mount of Olives and in the temple area. Caiaphas was high priest from a.d. 18-36 (son-in-law of Annas, High Priest from a.d. 6-15).

**11:50-52** This is another example of John's irony. Caiaphas preaches the gospel!

**11:50 "one man should die for the people"** The OT background for this is the Jewish view of "corporality." One person (good or bad) could affect the whole (i.e., Adam/Eve; Achan). This concept came to be an underpinning of the sacrificial system, especially the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), where one innocent animal bore the sin of the nation. This becomes the Messianic concept behind Isaiah 53. In the NT the Adam/Christ typology of Rom. 5:12-21 reflects this concept.

**11:51**

<b>NASB, REV,</b>	
<b>NET</b>	<b>"that Jesus was going to die"</b>
<b>NKJV, NIV,</b>	
<b>REB</b>	<b>"that Jesus would die"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"that Jesus was about to die"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"that Jesus was to die"</b>

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 326, has a good comment about the theological use of the verb *mellō* ("must," "to have to," "to be certain") when used of God's will for Christ's redemptive work.

1. Mark 10:32
2. Matthew 17:22
3. Luke 9:31,44; 24:21; Acts 26:23
4. John 7:39; 11:51; 12:33; 14:22; 18:32

It is also used of the necessity of Judas' betrayal

1. Luke 22:23
2. John 6:71; 12:4

Luke, in Acts, uses it for prophetic fulfillment (i.e., Acts 11:28; 24:15; 26:22). All of the redemptive events were in the hands of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29)!

**11:52 "He might also gather together into one the children of God"** This seems to be an editorial comment by John which could be parallel with 10:16. It could refer to

1. Jews living outside Palestine
2. half-Jews like the Samaritans
3. Gentiles

Option #3 seems best. Whichever it is, Jesus' death will bring a unity to "believing" humanity (cf. John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 10:16).

**11:53 "So from that day on they planned together to kill Him"** This is a recurrent theme in John (cf. John 5:18; 7:19; 8:59; 10:39; 11:8).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 11:54**

**<sup>54</sup>Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.**

**11:54 "Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publically among the Jews"** John 12 is Jesus' last attempt to deal with the religious leaders.

The term translated in John "publicly" (cf. John 7:26; 11:54; 18:20) usually means "boldly." See Special Topic at John 7:4.

▣ **"a city called Ephraim"** This town may have been located close to Bethel in Samaria (cf. 2 Chr. 13:19).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 11:55-57**

**<sup>55</sup>Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup>So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" <sup>57</sup>Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.**

**11:55-57** These verses link chapters 11 and 12 together.

**11:55 "to purify themselves"** This refers to ritual rites of cleansing in preparation for the Passover. There is still debate over how long Jesus taught, preached, and ministered in Palestine. The Synoptics are structured in such a way that one or two years is possible. However, John has several Passovers (an annual feast). There are certainly three mentioned (cf. John 2:13; 6:4; and 11:55) with at least a fourth implied in "a feast" in John 5:1.

**11:57** This is another editorial comment from John.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die?
2. Who was the miracle directed toward?
3. What is the difference between a resurrection and resuscitation?
4. Why were the Jewish leaders so appalled by the raising of Lazarus?

# JOHN 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Anointing at Bethany 12:1-8	The Anointing at Bethany 12:1-8	The Anointing at Bethany 12:1-8	Jesus is Anointed at Bethany 12:1-6 12:7-8	The Anointing at Bethany 12:1-8
The Plot Against Lazarus 12:9-11	The Plot to Kill Lazarus 12:9-11	12:9-11	The Plot Against Lazarus 12:9-11	12:9-11
The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem 12:12-19	The Triumphal Entry 12:12-19	Palm Sunday 12:12-19	The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem 12:12-13 12:14 12:15 12:16 12:17 12:18-19	The Messiah Enters Jerusalem 12:12-19
Some Greeks Seek Jesus 12:20-26	The Fruitful Grain of Wheat 12:20-26	Jesus' Public Ministry Concludes 12:20-26	Some Greeks Seek Jesus 12:20-21 12:22-26	Jesus Foretells His Death and Subsequent Glorification 12:20-28a
The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up 12:27-36a	Jesus Predicts His Death on the Cross 12:27-36	12:27-36a	Jesus Speaks About His Death 12:27-28a 12:28b 12:29 12:30-33 12:34 12:35-36a	12:28b 12:29-32 12:33-36a
The Unbelief of the Jews 12:36b-43	Who Has Believed Our Report?	12:36b-43	The Unbelief of the People 12:36b-38	12:36b



			Conclusion: The Unbelief of the Jews
	12:37-41		12:37-38
		12:39-40	12:39-40
		12:41	12:41
	Walk In the Light	12:42-43	12:42-50
Judgment by Jesus' Words	12:42-50	Judgment by Jesus' Words	
12:44-50	12:44-50	12:44-50	

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-50

- A. All four Gospels record the anointing of Jesus by a woman. Therefore, this event must have held significance to the Gospel writers. However, Mark 14:3-9, Matt. 26:6-13, and John 12:2-8 identifies her as Mary of Bethany, Lazarus' sister, while Luke 7:36-50 identifies her as sinful woman in Galilee.
- B. Chapter 12 closes the public ministry of Jesus (cf. John 12:29). He had tried over and over again to bring the Jewish leaders to faith. Chapter 11 was His attempt to bring the townspeople of Jerusalem to faith.
- C. There are five groups of people mentioned in this chapter.
  1. the crowd who witnessed Lazarus' resuscitation, John 12:17
  2. a crowd from Jerusalem, John 12:9
  3. the crowd of pilgrims coming to the Passover, John 12:12,18,29,34
  4. possibly a crowd of Gentiles, John 12:20
  5. possibly a crowd of Jewish leaders who believed in Him, John 12:42

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:1-8**

**<sup>1</sup>Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was**

servicing; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. <sup>3</sup>Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, <sup>5</sup>"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" <sup>6</sup>Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. <sup>7</sup>Jesus therefore said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup>For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

**12:1 "six days before the Passover"** This is a different chronological sequence from Matt. 26:2. It must be remembered that the primary focus of the Gospels is not chronology, but representative actions of Jesus that reflect truth about His person and work. The Gospels are not biographies but evangelistic tracts to target groups.

**12:2 "they"** This seems to refer to the townspeople of Bethany, who gave the supper for Jesus and His disciples in honor of raising His Lazarus. However, in Matt. 26:6, this takes place in the home of Simon the Leper.

**12:3 "pound"** This was a Latin term that referred to the Roman pound, which equaled 12 ozs. This expensive spice may have been Mary's wedding dowry. Many unmarried women wore this type of perfume in containers around their necks.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"a pound of very costly oil of spikenard"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"a whole pint of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard"</b>

There has been much conjecture over the adjective's meaning: (1) pure; (2) liquid; or (3) a place name. The perfume itself was from an aromatic-Himalayan root which was very expensive. See James M Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 379-380.

▣ **"anointed the feet of Jesus"** Other Gospel accounts of this same event (possibly Mary's thankfulness for raising Lazarus, John 12:2) speak of the woman anointing His head. Apparently Mary anointed His whole body, beginning with His head and going clear to His feet. The reason Jesus' feet were exposed was that He was reclining on His left elbow at a low table.

This is one of John's double entendres. This spice was used for preparing a body for burial (cf. John 19:40). Mary may have understood more of Jesus' message about His imminent death than the disciples did (cf. John 12:7). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#) at 11:2.

▣ **"and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume"** What a graphic eyewitness (editorial) detail. John clearly remembers the moment!

**12:4 "Judas Iscariot"** The term "Iscariot" has two possible etymologies: (1) a city of Judah (Kerioth cf. Jos. 15:25) or (2) the term for "assassin's knife." Of all the Gospel writers, John has the harshest statements about Judas (cf. John 12:6). See full note at John 6:70-71.

▣ **"betray"** This is another editorial comment. This term normally does not have this connotation. It literally means "to hand over" or "deliver up" in a judicial sense or to entrust something to another. See note at John 18:2.

**12:5 "Three hundred denarii"** A denarii was a day's wage for a soldier and a laborer, therefore, this

was almost a year's wage.

**12:6** This verse is another editorial comment. John, more than any other Gospel, condemns Judas.

**NASB, NKJV** "the money box"  
**NRSV** "the common purse"  
**TEV** "the money bag"  
**NJB** "the common fund"

This word means "a small box." It was originally used by musicians to carry their mouth pieces.

■ **"he used to pilfer what was put into it"** The Greek term is "carry." It is used in two different senses: (1) he carried the box but (2) also he carried off the contents of the box. This statement may have been included to show that Judas' concern for the poor in John 12:5 was really an excuse to steal for himself.

**12:7** This is a strange verse. It obviously links this act of generosity and devotion to a similar procedure done at one's burial (cf. John 19:40). This is another of John's prophetic statements.

**12:8 "For the poor you always have with you"** This is related to Deut. 15:4,11. It was not a disparaging remark concerning the poor but an emphasis on the Messiah's presence of Jesus (cf. John 12:35; 7:33; 9:4). The OT is unique among the literature of the Ancient Near East on the rights of and mandated care for the poor.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; <sup>11</sup>because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

**12:9 "The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there"** This is an unusual use of the term "Jews" in John. Usually it refers to the religious leaders in opposition to Jesus. However, in John 11:19, 45; 12:17, it seems to refer to the townspeople of Jerusalem who were friends of Lazarus and had come to his funeral.

**12:10 "the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also"** They wanted to remove the evidence! Their motives were fear (cf. John 11:48) and jealousy (cf. John 11:48; 12:11).

They must have thought Jesus' act of resuscitation was an isolated, rare event. The blindness and bias of these Jewish leaders reflect the darkness of fallen humanity.

**12:11** This relates back to 11:45. See Special Topic: John's Use of the Verb "Believe" at John 2:23.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:12-19**

<sup>12</sup>On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup>took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." <sup>14</sup>Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, <sup>15</sup>"Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." <sup>16</sup>These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. <sup>17</sup>So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. <sup>18</sup>For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that

**He had performed this sign. <sup>19</sup>So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."**

**12:12-19** This is John's version of Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38).

**12:12 "the large crowd who had come to the feast"** There were three required feast days for Jewish males (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; Leviticus 23; Deut. 16:16). The lifetime desire of the Jews who lived outside of Palestine (Diaspora) was to attend a feast in Jerusalem. During these set feasts, Jerusalem swelled from three to five times her normal population. This phrase refers to this vast number of curious pilgrims who heard of Jesus and wanted to see Him (cf. John 11:56).

**12:13 "the branches of palm trees"** This is an unusual Greek phrase for palm branches. Some believe that at one time palms grew on the slopes of the Mount of Olives (i.e., Josephus), while others believe they were imported from Jericho. They seem to have been a symbol for victory or triumph (cf. Rev. 7:9). They were used every year in the ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:40) and the Passover (tradition from Maccabean period).

■ **"began to shout"** This is an imperfect tense which represents (1) repeated action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action in past time.

■ **"Hosanna"** This term meant "save now" or "save please" (cf. Ps. 118:25-26). During the Passover ritual the recitation of the Hallel Psalms (cf. Ps. 113-118) occurred while the pilgrims were marching to the Temple. Many of these actions and phrases were repeated every year during the feast of Passover. But this particular year they found their ultimate meaning in Jesus! The crowd sensed this. The Pharisees recognized this.

■ **"He who comes in the name of the Lord"** This is exactly what Jesus has been claiming. He was the sent One! He represented YHWH.

**NASB** "even the King of Israel"  
**NKJV, NRSV,**  
**TEV, NJB** "the King of Israel"

This phrase was not part of the Psalm, but was added by the crowd. It seems to be a direct reference to Jesus as the Messianic King promised in 2 Sam. 7 (cf. John 1:49; 19:19).

**12:14 "a young donkey"** Donkeys were the royal military mount of Israel Kings (cf. 1 Kgs. 1:33,38,44). Only the king rode on his donkey, therefore, it was very important that Jesus rode on a donkey that had never been ridden before (cf. Mark 11:2).

**12:14-15 "as it is written"** This is a quote from Zech. 9:9. The colt of the donkey speaks not only of Messianic kingship but also of humility. Jesus did not come as the conquering military figure of Jewish expectation, but the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 riding on the colt of a donkey.

**12:16 "These things His disciples did not understand at the first"** This is another eyewitness, painful memory of John. It is a recurrent theme (cf. John 2:22; 10:6; 16:18; Mark 9:32; Luke 2:50; 9:45; 18:34). Only after the Ascension and Pentecost are their spiritual eyes fully opened.

■ **"but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered"** This was one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26 and 2:22).

This verse also shows that the Gospel writers structured their Gospels from personal experience of the resurrected Christ. The Synoptics present Jesus in historical development and hide his glory until the

climax of their presentations, but John writes his entire Gospel in light of the glorified Messiah. The Gospels reflect the later memories and faith community needs of these inspired men. Therefore, there are two historical settings (Jesus' and the Gospel writers'), both of which are inspired.

■ **"glorified"** See note at John 1:14.

**12:17** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8. See Contextual Insights, C.

**12:19 "the Pharisees said to one another"** This is another prophetic foreshadowing. It relates to (1) Jews, John 11:48; 12:11 and (2) Gentiles, John 12:20-23. It reflects two historical settings: Jesus' life and the early church.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:20-26**

<sup>20</sup>Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; <sup>21</sup>these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and *began* to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup>If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

**12:20 "some Greeks"** This was used in the sense of Gentiles, not specifically ethnic Greeks.

■ **"among those who were going up to worship at the feast"** The present tense implies they were in the habit of going to the Feast. They were either (1) God-fearers or (2) proselytes of the Gate. The first were regular worshippers at the synagogue and the second had officially become converts to the Jewish faith.

**12:21 "and began to ask him"** This is imperfect tense which means (1) they asked over and over again or (2) they began to ask. They wanted a private interview with Jesus. Apparently this was the last tick on the prophetic clock before Jesus' death (cf. John 12:23).

**12:22** Phillip (lover of horses) and Andrew (manly) are the only two Apostles to have Greek names. Perhaps this allowed these Greeks (i.e., Gentiles) to feel as if they could approach them.

**12:23 "The hour has come"** This is perfect tense. John often used the term "the hour" to refer to the crucifixion and resurrection as the climatic events of Jesus' mission (cf. John 12:27; 13:1, 32; 17:1). Jesus stated that He had come to the lost sheep of Israel (cf. Matt. 15:24). Now His message was reaching Gentiles!

■ **"the Son of Man"** This is an Aramaic phrase that simply meant "human being" (cf. Ps 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). However, it is used in Dan. 7:13 with the added connotation of Deity. This is Jesus' self-designated title that combines His two natures, human and divine (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

■ **"to be glorified"** Jesus' death is always referred to as "His glory." The term "glory" is used several times in this context (cf. John 12:28 [twice]; 32, and 33). It is often used to designate Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. John 13:1,32; 17:1). See note at John 1:14.

**12:24 "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies"** This is phenomenological language or descriptive language, things as they appear to the five senses. One seed can produce many seeds (cf. John 15:2,4,5,8,16; 1 Cor. 15:36). His death brought many to true life (cf. Mark 10:45).

■ **"if"** There is a series of third class conditional sentences in this context which means potential action (cf. John 12:24,26,32,47).

**12:25 "He who loves his life loses it"** This is a play on the Greek term *psychē*, which refers to the essence of a human's personality or life force (cf Matt. 10:39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24). Once someone trusts Christ, he is given new life. This new life is a gift from God for service, not for personal use. Believers are stewards of this new life. We are freed from slavery to sin to become servants of God (cf. Rom. 6:1-7:6).

The false shepherds of chapter 10 tried to "save" their lives by running. But Jesus lays down His life, so too, must believers do the same (cf. 2 Cor. 5:12-15; Gal. 2:20).

■ **"loses it"** This is a present active indicative. The term (see Special Topic at John 10:10) means "to destroy," another word with two connotations. This is the opposite of "eternal life." If one does not have faith in Christ, this is the only alternative. This destruction is not annihilation, but the loss of a personal relationship with God (which is the essence of Hell).

■ **"hates"** This is a Hebrew idiom of comparison. God must be priority (cf. Jacob's wives, Gen. 29:30,31; Deut. 21:15; Esau and Jacob, Mal. 1:2-3; Romans 10-13; one's family, Luke 14:26).

■ **"life"** This is the Greek term *zōē*. It is used consistently in John to refer to (1) spiritual life; (2) eternal life; (3) new age life; and (4) resurrection life. True life is a freedom from the tyranny of "self," which is the essence of the Fall.

**12:26 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

■ **"he must follow me"** This is a present active imperative which speaks of an ongoing relationship (cf. John 15). This is the neglected biblical issue of perseverance (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE](#) at John 8:31). This issue is often confused by the theological tension between a Sovereign God and human volition. However, it is best to see salvation as a covenantal experience. God always initiates (cf. John 6:44,65) and sets the agenda, but He also demands that mankind respond to His offer in repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21), both as an initial decision and a lifelong discipleship. Perseverance is evidence that we know Him (cf. Matt. 10:22; 13:20-21; Gal. 6:9; 1 John 2:19; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

Christian doctrine, being Bible-based, often comes in paradoxical, tension-filled pairs. Eastern literature is characterized by this figurative, contrasting thought patterns. Often modern western readers force the paradoxes into either/or choices when they are meant to be both/and truths.

To illustrate my comments, I have included a section from my Bible Interpretation Seminar entitled Biblical Paradoxes:

### **Biblical Paradoxes**

1. This insight has been the most helpful to me personally as one who loves and trusts the Bible as God's Word. In trying to take the Bible seriously it became obvious that different texts reveal truth in selected, not systematic ways. One inspired text cannot cancel or depreciate another inspired text! Truth comes in knowing all Scripture (all Scripture, not just some, is inspired, cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17), not quoting a single passage (proof-texting)!
2. Most biblical truths (eastern literature) are presented in dialectical or paradoxical pairs (remember the NT authors, except Luke, are Hebrew thinkers, writing in common Greek). Wisdom Literature and Poetic Literature present truth in parallel lines. The antithetical parallelism functions like the paradox. This synthetic parallelism functions like parallel passages. Somehow both are equally true! These paradoxes are painful to our cherished, simplistic traditions!
  - a. predestination versus human free will
  - b. security of the believer versus the need for perseverance

- c. original sin versus volitional sin
- d. Jesus as God versus Jesus as man
- e. Jesus as equal with the Father versus Jesus as subservient to the Father
- f. Bible as God's Word versus human authorship
- g. sinlessness (perfectionism, cf. Romans 6) versus sinning less
- h. initial instantaneous justification and sanctification versus progressive sanctification
- i. justification by faith (Romans 4) versus justification confirmed by works (cf. James 2:14-26)
- j. Christian freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33) versus Christian responsibility (cf. Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 4:1)
- k. God's transcendence versus His immanence
- l. God as ultimately unknowable versus knowable in Scripture and Christm. Paul's many metaphors for salvation
  - (1) adoption
  - (2) sanctification
  - (3) justification
  - (4) redemption
  - (5) glorification
  - (6) predestination
  - (7) reconciliation
- m. the kingdom of God as present versus future consummation
- n. repentance as a gift of God versus repentance as a mandated response for salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)
- o. the OT is permanent versus the OT has passed away and is null and void (cf. Matt. 5:17-19 vs. Matt. 5:21-48; Romans 7 vs. Galatians 3)
- p. believers are servants/slaves or children/heirs"

■ **"where I am, there shall My servant also be"** This theme is repeated in John 14:3; 17:24; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:17! Christianity is primarily a personal relationship with God! The goal is relational: His presence, His fellowship!

We were created for fellowship with God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Salvation is the restoration of the broken fellowship of the Garden of Eden. John emphasizes that this fellowship is restored now!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:27-36a**

**<sup>27</sup>"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup>So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. <sup>31</sup>Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup>And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." <sup>33</sup>But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. <sup>34</sup>The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" <sup>35</sup>So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. <sup>36</sup>While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."**

**12:27 "My soul has become troubled"** This is a perfect passive indicative. The agent (the Father, Satan, circumstances, etc.) is not expressed. It is a strong term used in several ways in the NT.

- a. Herod's fear (Matt. 2:3)

- b. the disciples' fear (Matt. 14:26)
- c. Jesus' unsettled anxiety (John 12:27; 13:21; also note Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34)
- d. the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:24)
- e. false teachers' disruption of the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:7)

This was John's way of relating Jesus' human struggle with the upcoming trauma of His crucifixion (cf. Mark 14:32ff). John does not record Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, but this is the same occasion.

- **"save Me from this hour"** There is much discussion about the exact meaning of this statement. Is this a prayer (i.e., Matt. 26:39)? Is this a surprised reaction at what should not be done (NET Bible)?
- **"for this purpose I came to this hour"** Jesus' life unfolded according to a divine plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28) which Jesus fully understood (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

**12:28 "glorify Your name"** The Father responds in John 12:28b. This term "glorify" is very fluid. It can refer to

1. pre-existent glory (cf. John 17:5)
2. Jesus' revelation of the Father (cf. John 17:4)
3. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (cf. John 17:1)

See note at John 1:14.

- **"a voice out of heaven"** The rabbis called this a *bath-kol*. Since the time of Malachi there had been no prophetic voice in Israel. If God's will was to be confirmed, it would be done by a voice from heaven. The Gospels record that God spoke three times during Jesus' life.
  1. at Jesus' baptism, Matt. 3:17
  2. at the transfiguration, Matt. 17:5
  3. here in this verse

**12:29 "So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying"** There are two interpretations of what happened: (1) it was thunder. This was used of God speaking in the OT (cf. 2 Sam. 22:14; Job 37:4; Ps. 29:3; 18:13; 104:7) or (2) an angel spoke to Him. This is similar to the confusion about Saul's experience in Acts 9:7; 22:9.

**12:30 "Jesus answered and said, 'This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes'"** This phrase is a Semitic comparison. This means it was not solely for them but primarily for them (cf. John 11:42).

**12:31 "Now judgement is upon this world"** This is a parallel construction with the following phrase ("the ruler of this world will be cast out"). The time when this occurred is not specified (see Special Topic following).

I surely agree with F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* (p. 198), that John 12:31 is another example of what C. H. Dodd called "realized eschatology." For John, Jesus has already brought both salvation to believers and judgment to unbelievers. In a sense this is similar to a grammatical form called "prophetic perfect." A future something is so certain that it is expressed as already occurring!

- **"the ruler of this world"** This refers to a personal evil force (cf. John 14:30; 16:11) known in Hebrew as "Satan" or "adversary" (cf. Job 1-2) or in Greek as "the devil" or "slanderer" (cf. Matt. 4:1,5,8,11; 13:39; 25:41; John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). These two names are synonymous in Matt. 4:1-11 and John 13:2,27. He is cast out of heaven so that he cannot continue to accuse/slander Jesus' followers.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

- **"will be cast out"** This is a future passive indicative. Scripture does not indicate the exact time of Satan's fall from heaven. Satan may be discussed in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 in a secondary sense. The



prophetic passages deal with the prideful kings of Babylon and Tyre. Their sinful arrogance reflects Satan's (cf. Isa. 14:12,15; Ezek. 28:16). However, Jesus said He saw Satan fall during the mission trip of the seventy (cf. Luke 10:18).

There is a development of Satan throughout the OT. Originally he was a servant angel, but through pride, became an enemy of God. The best discussion of this controversial subject is in A. B. Davidson's *Old Testament Theology* pp. 300-306.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WAR IN HEAVEN**

**12:32 "and I, if I am lifted up"** This is a third class conditional sentence which meant potential action.

This term can mean

1. lifted up (cf. John 3:14)
2. crucified (cf. John 8:28)
3. exalted (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31)
4. highly exalted (cf. Phil. 2:9)

It is this multiple connotation of terms (double entendre) that characterizes John's Gospel.

■ **"will draw all men to Me"** This may be an allusion to YHWH's covenant love for Israel in Jer. 31:3 which, of course, is the passage on "the new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). God woos people by His love for and actions toward them. This same metaphorical use of this term is in John 6:44 and explained in John 6:65.

Here the "all" is the universal invitation and promise of redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Isa. 2:2-4; John 1:9,12,29; 3:16; 4:42; 10:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14)!

There is a significant variant in this phrase. The "all" can be masculine, which would be translated "all men" and is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>75</sup> (VID),  $\kappa^2$ , B, L, and W, while the neuter, which would be translated "all things," is found in P<sup>66</sup> and  $\kappa$ . If it is the NEUTER it would speak of the cosmic redemption of Christ similar to Col. 1:16-17, which would probably reflect the Gnostic heresy so evident in 1 John. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the masculine a "B" rating (almost certain).

**12:33 "He said this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die"** This is yet another editorial comment by John. This is related to Deut. 21:23 where hanging on a tree was termed "cursed by God." This was why the religious leaders wanted Jesus crucified, not stoned. Jesus bore the curse of the Law for us (cf. Gal. 3:13).

**12:34 "The crowd then answered Him. . .the Christ is to remain forever"** This may be an allusion to Ps. 89:4,29,35-37. The OT expected only one coming of the Messiah and His establishing of a Palestinian reign of world peace (cf. Ps. 110:4; Isa. 9:7; Ezek. 37:25 and Dan. 7:14). For "forever" see Special Topic at John 6:58.

■ **"Son of Man"** The crowd (see Contextual Insights, C) must have heard Jesus teach/preach (possibly in John 12:23-24 for the title and John 12:30-32 for the verb "lift up") because they use His unique self-designation. This is the only place it is used by others. It was not a standard title or Messianic designation within Judaism.

**12:35 "Walk while you have the Light"** Jesus is urging His hearers to respond immediately to His words. His time on earth was limited. He was about to enter His last week on earth. His predestined hour had come (John 12:23).

In a sense this phrase (as so much in John) has a historical referent and an existential referent. What Jesus said is true for everyone who hears the gospel (i.e., the Parable of the Soils).

This is the metaphorical use of "walk" as lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). This is a present active imperative, which continues Jesus emphasis on belief as an ongoing relationship and discipleship, not just an initial decision (cf. John 12:44-46).

**12:36** This theme of Jesus as the light of the world was a major recurrent emphasis in John (cf. John 1:4,5,7,8,9; 3:19,20,21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9,10;12:35,36,46). Darkness and light were also contrasting

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:36b-43**

<sup>36b</sup>These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. <sup>37</sup>But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. <sup>38</sup>This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" <sup>39</sup>For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, <sup>40</sup>"He has blinded their eyes and He hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them."

<sup>41</sup>These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. <sup>42</sup>Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup>for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

**12:37** What a sad comment. Spiritual blindness is terrible (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). This verse characterizes the unpardonable sin (see Special Topic at John 5:21).

**12:38 "the word of Isaiah the prophet"** This is a quote from the suffering servant passage of Isa. 53:1.

**12:39-40** These are difficult verses. Does God harden people so that they cannot respond? I have inserted my comments from Isaiah 6:9-10 and Romans 11:7 (see [www.freebiblecommentary.mobi](http://www.freebiblecommentary.mobi)).

**Isaiah 6:9-10** As YHWH reveals His purpose for Isaiah's ministry, He also reveals to Isaiah the response his message will have on Judah.

1. go, Isaiah 6:9, BDB 229, KB , *Qal* imperative
2. tell, Isaiah 6:9, BDB 55, KB , *Qal* perfect
3. keep listening, Isaiah 6:9, *Qal* imperative and *Qal* infinitive absolute of BDB 1033, KB 1570
4. but do not perceive, Isaiah 6:9, BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* imperfect used in a jussive sense, cf. Isa. 1:3; 5:21; 10:13; 29:14
5. keep looking, *Qal* imperative and *Qal* infinitive absolute of BDB 906, KB 1157
6. but do not understand, Isaiah 6:9, BDB 393, KB 380, *Qal* imperfect used in a jussive sense
7. render the hearts of this people insensitive (lit. "fat"), Isaiah 6:10, BDB 1031, KB 1566, *Hiphil* imperative
8. their ears dull, Isaiah 6:10, BDB 457, KB 455, *Hiphil* imperative
9. and their eyes dim, Isaiah 6:10, BDB 1044, KB 1612, *Hiphil* imperative

These imperatives are followed by the consequences (three imperfects of previously used verbs, "see," "hear," and "perceive"). God knows (either by His foreknowledge or His hardening of their already wayward hearts/minds) that they will not respond and be saved.

1. lest they repent, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* perfect negated
2. lest they be healed, BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* perfect negated

Isaiah will preach and though some may respond, the vast majority of his people/his society will not (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28; Eph. 4:19) or cannot respond (cf. Isa. 29:9,10; Deut. 29:4; Matt. 13:13; Rom. 11:8)! Isaiah is not an evangelist here, but a prophet of covenant disobedience/consequences (cf. Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). His message of hope is for a future day, not his day!

**Romans 11:7 "the rest were hardened"** This is an aorist passive indicative (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14). The implication is that God hardened them (cf. Rom. 11:8-10). The agent of hardening is the evil one (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). "Hardened" (*pōroō*) is a medical term for callousness or blindness (cf. Rom. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18). This same term is used of the Apostles in Mark 6:52. It is a different Greek term from Rom. 9:18 (*sklērunō*) which is the opposite of mercy (cf. Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7).

This verse is very clear and is a summary of Rom. 11:1-6. Some who were chosen believed, some who were not chosen were hardened. However, this verse was not written in isolation, as a theological slogan. It was part of a sustained theological argument. There is a tension between the truth stated so clearly in this verse and the universal invitations of Romans 10. There is mystery here. But the solution is not to negate or minimize either of the horns of the dilemma, the paradoxical poles.

**12:39 "For this reason they could not believe"** This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative and a present active imperative. They were unable to continue in a faith relationship with Jesus. His miracles attracted them, but did not lead them into saving faith/trust in Jesus as the Messiah. In John "belief" has levels. All do not attain salvation. See notes at John 8:31-59.

▣ **"for Isaiah said again"** Isaiah 6:10; 43:8 refers to the hardness of the Jews' hearts concerning the message of God through Isaiah (cf. Jer 5:21; Ezek. 12:2; Deut. 29:2-4).

**12:40 "heart"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#)

**12:41 "These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory"** This is an assertion that OT prophets were informed about the Messiah (cf. Luke 24:27). See note on "glory" at John 1:14.

**12:42 "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him"** Jesus' message did bear fruit (cf. John 12:11; Acts 6:7). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

▣ **"they were not confessing Him"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION](#) at John 9:22-23.

▣ **"for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue"** (cf. John 9:22; 16:2).

**12:43** This implies that true faith can be weak and fearful, even undeclared! John's Gospel uses believe (*pisteuō*) in several senses, from initial attraction to emotional response to true saving faith.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 12:44-50**

**<sup>44</sup>And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. <sup>45</sup>He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. <sup>46</sup>I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. <sup>47</sup>If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup>He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. <sup>49</sup>For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup>I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.**

**12:44 "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me"** The goal of faith is ultimately in the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:25-27). This is a recurrent theme (cf. Matt. 10:40; John 5:24). To know the Son is to know the Father (cf. 1 John 5:10-12).

**12:45** What is God like? To see Jesus is to see God (cf. John 14:7-10)!

**12:46** The world is in darkness since Genesis 3 (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12; 8:21; Ps. 14:3; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:9-23).

**12:47 "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action. Continuing obedience is a sign in our continuing personal relationship by faith! Assurance (see Special Topic at 1 John 5:13) is based on a changed and changing life of obedience and perseverance (see Special Topic at John 8:31, cf. the books of James and 1 John).

**12:47-48 "for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world"** Jesus came primarily to redeem the world, but the very fact of His coming forces humans to decide. If they reject Him, they judge themselves (see Special Topic at John 8:31, cf. John 3:17-21).

**12:49-50** Jesus spoke in God's authority, not His own.

**12:50**

**NASB, NKJV "His commandment is eternal life"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NET "his command brings eternal life"**

**NJB "his commands mean eternal life"**

**REB "his commands are eternal life"**

**NIV "his command leads to eternal life"**

**Net (footnote) "his commandment results in eternal life"**

The first option is the literal Greek text. The others are trying to interpret its meaning.

The NASB has John 6:68 as a parallel passage, while Michael Magill's *NT TransLine* has John 17:8. The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 451) has John 10:18 as the parallel. Obviously the phrase is ambiguous.

In John there is a fluctuation between the singular and PLURAL of "commandment," with no exegetical significance.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF "COMMANDMENT" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Mary, Lazarus' sister, anoint Jesus' feet?
2. Why are Matthew, Mark and John slightly different in their accounts of this incident?
3. What was the significance of the crowd meeting Jesus with palm branches and the quote from Psalm 118?
4. Why was Jesus so moved by the Greeks' request to speak with Him?
5. Why was Jesus' soul so deeply troubled? (cf. John 12:27)
6. Explain why John uses "believe" in several senses.

# JOHN 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
Washing the Disciples' Feet	The Master Becomes a Servant	The Last Supper	Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet	The Washing of Feet
13:1-11	13:1-11	13:1-11	13:1 13:2-6 13:7 13:8a 13:8b 13:9	13:1 13:2-5 13:6-11
	We Also Must Serve		13:10-11	
13:12-20	13:12-30	13:12-20	13:12-17 13:18-20	13:12-16 13:17-20
Jesus Foretells His Betrayal			Jesus Predicts His Betrayal	The Treachery of Judas Foretold
13:21-30		13:21-30	13:21 13:22-24 13:25 13:26-29 13:30	13:21-30
The New Commandment	The New Commandment		The New Commandment	Farewell Discourses
13:31-35	13:31-35	13:31-35	13:31-35	13:31-35
Peter's Denial Foretold	Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial		Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial	
13:36-38	13:36-38	13:36-38	13:36a 13:36b 13:37 13:38	13:36-38

### READING CYCLE THREE

*FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 13:1-38

- A. John's Gospel concludes Jesus' signs with chapter 12. Chapter 13 starts the final passion week.
- B. The NASB Study Bible's footnote makes the interesting comment "the Greek noun *agapē* ('love') and the verb *agapaō* ('love') occur only eight times in chs. 1-12 but 31 times in chs. 13-17."
- C. John does not record the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) as do the Synoptics. He does give the only account of the dialogue in the Upper Room that night (chapters 13-17, which is a significant percentage of John's Gospel. It, therefore, must reveal Jesus' person and work in powerful new ways). Some see this omission as a deliberate attempt to downplay the early church's growing emphasis of sacramentalism. John never elaborates on Jesus' baptism or the Lord's Supper.
- D. The historical context of John 13 can be seen in Luke 22:24. The disciples were still arguing over who was the greatest.
- E. The physical setting of chapters 13-17 is an upper room in Jerusalem (or possibly chpts. 15-17 on the way to Gethsemane, cf. John 14:31), possibly John Mark's home, the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas.
- F. There seem to be two distinct purposes in Jesus' act of footwashing.
  1. vv. 6-11 foreshadow His work on our behalf on the cross.
  2. vv. 12-20 are an object lesson concerning humility (in light of Luke 22:24).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 13:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him, <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup>got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. <sup>5</sup>Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. <sup>6</sup>So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." <sup>8</sup>Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered

him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, *then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.*" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup>For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

**13:1 "before the Feast of the Passover"** John and the Synoptic Gospels disagree over whether this was the day before the Passover meal or the Passover meal itself. They both put the meal on Thursday and the crucifixion on Friday (cf. John 19:31; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:54). This Passover meal commemorated Israel's release from Egypt (cf. Exod. 12). John asserts that it was the day before the regular Passover meal (cf. John 18:28; 19:14,31,42).

It is possible that the Essene community used a different calendar (i.e., the solar calendar from the books of Jubilees and Enoch, as a way to show their rejection of the current priesthood), which put the Passover a day earlier.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary summarizes current scholarship (p. 451) and assumes that John's "day before" is correct and that the Synoptic Gospels assert the meal's Passover symbolism. We must always be reminded that the Gospels are not western, cause and effect, chronological histories. History is written in many ways, not right or wrong, not true or false. History is an explanation of the past to serve current issues/needs/perspectives. The real issue is who/why wrote the history. The best discussion of the genre of historical narrative and Gospels is Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 89-126.

■ **"Jesus knowing that His hour had come"** "Knowing" is a perfect active participle (like John 13:3). Jesus understood His unique relationship to the Father at least from the age of twelve (Luke 2:41-51). The coming of Greeks to see Him in John 12:20-23 showed Jesus that His hour of death and glorification had come (cf. John 2:4; 7:6,8,30; 8:20;12:23,27; 17:1).

■ **"that He would depart out of this world to the Father"** The Gospel of John continues to emphasize a vertical dualism, above vs. below (cf. John 13:3). Jesus was sent (cf. John 8:42) by the Father and now He will return. The Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus as teaching a horizontal dualism of the two Jewish ages, the already and not-yet tension of the Kingdom of God.

There are many questions about the Gospels that modern readers must address, but when all is said and done these sacred writings reveal a consistent biblical world-view.

1. there is one holy God
2. His special creation, mankind, has fallen into sin and rebellion
3. God has sent an incarnate Redeemer (i.e., Messiah)
4. mankind must respond by faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance
5. there is a personal force of evil in opposition to God and His will
6. all conscious creation will give an account of their lives to God

The verb "depart" (*metabainō*) has the connotation in John's writings of the transition from fallen physical existence (i.e., the old age of sin and rebellion) into the new age of the Spirit and eternal life (cf. John 5:24; 13:1; 1 John 3:14; except for its use in John 7:3)

■ **"having loved His own"** This Greek phrase was used in the Egyptian papyri (Moulton, Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*) for "near kin" (cf. Luke 8:19-21).

■ **"who were in the world"** John uses the term world (*kosmos*) in several different senses.

1. this planet (cf. John 1:10; 11:9; 16:21; 17:5,11,24; 21:25)
2. human kind (cf. John 3:16; 7:4; 11:27; 12:19; 14:22; 18:20,37)
3. rebellious mankind (cf. John 1:10,29; 3:16-21; 4:42; 6:33; 7:7; 9:39; 12:31; 15:18; 17:25)

See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* at John 14:17.

■ **"He loved them to the end"** This is the Greek word "*telos*," which means an accomplished purpose. This refers to Jesus' work of redemption for humanity on the cross. A form of this same word was Jesus' last word from the cross (cf. John 19:30), "It is finished," which we learn from the Egyptian papyri had the connotation of "paid in full"!

**13:2 "During supper"** There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point. The variant involves just one letter in a Greek word.

1. *ginomenou*, present participle (i.e., during the dinner), MSS  $\kappa$ , B, L, W

2. *genomenou*, aorist participle (i.e., after the dinner), MSS P<sup>66</sup>,  $\kappa$ <sup>2</sup>, A, D

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 a "B" rating (almost certain).

This possibly means

1. after the supper

2. after the first Cup of Blessing, when the procedure required the washing of hands

3. after the third Cup of Blessing

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PASSOVER (ORDER OF SERVICE)**

■ **"the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot"** This is a perfect active participle. Jesus knew about Judas from the beginning (cf. John 6:70). The evil one (see Special Topic at John 12:31) had been tempting Judas for a long time, but in John 13:27 the devil took full control of him. See Special Topic: Heart at John 12:40. See full note on Judas at John 18:2.

**13:3 "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands"** This is a perfect active participle, like John 13:1, followed by an aorist active indicative. This is one of Jesus' astonishing statements on His self-understanding and authority (cf. John 3:35; 17:2; Matt. 28:18). The aorist tense is significant. The Father gave Jesus "all things" before the crucifixion. They were not given solely as a reward for His obedience, but because of Who He was! He knew who He was and washed the feet of those who were arguing over which of them was greatest!

■ **"He had come forth from God"** This is the second of three items mentioned in John 13:3 that Jesus knew

1. the Father had given all things into His hands

2. He had come forth from God

3. He was going back to God (cf. John 7:33; 14:12,28; 16:5,10,17,28; 20:17)

The last two are part of the above vs. below dualism so common in John.

Item #2 is a unique phrase in John (cf. John 8:42; 13:3; 16:28,30; 17:8). It has both the inference of origin and place (i.e., Deity from heaven).

**13:4 "got up from supper"** Remember that they were reclining on their left elbows with their feet behind them, not sitting in chairs.

■ **"laid aside His garments"** The plural refers to Jesus' outer garment (cf. John 19:23). It is interesting that this same verb is used in John 10:11,15,17,18 for Jesus' laying down His life (cf. John 13:37). This may be another of John's double entendres. It seems likely that the footwashing was more than just an object lesson on humility (cf. John 13:6-10).

**13:5 "wash the disciples' feet"** This Greek word was used for "washing only part of the body." The word in John 13:10 was used for an entire bath. Footwashing was the duty of a slave. Even rabbis did not expect this of their disciples. Jesus, knowing His own Deity, was willing to wash the feet of these jealous and ambitious disciples (even Judas)!

**13:6** Peter's question was a rhetorical way of refusing Jesus' gesture. Peter often thought he knew what Jesus should and should not do (cf. Matt. 16:22).



**13:7** The Apostles, who lived with Jesus, did not always understand His actions and teachings (cf. John 2:22; 10:6; 12:16; 14:26; 16:18). This misunderstanding is a way of expressing the vertical dualism.

**13:8 "Never shall You wash my feet"** This is a strong double negative which meant "never no never under any circumstances."

▣ **"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me"** This is a third class conditional sentence. This verse implies that more was happening here than a mere practical object lesson. Verses 6-10 seem to relate to Jesus' work on the cross in forgiving sin.

The second phrase may reflect an OT idiom related to inheritance (cf. Deut. 12:12; 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kgs. 12:16). This is a very strong idiom of exclusion.

**13:9** The Greek negative particle "not" (mē) indicates an implied imperative, "wash."

**13:10 "He who has bathed"** Jesus is speaking metaphorically of redemption. Peter has been washed (saved, cf. John 15:3; Titus 3:5), but needs to continue to repent (cf. 1 John 1:9) to maintain intimate fellowship.

The other contextual possibility is that Jesus is speaking of Judas' betrayal (cf. John 13:11 & 18). So the metaphor of bathing refers either to (1) Peter's body or (2) the Apostolic group.

▣ **"you are clean, but not all of you"** The "you" is plural, referring to the inner circle of disciples, except for Judas (cf. John 13:11,18; 6:70).

"Clean" refers to Jesus' message which they have embraced (cf. John 15:3). They are "clean" because they have believed/trusted/faithed/received the One who is clean, Jesus.

For the phrase "not all of you," see Special Topic: Apostasy at John 6:64.

**13:11** The TEV and NET Bibles put this verse in parenthesis, interpreting it as one of many editorial comments of the author.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 13:12-20**

**<sup>12</sup>So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. <sup>16</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. <sup>18</sup>I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' <sup>19</sup>From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*. <sup>20</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."**

**13:12-20** In contrast to John 13:6-10, here Jesus describes His act as an example of humility. The Apostles were arguing over who was greatest (cf. Luke 22:24). In this context Jesus performs an act of a slave and then explains what it means and how to apply it.

**13:14 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purposes.

▣ **"the Lord and the Teacher"** Notice the definite article in John 13:13 and 14. Also notice the titles are reversed. He is the One who speaks with authority. He reveals the Father and expects obedience and

allegiance! What He does they must mimic (John 13:15).

**13:14-15 "you also ought to wash one another's feet"** Does this statement mean that this act of humility is meant to be a third church ordinance? Most Christian groups have said, no, because

1. there is never a record of it being done by any church in Acts
2. it is never advocated in the NT letters
3. it is never specifically said to be an ongoing ordinance as are baptism (cf. Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34)

This is not meant to imply that this might not be an important worship event.

The "example" that Jesus gave them was not just humility, but sacrificial service (cf. John 15:12-13). 1 John 3:16 states it well! Jesus loves to the end (cf. John 13:1), they must love to the uttermost also (i.e., a life of self-sacrifice, the reversal of the Fall).

**13:16 "Truly, truly I say to you"** This is literally "Amen, amen" (as is John 13:20). This is a form of the OT term for "faith" (cf. Hab. 2:4). Jesus was the only one (in any Greek literature) to ever use it in this opening position. It usually was said last to (1) agree with or (2) confirm a statement or act. When used at the beginning of a sentence and doubled, it is an authoritative, attention-getting device. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN](#) at John 1:51.

■ **"a slave is not greater than his master"** This is an introductory phrase to communicate truths.

1. John 13:16, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him
2. John 15:20
  - a. if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you
  - b. if they kept My word, they will keep yours also
3. Luke 6:40 (similar), but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher (cf. Matt. 10:24)
4. Luke 22:27 (similar), but I am among you as one who serves

**13:17 "If you know these things you are blessed if you do them"** The first "if" is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective. The second "if" in this verse is a third class conditional which means potential action. If we know, we should do (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49; Rom. 2:13; James 1:22-25; 4:11)! Knowledge is not the goal, but Christlike living. This reflects the Hebrew verb *shema*, "hear so as to do" (cf. Deut. 6:4).

**13:18 "the Scriptures may be fulfilled"** This refers to Judas. This is the mystery of the intersection of predestination and human free will.

Jesus, and His disciples, believed in the veracity of Scripture! When it spoke it was to be trusted (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). Several times John makes the comment "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled" (cf. John 12:14; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24,36). Often the OT text is not fully understood until an event in the life of Christ (i.e., typology, i.e., Hosea 11:1) or the NT event is a multiple fulfillment (i.e., Isa. 7:14 or Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

■ **"HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME"** This is a quote from Psalm 41:9. The Oriental custom of eating together as a sign of friendship and covenant heightens Judas' offense. In the Near East to show the bottom of one's foot to another was a sign of contempt.

**3:19** This verse shows the purpose of Jesus' miracle signs and predictions (cf. John 20:31). In John, belief is a growing and continuing experience. Jesus is continually developing the Apostles' trust/faith/belief. See Special Topic at John 9:7.

Jesus develops their faith by

1. His words
2. His deeds

### 3. His foreknowledge

Jesus brought a radical "new" way to be right with God. It cut across these Jewish men's traditions and beliefs.

1. He, not Moses, was the focus
2. grace, not performance

▣ **"that I am He"** This is a reference to God's name, "YHWH," which is from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. "I Am" of Exod. 3:14). Jesus is clearly claiming to be the promised Messiah with divine connotations here (cf. John 4:26; 8:24,28,58; 13:19 and 18:5,6,8; notice Matt. 24:5 and Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8).

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at John 6:20.

**13:20** Usually John uses the term "believe" (*pisteuō*), "believe in" (*pisteuō eis*) or "believe that" (*pisteuō hoti*) to designate Christians, (see Special Topic: John's Use of "Believe" at John 2:23), but he also uses other terms such as "receive" or "welcome" (cf. John 1:12; 5:43; 13:20). The gospel is both the welcoming of a person and the accepting of biblical truths about that person, as well as living a life emulating that person.

▣ **"he who receives whomever I send receives Me"** What a powerful statement of the delegated authority of Jesus' disciples. It can function on several levels.

1. the mission trips of the Twelve (Matt. 10:40) and Seventy (Luke 10:16)
2. the witness of the church (cf. John 17:20)

The message about Jesus has life-changing power unrelated to who proclaims it. The authority is in the message (i.e., gospel), not the earthly message.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 13:21-30**

**<sup>21</sup>When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." <sup>22</sup>The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. <sup>23</sup>There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. <sup>24</sup>So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." <sup>25</sup>He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" <sup>26</sup>Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup>After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." <sup>28</sup>Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. <sup>29</sup>For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.**

**13:21 "He became troubled in spirit"** Judas' betrayal really upset Jesus (the same word used of Jesus in John 12:27). Jesus chose Judas because of his spiritual potential, but it never came to fruition (cf. John 13:18).

▣ **"Truly, truly"** See note at John 1:51.

**13:22** This is a surprising verse. The inner-circle disciples were afraid that a predetermined plan might make them the betrayer (cf. Mark 14:19). This is the problem with determinism. God's actions do not violate human free will, but accentuates and finalizes its consequences!

**13:23 "whom Jesus loved"** This seems to refer to John himself (cf. John 13:23,25; 19:26-27,34-35;

20:2-5,8; 21:7,20-24). Chapter 19, John 13:26 confirms this. John's name never appears in this Gospel. Did Jesus have favorites? Well, He did have an inner circle (Peter, James, and John) and a special family (Lazarus, Mary, Martha).

**13:25** This context reflects the typical eating arrangements of the first century Palestine. The disciples would be lying at a low, horseshoe shaped table, leaning on their left elbows with their feet behind them, eating with their right hands. John was on Jesus' right, Judas on His left (the place of honor). The reason for the seating order is not given in Scripture. John leaned back and asked Jesus a question.

**13:26 "the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him"** This was a sign of honor (cf. Ruth 2:14). Judas was reclining on Jesus' left side, which was also the place of honor. Jesus was still trying to reach Judas!

The morsel was a dish of bitter herbs and sauce (see special Topic at John 13:2). The Mark parallel (14:20) states "with me." This is an eyewitness detail confusion.

■ **"Iscariot"** See Special Topic below and the notes at John 6:71 and 18:2.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ISCARIOT**

**13:27 "Satan then entered into him"** This is the only use of the term "Satan" in John's Gospel. It means "adversary" in Hebrew (cf. Luke 22:3 and John 13:2). See Special Topic at John 12:31. Is Judas not responsible because Satan entered into him? There is a tension in the Bible between the actions of the spiritual realm (God hardening Pharaoh's heart) and human responsibility in the physical realm. Humans are surely not as free in their choices as they think. All of us are historically, experientially, and genetically conditioned. Added to these physical determiners is the spiritual realm (God, Spirit, angels, Satan, and demons). This is the mystery! However, humans are not robots; we are responsible for our actions, choices, and their consequences. Judas acted! He did not act alone! But he is morally responsible for his actions. Judas' betrayal was predicted (John 13:18). Satan was the instigator (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at John 12:31). It is tragic that Judas never fully came "to know" or trust Jesus.

**13:29 "Judas had the money box"** Judas was in charge of the group's money (cf. John 12:6). See full note at John 18:2.

**13:30 "it was night"** Is this a time element or a spiritual evaluation? John often uses these ambiguous phrases which can be understood in several ways (i.e., Nicodemus, cf. John 3:2; 19:39).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 13:31-35**

**<sup>31</sup>Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; <sup>32</sup>if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. <sup>33</sup>Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' <sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

**13:31-38** These verses form part of a larger context of a series of questions by the disciples (cf. John 13:36; 14:5,8,22; 16:17-19) asked in the dialogue of the Upper Room the night of the Lord's Supper. It is obvious that Jesus' statements about going away caused the Apostles to have many questions based on their misunderstanding of Jesus' words.

1. Peter (John 13:36)
2. Thomas (John 14:5)
3. Philip (John 14:8)

4. Judas (not Iscariot) (John 14:22)
5. some of His disciples (John 16:17-19)

**13:31 "the Son of Man"** This was Jesus' chosen self-designation. The background is from Ezek. 2:1 and Dan. 7:13. It implies human and divine characteristics. Jesus used it because the term was unused in rabbinical Judaism, therefore, it had no nationalistic or militaristic implications and it combined His two natures (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

**13:32** There is a Greek manuscript variant in this verse. The longer text is found in NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, and NJB. It is supported by the manuscripts  $\kappa^c$ , A, C<sup>2</sup>, K, and the Textus Receptus. It ("if God is glorified in him") is left out in the MSS P<sup>66</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , B, C<sup>\*</sup>, D, L, W, and X. These seem to be the better set of manuscripts. But it is possible that scribes were confused by the parallelism and just omitted the first phrase.

■ **"glorified"** The term is used four or five times in John 13:31 and 32-two or three times in the aorist tense and twice in the future tense. It refers to God's plan of redemption through Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. John 7:39; 12:16,23; 17:1,5). Here it refers to the upcoming events in Jesus' life. They are so certain to occur that they are expressed as if they were past events (aorists). See note at John 1:14.

**13:33 "Little children"** John, writing as an old man from the city or area of Ephesus, uses this same title to address his hearers/readers in 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21. Here, Jesus' metaphor is another way to identify Him with the Father. He is father, brother, savior, friend, and Lord. Or to put it another way, He is both transcendent Deity and immanent companion.

■ **"I am with you only a little while longer. . .and as I said to the Jews"** Jesus had said this to the Jewish leaders several months earlier (cf. John 7:33); now He says it to His Apostles (cf. John 12:35; 14:19; 16:16-19). Therefore, it is obvious that the time element is somewhat ambiguous.

■ **"Where I am going, you cannot come"** The Jewish leaders could not come at all (cf. John 7:34,36; 8:21). The disciples would not be with Him until their deaths. Death, or the rapture, will unite His followers with Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

**13:34 "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another"** "To love one another" was not a new commandment (cf. Lev. 19:18; for "commandment" see Special Topic at John 12:50). What was new was that believers were to love each other as Jesus loved them (cf. John 15:12,17; 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11,16,23; 4:7-8,10-12,19-20; 2 John 5).

The gospel is a person to be welcomed, a body of truths to be believed, and a life to be lived (cf. John 14:15,21,23; 15:10,12; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 5,6; Luke 6:46). The gospel is received, believed, and lived out! It is lived out in love or it is not lived out!

I like Bruce Corley's statement in his article "Biblical Theology of the New Testament" in the hermeneutics book *Foundations For Biblical Interpretation*: "Christ's people are characterized by the ethic of love, whereby the 'is-ness' of grace is linked to the 'ought-ness' of love through the work of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:6,25; 6:2; James 3:17-18; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7)" (p. 562).

**13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples"** Love is the one characteristic that Satan cannot counterfeit. Believers are to be characterized by love (cf. 1 John 3:14; 4:7-21).

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. Our actions toward other Christians confirm our relationship with Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:9-11; 4:20-21).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 13:36-38**

<sup>36</sup>Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go,

**you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." <sup>37</sup>Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." <sup>38</sup>Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.**

**13:36 "Simon Peter said to Him"** This is the first in a series of questions by the disciples about Jesus' statements in John 13:31-35 (cf. John 13:36; 14:5,8,22; 16:17-19). I am so glad these disciples asked these questions and that John remembered them and recorded them!

**13:37 "I will lay down my life for you"** Peter meant this! But it does show how weak fallen mankind is and how committed our Lord, who did exactly this, is.

**13:38 "Truly, truly"** See note at John 1:51.

▣ **"a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times"** This must have been a Roman rooster. Jews did not allow animals in the city because it was holy ground. This is why most wealthy people had gardens (which needed fertilizer) outside the city walls on the Mt. of Olives. The Garden of Gethsemane was one such garden.

Jesus is using prediction to encourage belief in Himself. Even something as negative as this reveals His knowledge and control of future events (cf. John 18:17-18, 25-27; Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does John not record the actual ritual Lord's Supper?
2. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? Should we wash one another's feet?
3. Why did Jesus choose Judas to be His disciple?
4. How can one really know that he is a Christian?

# JOHN 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus, the Way to the Father	The Way, the Truth, and the Life	The Believers' Relation to the Glorified Christ	Jesus, the Way to the Father	Farewell Discourses (13:31-14:31)
14:1-14	14:1-6	14:1-7	14:1-4	14:1-4
			14:5	14:5-7
	The Father Revealed		14:6-7	
	14:7-11			
		14:8-14	14:8	14:8-21
	The Answered Prayer		14:9-14	
	14:12-14			
The Promise of the Spirit	Jesus Promises Another Helper		The Promise of the Holy Spirit	
14:15-24	14:15-18	14:15-17	14:15-17	
	Indwelling of the Father and the Son	14:18-24	14:18-20	
	14:19-24			
			14:21	
			14:22	14:22-31
	The Gift of His Peace		14:23-24	
14:25-31	14:25-31	14:25-31	14:25-26	
			14:27-31a	
			14:31b	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## BACKGROUND TO JOHN 14:1-31

- A. There should be no chapter division from John 13 through 17 because this is one literary unit, the dialogue of the Upper Room the night of the Lord's Supper. It is obvious that Jesus' statements about going away caused the disciples to have many questions. This context is built on a series of these questions based on the Apostles' misunderstanding of Jesus' words
1. Peter (John 13:36)
  2. Thomas (John 14:5)
  3. Philip (John 14:8)
  4. Judas (not Iscariot) (John 14:22)
  5. some of His disciples (John 16:17-19)
- Remember, John uses dialogue to communicate truth!
- B. These questions still help believers
1. They show that even the Apostles who were physically with Jesus did not always understand Him.
  2. Some of Jesus' most precious and profound words are said in response to these honest questions of misunderstanding.
- C. Chapter 14 begins Jesus' discussion of the coming "helper."
1. Jesus' references to the Holy Spirit in this Upper Room discourse are directly related (and limited) to the disciples' fear and anxiety related to Jesus' leaving (cf. John 13:33,36). Michael Magill, *New Testament TransLine* (p. 355) has an insightful outline of Jesus' contextual answers to these fears.
    - a. "you will be with Me some day where I am going," John 14:1-11
    - b. "It will be good for you that I go," John 14:12-17
    - c. "I will come to you where you are and reveal Myself to you," John 14:18-26
    - d. "I leave you my peace now," John 14:27-31
  2. This discussion of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is limited in scope. There are so many crucial aspects of His ministry not discussed at all in this context.
  3. The Spirit's task as
    - a. revealer of truth and
    - b. personal comforter are emphasized

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 14:1-7

<sup>1</sup>"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way where I am going." <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

**14:1 "Do not let"** This is a present passive imperative with negative particle which usually means to stop



an act already in process. "Stop letting your hearts be troubled." Jesus' comments about leaving had caused great anxiety.

- ▣ **"your heart"** Notice the plural. Jesus was speaking to all eleven. The Hebraic usage of "heart" implies the entire person: mind, will, and emotions (cf. Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37). See Special Topic at John 12:40.
- ▣ **"believe in God; believe also in Me"** These are either two present active imperatives (NASB, REB) or two present active indicatives or a combination of both (NKJV, NJB and NET Bible say the first is indicative and the second imperative). Belief is ongoing and habitual. The grammatically balanced structure of this verse shows that Jesus is claiming equality with God. Also remember that these were Jews who were committed to monotheism (cf. Deut. 6:4-6) and yet recognized the implications of Jesus' statement (see Special Topic: Trinity at John 14:26). It is one thing to believe in a Supreme Being and it is quite another to be a Christian. This phrase focuses not on a doctrinal creed, but on the person of Jesus Christ.

**14:2 "In my Father's house"** "House" is used in the OT of the Tabernacle or the Temple (cf. 2 Samuel 7), however, in this context it obviously implies the family quarters of God in heaven or dwelling with Him in His temple (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-6).

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"dwelling places"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"mansions"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"rooms"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"many places"</b>

The KJV translation, "mansions," is deceiving. The Greek term meant "permanent dwelling places" (cf. John 14:23) without the idea of lavishness. The imagery is that believers shall all have their own rooms in the Father's home (cf. TEV, NJB), much like a boarding house where all eat together daily.

It is also interesting that this is from the same Greek root as "abide," which is such a key concept (cf. chap. 15) in John. Our abode with the Father consummates with our abiding in the Son.

- ▣ **"if"** This is a partial second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." There are many rooms available. This phrase is difficult to translate.

<b>NASB, REB,</b>	
<b>NIV</b>	<b>"if it were not so, I would have told you"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"if <i>it were</i> not so, I would have told you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I would not tell you this if it were not so"</b>
<b>NJB, NET</b>	<b>"otherwise I would have told you"</b>
<b>Young's literal</b>	
<b>translation</b>	<b>"and if not, I would have told you"</b>
<b>New Berkley</b>	
<b>Version</b>	<b>"If this were not so, I would have told you"</b>
<b>Williams</b>	
<b>Translation</b>	<b>"if there were not, I would have told you"</b>

- ▣ **"I go to prepare a place for you"** This does not mean to imply that heaven, in a physical sense, was not prepared before this, but that Jesus' life, teachings, and death allows sinful mankind to approach and dwell with a holy God. Jesus goes before believers as their guide and forerunner (cf. Heb. 6:20).

**14:3 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. Jesus has told them He is returning to the Father soon (i.e., John 7:33; 16:5,10,17,28) and He will prepare a place for them.

The *Help for Translators* from United Bible Societies on John by Newman and Wider says that this clause should be understood in a temporal sense of "after I go" or "when I go" or "since I go" (p. 456).

■ **"I will come again and receive you to Myself"** This refers to the Second Coming or death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). This face-to-face fellowship with Jesus reflects Jesus' and the Father's fellowship (cf. John 1:1,2). Christians will participate in the intimacy between Jesus and the Father (John 14:23; 17:1ff).

The verb used here, receive (*paralambanō*), implies "welcome a person." Heaven is personal fellowship with God. This is different from John 1:12 (*lambanō*). It is difficult to ascertain the exact semantic overlapping of these two terms; often they are synonymous.

■ **"where I am, there you may be also"** Heaven is where Jesus is (cf. John 17:24)! Heaven is really face-to-face fellowship with the Triune God! The NT is unclear exactly when the full fellowship occurs.

1. at death, 2 Cor. 5:8

2. at the Second Coming, 1 Thess. 4:13-18

The Bible is surprisingly silent about afterlife. A good brief book is William Hendriksen's, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEAD, WHERE ARE THEY? (SHEOL/HADES, GEHENNA, TARTARUS)**

**14:4 "you know the way"** Jesus' statement causes Thomas to express his doubt about knowing the way. Jesus' answer is expressed in three terms often used in the OT.

**14:6 "I am the way"** In the OT, biblical faith was spoken of as a lifestyle path (cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 27:11; Isa. 35:8). The title of the early church was "the Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14,22). Jesus was emphasizing that He was and is the only way to God. This is the theological essence of John's Gospel! Lifestyle good works are an evidence of personal faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10), not a means of righteousness. See note at John 8:12.

■ **"the truth"** The term "truth" in Greek philosophy had the connotation of "truth" versus "falsehood" or "reality" versus "illusion." However, these are Aramaic-speaking disciples who would have understood Jesus to be speaking in the OT sense of truth which was "faithfulness" or "loyalty" (cf. Ps. 26:3; 86:11; 119:30). Both "truth" and "life" characterize "the way." The term "truth" is often used in John to describe divine activity (cf. John 1:14; 4:23-24; 8:32; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 17:17,19). See Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

■ **"the life"** The "life" is *zoā*, used by John to describe the life of the new age. In the OT, a believer's lifestyle faith is spoken of as a path unto the life (cf. Ps. 16:11; Pro. 6:23; 10:17). All three of these terms are related to lifestyle faith which is found only in personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

■ **"no one comes to the Father but through Me"** What a shocking claim! It is very restrictive but also very obvious that Jesus believed that only through a personal relationship with Himself can one know God (cf. 1 John 5:10-12). This has often been called the exclusivistic scandal of Christianity. There is no middle ground here. This statement is true or Christianity is false! In several ways this is similar to John 10.

**14:7 "If"** There is a manuscript variant connected to the type of conditional sentence. The United Bible Societies Greek text supports the first class conditional sentence, as do the ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>66</sup>,  $\kappa$ , and D. This would then be translated "if you had known Me and you do, then you would have known My Father, which you do."

It may be a second class conditional sentence which is often called "contrary to fact." The translation would then be "if you had known Me, which you have not, then you would have known My Father, which you do not." This is supported by manuscripts, A, B, C, D<sup>b</sup>, K, L, and X. This is a difficult statement because we assume that the Apostles had already believed unto salvation in Jesus as the Messiah sent by YHWH. This new and ultimately exclusive truth must have been very difficult for them to grasp. John's Gospel seems to speak of levels of belief. The context seems to support the second class conditional. Also notice

the same condition in John 14:2 and 28.

- **"you had known Me"** Jesus is addressing the entire Apostolic group again (cf. John 14:9). The term "know" is used in the OT sense, which speaks of intimate personal relationship, not just cognitive knowledge (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5).
- **"you would have known my Father also"** To see Jesus is to see God (cf. John 1:14-18; 5:24; 12:44-45; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)! Jesus is the perfect revelation of the invisible God. No one who rejects Jesus can claim to know God (cf. 1 John 5:9-12).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 14:8-14**

**<sup>8</sup>Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup>Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.**

**14:8 "Philip said to Him"** Apparently Philip (1) wanted a vision of God (Theophany) somewhat like Moses, Isaiah, or Ezekiel or (2) he totally misunderstood Jesus' words. Jesus answers by affirming that when Philip had seen and known Him, he had seen and known God (cf. Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"it is enough for us"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"it is sufficient for us"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we will be satisfied"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"that is all we need"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"then we shall be satisfied"</b>

These disciples wanted some type of confirmation just like the Pharisees. However, believers must walk by faith and not depend on sight (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7) in spiritual matters. Trust is the issue!

**14:9 "Have I been so long with you"** Notice this is plural. Philip asked the question that all of them were thinking.

- **"He who has seen Me has seen the Father"** This is a perfect active participle and a perfect active verb which means "has seen and continues to see." Jesus fully reveals Deity (cf. Col.1:15; Heb. 1:3).

**14:10** Jesus' question in Greek expects a "yes" answer. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: "ABIDING" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS](#) at 1 John 2:10.

- **"you. . .you"** The first "you" is singular, referring to Philip. The second "you" is plural, referring to the Apostolic group (cf. John 14:7, 10).
- **"The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative"** Jesus was acting on the Father's behalf in all things (cf. John 14:24; 5:19,30; 7:16-18; 8:28; 10:38; 12:49). Jesus' teachings are the very words of the Father (cf. John 14:24)
- **"but the Father abiding in Me does His works"** This fellowship between the Father and the Son (i.e., John 7:14; 8:28; 10:38), which is emphasized in Jesus' High Priestly prayer of chapter 17, becomes the

basis for the "abiding" of believers in Christ in chapter 15. John's Gospel reveals salvation as (1) doctrine; (2) fellowship; (3) obedience; and (4) perseverance.

**14:11 "Believe Me"** This is a present active imperative or a present active indicative (cf. John 14:1).

There is a manuscript variant of some significance in the opening phrase of this verse. Some early Greek texts (P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , D, L, and W) have just the verb "believe" followed by (*hoti*) "that," which implies that they were to accept the truth about Jesus and the Father's unity. Other ancient texts (MSS A and B) add the dative "in Me," showing the personal object of the belief. The United Bible Societies' Greek scholars believe that the first option was original (cf. Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, which gives this option a "B" rating [almost certain], p. 244). Most modern translations keep the "in me" but add "that" (which shows the content to be believed).

■ **"otherwise believe because of the works themselves"** Jesus tells them to believe in His works (cf. John 5:36; 10:25,38). His works fulfilled OT prophecy. His works reveal who He is! The Apostles, like all of us, had to grow in faith.

**14:12 "Truly, truly"** See note at John 1:51.

■ **"believes. . . he will do"** Believing is not a mental activity alone but an action-oriented word. The phrase "he can do even greater things" is a future active indicative which should be translated "he will do greater things." This possibly refers to

1. the geographical scope (cf. Matt. 28:18-20)
2. the Gentile mission
3. the Spirit being with every believer
4. Jesus' intercessory prayer (cf. Heb. 7:25; 9:24)

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED](#) at 1 John 3:22, B. 2.

The last phrase "he will do" is crucial to biblical Christianity. As the Father sent the Son, the Son sends his disciples! Being "in Christ," having "eternal life," means an active "Great Commission" heart and mind. Christianity is not a creed or something we receive for a rainy day. It is a new orientation of life, a new worldview! It changes everything! It must become an intentional, daily, kingdom-oriented, sacrificial lifestyle.

The church must recapture

1. the ministry of every believer
2. the priority of the Great Commission
3. daily intentional selfless service
4. Christlikeness now!

**14:13-14 "Whatever you ask in My name that will I do"** Notice that Jesus claims that He will answer our prayers based on His character. In Acts 7:59 Stephen prays to Jesus. In 2 Cor. 12:8 Paul prays to Jesus. In John 15:16 and 16:23 believers are to address the Father. To pray in Jesus' name does not involve a magic formula, said at the end of our prayers, but praying in the will and character of Jesus.

This is a good example of the need to consult parallel passages before making dogmatic statements on biblical subjects. One must balance "whatever we ask" with

1. "in My name" (John 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:23)
2. "keep on asking" (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8)
3. "two agreeing" (Matt. 18:19)
4. "believing" (Matt. 21:22)
5. "without doubt" (Mark 11:22-24; James 1:6-7)
6. "not selfishly" (James 4:2-3)
7. "keep His commands" (1 John 3:22)

8. "according to God's will" (Matt. 6:10; 1 John 5:14-15)

The name of Jesus represents His character. It is another way of referring to the mind and heart of Jesus. This phrase appears often in John (cf. John 14:13-14,26; 15:16; 16:23-26). The more like Christ one is, the more likely the prayers are to be answered in the affirmative. The worst thing God could do spiritually to most believers is answer their selfish, materialistic prayers. See note at 1 John 3:22.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER**

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD**

- **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.
- **"ask Me anything"** Usually believers are encouraged to pray in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. This verse is the only verse in John's Gospel where Jesus directs prayer to Himself. This may be the reason why some ancient Greek manuscripts omit "Me" (i.e. MSS, A, D, L, and some Old Latin, Vulgate, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Slavic versions). The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its inclusion as "B" (almost certain). It is included in MSS P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, W, and some Old Latin, Vulgate, and Syrian versions.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 14:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup>"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup>I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."**

**14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action. Love for God in Christ is expressed by obedience. "Keep" is a future active indicative used as a present imperative (Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 337). Obedience is extremely important (cf. John 8:51; 14:21,23-24; 15:10; 1 John 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:3; 2 John 6; Luke 6:46). Verses 21, 23, and 24 also emphasize this same truth. Obedience is evidence of true conversion (cf. James and 1 John).

The NKJV has the imperative "keep My commandments," which is supported by MSS A, D, W, the Vulgate, and many Church Fathers. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the future active indicative a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding), which is supported by MSS B, L, and the Copitic Version, as well as several Church Fathers.

**14:16 "He will give you"** See note at John 14:26.

**NASB, NKJV,**

<b>TEV</b>	<b>"another Helper"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"another Advocate"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"another Paraclete"</b>

The term "another" translates a Greek term (*allos*) that means "another of the same kind." The Holy Spirit has been called "the other Jesus" (G. Campbell Morgan, see Special Topic below).

The second term is the Greek term "*paraklētos*" which is used of Jesus in 1 John 2:1 (as intercessor) and of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26 and 16:7-14. Its etymology is "one called alongside to help," in a legal sense. Therefore, the term "Advocate" accurately translates this word. A form of this same Greek root, "comfort" (*parakalēō*), is used of the Father in 2 Cor. 1:3-11.

The translation of the noun "advocate" (*paraklētos*) comes from the Roman legal system. The translation "Comforter" was first used by Wycliffe and reflects the use of the verb form (*parakaleō*) in the Septuagint (i.e., 2 Sam. 10:4; 1 Chr. 19:3; Job 16:2; Ps. 69:20; Eccl. 4:1; Isa. 35:4). It may be the antonym of Satan (the accuser).

Both Philo and Josephus used the word in the sense of "intercessor" or "advisor."

## SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

■ **"that He may be with you forever"** Three different prepositions are used in reference to the Holy Spirit.

1. "*meta*" (John 14:16), "with"
2. "*para*" (John 14:17), "by the side"
3. "*en*" (John 14:17), "in"

Notice the Holy Spirit is with us, by us, and within us. It is His job to manifest the life of Jesus in believers. He will stay with them until the end of the age (cf. John 14:18; Matt. 28:20).

Notice the Spirit is called "He." This implies the Spirit is personal. Often in KJV the Spirit is addressed by "it," but this is because the term "spirit" in Greek is neuter (cf. John 14:17,26; 15:26). He is the third person of the Trinity (see Special Topic at John 14:26). The term Trinity is not a biblical term, but if Jesus is divine and the Spirit is a person, then some kind of tri-unity is involved. God is one divine essence but three permanent, personal manifestations (see Special Topic at John 14:26, cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Acts 2:33-34; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:18; 4:4-6; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2).

For "forever" see Special Topic at John 6:58.

**14:17 "the Spirit of truth"** "Truth" here has the same connotation as John 14:6 (cf. John 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). See Special Topic on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3. He is the opposite of Satan, the father of lies (cf. John 8:44).

■ **"whom"** "This" is neuter to agree with the term "spirit" (*pneuma*). However, elsewhere in Greek a masculine pronoun is used (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7,8,13,14). The Holy Spirit is really not male or female; He is spirit. It is important to remember that He is also a distinct personality (see Special Topic at John 14:26).

■ **"the world cannot receive"** The Holy Spirit can only be appropriated by those who have faith in Christ (cf. John 1:10-12). He provides everything the believer needs (cf. Rom. 8:1-11). The unbelieving world (*kosmos* see Special Topic below) cannot understand or appreciate spiritual things (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF KOSMOS (WORLD)

■ **"know. . .know"** This is probably another double entendre of John. The Hebrew connotation would be intimate, personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). The Greek connotation would be knowledge. The gospel is both personal and cognitive.

■ **"He abides with you"** Abiding is a key concept in John's writings (i.e., chapter 15, see Special Topic at 1 John 2:10). The Father abides in the Son, the Spirit abides in believers, and believers abide in the Son. This abiding is present tense, not an isolated decision or emotional response.

■ **"and will be in you"** This can be understood as "among you" (plural, cf. NRSV footnote) or "in you" (plural, cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV & NJB). The indwelling of the believer by God is a wonderful promise. The NT asserts that all three Persons of the Trinity indwell believers.

1. Jesus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
2. Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim.1:14)
3. Father (John 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:16)

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 14:18-24**

**<sup>18</sup>I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you *will* see Me; because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup>In that day you will know**

that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." <sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup>He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

**14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you"** Jesus fulfilled every promise He had made to the disciples on the Sunday evening after the Passover in His first post-resurrection appearance to them in the upper room (cf. John 20:19-31). Some commentators, however, see the context as referring to the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) or the Second Coming (cf. John 14:3).

**14:19 "After a little while the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me"** Verse 20 shows that this refers to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. This is the statement which Judas picks up on in John 14:22 to ask Jesus another question. The disciples were still expecting Him to set up an earthly Messianic Kingdom (i.e., Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45) and were greatly confused when He said, "the world will not see Me." Jesus' answer to Judas' (not Iscariot) question in John 14:23 and 24 was that He will manifest Himself in the life of individual Christians and thereby the world will see Him through them!

▣ **"because I live, you will live also"** The resurrection of Jesus was God's demonstration of His power and willingness to give life (cf. Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:20-23,50-58).

**14:20 "In that day"** This phrase is usually used in an eschatological sense (see Special Topic below), but here it may refer to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus or to the coming of the fullness of the Spirit on Pentecost.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY**

▣ **"you will know"** Often "know" has the Hebrew connotation of personal fellowship, intimate relationship, but here it is followed by "that" (*hoti*), which clarifies the cognitive content. This word, like "believe," has a double meaning. John chooses these kinds of words to express the gospel. Believers know Him (believe in Him), but also know truths about Him (believe that). See Special Topic at John 2:23.

▣ **"I am in my Father and you are in Me, and I in you"** John often emphasizes the unity of Jesus and the Father (cf. John 10:38; 14:10-11; 17:21-23). He adds the truth that as the Father and Jesus are intimately linked, so too, Jesus and His followers (cf. John 17)!

**14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them"** These are two present participles.

Obedience is crucial (see note at John 14:15). It is the evidence of true conversion (cf. John 14:23).

The Apostles were Jewish and often used Semitic idioms in their writings. The Jewish prayer that begins every worship time was Deut. 6:4-5, called the *shema*, which meant to "hear so as to do"! This is the point of John's comment (cf. James 2:14-26).

▣ **"and will disclose Myself to him"** This refers to either (1) the post-resurrection appearances (cf. Acts 10:40-41) or (2) the sending of the Holy Spirit to reveal and form Christ in believers (cf. John 14:26; Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19).

▣ Jesus believed and asserted that He (1) represented; (2) spoke for; and (3) revealed the Father. For believers this authoritative word spoken by Jesus recorded by Apostolic writers is the only source of clear information about God and His purposes. Believers affirm that the authority of Jesus and Scripture (properly interpreted) are the ultimate authority; reason, experience, and tradition are helpful, but not

ultimate.

There is fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is "the other Jesus." See Special Topic at John 14:16.

**14:22** See note on verse 19.

▣ **"Judas (not Iscariot)"** This was another name for Thaddaeus (cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). See Special Topic at John 1:45.

**14:23 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action. The disciples' love for Jesus will be seen in their love for one another (cf. John 14:15,21).

**14:24 "you"** The exegetical question is "To whom does this 'you' refer?" Grammatically the pronoun is in the verb, "hear" (present active indicative, second person plural). It could refer to

1. the people of the world who reject Jesus' message
2. the disciples as they accept Jesus' words as the very words of the Father (cf. John 14:10-11)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 14:25-31**

**<sup>25</sup>These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. <sup>28</sup>You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. <sup>30</sup>I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; <sup>31</sup>but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here."**

**14:25 "These things"** This must refer to the upper room teachings (chaps. 13-17, but is phrased specifically in John 14:15:11; 16:1,4,6,25,33).

**14:26 "the Holy Spirit"** This title for the third person of the Trinity occurs only in John 1:33; 20:22, and here in John (see Special Topic: The Holy One at 1 John 2:20). However, He is called by several other names in John's Gospel (Paraclete, Spirit of Truth, the Spirit).

There are several passages in the NT that refer to the Spirit in personal terms (cf. Mark 3:29; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15, see Special Topic below). There are other texts where the neuter pronoun is used of the Spirit because the Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*) is neuter (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 8:26).

Also, at this point just a word about the concept of a Trinity. The term "trinity" is not a biblical word, but in several texts the three personal manifestations of the one true God are seen together (see Special Topic below). If Jesus is divine and the Spirit is personal, then theologically as monotheists (cf. Deut. 6:4-6), we are forced into a tri-unity-not progressive manifestations, but eternal persons!

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

▣ **"whom the Father will send"** There was a tremendous fight in the early church (fourth century) about whether the Spirit came from the Father (cf. John 3:34; 14:16; 16:26) or from the Son (cf. John 15:26; 16:7; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33). The theological issue in the Arius - Athanasius debate was the full and eternal deity and equality between God the Father and Jesus the Son.

▣ **"will teach you all things"** This must be qualified. The Spirit does not teach believers in all areas of knowledge, but about spiritual truth, especially in relation to Jesus' person and work, the gospel (cf. John



16:13-14; I Jn. 2:20,27).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT**

- **"and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you"** The purposes of the Spirit are
  1. to convict humans of sin
  2. to bring them to Christ
  3. to baptize them into Christ
  4. to form Christ in them (cf. John 16:7-15)
  5. to help the Apostles remember all the things Jesus had said to them and clarify their meaning so that they can record them in the Scriptures (cf. John 2:22; 15:26; 16:13)

Jesus Himself also instructed the Apostles after His resurrection, particularly about how the OT points to Him and is fulfilled in Him (cf. Luke 24:13ff).

**14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you"** Believers' peace is not related to circumstances, but to a tranquility based on Jesus' promises and presence (cf. John 16:33; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15).

"Peace" is used in both an objective sense, restoration with God, and a subjective sense, a feeling of security or stability amidst difficult circumstances. It reflects a Jewish greeting, *Shalom*, which meant both the absence of problems and the presence of contentment (cf. John 20:19,21,26; 3 John 14; Eph. 2:14; Num. 6:26; Ps. 29:11; Isa. 9:6). It characterizes the new age!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE CHRISTIAN AND PEACE**

- **"leave"** Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (p. 21) makes an excellent comment about the priority of context in determining word meaning.

### **"The Logical Context"**

In a very real sense, the logical context is the most basic factor in interpretation. I tell my classes that if anyone is half asleep and does not hear a question that I ask, there is a fifty percent chance of being correct if he or she answers 'context.' The term itself covers a vast array of influences upon a text. These can best be diagrammed as a series of concentric circles moving outward from the passage itself.

As we move nearer the center, the influence upon the meaning of the passage increases. Genre, for instance, identifies the type of literature and helps the interpreter to identify parallels, but these are not as influential as the rest of Scripture is on the passage. We can, for example, identify the book of Revelation as apocalyptic; yet although intertestamental and Hellenistic apocalyptic provide important parallels, most of the symbols are taken from the Old Testament. At the other end of the scale, the immediate context is the final arbiter for all decisions regarding the meaning of a term or concept. There is no guarantee that Paul uses a term the same way in Philippians 1 as he does in Philippians 2. Language simply does not work that way, for every word has many meanings and a writer's use depends upon the present context rather than his use of it in previous contexts. A good example would be the use of *aphiemi* in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you," and in John 16:28, "I am leaving the world again." We would hardly interpret the one by the other, for their use is exactly opposite. In the first Jesus gives something to the disciples, in the second he takes something (himself!) away from them. Even less would we read into the term its common use (as in I Jn 1:9) for "forgiveness." The other passages help us to determine the semantic range (the different things the word might mean), but only the immediate context can narrow the possibilities to the actual meaning" (p. 21).

- **"do not let your heart be troubled"** This is a present passive imperative with negative particle which usually means "stop an action already in process," a repeat of John 14:1.

**14:28 "if you loved Me"** This is a second class conditional sentence ,like John 14:7, which is called a "contrary to fact." It will be better that Jesus goes to the Father and sends the Spirit, but of course, they do not realize this at this time.

▣ **"for the Father is greater than I"** This is not a statement that focuses on the inequality of the Son, but a statement that deals with the functions within the Trinity related to mankind's salvation (cf. John 10:29-30). This subordination of the Son was only for a period of time, during His stay on the earth to fulfill the Triune God's plan of revelation and redemption (cf. John 17:4-5; Phil. 2:6-11). However, there is a sense in which the Father, being the sender, is primary (cf. John 13:16; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:3-14).

**14:29 "Now I have told you this before it happens"** This was so that their faith might be strengthened (cf. John 13:19; 16:4).

**14:30**

**NASB** "the ruler of the world"

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV** "the ruler of this world"

**NJB** "the prince of this world"

This refers to Satan, whose realm of activity is now the earth (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4, "the god of this world"; Eph. 2:2, "the prince of the power of the air"). Possibly, Jesus saw the leaving of Judas as the coming of Satan (cf. John 13:27). See Special Topic at John 12:31.

**NASB, NKJV** "he has nothing in Me"

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB** "he has no power over me"

The meaning is that Satan has no basis for accusation, no power over, or nothing in common with Jesus at all (cf. Heb. 4:15).

1. James Moffatt translated it as "he has no hold on me"
2. William F. Beck as "he has no claim on Me"
3. New English Bible as "no rights over me"
4. the Twentieth Century New Testament as "nothing in common with me"

**14:31 "but so that the world may know"** Satan is in the will of God and is being manipulated for God's ultimate purpose in the redemption of mankind. See A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306.

▣ **"I do exactly as the Father commanded Me"** It was the Father's will that Jesus die (cf. Isa. 53:10a,b; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF "COMMANDMENT" IN JOHN'S WRITINGS](#) at John 12:50.

▣ **"Get up, let us go from here"** This is a present middle imperative. This is a very difficult phrase because it appears in Matthew and Mark in the Garden of Gethsemane as Judas and the band of policemen approach Jesus. Exactly why it is used in this upper room context (chapters 13-17) is uncertain. Possibly, Jesus had left the Upper Room and was teaching along the way to Gethsemane (cf. John 18:1).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the

book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the difference between Theism, Deism and Christianity based on verse 1.
2. Explain the OT background to the three nouns found in verse 6.
3. Can one build a theology of prayer on verse 13 alone?
4. What is the major purpose of the Holy Spirit? (both to the lost and to the saved)
5. Is Satan in the will of God?

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# JOHN 15

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus the True Vine	The True Vine	The Pattern of the Christian Believer's Life	Jesus the Real Vine	The True Vine
15:1-10	15:1-8 Love and Joy Perfected 15:9-17	15:1-11	15:1-4 15:5-10	15:1-17
15:11-17		15:12-17	15:11-17	
The World's Hatred	The World's Hatred		The World's Hatred	The Disciples and the World 15:18-16:4a
15:18-25	15:18-25 The Coming Rejection	15:18-25	15:18-25	
15:26-16:4a	15:26-16:4	15:26-27	15:26-16:4a	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO JOHN 15:1-27

A. This is a wonderful and troubling passage! It gives believers great encouragement of God's love and the promise of effectiveness, but it also has dire warnings! Theological traditions are so difficult to discuss in this area; let me quote one of my favorite commentators, F. F. Bruce in his book *Answers to Questions*.

"John 15:4,6. 'What is meant by the expressions "unless you abide" and "if a man does not abide" in John 15:4,6? Is it possible not to abide in Christ?'

Passages like these are not difficult in themselves; the difficulty arises when we try to make them and other Scriptures square with our theology, instead of using them as the basis for our theology. At the very time when our Lord was speaking there was a glaring example of one who failed to abide in Him—Judas Iscariot, who had just left them. Judas was chosen as his eleven colleagues were (Luke 6:13; John 6:70); their association with the Lord brought them no privileges which were not equally open to him. The plain passages of Scripture which teach the final perseverance of the saints should not be misused as an excuse for soft-pedaling the equally plain passages which speak of the danger of apostasy" (pp. 71-72).

- B. It is surprising how many aorist tenses are used in this context where one would theologically expect present tenses. The aorists seem to be used in the sense of summing up all of one's life and viewing it as a whole.
- C. The paragraph divisions of chapter 15 are uncertain. John, like 1 John, is a tapestry of various colors. The patterns appear again and again.
- D. The term "abide" (*menō*) is used in the NT about 112 times. Forty of these appear in John's Gospel and 26 in his letters. This is a major theological term for John. Although chapter 15 is the classic expression of Jesus' mandate that we abide in Him, this term has a wider focus in John.
1. the Law abides forever (Matt. 5:17-18) so too, the Christ (12:34)
  2. the book of Hebrews points toward a new means of revelation, not through a servant but through an abiding Son (Heb. 1:1-3, so, too John 8:35)
  3. Jesus is said to provide food that abides (6:27) and produces fruit that abides (15:16). Both of these metaphors express the same truth, our need for Christ both: (1) initially and (2) continuously (cf. John 6:53)
  4. John the Baptist saw the Spirit coming down and abiding on Jesus at His baptism (1:32)
- E. See Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10.
- F. In verses 11-16 the disciples are promised Jesus' joy, while in verses 17-27 the disciples are promised Jesus' persecution. The context of persecution runs through 16:4a. However, through it all believers are to love one another as He loved them!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 15:1-11

**<sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.**

**15:1 "I am the true vine"** This is one of Jesus' famous "I Am" statements in John's Gospel (cf. John 4:26; 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,9,10,11,14; 11:25; 14:6). In the OT the grapevine was a symbol of Israel ( Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15; 19:10; Hosea 10:1; Matt. 21:33ff; Mark 12:1-12, Rom. 11:17ff). In the OT these examples always have a negative connotation. Jesus affirms that He was the Ideal Israelite (cf. Isaiah 53). As Paul used the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and the building of God as metaphors for the church, so John used the vine. This implies that the church is the true Israel because of its relationship to Jesus, the true vine, (cf. Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). See Special Topic at John 6:55 and 17:3. See note at John 8:12.

Some interpreters have asserted that the upper room discourse ends with 14:31, "let us go from here." If so, then chapters 15-17 were taught along the way to Gethsemane. Again, if so, then possibly the "vine" imagery was a visual sign taken from the golden vines on the temple buildings as Jesus and the eleven walked through its courts that night.

▣ **"and My Father is the vinedresser"** Again Jesus affirms His intimate relationship with the Father and at the same time His subjection to the Father's will.

**15:2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away . . .that bears fruit"** The present passive participle occurs twice in this verse. Fruit bearing, not germination, is the evidence of salvation (cf. Matt. 7:16,20; 13:18ff; 21:18-22; Luke 6:43-45). The context implies that Jesus was speaking of (1) Judas' betrayal (cf. John 15:6; 13:10; 17:12) or (2) false disciples (cf. John 2:23-25; 8:30-47; 1 John 2:19; 2 Peter 2). There are levels of belief in John.

▣ **"He prunes it"** This is literally "cleanses." The word was used by Philo for pruning grapevines (BDBD 386). It is found only here in the NT. It is another word chosen by John for its dual connotations (i.e., pruning and cleansing, cf. John 15:3; 13:10). This is a present active indicative. Suffering has a purpose in believers' lives (cf. John 15:17-22). It maximizes fruit bearing, exposes fakes, and keeps them dependent on God (cf. Matt. 13:20-23; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). For two good practical books on this difficult subject see (1) *Principles of Spiritual Growth* by Miles Stanford and (2) *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whithall Smith.

It is possible because of the unified context of chapters 13-17 to relate this cleansing back to the foot washing of chapter 13. They were already bathed (saved), but their feet needed to be washed (continual forgiveness). This present tense verb addressed the disciples as 1 John 1:9 seems to confirm. It is not only obedience that is required for "abiding," but also ongoing repentance!

The purpose of suffering in the life of the believer may have several aspects.

1. develop Christlikeness (cf. Heb. 5:8)
2. temporal punishment for sin
3. simply life in a fallen world

It is always difficult to identify God's purpose, but #1 is always a possible result.

**15:3 "You are already clean"** The term "prunes" (*kathairō*) in John 15:2 is the same Greek root as "clean" (*katharos*). This entire context contains the evidences of true discipleship. The term "already" is emphasized in the Greek text which gave the remaining eleven disciples confidence of their secure position in Christ (compared to the same root used of Judas Iscariot in John 13:10).

▣ **"because of the word which I have spoken to you"** (cf. John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:23).

#### 15:4

**NASB, NKJV "Abide in Me, and I in you"**

**NRSV "Abide in Me, as I abide in you"**

**TEV "Remain united to me, and I will remain united in you"**

**NJB "Remain in me, as I in you"**

This is an aorist active imperative plural (cf. John 6:56; 1 John 2:6). The grammatical question is whether

the second phrase is a description or a comparison. Numerous times in this passage the theological doctrinal emphasis on perseverance of the true saint is stressed (cf. John 15:4,5,6,7,9,10,14; Mark 13:13; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7, see Special Topic at John 8:31). True salvation is both an initial and a continuous response. This theological truth is often ignored in our enthusiasm for personal assurance of salvation. Biblical assurance is linked to

1. perseverance in faith
2. a lifestyle of repentance
3. ongoing obedience (cf. James and 1 John)
4. fruit bearing (cf. Matt. 13:23)

See Special Topic on "Abiding" at 1 John 2:10.

■ **"the branch cannot bear fruit"** This shows the priority of divine provision. For "fruit" see note at John 15:5.

■ **"unless it abides. . . unless you abide"** These are both third class conditional sentences, which means potential action. Our spiritual effectiveness is linked to our continuing relationship with Jesus.

**15:5 "he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit"** This is a present active participle followed by a present active indicative. The continual fellowship (i.e., personal faith relationship) is the source of continual fruit. Fruit could refer to believers' attitudes as well as actions (cf. Matt. 7:15-23; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13). Believers are promised effective, lasting fruit if they abide (cf. John 15:16).

■ **"for apart from Me you can do nothing"** This is a strong double negative. This is a negative statement of the positive truth of John 15:5 and Phil. 4:13.

**15:6 "If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away"** This is a third class conditional sentence. Vine wood was useless for any domestic purpose (firewood) because it burned too fast and too hot (cf. Ezek. 15). This seems to be a reference to Judas and possibly Israel. If not, it must refer to false faith (cf. Matt. 13:41-42,50; and 1 John 2:19).

This is surely eschatological imagery! There will be a "gathering day" and a "burning day." How we live reveals the source of our lives (i.e., God or Satan). By ones fruit you know them (cf. Matthew 7; Gal. 6:7).

■ **"fire"** See Special Topic below.

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE](#)

**15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. Prayer is not automatically answered! Jesus switches metaphors from Himself abiding in the disciples to His words abiding. Jesus reveals the Father and, so too, do His teachings. They are interchangeable sources of revelation. The gospel is both a person and a message.

■ **"ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you"** This is an aorist middle imperative (cf. John 15:16). This phrase has been badly proof-texted. Be careful to seek the teaching of all Scripture and do not emphasize isolated texts (cf. note on 14:13). See Special Topic: Prayer, Unlimited Yet Limited at 1 John 3:22.

**15:8 "My Father is glorified"** Believers Christlike living brings glory to God and proves that they are true disciples. In John 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:4; and Matt. 9:8; 15:31 the Father was glorified in the Son's work and now in the believer's works (cf. Matt. 5:16). See note at John 1:14.

NASB	"so prove to be My disciples"
NKJV	"so you will be My disciples"
NRSV, TEV	"become my disciples"
NJB	"be my disciples"

<b>REB</b>	<b>"so be my disciples"</b>
<b>NIV,</b>	
<b>Goodspeed</b>	<b>"showing yourselves to be my disciples"</b>
<b>NET Bible</b>	<b>"show that you are my disciples"</b>
<b>JB</b>	<b>"then you will be my disciples"</b>

The differences are caused by a tense variation in the verb.

1. aorist subjunctive, MSS P<sup>66</sup>, B, D, L
2. future indicative, MSS  $\kappa$ , A

The lives (fruit) of believers reveal who they are! The verb tense is not as important as the reality of a changed and effective life of love, obedience, and service. These are marks of a true believer! We are not saved by our love, obedience, service (cf. Eph. 2:8,9), but they are the evidence that we are believers (cf. Eph. 2:10).

The term "disciples" is used in John's Gospel to denote those true believers and followers who do God's will and reflect His character. John does not use the term "church" (*ekklēsia*) even one time, therefore, "disciples" becomes the way he denotes Christian fellowship and gatherings. Discipleship is the daily life of the new age lived out in the old age. It is supremely characterized by love, light, obedience, and service! By these others know them as Jesus' disciples.

**15:9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you"** This chain of loving relationships characterizes God's family; the Father loves the Son, the Son loves His followers, His followers love one another.

- ▣ **"abide in My love"** This is an aorist active imperative. Believers are commanded to abide in
  1. prayer (John 15:7; 14:14)
  2. obedience (John 15:10, 14, 17, 20; 14:15,21,23,24)
  3. joy (John 15:11)
  4. love (John 15:12; 14:21,23,24)

These are all evidences of a personal relationship with God. See Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

**15:10 "If you keep My commandments"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. Obedience is evidence of true discipleship (cf. John 8:31; 14:15-21, 23-24; Luke 6:46). Jesus uses it as an example of His fidelity to the Father.

- ▣ **"love"** This Greek term for love (*agapē*) was not used much in Classical or Koine Greek literature until the church began to use it in a specialized sense. It began to be used as selfless, sacrificial, loyal, active love. Love is an action, not an emotion (cf. John 3:16). The NT term *agapē* is theologically analogous to OT term *hesed*, which meant covenant love and loyalty.

- ▣ **"just as I have kept my Father's commandments"** This is a perfect active indicative. As Jesus relates to the Father, believers are to relate to Him. There is a unity between Father and Son that is meant to be reproduced among believers (cf. John 14:23).

**15:11 "your joy may be made full"** Believers are to have Jesus' joy (cf. John 17:13). Joy is another evidence of true discipleship (cf. John 15:11 [twice]; 16:20,21,22,24; 17:13). In this world there are pain and crises; in Christ there is joy, full joy, His joy.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 741, has a good comment about how "joy" and "full" are used together in John's writings.

"In Jn. and the Johannine letters there is a frequent connection between → joy (*chara*) as a subject and the vb. *plēroō* in the pass., to be filled. This joy is the joy of Jesus (Jn. 15:11; 17:13) which he brings through his coming (3:29), his words (15:11; 17:13), and his return (16:22) to his disciples (15:11; 17:13). It replaces the sorrow that fills their hearts (16:16, 20). Thus Christ's joy becomes their joy (15:11; 16:24; cf. I



Jn. 1:4). This joy characterizes the life of the disciples in their walk with Jesus; it becomes complete (Jn. 3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 12). The pass. underlies the fact that it is God who completes this joy."

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 15:12-17**

**12**"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **13**Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **14**You are My friends if you do what I command you. **15**No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16**You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. **17**This I command you, that you love one another."

**15:12 "This is My commandment"** Jesus repeated this theme often (cf. John 13:34; 15:17; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7-8, 11-12, 19-21; 2 John 5).

▣ **"that you love one another"** This is a present active imperative, a continual command. Love is the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22). Love is not a feeling, but an action. It is defined in practical terms (cf. Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 13).

▣ **"just as I have loved you"** This is an aorist active indicative. This was possibly a figurative reference to the cross (cf. John 15:13). Again, it was Jesus' special type of self-giving love that believers are to exhibit (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

**15:13 "that one lay down his life for his friends"** This refers to Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary atonement (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isaiah 53). This is love in action! This is what disciples are called on to do (cf. 1 John 3:16).

**15:14 "You are my friends"** This is the Greek noun *philos*, which is often associated with friendship love (*phileō*). In Koine Greek "*agapaō*" and "*phileō*" are often synonymous verbs for divine love (compare 11:3 [*phileō*] and 5 [*agapaō*]); *phileō* also is used of God's love in John 5:20.

▣ **"if you do what I command you"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. It gives the condition for friendship, which is obedience (cf. John 14:15, 23-24; 15:10; Luke 6:46). As Jesus abided in the Father and remained in His love, so too, must His disciples!

**15:15** Jesus informs the disciples of (1) truths about God and (2) future events. He demonstrates His power so that the disciples will grow in faith and trust. Jesus shared with His disciples what He had heard from the Father (cf. John 3:32; 8:26,40; 12:49; 15:15); they were to pass this on to others (cf. Matt. 28:20).

**15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you"** There are several key grammatical items.

1. both verbs are aorist middle indicative - Jesus, Himself, once and for all chose them (cf. John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16,19)
2. the strong "*alla*" (but) adversative
3. the emphatic "*ego*" or "*I*" statement

Here is the balance between human response and election. Both are biblical teachings. God always initiates (cf. John 6:44,65; 15:16,19), but humans must respond (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 15:4,7,9). God's dealings with mankind are always in a covenant relationship ("if. . .then"). See Special Topic at John 3:16.

The verb "chosen" in this context refers to the Twelve. The term "chosen" has the connotation of "chosen for service" in the OT and only in the NT does the added concept of "chosen for salvation" come into the

semantic range. NT believers are chosen for Christlikeness which is service, selflessness, and sacrifice for the Kingdom of God, the body of Christ, the corporate good. It is a clear demonstration that the self-centeredness of the Fall has been broken.

It is characteristic in John that what Jesus says regarding the Twelve has implications and applications to all believers. They represent the first fruits of discipleship, but their relationship is

1. unique in its eyewitness testimony (i.e., inspiration)
2. applicable to all believers in that Jesus' will for them is His will for all who believe and follow

■ **"appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and *that* your fruit would remain"** These are three present active subjunctives: (1) go; (2) bear fruit; and (3) fruit remains (abides). Believers are on a mission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). The theological aspect of the term "appointed" can be seen in Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Tim. 1:11. It was also used of Christ's death on believers' behalf (cf. John 10:11,15,17-18; 15:13).

■ **"in My name"** Believers are to reproduce Jesus' character. This phrase is synonymous with "the will of God" in 1 John 5:14. Love and answered prayer are linked here as in John 14:13-15. See Special Topic: The Name of the Lord at John 14:13-14.

**15:17 "This I command you , that you love one another"** See note on verse 12. Answered prayer is linked to love and mission!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 15:18-25**

**18**"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. **19**If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. **20**Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. **21**But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. **22**If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23**He who hates Me hates My Father also. **24**If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. **25**But *they have done this* to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'"

**15:18 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose. The world, a fallen human system, hates the followers of Jesus.

■ **"the world"** John uses this term in several ways: (1) the planet, as a metaphor for all mankind (cf. John 3:16) and (2) as human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. John 10:8; 1 John 2:15-17). See Special Topic at John 14:17.

■ **"hates you"** This is a present active indicative; the world continues to hate (cf. John 15:20).

■ **"you know"** This is a present active imperative. Believers' knowledge of the NT truths will help them face a fallen world's persecution.

■ **"that it has hated Me before *it hated* you"** This is a perfect active indicative. The pronoun "Me" is emphatic (cf. John 7:7). This reveals the world's opposition to God, His Messiah, and His people (cf. John 17:14; 1 John 3:13).

Believers are one in Christ's love and one in Christ's persecution (cf. Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13). Identification with Christ brings peace, joy, and persecution, even death!

**15:19 "If"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." This should be translated "if you were of the world, which you are not, then the world would love you, but it does not."

**15:20 "Remember"** This is a present active imperative, like John 15:18, or a present active indicative, possibly a question (LB).

■ **"a slave is not greater than his master"** When one compares this verse with 13:16, it becomes obvious that Jesus used proverbial sayings in different ways.

■ **"If they persecute Me. . .if they kept My word"** These are two first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective. The term "persecuted" means to pursue as a wild animal. Persecution is the norm for followers of Christ in a fallen world (Matt. 5:10-12; John 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16).

However, notice that although some will reject the Apostles' words and even persecute them, there will be others who will hear and respond! They themselves are proof of this reality!

**15:21 "they do not know the One who has sent me"** This obviously refers to the Father. It implies that the Jews as well as Gentiles do not know God. "Know" is used in its Semitic (OT) sense of personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). The lost world persecuted believers because (1) they belong to Jesus, who they also persecuted and (2) they do not know God!

**15:22 "If I had not come"** This is another second class conditional sentence, which means "contrary to fact." It should be translated "If I had not come back and spoken to them, which I did, then they would not have sin, which they do." Responsibility is related to knowledge (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE UNPARDONABLE SIN](#) at John 5:21). In this context the fruitless branches (i.e., Judas and the Jews) had great opportunity for knowledge, much more than those who only had natural revelation (i.e., Gentiles, cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-20 or 2:14-15).

**15:23** The continual opposition to Jesus is continual opposition to God (cf. John 15:24).

**15:24 "If"** This is another second class conditional sentence which means "contrary to fact." It should be translated "If I had not done the works among them which no one else did (but which I did), then they would not have sin, which they do."

Light brings responsibility (cf. John 1:5; 8:12; 12:35,46; 1 John 1:5; 2:8,9,11; Matt. 6:23).

■ **"they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well"** These are both perfect active indicatives which show a settled attitude. To reject Jesus is to reject the Father (cf. 1 John 5:9-13).

**15:25** It is surprising that the term "Law" or "Torah" is used to describe a quote from Ps. 35:19; 69:4. Usually the term is used of the writings of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

The mystery of the Jewish rejection of Jesus in the face of such obvious revelation was attributed to willful unbelief (cf. Isa. 6:9-13; Jer. 5:21; Rom. 3:9-18).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 15:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup>"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth* who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup>and you *will* bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.**

**15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you"** Both the Father and the Son send the Spirit (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The work of redemption involves all three persons of the Trinity.

■ **"the Spirit of truth"** This is used in the sense of the Holy Spirit as the revealer of the Father (cf. John

14:17,26; 15:26; 16:13). See Special Topic on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

■ **"He will testify about Me"** The Spirit's task is to witness to Jesus and His teachings (cf. John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 John 5:7).

**15:27 "you will bear witness also"** The "you. . .also" is emphatic. This is a present active indicative. This must refer to the inspiration of the authors of the NT (i.e., Apostles and their friends) who were with Jesus during His earthly life (cf. Luke 24:48). See Special Topics: Witnesses to Jesus at John 1:8 and The Personhood of the Spirit at John 14:26.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does "abiding" involve?
2. What if a believer ceases to abide? What if a believer has no fruit?
3. List the evidences of true discipleship.
4. If suffering is the norm for Christians, what does that say to us today?
5. Explain John 15:16 in your own words

# JOHN 16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The World's Hatred  (15:18-16:4a)	The Coming Rejection  (15:26-16:4)	The Christian's Relation to the World	(15:18-16:4a)	The Disciples and the World  (15:18-16:4a)
The Work of the Spirit  16:4b-11	The Work of the Holy Spirit  16:5-15	16:1-4a  16:4b-11	The Work of the Holy Spirit  16:4b-11	The Coming of the Paraclete  16:4b-15
16:12-15		16:12-15	16:12-15	
Sorrow Will Turn into Joy  16:16-24	Sorrow Will Turn into Joy  16:16-24	16:16-24	Sadness and Gladness  16:16 16:17-18 16:19-22 16:23-24	Jesus to Return Very Soon  16:16 16:17-28
I Have Overcome  16:25-33	Jesus Christ has Overcome the World  16:25-33	16:25-28  16:29-33	Victory Over the World  16:25-28 16:29-30 16:31-33	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO JOHN 16:1-33

- A. The literary context runs from John 15:18-16:4a. Chapter divisions are not inspired and are much later additions, like paragraphing, capitalization, punctuation, and verse division.
- B. The Holy Spirit's task to the spiritually lost is defined in John 16:8-11, His task to the saved in John 16:12-15. Samuel J. Mikolaski has an interesting summary of the Spirit's activity in the NT in his article "The Theology of the New Testament" in *The Exposition Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1:  
"The NT doctrine of sanctification, while closely allied to justification, is nevertheless distinct from it. As in the OT, sanctification points first to the separateness-the holy transcendence of God-and second, to a moral quality and relationship that is Godlike. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, who unites a person with Christ and renews his life spiritually. The NT language entails the baptism in the Spirit ( 1 Cor. 12:13); the seal of the Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30), the indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14), instruction by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:12-15), the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). Sanctification is related to justification, which is a standing before God (Heb. 10:10), and may be thought of as development into a new ideal" (p. 474).
- C. Verse 17, like 13:36; 14:5, 8, and 22, is another question by the Apostles.
- D. Many believe that the "let us go from here" of John 14:31 combined with 18:1 shows that Jesus spoke chapters 15-17 on the way to Gethsemane through the temple and streets of Jerusalem, not in the upper room.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>"These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. <sup>2</sup>They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup>These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. <sup>4</sup>But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."**

### 16:1

NASB	"so that you may be kept from stumbling"
NKJV	"that you should not be made to stumble"
NRSV	"to keep you from stumbling"
TEV	"so that you will not give up your faith"
NJB	"so that you may not fall away"

This Greek term (aorist passive subjunctive of *skandalizō*, BAGD 752) was originally used of a baited trap for catching animals. It is often translated "fall away" (cf. Matt. 13:21; 24:10; Mark 4:17; 14:27,29). Its metaphorical use in this context refers to believers not being caught unawares by the hateful actions of fellow Jews, even religious leaders.

**16:2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue"** This refers to excommunication from Judaism (cf. John 9:22,34; 12:42).

There is so much that is unknown about Jewish dis-fellowshipping procedures. There was both a temporary and a permanent exclusion from synagogue services. Later, after the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, at Jamnia in Palestine, the rabbis developed a "curse oath" related to Christ by which they desired to

exclude Christians from synagogue services. This is what finally forced a split between the followers of Christ and local Jewish synagogues.

▣ **"everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God"** This is exactly what the Jewish leaders (cf. Isa. 66:5; Matt. 5:10-12; 10:32) thought. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) is a good example of this misguided religious zeal (cf. Acts 26:9-11; Gal. 1:13-14).

**16:3 "These things they will do"** Sincerity and commitment to a Supreme Being are not enough. Evil, error, and fanaticism often occur in God's name.

▣ **"because they have not known the Father or Me"** The term "to know" refers to the OT connotation of intimate, personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). This is a strong assertion that rejection of Jesus is ultimately rejection of God (cf. John 8:19; 15:21; 1 John 5:9-12).

John often asserts the spiritual blindness and ignorance of the world (cf. John 1:10; 8:19,55; 15:21; 16:3; 17:25). However the purpose of the Son's coming was to save the world (cf. John 3:16) and reveal the Father so that the world might know Him (cf. John 17:23) through Christ.

**16:4** Jesus' predictions were given as a means of encouraging the disciples faith/trust/belief in the midst of persecution and rejection (cf. John 13:19; 14:29).

"From the beginning" refers to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and the special call of the Twelve.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:5-11**

**<sup>5</sup>"But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' <sup>6</sup>But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup>But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup>And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; <sup>9</sup>concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup>and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; <sup>11</sup>and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."**

**16:5 "none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going'"** It seems that Peter did ask this very question in chapter 13:36, but immediately his mind was distracted to the agony of Jesus leaving them and then the question of what would happen to them (cf. John 16:6). John 14:1-3 addresses Jesus' ascension to heaven (cf. Acts 1:9-11).

This is a good place to remind ourselves that the Gospels are not verbatim, word-for-word, transcripts of Jesus' conversations. They are summaries done years later for theological purposes. The Gospel writers, under inspiration, had the option of selecting, arranging, and adapting Jesus' words (see Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*). I do not believe they had the right to put words in Jesus' mouth. This theological structuring of Jesus' words, teachings, and actions for the evangelization of certain target audiences, probably explains many of the differences among the Gospel accounts!

**16:6 "sorrow has filled your heart"** This is a perfect active indicative. The Upper Room experience was one of sorrow (cf. John 14:1; 16:6,22). The term "heart" is used in the Hebrew sense of the entire person-mind, feelings, and will. See Special Topic: Heart at John 12:40.

**16:7 "it is to your advantage that I go away"** Jesus' physical body could be in only one place at one time, which limited His ability to both teach and minister to all of His disciples. Also, during His earthly life He focused primarily on Israel (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24). The coming of the Holy Spirit would open up a new era that would issue in an expanded ministry (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The term "advantage" meant "expedient" and is also used in John 11:50 and 18:14 in connection with Jesus' death. The phrase "go away" could include all the events of Jesus' last week.

▣ **"for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you"** There are two third class conditional

sentences in this verse which imply potential action. Jesus had to leave for the fullness of the Spirit to come! The term *paracletos* can be translated "advocate," "comforter," or "helper" (cf. 14:16, 26; 15:26, see full note at John 14:16). This word appears only in John's writings. It was used in Greek literature for a defense lawyer called alongside to render aid. In John 16:8-11 the Spirit acted as a prosecutor to the world, however, in John 16:12-15 the Spirit's advocacy is seen on behalf of believers.

This same term *paracletos*, is used for the Son in 1 John 2:1. The Greek root can be translated "comfort." In this sense it is used of the Father in 2 Cor. 1:3-11.

■ **"I will send Him to you"** The Spirit came from both the Father and the Son (cf. John 14:26).

**16:8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world"** Notice that all three areas (sin, righteousness, judgment) of the Spirit's witness relate to the need of mankind and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The term "convict" was a legal term for a "cross-examination."

G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 159, has an interesting understanding of these three areas. Convince the world that

1. it has been wrong in bringing Jesus to trial and execution
2. it has been wrong about the meaning of sin
3. it has been wrong about the meaning of righteousness
4. it has been wrong about the meaning of judgment

If so, then the Spirit is fully revealing the gospel through the person of Jesus. Their religiosity cannot save them. Judgment awaits all who reject Jesus! "The sin" is unbelief! Jesus is the only way to life with God!

The term "world" refers to human, fallen society organized and functioning apart from God. See Special Topic at John 14:17.

**16:9 "concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me"** The gospel starts with a recognition of mankind's sinfulness and the need for God's righteousness (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3). Sin is not "the" major stumbling block to salvation this side of Calvary, but mankind's unbelief in the work and person of Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:6-21; 8:24,26). The term "belief" has cognitive and emotional elements, but primarily it is volitional (see Special Topic at John 2:23). It focuses not on the believer's worthiness or performance, but on their repentant faith response to God's promises in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-30).

**16:10 "concerning righteousness"** This may refer to

1. Christ's upcoming redemptive work on Calvary and the Resurrection seen as a unit (cf. John 16:10)
2. those who think they are right with God apart from Christ when in reality it is Christ only who is right with God, seen in the Ascension

**16:11 "concerning judgement, because the ruler of this world has been judged"** There is a day coming when both fallen angels and sinful mankind will stand before the righteous God (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). Satan, though still a great power in this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19), is already a defeated foe (perfect passive indicative). His children (cf. John 8:44; Matt. 13:38; 1 John 3:8-10) reap the wrath of God!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:12-15**

**<sup>12</sup>"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. <sup>13</sup>But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. <sup>15</sup>All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you."**

**16:12 "you cannot bear *them* now"** The term "bear" is used of an animal carrying a physical burden. Some of the things they could not understand were

1. Christ's suffering



2. Christ's resurrection

3. the world mission of the church

Modern readers must remember that in many ways the life of Christ represents a transition period. The Apostles did not understand many things until the post-resurrection appearances and the coming of the Spirit in fullness at Pentecost.

However, we must also remember that the Gospels were written years later for evangelistic purposes to certain targeted audiences. Therefore, they reflect a later, matured theology.

**16:13 "the Spirit of truth"** Truth (*alētheia*) is used in its OT connotation of trustworthiness and only secondarily in a sense of truthfulness. Jesus said that He was the truth in John 14:6. This title for the Holy Spirit emphasizes His role as the revealer of Jesus (cf. John 14:17,26; 15:26; 16:13-14; 1 John 4:6; 5:7). See note at John 6:55.

■ **"He will guide you into all the truth"** This does not refer to absolute truth in every area, but only in the area of spiritual truth and the teachings of Jesus. This refers primarily to the inspiration of the authors of NT Scriptures. The Spirit guided them in unique, authoritative (inspired) ways. In a secondary sense it relates to the Spirit's work of illuminating later readers to the truths of the Gospel. See Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and The Personhood of the Spirit at John 14:26.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

■ **"for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come"** The things that are to come refer to the immediate redemptive events: Calvary, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost. This does not refer to a prophetic ministry of foretelling the future (i.e., Agabus, Acts 21:10, see Special Topic: Prophecy at John 4:19).

The Spirit will receive truth from the Father, as Jesus did, and pass it on to believers, as Jesus did. It is not just the content of the Spirit's message that is from the Father, but the methodology (i.e., personal, see Special Topic at John 14:26) as well. The Father is functionally supreme (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28).

**16:14-15 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you"** The primary work of the Spirit is the lifting up and explaining of Jesus the Messiah (cf. John 16:15). The Spirit never shines the spotlight on Himself, but always on Jesus (cf. John 14:26).

■ **"all things that the Father has are Mine"** What an astonishing claim (cf. John 3:35; 5:20; 13:3; 17:10; Matt. 11:27). This is analogous to Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:22.

There is a functional order, not an inequality, within the Trinity. As Jesus reflected the Father, the Spirit reflects Jesus.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:16-24**

**16**"A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." **17**Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" **18**So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." **19**Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you *will* not see Me, and again a little while, and you *will* see Me'?" **20**Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. **21**Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. **22**Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one *will* take your joy away from you. **23**In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My

**name, He will give it to you. <sup>24</sup>Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."**

**16:16 "A little while"** This phrase occurs often in John (cf. John 7:33; 12:35; 13:33; 14:19). There have been several theories of what this idiomatic phrase means.

1. the post-resurrection appearances
2. the Second Coming
3. Jesus' coming in and through the Holy Spirit

In the light of the context, number 1 is the only possibility (cf. John 16:22). The disciples were confused by this statement (cf. John 16:17-18).

**16:17 "Some of His disciples then said to one another"** This is another question like John 13:36; 14:5,8,22. Jesus uses these questions to reassure them and reveal Himself. It is characteristic of John that he uses dialog to reveal truth. In John there are twenty-seven conversations with or about Jesus. It is also characteristic of John that Jesus' hearers did not comprehend what He said (cf. John 16:18). He is from above; they are from below.

■ **"and 'because I go to the Father'"** Jesus stated this in John 16:5 as He did in the phrase "in a little while" in John 16:16. In a sense this is a very specific Messianic reference (cf. John 13:1,3; 16:28; 17:24).

■ **"will not see. . . see"** There are two different words for "see" in John 16:16 and 17. They seem to be synonymous. If so there is only one period of time being referred to and that probably was the time between Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection morning.

Others suppose the two verbs and phrases refer to "physical" sight and "spiritual" sight and thereby refer to (1) the time between Calvary and Sunday morning or (2) the time between the Ascension and the Second Coming.

The fact that the first verb (*theōreō*) is present tense in both John 16:16 and 17 and the second (*horaō*) is future tense in both John 16:16 and 17 seem to support the synonymous theory.

**16:18 "So they were saying"** This is an imperfect tense which can mean (1) they were saying over and over or (2) they began to say.

■ **"What is this that He says"** Those who were with Him, who heard Him and saw His miracles, did not always understand (cf. John 8:27,43; 10:6; 12:16; 18:4). This is what the ministry of the Spirit will alleviate.

**16:19 "Jesus knew that they wished to question Him"** Jesus often knew people's thoughts (cf. John 2:25; 6:61,64; 13:11). It is difficult to know for sure if this was (1) His divine nature; (2) insight into people and situations; or (3) both.

**16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you"** This is literally "Amen, Amen" (see Special Topic 1:51). "Amen" was the OT term (*aman, emeth, emunah*) for "faith" (cf. Hab. 2:4). Its primary etymology was "to be firm" or "to be sure." It came to be used figuratively for the trustworthiness of God which is the background to the biblical concept of faith/faithfulness. Jesus is the only one who ever started a sentence with this term. It seems to have the connotation of "this is an important and trustworthy statement, listen closely."

■ **"you will weep and lament"** This meant loud and expressive sorrow which was characteristic of Jewish grieving practices (cf. John 11:31,33; 20:11). Three times Jesus used the emphatic plural "you" when speaking of the disciples' sorrow (John 16:20 [twice] and John 16:22). Leadership means

1. servanthood
2. rejection by the world
3. persecution like the Master's

■ **"you will grieve, but your grief will be turned to joy"** What a great promise to the disciples in the

midst of their confusion and lack of understanding. Everything that Jesus promised this core group of disciples was fulfilled at Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance the first Sunday night after the resurrection in the upper room.

1. He would not leave them (cf. John 14:18; 16:16,19; 20:19)
2. He would come to them (cf. John 14:18; 16:16,19; 20:19)
3. He would give them peace (cf. John 16:22; 20:19)
4. He would give them the Spirit (cf. John 15:26; 20:22)

**16:21 "Whenever a woman is in labor"** The metaphor of a woman in childbirth is common in the Old and New Testaments. Usually it is used to emphasize the suddenness or inevitability of the birth, but here the focus is on the attitude of the mother, before and after. This metaphor is often linked with the "birth-pains" of the New Age (cf. Isa. 26:17-18; 66:7-14; Mark 13:8). This was exactly what Jesus was referring to and this was exactly why the disciples, who were still on the other side of the cross, resurrection, and ascension, did not understand Jesus' words!

**16:23 "In that day"** This is another Hebraic idiomatic phrase (like childbirth cf. John 16:21) which is commonly associated with the coming of the New Age (cf. John 14:20; 16:25,26).

▣ **"you will not question Me about anything"** There are two different words for "question" or "ask" in this verse (cf. John 16:26). The first implies "ask a question" (cf. John 16:5,19,30). If this is the proper translation, Jesus was referring to all their questions expressed in the context of chapters 13-17 (cf. John 13:36; 14:5,8,22; 16:17-18). The second term would then refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:16-31; 15:26-27; 16:1-15), who will answer all their questions.

In some ways this phrase reminds me of the promise of the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34, where the coming of the new age would bring a complete knowledge to all believers.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"if you ask the Father for anything in My name"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"whatever you ask the Father in My name"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"if you ask anything of the Father in my name"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"anything you ask from the Father he will grant in my name"</b>

This is an indefinite relative clause, not a conditional sentence. It must be understood that asking in Jesus' name is not simply closing our prayers with a ritual formula, but praying in the will, mind, and character of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 5:13). See note at John 15:16. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED](#) at 1 John 3:22.

There is a manuscript variant related to the phrase "in My name." Should it go with "ask" or "give" or both? The context is prayer, therefore, it should probably go with "ask," although in reality, everything from the Father comes through Jesus ("My name" cf. John 14:13,14; 16:15,24,26). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD](#) at John 14:13-14.

**16:24 "ask and you will receive"** "Ask" is a present active imperative. This focuses on believers' prayers being persistent and ongoing. In one sense believers need only ask once, believing, but in another sense, prayer is an ongoing fellowship and trust in God, keep on asking (cf. Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8).

▣ **"so that your joy may be made full"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive participle (cf. 1 John 1:4). Answered prayer is a reason for our joy! Joy is a characteristic of Jesus' followers (cf. John 15:11; 16:20,21,24; 17:13).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:25-28**

**25**"These things I have spoken to you in a figurative language; an hour is coming when I

**will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. <sup>26</sup>In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; <sup>27</sup>for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. <sup>28</sup>I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."**

**16:25 "figurative language"** Jesus' teachings had a two-fold effect: (1) it opened up understanding and (2) it blocked understanding (cf. Mark 4:10-11; Isa. 6:9-10; Jer. 5:21). The heart of the hearer is the key to effectual understanding. However, there were truths that even the saved could not grasp until after the Passion week events (crucifixion, resurrection, resurrection appearances, ascension) and Pentecost.

The post-resurrection appearance to the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35) may give a clue as to how Jesus taught the Apostles (cf. John 16:25-27,29). He Himself in His post-resurrection appearances showed how the OT applied to and foreshadowed His ministry. This set the pattern for Peter's preaching in Acts (*kerygma*, see Special Topic at John 5:39).

■ **"will tell you plainly"** See Special Topic: Boldness (*Parrhēsia*) at John 7:4.

**16:26 "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf"** This verse expresses an important truth. Many modern Christians feel they cannot approach God directly! However, the Bible teaches that

1. the Spirit prays for believers (cf. Rom. 8:26-27)
2. the Son intercedes for believers in 1 John 2:1
3. believers can approach God directly in prayer because of Christ

**16:27 "for the Father Himself loves you"** This term for "love" is *phileō*, which is also used in John 5:20 for the Father's love for Jesus. What a tremendous statement which reinforces John 3:16 (which uses *agapaō*). It is not a reluctant God whom Jesus has to placate, but a loving Father with whom Jesus works to accomplish Their redemptive purposes!

**NASB "from the Father"**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV, NJB "from God"**

There are two Greek manuscript variants: (1) "God" or "Father" and (2) the presence or absence of the article. "God" appears in MSS P<sup>5</sup>, κ<sup>2</sup>, A, and N, while "the God" appears in MSS C<sup>3</sup> and W. This seems to be the more difficult and unusual wording. It is one of the tenants of Textual Criticism (see Appendix) that the most difficult or unusual text is probably the original that scribes tended to alter. The United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament gives it a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

However "Father" appears in κ<sup>1</sup> and "the Father" in B, C<sup>\*</sup>, D, and L. It fits the context best.

■ **"because you have loved Me and believed that I came forth"** These are two perfect active indicatives. Love and belief in Jesus set the stage for fellowship with the Father. The statement in *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* by Barclay Newman and Eugene Nida is very interesting: "These statements indicate that for John the concepts of love, obedience, and faith are simply different ways of expressing one's relation to the Son" (p. 518).

For "believed" see Special Topic: John's Use of "Believe" at John 2:23.

**16:28 "I came forth. . .and have come"** This is an aorist tense followed by a perfect tense. Jesus was born at Bethlehem (Incarnation) and the results of His coming abide (i.e., "I am with you always," cf. Matt. 28:20).

The fact that Jesus "came forth from the Father" (cf. John 16:27,30; 8:42; 13:3; 17:8) asserts

1. His pre-existence

2. His divinity
3. His full revelation of the Father

■ **"I am leaving the world again and going to the Father"** This refers to the upcoming ascension and the beginning of the ministry of the "Helper" and the intercessory ministry of Jesus (cf. Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). As pre-existence was asserted in John 1:1, so Jesus' restoration to glory and power is asserted in this verse (cf. John 17:5,24).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 16:29-33**

<sup>29</sup>His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. <sup>30</sup>Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." <sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>Behold, an hour is coming and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. <sup>33</sup>These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

**16:29 "speaking plainly"** See Special Topic: Boldness (*Parrhēsia*) at John 7:4.

**16:30** This sentence must be understood in light of Jesus' knowing the disciples' question of John 16:19. This statement by them reflects their growing, but still incomplete, faith. They had seen and heard so much; did this event (cf. John 16:19) really function as a major turning point in their understanding? To me this sounds like one of Peter's well-intentioned but exaggerated statements (see The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 456).

**16:31 "Do you now believe"** This can be a question or a statement. Most modern English translations understand it as a question. Even at this crucial period, the faith of the Apostles was not complete. Modern believers' initial, but weak, faith is also accepted by God when they respond to Jesus based on the light that they have. The disciples lack of faith will be evident in their deserting Jesus during His trials and crucifixion.

**16:32 "you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone"** Apparently only John was present at the trials and crucifixion (cf. Matt. 26:31, from Zech. 13:7). John 21:1-3 suggests that several of the Apostles had gone back to fishing as a vocation.

Jesus was bereft of human companionship (cf. Matt. 26:38,40-41, 43,45), but never divine companionship (cf. John 8:16,29) until the crucifixion, when He bore the sin of all the world (cf. Matt. 27:45-46).

NASB	"to his own <i>home</i> "
NKJV	"to his own"
NRSV	"to his home"
NJB	"his own way"
TEV	"your own home"
REB, NET, NIV	"to his own home"

The NKJV is literal. Most English translations assume it refers to ones home. Bultmann asserts it refers to "property" or "possessions" (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 839), referring to Jesus as the creator (i.e., John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

**16:33 "in Me you may have peace"** This is a present active subjunctive (cf. John 14:27). Both objective and subjective peace is found and maintained in Christ. See Special Topic: Peace at John 14:27.

- ▣ **"the world"** John uses "world" in this context as human society organized and functioning apart from God. See Special Topic: *Kosmos* at John 14:17.
- ▣ **"you have tribulation"** The persecution that Jesus faced, they will face (cf. John 15:18-25; Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3). The persecution (i.e., *thlipsis*) is a way to reveal Jesus' true followers. In Revelation there is a theological distinction between "wrath" and "persecution." God's wrath never falls on believers, but non-believers' anger falls on believers. The world reveals itself as the children of Satan by their attacks on "the light of the world" (cf. John 1:1-18; 3:17-21)!
- ▣ **"take courage"** This is a present active imperative (cf. Matt. 9:2,22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; Acts 23:11). It sounds like YHWH's words to Joshua (cf. Jos. 1:6,9,18; 10:25).
- ▣ **"I have overcome the world"** This is a perfect active indicative. Victory is assured even before Gethsemane, before Calvary, before the empty tomb (cf. Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:7-15)! There is no ultimate dualism. God is in control. As Jesus overcame the world by love and obedience to the Father, believers are also overcomers through Him (cf. 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5; Rev. 3:21; 12:11).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the connection between chapter 15 and chapter 16?
2. In relationship to verse 5, how do we understand 13:36?
3. What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the lost world?
4. What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers?
5. Why are verses 26-27 such an important truth needed in light of modern denominational tendencies?

# JOHN 17

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Prayer of Jesus	Jesus Prays for Himself	Jesus' High Priestly Prayer	Jesus Prays for His Disciples	The Prayer of Jesus
17:1-5	17:1-5	17:1-5	17:1-5	17:1-23
	Jesus Prays for His Disciples			
17:6-19	17:6-19	17:6-19	17:6-8	
	Jesus Prays for All Believers		17:9-19	
17:20-26	17:20-26	17:20-24	17:20-23	
			17:24-26	17:24-26
		17:25-26		

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-26

#### A. Historical Setting

1. This chapter is Jesus' High Priestly prayer for
  - a. Himself (John 17:1-5)
  - b. His disciples (John 17:6-19)
  - c. future followers (John 17:20-26)

It was given in an atmosphere of confidence, not resignation (cf. John 16:33).

2. This is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus.
3. This chapter is difficult to divide into subjects because the same motifs are mentioned over and over again, which is characteristic of John's writings. This is like a tapestry of recurrent patterns. The key words are "glory," "give," "know," "sent," "name," "the world," and "one."

4. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. This is unusual because of His prominence in chapters 14-16.

#### B. Characteristics of Disciples in Verses 6-19

1. They are elect
2. They are obedient
3. They know God and Christ
4. They accept truth
5. They are prayed for by Jesus
6. They stay in the world
7. They are kept by His power
8. They are one as the Father and Jesus are one
9. They have His joy
10. They are not of this world
11. They are consecrated by truth
12. They are sent as He was sent
13. They are loved as the Father loved Jesus

#### C. The term "glory" in John

1. There are over 25 Hebrew words translated by the Greek term *doxa* in the Septuagint (LXX). The major OT term is *kabod*, which meant "different," "weight," "heaviness," "worthiness," "reputation," "honor," or "brightness/splendor."
2. The Greek term *doxa* comes from the verb "to think" in the sense of reputation.
3. There are many different connotations of this word in John
  - a. divine glory (cf. John 17:5,24; 1:14; 12:41; 12:16)
  - b. the revelation of the Father by Jesus' signs, teachings, and Passion Week works (cf. John 17:4,10,22; 1:14; 2:11; 7:18; 11:4,40)
  - c. specifically the cross (cf. John 17:1,4; 7:39; 12:23; 13:31-32)

There is obviously some fluidity between these usages. The central truth is that the invisible God is revealed in a human (i.e., Jesus Christ) by His words and acts.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED TEXT: 17:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. <sup>3</sup>This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."**

**17:1 "Jesus spoke these things"** This must refer to the upper room discourses of chapters 13-16.

■ **"lifting up His eyes to heaven"** This was the common Jewish posture for prayer: hands, head, and open eyes lifted toward heaven as if in conversation with God (cf. John 11:41; Mark 7:34; Luke 18:13; Ps. 123:1). Jesus prayed often. This can clearly be documented from the Gospel of Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:41-45; 23:34.

■ **"Father"** Jesus commonly addressed Deity by this term (cf. John 11:41; 12:27,28; Matt. 11:25-27; Luke 22:42; 23:34). Jesus spoke Aramaic. Jesus' Aramaic term was *Abba*, which is what a child used for his father at home, "Daddy" (cf. Mark 14:36). This must have shocked and offended Jesus' non-disciples!



■ **"the hour has come"** This shows that Jesus knew the purpose and timing of His ministry (cf. John 2:4; 7:6,8,30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1). He was not overtaken by unknown circumstances.

■ **"glorify Your Son"** This is an aorist active imperative. Jesus always refers to His death in similar terms in John (cf. John 17:4; 7:39; 12:23; 13:31-32). This term also relates to Jesus' pre-existent deity (cf. John 1:14 and John 17:5,24). Jesus' actions glorified the Father. There was a reciprocity! See note at John 1:14 and Contextual Insights, C.

For "Son" see Special Topic at 1 John 3:8.

There is manuscript variant related to "Son."

1. Son with the article occurs in MSS P<sup>60</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, C\*, W
2. Son with the genitive pronoun occurs in MSS A, D, C<sup>2</sup>

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives form #1 a "B" rating (almost certain).

**17:2 "authority over all flesh"** This is an awesome statement by a peasant carpenter (cf. John 5:27; Matt. 11:27; 28:18; Luke 10:22). The term "authority" (*exousia*) is the same one used in John 1:12; 5:27; 19:10,11. It can be translated "legal right," "authority," or "power."

The phrase "all flesh" is singular (a Hebrew idiom referring to mankind, cf. Gen. 6:12; Ps. 65:2; 145:21; Isa. 40:5; 66:23; Joel 2:28).

■ **"to all whom You have given Him"** The term "all whom" is neuter and singular (cf. John 7,24), which focuses on disciples, the body of Christ, not individuals! The verb is perfect active indicative which speaks of an enduring gift! This phrase affirms foreknowledge and election (cf. John 17:6, 9, 12; 6:37, 39; Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-14). In the OT election was for service, while in the NT it is for spiritual, secure, and eternal salvation. Believers are also called to service. Election is not the only divine act, but must be covenantally linked to human responsibility. It is not focused on death, but on life! Believers are chosen for "holiness" (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a for a privileged standing. This phrase should not be understood as the Father giving some humans to Jesus and not others.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

■ **"He may give eternal life"** Eternal life is a gift from God through Christ (cf. John 5:21,26; 6:40,47; 10:28; 1 John 2:25; 5:11). It means "God's life," "new age life," or "resurrection life." It is not primarily quantity, but quality (cf. John 10:10).

**17:3 "This is eternal life"** This is a definition of "eternal life" inserted by John. This verse shows the two major truths of Christianity: (1) monotheism (cf. Deut. 6:4-6) and (2) Jesus as the Davidic Messiah (cf. 2 Samuel 7). This "eternal life" is not something reserved for the future but available now in Jesus Christ.

■ **"that they may know You"** This is a present active subjunctive. This does not refer only to cognitive knowledge about God, although there is truth to be affirmed, but is used in the Semitic sense of personal relationship. However, the truth is that Jesus is the Messiah, the full and complete revelation of the one true God (cf. John 1:12,14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), and that individuals must believe, receive, repent, obey, and persevere in Him.

■ **"the only true God"** The OT was unique in its assertion of the existence of one and only one God (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 37:20; 44:6,8; 45:6-7,14,18,21,22; 46:9; John 5:44; 1 Cor. 8:4,6; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; Jude 1:25). In fairness it must be said that the OT presentation of God's uniqueness and oneness is set against the backdrop of the Ancient Near Eastern's worldview of many spiritual beings. There is only one God, but other spiritual beings (cf. Exod. 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Ps. 86:8; 89:6).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

### SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUE" (THE TERM) IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

▣ **"and Jesus Christ whom You have sent"** This may be an editorial comment by John. This emphasis on Jesus as "sent" from the Father is a recurrent vertical dualism in John (cf. John 3:17,34; 5:36,38; 6:29,38,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42;17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). The rabbis used the term *apostellō* to refer to one sent as an official representative. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**17:4 "I have glorified You on the earth"** (See note at John 13:32). The term "glory" can be used in the sense of (1) "give glory to" or (2) "to reveal the glory of." Verse 6 implies #2. One of Jesus' main tasks was to reveal the Father (cf. John 1:14,18).

▣ **"having accomplished the work"** The Greek root, *telos*, implies "to complete fully" (cf. John 4:34; 5:36; 19:30). The work was threefold.

1. revelation of the Father (cf. John 1:14,18)
2. redemption of fallen mankind (cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21)
3. an example of true humanity (cf. John 13:31; 1 Pet. 2:21)
4. also, Jesus' work of intercession continues (cf. 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

**17:5 "glorify. . .glory"** This verse emphasizes the pre-existence of Christ (cf. John 1:1,15; 6:62; 8:58; 16:28; 17:11,13,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8). Jesus had revealed "glory" to the disciples by His signs and miracles (cf. John 1:14; 2:11; 11:4,40; 12:28). Now the ultimate "glory" would be His death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven's glory (cf. John 17:24; Phil. 2:5-6). The verb is an aorist active imperative used as a request to the Father. See full note on "glory" at John 1:14.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 17:6-19**

**<sup>6</sup>"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; <sup>8</sup>for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. <sup>9</sup>I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; <sup>10</sup>and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. <sup>12</sup>While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. <sup>14</sup>I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup>I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."**

**17:6 "I have manifested Your name"** Hebrew names were meant to reflect character (cf. John 17:11,12,25-26; Ps. 9:10). This phrase also theologically asserts that to see Jesus is to see God (cf. John 1:18; 12:45; 14:8-11; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

The "name" plays an important theological role in the upper room dialogues (cf. John 14:13,14,26; 15:16,21; 16:23,24,26; 17:6, 11,12,26). In chapter 17 two unique titles are used of God.

1. Holy Father, John 17:11
2. Righteous Father, John 17:25

■ **"the men whom You gave Me"** Theologically this speaks of election (cf. John 17:2,9,24; 6:37,39). No one can come unless

1. God gives
2. the Spirit draws (John 6:44,65)
3. they receive (John 1:12); believe (John 3:16)

■ **"they have kept Your word"** Obedience is crucial (cf. John 8:51,55; 14:23; 15:10,20). This is used in a similar sense to OT "blameless" (cf. Noah, Gen. 6:9; Abraham, Gen. 17:1; Israel, Deut. 18:13; Job, Job 1:1). It does not imply perfect obedience or sinlessness, but a desire to hear and do all that is revealed; so far it refers to the disciples' faith in Jesus, abiding in Jesus, and loving one another as Jesus loved them.

**17:7 "they have come to know"** This is a perfect active indicative followed by "that" (*hoti*), which refers to the content of a message. For John's use of "*hoti*" see Special Topic at John 2:23, #4.

■ **"that everything You have given Me is from You"** Jesus spoke what was revealed to Him by the Father (cf. John 17:8; 7:16; 12:48-49).

**17:8 "they received them"** They received Jesus' message about God. There is no direct object stated. In John 1:12 the direct object of accept/receive referred to Jesus Himself; here, it is the message about God that Jesus brought (cf. John 17:4). This highlights the twin aspects of the gospel as (1) a person and (2) a message.

■ **"they received. . .they believed"** These are aorist active indicatives. These truths refer to Jesus' divine origin and message (cf. John 5:19; 6:68-69; 12:48-49; 16:30; 17:18,21,23,25).

**17:9 "I ask on their behalf"** Jesus is our Mediator (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) and Advocate (cf. 1 John 2:1). The Father is also involved in these tasks (cf. John 16:26-27), as is the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). All three Persons of the Trinity are involved in all aspects of redemption.

■ **"the world"** *Kosmos* is used eighteen times in this chapter. Jesus cares for (1) the planet (cf. John 17:5,24) and (2) believers' relationship to its fallenness (cf. John 1:10; 17:6,9,11,13,14, 15,16,17,18,21,23). In John's writings this term uniquely means "human society organized and functioning apart from God." Sometimes it implies (1) the planet; (2) all life on the planet; or (3) or life apart from God. See Special Topic at John 14:17.

**17:10 "and all things that are Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine"** This reveals the unity of the Trinity (cf. John 17:11, 21-23; 16:15). For Trinity see Special Topic at John 14:26.

■ **"I have been glorified in them"** This is a perfect passive indicative. A disciple's life is to give honor to Jesus as He gave honor to the Father. What an awesome responsibility!

**17:11 "I am no longer in the world"** This refers to (1) the immediate future (ascension) when Jesus will return to the Father (cf. Acts 1:9-10) or (2) the public ministry of Jesus.

■ **"Holy Father"** This term "Holy" is used of the Father only here in the NT (Also used in the title, "Holy One," 1 Pet. 1:15) as it is in the OT. This adjective (*hagios*) is also often attributed to the Spirit (cf. John 1:33; 14:26; 20:22). The same Greek root is used of the disciples in John 17:17 (*hagiasmos*) and Jesus in John 17:19 (*hagiazō*).

The basic etymology of the root is "to separate for God's service" (cf. John 17:17,19). It is used of persons, places, and things given exclusively for God's use. It describes God's transcendent character (the Holy One of Israel) and a differentness from physical, earthly, fallen things. Jesus was holy; as His followers become more like Him they, too, reflect "holiness." The root of the term "saint" is from the Greek term "holy." Believers are holy because they are in Christ, but they are to become holy as they live for Him, like Him, and unto Him.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY**

■ **"keep them in Your name"** Jesus is praying (aorist active imperative) for the empowering protection and personal presence that YHWH has given Him (perfect active indicative) to be provided His disciples (cf. John 17:12). This will enable them to minister in a fallen world as He ministered in a fallen world (cf. John 17:18). This is one of the benefits of the unity (cf. John 17:21) between

1. the Father
2. the Son
3. the disciples

■ **"that they may be one even as We are"** This is a present subjunctive. It refers to the relational unity of the Triune God (cf. John 17:21,22,23; 10:30; 14:10). This is also an awesome request and responsibility for Christians! This call for unity is lacking in our day (cf. Eph. 4:1-6). Unity, not uniformity, is the way to reunite God's splintered church.

**17:12 "I was keeping. . .I guarded"** The first verb is imperfect tense and the second aorist tense. These verbs are synonymous. The thrust of the passage is Jesus' continuous protection (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3-9).

In his *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. 1, M. R. Vincent makes a distinction between these two terms. He says the first (*tēreō*) meant to preserve and the second (*phulassō*) meant to guard (p. 496).

■ **"not one of them perished"** This shows Jesus' power of protection (cf. John 6:37,39; 10:28-29).

This term (*apollumi*) is difficult to translate because it is used in two different senses. In his book *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, Gerhard Kittel says of this word, "In general we may say that 2 and 4 underlie statements relating to this world as in the Synoptics, whereas 1 and 3 underlie those relating to the next world, as in Paul and John" p. 394. The definitions he gives are:

1. "to destroy or kill"
2. "to lose or suffer loss from"
3. "to perish"
4. "to be lost"

This term has often been used to assert the doctrine of annihilation, that is, that unsaved people cease to exist after judgment. This seems to violate Dan. 12:2. It also misses the distinction between the connotations used in the Synoptic Gospels versus John and Paul, who use it metaphorically of spiritual lostness, not physical destruction. See Special Topic at John 10:10.

■ **"but the son of perdition"** This obviously refers to Judas Iscariot. This same phrase is used in 2 Thess. 2:3 of the "Man of Sin" (end-time Antichrist). This is a Hebraic idiom meaning "the one who is destined to be lost." It is a wordplay on the term "lost" used earlier in the verse: "no one is lost except the one destined to be lost."

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#) at John 6:64.

■ **"that the Scripture would be fulfilled"** This refers to Psalm 41:9, quoted in John 13:18; 6:70-71.

**17:13 "But now I come to You"** This could refer to

1. Jesus' prayer (John 17)
2. Jesus' ascension (John 17:11; Acts 1)

■ **"these things I speak in the world"** This phrase may link back to

1. 11:42, Jesus speaks aloud so others can hear
2. 15:11, Jesus' words are directly related to the disciples "joy"

■ **"that they may have My joy made full in themselves"** This is a present active subjunctive and perfect passive participle. What a wonderful promise (cf. John 15:11; 16:24). John uses this very phrase again (cf. 1 John 1:4; 2 John 12).

**17:14 "I have given them Your word"** The term "word" here is *logos*. The Greek synonym *rhēma* is used in verse 8. This is an affirmation of divine revelation through Jesus' person, teachings, and example. Jesus gives the Word and is the Word. The word is both personal and cognitive content. We welcome the Person of the gospel and believe the message of the gospel!

■ **"the world has hated them"** Rejection by the world is a sign of acceptance by Christ (cf. John 15:18-20; 1 John 3:13).

■ **"because they are not of the world"** Believers are in the world, but not of the world (cf. John 17:16; 1 John 2:15-17).

■ **"as I am not of the world"** "The world" refers to this fallen age of human and angelic rebellion (cf. John 8:23). This is another example of John's vertical dualism.

**17:15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world"** Christians have a mission in the world (cf. John 17:18; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is not time for them to go home!

NASB, NKJV **"the evil one"**  
NRSV **"the evil one"**  
TEV, NJB **"the Evil One"**

This term is either neuter or masculine. This literary unit mentions the personal force of evil often (cf. John 12:31; 13:27; 14:30; 16:11), therefore, this verse, like Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,38, should be "the evil one" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19). See Special Topic at John 12:31.

**17:17 "Sanctify"** This is an aorist active imperative from the root "holy" (*hagios*). This can mean

1. Believers are called to Christlikeness (cf. John 17:19; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:15). This can only happen through knowledge of the truth, which is both living word (Jesus cf. John 1:1-14) and written word (Bible, cf. John 15:3).
2. "Sanctify," in its OT sense, basically means "to set apart for God's service. Verse 18 clarifies the purpose for them being "sanctified."

It is not a question of whether #1 or #2 is true. They both are true. Jesus' life showed the necessity of both (cf. John 17:19).

It is quite possible that John has the disciples "sanctified" for God's service as an analogy of the OT priests set apart for God's service. They served as mediators of the OT sacrifices, but the disciples' served as the revealers of the NT perfect, once-for-all sacrifice, Christ (see the book of Hebrews, which compares the OT and NT).

■ **"in the truth; Your word is truth"** Truth refers to Jesus' message about God (cf. John 8:31-32). Jesus is called both the message (*Logos*, cf. John 1:1,14) and truth (cf. John 14:6) of God. The Spirit is often referred to as the Spirit of Truth (cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Notice that believers are also sanctified by truth (cf. John 17:19, perfect passive participle) and by the Spirit (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2). For a fuller discussion on the Greek root "true, truth" see Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

It is possible that "Your word is truth" may be an allusion or quote from the LXX of Ps. 119:142, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth." It is surely possible that Jesus was

seen as

1. the new Moses (Deut. 18:15)
2. His disciples as new priests (use of verb "sanctify")
3. His life as the true revelation of the one true God
4. the unity of the Triune God and disciples as the fulfilled purpose of creation (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27)
5. Jesus as the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15

**17:18 "As You sent Me into the world"** Jesus' life of obedience and service, even to the point of death (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16), sets the pattern for His followers (cf. John 17:19). He will send them into the lost world on mission just as He was sent in John 20:21. They must engage the world, not cloister from it. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**17:19 "I sanctify Myself"** This must refer in this context to Calvary! Jesus set Himself to do the Father's will (i.e., Mark 10:45).

▣ **"that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth"** This is a *hina* clause (purpose clause) with a periphrastic perfect passive participle, which implies that the results have already occurred and continue in force. There, however, is an element of contingency based on

1. Christ's upcoming work on the cross, resurrection, and ascension
2. their continuing repentant faith response to Jesus and His teachings

See Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 17:20-24**

**20**"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21**that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. **22**The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; **23**I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. **24**Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

**17:20 "but for those also who believe in Me"** This is a present tense functioning as a future tense. This refers to all subsequent believers and in John 10:16, even to Gentiles. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

▣ **"through their word"** This is the term *logos*. Because of its use in John 17:14 and its synonym *rhēma* in John 17:8, this must refer to the disciples' passing on the revelatory message of Jesus.

**17:21 "that they may all be one"** This unity is nothing else than the unity of the Trinity (cf. John 17:11, 22,23; Eph. 4:1-6). This is one aspect of Jesus' teaching that His followers have not followed.

▣ **"so that the world may believe that You sent Me"** This is a present active subjunctive. The purpose of unity is evangelism. Verse 23 is almost the exact same structure and emphasis!

There is a tension in Jesus' prayer. He does not pray for the world (cf. John 17:9), yet He sends His followers into the world with His message which will cause their persecution because God loves the world (cf. John 17:21,23; 3:16). God wants the whole world to believe (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). God loves all those made in His image and likeness. Jesus died for the sins of the entire world. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**17:22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them"** These are both perfect active indicatives. Glory must refer to the revelatory message. They will bear His word to the world as Jesus bore

the Father's word. This will result in them bearing His reproach also! A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. V, says "It is the glory of the Incarnate Word (cf. John 1:14 and 2:11) not the glory of the Eternal Word mentioned in John 17:24" (p. 280). See full note on "glory" at John 1:14.

**17:23 "that they may be perfected in unity"** This is *hina* clause with a periphrastic perfect passive, like John 17:19. In John 17:19, there is an element of contingency based on (1) Christ's upcoming work or (2) their continuing faith. The implication is that they have already been united by the agency of Jesus and that it will remain! The purpose of unity is evangelism.

■ **"and loved them, even as You have loved Me"** This is a promise (cf. John 16:27 and 14:21,23), but it has a condition. God deals with humans by means of covenants ("if. . .then").

Love (*agapeō*) occurs eight times in John 1-12, but 31 times in John 13-17. The upper room dialogues emphasized the revealed character of God the Father through the words and actions of the Son and soon after, the resurrection, and especially Pentecost, through the disciples. God is love (cf. 1 John 4:7-21).

**17:24 "be with Me where I am"** Jesus is returning to glory to prepare a place for His followers (cf. John 14:1-3). This world is not our home as it was not His either! It is His creation (Genesis 1-2) and it will be restored (Revelation 21-22).

■ **"so that they may see My glory which You have given Me"** Obviously the term "glory" in this verse cannot mean what it does in John 17:22. Here it seems to include the majesty of Jesus' pre-existent deity.

■ **"before the foundation of the world"** The Triune God was active in redemption even before creation. This phrase is used several times in the NT (cf. Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 17:25-26**

**<sup>25</sup>"O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; <sup>26</sup>and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."**

**17:25 "righteous Father"** This title only appears here in the NT. It is parallel to "Holy Father" in John 17:11. comes from a Hebrew word for "measuring reed." God is the standard of judgement! See Special Topic at 1 John 2:29.

■ **"the world has not known You"** The world, human society organized and functioning apart from God (John's unique usage), does not know God (cf. John 17:25) nor His Son (cf. John 1:10). It is evil and wicked (cf. John 3:19-20; 7:7).

■ **"yet I have known you"** Jesus is the highest and purest source of information about God (cf. John 1:18; 3:11).

**17:26 "I have made Your name known to them"** This is referring to Jesus' revelation of the Father's character and plan of redemption for mankind (cf. John 17:6,11,12; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). The term "known" is used five times in John 17:25-26.

■ **"and will make it known"** This either refers to (1) the continuing revelation of Jesus through the Spirit who clarifies His teachings or (2) the salvation (Passion Week) events about to occur. The context of the passage implies #1. Salvation involves a person and a message, a decision and a lifestyle, an initial faith and a continuing faith. It involves both the Greek connotation of "know" and the Hebrew connotation of "know."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this prayer so theologically important?
2. Was Judas a believer who fell from grace?
3. What is the purpose of our unity?
4. Why is the pre-existence of Jesus important?
5. Define in this context the key terms:
  - a. "glorified"
  - b. "give"
  - c. "know"
  - d. "sent"
  - e. "name"
  - f. "world"



# JOHN 18

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane	Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion Burial of Jesus  (18:1-19:42)	The Arrest of Jesus	The Arrest of Jesus
18:1-11	18:1-11	18:1-11	18:1-4 18:5a 18:5b 18:5c-7a 18:7b 18:8-9 18:10-11	18:1-9      18:10-11
Jesus Before the High Priest	Before the High Priest		Jesus Before Annas	Jesus Before Annas and Caiaphas, Peter disowns Him
18:12-14	18:12-14	18:12-14	18:12-14	18:12-14
Peter's Denial of Jesus	Peter Denies Jesus		Peter Denies Jesus	
18:15-18	18:15-18	18:15-18	18:15-17a 18:17b 18:18	18:15-18
The High Priest Questions Jesus	Jesus Questioned by the High Priest		The High Priest Questions Jesus	
18:19-24	18:19-24	18:19-24	18:19-21 18:22 18:23 18:24	18:19-24
Peter Denies Jesus Again	Peter Denies Twice More		Peter Denies Jesus Again	
18:25-27	18:25-27	18:25-27	18:25a 18:25b 18:26 18:27	18:25-27
Jesus Before Pilate	In Pilate's Court		Jesus Before Pilate	Jesus Before Pilate

18:28-38a	18:28-38	18:28-32	18:28-29	18:28-32
			18:30	
			18:31a	
			18:31b-32	
		18:33-38a	18:33	18:33-19:3
			18:34	
			18:35	
			18:36	
			18:37a	
			18:37b	
			18:38a	
Jesus Sentenced to Die	Taking the Place of Barabbas		Jesus is Sentenced to Die	
(18:38b-19:16c)			(18:38b-19:16a)	
18:38b-19:7		18:38b-19:7	18:38b-39	
	18:39-40			
			18:40-19:3	

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 18:1-40

- A. John omits Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (although chapter 17 may be parallel). This was apparently because he is emphasizing the dynamic character of Jesus which was in control of all circumstances. He Himself laid down His life (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18).
- B. The order of events of this chapter is somewhat different from the Synoptic Gospels. This discrepancy seems to be attributable to
  1. the nature of the eyewitness accounts
  2. the author's theological purposes

- C. John is very different from the Synoptic Gospels. Why and how are questions that scholarship cannot answer. The best discussion I have seen on this issue is in Gordon Fee, Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, where it gives several theories. Apparently the Gospel authors, under inspiration, had the freedom to
1. select from
  2. adapt
  3. rearrange
- the words and works of Jesus. I do not think they could make up words and works, but could adapt them for their evangelistic purposes to help reveal Jesus to different people groups. Remember the Gospels are not western histories (i.e., cause and effect and chronological), but eastern histories. They are not biographies, but evangelistic tracts.
- D. A good reference book on this chapter, as far as the legalities of Jesus' trials (cf., Sanhedrin, 4:1), is A. N. Sherwin-White's *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:1-11

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples. <sup>2</sup>Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. <sup>3</sup>Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup>So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" <sup>5</sup>They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup>So when He said to them, "I am *He*," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, "I told you that I am *He*; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," <sup>9</sup>to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." <sup>10</sup>Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

**18:1 "the ravine of the Kidron"** The term "ravine" meant "winter-brook" or "wadi." "Kidron" (BDB 871) meant (1) of cedars or (2) black. This was a wadi that was completely dry in the summer time but ran during the winter season. It was the place where the blood of the sacrifices from Mt. Moriah were drained. This may be the source of the description "black." It was between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives (cf. LXX 2 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kgs. 23:4,6,12; 2 Chr. 15:16; 29:16; 30:14; Jer. 31:40).

There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point:

1. "of the cedars" (*kedrōn*) in MSS  $\kappa^c$ , B, C, L and several other uncial manuscripts
2. "of the cedar" (*kedrou*) in MSS  $\kappa^*$ , D, and W
3. "of Kidron" (*kedrōn*) in MSS A and S

The United Bible Society's fourth edition uses #3

■ **"a garden"** This chapter completely omits Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, but it does place the event of the arrest in a garden. This was a favorite resting place of Jesus (cf. John 18:2; Luke 22:39). Jesus apparently slept here during the last week of His life (cf. Luke 21:37).

Gardens were not allowed in Jerusalem because the necessary fertilizer made it unclean. Many wealthy persons, therefore, owned vineyards, orchards, etc. on the Mount of Olives.

**18:2** This is another editorial comment by John.

▣ **"Judas"** There is so much speculation about Judas and his motives. He is mentioned and vilified often in John's Gospel (cf. John 6:70-71; 12:4; 13:2,26,27; 18:2,3,5). The modern play "Jesus Christ Superstar" depicts him as a faithful, but disillusioned, follower who tried to force Jesus into fulfilling the role of the OT Jewish Messiah-this is, to overthrow the Romans, punish the wicked, and set up Jerusalem as the capital of the world. However, John depicts his motives as greed and satanically inspired.

The main problem is the theological issue of God's sovereignty and human free will. Did God or Jesus manipulate Judas? Is Judas responsible for his acts if Satan controlled him or God predestined and caused him to betray Jesus? The Bible does not address these questions directly. God is in control of history; He knows future events, but mankind is responsible for choices and actions. God is fair, not manipulative.

There is a new book that tries to defend Judas-*Judas Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996. I do not agree with this book because it depreciates John's testimony about Judas, but it is very interesting and thought provoking.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

**18:3**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the Roman cohort"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"a detachment of troops"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"a detachment of soldiers"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"a group of Roman soldiers"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the cohort"</b>

This refers to a Roman military unit, which is a tenth of a legion and could have up to 600 men stationed in the Fortress Antonio, next to the Temple (cf. Acts 21:31,33). It is improbable that this large of a group was called on. The Romans were prepared for the riots in Jerusalem during these festival times. They would have taken the necessary precautions by transferring troops from Caesarea by the Sea. The Romans were involved in Jesus' trial because the Jews wanted to have Jesus crucified. This usually took several days; they could only do this with the Roman government's permission and cooperation.

▣ **"and officers from the chief priests"** The Levitical Temple police accompanied the Roman garrison. They had already failed to arrest Jesus once (cf. John 7:32,45).

▣ **"weapons"** The swords were carried by Roman soldiers, and the clubs were carried by the Temple police (cf. Matt. 26:43; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:52).

**18:4 "So Jesus, knowing all the things"** This is a strong emphasis on Jesus' own knowledge and control of His arrest, trials, and crucifixion (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18). It was not by accident that Jesus was crucified (cf. Mark 10:45; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). This theme is characteristic of John's Gospel and may be why he does not record Jesus' Gethsemane conflict.

**18:5**

<b>NASB, NJB</b>	<b>"Jesus the Nazarene"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV,</b>	
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Jesus of Nazareth"</b>

There has been some discussion about the etymology of the term "Nazarene." It is possible that it may mean (1) Nazarene; (2) Nazarite (cf. Numbers 6); or (3) from Nazareth. NT usage (cf. Matt. 2:23) confirms #3. Some have even linked the Hebrew consonants *nzr* to the Messianic title "Branch" (*nezer*, cf. Isa. 11:1; 14:19; 60:21).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

■ **"I am He"** This is literally "I am," Hebrew verb "to be" (see Special Topics at John 6:20), which the Jews would relate to YHWH, the Covenant name of God (cf. Exod. 3:14 and Isa. 41:4). Jesus makes this awesome assertion of deity in the same stark grammatical way (*ego eimi*) in John 4:26; 8:24, 28, 58 and 13:19. It is repeated three times in this context for emphasis (cf. John 18:6, 8). This grammatical structure is different from Jesus' famous "I Am. . ." statements.

■ **"and Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them"** This is another editorial comment by the eyewitness author of the Gospel, John.

**18:6 "they drew back and fell to the ground"** John recorded this to emphasize Jesus' dynamic character and presence.

This does not imply reverence (bowing before someone), but fear.

**18:7 "Therefore He again asked them"** Possibly, Jesus was drawing attention to Himself and away from the disciples. This seems to fit the immediate context of verse 8.

**18:8 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence; they were seeking Him.

■ **"let these go their way"** This is an aorist active imperative. It is the fulfillment of a prophecy from Zech. 13:7 (cf. Matt 26:31; John 16:32).

**18:9 "to fulfill the word which He spoke"** This seems to be a reference to John 16:32, but John 17:12 is quoted.

**18:10 "Simon Peter, then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear"** Peter was not aiming for his ear, but his head! This shows Peter's willingness to die on Jesus' behalf. Peter's action may have come from a misunderstanding of Jesus' statement in Luke 22:36-38. Luke 22:51 informs us that Jesus healed the man's ear with a touch.

■ **"the slaves' name was Malchus"** Only John mentions his name in this editorial comment. This shows an eyewitness account. The author of John was in the garden!

**18:11 "the cup"** This is a metaphor used in the OT as a symbol of person's destiny, usually in a negative sense (cf. Ps. 11:6; 60:3; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15,16,27-28).

The grammatical form of Jesus' questions expects a "yes" answer. Peter is acting again as someone who knows what is best to do (cf. Matt. 16:22; John 13:8).

The use of "cup" here is so different from the use of "cup" in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. For John, Jesus is in complete control of events! John presents Jesus as confident, not fearful (cf. John 18:4; 13:1,11)!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:12-14**

**<sup>12</sup>So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, <sup>13</sup>and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. <sup>14</sup>Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.**

**18:12**

**NASB**

**"the Roman cohort and the commander"**

**NKJV**

**"the detachment of troops and the captain"**

**NRSV**

**"the soldiers, their officer"**

**TEV**

**"the Roman soldiers with their commanding officer"**

## NJB "the cohort and its tribune"

The names of Roman military units are taken from the number of the full complement of troops involved.

1. cohort - refers to a unit of up to 600 men (cf. John 18:3)
2. the commander - is from the number 1,000 (*chiliarch*, i.e., Acts 21:31; 22:24; 23:10; 24:7)

These titles say nothing about how large or small the military unit was that arrested Jesus. In Palestine #2 simply meant the leader of a small group of soldiers.

■ **"bound Him"** This does not imply they were especially afraid of Jesus, but it seems to have been the normal procedures (cf. v 24).

**18:13 "led Him to Annas first"** There is much discussion about the order of these trials before Annas and Caiaphas. The Synoptics never mention a meeting with Annas. Verse 24 seems to be a footnote in John, but it is an integral part of the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' trials (cf. Matt 26:57; Mark 14:53).

In the OT the high priesthood was for life and each person had to be of the lineage of Aaron. However, the Romans had turned this office into a political plum, purchased by a Levitical family. The high priest controlled and operated the merchandising in the Court of the Women. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple angered this family.

According to Flavius Josephus, Annas was the High Priest from a.d. 6-14. He was appointed by Quirinius, governor of Syria and removed by Valerius Gratus. His relatives (5 sons and 1 grandson) succeeded him. Caiaphas (a.d. 18-36), his son-in-law (cf. John 18:13), was his immediate successor. Annas was the real power behind the office. John depicts him as the first person to whom Jesus is taken (cf. John 18:13,19-22).

**18:14** This is another editorial comment by John, as are verses 15 and 18.

■ **"Caiaphas "** John's major concern with Caiaphas was that he had unknowingly prophesied about Jesus' death (cf. John 11:50). He was Annas' son-in-law and was High Priest from a.d. 18-36. See note at John 11:49.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:15-18

<sup>15</sup>Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, <sup>16</sup>but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup>Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also *one* of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." <sup>18</sup>Now the slaves and the officers were standing *there*, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

**18:15 "Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple"** There has been much discussion as to the identity of this other disciple.

1. The traditional theory has been that it is the Apostle John because of a similar phrase used of him in John 20:2, 3, 4, and 8. Also, another possible connection is with John 19:25, which names John's mother, who could possibly be a sister of Mary, which means he may have been a Levite and, therefore, from a priestly family (cf. Polycarp's testimony).
2. This may have been a local unnamed follower like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea because of their association with the high priest and his family (cf. John 18:15-16).

■ **"Now that disciple was known to the high priest"** This is a very strong term for "acquaintance" and seems to mean a "close friend" (cf. Luke 2:44 and 23:49). If John, this may relate to his fishing business

which would have involved his family in regularly bringing fish to Jerusalem.

**18:17 "the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you'"** This grammatical form, like John 18:25, expects a "no" answer. It shows the contempt of those involved by not using Jesus' name. She may have asked this because of (1) Peter's connection with John or (2) Peter's Galilean accent.

■ **"I am not"** Peter may have been prepared to die for Jesus, but he was not prepared to truthfully answer the question of a slave girl! In the Synoptic Gospels these three denials are placed together, but in John they are separated by the questioning of Jesus by Annas (cf. John 18:24).

Peter's "I am" statement is the exact opposite of Jesus' "I am" statement" (cf. John 18:5).

**18:18** This story is told with such vivid eyewitness details. Both verses 18 and 25 have two periphrastic imperfections.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:19-24**

<sup>19</sup>The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

<sup>20</sup>Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup>Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."

<sup>22</sup>When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" <sup>24</sup>So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

**18:19 "The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching"** This refers to Annas, not Caiaphas. Annas was the power behind the throne. He reigned from a.d. 6 to 15. He was immediately followed by his son-in-law and later his five sons and a grandson. Annas, who owned the commercial rights in the temple area, was probably anxious to interrogate the one who cleansed the Temple (possibly twice). It is interesting that Annas was concerned about Jesus' disciples as well as His teachings.

**18:20** It is certainly true that Jesus taught publicly. However, it is also true that many of His teachings were veiled to the public (cf. Mark 4:10-12). The real issue was spiritual blindness on the part of His hearers.

Jesus' words and methods of teaching are recorded differently between the Synoptic Gospels and John. The Synoptics have no "I Am. . ." statements. Jesus teaches in parables; John records no parables. It seems to me that the differences may be explained by the Synoptics recording the public teachings of Jesus and John recording the private sessions.

**18:21 "Why do you question Me"** In John 18:20 Jesus asserts the public nature of His teaching ministry. Jesus was pointing out to Annas that his questions were illegal according to Jewish law and also were public knowledge.

**18:22 "the officers standing nearby struck Jesus saying"** This term originally meant "to slap" or "beat with a rod." It came to mean "a slap with the open hand." This is an allusion to Isa. 50:6. Jesus asserts that if He had done anything wrong, accuse Him; otherwise, why was He being hit?

**18:23 "If. . .if"** These are two first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Here the first one is a literary way to accent a false reality. Jesus is challenging Annas to bring his evidence.

**18:24** The order of these trials is reversed in the Synoptic Gospels.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:25-27**

<sup>25</sup>Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also *one* of His disciples, are you?" He denied *it*, and said, "I am not." <sup>26</sup>One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" <sup>27</sup>Peter then denied *it* again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

**18:26 "One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said"** There is some discrepancy among the four Gospels as to who asked the questions of Peter.

1. in Mark, it is a maid who asked the first question (cf. Mark 14:69)
2. in Matthew it is another servant girl (cf. Matt. 26:71)
3. in Luke 22:58 it is a man
4. in John a slave/servant of the High Priest

It is obvious from the historical setting that one person asked the question around the fire and the others joined in (cf. John 18:18).

**18:26 "Did I not see you in the garden with Him"** Unlike the first two questions in John 18:17 and 25, this grammatical form expects a "yes" answer.

**18:27 "Peter then denied *it* again"** We understand from Mark 14:71 and Matt. 26:74 that Peter denied it by cursing and swearing.

■ **"immediately a rooster crowed"** The chronology of events from all four Gospels implies this occurred between 12:00 and 3:00 o'clock in the morning. The Jews did not allow chickens inside the city limits of Jerusalem so it must have been a Roman rooster.

Luke 22:61 asserts at this point that Jesus looked at Peter. It is assumed that Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same house and the guards were moving Jesus from His meeting with Annas to His meeting with Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. It was in this movement when Jesus looked at Peter. This is all conjecture because we do not have enough historical information to be dogmatic about the sequence of events of these night trials.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:28-32**

<sup>28</sup>Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup>Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" <sup>30</sup>They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." <sup>31</sup>So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," <sup>32</sup>to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

**18:28**

NASB, NKJV,

JB "to the Praetorium"

NRSV "to Pilate's headquarters"

TEV "to the governor's palace"

This is a Latin term referring to the Roman governor's official residence when they were in Jerusalem. This may have been the fortress Antonio, which was next to the Temple or Herod the Great's palace.

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: PRÆTORIAN GUARD](#)**



■ **"it was early"** We know from Roman records that Roman officials in Palestine met for court at daybreak. Apparently, it was right at dawn when the Sanhedrin met to give some semblance of credibility and legality to the illegal night trials. They immediately took Jesus to Pilate.

■ **"they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled"** By entering a Gentile's residence they would have been defiled for the Passover meal. It is ironical that they were so squeamish about ceremonial items, but had no qualms about illegally putting a man to death.

This verse is the center of a controversy over an apparent historical discrepancy between the Synoptic Gospels, which assert that Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples (cf. Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:1), and John, which asserts that this took place the day before (Thursday), the preparation day of the traditional Passover feast. The renowned Roman Catholic Johannine scholar, Raymond Brown, makes these comments in the Jerome Biblical Commentary:

"If the chronicle of events as reported in the Syn tradition is to be preferred invariably to that of Jn from the standpoint of 'historicity,' the following passage—the report of a witness who certainly knew the Syn tradition—presents some insoluble difficulties. If, on the other hand, we recognize that the eyewitness testimony from which Jn has been formed is often closer to the factual events than the schematic Syn outline, the passage becomes more understandable" (p. 458).

There is also some possibility of two different dates to observe the Passover, on Thursday and on Friday. There is also the added problem that the term "Passover" can be used of the one-day feast and the eight-day festival (Passover combined with Unleavened Bread, cf. Exod. 12).

■ **"might eat the Passover"** There are still problems over the exact date of the Last Supper. The Synoptic Gospels seem to imply it was the Passover meal, but John states it was the day before the official Passover meal (cf. John 19:14 and this verse). The answer may be in

1. the fact that the term "passover" can refer to the week, the meal, or the special Sabbath
2. the fact that some Jewish separatist groups (i.e., Essenes) follow a lunar calendar from the intertestamental book of Jubilees
3. the fact that John's "double meanings" present Jesus as the Passover lamb (1:29), which was slain the day before the Passover

**18:29** God used Pilate's personality much like He used Pharaoh's in Exodus. He was appointed procurator of Judea in a.d. 26 by the Emperor Tiberius. He replaced Valerius Gratus (who removed Annas as High Priest). Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman procurator. He administered the kingdom of Archelaus (son of Herod the Great), which included Samaria and Judea, Gaza, and the Dead Sea. Most of the information about Pilate comes from Flavius Josephus' writings.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PONTIUS PILATE**

**18:30 "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you"** This is a second class conditional sentence often called "contrary to fact." Jesus was not an evil doer. This was a sarcastic remark of Pilate who refused to indulge in the "nit-picking" religious charges of Jews.

This verb "delivered" is the same one usually translated "betrayed" when used of Judas (cf. John 6:64,71; 12:4; 13:2,11,21; 18:2,5). The term literally means "to hand one over to an authority" or "to pass on a tradition." In connection with Judas, the term has intensified in meaning among English translators.

**18:31 "We are not permitted to put anyone to death"** The Jewish leadership had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but they used the charge of insurrection to have Him executed by the Romans. It was very important to the Jewish leaders that Jesus be crucified because of Deut. 21:23 (i.e., being crucified was understood by 1<sup>st</sup> century Rabbis as being cursed by God). Jesus had predicted this in John 18:32; 3:14; 8:28; 12:32,33; and Gal. 3:13.

**18:32 "signifying by what kind of death He was about to die"** Why did the Jewish leaders want

Jesus crucified? It is obvious from Acts 7 that they executed people for blasphemy by immediate stoning. Possibly it relates to the OT divine curse of Deut. 21:22-23. Originally this referred to public impalement after death, but the contemporary rabbis interpreted this verse in light of Roman crucifixion. They wanted Jesus, this Messianic pretender, cursed by God. This was God's plan for the redemption of fallen humanity. Jesus, the Lamb of God (i.e., 1:29), offered Himself as a substitute (cf. Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus became "the curse" for us (cf. Gal. 3:13).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:33-38a**

**<sup>33</sup>Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" <sup>35</sup>Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" <sup>36</sup>Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." <sup>37</sup>Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So, You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You may *correctly* say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." <sup>38</sup>Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"**

**18:33 "the Praetorium"** See Special Topic at John 18:28.

▣ **"Are you the King of the Jews"** Jesus was accused of treason (cf. Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:2 and John 19:3,12,15,19-22).

**18:34 "Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own initiative or did others tell you about Me'"** If Pilate was asking the question in reference to a political kingship, Jesus would have denied it. If the Jews had suggested it, then it referred to His Messiahship and Jesus would have affirmed it. Pilate was obviously not ready to discuss the intricacies of Jewish religious thought (cf. John 18:35).

**18:35** The first question expects a "no" answer. Pilate is expressing his contempt for the Jewish religion.

**18:36 "If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." It should be translated "If My kingdom were of this world, and it is not, then My servants would be fighting, which they are not." The phrase "my servants" could refer to (1) the disciples or (2) the angels (cf. Matt. 26:53).

**18:37 "Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So you are a king?'"** This was extreme irony on the lips of this symbol of earthly power (i.e., Rome), confronting Jesus and His spiritual kingdom. This question expects a "yes" answer.

▣ **"You may *correctly* say that I am a King. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world"** The first phrase is difficult to translate because of its ambiguity. It is an affirmation with qualifications (cf. Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3). Jesus knew who He was (two perfect tense verbs), and why he came (cf. John 13:1,3; Mark 10:45; Luke 2:49; Matt. 16:22ff). Pilate would not have understood!

▣ **"for this I have been born"** Jesus is referring to His task of revealing the Father (i.e., "to testify to the truth"). Basically there are three reasons why Jesus came.

1. to fully and completely reveal the character and purpose of God (cf. John 1:18; 3:32)
2. to die as the innocent lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29)
3. to give believers an example of how to live and please God

■ **"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice"** I am always deeply moved by "everyone," "anyone," "whosoever," "as many as"! Wow! YHWH is fulfilling Gen. 3:15 in Christ. Jesus restores the image of God damaged in the Fall. Intimate, personal fellowship is again possible! Fellowship is restored now (realized eschatology).

Only those with spiritual eyes and ears (i.e., John 10:3,16,27; 18:37) can understand truth (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,16,43; Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8; 10:23,24; 14:35; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). Jesus is the truth (John 14:6)! When He speaks His followers hear (cf. John 10:1-5). In John to "see" or "hear" truth is theologically equivalent to receiving "eternal life."

**18:38 "Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth'"** Pilate asked this question, but apparently left before he received the answer. Pilate wanted to assure himself that Jesus was no threat to the Roman government. He did this. He then tried to have Jesus released as was a custom of the Jews of that day during the Passover season (cf. John 18:39; Matt 27:15). John is writing, as Luke did, to show that Christianity was no threat to the Roman Empire (i.e., John 18:38b; 19:4; Luke 23:4,14,22).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 18:38b-40**

**<sup>38b</sup>And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. <sup>39</sup>But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for the King of the Jews?" <sup>40</sup>So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.**

**18:39 "you have a custom"** This is explained in Matt. 27:15 and Luke 23:17 (but unknown from historical documentation outside the NT).

**18:40 "So they cried out again, saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas'"** It is ironical that Barabbas was apparently a member of the zealot party and, therefore, guilty of the very charge for which Jesus was condemned (cf. Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19,25). This crowd apparently had been waiting there to support their local folk-hero. The Jewish authorities just took this opportunity to assure the condemnation of Jesus (cf. Mark 15:11).

It is also ironic that the name "Barabbas" means "son of a father." John uses these plays on words throughout his Gospel. The crowd wanted the "son of the father" released instead of "The Son of the Father." The darkness has fully come!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus go to a place where He knew Judas would find Him?
2. Why does John omit Jesus' agony at Gethsemane?
3. Why did the Sanhedrin take Jesus to Pilate?
4. Why is the order of events between John and the Synoptics so confusing?
5. Why does John depict Pilate as trying to release Jesus?

# JOHN 19

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<b>UBS<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
Jesus Sentenced to Die  (18:38b-19:16a) 18:38b-19:7	The Soldiers Mock Jesus  19:1-4 Pilate's Decision 19:5-16	(18:38b-19:7) 18:38b-19:7	Jesus is Sentenced to Die  (18:38b-19:16)  18:40-19:3  19:4-5  19:6a 19:6b 19:7	Jesus Before Pilate  (18:28-19:11) 18:33-19:3
19:8-12		19:8-12	19:8-9a 19:9b-10 19:11 19:12	19:8-11   Jesus is Condemned to Death 19:12-16a
19:13-16a		19:13-16a	19:13-14 19:15a 19:15b 19:15c 19:16a	
The Crucifixion of Jesus 19:16b-22	The King on a Cross  19:17-24	19:16b-25a	Jesus Is Crucified 19:16b-21  19:22	The Crucifixion 19:16b-22  Jesus' Garments Divided
19:23-27	Behold Your Mother 19:25-27	19:25b-27	19:23-24  19:25-26 19:27	19:23-24  Jesus and His Mother 19:25-27

The Death of Jesus 19:28-30	It Is Finished 19:28-30	19:28-30	The Death of Jesus 19:28 19:29-30a 19:30b	The Death of Jesus 19:28 19:29-30
The Piercing of Jesus' Side 19:31-37	Jesus' Side is Pierced 19:31-37	19:31-37	Jesus' Side is Pierced 19:31-37	The Pierced Side 19:31-37
The Burial of Jesus 19:38-42	Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb 19:38-42	19:38-42	The Burial of Jesus 19:38-42	The Burial 19:38-42

## READING CYCLE THREE

### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. <sup>2</sup>And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; <sup>3</sup>and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*. <sup>4</sup>Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." <sup>5</sup>Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* said to them, "Behold, the Man!" <sup>6</sup>So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." <sup>7</sup>The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God."

**19:1 "Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him"** The time sequence and number of floggings is uncertain. All prisoners who were condemned to crucifixion were flogged. It was such a brutal experience that many people died from it. However, in context, Pilate seems to have flogged Jesus to gain sympathy for the purpose of having Him released (cf. Luke 23:16,22; John 19:12). This may be a prophetic fulfillment of Isa. 53:5.

Roman flogging was a terribly painful, brutal punishment reserved for non-Romans. A whip of leather thongs with pieces of bone or metal tied to the ends was used to beat a person bent over with their hands

tied to a low stake. The number of blows was not dictated. It was regularly done before crucifixion (cf. Livy XXXIII:36).

The Gospels use different words to describe the beatings at the hands of the Romans.

1. Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15 - *phragelloō*, to whip or scourge
2. Luke 23:16,22 - *paideuō*, originally of child discipline (cf. Heb. 12:6-7,10), but here, as in 2 Cor. 6:9, of a beating
3. John 19:1 - *mastigoō*, originally the name of the whip, Matt. 10:17; 20:19; 23:34; Acts 22:24-25; Heb. 11:36

They may all be synonymous or they may denote two beatings

- a. a lesser beating by Pilate
- b. a scourging before crucifixion

**19:2 "the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head"** This was a mode of torture whereby the thorns were pressed into Jesus' brow. However, it is quite possible that it represented a radiant crown made of palm leaves, which was another way of mocking Jesus as a king (cf. Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:15-20).

The Greek term "crown" (*stephanos*) was used of an athletic victory garland or a laurel wreath worn by the Emperor.

▣ **"put a purple robe on Him"** Purple (*porphyros*) was a sign of royalty, the dye was very expensive, as it was made from a mollusk shell. Scarlet was the color of Roman officers' robes (Mark 15:17,20). Scarlet dye was made from the scale of an insect found on oak trees. This robe was an allusion to a royal purple kingly robe, but in reality it was probably a faded scarlet Roman officer's cloak (cf. Matt. 27:28).

**19:3**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and they <i>began</i> to come up to Him and say"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"then they said"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"They kept coming up to him, saying"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and came to him and said"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"They kept coming up to him and saying"</b>

These are imperfect tenses. Apparently the soldiers did this one after another. This mocking was more contempt for the Jews in general than Jesus in particular. Possibly Pilate wanted this to cause sympathy for Jesus, but it did not work.

Again in John's writings prophetic statements are often put into the mouths of opponents. These soldiers said more than they realized.

▣ **"and to give Him slaps *in the face*"** This word originally meant "beat with rods," but it came to be used for simply "slapping with the open hand." This may have been a mocking gesture of a royal salute more than a brutal facial beating.

**19:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"I find no guilt in Him"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"I find no fault in Him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"I find no case against him"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I cannot find any reason to condemn him"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"I find no case against him"</b>

One of John's purposes was to show that Christianity was not a threat to the Roman government or its officials. John records that Pilate tried to release Jesus several times (cf. John 18:38; 19:6; Luke 23:4,14,22).

**19:5**

**NASB, NKJV "Behold, the Man!"**  
**TEV, NET "look! Here is the man!"**  
**NRSV, NJB,**  
**REB "Here is the man!"**

There have been several ways to understand this phrase.

1. Jesus dressed as mock king
2. Jesus beaten to invoke sympathy
3. an allusion to Zech. 6:12 (Messianic referent "the Branch")
4. a later affirmation of Jesus' humanity (i.e., counter to the Gnosticism of John's day)
5. related to the Aramaic "son of man," *bar nashā* (another veiled Messianic referent)

**19:6 "they cried out, 'Crucify! Crucify!'"** The reason the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus crucified was so that the curse of Deut. 21:23 would become effective. This is one reason why Paul probably had such great doubts about Jesus of Nazareth being God's Messiah. However, we learn from Gal. 3:13 that Jesus bore our curse on the cross (cf. Col. 2:14).

■ **"I find no guilt in Him"** Pilate says this three times (cf. John 18:38; 19:4).

**19:7 "He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God"** Jesus did claim to be one with God, His very Son. The Jews, who heard His statements and understood their intent, had no doubts He was claiming to be divine (cf. John 5:18; 8:53-59; 10:33). The real Jewish charge against Jesus was blasphemy (cf. Matt. 9:3; 26:65; Mark 2:7; 14:64; Luke 5:21; John 10:33, 36). The charge of blasphemy was punishable by stoning (cf. Lev. 24:16). If Jesus is not incarnated, pre-existent Deity, He should be stoned!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:8-12**

**<sup>8</sup>Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was *even* more afraid; <sup>9</sup>and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin." <sup>12</sup>As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."**

**19:8 "when Pilate heard this statement, he was *even* more afraid"** Pilate's wife had already warned him about Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:19), and now the Jewish leaders were claiming that He had asserted that He was the Son of God. Pilate, being superstitious, became afraid. It was quite common for the gods of the Greek and Roman pantheon to visit humanity in human form.

**19:9**

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV "Where are You from"**  
**TEV, NJB,**  
**NIV "Where do you come from"**

Pilate is not asking about Jesus' hometown but His origin. Pilate is beginning to sense the significance of the person before him. Jesus knew from his comments in John 18:38 that Pilate was not interested in the truth but rather political expediency, so He did not respond.

Pilate joins a number of people who marvel at Jesus but do not understand His origin (cf. John 4:12;

6:42; 7:27-28,41-42; 8:14; 9:29-30). This is part of John's vertical dualism. Jesus is from above and no one below can know/understand/see/hear without the Father's touch (i.e., 6:44,65; 10:29).

▣ **"Jesus gave him no answer"** Pilate must have remembered Jesus' answer (cf. John 18:37)! Some see this as fulfillment of Isa. 53:7.

**19:10 "and I have the authority to crucify You"** Pilate asserts that he has political authority of life and death, yet in the face of an unruly mob he relinquished this right to their will. Pilate's question grammatically expected a "yes" answer.

**19:11 "you would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called "contrary to fact." Jesus was not intimidated by Pilate. He knew who He was and why He had come! The Bible asserts that God is behind all human authority (cf. Rom. 13:1-7).

▣ **"he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin"** At first reading this seems to refer to Judas Iscariot (cf. John 6:64,71; 13:11) but most commentators believe it refers to Caiaphas, who officially handed Jesus over to the Romans. This phrase can be understood collectively as referring to (1) the illegal Jewish leaders or (2) Jewish people as a whole (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19; Romans 9-11).

**19:12 "Pilate made efforts to release Him"** This is an imperfect tense which means repeated action in past time. He had tried several times.

▣ **"If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar"** This is a third class conditional sentence which meant potential action. The Jewish leaders were threatening to report Pilate to his superiors in Rome if he did not follow through on their wishes and condemn Jesus to death. The phrase "friend of Caesar" was an idiom reflecting an honorific title bestowed by the Roman Emperor (starting with either Augustus or Vespasian).

Caesar was a title for the Roman Emperor. It came from Julius Caesar and it was adopted by Augustus.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup>Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" <sup>15</sup>So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." <sup>16</sup>So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.**

**19:13 "when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat"** The text is ambiguous as to who sits on the judgement bench. Both the Williams and Goodspeed translations assert that it was Jesus, Himself, placed there in a mocking way as the King of the Jews. However, the context implies Pilate, who was about to pass judgement.

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NJB "called The Pavement but in Hebrew, Gabbatha"**

**NRSV "called the Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha"**

**TEV "called 'The Stone Pavement' (in Hebrew the name is 'Gabbatha')"**

The use of Hebrew/Aramaic words with their definitions show that John's target audience for his Gospel was Gentiles (cf. John 19:17). This stone pavement was the site of Roman legal pronouncements. The Aramaic term *Gabbatha* means "raised stones" or "elevated place."



**19:14 "it was the day of preparation for the Passover"** There is an obvious discrepancy between the dating of the Synoptic Gospels and the dating of John. In the Synoptics, Jesus observed the Passover meal with the disciples before His arrest (cf. Mark 15:42), but in John the meal took place on Preparation Day before the Feast. See full note at John 18:28.

■ **"it was about the sixth hour"** The chronology of Jesus' trial before Pilate and His crucifixion is:

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Pilate's Verdict				6 <sup>th</sup> Hour 19:14
Crucifixion		3 <sup>rd</sup> Hour 15:25		
Darkness Fell	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 27:45	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 15:33	6 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 23:44	
Jesus Cried Out	9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 27:46	9 <sup>th</sup> Hour 15:34		

When these time designations are compared, two interpretive options arise.

1. they are the same. John used Roman time, counting from 12:00 a.m. (cf. Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 364), and the Synoptics use Jewish time, counting from 6:00 a.m.
2. John is asserting a later time for Jesus' crucifixion which would be another example of the differences between the Synoptics and John

It seems from John 1:39 and 4:6 that he uses Jewish time and not Roman time (cf. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, Vol. 1, p. 403).

The time designations may be symbolic in all the Gospels for they relate to

1. time of daily sacrifices in the Temple (9 a.m. and 3 p.m. cf. Acts 2:15; 3:1)
2. just after noon was the traditional time to kill the Passover Lamb on the afternoon of Nisan 14

The Bible, being an ancient eastern book, does not focus on chronology, as do modern western historical accounts.

■ **"Behold, your King"** As verse 5 may be an allusion to Zech. 6:12, this phrase may be an allusion to Zech. 9:9 (see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 72).

**19:14** The first sentence is another editorial comment.

**19:15 "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"** This phrase has three aorist active imperatives.

The root word "to crucify" meant "to raise" or "to exalt"; this may be one of John's double entendres (cf. John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32).

■ **"The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar'"** The irony is stunning. These Jewish leaders were guilty of blasphemy, the very charge of which they accused Jesus. In the OT only God is King of His people (cf. 1 Sam. 8).

**19:16 "them"** In Matt. 27:26-27 and Mark 15:15-16 the pronoun refers to the Roman soldiers. In John the inference may be that Pilate handed Jesus over to the wishes of the Jewish leaders and the mob.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:17-22**

**<sup>17</sup>They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. <sup>18</sup>There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. <sup>19</sup>Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." <sup>20</sup>Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. <sup>21</sup>So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."**

**19:17 " bearing His own cross"** The shape of the cross in first century Palestine is uncertain; it could have been a capital T, a small t, or an X. Sometimes several prisoners were crucified on one scaffolding. Whatever the shape the condemned prisoner, who had just been scourged, had to carry part of the wooden apparatus to the crucifixion site (cf. Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 14:27; 23:26).

■ **"the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha"** The exact meaning of this phrase is uncertain. The Hebrew/Aramaic term did not refer to a hill that looked like a full skull, but to a low bald hill situated on a major thoroughfare into Jerusalem. The Romans crucified as a deterrent to rebellion. Modern archaeology is uncertain as to the exact location of the ancient walls of the city. Jesus was killed outside the city's wall in a well known public place of executions!

**19:18 "There they crucified Him"** None of the Gospels goes into the physical details of Roman crucifixion. The Romans learned it from the Carthaginians, who learned it from the Persians. Even the exact shape of the cross is uncertain. We know, however, that it was a brutal, lingering death! It had been developed to keep a person alive and in pain for several days. Death usually occurred by asphyxiation. It was meant to be a deterrent to rebellion against Rome.

■ **"two other men"** This fulfilled the prophecy of Isa. 53:9, recorded in Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27; and Luke 23:33.

**19:19 "Pilate also wrote an inscription"** Pilate may have hand-written this title (*titlon*) which someone else wrote on a wooden placard. Matthew calls it "the charge" (*aitian*, cf. Matt. 27:37), while Mark and Luke call it the inscription (*epigraphē*, cf. Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38).

**19:20 "and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek"** "Hebrew" refers to Aramaic (cf. John 5:2; 19:13,17; 20:16; Josephus, *Antiq.* 2.13.1). It is interesting to note the variety among the Gospels as to the exact wording of the charge placed over Jesus' head on the cross.

1. Matt. 27:37 - "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"
2. Mark 15:26 - "The King of the Jews"
3. Luke 23:38 - "This is the King of the Jews"
4. John 19:19 - "Jesus, the Nazarene, the King of the Jews"

Each one is different, but basically the same. This is true of most of the variety of historical detail among the Gospels. Each writer recorded his memories in slightly different ways, but they are still the same eye witness accounts.

Pilate meant to irritate the Jewish leaders by putting the very title they feared on Jesus' cross (cf. John 19:21-22).

**19:22 "What I have written , I have written"** These are two perfect tense verbs which emphasize the completion and finality of what had been written.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:23-25a**

**<sup>23</sup>Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. <sup>24</sup>So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was to fulfill the Scripture, "They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." <sup>25</sup>Therefore the soldiers did these things.**

**19:23 "made four parts, a part to every soldier"** The soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothes. This refers to His outer garments only. It is uncertain how Jesus' clothes could be divided in four ways. This must refer to His shoes, prayer shawl (*tallith*), waist band, and outer garment(s). It is uncertain whether Jesus wore a turban. The Jews would have been offended by total nakedness. This is another fulfilled prophecy quoted in John 19:24 (cf. Ps. 22:18).

▣ **"the tunic"** Jesus' outer garment is referred to by the plural term *himatia*. His long undergarment, worn next to the skin, was the tunic (*chiton*). The distinction between these can be seen in Matt. 5:40 and Luke 6:29. Dorcas made both of these items of clothing (cf. Acts 9:39). First-century Jews apparently wore an additional piece of underwear called a loin cloth. Jesus was not completely disrobed.

The last phrase of John 19:23 is another editorial comment from one who lived with Jesus.

▣ **"now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece"** This may have theological significance. A tunic like this was unusual and may have been expensive. It seems out of character for Jesus to have an unusually expensive piece of clothing. From Josephus (*Antiq.* 3.7.4), we know that the High Priest wore a robe like this ,as rabbinical tradition asserts that Moses did. Could this be a reference to Jesus as

1. the High Priest (cf. Hebrews)
2. the new law giver

Double meanings are always possible in John's Gospel, but interpreters must be diligent not to allegorize all the details!

**19:24 "this was fulfilled Scripture"** Psalm 22 formed the OT background to the crucifixion.

1. Psalm 22:1-2 - Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
2. Psalm 22:7-8 - Matt. 27:39,43; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35
3. Psalm 22:15 - Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28,29
4. Psalm 22:16 - Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 20:25
5. Psalm 22:18 - Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24
6. Psalm 22:27-28 - Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47; (John 20:31; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:25b-27**

**<sup>25b</sup>But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup>Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his**

**19:25 "standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene"** There is much discussion about whether there are four names here or three names. It is probable that there are four names because there would not be two sisters named Mary. Mary's sister, Salome, is named in Mark 15:40 and 16:1. If this is true, then it would mean James, John, and Jesus were cousins. A second-century tradition (*Hegesippus*) says that Clopas was Joseph's brother. Mary Magdala was the one out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, and the first one to whom He chose to appear after His resurrection (cf. John 20:1-2, 11-18; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1-10).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS**

**19:26 "the disciple whom He loved"** Since John is not mentioned by name in the Gospel, many assume this was his way of identifying himself (cf. John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7,20). In each of these he uses the term *agapaō*, but in John 20:2 he uses the same phrase but with *phileō*. These terms are synonymous in John; compare 3:35, *agapaō* and 5:20, *phileō*, where they both refer to the Father's love for the Son.

**19:27 "From that hour, the disciple took her into his own household"** This does not necessarily mean that John immediately took Mary to his house, although this may be implied by the fact that she is not listed with the other women in Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40. Tradition says that John cared for Mary until her death and then he moved to Asia Minor (especially Ephesus) where he had a long and successful ministry. It is at the urging of the Ephesian elders that John, as an old man, wrote his memories of the life of Jesus (i.e., the Gospel of John).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:28-30**

**<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty." <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. <sup>30</sup>Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.**

**19:28 "Jesus knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty'"** It is syntactically ambiguous whether the Scripture mentioned refers to the phrase "I am thirsty" or "all things had already been accomplished." If it is taken in the traditional way, then "I am thirsty" is a reference to Ps. 69:21.

**19:29 "A jar full of sour wine was standing there"** This was a cheap wine, a sour wine. It would have been both for the soldiers and for the crucified. They were given small amounts of liquids in order to make the crucifixion last longer.

■ **"sour wine"** This is literally "vinegar." This was the drink of the poor people. Notice that Jesus did not take the drugged wine that the women of Jerusalem offered Him (cf. Mark 15:23; Matt. 27:34). Possibly the reason He accepted this drink was to fulfill Ps. 22:15. He was too parched to speak and He had one more thing to say.

■ **"upon a branch of hyssop"** Some see this as a symbolic use of the special plant that was used in the Passover service (cf. Exod. 12:22). Others believe that there has been an ancient scribal corruption of the term and that originally it meant "spear," "javelin," or "stick" (cf. NEB but REB reverts to hyssop). Matthew 27:48 and Mark 15:36 have "reed."

The reason many see a scribal change here is because the hyssop plant did not have a very long stem (only 2 to 4 feet), but it must be remembered that the crosses were not raised that high above the ground.

Our traditional pictures of a high cross may be our misunderstanding of John 3:14. Jesus' feet may have been within a foot or two of the ground.

**19:30 "It is finished!"** This is a perfect passive indicative. From the Synoptic Gospels we learned that He shouted this with a loud cry (cf. Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; Matt. 27:50). This refers to the finished work of redemption. This form of the term (*telos*) in the Egyptian papyri (Moulton and Milligan) was a commercial idiom for "paid in full."

■ **"He bowed His head and gave up His spirit"** The phrase "bowed His head" was idiomatic of "going to sleep." Jesus' death was a calm moment for Him. The inference is that in death the spiritual aspect of a person is separated from the physical. This seems to demand a disembodied state for believers between death and resurrection day (cf. 2 Cor. 5; 1 Thess. 4:13-18, see William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*).

The Gospel parallels in Mark 15:37 and Luke 23:46 have "He breathed His last." The Hebrew word for "spirit" and "breathe" are the same. His last breath was viewed as His spirit leaving the body (cf. Gen. 2:7).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:31-37**

**<sup>31</sup>Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup>So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; <sup>33</sup>but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. <sup>34</sup>But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup>And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup>For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." <sup>37</sup>And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."**

**19:31 "that the bodies could not remain on the cross on the Sabbath"** The Jews were very concerned about dead bodies ceremonially polluting the land (cf. Deut. 21:23), especially on the High Holy Sabbath of Passover.

■ **"(for the Sabbath was a high day)"** This has been interpreted in two ways.

1. the Passover meal and the Sabbath coincided this particular year (Jews used a lunar calendar)
2. the feast of Unleavened Bread coincided with the Sabbath this year

The feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread (cf. Exodus 12) had become an eight-day festival.

■ **"that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away"** Apparently this situation had happened before. A large mallet was used to break the legs of the crucified persons. Crucifixion usually caused death by asphyxiation. Breaking the legs caused this almost immediately because the person could not push up on his legs to breathe.

**19:33 "they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs"** This may also be fulfilled prophecy going back to Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12 and Ps. 34:20.

**19:34 "one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately blood and water came out"** This is an eyewitness medical detail showing that He was truly dead and thereby asserting the true humanity of Jesus the Messiah. The Gospel of John, as well as 1 John, were written in the days of a growing Gnosticism which affirmed the Deity of Jesus but denied His humanity.

**19:35** This verse is a comment by John, who was the only eyewitness to all the events of (1) the night trials;

(2) the Roman trial; and (3) the crucifixion. This comment on the death of Jesus is parallel to 20:30-31, which shows the evangelistic purpose of the Gospel (cf. John 21:24). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in the verb of the last clause. Some texts have the present tense and some the aorist tense. If it was originally an aorist, it is focusing on unbelievers, as does 20:30-31. However, if it is present it is focusing on continuing and developing faith. John's Gospel seems to be directed to both groups.

▣ **"true. . . truth"** See Special Topics at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**19:36** This may be an allusion to the Passover Lamb from Exod.12:46; Num. 9:12; or Ps. 34:20. It depends on which phrase is being referred to: (1) pierced or (2) broken. Jesus Himself showed the early church these Scriptures during the 40 days that He stayed on earth after the resurrection (cf. Luke 24:27; Acts 1:2-3). The preaching of the early church (in Acts) reflects these fulfilled OT prophecies which Jesus showed them.

**19:37** This is a quote from Zech. 12:10 which is one of the great promises that

1. Israel will one day turn to Jesus, the Messiah, in faith (cf. Rev. 1:7)
2. many Jews who had believed already were there grieving over Jesus' death
3. this refers to the Roman soldiers (cf. Matt. 27:54) representing the Gentile nations (cf. John 12:32)

It is interesting that this quote is obviously from the Masoretic Hebrew Text, not the Septuagint which is usually quoted by the Gospel writers. The Septuagint has "mocked," but the Masoretic Text has "pierced."

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 19:38-42**

**<sup>38</sup>After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret *one* for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*. <sup>40</sup>So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup>Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup>Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.**

**19:38-39 "Joseph. . . Nicodemus"** These two wealthy, influential members of the Sanhedrin were secret disciples of Jesus who went public at this critical and dangerous time.

**19:39 "bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*"** This was the traditional aromatic burial spices of the Jewish people of the first century. The amount is somewhat extravagant; many see this as symbolic of Jesus being buried as a king (cf. 2 Chr. 16:14). See special topic on anointing at John 11:2.

The Greek word for "mixture" (*migma*), found in MSS P<sup>66</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , A, D, L, and most of the church Fathers and versions, is surprisingly changed to "package" (*eligma*) in MSS  $\kappa^*$ , B, W, and some Coptic versions. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "mixture" a "B" rating (almost certain).

#### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL SPICES](#)**

**19:40 "So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices"** The spices were for two purposes: (1) to kill the odor and (2) to hold the burial wrappings in place.

**19:41 "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden"** It is crucial that we understand the haste with which Joseph and Nicodemus worked. Jesus died at 3:00 p.m. and had to be in the grave by 6:00 p.m., which was the beginning of the Jewish Passover Sabbath.

▣ **"a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive participle. We learn from Matt. 27:60 that this was Joseph's own tomb. This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9 quoted in Matthew 27:57.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the soldiers flog and mock Jesus?
2. What is the significance of Pilate's repeated attempt to let Jesus go free?
3. Why is the statement of the Jewish Priest in verse 15 so astonishing?
4. Why are the details of the crucifixion different from Gospel to Gospel?
5. How does Deuteronomy 21:23 relate to Jesus' crucifixion?

# JOHN 20

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Resurrection of Jesus	The Empty Tomb	The Resurrection	The Empty Tomb	The empty Tomb
20:1-10	20:1-10	20:1-10	20:1-10	20:1-2 20:3-10
The Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene Sees the Risen Lord		Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene	The Appearance to Mary Magdalene
20:11-18	20:11-18	20:11-18	20:11-13a 20:13b 20:14-15a 20:15b 20:16a 20:16b 20:17 20:18	20:11-18
The Appearance of Jesus to the Disciples	The Apostles Commissioned		Jesus Appears to His Disciples	Appearances to the Disciples
20:19-23	20:19-23	20:19-23	20:19-23	20:19-23
Jesus and Thomas	Seeing and Believing		Jesus and Thomas	
20:24-29	20:24-29	20:24-29	20:24-25a 20:25b 20:26-27 20:28 20:29	20:24-29
The Purpose of the Book	That You May Believe		The Purpose of the Book	First Conclusion
20:30-31	20:30-31	20:30-31	20:30-31	20:30-31

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.



Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-29

- A. Every promise that Jesus made to the Apostles in chapters 14-17 was fulfilled on the evening of the first resurrection Sunday. See note at John 16:20.
- B. The Gospel accounts differ in the details surrounding the resurrection because
  1. they are eyewitness accounts
  2. years had passed
  3. each wrote to a select target group and emphasized different things (cf. Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." <sup>3</sup>So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; <sup>5</sup>and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>So Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*, <sup>7</sup>and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So the disciples went away again to their own homes.

**20:1 "on the first *day* of the week"** This was Sunday, the first work day following the high Sabbath of Passover week, when the first fruits were offered in the Temple. Jesus was the first fruits of the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23). Jesus' appearances on three successive Sunday nights set the stage for believers worshiping on Sundays (cf. John 20:19, 26; Luke 24:36ff; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

■ **"Mary of Magdalene"** This was one of several women who accompanied Jesus and the Apostles. In Galilee Jesus had delivered her from several demons (cf. Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2). She was present at the crucifixion. See notes at John 19:25.

Although John's Gospel does not state the purpose of Mary's visit, Mark 16:1 and Luke 23:56 mention that several women (cf. John 20:2) came early to anoint Jesus' body with spices. Apparently they did not know of Joseph and Nicodemus' anointing or thought it needed to be supplemented.

■ **"while it was still dark"** Apparently she and the others had left home while it was still dark, but by the time they arrived it was dawn (cf. Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2).

■ **"the stone *already* taken away from the tomb"** Literally this is "taken out" (perfect passive participle) from its groove (cf. Matt. 28:2). Remember the stone was removed to let the eyewitnesses into the tomb, not to let Jesus out. His new resurrection body did not have the physical limits of His earthly body (i.e., 20:19,26).

**20:2 "So she ran"** Apparently she left the empty tomb early to tell the disciples about Jesus not being there (cf. Matt. 28:5).

■ **"the other disciple whom Jesus loved"** This Greek word for love is *phileō* which has the connotation of "brotherly love." However in the Koine Greek (300 b.c.-a.d. 300) it was being used synonymously with *agapaō*. The disciple mentioned seems to be John, the author of the Gospel (cf. John 20:4-8 and 13:23). Here he is linked with Peter.

■ **"They have taken away the Lord"** This is an aorist active indicative (i.e., completed action). Jesus was gone. In Mary's mind, "they" refers to the Jewish leaders. Apparently, the Apostles and the disciples present in the upper room were surprised by the resurrection!

■ **"we"** This includes Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and the other women (cf. Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).

**20:4 "the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first"** John was probably the youngest of the Apostles (i.e., tradition).

**20:5 "stooping"** The tombs of this period had a low entrance about 3 to 4 feet high. One would have to bend down (cf. John 20:11) to enter the cave/dugout.

■ **"looking in"** This is literally "to squint so as to see." This was because of the contrast between the morning light and the darkened tomb.

■ **"the linen wrappings lying *there*"** Where and how the bandages were lying is not specified in the Greek text. If the body was stolen, the bandages would have been taken also because the spices acted like a glue!

**20:6 "Simon Peter"** Simon (*Cephas*) was his Hebrew (Aramaic) name, while Peter (*Petros*) was his Greek name given to him by Jesus. In Greek it meant "a detached stone or boulder" (cf. Matt. 16:18). In Aramaic there is no distinction between *Petros* and *Petra*.

**20:7 "face-cloth"** The face was wrapped with a separate cloth (cf. John 11:44). It is possible that this handkerchief was used to (1) lay over the face; (2) wrap the face (cf. NJB); or (3) tie the jaw lightly in place (cf. TEV).

■ **"but rolled up in a place by itself"** This is another perfect passive participle which implies that special care was taken by someone to fold it. This is apparently what caught John's attention and elicited belief (John 20:8).

**20:8 "he saw and believed"** John saw the physical evidence and believed Jesus was alive! Belief in the resurrection becomes a crucial theological issue.

1. Romans 10:9-13

2. 1 Corinthians 15

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 is a good summary of the consequences if Jesus has not been raised! The resurrection became a central truth of the early apostolic sermons in Acts called the *kerygma*. See Special Topic at John 5:39.

**20:9 "they did not understand the Scripture"** This is another editorial comment by the author. It may refer to Ps. 16:10, which Peter quotes on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:27. However, it could refer to Isa. 53:10-12 or Hos. 6:2. The Sanhedrin understood Jesus' prediction about His resurrection (cf. Matt. 27:62-66), while the disciples did not. What irony!

This verse may have functioned theologically to reinforce the truth that the Spirit had not yet come in fullness on the disciples. The Spirit, once given, would help believers understand Jesus' words and actions (cf. John 2:22; 14:26).

**20:10** This may mean (1) they went back to Galilee (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10,16; John 21 finds them fishing in the Sea of Galilee) or (2) they went to their quarters in Jerusalem. Because the post-resurrection experiences were in the upper room, #2 is more probable.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:11-18**

**<sup>11</sup>But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. <sup>13</sup>And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and *that* He had said these things to her.**

**20:11 "weeping"** This is literally "wailing" (cf. John 11:31). It is Imperfect tense, which speaks of continuous action in past time. Eastern funeral practices are characteristically very emotional.

**20:12 "two angels"** John and Luke (24:23) agree that there were two angels. Matthew, who usually has two of everything (cf. John 8:28; 9:27; 20:30), has only one angel! This is one example of the unexplainable differences between the Gospels.

The Gospels are eyewitness accounts that select, adapt, and combine the words and works of Jesus for their own (inspired) theological purposes and target group. Modern readers often ask questions such as (1) which one of the Gospels is historically accurate or (2) seek more historical details about an event or teaching than is recorded by an individual inspired Gospel writer. Interpreters must first seek the intent of the original author as expressed in an individual Gospel. We do not need more historical detail to understand the Gospel.

▣ **"in white"** The spiritual realm or spiritual beings are described as wearing white.

1. Jesus' garments at the transfiguration - Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29
2. angels at the tomb - Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12
3. angels at the ascension - Acts 1:10
4. saints with the glorified Christ - Rev. 3:4-5,18
5. the elders (angels) around the throne of God - Rev. 4:4
6. the martyrs under the throne of God - Rev. 6:11
7. all of the redeemed - Rev. 7:9,13-14 (cf. Dan. 12:10)
8. the armies (of angels) in heaven - Rev. 19:14
9. OT imagery for forgiveness - Ps. 51:7; Isa. 1:18 (symbolizing God's purity, cf. Dan. 7:9)

**20:14 "did not know that it was Jesus"** Mary Magdala did not recognize Jesus. The possible reasons for this are:

1. there were tears in her eyes
2. she was looking from the darkness to light
3. Jesus' appearance was somewhat different (cf. Matt. 28:17 and Luke 24:16,37)

**20:15 "Sir"** This is the Greek word *kurios*. It is used here in its non-theological sense (cf. John 12:21). It can mean "sir," "mister," "master," "owner," "husband," or "Lord." Mary thought she was talking to (1) a gardener or (2) the owner of the garden.

But note its theological usage in John 20:28!

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the speaker's perspective. She believed someone had stolen the body.

**20:16 "Mary. . .Rabboni"** Mary is literally Miriam. Both of these terms are Aramaic ("Hebrew" means Aramaic, cf. John 5:2; 19:13,17,20). Apparently Jesus said her name in a characteristic manner. He must have done the same type of thing when He prayed with two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:30-31). The "I" on the end of "Rabboni" may reflect "my Rabbi," "my Master" or "my teacher."

### SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

**20:17**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"stop clinging to Me"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Do not cling to Me"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Do not hold on to Me"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Do not hold on to Me"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Do not cling to Me"</b>

The KJV has "touch me not." This is a present middle imperative with the negative particle which usually means to stop an act which is already in process. Mary had grabbed Him and was holding on! This has no theological implications about touching Jesus' body before the ascension. In John 20:27 Jesus allows Thomas to touch Him and in Matt. 28:9 He allows the women to hold His feet.

- **"I have not yet ascended"** This is perfect active indicative. Jesus will not ascend into heaven until 40 days after His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:9).
- **"go to My brethren"** The resurrected, glorified Lord calls these cowards "brothers" (cf. Matt. 12:50).
- **"I am going up"** This is present tense. This did not actually happen until forty days later while He was in their presence (cf. Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:2-3). John consistently uses the vertical dualism of "above" and "below." Jesus is from the Father (pre-existence) and He returns to the Father (glorification).
- **"to My Father and your Father"** What a marvelous statement! However, it must also be stated that this does not imply that believers' sonship is equal to Jesus' sonship. He is the unique Son of the Father (John 3:16), fully God and fully man. Believers become family members only through Him. He is both Lord, Savior, and brother!

**20:18** Mary is also a witness!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:19-23**

**<sup>19</sup>So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>And when He had said this, He showed them both His**

hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." <sup>22</sup>And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained."

**20:19 "when it was evening on that day"** Jewish time begins and ends at twilight (cf. Gen. 1:5), which here is about 6:00 p.m., on Sunday.

■ **"the first day of the week"** Sunday was the first work day, like our Monday. This became the meeting day of the Church to commemorate Jesus' resurrection. He Himself set the pattern by appearing in the Upper Room three Sunday nights in a row (cf. John 20:19,26; Luke 24:36ff; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

The first-generation believers continued to meet on the Sabbath at the local synagogues and at the temple on set feast days. However, the rabbis instituted a "curse oath" that required synagogue members to reject Jesus as the Messiah (after a.d. 70). At this point they dropped the Sabbath services, but continued to meet with other believers on Sunday, the resurrection day, to commemorate Jesus' resurrection.

■ **"doors were shut"** This is a perfect passive participle. The plural implies that both the downstairs and upstairs doors were locked. This was mentioned to (1) accentuate Jesus' appearance or (2) to show their fear of arrest.

■ **"the disciples"** Thomas was not present. Other disciples besides the eleven Apostles were present (cf. Luke 24:33).

■ **"Peace be with you"** This shows their surprise, and possibly fear. Jesus had promised them peace (cf. John 14:27; 16:33). This probably reflects the Hebrew greeting *shalom*. Jesus repeats it three times (John 20:19,21,26).

**20:20 "showed them both His hands and His side"** John apparently focuses on the piercing of Jesus' side more than the other Gospels (cf. John 19:37; 20:25). His feet are not mentioned except in Luke 24:39 and Ps. 22:16. Jesus' glorified body retains the marks of His crucifixion (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 3:1).

■ **"Lord"** This title is used here in its full theological sense which relates to YHWH of the OT (cf. Exod. 3:14). Applying an OT title for God the Father to Jesus was one way NT authors affirmed Jesus' full Deity. See Special Topic at John 6:20.

**20:21 "as the Father has sent Me"** This is a perfect active indicative (cf. John 17:18). The Church has a divine mandate (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Believers have also been sent on a sacrificial mission (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16).

Jesus uses two different terms for "send." In John these are synonymous. This is clearly seen in chapter 8, where *pempō* is used of Jesus' being sent by the Father (cf. John 8:16,18,26,29), yet *apostellō* is used in John 8:42. This same thing is true of chapters 5,6. See Special Topic Send (*Apostellō*) at John 5:24.

**20:22 "He breathed on them"** This is a word play on the term "breathed." The Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* can mean "breathe," "wind," or "spirit." This same verb in the Septuagint was used in the OT of God's creative activity in Gen. 2:7 and the revitalization of Israel in Ezek. 37:5,9. The pronoun "them" refers to a wider group than just the Apostles (cf. Luke 24:33).

■ **"Receive the Holy Spirit"** This is an aorist active imperative. How this relates to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is uncertain. Jesus fulfilled everything that He promised the disciples at this first appearance. It is related to Jesus' equipping them for their new ministry assignment as the Spirit equipped Him at His baptism.

This verse was used in the early church's fight over the question of the Spirit proceeding from the Father or from the Father and the Son. In reality all three persons of the Trinity are involved in all the acts of redemption.

In *A Theology of the New Testament*, George Ladd summarizes the possible interpretations of this passage:

"This passage raises difficulties in the light of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, which may be solved in one of three ways. Either John did not know about Pentecost and substitutes this story so that it becomes in effect the Johannine Pentecost; or there were actually two gifts of the Spirit; or Jesus' breathing on the disciples was an acted parable promissory and anticipatory to the actual coming of the Spirit at Pentecost" (p. 289).

The footnote #24 (p. 1965) in the NET Bible asserts that this recalls Gen. 2:7 (LXX). As physical life was given in Genesis, eternal life is given in the NT. This emphasis on "the breath of God" is paralleled with Ezekiel 37, where YHWH brings new life to His people by the breath of the Spirit.

**20:23 "If you forgive the sins of any"** These are two third class conditional sentences with *an* which is usually used with second class conditional sentences, not *ean*. This mixed condition heightens the contingency which relates both to those who share the Gospel and to those who respond by faith. Someone with the gospel knowledge chooses to share it and someone hears it and chooses to receive it. Both aspects are required. This verse does not give arbitrary authority to clergy, but wonderful life-giving power to believing witnesses! This authority was evidenced in the mission trip of the seventy during Jesus' life.

▣ **"their sins have been forgiven them"** This grammatical construction is a perfect passive indicative. The passive voice implies God's forgiveness, available completely through gospel proclamation. Believers have the keys of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:19) if they will only use them. This promise is to the Church, not individuals. This is theologically similar to "the bound and unbound" of Matt. 18:18.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:24-25**

**<sup>24</sup>But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.**

**<sup>25</sup>So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."**

#### **20:24 "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus was not with them when Jesus came"**

Didymus in Greek means "twin" (cf. John 11:16). Often people have used this passage to call Thomas a doubter, but remember 11:16. Thomas appears more often in John's Gospel than any other Gospel (cf. John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24,26,27,28,29; 21:2).

**20:25 "Unless. . . I will not believe"** "Unless" is a third class conditional sentence with a strong Double negative, "I will never, no never, believe it" without sight and touch. Jesus honored this request. Jesus worked with the faith of the disciples through (1) His miracles and (2) His predictions. Jesus' message was so radically new, He allowed them time to understand and assimilate the gospel assertions and implications.

▣ **"imprint"** See Special Topic below.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (TUPOS)**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:26-29**

**<sup>26</sup>After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup>Then He**

said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

**20:26 "after eight days"** This is a Hebrew idiom for a week. This was another Sunday evening. Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room (possibly John Mark's house) three Sunday nights in a row and thereby set a precedent for Christian worship. See note at John 20:19.

**20:27 "and do not be unbelieving, but believing"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with negative particle which usually means to stop an act in process. All believers are a strange mixture of doubt and faith!

**20:28** Thomas' confession may be theologically related to verse 17. Thomas' confession may have had an OT precedence in that whenever the titles YHWH *Elohim* (i.e., Gen. 2:4) occurred together, the name is translated "Lord God." Jesus fully accepts this shocking affirmation of His Deity. From chapter 1, verse 1, John's Gospel asserts the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus claimed deity several times in John (cf. John 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28) and the author asserts His deity in John 1:1,14-18; 5:18. Other biblical authors also clearly assert that Jesus is divine (cf. Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1,11; 1 John 5:20).

**20:29** This opening phrase can be a statement or a question expecting a "yes" answer. The grammatical structure is ambiguous.

This is similar to the blessing in John 17:20 (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 20:30-31**

<sup>30</sup>Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

**20:30** Verses 30-31 are obviously the theme and purpose of the Gospel. It is an evangelistic tract! The Gospel writers, under inspiration, had the right and God-given ability to select, arrange, and adapt and summarize Jesus' acts and words to clearly communicate to selected audiences, Jews, Romans, and Gentiles, the great truths about Jesus. The NT is not a Christian Talmud.

Carl F. H. Henry, in the opening article entitled "The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 says:

"The Bible does not aim to present a complete chronology of events, whether it deals with creation narrative or with salvation history, including incarnation history. But the stated purpose of the biblical writings is to give man all that is necessary and sufficient for his redemptive rescue and obedient service of his Maker. Though the biblical writers sometimes view the one saving work of God from various angles and for differing purposes, what they tell us is reliable and adequate. Matthew subordinates much of the chronology of the ministry of Jesus to a topical arrangement serviceable for instruction. Luke omits much of the material contained in Mark in what is still an orderly account that bulwarks catechetical indoctrination (cf. John 1:4). John openly comments on the radical selectivity that underlies the fourth Gospel (20:30,31)" (pp. 27-28).

■ **"many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples"** These "signs" can be understood in several ways.

1. the signs that He was truly alive
  - a. their touching his wounds
  - b. His eating with them (cf. Luke 24:43)
2. special unrecorded signs done in the upper room in their presence

3. a reference to His life's work (focusing on the past) preparing them to record the Gospels (cf. Luke 24:46-48)

**20:31**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**TEV, NJB** "that you may believe"

**NRSV** "that you may come to believe"

Some early Greek manuscripts, P<sup>66</sup>, κ<sup>\*</sup>, B, and the Greek text used by Origen, have a present subjunctive, which would imply that John was written to encourage believers to continue in the faith.

Other Greek uncial manuscripts (i.e., κ<sup>2</sup>, A, C, D, L, N, W) have an aorist subjunctive, which would imply that John was writing to unbelievers. UBS<sup>4</sup> puts the aorist in the text but gives it a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding). This verse is the stated purpose of the Gospel. John is, like the other Gospels, an evangelistic tract.

■ **"the Christ"** This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term "Messiah" which is literally "an anointed One." It was the OT descendant of David who was prophesied to bring in the new age of righteousness. Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:45) is the Jewish Messiah (cf. John 11:27).

This designation for Jesus is found early in the Gospel (cf. John 1:41). However, the title "Lord," not "Messiah," was the normal title used for Jesus in Gentile contexts (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:9-11).

The concept of "Messiah" had eschatological implications (1) to the Pharisees it had political, national expectations and (2) in Apocalyptic Jewish literature it had cosmic, universal expectations.

■ **"the Son of God"** This title is used sparingly in the Synoptics (perhaps because of possible misunderstanding by Gentiles), but used early in John (cf. John 1:14,34,49). It was John's way of asserting the unique relationship between Jesus and the Father (use of *huios*). John uses this familial metaphor in several ways.

1. a title
2. in connection with "the only begotten" (*monogenēs*, cf. John 1:18; 3:16; 1 John 4:9)
3. in combination with the use of the title "Father" (cf. John 20:17)

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD](#) at 1 John 3:8.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who came to the tomb? When? Why?
2. Why had the disciples not expected the resurrection? Did anyone expect it?
3. Why did Mary not recognize Jesus?
4. Why did Jesus tell Mary not to cling to Him?
5. Explain verses 22-23 in your own words.
6. Is it fair to call Thomas a doubter?
7. Define the word "believe" as it was understood in Jesus' day, not ours.



# JOHN 21

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Appearance of Jesus to the Seven Disciples	Breakfast By the Sea	Epilogue	Jesus Appears to Seven disciples	The Appearance on the Shore of Tiberias
21:1-14	21:1-14	21:1-3	21:1-3a 21:3b-5a	21:1-3
		21:4-8	21:5b 21:6 21:7-10	21:4-8
		21:9-14	21:11-14	21:9-14
Jesus and Peter	Jesus Restores Peter		Jesus and Peter	
21:15-19	21:15-19	21:15-19	21:15a 21:15b 21:15c-16a 21:16b 21:16c-17a 21:17b 21:17c-19	21:15-19
Jesus and the Beloved Disciple	The Beloved Disciple and His Book		Jesus and the Other Disciple	
21:20-23	21:20-25	21:20-23	21:20-21 21:22 21:23	21:20-23 Second Conclusion
21:24		21:24-25	21:24 Conclusion	21:24
21:25			21:25	21:25

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-25

- A. There has been much discussion about chapter 21 being an addition because the Gospel seems to end in John 20:31. However, there is no Greek manuscript that omits chapter 21.
- B. Verse 25 is often thought to be a later addition because in some manuscripts John 7:53 - 8:11 is inserted after verse 24. Also, in the ancient manuscript Sinaiticus, the scribe originally omitted verse 25 and had to go back and erase an ornamental Colophon in order to insert it.
- C. Though not an integral part of the Gospel of John, chapter 21 was certainly from the hand of the Apostle. It answers two questions of the early church:
  1. was Peter re-instated?
  2. what about the legend concerning John's longevity?

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:1-3

<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested *Himself* in this way. <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

**21:1 "Sea of Tiberias"** Tiberias was the Roman administrative capital of Galilee. This body of water is also known as the "Sea of Galilee" (cf. John 6:1) or "Lake of Gennesaret" (cf. Matt. 14:34; Mark 6:53; Luke 5:1) and in the OT as "Lake of Chinnereth" (cf. Num. 34:11; Deut. 3:17; Jos. 11:2; 12:3; 13:27; 19:35; 1 Kgs. 15:20).

■ **"He manifested *Himself* in this way"** This verb has the connotation of "to display fully or clearly" (cf. John 1:31; 2:11; 7:4; 9:3; 1 John 1:2; 2:28; 3:2; 4:9). In Matthew there is a meeting in Galilee which occurred on a mountain (cf. 26:32; 28:7, 10, 16), the setting for "the Great Commission." In John Jesus manifested Himself at the Sea of Tiberias. In this encounter Jesus deals with two questions the early church was interested in

1. was Peter reinstated as a leader
2. what about the legend that John would not die before Jesus' return

**21:2 "Thomas called Didymus"** See Special Topic about the Apostles' names at John 1:45.

Apparently seven of the eleven went fishing.

- **"sons of Zebedee"** This refers to James (Jacob) and John (Johanan, cf. Matt. 4:21). Neither James nor John are mentioned by name in John's Gospel.

**21:3 "Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing'"** This is present tense. There are several theories concerning this fishing trip.

1. it was a relaxing trip to pass the time until Jesus' appointed meeting (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10)
2. it was for the purpose of making money
3. it was a re-instigation of Peter's fishing vocation

This chapter is very similar to Luke 5.

- **"and that night they caught nothing"** Notice that these men, who were able to heal the sick and cast out demons, did not have miraculous powers on all occasions for all purposes. This verb is used nowhere else in the NT for catching fish. Usually it is used of arresting someone.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:4-8**

**<sup>4</sup>But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." <sup>6</sup>And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. <sup>7</sup>Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup>But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.**

**21:4 "yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus"** There have been several theories as to this inability to recognize Jesus.

1. it was too dark
2. He was too far away
3. they were too tired
4. Jesus looked slightly different (cf. John 21:12; Matt. 28:16-17; Luke 24:13ff)
5. they were divinely prevented from recognizing Him (cf. Luke 24:16)

**21:5 "Children"** This is used metaphorically. There are two terms for "little children" commonly used in the NT. This one (*paidion*) is used least and is different from the more common one (*teknion*) used in John and 1 John. This term occurs in the Gospel only in John 4:49; 16:21, and here. These terms seem to be used synonymously in 1 John, *paidion* in John 2:13,18, but *teknion* in John 2:1,12,28.

- **"you do not have any fish"** This term "fish" (*prosphagion*) really denotes food of any kind that is eaten with bread, but in this context, "fish" is demanded. This question expects a "no" answer.

**21:6** Jesus was acting in the same manner as He did when he first called them, Luke 5:1-11. As a characteristic of this chapter (see note at John 21:15) two different Greek terms are used for boat, *plouon* in John 21:3 and 6 and *plouaron* (little boat) in John 21:8. John shows his literary variety in the chapter several times.

**21:7 "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved"** This refers to the author of the Gospel, the Apostle John (cf. John 13:23; 20:2,3,8; 21:20). John is never named in the Gospel.

NASB	"he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped <i>for work</i> )"
NKJV	"Put on his outer garment (for he had removed it)"
NRSV	"he put on some clothes, for he was naked"
TEV	"he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken his clothes off)"
NJB	"Peter tied his outer garment around him (for he had nothing on)"

In first century Palestine people wore an outer robe and close-fitting long underwear. Peter had removed his outer cloak/robe and rolled down his underwear to the waist.

▣ **"It is the Lord"** The term *kurios* was the Greek term for "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," or "lord." In some contexts it is simply a polite address, but in others it is a theological affirmation of Jesus' deity. In this context these fishermen recognized this person on the beach as the glorified, resurrected Lord!

The origin of the translation comes from OT usage, where YHWH is translated as Lord. This occurred because the Jews were afraid to pronounce this covenant name for Deity, so they substituted another Hebrew term, *Adonai*, which corresponds to *kurios*. See Special Topic at John 6:20.

Lord is the title which is above every name in Phil. 2:9-11. It was the part of the early church's baptismal confession, "Jesus is Lord" (cf. Rom. 10:9-13).

**21:8 "the other disciple"** Apparently all the inner circle had gone with Peter and John for a fishing retreat as a way to get some spending money (they could no longer depend on the women who traveled with Jesus).

- ▣ **"the net full of fish"** Even at this late date Jesus is still
1. building their faith
  2. providing their needs
  3. confirming His resurrection and authority (over nature)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:9-14**

<sup>9</sup>So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire *already* laid and fish placed on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." <sup>11</sup>Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, "Come *and* have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave *it* to them, and the fish likewise. <sup>14</sup>This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

**21:9 "a charcoal fire *already* laid and fish placed on it, and bread"** The purpose of this early morning breakfast was for fellowship and for theological reflection. The theological implications are

1. This section deals with Peter's denial in a setting of another charcoal fire (cf. John 18:18). This term is found here and there.
2. The Gospel of John and 1 John were written to combat the heresy of Gnosticism which denied true humanity to Jesus, the Messiah. Jesus ate with them.

**21:10** There are two different terms for fish in this paragraph: (1) in John 21:9,10, & 13 the term is *opsarion*, which meant small fish and (2) in John 21:6,8 & 11 the term is *ichthus*, which meant large fish. They seem to be used interchangeably in this context.

**21:11 "a hundred and fifty-three"** In context there seems to be no symbolic significance to this number; it is simply an eye-witness detail. However, the inappropriate tendency of the early church to allegorize all numbers and details forced this verse to mean:

1. Cyril stated that 100 stood for Gentiles and 50 stood for Jews and 3 for the Trinity.
2. Augustine asserted that this number refers to the Ten Commandments and the seven gifts of the Spirit, which equals the number seventeen. If you add up each number 1,2,3,4 through 17 you get 153. Augustine said this was the total number who came to Christ through the law and grace.
3. Jerome said there are 153 different kinds of fish, therefore, this is symbolic of all nations coming to Christ. This allegorical method of interpretation speaks of the cleverness of the interpreter and not the intent of the original, inspired author!

■ **"and although there were so many, the net was not torn"** This is either a usual eyewitness detail or an implied miracle.

**21:14 "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples"** This must refer to the two accounts in chapter 20 added to this one.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:15-19**

**<sup>15</sup>So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" <sup>16</sup>He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." <sup>17</sup>He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. <sup>18</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." <sup>19</sup>Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"**

**21:15 "Simon, *son* of John"** Notice that Jesus did not call him "Simon Peter;" this man was anything but a rock!

There is a manuscript variant related to Simon's father's name.

1. John -  $\kappa^1$ , B, C\*, D, L W
2. Jona - A, C<sup>2</sup>
3. omit -  $\kappa^*$

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 a "B" rating (almost certain) following 1:42 (P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>72</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B\*, L, W).

■ **"love. . .love. . .love"** There is an obvious threefold repetition which seems to relate to Peter's threefold denials in the courtyard of the High Priest (cf. John 18:17,25,27). There is a variety of parallels and contrasts throughout this section.

1. love (*phileō*) versus love (*agapaō*)
2. lambs versus sheep
3. know (*ginoskō*) versus know (*oida*)

There has been much discussion as to whether this refers to literary variety or if there is an intended contrast between these terms. John often uses variety, especially in this chapter (two terms for "children," "boat," and "fish"). There seems to be some distinction in this context between the Greek words *agapaō* and *phileō*, but this cannot be pushed because in Koine Greek they are synonymous (cf. John 3:35; 5:20; 11:3,5).

■ **"do you love Me more than these"** The syntax is ambiguous as to the object of this question. Some assert that it refers to

1. fishing as a vocation

2. Peter's previous statements of loving Jesus more than the other disciples (cf. Matt. 26:33; Mark 14:29 and John 13:37)
3. the first shall be servant of all (cf. Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-27)

■ **"Tend My lambs"** This is a present active imperative. All three of these statements are the same grammatical form (cf. John 21:16 and 17), but slightly different wording (shepherd My sheep and tend My sheep).

**21:17 "Lord, you know all things"** Peter is learning not to speak so fast. He expresses good theology (cf. John 2:25; 6:61,64; 13:11; 16:30).

■ **"You know that I love You"** There is a change in the Greek word for "know" between John 21:16 (*oida*) and John 21:17 (*oida* and *ginoskō*). The exact reason is uncertain and may simply involve variety.

**21:18 "stretch out your hands"** This may be a technical idiom used (1) in the early church and (2) in Greek literature for "crucifixion."

**21:19 "signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God"** Tradition asserts that Peter died by crucifixion in an upside-down position. In *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 3:1, Eusebius says, "Peter was believed to have preached in Pontius, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia unto the Jews of the Diaspora. Having gone to Rome he was crucified head down at his own request." See note at John 1:14.

■ **"Follow Me"** This is a present active imperative, as is John 21:22. This is related to the renewal and reaffirmation of Peter's call to leadership (cf. Matt. 4:19-20).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:20-23**

<sup>20</sup>Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following *them*; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" <sup>21</sup>So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!" <sup>23</sup>Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, "If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you?"

**21:20 "the disciple whom Jesus loved"** This refers to the account found in John 13:25. Why he is designated in this cryptic manner is uncertain (cf. John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). Possible theories are

1. traditional Jewish writings of the first century did not mention the author by name
2. John was so young when he became a follower of Jesus
3. John was the only Apostle who stayed with Jesus during the trials and crucifixion

**21:22 "Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you'"** This is a third class conditional sentence. We must remember that we are to deal with our own gifts and ministries and not be concerned with what God has planned for others! A possible reason for adding chapter 21 was to answer the misunderstanding over this very issue. Apparently there was an early rumor (possibly Gnostic) that John was to live until the Second Coming (John does speak of the *Parousia*, cf. 1 John 3:2).

■ **"follow Me"** This almost summarizes the personal invitation of John's Gospel (cf. John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19,22). This emphasizes the personal aspect of the gospel, while "believe that" emphasizes the content aspect of the gospel.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:24**

<sup>24</sup>This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we

**know that testimony is true.**

**21:24 "wrote these things"** Does this refer to (1) John 21:20-23; (2) chapter 21; or (3) the whole Gospel? The answer is uncertain.

▣ **"we know that his witness is true"** The specific group referred to by the pronoun "we" is uncertain. It is obvious that others are being brought into the affirmation of the truth of the Gospel of John. This probably refers to the Ephesian elders. This was the area in which John lived, ministered, and died. Early tradition asserts that the Ephesian leaders urged the aged John to write his own Gospel because of the death of all the other Apostles and the growing heresies about Jesus. See Special Topic: Witnesses to Jesus at John 1:8.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: JOHN 21:25**

**<sup>25</sup>And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.**

**21:25** Verse 25 has been disputed for two reasons: (1) in several manuscripts John 7:53 - 8:11 is inserted between verses 24 and 25 (2) in the manuscript Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) the scribe erased an ornamental Colophon and inserted John 21:25 later. This was observed by ultra-violet rays at the British Museum. This verse specifically informs us that the Gospel writers were selective in what they recorded. The hermeneutical question is always to ask, "Why did they record this in the way they did and not rush to combine the four Gospels?" (see Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is John 21 similar to Luke 5?
2. Why did the disciples not immediately recognize Jesus?
3. Who is the disciple whom Jesus loved?
4. Why did Jesus ask Peter three times concerning his love for Him?
5. Did Jesus assert that John would live until He came again?
6. Who is referred to in verse 24?
7. Is verse 25 original?

# INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN

## UNIQUENESS OF THE BOOK

- A. The book of 1 John is not a personal letter nor a letter written to one church as much as it is an "Impassioned Office Memo from Headquarters" (corporate letter).
1. It has no traditional introduction (from whom, to whom).
  2. It has no personal greetings or closing message.
- B. There is no mention of personal names. This is highly unusual except in books written to many churches, such as Ephesians and James. The only NT letter which does not include the name of the author is Hebrews. However, it is obvious that 1 John was written to believers presently facing an internal church problem of false teachers (Gnostics).
- C. This letter is a powerful theological treatise
1. The centrality of Jesus
    - a. fully God and fully man
    - b. salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ, not a mystical experience or secret knowledge (false teachers)
  2. The demand for a Christian lifestyle (three tests of genuine Christianity)
    - a. brotherly love
    - b. obedience
    - c. rejection of the fallen world system
  3. The assurance of eternal salvation through faith in Jesus of Nazareth ("know" used 27 times)
  4. How to recognize false teachers
- D. John's writings (especially 1 John) are the least complicated Koine Greek of any NT writer, yet his books, as no other, plumb the depths of the profound and eternal truths of God in Jesus Christ (i.e., God is Light, 1 John 1:5; God is Love, 1 John 4:8,16; God is spirit, John 4:24).
- E. It is possible that 1 John was meant to be a cover letter for the Gospel of John. The Gnostic heresy of the first century forms the background for both books. The Gospel has an evangelistic thrust, while 1 John is written for believers (i.e., discipleship).  
The renowned commentator Westcott asserted that the Gospel affirms the Deity of Jesus, while 1 John affirms His humanity. These books go together!
- F. John writes in black and white (dualistic) terms. This is characteristic of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gnostic false teachers. 1 John's structured literary dualism is both verbal (light versus dark) and stylistic (a negative statement followed by a positive one). This is different from the Gospel of John, which employs a vertical dualism (Jesus from above versus all humans from below).
- G. It is very difficult to outline 1 John because of John's recurrent use of themes. The book is like a tapestry of truths woven together in repeated patterns (cf. Bill Hendricks, *Tapestries of Truth, The Letters of John*).

## AUTHOR

- A. The authorship of 1 John is part of the debate over the authorship of the Johannine Corpus - the Gospel, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation.



## B. There are two basic positions

### 1. Traditional

- a. Tradition was unanimous among the early Church fathers that John, the beloved Apostle, was the author of 1 John
- b. Summary of early church evidence
  - (1) Clement of Rome (a.d. 90) makes allusions to 1 John
  - (2) Polycarp of Smyrna, *Philippians* 7 (a.d. 110-140) quotes 1 John
  - (3) Justin Martyr's, *Dialogue* 123:9 (a.d. 150-160) quotes 1 John
  - (4) Allusions to 1 John are made in the writings of
    - (a) Ignatius of Antioch (date of his writings are uncertain but in early a.d. 100's)
    - (b) Papias of Hierapolis (born between a.d. 50-60 and martyred about a.d. 155)
  - (5) Irenaeus of Lyons (a.d. 130-202) attributes 1 John to the Apostle John. Tertullian, an early apologist who wrote 50 books against heretics, often quoted 1 John
  - (6) Other early writings which attribute authorship to John the Apostle are Clement, Origen, and Dionysius, all three of Alexandria, the Muratorian Fragment (a.d. 180-200), and Eusebius (third century).
  - (7) Jerome (second half of fourth century) affirmed John's authorship but admitted that it was denied by some in his day.
  - (8) Theodore of Mopsuestia, Bishop of Antioch from a.d. 392-428, denied John's authorship.
- c. If John, what do we know about John the Apostle?
  - (1) He was the son of Zebedee and Salome
  - (2) He was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee with his brother, James (possibly owned several boats)
  - (3) Some believe his mother was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (cf. John 19:25; Mark 15:20)
  - (4) Apparently he was wealthy because he had
    - (a) hired servants (cf. Mark 1:20)
    - (b) several boats
    - (c) a home in Jerusalem
  - (5) John had access to the High Priest's home in Jerusalem, which shows he was a person of some renown (cf. John 18:15-16)
  - (6) It was John in whose care Mary, the mother of Jesus, was committed
- d. Early Church tradition unanimously testified that John outlived all of the other Apostles, and after the death of Mary in Jerusalem he moved to Asia Minor and settled in Ephesus, the largest city in that area. From this city he was exiled to the Island of Patmos (just off the coast) and was later released and returned to Ephesus (Eusebius quotes Polycarp, Papias and Irenaeus).

### 2. Modern Scholarship

- a. The vast majority of modern scholars recognize the similarity among all of the Johannine writings, especially in phrasing, vocabulary, and grammatical forms. A good example of this is the stark contrast which characterized these writings: life versus death, truth versus falsehood. This same stark dichotomy can be seen in other writings of the day, the Dead Sea Scrolls and incipient Gnostic writings.
- b. There have been several theories about the inter-relationship between the five books traditionally ascribed to John. Some groups assert authorship to one person, two people, three people, and so on. It seems the most plausible position is that all of the Johannine writings are the result of the thoughts of one man, even if possibly penned by several of his disciples.
- c. My personal belief is that John, the aged Apostle, wrote all five books toward the end of his ministry in Ephesus.

3. The issue of authorship is an issue of hermeneutics, not inspiration. Ultimately the author of Scripture is God!

## **DATE** - Obviously this is linked to authorship

- A. If John the Apostle wrote these letters, and especially 1 John, we are talking about some time during the close of the first century. This would give time for the development of the Gnostic false theological/philosophical systems and also would fit into the terminology of 1 John ("little children"), which seems to imply an older man talking to a younger group of believers. Jerome says John lived 68 years after Jesus' crucifixion. This seems to fit with this tradition.
- B. A.T. Robertson thinks 1 John was written between a.d. 85-95, while the Gospel was written by a.d. 95.
- C. *The New International Commentary Series on 1 John* by I. Howard Marshall asserts that a date between 60-100 a.d. is as close as modern scholarship would like to come to estimating the date of the Johannine writings.

## **RECIPIENTS**

- A. Tradition asserts that this book was written to the Roman Province of Asia Minor (western Turkey), with Ephesus being its major metropolitan area.
- B. The letter seems to have been sent to a specific group of churches in Asia Minor which were experiencing a problem with false teachers (like Colossians and Ephesians), specifically
1. docetic Gnostics who denied the humanity of Christ, but affirmed His deity
  2. antinomian Gnostics who separated theology from ethics/morality
- C. Augustine (fourth century a.d.) says it was written to the Parthians (Babylon). He is followed by Cassiodorus (early sixth century a.d.). This probably came from the confusion of the phrase "the elect lady," 2 John 1, and the phrase, "she who is in Babylon," 1 Peter 5:13.
- D. The Muratorian Fragment, an early canonical list of NT books written between a.d. 180-200 in Rome, asserts that this letter was written "after the exhortation of his fellow disciples and bishops" (in Asia Minor).

## **THE HERESY**

- A. The letter itself is obviously a reaction against a type of false teaching (i.e., "If we say. . ." 1 John 1:6ff and "he who says . . ." 1 John 2:9; 4:20 [diatribe]).
- B. We can learn some of the basic tenets of the heresy by internal evidence from 1 John.
1. a denial of the incarnation of Jesus Christ
  2. a denial of the centrality of Jesus Christ in salvation
  3. a lack of an appropriate Christian lifestyle
  4. an emphasis on knowledge (often secret)
  5. a tendency toward exclusivism
- C. The setting of the first century
- The Roman world of the first century was a time of eclecticism between the Eastern and Western religions. The gods of the Greek and Roman pantheons were in ill repute. The Mystery religions were very popular because of their emphasis on personal relationship with the deity

and secret knowledge. Secular Greek philosophy was popular and was merging with other worldviews. Into this world of eclectic religion came the exclusiveness of the Christian faith (Jesus is the only way to God, cf. John 14:6). Whatever the exact background of the heresy, it was an attempt to make the seeming narrowness of Christianity plausible and intellectually acceptable to a wider Greek-Roman audience.

#### D. Possible options as to which group of Gnostics John is addressing

##### 1. Incipient Gnosticism

- a. The basic teachings of incipient Gnosticism of the first century seem to have been an emphasis on the ontological (eternal) dualism between spirit and matter. Spirit (High God) was considered good, while matter was inherently evil. This dichotomy resembles Platonism's ideal versus physical, heavenly versus earthly, invisible versus visible. There was also an overemphasis on the importance of secret knowledge (passwords or secret codes which allow a soul to pass through the angelic spheres [*aeons*] up to the high god) necessary for salvation.
  - b. There are two forms of incipient Gnosticism which apparently could be in the background of 1 John
    - (1) Docetic Gnosticism, which denies the true humanity of Jesus because matter is evil
    - (2) Cerinthian Gnosticism, which identifies the Christ with one of many *aeons* or angelic levels between the good high god and evil matter. This "Christ Spirit" indwelt the man Jesus at his baptism and left him before his crucifixion.
    - (3) of these two groups some practiced asceticism (if the body wants it, it is evil), the other antinomianism (if the body wants it, give it). There is no written evidence of a developed system of Gnosticism in the first century. It is not until the middle of the second century that documented evidence existed. For further information about "Gnosticism" see
      - (a) *The Gnostic Religion* by Hans Jonas, published by Beacon Press
      - (b) *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, published by Random House
      - (c) *The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible* by Andrew Helmbold
2. Ignatius suggests another possible source of the heresy in his writings *to the Smyrnaeans* iv-v. They denied the incarnation of Jesus and lived antinomian lifestyles.
  3. Yet another less likely possibility of the source of the heresy is Meander of Antioch, who is known from the writings of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* XXIII. He was a follower of Simon the Samaritan and an advocate of secret knowledge.

#### E. The Heresy Today

1. The spirit of this heresy is present with us today when people try to combine Christian truth with other systems of thought.
2. The spirit of this heresy is present with us today when people emphasize "correct" doctrine to the exclusion of personal relationship and lifestyle faith.
3. The spirit of this heresy is present with us today when people turn Christianity into an exclusive intellectual elitiness.
4. The spirit of this heresy is present with us today when religious people turn to asceticism or antinomianism.

## PURPOSE

#### A. It has a practical focus for believers

1. to give them joy (cf. 1 John 1:4)
2. to encourage them to live godly lives (cf. 1:7; 2:1)
3. to command them (and remind them) to love one another (cf. 1 John 4:7-21) and not the world (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

4. to give them assurance of their salvation in Christ (cf. 1 John 5:13)

B. It has a doctrinal focus for believers

1. refute the error of separating Jesus' deity and humanity
2. refute the error of separating spirituality into an intellectualism devoid of godly living
3. refute the error that one can be saved in isolation from others

## **READING CYCLE ONE**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book.
2. Type of literature (genre)

## **READING CYCLE TWO**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# 1 JOHN 1:1-2:2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Word of Life	What Was Heard, Seen, and Touched	Introduction	The Word of Life	The Incarnate Word and Sharing with the Father and the Son
1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4
God is Light	The Basis of Fellowship with Him	Right Attitude Toward Sin	God is Light	To Walk in the Light  (1:5-2:28)
1:5-10	1:5-2:2	1:5-10	1:5-7  1:8-10	1:5-7  First Condition: To Break with Sin  1:8-2:2

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- A. This passage is related to the Prologue of John's Gospel (1:1-18, before physical creation), which is related to Gen. 1:1 (physical creation). However, here it refers to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.
- B. The emphasis is on
1. The full humanity of Jesus Christ
    - a. Participles related to the human senses: sight, sound, touch (cf. 1 John 1:1,3). Jesus was truly human and physical
    - b. full titles of Jesus
      - (1) the Word of Life (cf. 1 John 1:1)
      - (2) His Son Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 1:3)
  2. Deity of Jesus of Nazareth
    - a. pre-existence (1 John 1:1,2)
    - b. incarnation (1 John 1:2)

These truths are directed against the Gnostic false teachers' worldview.

## SYNTAX

- A. Verses 1-4
1. Verses 1-3a form one sentence in Greek.
  2. The main verb "proclaim" is in 1 John 1:3. The emphasis is on the content of Apostolic preaching.
  3. There are four relative clauses in 1 John 1:1 which are placed forward in their clauses for emphasis.
    - a. "what was from the beginning"
    - b. "what we have heard"
    - c. "what we have seen with our eyes"
    - d. "what we have looked at and touched with our hands"
  4. Verse 2 seems to be a parenthesis concerning the incarnation of Christ. The fact that it is so awkward grammatically draws attention to it!
  5. Verses 3 and 4 define the purposes of John's Apostolic proclamation: fellowship and joy. Apostolic eyewitness accounts were one of the early church's criteria for canonization.
  6. Notice the flow of verb tenses in verse 1
    - a. Imperfect (pre-existed)
    - b. Perfect, perfect (abiding truth)
    - c. Aorist, aorist (specific examples)
- B. Verses 1:5-2:2
1. The pronouns in 1 John 1:5-2:2 are very ambiguous, but I think almost all of them except 1 John 1:5, refer to the Father (similar to Eph. 1:3-14)
  2. All the "ifs" are third class conditional sentences which speak of potential action.
  3. There is a significant theological variation between
    - a. the verb tenses present versus aorist in reference to "sin"
    - b. the singular and plural, "sin" versus "sins"

## THE HERETICS

- A. The heretics' false claims can be seen in 1 John 1:1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9.
- B. Verses 5-10 relate to the theological attempt to separate knowing God (theology) from following God (ethics). It represents an undue Gnostic overemphasis on knowledge. Those who know God will reveal His characteristics in their lifestyle.

- C. Verses 1:8-2:2 must be held in balance with 3:6-9. They are two sides of one coin. They possibly refute two different errors:
1. theological error (no sin)
  2. moral error (sin does not matter)
- D. 1 John 2:1-2 is an attempted balance between taking sin too lightly (antinomianism) and the recurrent problem of Christian judgmentalism, cultural legalism, or asceticism.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life <sup>2</sup>and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us <sup>3</sup> what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.**

**1:1 "What"** The book begins with a neuter pronoun. It speaks of the dual aspects of God's message which are

1. the message about Jesus
2. the person of Jesus Himself

The gospel is a message, a person, and a lifestyle.

▣ **"was"** This is an Imperfect indicative. It asserts Jesus' pre-existence (i.e., this is a recurrent theme in John's writings, cf. 1 John 1:2; John 1:1,15; 3:13; 8:57-58; 17:5). This was one way of asserting His Deity. Jesus reveals the Father because He has been with the Father from the beginning.

▣ **"from the beginning"** This is an obvious allusion to Genesis 1 and John 1, but here it refers to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (see Special Topic: *Archē* at John 1:1). The coming of Jesus was not "Plan B." The gospel was always God's plan of redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). This phrase in this context refers to the beginning of the twelve Apostles' personal encounter with Jesus.

John uses the concept of "beginning" (*archē*) often. Most of the occurrences divide into basically two categories.

1. from creation
  - a. John 1:1,2 (Jesus in the beginning)
  - b. John 8:44; 1 Kgs. 3:8 (Satan murderer and liar from the beginning)
  - c. Rev. 3:14; 21:6,12 (Jesus the beginning and the end)
2. from the time of Jesus' incarnation and ministry
  - a. John 8:25; 1 John 2:7 [twice]; 3:11; 2 John 5,6 (Jesus' teachings)
  - b. John 15:27; 16:4 (with Jesus)
  - c. 1 John 1:1 (from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry)
  - d. 1 John 2:13,24 [twice] (from their trust in Jesus)
  - e. John 6:64 (from their rejection of Jesus)
3. context favors #2

### SPECIAL TOPIC: John 1 Compared to 1 John 1

▣ **"we"** This implies the collective yet personal witness of the Apostles (i.e., NT writers). This collective testimony is a characteristic of 1 John. It is used over 50 times.

Some see this collective pronoun as referring to those of "John's tradition." This would imply guardians or teachers of John's unique theological perspective.

■ **"have heard. . . have seen"** These are both perfect active indicatives which emphasize abiding results. John was asserting Jesus' humanity by his recurrent use of participles related to the five senses in 1 John 1:1,3. He thereby claims to be an eyewitness to the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

■ **"have looked . . . and touched"** These are both aorist indicatives which emphasize specific events. "Looked" means "closely observed" (cf. John 1:14), "touched" means "closely examined by feel" (cf. John 20:20,27; Luke 24:39).

The Greek term for "touched" or "handled" (*psēlaphaō*) is found in only two verses in the NT: here and Luke 24:39. In Luke it is used of a post-resurrection encounter with Jesus. 1 John uses it in the same sense.

■ **"Word of Life"** The use of the term *logos* served to catch the attention of the Greek false teachers, as in the Prologue to John's Gospel (cf. 1 John 1:1). This word was widely used in Greek philosophy. It also had a specific background in Hebrew life (cf. Introduction to John 1, C). This phrase here refers to both the content of the gospel and the person of the gospel.

**1:2** This verse is a parenthesis defining "life."

■ **"life"** "Zōē" (1 John 1:2 twice) is used consistently in John's writings for spiritual life, resurrection life, new age life, or God's life (cf. John 1:4; 3:15,36 [twice]; 4:14,36; 5:24 [twice],26 [twice],29,39,40; 6:27,33,35,40,47,48,51,53,54,63,68; 8:12; 10:10,28; 11:25; 12:25,50; 14:6; 17:2,3; 20:31; 1 John 1:1,2; 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11,12,13,16,20). Jesus called Himself "the life" (cf. John 14:6).

■ **"manifested"** This verb is used twice in this verse and both are Aorist passive indicatives. The passive voice is often used of the agency of God the Father. This term (*phaneroō*) implies "to bring to light that which was already present." This was a favorite term with John (cf. John 1:31; 3:21; 9:3; 17:6; 1 John 1:2[twice]; 2:19; 3:5,8,10; 4:9). The aorist tense emphasizes the incarnation (cf. John 1:14), which the false teachers denied.

■ **"testify"** This refers to John's personal experience (i.e., present active indicative). This term was often used of testimony in a court case. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

■ **"proclaim"** This refers to John's authoritative testimony (i.e., present active indicative) revealed and recorded in his preaching and writing. This is the main verb of 1 John 1:1-3. It is repeated twice (1 John 1:2 and 1 John 1:3).

■ **"was with the Father"** Like 1 John 1:1, this is an assertion of Jesus' pre-existence. The phrasing is like John 1:1. Deity has been incarnated as a man (cf. John 1:14). To know Jesus is to know God (cf. John 14:8-11). This is an example of John's vertical dualism.

**1:3 "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also"** This is the fifth relative clause, which resumes the thought of 1 John 1:1 after the parenthesis of 1 John 1:2. It repeats the verbs of perception found in 1 John 1:1.

■ **"we proclaim to you also"** This is the main verb of 1 John 1:1-3. It is a present active indicative. Knowing God demands a fellowship with His children!

■ **"so that you too may have fellowship with us"** This is a purpose clause (*hina*) with a present active subjunctive. The stated purpose of the Gospel was that those who never heard or saw Jesus might be saved by the Apostolic witness (cf. John 17:20; 20:29-31). It is this fellowship in revelatory grace that brings "joy," "peace," and "assurance"! The church is a community of believers, a body of believers! The



gospel is for the whole world.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: Koinōnia (fellowship)

### SPECIAL TOPIC: Christianity Is Corporate

■ **"with the Father. . .with His Son"** These phrases are grammatically parallel in preposition and definite article. This syntax affirms the equality and deity of Jesus (cf. John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7). It is impossible to have the Father (High God) without the Son (Incarnate God) as the false teachers implied (cf. 1 John 2:23; 5:10-12).

This fellowship with the Father and the Son is very similar to the mutual "indwelling" passage of John 14:23.

**1:4 "These things we write"** This could refer to the whole book or specifically to 1 John 1:1-3. This same ambiguity is seen in 1 John 2:1. The author states one of his purposes here (cf. 1 John 2:1).

■ **"so that our joy may be made complete"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive subjunctive (cf. John 15:11; 16:20,22,24; 17:13; 2 John 12; 3 John 4). The believers' joy was made complete by fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. This was an important element in light of the disruptions of the false teachers. John's stated purposes in writing this book are

1. fellowship with God and with His children
2. joy
3. assurance
4. on the negative side, his purpose was to equip believers against the false theology of the Gnostic teachers

There is a Greek variant in this verse between

1. "our joy," MSS  $\kappa$ , B, L; NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB, NIV
2. "your joy," MSS A, C; NKJV

The UBS<sup>4</sup> prefers #1. Does "our" refer to the Apostolic eyewitnesses or to believers? Because of the theological thrust of 1 John towards Christian assurance, I assume it is directed to all believers.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 1:5-2:2**

**<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. <sup>2:1</sup>My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; <sup>2</sup>and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.***

**1:5 "the message we have heard"** The pronoun "we" refers to John and the other eyewitness hearers and followers of Jesus during His earthly life. John directly speaks to his readers ("you") in 1 John 2:1, probably referring to the churches of Asia Minor.

The verb "heard" is a perfect active indicative. This reflects the vivid recurrent term relating to the physical senses in 1 John 1:1-4. In a sense this is the Apostle John affirming his personal presence at Jesus' teaching sessions. John is passing on Jesus' revelations, not his own! It is even possible that the Gospels' unique "I Am" statements were John's remembrance of Jesus' private teachings.

- **"from Him"** "From Him" is the only pronoun in the entire section of 1 John 1:5-2:2 which refers to Jesus. Jesus came to reveal the Father (cf. John 1:18). Theologically speaking, Jesus came for three purposes.
  1. to reveal the Father (cf. 1 John 1:5)
  2. to give believers an example to follow (cf. 1 John 1:7)
  3. to die on sinful mankind's behalf (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:2)

■ **"God is Light"** There is no article. This is emphasizing the revelatory and ethical aspects of God's nature (cf. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:20; Micah 7:8; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17). The Gnostic false teachers asserted that light referred to knowledge, but John asserts that it refers also to ethical purity. "Light" and "dark" were common terms (an ethical dualism using these terms is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and early Gnosticism). It related to the dualism between good and evil (i.e., John 1:5; 8:12; 12:46) and possibly the Gnostic dualism of spirit versus matter. This is one of John's simple yet profoundly theological assertions about deity. The others are (1) "God is love" (cf. 1 John 4:8,16) and (2) "God is spirit" (cf. John 4:24). God's family, like Jesus (cf. John 8:12; 9:5), should reflect His character (cf. Matt. 5:14). This changed and changing life of love, forgiveness, and purity is one of the evidences of a true conversion.

■ **"in Him there is no darkness at all"** This is a double negative for emphasis. It is an assertion of the unchanging holy character of God (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; Ps. 102:27; Mal. 3:6).

**1:6 "If we say"** This is the first of several third class conditional sentences which refer to the claims of false teachers (cf. 1 John 1:8,10; 2:4,6,9). These statements are the only way to identify the assertions of the false teachers. They appear to be early (incipient) Gnostics.

The literary technique of a supposed objector is called diatribe. It was a way of presenting truth in a question/answer format. It can be clearly seen in Malachi (cf. Mal. 1:2,6,7,12; 2:14,17; 3:7,14) and in Romans (cf. Rom. 2:3,17,21-23; 3:1,3,7-8,9,31; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7).

■ **"we have fellowship with Him"** The heretics claimed that fellowship was based on knowledge only. This was an aspect of Greek philosophy from Plato. However, John asserts that Christians must live Christlike lives (cf. 1 John 1:7; Lev. 19:2; 20:7; Matt. 5:48).

■ **"yet walk in the darkness"** "Walk" is a present active subjunctive. This is a biblical metaphor expressing a moral lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). God is light with no darkness. His children should be like Him (cf. Matt. 5:48).

■ **"we lie and do not practice the truth"** These are both present tense verbs. John calls several types of religious people liars (cf. 1 John 1:10; 2:4,22; 4:20; Isa. 29:13). Lifestyle actions truly reveal the heart (cf. Matt. 7). See Special Topic: Truth in John's Writings at John 6:55.

**1:7 "but if we walk in the Light"** This is another present tense which emphasizes continuing action. "Walk" is a NT metaphor for the Christian life (i.e., Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

Notice how often "walk" and present tense verbs are related to the Christian life. Truth is something we live, not just something we know! Truth is a key concept in John. See Special Topics at John 6:55 and 17:3.

■ **"as He Himself is in the light"** Believers are to think and live like God (cf. Matt. 5:48). We are to reflect His character to a lost world. Salvation is the restoration of the image of God in mankind (i.e., Gen. 1:26,27), damaged in the fall of Genesis 3.

■ **"we have fellowship with one another"** The term "fellowship" is the Greek term *koinōnia*, which means a joint participation between two persons (see Special Topic at 1 John 1:3). Christianity is based on believers sharing Jesus' life. If we accept His life in forgiveness, we must accept His ministry of love (cf. 1 John 3:16). Knowing God is not abstract truth, but initiates fellowship and godly living. The goal of Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now. The Gnostic heretics had a tendency

toward exclusivism. However, when one is rightly related with God, he will be rightly related to his fellow Christian. Lack of love toward other Christians is a glaring sign of a problem with our relationship with God (cf. 1 John 4:20-21 and also Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:21-35)

■ **"the blood of Jesus"** This refers to the sacrificial death of Christ (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). It is very similar to 2:2, "the atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins." This is the thrust of John the Baptist's "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (cf. John 1:29). The innocent died on behalf of the guilty!

The early Gnostics denied Jesus' true humanity. John's use of "blood" reinforces Jesus' true humanity. There is a Greek manuscript variable related to the name.

1. Jesus - NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB, NET
2. Christ - MSS  $\alpha$ , B, C
3. Jesus Christ - NKJV

This is one example used by Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 153, to show how ancient scribes tried to make the text more specific to refute the current heretics. Option #3 was an attempt to mediate the MSS variation.

■ **"cleanses us from all sin"** This is a present active indicative. The term "sin" is singular with no article. This implies every kind of sin. Notice this verse is not focusing on a one-time cleansing (salvation, 1 John 1:7), but an ongoing cleansing (the Christian life, 1 John 1:9). Both are part of the Christian experience (cf. John 13:10).

**1:8 "If we say that we have no sin"** This is another third class conditional sentence. Sin is a spiritual reality in a fallen world, even for believers (cf. Romans 7). John's Gospel addresses this issue often (cf. 1 John 9:41; 15:22,24; 19:11). This verse rejects all ancient and modern claims that deny individual moral responsibility.

■ **"we are deceiving ourselves"** This Greek phrase refers to personal, willful rejection of truth, not ignorance.

■ **"the truth is not in us"** The way to acceptance by a Holy God is not denial, but recognition of our sin and acceptance of His provision in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). "The truth" can refer to the message about Jesus or the person of Jesus (cf. John 14:6). See Special Topics at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**1:8,9 "If"** These are both third class conditional sentences which means potential action.

**1:9 "confess"** This is a compound Greek term from "to speak" and "the same." Believers continue to agree with God that they have violated His holiness (cf. Rom. 3:23). It is present tense, which implies ongoing action. Confession implies

1. a specific naming of sins (1 John 1:9)
2. a public admitting of sins (cf. Matt. 10:32; James 5:16)
3. a turning from specific sins (cf. Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16)

1 John uses this term quite often (cf. 1 John 1:9; 4:2,3,15; 2 John 7). Jesus' death is the means of forgiveness, but sinful mankind must respond and continue to respond in faith to be saved (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). See Special Topic: Confession at John 9:22-23.

■ **"our sins"** Notice the plural. This refers to specific acts of sin.

■ **"He is faithful"** This refers to God the Father (cf. Deut. 7:9; 32:4; Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1,2,5,8; 92:2; 119:90; Isa. 49:7; Rom. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:13). God the Father's unchanging, merciful, faithful character is our surest hope! This phrase accentuates God's faithfulness to His Word (cf. Heb. 10:23; 11:11). This may also refer to God's New Covenant promise made in Jer. 31:34, which promised the forgiveness of sins.

■ **"and righteous"** This term is unusual in a context related to a holy God freely pardoning unholy people. However, this is theologically accurate because God takes our sins seriously, yet He has provided the means for our forgiveness in the substitutionary death of Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). See Special Topic at 1 John 2:29.

■ **"forgive . . . cleanse"** These are both aorist active subjunctives. These two terms are synonymous in this context; they refer both to the salvation of the lost and to the ongoing cleansing necessary for fellowship with God (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Ps. 103:3,11-13; Mic. 7:19). The false teachers who denied the gospel, needed salvation. Believers who continue to commit acts of sin need restoration of fellowship. John seems to address the first group implicitly and the second explicitly.

**1:10 "If we say"** See note at 1 John 1:6.

■ **"we have not sinned"** This is a perfect active indicative which implies that one has never sinned in the past nor in the present. The term "sinned" is singular and refers to sin in general. The Greek term means "to miss the mark." This means that sin is both the commission and the omission of the things revealed in God's Word. The false teachers claimed salvation was related only to knowledge, not to life.

■ **"we make Him a liar"** The gospel is based on the sinfulness of all mankind (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:1; 11:32). Either God (cf. Rom. 3:4) or those who claim sinlessness, is lying.

■ **"His word is not in us"** This involves the dual aspect of the term *"logos,"* both as a message and a person (cf. 1 John 1:1,8; John 14:6). John often refers to this as "truth."

**2:1 "My little children"** John uses two different diminutive terms for "children" in 1 John.

1. *teknion* (cf. 1 John 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21; John 13:33)

2. *paidion* (cf. 1 John 2:14,18)

They are synonymous with no intended theological distinctives. These affectionate terms probably come from John's advanced age at the time of the writing.

Jesus used the term "children" to refer to disciples in John 13:33.

■ **"I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin"** This is an aorist active subjunctive. John is making a definite distinction between present tense, an ongoing habitual lifestyle of sinning (cf. 1 John 3:6,9) and individual acts of sin committed by struggling and tempted Christians. He is trying to bring a balance between the two extremes of

1. taking sin too lightly (cf. Rom. 6:1; 1 John 1:8-10; 3:6-9; 5:16)

2. Christian harshness and brittleness over personal sins

These two extremes probably reflect two different schools of Gnostic teachings. One group felt that salvation was an intellectual matter; it did not matter how one lived because the body was evil. The other group of Gnostics also believed the body was evil and, therefore had to be limited in its desires.

■ **"And if anyone sins"** This is a third class conditional sentence which speaks of potential action. Even Christians sin (cf. Romans 7).

■ **"we have an Advocate with the Father"** This is a present active indicative which refers to Jesus' ongoing intercession as our heavenly Advocate (*paraklētos*). This was a legal term for a defense lawyer or "one called alongside to help" (from *para*, beside and *kaleō*, to call). It is used in the upper room discourse in the Gospel of John, for the Holy Spirit, our earthly, indwelling advocate (cf. John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). However, this is the only use of the term for Jesus (although it is implied in John 14:16; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24). Paul used this same concept for the intercessory work of Christ in Rom. 8:34. In this same passage he also speaks of the intercession of the Holy Spirit in Rom. 8:26. We have an Advocate in heaven (Jesus) and an Advocate within (the Spirit), both of whom the loving Father sent on His behalf.

■ **"Jesus Christ the righteous"** This characterization is used of God the Father in 1 John 1:9. New Testament authors use several literary techniques to assert the deity of Jesus.

1. use titles used for God for Jesus
2. assert actions of God done by Jesus
3. use grammatically parallel phrases referring to both (objects of verbs or prepositions)

It speaks of the sinlessness (holiness, God likeness) of Christ (cf. 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). He was the Father's means of bringing "righteousness" to a people.

## 2:2

**NASB, NKJV "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins"**

**NRSV "he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins"**

**TEV "Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven"**

**NJB, RSV "He is the sacrifice to expiate our sins"**

The term *hilasmos* is used in the Septuagint for the lid of the Ark of the Covenant called the mercy seat or place of atonement. Jesus put Himself in our guilty place before God (cf. 1 John 4:10; Rom. 3:25).

In the Greco-Roman world this word carried the concept of a restoration of fellowship with an estranged deity by means of a price being paid, but the word is not in this sense in the Septuagint (remember the NT authors [except Luke] were Hebrew thinkers, writing in Koine Greek). It was used in the Septuagint and in Heb. 9:5 to translate "mercy seat," which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant located in the Holy of Holies, the place where atonement was procured on behalf of the nation on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16).

This term must be dealt with in a way that does not lessen God's revulsion to sin, but affirms His positive redemptive attitude toward sinners. A good discussion is found in James Stewart's *A Man in Christ*, pp. 214-224. One way to accomplish this is to translate the term so that it reflects God's work in Christ: "a propitiatory sacrifice" or "with propitiatory power."

The modern English translations differ on how to understand this sacrificial term. The term "propitiation" implies that Jesus placated the wrath of God (cf. Rom. 1:18; 5:9; Eph. 5:6; Col.3:6). God's holiness is offended by mankind's sin. This is dealt with in the ministry of Jesus (cf. Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:17).

Some scholars (i.e., C. H. Dodd) feel that a pagan (Greek) concept (appeasing the anger of a deity) should not be applied to YHWH, therefore, they prefer "expiation" whereby Jesus' ministry dealt with mankind's guilt (cf. John 1:29; 3:16) before God and not God's anger against sin. However, both are biblically true.

■ **"for our sins; and not ours only, but also for those of the whole world"** This refers to the potential of unlimited atonement (cf. 1 John 4:14; John 1:29; 3:16,17; 12:47; Rom. 5:18; 1 Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 7:25). Jesus died for the sin and sins of the whole world (cf. Gen. 3:15). The only thing that keeps the whole world from being saved is not sin, but unbelief. However, humans must respond and continue to respond by faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does John use so many verbs involving the five senses?
2. List the sacrificial terms found in 1 John 1:7 and 9.
3. Explain the beliefs of the heretics who John is combating.
4. How does 1 John 1:9 relate to both Gnostics and believers?

## 5. Describe and define "confession."

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# 1 JOHN 2:3-27

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Christ Our Advocate	The Basis of Fellowship with Him (1:5-2:2)	Obedience	Christ Our Helper	To Walk in the Light (1:5-2:28)
2:1-6	The Test of Knowing Him	2:1-2	2:1-2	First Condition: To Break With Sin (1:8-2:3)
	2:3-11	2:3-6	2:3-6	Second Condition: To Keep the Commandments, Especially That of Love 2:3-11
The New Commandment 2:7-14		Love for One Another 2:7-11	The New Command 2:7-8	
	Their Spiritual State	True Relationship to God in Christ	2:9-11	Third Condition: Detachment from the World
	2:12-14	2:12-14	2:12-13	2:12-17
	Do Not Love the World	True Appraisal of the World	2:14	
2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	2:15-17	
The Antichrist	Deceptions of the Last Hour	Loyalty to the True Faith	The Enemy of Christ	Fourth Condition: To Be on Guard Against Antichrists
2:18-25	2:18-23	2:18-25	2:18-19 2:20-21	2:18-28
	Let Truth Abide in You		2:22-23	
	2:24-27		2:24-25	
2:26-27		2:26-27	2:26-27	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 2:3-27

- A. It is very difficult to outline 1 John because of its recurrent themes. However, most commentators agree that chapter 2 continues the themes of chapter 1, which are the characteristics of fellowship with God, both positive and negative.
- B. There is a structural parallel between chapters 1 and 2. John presents the message in contrast to the false assertions of the Gnostics.

<u>Chapter 1</u>	<u>Chapter 2</u>
1. if we say. . . (1 John 2:6-7)	1. The one saying. . . (1 John 2:4-5)
2. if we say. . . (1 John 2:8-9)	2. The one saying. . . (1 John 2:6)
3. if we say. . . (1 John 2:10)	3. The one saying. . . (1 John 2:8-11)

- C. This context lists several tests or evidences which reveal a true believer (1 John 2:3-25)
1. Willingness to confess sin (initially and continually) (1 John 1:8)
  2. Lifestyle obedience (1 John 2:3-6)
  3. Lifestyle love (1 John 2:7-11)
  4. Victory over the evil (1 John 2:12-14)
  5. Forsaking the world (1 John 2:15-17)
  6. Perseverance (1 John 2:19)
  7. Correct doctrine (1 John 2:20-24; 4:1-3)
- D. Special Theological Concepts (in 1 John 2:18-19)
1. "the last hour" (1 John 2:18)
    - a. This phrase and similar phrases, such as "the last days," refer to the period of time from Jesus' birth in Bethlehem to the Second Coming. The kingdom has come, but is not yet fully consummated.
    - b. The people of Israel during the interbiblical period began to believe in two ages, the current evil age and the age of righteousness ushered in by the Spirit, which was still future. What the OT did not clearly reveal was the two comings of the Messiah, the first as Savior and the second as Consummator. These two ages overlap. See Special Topic at 1 John 2:17.
    - c. This is the metaphorical use of the term "hour" (*kairos*) as an unspecified period of time (cf. John 4:21,23; 5:25,28; 16:2).
  2. "the antichrist" (1 John 2:18)
 

Only John uses the term "antichrist" (cf. 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). Notice in 1 John 2:18 it is both plural and singular (cf. 2 John 7).

    - a. There are references to the same end-time person in other biblical writers.
      - 1) Daniel - "Fourth Beast" (cf. 1 John 7:7-8,23-26; 9:24-27)
      - 2) Jesus - "Abomination of Desolation" (cf. Mark 13; Matt. 24)
      - 3) John - "Beast coming out of the sea" (cf. Rev. 13)
      - 4) Paul - "Man of Sin" (cf. 2 Thess. 2)
    - b. John also makes a distinction between the eschatological person and the recurring spirit



or attitude always present in the world (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7; Mark 13:6,22; Matt. 24:5,24).

c. The preposition *anti* in Greek can mean (1) against or (2) instead of. This is as significant as the use of both the singular and plural in 1 John 2:18. History is replete with those who have opposed God and His Christ

- 1) Antiochus IV Epiphanes (little horn of Daniel 8; 11:36-45)
- 2) Nero and Domitian (claimed deity but not Messiahship)
- 3) Atheistic Communism
- 4) Secular Humanism

But also this is matched by those who are not against Christ, but claim to be the Christ (use #2).

- 1) the false teachers of Mark 13:6,22 and Matt. 24:5,24
- 2) modern cult leaders
- 3) the Antichrist (Dan. 7:8, 23-26; 9:24-27; 2 Thess. 2:3; and Rev. 13)

d. Christians in every age will experience both false teachers who deny Christ and false Messiahs who claim to be Christ. However, one day, the last day, one special incarnation of evil (i.e., the Antichrist) will do both!

3. "Abides in You" (1 John 2:19,24,27,28)

a. Most modern evangelicals stress the need for a personal initial decision to trust/faith/believe in Christ, and this is surely true. However, the Bible's emphasis is not on decisions, but on discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

b. The doctrine of the Security of the Believer must be inseparably linked to the doctrine of Perseverance. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: The Need to Persevere](#) at John 8:31. It is not an either/or option, but a both/and biblical reality. In reality "abiding" is a biblical warning (cf. John 15)!

c. Other passages on abiding are Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,18-23; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:1-27; 1 Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:1; Rev. 2:2,7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7. See Special Topic: "Abiding" at 1 John 2:10.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:3-6

<sup>3</sup>By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup>The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup>but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: <sup>6</sup>the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

**2:3 "By this we know that we have come to know Him"** Literally this is "we know that we have known Him." This is a present active indicative followed by a perfect active indicative emphasizing that the Christians of these traumatized churches can have the full assurance of their salvation in light of the Gnostic false teachings.

The word "know" is used in its Hebrew sense of personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and its Greek sense of facts about something or someone. The gospel is both a person and a body of truth. The emphases in this phrase are

1. we can know God
2. we can know what He wants for our lives
3. we can know that we know! (cf. 1 John 5:13)

One of the assurances of our relationship with God is revealed by our actions and motives (cf. Matthew 7; James, 1 Peter). This is a recurrent theme of 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:3,5; 3:24; 4:13; 5:2,13).

John's writings use two Greek words for "know" (*ginōskō* and *oida*) often (27 times in the five chapters

of 1 John) and synonymously. There seems to be no discernable semantic distinction between these terms in Koine Greek. The choice is stylistic. It is also interesting that John does not use the intensified term *epiginōskō*.

John is writing to encourage believers as well as refute heresy. The Gospel of John and 1 John use the terms for "know" more than any other of the books in the NT. 1 John is a book of assurance based on knowledge of the gospel and commensurate lifestyle love and obedience (cf. The book of James).

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

■ **"we keep His commandments"** Notice the conditional element (present active subjunctive). The new covenant is unconditional as to God's offer but conditional as to mankind's repentant faith and obedient response (cf. 1 John 2:3-5; 3:22,24; 5:2,3; John 8:51-52; 14:15,21,23; 15:10; Rev. 2:26; 3:8,10; 12:17; 14:12). One of the evidences for true conversion is obedience to the Light (both Jesus and the gospel, cf. Luke 6:46). Even in the OT obedience was better than sacrificial ritual (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:22-23). Obedience does not bring or secure salvation, but it does evidence salvation. It is not the basis (cf. Eph. 2:8-9), but the fruit (cf. Eph. 2:10).

**2:4 "The one who says"** This is the textual marker for John's diatribe format.

■ **"I have come to know Him"** This is one of several assertions of the false teachers (cf. 1 John 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9). This is a diatribe ("the one who says. . .") similar to Malachi, Romans, and James. The false teachers were claiming to know (perfect tense) God, but were trying to separate salvation from godly living. They were separating justification from sanctification. They claimed superior (i.e., secret) knowledge of God, but their lifestyles revealed their true motives.

■ **"and does not keep His commandments"** This is present active participle which speaks of habitual lifestyle action. Our lives reveal our spiritual orientation (cf. Matthew 7). Verse 4 expresses the truth negatively, while verse 5 expresses the same truth positively.

■ **"is a liar"** There is nothing worse than self-willed deception! Obedience is evidence of true conversion. You shall know them by their fruit (cf. Matt. 7).

John calls several religious people (teachers, preachers) liars (cf. 1 John 1:6; 2:4,22; 4:20). They are religious but not right with God!

**2:5 "but whoever keeps His word"** This is present active subjunctive which speaks of habitual lifestyle action. The authors of the UBS' *A Handbook on The Letters of John* (Haas, Jonge, and Swellengrebel) offer an interesting comment on this Greek construction: "a relative pronoun with the Greek particle, 'an' or 'ean' and the following verb in the subjunctive occurs in 1 John 3:17,22; 4:15; 5:15; 3 John 5. It seems to express generally occurring circumstances" (p. 40). Obedience is a crucial aspect of covenant faith. This is the central message of 1 John and James. One cannot say He knows God and yet reject both the living Word and the written Word by lifestyle sin (cf. 1 John 3:6,9)!

■ **"in him the love of God has truly been perfected"** This is a perfect passive indicative which speaks of completed action (cf. 1 John 4:12,17,18). It is uncertain, grammatically speaking, whether the genitive is speaking of

1. God's love for us (cf. 1 John 4:12)
2. our love for God (cf. 1 John 5:3)
3. just God's love in general in our hearts

The term "perfect" (*telos* cf. 1 John 4:12,17,18) means mature, complete, or fully equipped for an assigned task (cf. Eph. 4:12), not without sin (cf. 1 John 1:8,10).

■ **"By this we know that we are in Him"** Here again is the emphasis on believers' ability to have a faith confidence in their relationship with God. The concept of our being in Him (abiding cf. 1 John 2:6) is a recurrent theme of John's writings (cf. John 14:20,23; 15:4-10; 17:21,23,26; 1 John 2:24-28; 3:6,24;

4:13,16).

**2:6 "abides"** See Special Topic at 1 John 2:10. The NT also asserts that both the Father and the Son abide in us (cf. John 14:23 and 17:21). Notice that even in a clause which emphasizes assurance there is the need for, and implied warning, of "ought" (cf. 1 John 2:6, present infinitive, "abides in Him"). The gospel is a conditional covenant with rights and responsibilities!

■ **"ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked"** This is another emphasis on "true faith" as lifestyle faith (cf. James 2:14-26). Faith is not only a decision, but an ongoing personal relationship with Jesus that naturally issues in daily Christlike living. Eternal life has observable characteristics! This is parallel to 1:7. The goal of Christianity is not just heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15)! We are saved to serve. We are sent on mission as He was sent on mission. As He laid down His life for others, so we too, must see ourselves as servants (cf. 1 John 3:16).

"He" is literally "that One," which is a common idiom in John's writings for "Jesus" (cf. John 2:21; 19:35; 1 John 2:6; 3:3,5,7,16; 4:17). Often it is used in a derogatory way (cf. John 7:11; 9:12,28; 19:21).

If "that One" refers to Jesus, then who does the "in Him" of 6a refer to? John often used a purposeful ambiguity. It could refer to the Father (cf. John 15:1-2,9-10) or the Son (cf. John 15:4-6). This same ambiguity can be illustrated in "the Holy One" of 1 John 2:20.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:7-11**

<sup>7</sup>**Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.**  
<sup>8</sup>**On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.** <sup>9</sup>**The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.** <sup>10</sup>**The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.** <sup>11</sup>**But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**

**2:7 "Beloved"** John often calls his readers by affectionate terms (cf. 1 John 2:1). This term was used by the Father to refer to Jesus at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) and transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5). It is a common designation of the saved in John's letters (cf. 1 John 3:2,21; 4:1,7,11; and 3 John 1,2,5,11).

The Textus Receptus has "brothers" (MSS K, L, NKJV), but 1 John uses this only in 1 John 3:13. "Beloved" is supported by the uncial Greek manuscripts (κ, A, B, C, P, and the Vulgate, Peshitta, Coptic, and Armenian versions (see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, p. 708).

■ **"I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment"** This is characteristic of John's writings (cf. John 13:34; 15:12,17). The command was not new in terms of time, but new in terms of quality. Believers are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved them (cf. John 13:34).

The "old commandment" can be understood in two senses.

1. the Law of Moses (i.e., Lev. 19:18)

2. the teachings of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel (i.e., John 13:34; 15:12,17)

■ **"the old commandment"** In 1 John 2:3 the word "commandment" is plural, but here it is singular. This seems to imply that love fulfills all other commandments (cf. Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 13:13). Love is the gospel's mandate.

■ **"which you had from the beginning"** This is an IMPERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which refers to the hearer's first encounter with the gospel message (cf. 1 John 2:24; 1:1; 3:11; 2 John 5-6).

▣ **"have heard"** The Textus Receptus adds the phrase "from the beginning" (used in the earlier part of the verse).

**2:8 "which is true in Him"** The gender of this pronoun changes from the feminine in 1 John 2:7, which matches "commandment," to the neuter, which addresses the whole gospel. A similar change in pronoun is found in Eph. 2:8-9.

▣ **"the darkness is passing away"** This is present middle indicative (according to A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 212). For those who know God in Christ, the new age has dawned and is continuing to dawn in their hearts and minds (i.e., realized eschatology).

▣ **"the true Light is already shining"** Jesus is the light of the world (cf. John 1:4-5,9; 8:12), which is a biblical metaphor for truth, revelation, and moral purity. See notes at 1 John 1:5 and 1:7. The new age has dawned!

**2:9 "yet hates his brother"** This is present active participle which speaks of a settled ongoing attitude. Hate is an evidence of darkness (cf. Matt. 5:21-26).

**2:10 "The one who loves his brother abides in the Light"** Present tense verbals dominate this context. Love is an evidence of believer's salvation and personal relationship with and knowledge of truth and light. This is the new, yet old commandment (cf. 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11,21).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: "Abiding" in John's Writings](#)

**NASB, NKJV** "and there is no cause for stumbling in him"  
**NRSV** "in such a person there is no cause for stumbling"  
**TEV** "there is nothing in us that will cause someone else to sin"  
**NJB** "there is in him nothing to make him fall away"

There are two possible translations of this verse.

1. the believer who walks in love will not personally stumble (cf. 1 John 2:11)
2. the believer who walks in love will not cause others to stumble (cf. Matt. 18:6; Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:13)

Both are true! The gospel benefits the believer and others (both other believers and the lost).

In the OT "stumbling" is the opposite of faith (sure-footed, stable stance). God's will and commands were illustrated by a clear path or way. This is how "walk" can be a metaphor for lifestyle.

See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the OT at John 1:14.

**2:11 "But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness"** There is a present active participle (hates) followed by a present active indicative (walks). Hate is a sign of unbelief (cf. 1 John 3:15; 4:20). Light and darkness, love and hate cannot exist in the same person. This is typical of John's black or white statements. He expresses the ideal! Often, however, believers struggle with prejudice, unlove, and neglect! The gospel brings both an instantaneous change and a progressive change.

▣ **"the darkness has blinded his eyes"** This can refer either to believers' remaining sin nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:5-9), or the actions of Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). There are three enemies of mankind: (1) the fallen world system; (2) a personal angelic tempter, Satan; and (3) our own fallen, Adamic nature (cf. Eph. 2:2-3,16; James 4).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:12-14**

**<sup>12</sup>I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. <sup>13</sup>I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the**

**beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. <sup>14</sup>I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.**

**2:12-14** All of the verbs in these verses (except "I am writing" [NASB 1970], "I have written" [NASB 1995], UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the second option an "A" rating [certain]) are perfect tense, which speak of action in the past resulting in an ongoing state of being. As the previous context addressed the false teachers, this context addresses the believer. There are three different titles given to believers: "little children," "fathers," and "young men." This paragraph does not fit smoothly into the context of lifestyle evidences of assurance. It is possible that we are not dealing with three groups but a literary device describing the settled condition of all Christians.

There are four things listed that believers know.

1. that their sins are forgiven (1 John 2:12)
2. that through Christ they have overcome the devil (1 John 2:13)
3. that they "know" they have fellowship with both the Father (1 John 2:14) and the Son (1 John 2:13-14)
4. that they are strong in the Word of God (1 John 2:14).

This list is expressed grammatically in (1) the phrase "I am writing you" and (2) the six *hoti* (because) clauses.

▣ **2:12 "because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake"** Jesus' ministry is mankind's only hope for forgiveness (perfect passive indicative). In Hebrew understanding, the name equals the character and personality (cf. 1 John 3:23; 3 John 7; Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:6-11).

There is a series of six *hoti* clauses in 1 John 2:12-14. They may be purpose clauses (NASB, NRSV, NJB, "because") or simply a literary way to introduce statements of fact (NET, "that").

**2:13 "Him who has been from the beginning"** The pronouns in 1 John are ambiguous and can refer to God the Father or God the Son. In context this one refers to Jesus. It is a statement of pre-existence and, thereby, His Deity (cf. John 1:1,15; 3:13; 8:48-59; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

▣ **"you have overcome"** This is a recurrent promise and warning in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:14; 4:4, 5:4-5, 18-19). This is expressed in a perfect active indicative which speaks of the culmination of a process. Here again, John writes in black and white terms (this realized eschatological victory is so reminiscent of the Gospel of John). Believers are victors, yet because of the "already but not yet" tension of the Kingdom of God, they still struggle with sin, temptation, persecution, and death.

▣ **"the evil one"** This is a reference to Satan, who is mentioned again in 1 John 2:14. Verses 13 and 14 are parallel. See Special Topic at John 12:31.

▣ **"because you know the Father"** The biblical concept of "know" involves the Hebrew sense of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and the Greek concept of "facts about." The gospel is both a person to welcome (Jesus), a message (doctrine) to accept and act on, and a life to live.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW \(using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm\)](#)

**2:14 "you are strong"** Notice that their strength is based on the abiding word of God. This is similar to Paul's admonitions in Eph. 6:10-18. The abiding word is the gospel. It is both conceptual and personal, God initiated and individually received, both a decision and a discipleship, both truth and trustworthiness.

▣ **"the word of God abides in you"** This personifies the concept of the word of God (the gospel, cf. 1 John 2:24). This is an allusion to John 15. It is used in a negative sense in John 5:38 and 8:37.

■ **"you have overcome the evil one"** This is an emphasis on the perseverance of true saints. It is found again in 1 John 2:17,19,24,27,28; 5:18; and 2 John 9. The doctrine of the security of the believer needs to be balanced with the truth that those who are truly redeemed will hold out until the end (cf. Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21). See Special Topic: the Need to Persevere at John 8:31. This does not imply sinlessness now, though that is a theoretical possibility in Christ's finished work (cf. Romans 6).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup>The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.**

**2:15 "Do not love"** This is a Present active imperative with a negative particle, which means to stop an act that is already in progress. The love of the world characterized one group of Gnostic false teachers.

■ **"the world"** This term is used in two different senses in the NT: (1) the physical planet and/or the created universe (cf. John 3:16; 16:33; 1 John 4:14) and (2) human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1,13; 4:4-5; 5:4-5,19). The first refers to initial physical creation (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the second to fallen creation (cf. Genesis 3). See Special Topic: *Kosmos* at John 14:17.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT**

■ **"nor the things in the world"** This seems to refer to a love of material objects (cf. 1 John 2:16) or the things the world has to offer: power, prestige, influence, etc. (cf. Rom. 12:2; James 1:27). This fallen world system attempts to meet all of mankind's needs apart from God. It structures life in such a way that humans appear to be independent. Institutions that all of us are grateful for can become idolatrous when they allow independence from God. Examples include: (1) human governmental systems; (2) human educational systems; (3) human economic systems; (4) medical systems, etc.

As Augustine said so well, "man has a God-shaped hole" in his life. We try to fill that hole with earthly things, but we can only find peace and fulfillment in Him! Independence is the curse of Eden!

■ **"If"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. What we love is evidence of whose we are. . . God's or Satan's.

**2:16 "the lust of the flesh"** This refers to fallen mankind's self-seeking attitude (cf. Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:3; 1 Pet. 2:11). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at John 1:14.

■ **"the lust of the eyes"** The Jews recognized that the eyes are the windows of the soul. Sin begins in the thought life and works its way out to action. One's actions develop into lifestyle domination (e.g., Prov. 23:7).

■ **"and the boastful pride of life"** This refers to human pride apart from God (i.e., humans trusting in their own resources). In *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, vol. II, Raymond Brown, a renowned Catholic Johannine scholar, says of the phrase,

"However, *alazoneia*, found also in James 4:16, has a more active meaning than mere pride: It denotes arrogance, boastfulness, the conviction of self-sufficiency" (p. 408).

The term life is *bios* which refers to earthly, physical, temporal life on this planet (what mankind shares with the plants and animals, cf. 1 John 3:17). These characterizations describe both groups of Gnostic false teachers and unregenerate fallen mankind. God help us, they also describe immature Christians!

■ **"is not from the Father, but is from the world"** There are two reasons Christians must not love the world.

1. that love is not from the Father (cf. 1 John 2:16)
2. the world is passing away (cf. 1 John 2:17)

**2:17 "The world is passing away"** This is a present middle indicative (cf. 1 John 2:8). This relates to the Jewish two ages. The new and consummated age is coming; the old age of sin and rebellion is passing away (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: This Age and the Age to Come**

▣ **"but the one who does the will of God lives forever"** Notice how eternal life (i.e., literally "abides into the age") is connected to a loving lifestyle, not just a past profession of faith (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; James 2:14-26). See Special Topic on the Will of God at John 4:34.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:18-25**

**<sup>18</sup>Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. <sup>19</sup>They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. <sup>20</sup>But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. <sup>21</sup>I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. <sup>22</sup>Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup>Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. <sup>24</sup>As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup>This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.**

**2:18 "Children"** See note at 1 John 2:1.

▣ **"it is the last hour"** Literally it is "last hour" with no article (found only here). Like "the last days," this is one of the phrases used in the NT to describe the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (cf. John 6:39-40,44). This is an important concept in John because in our day so many interpreters have been influenced by C. H. Dodd's "realized eschatology" (a major tenet of amillennialism). It is surely true that John uniquely and forcefully teaches that the Kingdom of God has come in Jesus. However, this text reveals that there is also a future consummation (event or period). Both are true. This is another expression of the NT tension (paradox) between "the already and the not yet" (i.e.; "is coming") of the two Jewish ages, which are now overlapped in time.

▣ **"antichrist. . . antichrists"** This descriptive phrase is both singular and plural; neither term has the article (following MSS  $\chi^*$ , B, C). Only John uses this term in the NT (cf. 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7). See fuller note in Contextual Insight to 2:3-27, D.

▣ **"is coming"** This is a present middle (deponent) indicative. In Koine Greek some forms of the Greek verb fell out of use and other forms took over their function. Deponent verbs are middle or passive voice in form, but are translated as Active voice in meaning. Here the present is used to express the certainty of a future event. The Antichrist, singular, is coming and many false teachers or false messiahs similar to him have already appeared (antichrists).

It is just theologically possible that since Satan does not know the time of Christ's return, he has someone already prepared to step into world leadership at any moment of opportunity.

▣ **"have appeared"** This is a perfect active indicative. The "anti"-Christ spirit is already present and active in this fallen world (i.e., the false teachers), yet there is still a future manifestation. Some

commentators understand this to refer to the Roman Empire of John's day, while others see it as a future world empire of the last day. In many senses, it is both! The last hour was inaugurated at the Incarnation and will last until the consummation (the Second Coming of Christ).

**2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not really of us"** This is a perfect example of false teaching and false professions in the visible church (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 13:1-9,18-23,24-30). Their lack of truth, love, and perseverance are evidences that they are not believers. Heresy always comes from within!

The author of 1 John is very careful in his choice of verb tenses. Verse 19 reflects

1. the false teachers have left (aorist)
2. they were never truly a part (imperfect)
3. if they had been a part they would not have left (a second class conditional sentence with a pluperfect verb)

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Apostasy](#) at John 6:64.

■ **"if"** This is a second class conditional sentence which is called contrary to fact. It should be translated, "if they had belonged to us, which they did not, then they would have stayed with us, which they did not."

■ **"they would have remained with us"** This is a pluperfect active indicative which speaks of completed action in past time. This is one of several references to the doctrine of Perseverance (cf. 1 John 2:24,27,28). True faith remains and bears fruit (cf. Matt. 13:1-23). See Special Topic at John 8:31.

**2:20 "you have an anointing from the Holy One"** "You" is plural which is emphasized in the Greek text in contradistinction to those who had left the Christian fellowship. It is possible that the Gnostics were influenced by the eastern "mystery" religions and taught a special anointing which brought knowledge and identification with a deity. John asserts that it was believers, not the Gnostics, who had the anointing (special initiation) from deity.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: The Holy One](#)

■ **"anointing"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Anointing in the Bible \(BDB 603\)](#) in the Bible at John 11:2.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and you all know"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"and you know all things"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"and all of you have knowledge"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and so all of you know the truth"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and have all received knowledge"</b>

This was a significant statement in light of Gnostic false teachers' arrogant assertions about their secret knowledge. John asserts that believers have basic Christian knowledge (1 John 2:27 and John 16:7-14 and Jer. 31:34), not exhaustive knowledge either in religion or other realms or knowledge (cf. 1 John 3:2). For John, the truth is both conceptual and personal, as is the anointing which can refer to the gospel or the Spirit.

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. The NKJV follows the uncial manuscripts A, C, and K, having *panta*, a neuter plural used as a Direct object, while NASB follows manuscripts  $\kappa$ , B, and P, having *pantes*, a masculine plural, which focuses on the subject "you all." In light of the exclusivistic claims of the false teachers, the last option is best. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "B" rating (almost certain). The anointing and knowledge are given to all believers, not a select, special, intellectual, spiritual few!

**2:21** This is one of many verses which assert that John's readers have faith assurance of redemption and know the truth. In this verse assurance is based on an anointing from the Spirit who has given believers a hunger for and knowledge of the gospel.

**2:22 "Who is the liar"** This phrase has the definite article, therefore, John is referring either to



1. a specific false teacher (possibly Cerinthus)
2. the "big lie" and denial of the gospel (cf. 1 John 5:10)

"The liar" is parallel to "antichrist." The spirit of the antichrist is present in every age; a basic definition (the two connotations of the preposition "anti") is "one who denies that Jesus is the Christ" or "one who tries to replace Christ."

- **"that Jesus is the Christ"** The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 408, makes a good point, "the author does not mean simply the fulfillment by Jesus of the OT and Jewish expectation of a messiah. 'Christ' here has its full sense as the preferred NT designation of Jesus, whose words and deeds have proclaimed him the divine Savior of mankind (cf. Acts 2:31; Rom. 1:4)."

It is possible that this doctrinal affirmation functioned

1. as a polemic against Gnosticism
2. a Palestinian creedal formula that clearly separated the Synagogue from the Church; it may reflect the post-Jamnia (a.d. 70) curse formulas of the rabbis
3. like "Jesus is Lord," it may have been a baptismal affirmation

**2:22-23 "the one who denies the Son"** Apparently the Gnostic false teachers claimed to know God, but they denied, decentralized, and depreciated the place of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 4:1-6; 5:11-12; John 5:23).

Based on the writings of the Gnostics from the second century a.d., the comments within the NT, and the early church fathers, the following beliefs emerge.

1. The Gnostics tried to wed Christianity to Greek philosophy (Plato) and the eastern mystery religions.
2. They taught that Jesus was divine but not human because spirit was good, but matter (flesh) was evil. Therefore, there was no possibility of a physical incarnation of deity.
3. They taught two things about salvation
  - a. one group asserted that a special knowledge of angelic spheres (*aeon*) brought a salvation of the spirit unrelated to the actions of the body on the physical plain.
  - b. another group accentuated physical asceticism (cf. Col. 2:20-23). They asserted that a total denial of bodily wants and needs was crucial to a true salvation.

**2:23** This verse in the Textus Receptus, following the uncial manuscripts K and L, has accidentally shortened the original text by omitting the second parallel reference to the Father, which is strongly supported by the Greek uncial manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, B, and C.

- **"the one who confesses"** This is the exact opposite of "whoever denies" in 1 John 2:22 [twice] and 23 [once] and 26 [once]. See Special Topic: Confession at John 9:22-23.

- **"the Son"** Fellowship with God is only available through faith in the Son (cf. 1 John 5:10-12,13). Faith in Jesus is not an option! He is the only way to the Father (cf. John 5:23; 14:6; Luke 10:16).

**2:24 "As for you"** This shows a very emphatic contrast between John's readers and the false teachers and their followers who left (cf. 1 John 2:27).

- **"let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning"** This is a present active imperative with a grammatical emphasis on "you" (which is at the beginning of Greek phrase) in contradistinction to the false teachers' message. The gospel is personified and described as an indwelling guest. This is the first of two reasons given for the Christians' victory over the false teachers (the liars). The second one is found in 1 John 2:20 and 27, where the anointing of the Spirit is mentioned. Again, the gospel as both message and person are linked by the phrase "from the beginning" (cf. 1 John 2:13,14,24 [twice]). God's word is both content and personal, both written and living (cf. 1 John 1:8,10; 2:20,24)! See Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

■ **"If"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. This continues the warning and admonition related to "abiding." The cessation of abiding reveals that they were never a part (cf. 1 John 2:18-19). The lifestyle evidence of "abiding" brings a faith assurance (cf. John 15). Abiding is a message heard and received and a fellowship with both the Son and the Father (cf. John 14:23) which is revealed in lifestyle choice, both positively (love) and negatively (rejection of the world).

**2:25 "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life"** Again the pronouns in 1 John 2:25 are very ambiguous and can refer to God the Father or God the Son. Maybe this was purposeful (as in 2 Peter 1). Apparently this statement is much like John 3:15-16 and 6:40. The believer's hope rests in the character and promises of God (cf. Isa. 45:23; 55:11). Our intimate fellowship with the Triune God issues in the hope, yea, the promise of eternal life (cf. 1 John 5:13). Eternal life has observable characteristics.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup>These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. <sup>27</sup>As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.**

**2:26 "those who are trying to deceive you"** This is a present active participle. There are deceivers in every age (cf. Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; 2 John 7). These are often sincere religionists who attend and are active in Christian gatherings.

**2:27 "the anointing"** This seems to emphasize the result of the anointing, not the means (the Spirit) or the elements (the gospel truths) involved. Anointing was an OT concept of the special call and equipping of a person for a God-given task. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. This term is etymologically related to the term "Messiah." Here it refers to the resulting stability which the Holy Spirit's enlightening of the heart and mind to the gospel brings to believers. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Anointing in the Bible \(BDB 603\)](#) in the Bible at John 11:2.

The false teachers were claiming a special revelation from God (i.e., special anointing). John asserts that all believers already have the true anointing when they trust the Anointed One, are filled with His Spirit, and abide in God's word.

■ **"which you received"** This is an aorist active indicative which points to some completed past act. The "anointing" is parallel to "you have heard" in 1 John 2:24. The gospel must be received (1) individually by faith (cf. John 1:12; 3:16) and (2) as a body of truth (cf. 2 John 9-10; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Jude 3). Both of these acts are mediated by the Holy Spirit.

■ **"and you have no need for anyone to teach you"** Verse 27 is a parallel to 1 John 2:20 (i.e., the New Covenant, cf. Jer. 31:34). John is using recurrent themes (1 John 2:20,24,27). The Holy Spirit, not the Gnostic false teachers, is our ultimate and indispensable teacher (cf. John 14:26). However, this does not mean that the office and gift of teacher is not active in the early church and today (cf. Eph. 4:11; Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28). It simply means that basic things concerning salvation come from the Holy Spirit and the Bible, not from any special, gifted, human teacher, although He often uses them as a means.

■ **"but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie"** This refers to spiritual truth. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit guiding his/her conscience. We must be sensitive to the Spirit's gentle leadership in areas of truth and ethics.

■ **"just as it has taught you, you abide in Him"** This is a present active imperative. John uses the concept of "abide" extensively in this letter as an element of faith assurance for his readers (cf. John 15). Biblical faith is a covenant in which God takes the initiative and sets the agenda, but humans must initially

respond and continue (abide)! There is both a divine aspect and a human aspect involved in abiding. See Special Topic: Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the false teachers' beliefs.
2. Give the evidence by which we can know that we are truly redeemed.
3. Explain the relationship between habitual sin and isolated acts of sin.
4. Explain the relationship between the perseverance of the saint and the security of the believer.
5. List and define the three enemies of man.

# 1 JOHN 2:28-3:24

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Children of God (2:28-3:10)	The Children of God	Loyalty to the True Faith (2:18-29)	The enemy of Christ (2:18-29)	To Live as God's Children (2:29-4:6)
2:28-3:3	2:28-3:3	2:28  2:29 Filial Relation Expressed in Right Conduct  3:1-10	2:28-29  Children of God  3:1-3	2:29-3:2   First Condition: To Break with Sin  3:3-10
3:4-10	Sin and the Child of God 3:4-9		3:4-6  3:7-8  3:9-10	
Love One Another	The Imperative of Love 3:10-15	Love for One Another	Love One Another	Second Condition: To Keep the Commandments, Especially Life
3:11-18		3:11-18	3:11-12  3:13-18	3:11-24
Confidence Before God	The Outworking of Love 3:16-23	The Christian's Assurance	Courage Before God	
3:19-24	The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error  3:24-4:6	3:19-24	3:19-24	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 2 is directed at the Gnostic false teachers (especially Docetic Gnostics who denied Jesus' humanity).
- B. Chapter 3 continues to allude to the false teachers who separated salvation (justification) from ethics and morality (sanctification). Yet chapter 3 also addresses the believer more directly.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:28-3:3

**<sup>28</sup>Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. <sup>29</sup>If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. <sup>3:1</sup>See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup>Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

**2:28** There is much discussion among commentators whether a new paragraph should begin in verse 28, 29, or 3:1. Because of the repetition between 1 John 3:27 and 28, the paragraph division should probably go here.

▣ **"little children"** See note at 1 John 2:1.

▣ **"abide in Him"** This is a present active imperative. This is the third present imperative used to promote Christian perseverance (cf. 1 John 3:15,24). See Special Topics: Need to Persevere at John 8:31 and Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

The pronouns' antecedents are often difficult to identify, but in this paragraph, they are obvious.

1. "in Him," 1 John 3:28a - Jesus
2. "from Him," 1 John 3:28b - Jesus
3. "His," 1 John 3:28b - Jesus
4. "He is righteous," 1 John 3:29 - the Father
5. "born of Him," 1 John 3:29 - the Father (see note)
6. "know Him," 1 John 3:1 - the Father (cf. John 15:21; 16:2-3)
7. "He appears," 1 John 3:2 - Jesus
8. "like Him," 1 John 3:2 - Jesus
9. "see Him," 1 John 3:2 - Jesus
10. "He is," 1 John 3:2 - Jesus
11. "on Him," 1 John 3:3 - Jesus
12. "as He is pure," 1 John 3:3 - Jesus

Context, context, context!

▣ **"when He appears"** This is a third class conditional sentence, like 1 John 3:29, and also the "whenever Jesus returns" of 1 John 3:2. This is not meant to convey an uncertain event, but an uncertain time (similar to the NT use of the term "hope," cf. 1 John 3:3).

■ **"we may have confidence"** The Greek word for "confidence" (*parrhēsia*) is from the root "to speak freely." Assurance is a current lifestyle based on the believer's knowledge of and trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

See Special Topic: Boldness at John 7:4.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and not shrink away from Him in shame"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"and not be ashamed before Him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>" and be put to shame before him"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and not hide in shame from him"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and not shrink from him in shame"</b>

This is an aorist passive (deponent) subjunctive which means that it can be understood as

1. the believer himself being ashamed (NASB, TEV, NJB)
2. the believer being made ashamed (NRSV)

Believers are to look for and rejoice in the return of Christ, but those who have lived in selfish, worldly ways will surely be surprised and embarrassed at His appearance! There will be a judgment of believers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

■ **"at His coming"** This is a reference to the Second Coming. This word, *Parousia*, is used only here in all of John's writings and has the connotation of an imminent royal visit.

This is literally "until the *Parousia*," which means "presence" and was used of a royal visit. The other NT terms used for the Second Coming are

1. *epiphaneia*, "face to face appearing"
2. *apokalupis*, "unveiling"
3. "the Day of the Lord" and the variations of this phrase

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NT Terms for Christ's Return](#)

**2:29 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence that means potential action. Here it refers to an assumed knowledge that believers share, but false teachers have missed.

■ **"you know"** In grammatical form this is either a present active indicative, which states an ongoing knowledge, or a present active imperative which speaks of a believer's necessary knowledge. John's usage of "know" as the possession of all who have the Spirit dictates that it is indicative.

■ **"He"** This refers to Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:1, 28; 3:7. However, the last pronoun "born of Him" seems to refer to God the Father because the phrase "born of God" is used so often (cf. 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18; John 1:13).

■ **"righteous. . .righteousness"** This is an expected family characteristic!

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: Righteousness](#)

■ **"born"** This is a perfect passive indicative which means a settled condition brought about by an outside agent, God the Father (cf. John 3:3). Notice the use of another familial metaphor (cf. 1 John 3:9) to describe Christianity (it is a family). See note at 1 John 3:1d.

**3:1 "See how great a love"** The terms for love used here and throughout 1 John are *agapaō* (Verb) or *agapē* (Noun, cf. 1 John 2:5,15; 3:1,16,17; 4:7,8,9,10,12,16,17,18; 5:3). This term was used in Classical Greek, but not often. It seems that the early church redefined it in light of the gospel. It came to represent a deep abiding love. It is unfair to say "a God kind of self-giving love" because in the Gospel of John it is used synonymously with *phileō* (cf. John 5:20; 11:3,36; 12:25; 15:19; 16:27; 20:2; 21:15,16,17). However,

it is interesting that it is always used (in 1 John) in connection with believers loving believers. Faith and fellowship with Jesus changes our relationship with Deity and mankind!

■ **"the Father has bestowed on us"** This is a perfect active indicative. The use of this tense connected to God's gift of salvation in Christ is one biblical basis for the doctrine of the security of the believer (cf. John 6:35-40; 10:1ff; Eph. 2:5,8; 5:1). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Christian Assurance](#) at John 6:37.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE FOR ONE'S SALVATION**

■ **"that we would be called"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive which is used in the sense of an honorific title ("children of God") given by God.

■ **"children of God"** This is the focus of 1 John 2:29-3:10. It confirms God's initiative in our salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). John uses familial terms to describe the believer's new relationship with deity (cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:1,2,9,10; John 1:12).

It is interesting that John (cf. John 3:3) and Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3,23) use the familial metaphor "born again" or "born from above," while Paul uses the familial metaphor of "adoption" (cf. Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal. 4:1-5; Eph. 1:5) and James uses the familial metaphor of "birth" (cf. James 1:18) or "bringing forth" to describe the believer's new relationship with God through Christ. Christianity is a family.

■ **"and such we are"** This is the Present indicative. This phrase is not found in the King James Version of the Bible because it was not included in the later Greek manuscripts (i.e., K and L) on which the KJV is based. However, this phrase does appear in several of the most ancient Greek manuscripts (P<sup>47</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, and C). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its inclusion an "A" rating (certain). See Appendix Two on Textual Criticism.

■ **"the world does not know us"** The term "world" is used in a theologically similar way as 2:15-17. The world denotes human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. John 15:18-19; 17:14-15). Persecution and rejection by the world is another evidence of our position in Christ (cf. Matt. 5:10-16).

■ **"because it did not know Him"** This is apparently a reference to God the Father because in the Gospel of John Jesus says again and again that the world does not know Him (cf. John 8:19,55; 15:18,21; 16:3). The pronouns in 1 John are ambiguous (see note at 1 John 2:28). In this context the grammatical antecedent is the Father, but the theological reference in 1 John 3:2 is the Son. However, in John this may be purposeful ambiguity because to see Jesus is to see the Father (cf. John 12:45; 14:9).

**3:2 "it has not appeared as yet what we will be"** This speaks of John's inability to describe these end-time events (cf. Acts 1:7) or the exact nature of the resurrected body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35-49). This also shows that 2:27 does not mean exhaustive knowledge in every area. Even Jesus' knowledge of this event was limited while He was incarnate (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:22).

■ **"when He appears"** The term "when" introduces a third class conditional sentence. It is used here not to question the Second Coming, but to express its uncertain date. John, although emphasizing a full salvation now, also expects a Second Coming.

■ **"we will be like Him"** This involves the consummation of our Christlikeness (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:21; and Col. 3:4). This is often called "glorification" (cf. Rom. 8:28-30). This is the culmination of our salvation! This eschatological transformation is related to the full restoration of God's image in humans created in His likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6). Intimate fellowship with God is again possible!

■ **"because we will see Him just as He is"** Job longed to see God (cf. Job 19:25-27). Jesus told us that the pure in heart will see God (cf. Matt. 5:8). To see Him in His fullness means that we will be changed into His likeness (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). This refers to the glorification of the believer (cf. Rom. 8:29) at the Second Coming. If "justification" means freedom from the penalty of sin and "sanctification" means freedom from

the power of sin, then "glorification" means freedom from the presence of sin!

**3:3 "everyone"** The Greek term *pas* appears seven times from 2:29 to 3:10. There are no exceptions. John presents truth in stark, black-or-white categories. One is either the child of God or the child of Satan (cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:3,4,6 [twice],9,10).

■ **"this hope"** In Paul this term often refers to Resurrection Day (cf. Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-7; Rom. 8:20-25; 1 Thess. 2:19; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3,21). It expresses the certainty of the event, but with an ambiguous time element.

John does not speak of "the hope" of the Second Coming as frequently as other NT authors. This is the only use of the term in his writings. He focuses on the benefits and obligations of "abiding" in Christ now! However, this is not to imply he did not expect an end-time judgment of evil (cf. 1 John 2:18) and end-time glorification of the believer (cf. 1 John 3:1-3).

■ **"purifies himself, just as He is pure"** This is a present active indicative. Purity is important (cf. Matt. 5:8,48). We must cooperate in the process of sanctification (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1; James 4:8, 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 3:13,14) just as John 1:12 speaks of our cooperation in the process of justification. This same tension between God's part (sovereignty) in our salvation and our part (human free will) can be clearly seen by comparing Ezek. 18:31 with 36:26-27. God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65), but He has demanded that covenant people must respond by initial repentance and faith as well as continuing repentance, faith, obedience, service, worship, and perseverance.

This may be an allusion to Jesus' High Priestly prayer of John 17, especially 1 John 3:17,19. He sanctifies Himself, His followers sanctify themselves. It is somewhat surprising that different forms of the same basic root are used.

1. John 17:17,19 - *hagiazō* (*hagios*, cf. John 10:36)
2. 1 John 3:3 - *hagnizō* (*hagnos*, cf. John 11:55)

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 3:4-10

- A. This passage has been the center of the controversy between Christian perfectionism (cf. Romans 6), sometimes called entire sanctification, and the continuing sinning of the Christian (cf. Romans 7).
- B. We must not allow our theological bias to influence our exegesis of this text. Also, we must not allow other texts to influence this text until our independent study of this text is complete and we have ascertained what John was saying both in chapter 3 and in the entire book of 1 John!
- C. This text clearly presents the goal that all believers long for, a total deliverance from sin. This same ideal is presented in Romans 6. Through Christ's power we have the potential for sinless living.
- D. This passage, however, must fit into the larger context of the entire book of 1 John.
  1. To interpret this passage without regard for 1:8-2:2 (Christians still sin) would be folly.
  2. To interpret this passage in such a manner as to defeat the overall purpose of 1 John, the assurance of salvation against the claims of the false teachers would be folly also.
  3. This passage must be related to the false teachers' claims of sinlessness or sin's insignificance. Possibly 1:8-2:2 deals with one extreme of the false teachers, while 3:1-10 deals with another. Remember that interpreting the letters of the NT is like listening to one half of a phone conversation.
- E. A paradoxical relationship exists between these two passages. Sin in the Christian's life is a recurrent problem in the NT (cf. Romans 7). This forms the same dialectical tension as predestination and free will or security and perseverance. The paradox provides a theological



balance and attacks the extreme positions. The false teachers were presenting two errors in the area of sin.

- F. This entire theological discussion is based on a misunderstanding of the difference between
1. our position in Christ
  2. our striving to fulfill that position experientially in daily life
  3. the promise that victory will be ours one day!

We are free from sin's penalty (justification) in Christ, yet we still struggle with its power (progressive sanctification) and one day we will be free of its presence (glorification). This book as a whole teaches the priority of admitting our sin and striving toward sinlessness.

- G. Another option comes from John's literary dualism. He wrote in black and white categories (also found in Dead Sea Scrolls). For him one was in Christ and thereby righteous, or in Satan and thereby sinful. There was no third category. This serves as a "wake up call" to peripheral, cultural, part-time, funeral-only, Easter-only Christianity!

H. Some references on this difficult subject:

1. For the seven traditional interpretations of this passage see "The Epistles of John" in *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* by John R. W. Stott, published by Eerdmans (pp. 130-136).
2. For a good treatment on the position of Perfection see *Christian Theology*, Vol. II, p. 440ff by H. Orton Willie, published by Beacon Hill Press.
3. For a good treatment on the doctrine of continuing sin in the life of the Christian see "Perfectionism" by B. B. Warfield published by The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:4-10**

**<sup>4</sup>Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. <sup>7</sup>Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; <sup>8</sup>the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. <sup>10</sup>By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.**

**3:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Whoever sins, acts wickedly"</b>

The pronoun "everyone" is fronted here and in 1 John 3:6. This context relates to all humanity!

This is a present active participle and a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. It is significant these Present tense verbs emphasize habitual, ongoing, lifestyle action in contradistinction to the aorist active

subjunctives in 1 John 2:1-2. However, the theological problem of this passage (compare 1:7-10 with 3:6-9) cannot be fully solved by a verb tense. It is solved by the historical setting of two types of Gnostic false teachers and the total context of the book.

Another distinctive of this passage is its use of the term "lawlessness." This speaks not of the breaking of a law (Moses Law or societal norms) as much as an attitude of rebellion. This same word is used to describe the Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:3,7. It may be a fuller definition of sin (cf. John 9:41; Rom. 14:23; James 4:17; 1 John 5:17), the opposite of Christlikeness (cf. 1 John 3:5), not just violation of a rule or standard.

**3:5 "He appeared"** This is an aorist passive indicative which speaks of Jesus' incarnation (cf. 1 John 3:8; 2 Tim. 1:10). The same verb, *phaneroō*, is used twice in 1 John 3:2 of His Second Coming. He came first as savior (cf. Mark 10:45; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21), but He will return as Consummator! In his commentary *The Letters of John*, one of my favorite teachers, Bill Hendricks says:

"Two of the most penetrating statements of the purpose of Christ's coming are found in this verse and in verse 8. He was sent by God to take away sins (3:5), and he was revealed to destroy the devil's works (3:8). Elsewhere Luke recorded that Jesus' purpose in coming was to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). The Gospel of John states that Jesus came that his sheep might have the abundant life (John 10:10). Matthew implied the purpose of Jesus' coming in his interpretation of the name Jesus; He shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). The basic fact in all of these expressions is that Jesus Christ has done something for man which man could not do for himself" (pp. 79-80).

■ **"to take away sins"** This is an aorist subjunctive. The action is contingent on human response (i.e., repentance and faith). The background of this statement is related to two possible sources.

1. the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16) where one of the two scapegoats symbolically bore away the sin from the camp of Israel (cf. John the Baptist's use in John 1:29)
2. a reference to what Jesus did on the cross (cf. Isa. 53:11-12; John 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24)

■ **"and in Him there is no sin"** This is a present active indicative. Jesus Christ's sinlessness (cf. John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22) is the basis for His vicarious, substitutionary atonement on our behalf (Isaiah 53).

Notice that "sin" is plural in the first part of 1 John 3:5 and singular in the last part. The first refers to acts of sin, the second to His righteous character. The goal is that believers will share both the positional sanctification and progressive sanctification of Christ. Sin is an alien thing for Christ and His followers.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: Sanctification**

**3:6 "No one who abides in Him sins"** Like 3:4, this is another present active participle and present active indicative. This passage must be contrasted with 1:8-2:2 and 5:16.

■ **"no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him"** This verse has one present active participle followed by two Perfect active indicatives. Continual flagrant sinning reveals that one does not know Christ and has never known Christ. Sinning Christians

1. thwart Christ's mission
2. thwart the goal of Christlikeness
3. reveal the individual's spiritual origin (cf. John 8:44)

**3:7 "make sure no one deceives you"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act in process. The presence of false teachers (cf. 1 John 2:26) sets the historical situation for a proper theological understanding of 1 John as a whole and verses 1:7-10 and 3:4-10 in particular.

■ **"the one who practices righteousness is righteous"** This verse cannot be isolated from the general context and be used to advocate or condemn a doctrinal position ("works righteousness"). The NT is clear

that human beings cannot approach the Holy God by their personal merit. Humans are not saved by self-effort. However, humans must respond to God's offer of salvation in the finished work of Christ. Our efforts do not bring us to God. They do show that we have met Him. They clearly reveal our spiritual condition (cf. Rev. 22:11) and maturity after salvation. We are not saved "by" good works, but "unto" good works. The goal of God's free gift in Christ is Christlike followers (cf. Eph.2:8-9,10). The ultimate will of God for every believer is not just heaven when he dies (forensic justification), but Christlikeness (temporal sanctification) now (cf. Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19)! For a word study on righteousness see Special Topic at 1 John 2:29.

**3:8 "the one who practices sin is of the devil"** This is the present active participle. God's children are known by how they live, as are Satan's children (cf. 1 John 3:10; Matt. 7:13; Eph. 2:1-3).

■ **"for the devil has sinned from the beginning"** This is present active indicative. The devil continues to sin from the beginning (cf. John 8:44). Does this refer to creation or an angelic rebellion?

It is difficult theologically to determine when Satan rebelled against God. Job 1-2; Zechariah 3 and 1 Kings 22:19-23 seem to show that Satan is a servant of God and one of the angelic councilors. It is possible (but not probable) that the pride, arrogance, and ambition of the eastern kings (of Babylon, Isa. 14:13-14 or of Tyre, Ezek. 28:12-16) are used to declare the rebellion of Satan (apparently a covering cherub, Ezek. 28:14,16). However, in Luke 10:18 Jesus said He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning, but it does not tell us exactly when. The origin and development of evil must remain an uncertainty because of the lack of revelation. Be careful of systematizing and dogmatizing isolated, ambiguous, figurative texts! The best discussion of the OT's development of Satan from servant to vile enemy is A. B. Davidson's *Old Testament Theology*, published by T & T Clark, pp. 300-306. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at John 12:31.

■ **"the Son of God"** See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD**

■ **"appeared"** This is the Greek term *phaneroō*, which means "to bring to light so as to make clear." Verses 5 and 8 are parallel and both use the term in the passive voice, which speaks of Christ being truly revealed in His incarnation (cf. 1 John 1:2). The problem with false teachers was not that the gospel was unclear to them, but that they had their own theological/philosophical agenda.

■ **"to destroy the works of the devil"** The purpose of Jesus' manifestation in time and flesh was to "destroy" (aorist active subjunctive of *luō*), which means "to loose," "to unbind," or "to destroy." Jesus did just that on Calvary, but humans must respond to His finished work and free gift (cf. Rom. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8) by receiving Him by faith (cf. John 1:12; 3:16).

The "already and not yet" tension of the NT also relates to the destruction of evil. The devil has been defeated, but he is still active in the world until the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

**3:9 "no one who is born of God"** This is a perfect passive participle (cf. the parallel in 1 John 3:9c; 2:29; and 5:18 ) which speaks of a settled condition produced by an outside agent (God).

■ **"practices sin"** This is a present active indicative in contradistinction to 2:1 where the aorist active subjunctive is used twice. There are two theories about the significance of this statement.

1. it relates to the Gnostic false teachers, especially that faction that reduced salvation to intellectual concepts, thereby removing the necessity of a moral lifestyle
2. the present tense verb emphasizes continual, habitual, sinful activity (cf. Rom. 6:1), not isolated acts of sins (cf. Rom. 6:15)

This theological distinction is illustrated in Romans 6 (potential sinlessness in Christ) and Romans 7 (the ongoing struggle of the believer sinning less).

The historical approach #1 seems best, but one is still left with the need to apply this truth to today, which #2 addresses. There is a good discussion of this difficult verse in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter

Kaiser, Peter Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred Brauch, pp. 736-739.

■ **"because His seed abides in him"** This is a present active indicative. There have been several theories as to exactly what the Greek phrase, "His seed," means

1. Augustine and Luther said it refers to God's Word (cf. Luke 8:11; John 5:38; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23)
2. Calvin said it refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5,6,8; 1 John 3:24; 4:4,13)
3. others said it refers to the Divine Nature or new self (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 4:24)
4. possibly it refers to Christ Himself as the "seed of Abraham" (cf. Luke 1:55; John 8:33,37; Gal. 3:16)
5. some say it is synonymous with the phrase "born of God"
6. apparently this was a term used by the Gnostics to speak of the divine spark in all humans

Number 4 is probably the best contextual option of all of these theories, but John chose his vocabulary to refute the incipient Gnostics (i.e., #6).

**3:10** This is a summary of 1 John 3:4-9. It contains two present active indicatives and two present active participles, which refer to action in process. Theologically this is parallel to Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 7:16-20). How one lives reveals one's heart, one's spiritual orientation.

This is the negative counterpoint to 2:29!

■ **"children of God. . . children of the devil"** This shows John's Semitic background. Hebrew, being an ancient language without adjectives, used "son of. . ." as a way to describe persons.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; <sup>12</sup>not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.**

**3:11 "the message"** This Greek term (*aggelia*, usually transliterated *angelia*) is used only in 1 John 1:5 and 3:11. The first usage seems to be doctrinal, while the second is ethical. This is in keeping with John's balance between these two aspects of Christianity (cf. 1 John 1:8,10; 2:20,24; 3:14).

■ **"you have heard from the beginning"** This phrase is a literary device which relates to Jesus as both the living Word of God (cf. John 1:1) and revealing the Word of God (cf. 1 John 1:1; 2:7,13,14,24; 2 John 5,6).

■ **"we should love one another"** This is evidence by which believers know they are truly redeemed (cf. 1 John 3:10,14). It reflects Jesus' words (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; 1 John 3:23; 4:7-8,11-12,19-21).

**3:12 "Cain"** The account of Cain's life is recorded in Genesis 4. The exact reference is Gen. 4:4 (cf. Heb. 11:4), where the offerings of Cain and Abel are contrasted. Cain's actions reveal the influence of the fall of mankind (cf. Gen. 4:7; 6:5,11-12,13b). In both Jewish and Christian traditions (cf. Heb. 11:4; Jude 11) Cain is an example of wicked rebellion.

■ **"who was of the evil one"** This grammatical construction could be masculine singular (the evil one, cf. 1 John 3:10) or neuter singular (of evil). This same grammatical ambiguity is found in Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,38; John 17:15; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 2:13,14; 3:12; and 5:18-19. In several cases the context obviously refers to Satan (cf. Matt. 5:37; 13:38; John 17:15).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:13-22**

**<sup>13</sup>Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.**

**15**Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **16**We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. **17**But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? **18**Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. **19**We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him **20**in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. **21**Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22**and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

**3:13 "Do not be surprised"** This is a present active imperative with a negative particle which often means to stop an act already in progress (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12-16). This is not a fair world; this is not the world that God intended it to be!

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"the world hates you"** It hated Jesus; it will hate His followers. This is a common theme in the NT (cf. John 15:18; 17:14; Matt. 5:10-11; 2 Tim. 3:12) and another evidence that one is a believer.

**3:14 "We know"** This is a perfect active indicative (*oida* has perfect form, but present meaning). This is another common theme. God's children's confidence is related to (1) a change of mind and (2) a change of action, which are the root meanings of the term "repent" in Greek and Hebrew.

■ **"we have passed out of death into life"** This is another perfect active indicative (cf. John 5:24). One of the evidences of passing from death into life (i.e., Christian assurance, see Special Topic at John 6:37) is that we love one another. The other is that the world hates us.

■ **"because we love the brethren"** This is a Present active indicative. Love is the major characteristic of the family of God (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; 2 John 5; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22) because it is characteristic of God, Himself (cf. 1 John 4:7-21). Love is not the basis of human relationship with God, but the result. Love is not the basis of salvation, but another evidence of it.

■ **"He who does not love abides in death"** This is a Present participle used as the subject with a present active indicative verb. As believers continue to abide in love, unbelievers abide in hate. Hate, like love, is an evidence of one's spiritual orientation. Remember John's stark, dualistic categories; one abides in love or abides in death. No middle ground.

**3:15 "Everyone"** John has used this term (*pas*) 8 times since 2:29. The significance of this is that there are no exceptions to what John is saying. There are only two kinds of people, lovers and haters. John sees life in black or white terms, no pastels.

■ **"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer"** This is a present active participle (i.e., an ongoing, settled hatred). Sin occurs first in the thought life. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught that hatred equals murder as lust equals adultery (cf. Matt. 5:21-22).

■ **"and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"** This is not saying someone who commits murder cannot be a Christian. Sin is forgivable, but lifestyle actions reveal the heart. It is saying that one who habitually hates cannot be a Christian. Love and hate are mutually exclusive! Hate takes a life, but love gives its life.

**3:16 "We know"** This is a perfect active indicative. The Greek term used in 1 John 3:15 was *oída*; here *it is ginōskō*. These are used synonymously in John's writings.

▣ **"love by this"** Jesus has shown the ultimate example of what love is like. Believers are to emulate His example (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

▣ **"He laid down His life for us"** This is an aorist tense referring to Calvary using Jesus' own words (cf. John 10:11,15,17,18; 15:13).

▣ **"we ought"** Believers are bound by Jesus' example (cf. 1 John 2:6; 4:11).

▣ **"to lay down our lives for the brethren"** Christ is the example. As He laid down His life for others, Christians are to lay down their lives if necessary for the brethren. Death to self-centeredness is

1. a reverse of the Fall
2. the restoration of the image of God
3. living for the corporate good (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Phil. 2:5-11; Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:21)

**3:17 "But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need"** These are present subjunctive verbs. Laying down one's life in 1 John 3:16 is now put into the realm of potential, practical help of one's brother. These verses sound so much like James (cf. James 2:15,16).

▣ **"and closes his heart against him"** This is an aorist active subjunctive. The term heart is literally "bowels," a Hebrew idiom for the emotions. Again, our actions reveal our Father.

▣ **"the love of God"** Again is this an objective or subjunctive genitive or purposeful ambiguity?

1. love for God
2. God's love for us
3. both

Number 3 fits John's writings!

**3:18 "let us not love with word or with tongue"** Actions speak louder than words (cf. Matt. 7:24; James 1:22-25; 2:14-26).

▣ **"but in deed and truth"** The term "truth" is surprising. One would expect a synonym of "deed," like "action." The term seems to mean genuine (NJB) or true (TEV), like the use of "message" in 1 John 1:5 and 3:11 which emphasizes both doctrine and lifestyle, so too, "truth." The deed and motives must both be motivated by self-giving love (God's love) and not just be showy deeds that feed the ego of the provider or giver.

**3:19 "We will know by this"** This refers to the loving acts previously mentioned. This is a future middle (deponent) indicative, which is another evidence of one's true conversion.

▣ **"that we are of the truth"** Believers' loving lifestyles show two things: (1) that they are on the side of truth and (2) that their consciences are clear. See Special Topic: Truth at John 6:55.

**3:19-20** There is much confusion about how to translate the Greek text of these two verses. One possible interpretation emphasizes God's judgment, while the other emphasizes God's compassion. Because of the context, the second option seems most appropriate.

**3:20-21** Both of these verses are Third class conditional sentences.

**3:20**

**NASB "in whatever our heart condemns us"**

NKJV	"for if our heart condemns us"
NRSV	"whenever our hearts condemns us"
TEV	"if our conscience condemns us"
NJB	"even if our own feelings condemns us"

All believers have experienced inner grief over not living up to the "standard" that they know is God's will for their lives (i.e., Romans 7). Those pains of conscience can be from God's Spirit (to cause repentance) or Satan (to cause self-destruction or loss of witness). There is both appropriate guilt and inappropriate guilt. Believers know the difference by reading God's book (or hearing His messengers). John is trying to console believers who are living by the standard of love but still struggling with sin (both commission and omission). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Heart](#) at John 12:40.

■ **"and knows all things"** God knows our true motives (cf. 1 Sam. 2:3; 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; Pro. 15:11; 20:27; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:26,27).

**3:21 "if our heart does not condemn us"** This is a third class conditional sentence. Christians still struggle with sin and self (cf. 1 John 2:1; 5:16-17). They still face temptations and act inappropriately in specific situations. Often their conscience condemns them. As the hymn "At Even, Ere the Sun Was Set," by Henry Twells states:

"And none, O Lord, has perfect rest,  
For none is wholly free from sin;  
And they who fain would serve Thee best  
Are conscious most of wrong within."

A knowledge of the gospel, a sweet fellowship with Jesus, a yieldedness to the Spirit's leading and the Father's omniscience calm our hearts of dust (cf. Ps. 103:8-14)!

■ **"we have confidence before God"** This speaks of open and free access to God's presence. It is an oft-repeated term and concept of John (cf. 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14; Heb. 3:6; 10:35, see Special Topic at 1 John 7:4). This phrase introduces two of the benefits of assurance.

1. that believers have perfect confidence before God
2. they obtain from Him whatever they ask

**3:22 "whatever we ask we receive from Him"** This is a Present active subjunctive and a Present active indicative. This reflects Jesus' statements in Matt. 7:7; 18:19, John 9:31; 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:23; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9-10. These Scripture promises are so different from believer's experience in prayer. This verse seems to promise unlimited answered prayer. This is where a comparison of other relevant texts helps bring a theological balance.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: Prayer, Unlimited Yet Limited](#)

■ **"because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight"** Notice in this context the two requirements for answered prayer.

1. obedience
2. practicing the things pleasing to God (cf. John 8:29)

1 John is a "how to" book on effective Christian living and ministry.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:23-24**

<sup>23</sup>This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. <sup>24</sup>The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

**3:23 "This is His commandment. . .that we believe. . .and love"** Notice the term "commandment" is singular with two aspects. The first aspect is personal faith; the verb, "believe," is aorist active subjunctive (cf. John 6:29,40). The second aspect is ethical; the verb, love, is in the present active subjunctive (cf. 1 John 3:11; 4:7). The gospel is a message to be believed, a person to receive, and a lifestyle to live!

■ **"that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ"** The concept of "believe" is crucial in understanding biblical faith. The OT term *aman* reflected "loyalty," "trustworthiness," "dependability," or "faithfulness" (see Special Topic on the OT word at 1 John 2:10). In the NT the Greek term (*pisteuō*) is translated by three different English terms: believe, faith, or trust (see Special Topic on the Greek word at John 2:23). The term does not so much reflect on the Christian's trustworthiness as on God's. It is His character, revelation, and promises, not the loyalty or faithfulness of fallen humans, even redeemed fallen humans, that form the unshakable foundation!

The concept of believing in "the name" or praying "in the name" reflects the Near Eastern understanding that the name represents the person.

1. Jesus in Matt. 1:21,23,25; 7:22; 10:22; 12:21; 18:5,20; 19:29; 24:5,9; John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 14:26; 15:21; 17:6; 20:31
2. the Father in Matt. 6:9; 21:9; 23:39; John 5:43; 10:25; 12:13; 17:12
3. the Trinity in Matt. 28:19.

Just a brief technical note on this verse. In his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (p. 228), A. T. Robertson mentions a Greek manuscript problem relating to the verb "believe." The Greek uncial manuscripts B, K, and L have aorist active subjunctives, while  $\kappa$ , A, and C have present active subjunctives. Both fit the context and style of John.

**3:24 "The one who keeps. . .abides. . ."** These are both present tense. Obedience is linked to abiding. Love is evidence that we are in God and God is in us (cf. 1 John 4:12,15-16; John 14:23; 15:10). See Special Topic on abiding at 1 John 2:10.

■ **"by the Spirit whom He has given us"** John uses certain evidences to evaluate true believers (cf. Rom. 4:13; 8:14-16, see Contextual Insights to 2:3-27, C). Two are related to the Holy Spirit.

1. confessing Jesus (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3)
2. Christlike living (cf. John 15; Gal. 5:22; James 2:14-26)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the unifying theme of verses 11-24? (cf. 1 John 2:7-11)?
2. Explain the relationship of verses 16 and 17. How is laying down our lives to be compared with helping our brother in need?
3. Do verses 19-20 emphasize the strictness of God's judgment or God's great compassion which calms our fears?
4. How do we relate John's statement about prayer in verse 22 to our daily experience?
5. How does one reconcile John's seemingly paradoxical emphasis on the Christian's need to admit and confess sin and his statement of sinless perfection?
6. Why is John making such a heavy emphasis on lifestyle?
7. Explain the theological truths involved in being "born again."
8. How does this passage relate to the daily Christian life?





# 1 JOHN 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Antichrist	The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error	Discernment of Truth and Error	The True Spirit and the False Spirit	The Third Condition: To Be on Guard Against Antichrists and Against the World
4:1-6	3:24-4:6	4:1-6	4:1-3 4:4-6	4:1-6 The Source of Love and Faith (4:7-5:13)
God is Love	Knowing God Through Love	The Blessedness of Love	God is Love	The Source of Love
4:7-12	4:7-11 Seeing God Through Love 4:12-16	4:7-12	4:7-10 4:11-12	4:7-5:4
4:13-16a		4:13-16a	4:13-16a	
4:16b-21	The Consummation of Love 4:17-19 Obedience by Faith 4:20-5:5	4:16b-21	4:16b-18 4:19-21	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 4:1-21

- A. John 4 is a very specialized literary unit on how Christians assess and verify those who claim to speak for God. This passage is related to
1. these false prophets called antichrists (cf. 1 John 2:18-25)
  2. those who try to deceive (cf. 1 John 2:26; 3:7)
  3. possibly those who claim knowledge of special spiritual truths (cf. 1 John 3:24)
- To fully understand the predicament of the early Christians one must recognize that many claimed to speak for God (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1-6). There was no complete and available New Testament. Spiritual discernment involved both doctrinal and social tests (cf. James 3:1-12).
- B. 1 John is extremely hard to outline because of the recurring pattern of themes. This is surely true in chapter 4. It seems that this chapter re-emphasizes truths which were taught in earlier chapters, especially the believers' need to love one another (cf. 1 John 4:7-21; 2:7-12 and 3:11-24).
- C. John is writing both to combat the false teachers and to encourage the true believers. He does this by using several tests:
1. the doctrinal test (belief in Jesus, cf. 1 John 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16; 5:1,5,10)
  2. lifestyle test (obedience, cf. 1 John 2:3-7; 3:1-10, 22-24)
  3. the social test (love, cf. 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12,16-21; 5:1-2)
- Different parts of Scripture relate to different false teachers. 1 John addresses the heresy of Gnostic false teachers. See Introduction to 1 John, the Heresy. Other parts of the NT address other untruths (cf. John 1:13; Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3). Each context must be studied separately to ascertain what error is being addressed. There was error from several sources.
1. Jewish legalists
  2. Greek philosophers
  3. Greek antinomians
  4. those who claimed special spiritual revelation or experiences.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED TEXT): 4:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. <sup>4</sup>You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup>We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**4:1 "do not believe"** This is a present imperative with a negative particle which usually means to stop an act already in process. The tendency of Christians is to accept strong personalities, logical arguments, or miraculous events as from God. Apparently the false teachers were claiming (1) to speak for God or (2) to have had a special revelation from God.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: Should Christians Judge One Another?

- **"every spirit"** Spirit is used in the sense of a human person. See note at 1 John 4:6. This refers to a

supposed message from God. Heresy comes from within the church (cf. 1 John 2:19). The false teachers were claiming to speak for God. John asserts that there are two spiritual sources, God or Satan, behind human speech and action.

■ **"but test the spirits"** This is a Present active imperative. This is both a spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29) and a necessity for every believer, as are prayer, evangelism, and giving. This Greek word *dokimazō* has the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval." Believers must think the best of others unless the worst is proven (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 Thess. 5:20-21).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS**

■ **"because many false prophets have gone out into the world"** This is a perfect active indicative (cf. Jer. 14:14; 23:21; 29:8; Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:18-19,24; 3:7; 2 John 7). The implication is that they have left the church (house churches), yet continue to claim that they speak for God.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NT Prophecy](#) at John 4:19

**4:2 "By this you know the Spirit of God"** This grammatical form is either a present active indicative (a statement) or present active imperative (a command). This same ambiguity of form is in "abide," 2:27 and "know," 2:29. The Holy Spirit always magnifies Jesus (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). This same test can be seen in Paul's writings in 1 Cor. 12:3.

■ **"every spirit that confesses"** This is a present active indicative which points to a continuing profession, not a past affirmation of faith. The Greek term "confess" is a compound from "the same" and "to speak," meaning "to say the same thing." This is a recurrent theme in 1 John (cf. 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 4:2-3; 4:15; John 9:22; 2 John 7). This term implies specific, public, vocal acknowledgment of one's affirmation of and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. See Special Topic at John 9:22.

■ **"that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"** This is a perfect active participle. This is the essential doctrinal test for the false teachers (i.e., Gnostics) whom John was combating in this book. Its basic assertion is that Jesus is fully human (i.e., flesh, which the Gnostics denied) as well as fully God (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 2 John 7; John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). The perfect tense affirms that Jesus' humanity was not temporary, but permanent. This was not a minor issue. Jesus is truly one with humanity and one with God.

**4:3 "every spirit that does not confess Jesus"** It is theologically interesting that the old Latin version of the NT and the Patristic writers, Clement, Origen of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Tertullian have *leui* (looses), which implies "separating Jesus," apparently into a human spirit and a separate divine spirit which so characterized second century Gnostic writings. But this is a textual addition which reflects the early church's life and death struggle with heresy (see Bart Erhart, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 125-135).

■ **"the spirit of the antichrist"** Here the term (cf. 1 John 2:18-25) is used as a denier of Christ, not an attempt to usurp His position.

■ **"you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world"** This is a perfect active indicative which implies that John had earlier discussed this subject with them and that its relevance remained. In Greek the pronoun "it" matches the neuter "spirit." Like 2:18, this phrase reflects that the spirit of the antichrists has both already come and will come. These Gnostic false teachers form a chain of false information, false lifestyles, and false professions through the ages, from the evil one of Genesis 3 to the manifestation of the incarnation of evil and the end-time Antichrist (i.e., 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13).

**4:4-6 "You. . .They. . .We"** All of these pronouns are emphasized. There are three groups being addressed.

1. true believers (John and his readers)
2. false believers (Gnostic teachers and their followers)
3. John's missionary team or theological group

This same type of triad is seen in Hebrews 6 and 10.

**4:4 "have overcome them"** This is a perfect active indicative. This seems to be a reference to both the doctrinal controversy and the victorious Christian life. What a wonderful word of encouragement for them and us!

John is concerned with the Christian's victory over sin and the devil. He uses this term (*nikaō*) 6 times in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4,5), 11 times in the Revelation, and once in John 16:33). This term for "victory" was used only once in Luke (cf. Luke 11:22) and twice in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 3:4; 12:21).

▣ **"because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"** This is an emphasis on indwelling Deity. Here it seems to be a reference to the indwelling Father (cf. John 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:16). The NT also emphasizes (1) the indwelling Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; Col. 1:27) and (2) the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 John 4:13). The Spirit and the Son are closely identified (cf. Rom 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11). See Special Topic at John 14:16.

The phrase "he who is in the world" refers to Satan (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19) and his followers. The term "world" in 1 John always has negative connotations (i.e., human society organized and functioning apart from God, see Special Topic: *Kosmos* at John 14:17).

**4:5 "They are from the world"** This is an ablative of source. The term "world" is used here in the sense of fallen human society trying to meet all of its needs apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). It refers to fallen humanity's collective independent spirit! An example of this is Cain (cf. 1 John 3:12). Other examples would be (1) Elijah and the Prophets of *Ba'al* (1 Kings 18) and (2) Jeremiah vs. Hananiah (Jeremiah 28).

▣ **"the world listens to them"** Another evidence of Christian teachers versus false teachers is who listens to them (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1).

**4:6 "who knows God listens to us"** This is a present active participle. The true believers continue to listen and respond to Apostolic truth! Believers can recognize true preachers/teachers by both the content of their message and who hears and responds to them.

▣ **"By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"** This may refer to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6; 5:7) and the evil spirit, Satan. Believers must be able to discern the source of the message. Often they are both given in God's name, supposedly by God's speakers. One lifts up Jesus and Christlikeness and one lifts up human speculation and personal freedom.

Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, has an interesting discussion of the uses of the term "spirit" in the NT.

- "1. evil spirits
2. the human spirit
3. the Holy Spirit
4. things that the Spirit produces in and through human spirits
  - a. 'not a spirit of slavery vs. a spirit of adoption' - Rom. 8:15
  - b. 'a spirit of gentleness' - 1 Cor. 4:21
  - c. 'a spirit of faith' - 2 Cor. 4:13
  - d. 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' - Eph. 1:17
  - e. 'not a spirit of timidity, but of power, love and discipline' - 2 Tim. 1:7
  - f. 'spirit of error vs. spirit of truth' - 1 John 4:6" (pp. 61-63).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 4:7-14|**

**<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>By this**

**the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup>We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.**

**4:7 "let us love one another"** This is a present active subjunctive. Lifestyle, daily love is the one common characteristic of all believers (cf. 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22). This is a recurrent theme in John's writings and the essence of the ethical test (cf. John 13:34; 15:12,17; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11,23; 2 John 5, see Contextual Insights, C). The subjunctive mood states a contingency.

■ **"for love is from God"** God, not human philanthropy, pity, or emotion, is the source of love (cf. 1 John 4:16). It is not primarily emotional but purposeful action (i.e., the Father sending the Son to die on our behalf, cf. 1 John 4:10; John 3:16).

■ **"everyone who loves is born of God and knows God"** The verbs are perfect passive and present active indicatives. John's favorite terms for becoming a believer are related to physical birth (cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; John 3:3,7).

The term "know" reflects the Hebrew sense of ongoing, intimate fellowship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). It is the recurrent theme of 1 John, used over seventy-seven times. See Special Topic at John 1:10.

**4:8 "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love"** Lifestyle love is the true test of knowing God.

This is one of John's profoundly simple statements; "God is love" matches "God is light" (cf. 1 John 1:5) and "God is spirit" (cf. John 4:24). One of the best ways to contrast God's love and God's wrath is to compare Deut. 5:9 with 5:10 and 7:9.

**4:9 "By this the love of God was manifested in us"** This is an aorist passive indicative (cf. John 3:16; 2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 8:32). God has clearly shown that He loves us by sending His only Son to die in our place. Love is an action, not just a feeling. Believers must emulate it in their daily lives (cf. 1 John 3:16). To know God is to love as He loves.

■ **"God has sent His only begotten Son into the world"** This is a perfect active indicative; the incarnation and its results remain! All of God's benefits come through Christ.

The term "only begotten" is *monogenēs*, which implies "unique," "one of a kind," not begotten as in sexual generation. The virgin birth was not a sexual experience for God or Mary. John uses this term several times referring to Jesus (cf. John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9). See further note at John 3:16. Jesus is God's Son in a unique (ontological) sense. Believers are God's children only in a derived sense.

■ **"so that we might live through Him"** This is an aorist active subjunctive which implies a contingency, a faith response is necessary. The purpose of the incarnation was eternal life and abundant life (cf. John 10:10).

**4:10 "In this is love"** God's love is clearly demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:6,8). To know Jesus is to know God. To know God is to love!

■ **"not that we loved God"** The NT is unique among the world religions. Typically religion is mankind seeking God, but Christianity is God seeking fallen mankind! The wonderful truth is not our love for God, but His love for us. He has sought us through our sin and self, our rebellion and pride. The glorious truth of Christianity is that God loves fallen mankind and has initiated and maintained a life-changing contact.

There is a variant related to the form of the verb.

1. have and continue to love, perfect - MS B

2. loved, aorist - MS  $\kappa$

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the perfect tense a "B" rating (almost certain).

▣ **"sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"** See note at 1 John 2:2.

**4:11 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. God does love us (cf. Rom. 8:31)!

▣ **"God so loved us"** "So" should be understood as "in such a manner," as in John 3:16.

▣ **"we also ought to love one another"** Because He has loved us we must love one another (cf. 1 John 2:10; 3:16; 4:7). This statement of necessity reflects the disruptive actions and attitudes of the false teachers.

**4:12 "No one has seen God at any time"** This is a perfect middle (deponent) indicative. This word implies "to gaze intensely at someone or something" (cf. Exod. 33:20-23; John 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16). It is possible that the Gnostic teachers, somewhat influenced by eastern mystery religions, claimed some type of vision from God or of God. Jesus came to fully reveal the Father. By gazing at Him we know God!

▣ **"if"** This is a third class conditional which means potential action.

▣ **"God abides in us"** See Special Topic on Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

▣ **"His love is perfected in us"** This is a periphrastic perfect passive participle. Loving Christians are an evidence of the abiding, perfected love of God (cf. 1 John 2:5; 4:17).

**4:13 "He has given us of His Spirit"** This is a Perfect active indicative. The indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. 1 John 3:24; Rom. 8:9) and His transforming influence are evidence of our true salvation (cf. Rom. 8:16). It seems that 1 John 4:13 is the subjective witness of the Spirit, while 1 John 4:14 is the objective witness of Apostolic testimony. The three persons of the Trinity appear clearly in 1 John 4:13-14. See Special Topic: The Trinity at John 14:26.

**4:14 "We have seen and testify"** The verbs are perfect middle (deponent) indicative joined with present active indicative. It speaks of John's eyewitness testimony concerning the person of Christ, just like 1:1-3.

The term "seen" is the same Greek word as in 1 John 4:12 which means "to gaze intently at." See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

▣ **"that the Father has sent the Son"** This is a perfect active indicative. The fact that God the Father sent God the Son into the world (cf. John 3:16) refutes the Gnostic false teaching about the supposed dualism between spirit (good) and matter (evil). Jesus was truly divine and He was sent into an evil world of sin to redeem it and us (cf. Romans 8:18-25) from the curse of Genesis 3 (cf. Gal. 3:13).

▣ **"to be the Savior of the world"** The fact that the Father chose to use Jesus as the means of salvation refutes the Gnostic false teaching that salvation is obtained through special, secret knowledge related to the angelic levels. They called these angelic levels *eons* or realms of angelic authority between the high God and the lesser god who formed the world out of preexisting matter.

The phrase "Savior of the world" was (1) a title for the gods (i.e., Zeus) and (2) a common title for the Roman Caesar. For the Christian only Jesus could bear this title (cf. John 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10). This is exactly what caused the persecution by local caesar-cults in Asia Minor.

Notice it is all inclusive. He is the savior of all (not some) if they will only respond (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 5:18; 10:9-13).

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 4:15-21

<sup>15</sup>Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup>We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup>By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. <sup>19</sup>We love, because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

**4:15 "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God"** This is an aorist active subjunctive. For "confesses" see note at 1 John 4:2. One of John's three tests of a true Christian is theological truth concerning the person and work of Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:22-23; 4:1-6; 5:1,5). This is also matched in 1 John and James with lifestyle love and obedience. Christianity is a person, a body of truth, and a lifestyle. See Contextual Insights, C.

The inclusive term "whoever" is the great invitation of God for anyone and everyone to come to Him. All humans are made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:3; 9:6). God promised redemption to the human race in Gen. 3:15. His call to Abraham was a call to reach the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5). Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem (cf. John 3:16). Everyone can be saved if they will respond to the covenant obligations of repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance. God's word to all is "Come" (cf. Isaiah 55).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN**

▣ **"God abides in him and he in God"** This reflects the covenantal structure of God's relationship with humankind. God always takes the initiative, sets the agenda and provides the basis for the covenant, but humans have the responsibility to initially respond and to continue to respond.

Abiding is a covenant requirement, but also a wonderful promise (cf. John 15). Imagine the Creator of the universe, the Holy One of Israel, abiding with (indwelling) fallen humans (cf. John 14:23)! See Special Topic on Abiding at 1 John 2:10.

**4:16 "We have come to know and have believed"** These verbs are both perfect active indicatives. Believers' confident faith assurance of God's love in Christ, not existential circumstances, is the basis of their relationship. See Special Topic: Assurance at 1 John 5:13.

▣ **"which God has for us"** This is a Present active indicative expressing God's continuing love.

▣ **"God is love"** This important truth is repeated (cf. 1 John 4:8).

**4:17 "By this, love is perfected"** This is from the Greek word *telos* (cf. 1 John 4:12). It implies fullness, maturity, and completion, not sinlessness.

▣ **"with us"** This preposition (*meta*) can be understood as "in us" (TEV, NJB), "among us" (NKJV, NRSV, NIV, REB), or "with us" (NASB).

▣ **"so that we may have confidence"** Originally this term meant freedom of speech. John uses this extensively (cf. 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 5:14). It speaks of our boldness in approaching a holy God (cf. Heb. 3:6; 10:35). See Special Topic at John 7:4.

▣ **"in the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in this world"** Christians are to love as



Jesus loved (cf. 1 John 3:16; 4:11). They may be rejected and persecuted as He was, but also they are loved and sustained by the Father and the Spirit as He was! One day all humans will give an account to God for the gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). Judgment Day holds no fear for those in Christ.

**4:18 "There is no fear in love"** When we come to know God as Father, we no longer fear Him as judge. Most, if not all, conversions to Christianity involve fear-fear of judgment, of condemnation, of hell. However, a wonderful thing happens in the life of redeemed humans: what starts with fear ends in no fear!

▣ **"fear involves punishment"** This is a rare word used only here and Matt. 25:46 (the verb form is in 2 Pet. 2:9), which is also an eschatological setting. The present tense verb implies that fear of God's wrath is both temporal (in time) and eschatological (at the end of time). Humans are made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) which involves aspects of personality, knowledge, choice, and consequences. This is a moral universe. Humans don't break God's laws; they break themselves on God's laws!

**4:19 "We love"** This is a present active indicative. The NKJV adds a direct object after "we love." The manuscript options for a direct object are:

1. in one uncial Greek manuscript (κ) "God" (*ton theon*) is supplied
2. in Ψ "Him" (*auton*) is supplied (KJV)
3. in the Vulgate "one another" is supplied

These direct objects may be later additions. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the verb only an "A" rating (certain).

▣ **"because He first loved us"** This is the repeated emphasis of 1 John 4:10. God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65) but fallen mankind must respond (cf. John 1:12; 3:16). Believers trust in His trustworthiness and have faith in His faithfulness. The loving, acting, faithful character of the Triune God is the hope and assurance of redeemed mankind.

**4:20 "If someone says"** This is a third class conditional sentence which meant potential action. This is another example of John quoting the statements of the false teachers in order to make a point (cf. 1 John 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6). This literary technique is called diatribe (cf. Malachi, Romans, and James).

▣ **"I love God' and hates his brother"** Our lifestyle love clearly reveals whether we are Christians (cf. Mark 12:28-34). Conflict is possible, but settled hatred is not (present tense). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Racism](#) at John 4:4.

▣ **"he is a liar"** John calls several "supposed" believers liars (cf. 1 John 2:4,22; 4:20). John also states that those who preach false truths make God a liar (cf. 1 John 1:6,10; 5:10). There surely are self-deceived religionists!

**4:21** This verse summarizes the chapter! Love is the non-counterfeitable evidence of a true believer. Hate is the evidence of a child of the evil one. The false teachers were dividing the flock and causing conflict.

▣ **"brother"** It must be admitted that the term "brother" is ambiguous. It could mean "fellow Christian" or "fellow human." However, John's recurrent use of "brother" for believers implies the first meaning (cf. 1 Tim. 4:10).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the three major tests of genuine Christianity.
2. How does one know who really speaks for God?
3. List the two sources of truth (subjective and objective).
4. What is significant about the title "Savior of the world"?
5. List the actions that reveal liars (i.e., false believers).

# 1 JOHN 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Faith is Victory Over the World	Obedience by Faith	Victorious Faith	Our Victory Over the World	
	4:20-5:5			
5:1-5		5:1-5	5:1-5	The Source of Faith
The Witness Concerning the Son	The Certainty of God's Witness		The Witness About Jesus Christ	5:5-13
5:6-12	5:6-13	5:6-12	5:6-12	
The Knowledge of Eternal Life		Conclusion	Eternal Life	
5:13-15	Confidence and Compassion in Prayer	5:13	5:13-15	Prayer for Sinners
	5:14-17	5:14-17		5:14-17
5:16-17	Knowing the True, Rejecting the False		5:16-17	Summary of the Letter
5:18-21	5:18-21	5:18-20	5:18	5:18-21
			5:19	
			5:20	
		5:21	5:21	

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup>Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father**

loves the *child* born of Him. <sup>2</sup>By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. <sup>3</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup>For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith.

**5:1 "Whoever" (twice)** The term *pas* is used repeatedly in 1 John (cf. 1 John 2:29;3:3,4,6 [twice]9,10; 4:7; 5:1). No one is excluded from John's black or white theological categories. This is the universal invitation of God to accept Jesus Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). It is similar to Paul's great invitation in Rom. 10:9-13.

■ **"believes"** This is a present active participle. This is the Greek word (noun - *pistis*; verb - *pisteuō*) which can be translated "faith," "trust," or "believe." However, in 1 John and the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) it is often used in a sense of doctrinal content (cf. Jude 1:3,20). In the Gospels and Paul it is used for personal trust and commitment. The gospel is both truths to believe and a person to trust and, as 1 John and James make clear, a life of love and service to be lived. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

■ **"that Jesus is the Christ"** The essence of the false teachers' error centers around the person and work of the man Jesus, who was also full deity (cf. 1 John 5:5). Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah! The Messiah is surprisingly (i.e., from the OT) also divine. This phrase was an oath, possibly at baptism (cf. 1 John 2:22), with the added phrase "the Son of God" (cf. 1 John 4:15; 5:5). For sure this affirmation of Jesus' Messiahship related to people with an OT background (i.e., Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers).

■ **"is born of God"** This is a perfect passive indicative which emphasizes a culmination of an action, produced by an outside agent (God, cf. 1 John 5:4,18; 2:29) into a permanent state of being.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"loves the <i>child</i> born of Him"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"loves him who is begotten of Him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"loves the parent loves the child"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"loves the father loves his child also"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"loves the father loves the son"</b>

This phrase probably refers to the Father loving Jesus because of the use of (1) the singular; (2) the aorist tense; and (3) the false teachers' attempts to theologically separate Jesus from the Father. However, it could relate to the recurrent theme of Christians loving one another (cf. 1 John 5:2) because we all have one Father.

**5:2** This verse, along with verse 3, repeats one of the major themes of 1 John. Love, God's love, is expressed by ongoing love (cf. 1 John 2:7-11; 4:7-21) and obedience (cf. 1 John 2:3-6). Notice the evidences of a true believer.

1. loves God
2. loves God's child (1 John 5:1)
3. loves God's children (1 John 5:2)
4. obeys (1 John 5:2,3)
5. overcomes (1 John 5:4-5)

**5:3 "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments"** The genitive could be objective or subjective or a combination. Love is not sentimental but action oriented, both on God's part and on ours. Obedience is crucial (cf. 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22,24; John 14:15,21,23; 15:10; 2 John 6; Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

■ **"His commandments are not burdensome"** The new covenant does have responsibilities (cf. Matt. 11:29-30, where Jesus uses the word "yoke"; the rabbis used it for the laws of Moses, Matt. 23:4). They flow out of our relationship with God, but do not form the basis of that relationship, which is based on God's

grace, not human performance or merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10). Jesus' guidelines are very different from the false teachers, who either had no rules (antinomian) or too many rules (legalists)! I must admit that the longer I serve God by serving His people I am more and more afraid of the two extremes of libertinism and legalism.

See Special topic: Use of the Word "Commandment" in John's Writings at John 12:50.

**5:4**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV "For whatever is born of God"**

**TEV, NJB "because every child of God"**

The Greek text puts the word "all" (*pas*) first for emphasis, as in 1 John 5:1. The neuter singular (*pan*) is used which is translated "whatever." However, the context demands a personal connotation (i.e., the generic sense) because it is combined with the Perfect passive participle of "begotten." It is one who believes in Jesus and has been born of God who overcomes the world (cf. 1 John 4:4; 2:13,14).

■ **"overcomes the world"** "Overcomes" is a present active indicative of *nikaō* (cf. 1 John 2:13,14; 4:4; 5:4,5). The same root is used twice more in 1 John 5:4.

1. the noun, "victory," *nikē*

2. the aorist active participle, *nikaō*, "has overcome"

Jesus has already conquered the world (perfect active indicative, cf. John 16:33). Because believers stay in union with Him, they also have the power to overcome the world (cf. 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4).

The term "world" here means "human society organized and functioning apart from God." An attitude of independence is the essence of the Fall and human rebellion (cf. Genesis 3). See Special Topic at John 14:17.

■ **"the victory"** This is the noun form (*nikos*) of the verb "has overcome." At the end of 1 John 5:4 the aorist active participle of the same root is used. Then again in 1 John 5:5 another participle form of *nikos* is used. Believers are overcomers and continue to be overcomers in and through Christ's victory over the world. The word "nike," so popular today as a manufacturer of tennis shoes, is the Greek name for the goddess of victory.

■ **"our faith"** This is the only use of the noun form of the term "faith" (*pistis*) in all the writings of John! Possibly John was worried about an overemphasis on "correct theology" (as a system of beliefs) versus daily Christlikeness. The verb (*pisteuō*) is used extensively by John. Our faith brings victory because

1. it is linked to Jesus' victory

2. it is linked to our new relationship with God

3. it is linked to the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit

See Special Topics at John 1:7; 2:23; and 1 John 2:10.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:5-12**

**<sup>5</sup>Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? <sup>6</sup>This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. <sup>7</sup>It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. <sup>8</sup>For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. <sup>9</sup>If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. <sup>10</sup>The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. <sup>11</sup>And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup>He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.**

**5:5 "Jesus is the Son of God"** This verse clearly defines the content of our faith, which is mentioned in 1 John 5:4. Our victory is our profession/confession of trust in Jesus, who is both fully man and fully God (cf. 1 John 4:1-6). Notice that believers affirm that Jesus is (1) the Messiah (1 John 5:1); (2) child of God (1 John 5:1); (3) Son of God (1 John 5:5,10); and (4) the Life (cf. 1 John 1:2; 5:20). See Special Topic at John 2:23, which lists all the *hoti* clauses connected to the verb "believe."

▣ **"Son of God"** See Special Topic at 1 John 3:8.

**5:6 "This is the One who came"** This is an aorist active participle which emphasizes the Incarnation (Jesus as both man and God) and His sacrificial death, both of which the false teachers denied.

▣ **"by water and blood"** It seems that "water" refers to Jesus' physical birth (cf. John 3:1-9) and "blood" refers to His physical death. In the context of the Gnostic false teachers' rejection of Jesus' true humanity, these two experiences summarize and reveal His humanity.

The other option related to the Gnostic false teachers (Cerinthus) is that "water" refers to Jesus' baptism. They asserted that the "Christ spirit" came upon the man Jesus at His baptism (water) and left before the man Jesus' death on the cross (blood, see a good summary in NASB Study Bible, p. 1835).

A third option is to relate the phrase to Jesus' death. The spear caused "blood and water" (cf. John 19:34) to pour out. The false teachers may have depreciated Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary death.

▣ **"It is the Spirit who testifies"** The role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the gospel. He is that part of the Trinity who convicts of sin, leads to Christ, baptizes into Christ, and forms Christ in the believer (cf. John 16:7-15). The Spirit always witnesses of Christ, not Himself (cf. John 15:26).

▣ **"the Spirit is the truth"** (cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6). See Special Topics at John 6:55 and John 17:3.

**5:7** There is some confusion in the English translations as to where 1 John 5:6,7, and 8 begin and end. The portion of 1 John 5:7 that is found in the KJV which says "in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one," is not found in the three major ancient uncial Greek manuscripts of the NT: Alexandrinus (A), Vaticanus (B), or Sinaiticus (κ), nor in the Byzantine family of manuscripts. It only appears in four late minuscule manuscripts.

1. MS 61, dated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century
2. MS 88 dated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, where the passage is inserted in the margin by a later hand
3. MS 629, dated in the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century
4. MS 635, dated in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, where the passage is inserted in the margin by a later hand

This verse is not quoted by any of the Early Church Fathers, even in their doctrinal debates over the Trinity. It is absent from all ancient versions except one late Latin manuscript family (*Sixto-Clementine*). It is not in the Old Latin or Jerome's Vulgate. It appears first in a treatise by the Spanish heretic Priscillian, who died in a.d. 385. It was quoted by Latin Fathers in North Africa and Italy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This verse is simply not part of the original inspired words of 1 John.

The biblical doctrine of one God (monotheism) but with three personal manifestations (Father, Son, and Spirit) is not affected by the rejection of this verse. Although it is true that the Bible never uses the word "trinity," many biblical passages speak of all three persons of the Godhead acting together:

1. at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16-17)
2. the great commission (Matt. 28:19)
3. the Spirit sent (John 14:26)
4. Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:33-34)
5. Paul's discussion of flesh and spirit (Rom. 8:7-10)
6. Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6)
7. Paul's travel plans (2 Cor. 1:21-22)
8. Paul's benediction (2 Cor. 13:14)

9. Paul's discussion of the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4-6)
10. Paul's prayer of praise to the Father (Eph. 1:3-14)
11. Paul's discussion of the Gentiles' former alienation (Eph. 2:18)
12. Paul's discussion of the oneness of God (Eph. 4:4-6)
13. Paul's discussion of the kindness of God (Titus 3:4-6)
14. Peter's introduction (1 Pet. 1:2)

See Special Topic on the Trinity at John 14:26.

**5:8 "the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement"** In the OT two or three witnesses were needed to confirm a matter (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Here, the historical events of Jesus' life are given as a witness to His full humanity and deity. In this verse, "water" and "blood" are mentioned again along with "the Spirit." The terms "water" and "blood" are mentioned in 1 John 5:6. The "Spirit" may refer to Jesus' baptism because of the dove descending. There is some disagreement about the exact historical allusion that each of these three represents. They must relate to the false teachers' rejection of Jesus' true humanity.

**5:9 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. The churches John was writing to were confused because they apparently had heard the preaching or teaching of the Gnostic teachers.

■ **"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater"** This divine testimony, in context, refers to

1. the Holy Spirit's witness
2. the Apostolic witness to Jesus' earthly life and death (e.g., 1:1-3)

■ **"that He has testified concerning His Son"** This is a perfect active indicative which implies an action in the past that has come to a state of culmination and is abiding. This may refer to God's vocal affirmations at Jesus' baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) or at His transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5; John 5:32,37; 8:18) or the recording of both in Scripture (i.e., the Gospels). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

**5:10 "has the testimony in himself"** It is possible to interpret this phrase in two ways.

1. the subjective internal witness of the Spirit in believers (cf. Rom. 8:16)
2. the truth of the gospel (cf. Rev. 6:10; 12:17; 19:10)

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WITNESSES TO JESUS](#) at John 1:8.

■ **"has made Him a liar"** This is another perfect active indicative. Those who reject the Apostolic witness about Jesus reject God (cf. 1 John 5:12) because they make God a liar.

■ **"because he has not believed"** This is another perfect active indicative which emphasizes the settled condition of the unregenerate.

**5:11-12 "that God has given us eternal life"** This is an aorist active indicative which speaks of a past act or completed act (cf. John 3:16). Eternal life is defined in John 17:3. In some instances the phrase refers to Jesus Himself (cf. 1 John 1:2; 5:20), in others it is a gift from God (cf. 1 John 2:25; 5:11; John 10:28), which is received through faith in Christ (cf. 1 John 5:13; John 3:16). One cannot be in fellowship with the Father without personal faith in the Son!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:13-15**

<sup>13</sup>These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. <sup>14</sup>This is the confidence which we have before Him,

**that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup>And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.**

**5:13 "believe in the name"** This is a present active participle, which emphasizes continuing belief. This is not a magical or mystical use of the name (like Jewish mysticism based on the names of God, *Kabbalah*), but the OT use of the name as a substitute for the person. See Special Topic at John 2:23.

▣ **"that you may know"** This is a perfect active subjunctive (*oida* is perfect in form, but is translated as present). Assurance of one's salvation is a key concept, and an often stated purpose of 1 John. There are two Greek synonyms (*oida* and *ginōskō*) used throughout the letter/sermon which are translated "know." It is obvious that assurance is the heritage of all believers! It is also obvious that because of the local situation then and the cultural context now that there are true believers who do not have assurance. This verse is theologically similar to the closing of the Gospel of John (cf. 1 John 20:31).

The closing context of 1 John (5:13-20) lists seven things that believers know. Their knowledge of gospel truths provides a worldview, which when combined with personal faith in Christ, is the bedrock foundation of assurance.

1. believers have eternal life (1 John 5:13, *oida*, perfect active subjunctive)
2. God hears believers' prayers (1 John 5:15, *oida*, perfect active indicative)
3. God answers believers' prayers (1 John 5:14, *oida*, perfect active indicative)
4. believers are born of God (1 John 5:18, *oida*, perfect active indicative)
5. believers are of (out of) God (1 John 5:19, *oida*, perfect active indicative)
6. believers know the Messiah has come and given them understanding (1 John 5:20, *oida*, perfect active indicative)
7. believers know the true one - either the Father or the Son (1 John 5:20, *ginōskō*, present active subjunctive)

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE**

**5:14 "the confidence which we have before Him"** This is a recurrent theme (cf. 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17). It expresses the boldness or freedom we have in approaching God (cf. Heb. 4:16). See Special Topic at John 7:4.

▣ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

▣ **"we ask anything according to His will"** John's statements seem to be unlimited in the believer's ability to beseech God. How and for what one prays is another evidence of a true believer. However, on further examination, we realize that prayer is not asking for our will, but asking for God's will in our lives (cf. 1 John 3:22; Matt. 6:10; Mark 14:36). See fuller note at 1 John 3:22. For Special Topic: The Will of God see John 4:34. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Prayer, Unlimited Yet Limited](#) at 1 John 3:22.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: Intercessory Prayer**

**5:15 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence (but with *ean* and the indicative, see A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 243) which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. This is an unusual conditional sentence.

1. it has *ean* instead of *ei* (cf. Acts 8:31; 1 Thess. 3:8)
2. it has *ean* connected to a subjunctive (i.e., ask), which is the normal grammatical construction for a third class conditional
3. there are third class conditionals in 1 John 5:14 and 16
4. the theology of Christian prayer linked to God's will (1 John 5:14) and Jesus' name (1 John 5:13)



- ▣ **"we know"** This is another perfect active indicative, translated as a present, which is parallel to 1 John 5:14. It is the believer's assurance that the Father hears and responds to His children.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. <sup>17</sup>All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death.**

**5:16 "If"** This is a third class conditional which means potential action. Verse 16 emphasizes our need to pray for our fellow Christians (cf. Gal. 6:1; James 5:13-18) within some suggested limits (not for the sin unto death), which seems related to the false teachers (cf. 2 Pet. 2).

- ▣ **"sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death"** John has listed several categories of sin. Some relate to one's (1) fellowship with deity; (2) fellowship with other believers; and (3) fellowship with the world. The ultimate sin is rejection of trust/belief/faith in Jesus Christ. This is the sin unto ultimate death! W. T. Conners in his *Christian Doctrine*, says:

"This does not mean, however, unbelief in the sense of a refusal to accept a doctrine or a dogma. It is unbelief in one's rejection of moral and spiritual light, particularly as that light is embodied in Jesus Christ. It is the rejection of God's final revelation of himself as made in Christ. When this rejection becomes definite and wilful, it becomes the sin unto death (1 John 5:13-17). It thus becomes moral suicide. It is putting out one's own spiritual eyes. It does not take place except in connection with a high degree of enlightenment. It is deliberate, wilful, malicious rejection of Christ as God's revelation, knowing that he is such a revelation. It is deliberately calling white black" (pp. 135-136).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: What Is Sin Unto Death?**

- ▣ **"God will for him give life"** The theological and lexical problem here is the meaning of the term "life" (*zoē*). Normally in John's writings this refers to eternal life, but in this context it seems to mean restoration to health or forgiveness (i.e., much like James' use of "save" in James 5:13-15). The person prayed for is called "a brother" which strongly implies a believer (by John's own use of the term for his readers).

**5:17** All sin is serious, but all sin can be forgiven through repentance (initial, cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; continuing, cf. 1 John 1:9) and faith in Christ except the sin of unbelief!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:18-20**

**<sup>18</sup>We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup>We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power* of the evil one. <sup>20</sup>And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**

**5:18 "We know"** See notes in second paragraph at 1 John 5:13.

- ▣ **"no one who is born of God sins"** This is a perfect passive participle. This is the black and white assertion of 1 John 3:6 and 9. Eternal life has observable characteristics. The antinomian false teachers' lifestyles reveal their unregenerate hearts (cf. Matthew 7)!

John was addressing two different kinds of false teachers. One who denied any involvement in sin (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:1) and another group that simply made sin irrelevant (cf. 1 John 3:4-10 and here). Sin must be initially confessed and existentially avoided. Sin is the problem, a problem, and continually a problem (cf. 1

John 5:21).

Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (p. 718) asserts that the manuscript variation is based on what the copyist thought the phrase "born of God" referred to.

1. Jesus - then *auton* fits best (A\*, B\*)
2. believers - then *eauton* fits best (κ, A<sup>C</sup>)

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives #1 a "B" rating (almost certain).

■ **"but He who was born of God keeps him"** The first verb is an aorist passive participle, which implies a completed act accomplished by an outside agent (i.e., the Spirit cf. Rom. 8:11). This refers to the Incarnation.

The second verb is a Present active indicative with "him" (*auton*). This is literally, "the One who was born of God continues to keep him." This refers to Christ's continual sustaining of the believer. This translation follows the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts of A\* and B\*. This interpretation is found in the English translations NASB, RSV, and NIV.

Manuscripts κ and A<sup>C</sup> have another pronoun, "keeps himself" (*eauton*) which implies that the one born of God has some responsibility in keeping himself. The verb used here for "was born" is not used elsewhere of Jesus. The reflexive concept is used of believers in 1 John 3:3 and 5:21. This is followed by the English translations KJV and ASV.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and the evil one does not touch him"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the wicked one does not touch him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the evil one does not touch them"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the Evil One can not harm them"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the Evil One has no hold over him"</b>

This is Present middle indicative which means the evil one cannot continue "laying hold of him." The only other use of this term in John's writings is in his Gospel, 20:17. It is obvious from the Bible and experience that Christians are tempted. There have been three major theories about the meaning of this phrase.

1. believers are free from the condemnation of the evil one based on violation of the law (justification)
2. Jesus prays for us (cf. 1 John 2:1; Luke 22:32-33)
3. Satan cannot wrestle our salvation from us (cf. Rom. 8:31-39), though he can thwart God's testimony in our lives and possibly, based on 1 John 5:16-17, take a believer out of this world early!

**5:19 "We know that we are of God"** This is the confident faith assurance, the worldview of a believer in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 John 4:6). All else is based on this wonderful truth (cf. 1 John 5:13). See note at 1 John 5:13.

■ **"the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"** This is a present middle (deponent) indicative (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12). This was made possible through (1) Adam's sin; (2) Satan's rebellion; and (3) each individual's personal choice to sin.

**5:20 "We know"** See full note at second paragraph of 1 John 5:13.

■ **"the Son of God has come"** This Present active indicative affirms the incarnation of the divine Son. Deity with a human body was a major problem for the Gnostic false teachers who asserted the evilness of matter.

■ **"has given us understanding"** This is another perfect active indicative. Jesus, not the Gnostic false teachers, has provided the needed insight into Deity. Jesus has fully revealed the Father by means of His life, His teachings, His actions, His death and His resurrection! He is the living Word of God; no one comes to the Father apart from Him (cf. John 14:6; 1 John 5:10-12).

■ **"we are in Him who is true; in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life"** The first phrase "in Him who is true" refers to God the Father (see Special Topics at 1 John 6:55 and John 17:3), but the person referred to in the second phrase, "the true God," is harder to identify. In context it seems to also refer to the Father, but theologically it could refer to the Son. The grammatical ambiguity might be purposeful, as it is so often in John's writings, for one to be in the Father one must be in the Son (cf. 1 John 5:12). The deity and trueness (truth) of both the Father and the Son may be the intended theological thrust (cf. John 3:33; 7:28; 8:26). The NT does assert the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:1,18; 20:28; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13; and Heb. 1:8). However, the Gnostic teachers would have also affirmed the deity of Jesus (at least by the indwelling of the divine spirit).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 JOHN 5:21**

**<sup>21</sup>Little children, guard yourselves from idols.**

**5:21**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"guard yourselves from idols"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"keep yourselves from idols"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"keep yourselves safe from false gods!"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"be on guard against false gods"</b>

This is an aorist active imperative, an emphatic general truth. This refers to the Christians' active participation in the sanctification (cf. 1 John 3:3), which they are already enjoying in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:5).

The term idols (which is used only twice in John's writings, here and in an OT quote in Rev. 9:20), either relates to the teachings and lifestyles of the false teachers, or because the Dead Sea Scrolls use this term in the sense of "sin," the terms "idol" and "sin" may be synonymous.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the three major tests that assure believers that they are in Christ.
2. What do the terms "water" and "blood" refer to in 1 John 5:6 and 8?
3. Can we know that we are Christians? Are there some Christians who do not know?
4. What is the sin that leads to death? Can it be committed by a believer?
5. Is it God's keeping power or our own efforts which deliver us from temptation?

# 2 JOHN

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation vv. 1-3	Greeting the Elect Lady vv. 1-3	vv. 1-2 v. 3	Introduction vv. 1-3	Greetings vv. 1-3
Truth and Love vv. 4-11	Walk in Christ's Commandments vv. 4-6  Beware of Antichrist Deceivers vv. 7-11	vv. 4-6  vv. 7-11	Truth and Love vv. 4-6  vv. 7-8 vv. 9-11	The Law of Love vv. 4-5 v. 6 The Enemies of Christ vv. 7-11
Final Greetings vv. 12-13	John's Farewell Greeting vv. 12-13	v. 12 v. 13	Final Words v. 12 v. 13	v. 12 v. 13

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### BRIEF INTRODUCTION

2 John is obviously related to the message and literary style of 1 John. They are probably from the same author, written about the same time. It is typical of first century personal letters in that it was written in a set form and able to fit on one papyrus sheet.

As 1 John was written to several churches (and in a sense, all churches), 2 John is addressed to one local church and her leader (although, as most NT personal letters it was read to the whole church). It is a wonderful little window into the life of the first century church in Asia Minor (Turkey).

### READING CYCLE ONE

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book.
2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

## READING CYCLE THREE

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 1-3**

**<sup>1</sup>The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, <sup>2</sup>for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup>Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.**

**v. 1 "The elder"** This title (*presbuteros*) is used to identify the author of both 2 and 3 John. It has a wide variety of meanings in the Bible.

The Johannine writings exhibit authorial designations in different ways.

1. the Gospel uses a cryptic phrase "the beloved disciple"
2. the first letter is anonymous
3. the second and third letters have the title "the elder"
4. Revelation, so uncharacteristic of apocalyptic writing, lists the author as "His servant John"

There has been much discussion among commentators and scholars about the authorship of these

writings. They all have many linguistic and stylistic similarities and differences. At this point there is no explanation accepted by all Bible teachers. I affirm John the Apostle's authorship of them all, but this is a hermeneutical issue and not an inspirational issue. In reality the ultimate author of the Bible is the Spirit of God. It is a trustworthy revelation, but moderns just do not know or understand the literary process of its writing or compilation.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELDER**

■ **"chosen lady and her children"** There has been much discussion about this title. Many have tried to assert this was written to a lady named either *Electa*, from the Greek word for elect or chosen (Clement of Alexandria) or *Kyria*, from the Greek term lady (Athanasius). However, I agree with Jerome that this refers to a church for the following reasons.

1. the Greek term for church is feminine (2 John 1:1)
2. in the LXX "elect" refers to a body of people (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9)
3. this may refer to the church as the bride of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2)
4. this church has members referred to as children (cf. 2 John 1:13)
5. this church has a sister that seems to refer to another local church (cf. 2 John 1:13)
6. there is a play between the singular and the plurals throughout the chapter (singular in 2 John 1:4,5,13; plurals in 2 John 1:6,8,10,12)
7. this term is used in a similar way for a church in 1 Pet. 5:13

■ **"whom"** It is surprising that this is a masculine plural pronoun because it is meant to link up to either "lady," which is feminine, or "children" which is neuter. I think it was John's way of marking the phrase as symbolic.

■ **"I love"** John uses *phileō* synonymously with *agapaō* in the Gospel and Revelation, but in I, II, and 3 John he uses only *agapaō* (cf. 2 John 1:3,5,6; 1 John 3:18).

■ **"truth"** Truth is an often repeated theme (cf. 2 John 1:1[twice],2,3,4). The phrase "this teaching" in 2 John 1:9 [twice] and 10 is synonymous with "truth." This term is probably emphasized because of the local heresy that is obvious in this little letter (cf. 2 John 1:4,7-10) as in 1 John.

"The truth" can refer to one of three things: (1) the Holy Spirit in John (cf. John 14:17); (2) Jesus Christ Himself (cf. John 8:32; 14:6); and (3) the content of the gospel (cf. 1 John 3:23). See Special Topics at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**v. 2 "which abides in us"** This is a present active participle of one of John's favorite terms to describe believers, "abide." See Special Topic at John 2:10. This seems to refer to the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9; or Son, Rom. 8:9-10). All the Persons of the Trinity also abide in/with/by believers (cf. John 14:23).

■ **"will be with us forever"** Truth abides in and remains with all believers forever. What a powerful statement of assurance! See Special Topic at 1 John 5:13. Truth is both the person of the gospel and the message of the gospel. This "truth" always issues in love, love for God, love for fellow covenant brothers/sisters, and love for a lost world (cf. 1 John 4:7-21).

"Forever" is literally "into the age" (cf. John 4:14; 6:51,58; 8:35,51; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; 1 John 2:17). See Special Topic: Forever at John 6:58.

**v. 3 "Grace, mercy, and peace"** This is a typical introduction to a Greek letter of the first century with two exceptions. First, it has been slightly altered to make it uniquely Christian. The Greek term for "greeting" is *chairein*. It has been altered to *charis*, which means "grace." This introduction is very similar to the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; two of these terms are repeated in Paul's introduction to Galatians and 1 Thessalonians.

Second, the normal grammatical construction is a prayer or wish for health. However, 2 John is a

statement of truth, a promise of standing with God with a desired Divine outcome.

Theologically one wonders if there is an intentional order or relationship between these terms. Grace and mercy reflect the character of God that brings a free salvation through Christ to fallen mankind. Peace reflects the recipient of God's gift. The believers experience a complete transformation. As the Fall affected all aspects of human life, so too, salvation restores, first through position (justification by faith), then by a radical shift in worldview enabled by an indwelling Spirit, which results in a progressive Christlikeness (progressive sanctification). The image of God in mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is restored!

The other possibility relates to the need for these three terms in light of the false teachers. They questioned "grace" and "mercy" and brought everything but "peace." It is also a point of interest to note that this is the only use of "mercy" (*eleēōi*) in all of John's writings. "Grace" (*charis*) is used only here, in the Gospel in 2 John 1:14,16,17, and Revelation (cf. 1:4; 22:21).

The Jerome Biblical Commentary mentions the fact that these three terms have OT covenant connections (p. 412). The writers of the NT (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers, writing in Koine Greek. Much of the vocabulary of the NT has Septuagint origins.

- **"from God the Father and from Jesus Christ"** Both nouns have the preposition (*para*) which grammatically puts them on equal footing. This was a grammatical way to assert the full deity of Jesus Christ.
- **"the Son of the Father"** A continuing emphasis in 1 John is that one cannot have the Father without having the Son (cf. 1 John 2:23; 4:15; 5:10). The false teachers claimed a unique and special relationship with God, but theologically depreciated the person and work of the Son. John repeats again and again that Jesus is the (1) full revelation of the Father and (2) the only way (cf. John 14:6) to the Father.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. <sup>5</sup>Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. <sup>6</sup>And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.**

**v. 4 "I was very glad"** This is an aorist passive (deponent) indicative. Possibly the Elder heard about this church from some of its traveling members.

- **"to find some of your children walking in truth"** This refers either to
  1. godly, loving lives of some in the church (cf. 2 John 1:3-4)
  2. a way of acknowledging the presence of heretics within the congregation who had led some astray
- **"just as we have received commandment to do from the Father"** This is an aorist active indicative which refers to the giving of the commandment to love one another, even as Jesus loved them (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 John 3:11; 4:7,11-12,21).

**v. 5 "we have had from the beginning"** This is an imperfect active indicative which refers to the beginning of Jesus' teaching (cf. 1 John 2:7,24; 3:11). The content of the commandment is reaffirmed as "love for one another" (cf. 2 John 1:5) and "acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (cf. 2 John 1:7). Notice it is content, personal and lifestyle.

- **"that we love one another"** This is a present active subjunctive (as is the last verb in this verse, walk). It was characteristic of the heretics to be exclusivistic and unloving. This forms the first of John's three tests for how one knows he is a Christian. In the book of 1 John these three tests are: love, lifestyle, and doctrine. These three tests are repeated in 2 John.

1. love (cf. 2 John 1:5; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12,16-21; 5:1-2)

- 2. obedience (cf. 2 John 1:6; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:2-3)
- 3. doctrinal content (cf. 2 John 1:7; 1 John 1:1ff; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16; 5:1,5,10)

**v. 6 "And this is love"** Love (*agapē*) is an ongoing (present tense) action, not just a feeling. Love is "the sign" of all true believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 13; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 4:7-21).

- ▣ **"from the beginning"** See note at 1 John 1:1. I think the phrase is used in 1 John and 2 John as a reference to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.
- ▣ **"walk in it"** Christianity is an initial commitment and a lifestyle change (cf. 1 John 2:6). Our lifestyle does not save us, but it does verify that we are saved (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 2:10).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. <sup>9</sup>Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teachings of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup>If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting; <sup>11</sup>for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.**

**v. 7 "For many deceivers"** The word "deceivers" comes from the Greek word *planē*, from which we get the English term "planet." In the ancient world the movement of the heavenly bodies was mapped and studied (*zodiac*). The stars fit into stable patterns, but some stars (i.e., planets) moved irregularly. The ancients called them "wanderers." This developed metaphorically into those who wander from the truth.

These false teachers are not just sincerely wrong or misled persons who are ignorant of the gospel. In John's writings both the Pharisees and the false teachers rebel against the clear light they have received. This is why their rebellion is characterized as "the unpardonable sin" or "the sin unto death" (see notes at 1 John 5:16). The tragedy is that they also caused others to follow them to destruction. The NT clearly reveals that false teachers will appear and cause great problems (cf. Matt. 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; 1 John 2:26; 3:7; 4:1).

- ▣ **"have gone out into the world"** The world here is simply our physical planet. These false teachers have either left the Christian church (cf. 1 John 2:19) or they are on missionary assignments (cf. 3 John).
- ▣ **"those who do not acknowledge"** This is the term *homologeō*, which implies a public profession and confession of faith in Christ. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: Confession](#) at John 9:22-23.

▣ **"Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh"** These deceivers continue in their false teachings about the person of Christ. This verse repeats the admonition to "test the spirits" of 1 John 4:1-6, especially as they relate to Jesus' full humanity (cf. John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). Gnosticism affirmed an eternal dualism between "spirit" (God) and "matter" (flesh). To them, Jesus could not be fully God and fully man.

There seems to have been at least two theological streams within early Gnostic thought.

1. denial of Jesus' humanity (Docetic); He appeared to be human, but was a spirit
2. denial that Christ died on the cross; this group (Cerinthian) asserted that the "Christ spirit" came on the man Jesus at his baptism and left Him before He died on the cross

It is possible that the present tense, "coming in the flesh," is John's way of rejecting Cerinthian Gnosticism and 1 John 4:1-6 is his way of rejecting Docetic Gnosticism.

- ▣ **"This is the deceiver and the antichrist"** In 1 John 2:18 there is a distinction between the plural "antichrists" and the singular "the Antichrist." The plural had come in John's day and they had left the



churches (cf. 1 John 2:19), but the singular is projected into the future (see "the man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2). However, in this verse, the singular is used, like the plural in 1 John 2:18-25.

**v. 8 "watch yourselves"** This is a Present active imperative. It is the term "see" (*blepō*), used metaphorically for a warning against evil (cf. Matt. 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8; Acts 13:40; 1 Cor. 8:9; 10:12; Gal. 5:12; Heb. 12:25). Believers are responsible for discerning error because

1. they know the gospel
2. they have the Spirit
3. they have ongoing fellowship with Christ

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"that you do not lose what we have accomplished"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that we do not lose those things we worked for"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so that you do not lose what we have worked for"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"so that you will not lose what we have worked for"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"or all our work will be lost"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variation in this verse related to the first pronoun: should it be "you" (NASB, NRSV, TEV) or "we" (NKJV)? The UBS<sup>4</sup> text supports "you," meaning the believers addressed might not accomplish the goals of the gospel given them by the Apostolic witness.

▣ **"but that you may receive a full reward"** This is an aorist subjunctive which points back to their reception of the gospel. The subjunctive's contingency is not related to their salvation, but the maturity and expansion of the gospel through them (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27; 15:10,14,58; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:1; 3:5).

#### **v. 9**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Anyone who does not stay with the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"If anybody does not remain in the teaching of Christ but goes beyond it"</b>

First, notice the negative use of *pas*. The gospel invitation is to "all," but unfortunately so also is the potential for heresy. This potential heresy is characterized by two present active participles: "goes beyond" and "does not abide." The first "going beyond" may have been a catchword for the false teachers' implying they had advanced truth beyond the eyewitness Apostles. Believers are characterized by the word of truth abiding in them (cf. John 8:31; 15:7; 1 John 2:14, the negative in John 5:38; 1 John 1:10). See Special Topic on Perseverance at John 8:31 and Apostasy at John 6:64.

The genitive phrase "of Christ" could refer to

1. teachings of Christ
2. teachings about Christ
3. John's common double meanings

Genitives are numerous and vague! Only context can determine the intended meanings but often, as here, they overlap.

▣ **"does not have God"** The "teaching of Christ" and the "truth" of v. 2 are parallel. False teachers and their followers have no reward (cf. v. 8). They are spiritually lost and not with God because to have the Father one must have the Son (cf. 1 John 5:10-12). The use of the verb "has" (twice, present active indicative) with God is found only here and 1 John 2:23.

**v. 10 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. False teachers will come!

■ **"do not receive him into *your* house"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle which often implies the stopping of an act in process (the context must determine).

The "house" could refer to Christian hospitality (cf. Matt. 25:35; Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9 or 3 John 5-6), but in context it probably refers to inviting a traveling minister to speak to the house church (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2).

■ **"and do not give him a greeting"** This is another present active imperative with the negative particle. Do not identify yourself with this "so-called Christian." Any hint of fellowship might be misunderstood as approval (cf. 2 John 1:11). This statement is very hard to apply to today. So many claim to be Christians. Yet in an attempt to share with them we must be cordial and engaging in conversation. Still, Christian leaders must beware of any identification with heresy. This, of course, does not apply to Christian denominations!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 12-13**

**<sup>12</sup>Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to *do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full. <sup>13</sup>The children of your chosen sister greet you.**

**v. 12 "have many things to write to you"** This is similar to the ending of 3 John 1:13-14.

■ **"your joy may be made full"** This is a perfect passive subjunctive periphrastic of purpose (a purpose clause shows contingency). This was a common theme in John (cf. John 3:29; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4). This joy was based on

1. the presence of the teacher
2. the knowledge of truth that he brought

John mentioned his "joy" in 2 John 1:4 at the continuing walk of love and obedience.

**v. 13** This verse, like 2 John 1:1, uses metaphorical language to speak of a sister church and its members.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the three tests found in 1 John that are repeated in 2 John.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
2. Is this letter written to a lady or to a church?
3. How do you know from this short letter that heretics were present in the congregation?
4. Who or what is the impostor and the antichrist of 2 John 1:7?
5. Are 2 John 1:10 and 11 a contradiction to the NT mandate to show hospitality and love even to our enemies?

# 3 JOHN

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting to Gaius		Introduction	Address and Greetings
v. 1	vv. 1-4	v. 1	v. 1a v. 1b	vv. 1-4
v,v. 2-4		vv. 2-4	vv. 2-4	
Cooperation and Opposition	Commended for Generosity		Gaius Is Praised	
vv. 5-8	vv. 5-8	vv. 5-8	vv. 5-8	vv. 5-8
	Diotrephes and Demetrius		Diotrephes and Demetrius	Beware of the Example of Diotrephes
vv. 9-10	vv. 9-12	vv. 9-10	vv. 9-10	v. 9-11
vv. 11-12		vv. 11-12	v. 11 v. 12	Commendation of Demetrius v. 12
Final Greetings	Farewell Greeting		Final Greetings	Epilogue
vv. 13-15	vv. 13-15	vv. 13-14 v. 15	vv. 13-14 v. 15a v. 15b	vv. 13-15

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE ONE

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book.

## 2. Type of literature (genre)

### READING CYCLE TWO

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

### READING CYCLE THREE

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 3 John

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. This little letter is only entitled 3 John because it is slightly shorter than 2 John. I really think both 2 John and 3 John form a balanced message to a local church, probably somewhere in the Roman Province of Asia Minor, towards the end of the first century.
- B. 2 John deals with the problem of heretical, itinerant preachers, while 3 John deals with the admonition to help itinerant Christian preachers.
- C. There are three different men specifically named in 3 John.
  1. Gaius (a godly man in the recipient church)
    - a. There are three Gaiuses mentioned in other parts of the Bible: Gaius of Macedonia, Acts 19:29; Gaius of Derbe, Acts 20:4; and Gaius of Corinth, Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14.
    - b. The writings known as "Apostolic Constitutions" list the Gaius of 3 John as the Bishop of Pergamum, appointed by John.
  2. Diotrephes (a godless trouble-maker in the recipient church)
    - a. This is the only mention of this man in the NT. His name is a very rare name which means "nursed of Zeus." How ironic it is that man named after "Zeus" would be against travelers when "Zeus" was the "protector of travelers."

- b. His attitude is exposed in 3 John 1:9-10.
- 3. Demetrius (the bearer of John's letter to this local church)
  - a. Apparently he is one of the traveling missionaries and the bearer of the letter from the Apostle John in Ephesus.
  - b. The tradition called "The Apostolic Constitutions" lists Demetrius as the Bishop of Philadelphia, who was appointed by the Apostle John.

D. The early church struggled with how to evaluate and support traveling preachers/teachers/evangelists. One early non-canonical Christian writing from the early second century called *The Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* has these guidelines:

#### CHAPTER XI-CONCERNING TEACHERS, APOSTLES, AND PROPHETS

"Whosoever, therefore, cometh and teacheth you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not; but *if he teach* so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do: Let every apostle that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain *except* one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet" (p. 380).

#### CHAPTER XII-RECEPTION OF CHRISTIANS

"But whosoever saith in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he saith to you to give for other's sake who are in need, let no one judge him.

But let every one that cometh in the name of the Lord be received, and afterward ye shall prove and know him; for ye shall have understanding right and left. If he who cometh is a wayfarer, assist him as far as ye are able; but he shall not remain with you, except for two or three days, if need be. But if he willeth to abide with you, being an artisan, let him work and eat; but if he hath no trade, according to your understanding see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he willeth not so to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that ye keep aloof from such" (p. 381).

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSE 1

<sup>1</sup>The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

**v. 1 "The elder"** The term elder is synonymous with the term "pastor" and "bishop" (cf. Titus 1:5,7; Acts 20:17,28). See full note in 2 John 1:1.

■ **"the beloved"** This is characteristic of John's letters (cf. 1 John 2:7; 3:2,21; 4:1,7,11; 3 John 1,2,5,11), but is not found as a title for believers in the Gospel or the Revelation.

■ **"Gaius"** There has been much discussion as to whether Gaius or Diotrephes is the pastor of this local church. It is hard to make any dogmatic statement from this slight amount of information which is available. Because of 3 John 1:9, where "the church" and "them" are mentioned, it is possible that Diotrephes was the leader of one house church and Gaius was the leader of another house church which was very close by, but this is pure speculation.

■ **"whom I love in truth"** "Love and truth" are found together often in John's letters (cf. 2 John 1,2,3,4; 3 John 1,3,4,8,12). Truth can refer to

1. the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:17)
2. Jesus the Son (cf. John 8:32; 14:6)

3. the content of the gospel (cf. 1 John 2:2; 3:23)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 2-4**

**<sup>2</sup>Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. <sup>3</sup>For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. <sup>4</sup>I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.**

**v. 2 "I pray"** This follows a typical Greek letter opening. It is a prayer/wish for the recipients' prosperity and health. It was a way to greet a loved one. This cannot be used as a proof text for the "health, wealth gospel," so popular in modern America. See Gordon Fee (a charismatic scholar), *The Disease of the Health, Wealth Gospel*. For my views on healing, please see my notes on James 5 online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

■ **"that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health"** This is a typical opening prayer in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. It was never meant to be a proof-text for "health, wealth, and prosperity" preachers. Bible texts removed from context can be used to assert anything. The text cannot mean today what it never meant in its own day. The only inspired person is the original author. We must follow his thoughts, not interject our own!

■ **"soul"** This term "*psuche*" (soul) is almost synonymous with "*pneuma*." They are used to refer to the essence of personhood or self. This does not refer to an isolated part of man (body, soul, spirit). Humans are a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). We are a soul; we do not have a soul.

**v. 3 "I was very glad"** (cf. 2 John 4; Phil. 4:10).

■ **"came and testified"** Both of these are present participles which imply that

1. members of this church traveled regularly to Ephesus and reported to John
2. that returning missionaries reported Gaius' generosity

Possibly John, an old man, could not travel easily, but he loved to hear the condition and growth of the churches.

■ **"walking in the truth"** This phrase is theologically parallel to "walk in the light" (cf. 1 John 1:7). Christianity is not primarily a creed, a ritual, or an institution to be joined, but a life to be lived in relationship with Jesus Christ. The early church was first called "The Way" (cf. Acts 9:2, 19:9,23; 24:22). Truth is not only intellectual (content), but also a relationship (first with God through Christ resulting in love for one another). See Special Topics on Truth at John 6:55 and 17:3.

**v. 4 "my children"** This is a common designation in John's letters (cf. 1 John 2:12,13,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). The emphasis here is on (1) John's apostolic authority or (2) John's term of affection for the churches and Christians of the Roman Province of Asia Minor (western Turkey), where he spent his last days of ministry.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 5-8**

**<sup>5</sup>Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are strangers*; <sup>6</sup>and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup>For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.**

**v. 5 "you are acting faithfully"** These actions by Gaius are exactly opposite of Diotrephes' actions in vv. 9-10. See Special Topics: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness at John 1:7 and John 1:14.

▣ **"in whatever you accomplish"** This is a relative pronoun with *ean* and an aorist middle subjunctive which expresses a condition with the prospect of being fulfilled. Gaius had helped traveling missionaries on every occasion and in every way possible.

▣ **"especially when they are strangers"** The church should have been welcoming and supporting these itinerant Christian missionaries, but because of the local situation, Gaius alone was helping these brethren of whom he knew nothing except that they also knew, served, and loved Jesus Christ.

**v. 6 "they have testified to your love before the church"** Obviously the early church in Ephesus had a missionary report time during their corporate worship.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: Church (*ekklesia*)**

▣ **"You will do well"** This is a Greek idiom found in the Egyptian papyri (see Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*) for "please" (cf. Acts 10:33).

▣ **"to send them on their way"** This is a technical idiom for equipping, praying for, and supplying the needs of traveling missionaries (cf. Acts 15:3; Rom. 15:24; 1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor. 1:16; Titus 3:13).

▣ **"in a manner worthy of God"** This means in a significant, loving, abundant way (cf. Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12). Believers are to treat gospel workers in a manner befitting who they serve (cf. Eph. 4:1).

### **v. 7**

<b>NASB, REB</b>	<b>"they went out"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"they went forth"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"they began their journey"</b>
<b>TEV, NJB</b>	<b>"they set out"</b>

This very common verb is used of

1. the false teachers leaving the church in 1 John 2:19
2. false prophets going out into the world in 1 John 4:1
3. many deceivers going out into the world in 2 John 1:7
4. true Apostolic witnesses going out (into the world) in 3 John 1:7

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"for the sake of the Name"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"for His name's sake"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"for the sake of Christ"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in the service of Christ"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"entirely for the sake of the name"</b>

This is an example of "the name" standing for the person and work of Jesus Christ. As believers believe in His name (cf. John 1:12; 3:18; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9-11), they are forgiven in His name (1 John 2:13), they also act for His name (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12,17; John 15:21; 20:31; Acts 4:17; 5:41; 9:14; Rom. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:14,16; Rev. 2:3).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"accepting nothing from the Gentiles"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"taking nothing from the Gentiles"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"accepting no support from non-believers"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"without accepting any help from unbelievers"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"without depending on non-believers for anything"</b>

This phrase refers to these witnesses trusting God for His provision, much like Jesus' words to the Twelve in Matt. 10:5-15 and the Seventy in Luke 10:4-7.

This is the late first century use of "Gentiles" as an allusion to pagans or unbelievers (cf. Matt. 5:47; 1 Pet. 2:12; 4:3). Believers are to support gospel work! Who one helps reveals his heart.

In John's day many traveling teachers taught for money and reputation. God's teachers/preachers/evangelists were to be helped not for their words, but because of their Lord whose mission they were sacrificially involved in.

**v. 8 "we ought"** This is an oft repeated, moral admonition (cf. John 13:14; 19:7; 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 4:11). The term *opheilō* means literally to be in financial debt, but it came to be used figuratively to be obligated or to be indebted to someone.

■ **"to support such men"** Hospitality was a crucial duty of the early church because of the deplorable moral conditions of most of the local inns (cf. Matt. 25:35; Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9).

■ **"so that we may be fellow workers with the truth"** As believers help missionaries, they are involved in their work of faith and truth. This is a gospel principle! The NT guidelines for Christian giving are found in 2 Corinthians 8-9.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 9-10**

**<sup>9</sup>I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. <sup>10</sup>For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.**

**v. 9 "I wrote something to the church"** This may refer to I or 2 John or to a lost letter; in all probability it refers to 2 John. See Special Topic: Church (*Ekklesia*) at 3 John 1:6.

■ **"Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them"** This is a present active participle. This is a compound term "love" (*phileō*) and "to hold first rank" (*prōteuō*). It is used only here in the NT, but the second term is used in Col. 1:18 of Christ's premier rank. This man is the first recorded "power-broker" or "church boss." We do not know if he was the pastor or simply a significant layman. However, this does show his motives. This kind of egotistical individual has been present in the church in every age! Whether he was also a Gnostic is uncertain and unstated, but possible.

James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, p. 392, sees Diotrephes as an example of "early catholicism."

"In particular, John's individualism is very plausibly to be understood precisely as a *protest* against the kind of institutionalizing trends so evident in Pastorals (above pp. 129f., cf. again Hebrews and Revelation - §§31.2, 3). Likewise the Johannine writings seem if anything to be opposed to the kind of sacramentalism which is already clearly established in the early catholicism of Ignatius ('the medicine of immortality' - Eph., 20.2) (see above §41). Most intriguing of all is the attack of 'the elder' on Diotrephes in 3 John 9f. Diotrephes was clearly in control of this church at least: not only was he able to refuse a welcome to visiting Christians, but he also 'expels from the church' those who crossed him. Diotrephes, in other words, was acting with the authority of a monarchical bishop (cf. Ignatius, Eph., 6.1; Trall., 7.2; Smyrn., 8.1f), and it was against this lust for ecclesiastical prominence and power (*philoprōteuōn*) that 'the elder' wrote. In other words, assuming that 3 John comes from the same circle as I and 2 John, it is best seen as the response of a kind of convention or conventicle Christianity, an anti-institutional and individualistic pietism, protesting against the increasing influence of early



catholicism."

■ **"does not accept what we say"** Not only did Diotrephes reject John's Apostolic authority, but he was aggressively involved in rejecting Apostolic policy and even taking his vengeance out on those who would follow!

v. 10 **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

■ **"I will call attention to his deeds"** John wants to clearly delineate this man's motives (cf. 3 John 1:9) and actions (cf. 3 John 1:10):

1. NASB - "unjustly accusing us with wicked words"  
NKJV - "prating against us with malicious words"  
NRSV - "spreading false charges against us"  
TEV - "the terrible things he says about us and the lies he tells"  
NJB - "the wicked accusations he has been circulating against us"
2. "he himself does not receive the brethren"
3. "he forbids those who desire *to do so*"
4. "he puts *them* out of the church"

This man wants the attention and will not share the spotlight with anyone. He also removes anyone from the church who disagrees, or might disagree, with him.

■ **"puts *them* out of the church"** This same strong verb (*ekballō*) is used in John 9:34,35 for the blind man who Jesus healed being excommunicated from the Synagogue.

It is also used of Satan being cast out in John 12:31.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. <sup>12</sup>Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.**

v. 11 **"do not imitate what is evil"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative which often implies to stop an act in process. We get the English term "mimic" from this Greek word (*mimeomai*). We must carefully choose our role models. They ought to be mature Christian persons in the church (cf. 2 Thess. 3:7,9; Heb. 6:12; 13:7). Demetrius is a good example, Diotrephes is a bad example.

■ **"The one who does good is of God"** John's letters have three tests by which one can know they are Christian. This refers to the obedience test (cf. 1 John 2:3-6,28-29; 3:4-10; 5:18; 2 John 6). There are also allusions to the other two tests: (1) doctrine (3 John 1:3-4) and (2) love (3 John 1:1-2,6).

■ **"the one who does evil has not seen God"** The false teachers claimed to know God intimately but lived godless and loveless lives. This reflects the antinomian, libertine Gnostics who believed that salvation was an intellectual truth to be affirmed but had no relationship to daily life.

v. 12 **"Demetrius has received good testimony"** This is a perfect passive indicative. This really seems to be a letter of recommendation from John to Gaius about the missionary Demetrius, who may have delivered 3 John to Gaius. For other letters of recommendations in the NT, see Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:16-24; Col. 4:10.

■ **"and from truth itself"** Truth (see Special Topics at John 6:55 and 17:3) is personified as another witness to Demetrius' good testimony.

■ **"you know that our testimony is true"** John is asserting his own trustworthy witness to Christ (cf. John

19:35; 21:24).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSES 13-14**

<sup>13</sup>I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; <sup>14b</sup>but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

v. 13 This is very similar to 2 John 12.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: VERSE 14b**

<sup>14b</sup>Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

v. 14 **"Peace be to you"** This is obviously a reference to the Hebraic idiom *shalom* (cf. Luke 10:5). It can mean "hello" or "good-bye." It expresses not only the absence of problems but the presence of God's blessings. These were the resurrected Christ's first words to the disciples in the upper room (cf. John 20:19,21,26). Both Paul (cf. Eph. 6:23) and Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:14) used this as a closing prayer for God's people.

■ **"by name"** This is an idiom for individually, personally, and warmly. It was used often in the Egyptian papyri.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. There have been many theories as to why Gaius and Diotrephes were at odds with one another. Some of the suggestions have been:
  - a. theological reasons
  - b. social reasons
  - c. ecclesiastical reasons
  - d. moral reasonsExplain each of these possibilities and how they might relate to 3 John.
2. How are 2 John and 3 John related?
3. List the three tests for Christian assurance found in 1 John which are repeated in 2 John and 3 John.

# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

## I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

## II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
  1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
  2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
  3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
  4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
  1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
  2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
  3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

## III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

## V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
  1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
  2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
  3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
  4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
  5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."

6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

## VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

### 1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

### 2. Logical connectors

#### a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

#### b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

#### c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

#### d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

#### e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

#### f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
  - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
  - (2) *kai* - "and"
  - (3) *tei* - "and"
  - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
  - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

### 3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

## VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
  - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
  - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
  - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

## VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

## IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
  - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
  - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
  - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
  - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
  - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

## X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
  - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
    - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
    - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
    - c. what the author felt deeply about
  - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
    - a. for linking verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) complement
    - b. for transitive verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) object
      - (4) indirect object
      - (5) prepositional phrase
    - c. for noun phrases
      - (1) noun
      - (2) modifier
      - (3) prepositional phrase
  - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
    - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of



- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
  - b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
  - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
  2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
    - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
    - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
    - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
    - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
  3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
  4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
    - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
    - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
    - c. figures of speech
      - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
      - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
      - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
      - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
      - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
      - (6) sound plays between words
        - (a) "church"
          - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
          - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
          - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
        - (b) "free"
          - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
          - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
          - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
    - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
      - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
      - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
      - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
      - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
  5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
  6. The special use of *autos*
    - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
    - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
  2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)

with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

# TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

## I. The textual sources of our English Bible

### A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
  - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
    - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
      - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
      - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
  - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
  - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
    - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
    - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

### B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter  $\aleph$  (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
  - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
    - (1) P<sup>75</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
    - (2) P<sup>46</sup> (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
    - (3) P<sup>72</sup> (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
    - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
    - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
    - (6) other MSS which show this text type are  $\aleph$ , C, L, W, 33
  - b. Western text from North Africa
    - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
    - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
    - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
    - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
  - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
    - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
    - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
    - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
    - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
  - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
    - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
    - (2) some witnesses to it are P<sup>45</sup> and W

## II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

### A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
  - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
    - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
    - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
  - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

## 2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

## B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

## III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

### A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

# GLOSSARY

**Adoptionism.** This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

**Alexandrian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

**Alexandrinus.** This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

**Allegory.** This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

**Analytical lexicon.** This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

**Analogy of Scripture.** This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

**Ambiguity.** This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

**Anthropomorphic.** Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

**Antiochian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

**Antithetical.** This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

**Apocalyptic literature.** This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

**Apologist (Apologetics).** This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

**A priori.** This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

**Arianism.** Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

**Aristotle.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

**Autographs.** This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

**Bezae.** This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

**Bias.** This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

**Biblical Authority.** This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

**Canon.** This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

**Christocentric.** This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

**Commentary.** This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

**Concordance.** This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

**Dead Sea Scrolls.** This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

**Deductive.** This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

**Dialectical.** This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

**Diaspora.** This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

**Dynamic equivalent.** This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.



**Eclectic.** This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

**Eisegesis.** This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

**Etymology.** This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

**Exegesis.** This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

**Genre.** This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

**Gnosticism.** Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

**Hermeneutics.** This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

**Higher Criticism.** This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

**Idiom.** This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

**Illumination.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for

mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Inductive.** This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

**Interlinear.** This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

**Inspiration.** This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

**Language of description.** This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

**Legalism.** This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

**Literal.** This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

**Literary genre.** This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

**Literary unit.** This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

**Lower criticism.** See "textual criticism."

**Manuscript.** This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

**Masoretic Text.** This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

**Metonymy.** This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

**Muratorian Fragments.** This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

**Natural revelation.** This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

**Nestorianism.** Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

**Original author.** This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

**Papyri.** This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

**Parallel passages.** They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

**Paraphrase.** This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

**Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

**Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

**Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

**Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

**Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

**Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

**Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

**Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

**Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

**Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

**Spiritualizing.** This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

**Synonymous.** This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

**Syntax.** This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

**Synthetical.** This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

**Systematic theology.** This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian

theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

**Talmud.** This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

**Textual criticism.** This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

**Textus Receptus.** This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

**Torah.** This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

**Typological.** This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

**Vaticanus.** This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

**Vulgate.** This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

**Wisdom literature.** This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

**World picture and worldview.** These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the

Who, not the how, of creation.

**YHWH.** This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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# DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.