

Krapf Commentary Series

The Gospel of John

1:1-18

The first eighteen verses of John's Gospel lay the foundation and outline the theme of the book—the divinity of our Lord Jesus. When God spoke at the beginning of time (Genesis 1:1), the Son was that Word, through which the world was created. The Word was with God, was God and without the Son nothing was created (vs. 1-3).

The message of this book is summed up in the first and last lines of this section; "in the beginning was the Word...he has made him [God] known" (vss. 1, 18). As the Son revealed God through creation (general revelation), now also in a new redemptive creation (special revelation), he took on our human nature. Jesus was, and still is, the glory of God manifested in the fulness of human nature (without sin). Jesus is the true embodiment of human spirituality; filled with grace and truth, the

goodness of God, a genuine sincerity toward men and absolute integrity toward God (vs. 14).

The purpose of this self-revelation of God is redemption. Jesus came to make fallen creatures into "children of God" (vs. 12)—not just created by God (vs. 2) but born of God unto new life (vs. 13). All who receive him and believe on him will be given the right to be sons of God, like Jesus (vs. 12).

1:19-34

John begins with a record of the first week of Jesus' ministry, connected by four successive days (29-34; 35-42; 43-51), and then three days after going to Galilee, he was at the wedding at Cana (1:43, 2:1-12). This series of events starts when the religious authorities sent a delegation to discover the identity of John the Baptist (1:19). The Jewish leaders were confused, because baptism in Israel was a rite usually associated with proselytes (converts to Judaism), so they sent to inquire who John was. John denied that he was the Christ (vs. 20) or that he was Elijah, or that he was "the prophet" whom Moses had predicted would come (vs. 21, see Deuteronomy 18:15-22). Not satisfied with this they ask outrightly for a positive identification, who are you? (vs. 22).

John deflected all attention from himself to Jesus. His baptism was nothing in comparison to the baptism of Jesus. But John's baptism did mean something to his Jewish audience. It was a baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), pointing, among other things to the fact that the nations would be invited into the kingdom. This fact along, with two key events in Jesus ministry, were part of John's "preparation" for the coming of the Messiah: the cross, as the Lamb of God (vs. 29), and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (vs. 33). The nations would be baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13; 11:17-18).

1:35-51

Verses 35-51 record the events of two days and marks the transition of John's ministry to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. John will continue to preach, but "decrease" in reputation, until his martyred-death (3:22-36; Matthew 14:1-12). But in this passage, John proclaims Jesus as the "Lamb of God," a descriptor which would have resonated with his audience and that connected Jesus to their sacrificial ceremony—dealing with sin.

What follows is a great example of personal evangelism by those who speak naturally and

passionately about one in whom they have complete confidence. We are told that one of John's disciples who followed Jesus was called Andrew (vs. 40). Andrew in turned found his brother, Simon (vss. 41-42) and brought him to Jesus.

The following day, Jesus continued in Galilee in the city of Andrew and Simon and found Philip (vs. 45). Philip in turn found Nathaniel, telling him to "come and see" (vs. 46). Notice that the evangelism of these men was based on the text of the OT Scriptures (see vs. 45), and while the nation rejected Jesus (1:11), his disciples, in the ones and twos, so to speak, believed on him (2:11). They recognised him as the Son of God (1:34, 49), the baptiser in the Holy Spirit (1:33), the Lamb of God (1:36), the teacher (1:38, 49), the Messiah (1:41), the King of Israel (1:49).

2:1-12

This miracle, at the marriage of Cana, is the first of over 30 recorded miracles that Jesus performed while he was on earth. Cana was close to Nazareth, and Jesus' mother was at the wedding, the celebration of which would have lasted up to one week. At any rate, the host ran out of wine and Mary turned to Jesus as the problem solver.

Jesus was correct in his reply, the physical and practical problem of wine (or lack of) at a wedding was not his problem—"what does this have to do with me?" (vs. 4). His obligation was only obedience to his Father. But Jesus condescended to his mother's request and used the occasion for his own glory. Two truths about Jesus' ministry are being taught in this story. First, Jesus is clearly revealing his glory (vs. 11). His glory is not just in the fact that he can do wonders, signs or miracles, but that he does a work of transformation that brings joy. Moses turned the water into blood, calling for judgement against the Egyptians (Exodus 7:14-24). By contrast, Jesus turns water into wine—and brings joy. It is not a coincidence that Jesus' first miracle points to joy and celebration, not just healing, or the relief of pain or suffering. This is teaching us an important lesson.

But Jesus is making another point. In verse 6, the writer tells us that there were six large water jugs. This would not be unusual in a Jewish home, for lots of water was needed for rites of purification; hand washing at mealtimes etc., (Matthew 15:1-2; Mark 7:3). But it is mentioned here, most likely to highlight purification, and to point to the fact that a new order is about to be ushered in—messianic purification (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). The lesson is

taught again (vs. 10), that the last wine will be better than the first (See John 4:13; 7:38-39). We see this again in Jesus' teaching about wineskins (Matthew 9:17).

2:12

Verse 12 tells us that Jesus went down Capernaum. The verse really has little to do with what happened before, in Cana, or what follows in Jerusalem. Capernaum is northeast from Cana and Jerusalem is due south. Jesus detoured purposefully to go to Capernaum. He was waiting until the time of the Passover at Jerusalem. But the writer inserts this visit to Capernaum for a reason and we do well to pause and review this place called Capernaum.

The name Capernaum means the village of comfort, and comes from two Hebrew words, "village" and "comfortable." It was located on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and was a wealthy and vibrant place in the days of the Lord Jesus.

In this story, we are told that Jesus has left home (Matthew 4:13; Luke 4:31). Although he would visit home again, Nazareth was no longer his base, and it seems that he made Capernaum his home base (Matthew 4:13; Mark 1:21, 2:1). He is beginning his

"life's-work" and for this he will need to create his own space, an identity apart from his earthly family—Jesus is seeking his own bride and building his own family (Mark 10:29; Mark 3:35)—he leaves his mother and father (Genesis 2:24).

But this verse also points us to the privileges of the Gospel. Because Jesus spent so much time there, Capernaum was a privileged place, and he singled it out because it was unrepentant (Matthew 11:23). Jesus' presence there had elevated the town, but it would be brought down to hell, and judgement on such a privileged place would be more severe.

2:13-22

The cleansing of the Temple, recorded here at the beginning of Jesus ministry is different from the other gospel writers (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-16; and Luke 19:45-46). These authors tell us that Jesus cleansed the Temple towards the end of his ministry. So, there were two temple cleanings, which reveals something of the shortness of our corporate memory—in the space of about three years, Jesus needs to cleanse the temple twice! Notice three truths taught in this passage.

First, the honour of the Lord. When Jesus saw the flagrant abuse of the house of the Lord, he burned

with anger, for the Father's honour. **Second**, the purity of God's dwelling place. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, the apostle Paul show that we (Christians) are the "temple of the Holy Spirit." Salvation, by the indwelling Holy Spirit is a cleansing work, a renewing work in the life of a believer.

Third, the power of the resurrection. The Jews asked for a sign (vs. 18), which would indicate the authority on which Jesus cleansed the temple. Jesus pointed to his resurrection (vs. 19). The disciples did not understand the teaching of the Lord here (vs. 22), but they remembered it later and connected the dots. It is the resurrected and ascended Saviour who breaths new life into his Church. It was on the authority of the resurrection that Abraham offered up Isaac (Hebrews 11:19), and that Paul preached in the midst of persecution and death-threats, and by which he encourages us to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

2:23-25

Faith in miracles, signs and wonders is not sufficient to save the soul. Contrast the "many" (vs. 23), who "believe" because of the miracles, with ones and twos who believe on Jesus because he is the Messiah (1:41), the Teacher (1:38), the Son of

God (1:49). Here, Jesus highlights the need for a personal, meaningful, and life-changing faith.

These people were religious, at the right place, celebrating the Passover lamb, but did not understand or accept the Lamb of God (1:29, 36). The question here then, is not do you trust in Jesus, but does Jesus trust you?—is your profession of faith sincere and rooted in an understanding of who Jesus really is, and his sacrifice for sin?

3:1-15

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, and it seems there were other rulers along with Nicodemus who knew that Jesus was sent from God (*"we know,"* vs. 2). Joseph of Aramathea was probably one of them (John 19:38-39). By night, possibly for fear of being identified as an inquirer after Jesus, which would be compromised his position as a member of the ruling religious body, the Sanhedrin.

Nicodemus was sincere. he acknowledged that Jesus was from God, but he was unclear on the nature of God Kingdom, and the way into the Kingdom. He learned that religion does not necessarily mean spiritual life. There are two realms, the earthly and the heavenly (vs. 12), the fleshly and the spiritual (vs. 6). There is natural birth

and there is spiritual birth (vs. 6). Nicodemus represents those rulers who were religious, but not "born again."

Jesus explained this idea of being "born again," or being "born from above," by pointing to two central truths. It is a work of the Holy Spirit (8), and it is by faith the sacrifice of Jesus (vs. 14). This is how we are brought into the kingdom of God (vs. 3) and in the kingdom (the realm of God's rule) we have eternal life (vs. 15).

3:16-21

It is not clear who spoke these verses—possibly John as a summary of the gospel. There is no doubt, John, as a disciple of John the Baptist, had drunk deeply at the wells of salvation, and understood very clearly the person and ministry of Jesus right from the beginning. More than any other gospel writer, John displays a solid understanding of the theology behind the ministry of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit, as the divine Author, lays out four essential truths about salvation. **First**, God's love for the nations of the world in sending his Son (vs. 16). John has already told us that the Lamb will take away the sins of the world (1:29). The Jews will

have to come to terms with God's global reach in the gospel. **Second**, Jesus' obedience in coming, not to condemn, but to save. The world already stands condemned before God; Jesus came to save from condemnation (Romans 8:1).

Third, the necessity of faith in salvation (vs. 18). Saving faith includes knowledge of the truths of the gospel, consent, or acceptance of those truths as indeed true, and then a resting on those truths for life and eternity. This is what the Scripture demands for salvation. **Fourth**, the certainty of Judgement for those who conceal their sin in the darkness and refuse the light (vs. 20).

3:22-36

It is a great honour to be a groomsman ("*friend of the groom*"). But the groomsman is not the main man. His job is to assist and promote the groom. John used this image of the groomsman and the groom to illustrate his work for the Lord Jesus (vs. 29).

John's ministry overlapped with Jesus' ministry. Some of the Jews came to John and wondered why Jesus was getting more following (vss. 22-23). It raised the question as to the function and importance of John's ministry (vs. 26). There are

two lessons here regarding ministry. The **first** is, that the preacher's work is to promote Jesus. Our focus should never be about self-promotion, or ministry promotion, or our organisation, or denomination, but about Jesus Christ (vs. 30). We should be kingdom oriented. The **second** lesson is in humble contentment (vs. 27). Other men's ministry may have more money and bigger crowds. We are not to measure our ministry by other ministries but remain faithful to the task the Lord has given us. Our goal is not to be successful, but to be useful. Let us seek to be useful for the kingdom, and that will be our success.

4:1-6

The Pharisees were beginning to take notice of Jesus, but Jesus wanted to avoid a confrontation with them at this point in his ministry, so he left the city and went to Galilee. Confrontation with Judaism will come, but he has other work to do first. John does not shy away from presenting to us the humanity of Jesus, alongside his divinity. First, Jesus "learned" that the Pharisees knew about his growing ministry (vs. 1). He who knows all things, "grew" in body and in wisdom (Luke 2:40), and he used human intelligence and information during his ministry on earth. Jesus' divine omniscience and human wisdom are seen together in this story—

he "learned" about the Pharisees (vs. 1) and yet knew all about this woman of Samaria (vss. 18-19).

The second point that John raises concerning the humanity of Jesus is that he was "wearied" from the journey (vs. 6). He had a body like ours (Hebrews 2:14). He grew hungry, weary and thirsty as we do. Yet he is the Lord, the almighty God, equal with the Father. He is both God and man (the Godman), one person, with two distinct, perfect and complete natures. This is necessary in order to bring God (the Divine), and man (the human) together in salvation.

It has been well said, that while we cannot "comprehend" these truths we can "apprehend" them. In other words, we cannot fully understand how two natures (divine and human) can be in one person, yet we can, and we must, take hold of it by faith for salvation. He has all the power and perfection of God, yet he has all the sympathy with humanity. No other combination is sufficient to save from sin and to comfort and encourage us in the life that "we now live in the flesh" (Galatians 2:20), as he did.

4:7-26

Jesus "must" go through Samaria (vs. 4). This is the third "must" that John has used concerning Jesus. He "must" be lifted up (3:14), and he "must" increase (3:30). This is a "must" of divine and condescending mercy (4:4). Jesus was alone (vs. 8), and for a man to speak to a woman, and a Jewish man to a Samaritan woman was not allowed. Mercy breaks through human prejudice and cultural barriers.

Notice how Jesus caused her to think and ask questions by making mysterious statements (vs. 10) and by probing into the secrets of her heart (vss. 16-17). Two things she must learn. **First**, rather than pursue fulfilment in the pleasure of this world she must learn about spiritual life (7-19). Jesus used the image of "living water." She wondered if Jesus could make a well into a running stream—"running water" (vs. 15). By living water, however, Jesus meant the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 2:13; Zachariah 14:8; John 7:38-39). This living water will "spring up" to eternal life (vss. 13-14), and there will be no more spiritual thirst. Jesus, who knew this woman, better than she knew herself, pointed out her desire for unfilled relationships—her five husbands. She was thirsty but had not identified the source of the thirst.

Second, Jesus taught her about spiritual worship (vss. 20-26). Jesus pointed out that there was coming a day when location of worship would not matter (vs. 21), nor national identity (vss. 22-23). True worship is personal and spiritual (vs. 23). In this passage also, Jesus made the remarkable declaration and revelation that he is the Messiah (vs. 26 "I...am he"). Jesus could not yet tell the Jews this, but he first made this statement to a Samaritan woman. This is the first indication that the Kingdom of Christ has begun, the Gentiles are being welcomed in. Amazing grace!

4:27-42

Living with Jesus, and hearing him teach, not only excites us to action (vss. 28-29), but also to think, because of his mysterious statements (vss. 32-34). The disciples, who understood Jesus and who spent time hearing his words, were instructed and motivated to evangelism and mission (vss. 35-38). This is the work of Christ, because to serve is Christlike.

The woman at the well forgot the purpose of her original trip to the well and ran into town. She was so excited about the news of "living water," and of One who really knew her. It was a relief for her to find someone who could identify the source of her

thirst, reveal the guilty secrets of her burdened heart, and offer her forgiveness and peace, not condemnation (3:17).

This woman, with the reputation that she had in town, would find it difficult for others to believe her. She does not come with a dogmatic lecture on the meaning of living water or true worship (all the stuff she had learned), but with to an invitation, and a question (vs. 29). The question is framed in such a way that is expected a negative answer, but it would stir interest and inquiry. Insofar as we can, let us meet the world with the gospel in such a way that it rouses inquiry, not anger. The Samaritans came at her invitation, and they trusted Jesus, because of what he said, and what they heard from him themselves (vs. 42).

4:43-54

Here we find Jesus at Cana again (2:1-11) where he did a second miracle or "sign" (vs. 54). These were signs that the Messianic age had come, as Jesus had told the Samaritan woman (vss. 25-26. See also Isaiah 35:5-6). The reference to Jesus' "hometown" (vs. 44), is unclear, but in this context, it seems to mean Judea, where he received some opposition.

At any rate, not far away in Capernaum (about 20 miles) there was a little boy dying (See notes on Capernaum, 2:12). Try to get a sense of the excitement, panic and action in this story (and our own lives also), and the calm assurance that Jesus brings in these situations. The man came urgently to Jesus with no time to argue (vs. 49). The servant came immediately he saw a change in the son's health (vs. 51).

Jesus, at first rebuked a faith that tested only on miracles (see 2:23-25). But this man, weak though his faith may have been, pleaded for mercy, and Jesus responded calmly with the assurance that his son would live. The man "believed the word" (vs. 50). He later worked out (vss. 52-53) that his son was healed by the direct word of Jesus (even at a great distance), and he brought his whole house to faith in Jesus (vs. 53).

5:1-18

John did not record all the incidents in Jesus' life (see 21:25). There is probably some months between these events. John chooses events that lead to Jesus' teaching (vs. 19, notice this also in 3:1ff; 4:4ff). It is not clear which feast is spoken of (vs. 1), but two points of reference are important; first, Jerusalem would have been filled with the

Jewish faithful coming to the feast, and second, this event occurred on a Sabbath (vs. 9, 16).

Jesus came to the pool called Bethesda (house of kindness/mercy), on the north side of the Temple. There were many people there, but Jesus singled out one man, who had been there for thirty-eight years. He was it seems (vs. 7) resigned to the fact that he would never be healed, because he had no strength and no one to help him to the pool. Jesus stirred an interest in him by asking him a question (vs. 6, see also 1:38, and similar 4:16). With the power of the spoken word the man received strength from Jesus to rise up and walk (vs. 8), illustrating for us today the power of the effectual call of the gospel.

The writer tells us that it was the Sabbath (vs. 9), According to rigid Jewish (Pharisaic) tradition there ought not be any work done on the Sabbath. So not only Jesus' healing (vs. 18), but the man carrying his bed (vs. 11) broke this law. For the healed man, Jesus had more authority than the Jews (vs. 11), for he had power to heal. When Jesus later found him in the temple, he told him that the mercy shown in healing him, brought with it an obligation to follow and obey the Lord. The grace of the gospel lays on us the obligation to live out or work the gospel into our lives (Philippians 2:12).

5:19-29

Verses 19-47 contain one long answer that Jesus gave to the Jews who were going to kill him for blasphemy (see vs. 18). The answer falls into two parts. First, Jesus answers their charges of blasphemy and claims divine authority (vss. 19-29). Second, he presents four witnesses to his authority as the Son of God (vss. 30-47).

Jesus told the Jews that the relationship between the Father and Son is so close that they are one. God the Father gives life, so the Son also gives life (vss. 21, 26). The Father has given judgment to the Son so that the Son will be honoured as the Father is honoured (vss. 22-23, 27).

These two functions—giving life and executing judgment—have a very immediate and practical application to the hearers, and to us today. If you trust the Word (Christ) and receive him as sent from the Father, then you will not come into judgment but will be given eternal life (vs. 24). Jesus highlights his "greater works," – not in miraculous deeds, but of giving spiritual life (vs. 21) or eternal life (vs. 24). This spiritual life is a present reality for the believer, while we wait for the resurrection life (body and soul reunited), we can enjoy the power

of heaven before we get there (vs. 28-29, see also Hebrews 6:5).

5:30-47

In these verses Jesus continues explanation of the divine authority of the Son, and his equality with the Father. Jesus presented four different "witnesses" that testify to his divine authority. First, the Father (vs. 32). Jesus knows that his testimony is true, but the Jews did not receive it. There is also John, who bore witness of Jesus. He was that burning and shining light, that they enjoyed listening to and followed for a while, but they did not believe his witness (vs. 35). But there was a greater witness on this earth, because Jesus' own works are greater than John's testimony (vs. 36). These works, which the Father enabled him to do bore witness to the fact that he was sent from the Father, but the Jews could not recognise the Father through the Son (vss. 37-38).

The final witness to the Son is the Scriptures (vs. 39). The Jews put so much emphasis on Moses, the lawgiver, but Jesus told them that their rejection of Jesus was a rejection of Moses also, for Moses spoke of Jesus. They had the Scriptures, but their faithlessness, blinded them, and they could not see Jesus in the Old Testament. Having rejected Jesus

and Moses, they were left with nothing, and they searched the Scriptures in vain, for lack of faith.

6:1-15

Jesus came from Jerusalem to Galilee where he fed the 5000 men (plus women and children, Matthew 14:21). This is the only miracle recorded by all four of the gospel writers (see also Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17). Having shown the unbelief of the Jews at Jerusalem, Jesus then shows the unbelief of the Galileans. In this miracle, the writer is preparing us for Jesus' teaching on the "bread of life" (vs. 22ff).

The miracle itself highlights the sufficiency of Jesus while everything and everyone else is under resourced. The disciples had nothing to give, and not enough money to buy sufficient (vs. 7). All they could find was "a little lad" with his lunch of five loaves and two fish. The writer tells us that they were "barley loaves," which was the food for the poor, but in this miracle, Jesus shows that he is greater than Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44). The phrase, when they all had "eaten their fill" (vs. 12), puts this miracle beyond dispute—it was not a symbolic act, but a real miracle with real people and full stomachs. Out of this small lunch, the Lord Jesus

fed 5000 and the disciples collected twelve baskets of crumbs.

Again, those who saw the miracles and heard Jesus speak did not understand the spiritual meaning behind the miracles. They thought Jesus, like Moses, was going to lead them out of bondage (this time not Egyptian, but Roman), and they attempted to make him king. Jesus then, escapes away into the mountain to be alone (vs. 15).

6:16-21

Some of the details of this story, that John does not mention, are found in other gospels. For example, the fact that Jesus commanded them to go down into the ship and across to Bethsaida (Marks 6:45). Drawing from other gospels, it seems also, that they waited for him in Bethsaida and then moved along the coast to Capernaum. As the disciples rowed their boat east towards Capernaum, the wind from the west became strong and they could not make progress (Mark 6:48). In the middle of the night (between 3 and 6 in the morning, Matthew 14:25; Mark 6:48), amid rough seas and strong winds, Jesus appeared to his disciples, walking on the water (vs. 19).

The boat made it "immediately" to the shore (vs. 21). It is not stated as a miracle, but Jesus is teaching the disciples through this experience. First, even the disciples of Jesus must deal with the dangers and struggles of life on earth. Second, when they are rowing hard, in danger and making no progress, he knows where they are, and he does not forget them. Third, he is the creator and sustainer of the world, who can calm any storm, therefore, his disciples should not be afraid (vs. 20).

6:22-40

This long section, chapter 6:22-71, records a discussion Jesus had with some of "the crowd" who had followed him from Bethsaida at the feeding of the 5000 (vss. 24-25). The discussion broadened out to include others also who had gathered in the synagogue in Capernaum, "the Jews" (vs. 41, 52, 59). In the end the discussion narrowed down to just Jesus and his disciples (vss. 61-71).

These three natural breaks help us work through this discussion. First, Jesus tells the crowd that God is the source of all life (vss. 22-40). Second, Jesus tells the Jews that they must receive, or "feed on" the Bread of Life and live forever (vss. 41-59). Third, Jesus causes his disciples to examine themselves considering these "hard sayings" (vss. 60-71).

First then, God is the source of all life (vss. 22-40). The people who followed were interested only in what satisfied them in the present (vs. 26). Jesus knew their hearts and called this, "food that perishes" (vs. 27). They thought Moses had given them bread in the wilderness, but it was God (vs. 32). Jesus emphasises the fact that salvation is the Father's plan. This "bread of life" is in fact the "bread of God" (vs. 33), those who come to Jesus, are those whom the Father has given (vs. 37), and all that Jesus is doing is the will of the Father (vss. 38-40). To know God then, and to have eternal life, they must accept Jesus.

6:41-59

The Jews grumbled against Jesus, just as they grumbled in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 1:27; Psalm 106:25; John 7:12). In this passage they murmured among themselves over two points; the analogy of the bread, and the fact that this bread "came down from heaven," from the Father. John emphasised this fact because he wants them to get it (vss. 41,42,50,51,58).

Jesus stressed also that this is the initiative and purpose of the Father (vss. 41, 42, 57, 58). He points out two important truths with the words

"truly, truly." First, whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life (vs. 47). The second truth elaborates on this and shows that those who believe, must "feed" on Jesus' flesh and "drink" his blood. Those who do this have life in them (vs. 53). This is a very striking and vivid image; as bread sustains physical life, so Jesus, the bread of life, sustains the soul.

6:60-71

This paragraph concludes the long discussion that Jesus had with the crowds after the feeding of the 5000. Among the crowd were those who flat out opposed him. Some had followed him for bread (vs. 26), and it seems others had followed him out of a genuine interest but were not truly convinced (vs. 64).

In the lengthy discussion Jesus met with opposition, but he matched their persistence with the unchanging message. He did not concede to suit their sensitivities. He continued to press home the truth, although it was "hard" to hear. The idea behind this word "hard" (vs. 60) is that which is incredible or absurd, or perhaps objectionable.

Jesus' gospel covered three areas. First, that there is an election of grace gifted by the Father from heaven—no one can come except the Father draws

(vss. 37-39, 44, 65). Second, that the Holy Spirit must give life (vs. 63), and third, that the life is in Jesus Christ, and received by faith (47ff).

The two natures (the divine and human) communicate and Jesus knew that there were those for whom this teaching was indeed objectionable (vss. 61, 64)—they could not concede the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. They left and "walked no longer with him" (vs. 66). Notice that Jesus put his true disciples to the test (vs. 67), but Peter responded collectively with assurance; "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

7:1-13

John jumps ahead about six months from the Passover (6:4) to the Feast of Booths (7:1). This feast was a reminder that God provided for his people in the wilderness, and that he dwelt with them. The irony is—and this is emphasised in this passage—that Jesus was dwelling among them in the flesh, and they rejected him.

His family did not believe in him (vs. 5, see also Mark 3:21, 31-35; 6:3; John 7:5, John 1:10-11;

12:37). The Jewish leaders were seeking to kill him (vss. 1, 25), and the Jewish people were murmuring against him (6:41, 61). Some may have supported him but could not speak openly because the people feared the Jewish leaders (vs. 13). The leaders had spread the slander that Jesus was deceiving the people, leading them astray (vs. 12), and according to the Talmud, this carried the penalty of stoning to death.

The question is, did his brothers support him (as brothers), and wanting him to prove who he was to the people? Or were they mocking him, telling him to go up to Jerusalem? They were looking to see his glory, but the "time" (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20. See also 17:1; 12:23, 27; 13:1) of his manifestation as Messiah was the cross of humiliation. His glory would be manifested in his apparent defeat—his death on the cross—not in miracles of healing.

7:14-24

Two things caused the Jews concern. First, they were upset by the content of his teaching, which was standard fare (vs. 20). Second, the Jews were confused that Jesus was in fact teaching and yet had not studied (vs. 15). He taught with authority (see Mark 1:22) but had not attended any of their rabbinic schools. Jesus was not "self-taught" either,

nor a genius phenomenon. Jesus stated clearly that his teaching was from the Father who had sent him (vs. 16, see 12:49-50; 14:11, 24). In these verses Jesus clearly and decidedly identifies with us. He, like us, was "God-taught" (John 6:45; 1 Thessalonians 4:9).

When we speak the truth, we do not speak on our own account, but for God. We can have confidence and boldness in his authority (vss. 16-17). If we have a desire to know the truth, it will be revealed to us and that doctrine will be translated into practice – and be seen to be from God (vs. 17). If we seek the glory of the Lord, we will teach the Word of God and not our own ideas, fancies, theories or rules. There is no authority in these, and only a self-satisfying glory (vs. 18).

These Jews were not taught of God. Jesus identified murder in their hearts (vs. 19), and this only raised further insults (vs. 20). But Jesus could draw on past experiences (see 5:1-18) showing that their understanding of the law was superficial (vss. 21-24). They majored on little details in the life and judged on appearances (vs. 24). Jesus was calling on these people, and on us today, to seek the Lord for who he is, and be taught of him (see. 17).

7:25-36

The scene of this discussion is still at the Feast of Booths (vss. 2, 14). In this section the author is telling of the lack of leadership in the nation at that time and the confusion among the Jewish population. Jesus spoke boldly (vs. 26 , i.e. both with confidence and publicly), and as the people heard him teach with such authority, they wondered if this was indeed the man that the leaders has tried to kill (vs. 25). Had the leaders now begun to agree with him?

Jesus was shattering all the Jewish myths about the Messiah's appearance. They believed that there would be some mystery in his coming—that his origins would be unknown and that his "manifestation" would be grand and glorious. But they knew where this man came from, he was the carpenter from Nazareth (vs. 27-28). Ironically, Jesus told them that they in fact do not know where he is from, because he is from the Father, whom they do not know (vs. vs. 28b).

Also, his "manifestation," or as Jesus called it "my set time" (7:6) or "hour" (vs. 30; 8:20) has not yet come. Jesus had come for the cross—that was his "set time," and no one could pre-empt that. Even the enemies of Jesus are in the hands of the sovereign Lord. But Jesus would not leave these

Jewish leaders without warning them that the day of opportunity would end. He would one day leave, go to his Father, and they could not follow him there (vss. 33-36).

7:37-39

Jesus had warned the people that the opportunity to seek him would one day be gone (vs. 36). Now, on the last day of the feast, he took the opportunity to give one of his clearest and pointed invitations of his earthly ministry. This was the "great day" of the feast, a Sabbath, when there would be a solemn public meeting (Leviticus 23:36). It was also the tradition that on this day, while the choir sang from Isaiah 12:3, the priest would bring a pitcher of water up from the Pool of Siloam and pour it out at the altar. This was to remind them of how the Lord had provided water out of the rock during the wilderness wanderings (Numbers 20:8-11; Psalm 78:15-16).

This was the scene, as Jesus stood in their presence fulfilling the Old Testament picture, with an invitation to come and receive the fullness of it—himself. He stood up and cried out (to "scream" or "cry aloud," see 1:15, 7:28), to anyone among the people who thirsted. The water from the rock which they celebrated was ancient history. But

Jesus was right before them, in the present. The invitation to draw water from "the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3), included the fulness of the promise at Pentecost—the reality of the indwelling Spirit of the living God and the continuous satisfaction flowing from within them.

7:40-53

What a powerful message Jesus had preached on that final day of the feast. The effects of it were evident in the conversations which followed among the confused and divided people (vss. 40-44). These people were drawing on often repeated theories, myths and traditions that had developed in Judaism. Some saw him as the prophet that Moses spoke of (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18), but did not connect "the prophet" with Messiah. Others believed him to be the Messiah.

The author shows here that the Jews, the officers and the rulers of Israel, were powerless over Jesus, either to believe on him (6:44) or to arrest him (vs. 44). The story turns to the controversy within the Jewish leadership. The officers (guards) unable to arrest Jesus were questioned by the Pharisees; have you been deceived? (vs. 47), and, why would you believe, they asked proudly, since none of the Pharisees have believed? (vs. 48).

Nicodemus found himself in a difficult position. He was one of the Sanhedrin (vs. 50), but he believed in Jesus and, like the crown, was willing give him a fair hearing (See John 3:1-3; 12:42; 19:38-39). The Pharisees had effectively lumped him in with what they viewed as the ignorant mob, and under the curse (vs. 49). Ironically, it was the Pharisees who knew the law, who were under the curse.

8:1-11

Notice the willingness of Jesus to teach, as he sits in the early morning with eager inquirers around him (vs. 2). As the morning progressed however, there were deeper lessons, life-lessons, to be learned.

The story unfolds as the Scribes and Pharisees brought an adulterous woman to Jesus. It was an attempt to trip Jesus up on the law (vs. 6). But Jesus could not be drawn. He did not tell them not to stone her but challenged the one without sin to begin the execution. They were not to be the agents of God punishment.

But Jesus went further, and without speaking a word he began to write on the dust. One wonders what he wrote, but whatever it was it was a piercing

accusation to each one of them. The silent operations of the heart as it interacts with Jesus—the power of the conscience that comes faces to face with Jesus. Without a spoken word, he withered the accusing Pharisees and with a gentle word of mercy he reformed a lustful woman (vs. 11). We should not think that Jesus' silence on this occasion, condoned this woman's lifestyle, or ignored it. She already stood condemned in the law, and by her conscience. Jesus came to save her from the condemnation of the law and from the weight of an accusing conscience.

8:12-30

The Scribes and the Pharisees had gone away in shame (vs. 9). Some had returned however, or perhaps others had gathered to continue their opposition. But the dialogue with the Pharisees continues (vs. 13), and Jesus makes a number of striking statements which confuse the Pharisees; "I am the light of the world" (vs. 12), "the Father ... bears witness about me" (vs. 18), "where I am going you cannot come" (vs. 21), "you will die in your sin" (vs. 24).

For Jesus to refer to God as "my father," was radical for a Jewish rabbi (vs. 18-19). Jesus introduced this manner of speaking, and it is

characteristically Christian. We are not children of God by nature, but by adoption and Jesus invites his followers to call him "our Father" (Luke 11:2). This was new to the Pharisees and these statements show that they did not have the spiritual insight they thought they had, and that they indeed did not know the Father (vs. 19). The statements also teach us that without the illuminating work of the Spirit, the words of the preacher are rejected—even if the preacher is Jesus himself.

Confused and frustrated, they asked Jesus directly, "who are you?" (vs. 25), most likely seeking to draw out an answer that would trip or condemn him. But Jesus would not be drawn; he asserts simply that he speaks in the authority of the Father, and that he has come to do his Father's pleasure (vss. 28-29). The Pharisees were not convinced, but the author tells us that quietly in the background of the conversation, "many believed in him" (vs. 30). In the midst of the hostility towards him, God was doing his work, drawing his people to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

8:31-38

Here Jesus turned his attention to those who had believed on him – their first discipleship class, from the Saviour himself. He instructs them on the need

to continue in the gospel, and to hold fast (2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 10:23; Revelation 2:25). If they do this, they will show that they are genuine disciples. Another evidence of true disciples is that the Word of God finds a place in the genuine disciple (vs. 37). Like all disciples, these believers had their own questions, and part of our discipleship within the Church is deal with these questions – the nature of saving faith, the confusion between faith and culture and their ignorance of their own history (vs. 33).

Their first lesson was on spiritual freedom—not only from the law (of sin and death, Romans 8:2), but from spiritual ignorance, error and cultural prejudice. To explain this freedom Jesus pictures a house, a family with household servants (vss. 34-38). In this house, we have all forfeited our right to sonship and have become servants to sin. Servants do not remain in the house forever, like a son who are part of the household. In the mercy of God servants can be set free, and a Son has been born in the house to set servants free (vs. 36).

Jesus doubles down on this and reminds these followers that their cultural and ancestral privilege means nothing (vss. 37-38). Salvation is not in Father Abraham, but in God the Father through the

Word that the Father speaks (which is Jesus). It is Jesus, the truth (John 14:6) who sets us free.

8:39-47

The conversation with the "Jews who believed on him [Jesus]" continues (see vs. 3, 31). This was their first discipleship class and Jesus is separating the chaff from the wheat. By two conditional statements ("if you were..." vs. 39, and "if God were..." vs. 42) Jesus shows that they do not fulfil the conditions for being children of God, or true disciples. He shows this in three ways.

First, they are not children of Abraham, because they do not bear his likeness. This is the second time they appeal to their father Abraham (vss. 33, 39), and Jesus shows that the children of Abraham are identified, not by genetics, but on moral grounds. They do not do the works that Abraham did (vs. 39), i.e. they do not respond in faith. Abraham was the father of those who believe, and those who believe are "children of Abraham" (Luke 19:9).

Second, they are not children of God because they bear no likeness to God the Father—they do not love Jesus (vs. 42). **Third**, rather than showing likeness to Abraham or to God the Father, these

people actually resemble their father the devil (vss. 43-37).

These are hard words, but the transition pivots on vs. 43, these Jews, and sinners today, cannot understand these things, because they are opposed to, (i.e. they cannot tolerate the words of Jesus).

8:48-59

Here Jesus is still under attack by the Jews, and their abuse increased because they could not gainsay his arguments. They resorted to Ad hominem attack, accusing him of being a Samaritan, (i.e. a heretic) and possessed with a demon (vss. 48-49). Was Jesus greater than Abraham and the prophets, who all died? They could not understand his words (see vs. 43) and took his references to death literally (vss. 51-52).

Notice how Jesus responds to these attacks. First, his calm and reasoned arguments (vss. 49-51, 54-56). There is no fear in the truth; these Jews resorted to personal attack because they did not have the truth. Second, his obedience to the Father and his honour of the Father (vss. 49, 54-55). Jesus will be glorified, but only as he glorifies the Father

(see John 17:4-5). Third, Jesus preached himself as the only way to the Father.

The Jews had continually referenced Abraham as their father (vss. 33, 39, 53). Jesus was saying, it is not enough to have Abraham as your father, you must own God and Jesus who reveals the Father. Abraham had seen the coming of the Messiah by faith (vs. 56), and they should follow their father's example. But Jesus leaves them with the claim that he is the eternal, pre-existing deity, and equal with God (vs. 58) – the eternal "I AM." They could not accept this and had he not "hid himself" from them, they would have stoned him (vs. 59).

9:1-5

There is an important **background** to this story in the events of Ch. 8. There the unbelieving Jews tried to stone Jesus. This event follows on from that and it seems clear that by healing this blind man Jesus is making a statement about the unbelieving Jews, who do not understand and cannot bear his words (8:43) and have not known the Father (8:55)—they were blind. The words of verses 5, where Jesus repeats "I am the light of the world," refer us back also to the previous story (8:12).

There are **circumstances** of the event that will be important as the story develops—that he was a Jew (vs. 34), he was well known in the community (vs. 8), and this happened on the Sabbath (vs. 14).

But before Jesus performs the healing, he must deal with some false thinking among the disciples. The opinion voiced here, concerning sickness and sin, has a history (see Job 4:8) and was generally accepted in those days as it is also today. But Jesus is speaking here to his disciples—they have swallowed this false notion. Very often Jesus has to shake up, unsettle and remove false notions before he begins to teach us and build us. We can't build on false doctrine. Right practice follows on from good doctrine.

9:6-12

In the previous verses, the disciples raised the question of sin in relation to suffering (vs. 2). Jesus guided the discussion, not into a lengthy discussion on the origins of sin, but as an opportunity to work "the works of him who sent me" (vs. 4). He also saw the urgency of this work, to "work while it is day" (vs. 4), while he is "in the world" (vs. 5).

While this blindness illustrated the condition of the religious leaders, Jesus' healing illustrated the truth that Jesus had just stated, "I am the light of the world" (vs. 5). Furthermore, the manner of healing and the elements of spit and mud illustrate the divine character of Jesus. It seems clear that Jesus was recreating the creation scene. The author repeatedly tells us that the man was "blind from birth" (vss. 1, 2, 19-20). Most likely his eyes had not formed in the womb. However he appeared to the public view, Jesus was not merely restoring his sight but creating eyes for him.

The pool Siloah, or Siloam, was the one from which they took the water on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The pouring out of the water then, pointed to the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost. The washing was part of the healing process and showed the man's faith—he came back seeing (vs. 7). The question is, to what or whom does the word "sent" refer? It seems most likely to refer to the water itself, sent or flowing softly from the pool (Isaiah 8:6). This in turn points to the sending of the Son (vs. 4), and in time the Spirit (John 14:26).

9:13-34

The healing of this man was such an extraordinary event that the people felt they needed to inform

the religious hierarchy (vs. 13). The controversy was in making the mud, which was the work of a mason, on the Sabbath. According to the Pharisees, Jesus had broken the law—he was a sinner (vss. 24, 31). The contention was that he broke the law to work a sign, a miracle; therefore, he could not be from God. The religious leaders then were in a bind—they could not affirm the healing without recognising Jesus, and admitting his powers over creation, and also over the Sabbath (Luke 6:5).

Notice how the facts were repeatedly put before them, and yet they refused to admit the truth, not because of lack of evidence, but because they had already settled in their minds (vs. 22) and were determined to oppose Jesus. They questioned the man twice (vs. 24), and also his patents trying to find a way to explain this healing without recognising Jesus as the healer.

Three lessons present themselves on the surface of this passage. First, the stubborn blindness of the sinner's heart. There is none so blind as he who will not see. Second, the miracle of grace needed to open the eyes of the blind (1 Corinthians 4:7). Third, the response of grace and the cost of discipleship. The Jews have two levels of excommunication, this man was either under a

suspension for a period of time, or completely excommunicated (vss. 22, 34).

9:35-41

A quick recap: Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, who had been born blind (vss. 1-8). The Pharisees kick up a stink, cross-examine him twice and question his parents (vss. 9-34). They had predetermined that Jesus was a sinner, and against all the evidence, refuse to acknowledge that Jesus healed his blindness. This man was not looking for controversy, but when it came, he maintained his ground. Frustrated with the facts, the Pharisees brought up the same condemnation that Jesus had debunked at the beginning—that his blindness was because of his sin (vs. 34). They threw him out of the room (vs. 34) and began the excommunication process.

Verse 35 begins with "Jesus heard" ... of his trouble, and he went looking for him. This was another one of Jesus' discipleship classes. As Jesus deals with this man, he addresses two things; he confirmed the man's faith (vss. 36-38) and he explained what just happened (vss. 39-41). This man had just been through a horrendous spiritual battle, a test of faith. Jesus explained to him that it

was part of a bigger purpose, the broader ministry of Jesus in bringing judgment to the world.

We have already seen that Jesus did not come to judge, but to save (3:17; 8:11). However, the coming of Jesus into the world brings judgement, because those who in their own conceit think they have knowledge, will be proven to be in fact blind (vs. 39). The wording of verse 41 is difficult, so for the sake of space let me paraphrase it; if you knew yourselves to be blind, then your sin (guilt) would not be so aggravated. But you think you see, and your sin (guilt) is confirmed.

10:1-6

Coming off the back of his statement about those who think they can see, but are blind (9:41), Jesus gives a proverb (vss. 1-5), the wisdom of which proves that they do not in fact understand (vs. 6). The figure of the shepherd would have been family to those hearing the Lord, as leaders in Israel were referred to as shepherds.

In the proverb Jesus spoke of a sheepfold, in which there were two competing and contrasting authorities—one that is usurped and stolen, the other that is true and faithful. These religious leaders (to whom Jesus was speaking) do not bring

the sheep in by the door, they are thieves and robbers (vs. 1). They steal, by usurping the offices and authority of the Church from God (Jeremiah 14:14; 29:9). They also steal from those who are they claim to bring into the sheepfold—the dues and fees of false religion. The true leaders (or shepherds), imitating the one true shepherd (vss. 2, 11), who brings the sheep in by "the door," the only way into the sheepfold (vss. 2, 7). Jesus Christ is both the shepherd and the door, as he is both the priest who offered himself as the sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14).

As there is only one fold, one door, and one true shepherd, there is also only one voice. It is the voice of the Shepherd. This is the point of the proverb. Those who thought they had spiritual insight were still in their sin (9:41). They had not heard the voice of the Shepherd and had not followed him.

10:7-21

In this paragraph Jesus builds on the proverbs of the sheepfold (vss. 1-6), and from it he makes important gospel applications. Remember, he is still speaking to religious leaders who questioned the blind man and who rejected Jesus for healing

him on the Sabbath (see vs. 21 which ties Chs. 9 and 10 together).

Jesus kept the focus of this story on the relationship of the Shepherd to the sheep, and he shows the contrasts between the false religious leaders and the true Shepherd. First, the sheep come to Jesus because he calls them (vss. 16, 27), and they follow him (John 1:43; 8:12; 21:19, 22). The sheep know the voice of their Shepherd and will recognise with caution the voice of strangers (vs. 5). Second, the sheep are safe because the Shepherd owns them (vss. 12-13). The hired hand does not have a vested interest in the sheep and so will not stick around in times of danger. Jesus, however, has laid down his life for his sheep. Third, the Shepherd knows the sheep. He expands this knowledge to those presently outside the fold. The sheepfold in this story is the Church in Israel, or the true Israel (Romans 9:6). There are other sheep however (Gentiles), who are not of this fold, but the Saviour knows them and will bring them (vs. 16, 2 Timothy 2:19).

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross—his laying down his life for the sheep—not only secures his sheep but it pleases the Father. It is the Father's plan and will (John 5:30), he is the Father's Lamb (John 1:29), the Father's beloved Son and we then

in Christ are the beloved of the Father (John 17:23).

10:22-42

John set the scene by identifying the time in the religious calendar and the season. It was winter at the feast of Hanukkah, celebrating the deliverance from the enemy and the dedication of the Second Temple (December 25–January 2). There at the temple, inquisitive and frustrated the Jews "closed in on him," and pleaded with him directly "don't keep us in suspense" (vs. 24).

Jesus had been clear with them—he had told them (vs. 25) and also shown them by his works (vs. 32), that he is the Messiah sent from the Father. Here Jesus distinguishes between the Jews who do not believe and his own sheep—they hear his voice, he knows them, and they follow him (vs. 27). Jesus takes time to emphasize the security of those that are his true sheep (vs. 27-30). No one can "snatch" them (vs. 28). This word takes the hearers back to the same word use in 10:12, where it refers to wolves and robbers. Jesus's sheep are in his hands (vs. 28) and eternally secure.

But the point that they could not accept was Jesus' claim that "I and the Father are one." (vss. 30, 33).

That stuck in their craw, and they lifted stones to stone him for blasphemy. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah from God (anointed by God and sent from God), but they could not accept that he is actually God (vs. 30). They were happy to accept Jesus for his works, his teaching, his miracles and to join the crowd to follow him. Notice how Jesus points them to their own Scriptures (vs. 34). They accused Jesus of making himself God, but Jesus points out that even in their Scriptures they sometimes refer to men as gods (i.e. judges, Psalm 82:1,6). The point is that the idea of attributing the Divine nature to humanity is not foreign to their own Scripture, so why can't they believe when Jesus come claiming to be the Son of God? To know Jesus is to know God and to have the Spirit of God dwelling in them (14:7).

11:1-16

Again, under divine inspiration, John picks up on an event that will lead to a great teaching opportunity on the subject of the resurrection. John first establishes the close relationship that this family had with Jesus (vss. 1-2, 3, 5). It was because of this relationship that Jesus delayed (vs. 6). Sickness, death and adverse circumstances in the life of the believer are not only permitted by our sovereign Lord but designed by

him for our good and his glory (think of Job. think of Peter also and "by what death he should glorify God," 21:19. See also Revelation 3:19; Hebrews 12:5-11).

Out of this great affliction, the Lord Jesus intended to bring great blessing. By choosing his timing in order that his "beloved" friend Lazarus would die, and the acceptance of this by the two sisters, Jesus was asking them to exercise faith and fit into his program so they would grow and that he would be glorified (vs. 4). But Jesus was also teaching his disciples (vs. 15).

Thomas gives a very uninformed and pessimistic view of the situation, and indeed he and the others would forsake Jesus in his hour of death, but it is nonetheless a show of great affection for Jesus, and also for the friends of Jesus when he suggests that they should go and die with Jesus (vs. 16, see vs. 8). The disciples are still being instructed, and every event is a learning event. While Lazarus was dying, life for Jesus was going on as normal, undisturbed, and there were always more opportunities in the daily routine of life to teach his disciples, and us. The lesson here was that by going up to Jerusalem, Jesus was not afraid. he was not walking in the dark, but in safety and security of the light (vss. 7-10).

11:17-27

This paragraph records the interaction between Jesus and Martha—another discipleship moment in the ministry of Jesus. Lazarus had died soon after the messenger set out to find Jesus, so by the time Jesus had come Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (vs. 17). The delay was important so that it would be evident that Lazarus had actually died—four days in the tomb would prove this, and in that culture it was significant.

The delay was also important so that Jesus would have an audience. In their culture, mourners would gather to comfort the family (vs. 19), and the mourning would go on for several days. So, when Jesus arrived there was an audience already gathered to witness one of the most incredible miracles of his ministry, and what would be the catalyst for his crucifixion. But Martha ran to meet him first, with a clear statement of faith "if you had been here my brother would not have died" (vs. 21). It seems that Martha did not go to Jesus for a miracle, but for comfort. She knew that if Jesus had been there, he would have healed her brother, but she also knew that, "even now, whatever you ask from God, he will give it." (vs. 22). Martha's faith in Jesus and her focus on the eternal is remarkable in the face of such circumstances—although she

needed taught on some matters regarding the resurrection. While she believed that Jesus could raise her brother up, she was not expecting him to do immediately, but on the last day (vs. 24).

Martha's need for clarification gave occasion for Jesus to teach her, and us, with the fifth great "I AM" statement—I AM the resurrection and the life." Martha spoke of the resurrection as some future event, but "resurrection and life" were right beside her in the person of Jesus Christ (vs. 25). Martha may not have understood the fullness of this statement and what followed, but she was sure of three great truths—Jesus is the Christ, he is the Son of God, and he was "the coming one" (vs. 27, John 12:13).

11:28-37

Jesus had heard of the death of his friend Lazarus. He delayed and arrived four days "late." When she heard that he was coming, Martha went out to meet him, but Mary had stayed in her home (vs. 20). Jesus was too late to heal Lazarus, but he had arranged his coming in time to sympathise with the sisters and to raise Lazarus from the dead. His arrangement of the circumstances may be difficult for Mary and Martha, but they were designed to

reveal his sympathising heart, his power over death and his glory.

Jesus hates the griefs, pains and adverse conditions in which his people find themselves, and he weeps with us. That which pains us, pains him and he takes these things to heart. In his human nature has entered into our affliction (Isaiah 53:4). He is not a professional mourner as many of those gathered at the home of Lazarus, and he does not weep in helplessness, as they wept, Jesus has come, not just to sympathise (vs. 35), but to teach (vs. 28) and do something about their affliction (vss. 38-44).

11:38-44

The story has been building up to this moment—with the death of Lazarus, the request for Jesus to come (vss. 1-16), Jesus' conversation with Martha (vss. 17-27), and then meeting Mary on his way to the village (vss. 28-37).

Now we come to the resurrection of Lazarus, the clearest and boldest display of the deity of Jesus, the purpose for John's writing, and the catalyst that would eventually lead to his crucifixion.

Vs. 37 sets the scene and reminds us that as Jesus came to the tomb he was already up against opposition from the Jews, which will result in his death. So, Jesus came to the tomb agitated, disturbed and angry at their unbelief (vs. 38). Martha needed a gentle rebuke, and we do well to note Jesus words to Martha—believe in me and you will see the glory of God (vss. 39-40, see vss. 25-26).

As Jesus comes to the act of raising Lazarus, he had already been praying (although that prayer is not recorded). He thanks the Father publicly that he had been heard, to acknowledge to the Jews that he can do nothing without the Father, and that he is from the Father (see 5:19-26). And so, Lazarus came forth, bound with grave clothes, showing that he had indeed been dead and buried. But Lazarus must go through the pangs of death again and be buried, in contrast to his Saviour who rose in the power of an endless life; that could not die (Hebrews 7:16).

11:45-57

This paragraph begins by identifying the two responses to the revelation of Jesus Christ—belief (vs. 45), and rejection (vss. 46-57). John develops this thought of rejection and shows how the

catalyst for crucifixion was this event of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. From this time the Jews were planning the death of Jesus (vs. 53).

The Sanhedrin called an emergency meeting to discuss the question "what are we to do?" (vs. 47). It is significant that it was Caiaphas, the High Priest who first called for the blood of Jesus. From his perspective it was in order to preserve his nation's position under Rome. What sins have been committed and what crimes have been conceived in the name of national politics, or by the same token, institutional preservation (vs. 50). However, in the decrees of God, Caiaphas was uttering a prophecy—that Jesus would die for the nation (vs. 51). What an irony, that in the providence of God, the High Priest of Israel was the one (unwittingly) who announced the last great sacrifice for sin in the death Jesus. The blood that Caiaphas was calling for would actually abolish the Jewish sacrificial system and make his own position redundant.

Jesus knew when "his hour" would come (2:4; 12:23, 27), but until that time, he did not "walk openly" among them (vs. 54). Couched in the normal routine of life, Jesus took control of the timing of his own death. They were searching for

him, and the Pharisees gave orders that anyone with information should bring it to them (vs. 57).

12:1-8

This story parallels another time when a woman anointed Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair (Luke 7:38). Both occasions manifest deep devotion that cuts across cultural and Jewish conventions, for woman to take her hair down in public, and before men. It is no surprise that he who was piously over-critical and outwardly charitable was in fact false. John tells us that Judas who was the treasurer of the 12 and that he would help himself to the cash. I wonder did the disciples know this at the time or discover this after his death.

At any rate, Jesus knew. And Jesus defends Mary with two points. First, she was anticipating Jesus' burial (vs. 7). Evidently the incident with Lazarus had taught Mary, Martha and Lazarus something about the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. Mary had lost nothing in the pouring out of the ointment, it was not a waste. She had in fact gained a memorial. Second, Jesus told Judas that this was a unique opportunity, and she quite rightly seized it (vs. 8).

12:9-11

This short paragraph brings the story of Lazarus' resurrection to an end. It has been a long and detailed account, primarily because John is highlighting the significance of the resurrection of the body in anticipation of Jesus' resurrection, a pillar of Christian teaching and the hope of every believer (see 2:19-22 and also 1 Corinthians 15:12-19). But why does John tell us that the Jews wanted to put Lazarus to death (vs. 10).

It was Passover, the Jews were gathering at Jerusalem for the feast, and when they heard that Jesus was at Bethany, just a short distance away (11:18), they came to see him. But Jesus was not the only attraction—the people also wanted to see Lazarus who had been raised from the dead.

12:12-19

The resurrection of Lazarus was a pivotal point in the life and ministry of Jesus. It was the catalyst the crucifixion instigated by the Jewish leaders (11:45-57), and ironically for Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19). The crowds who had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover attempted again (see 6:15) to take Jesus and make him king. The crowds of course did not understand the implications of their words or action, and would

later be calling for his blood, but in the sovereign purposes of God, they brought him into the city with cries of Hosanna ("save now" or "please save," see Psalm 118:25-26). The language they used, and the mode of transport (the colt of a donkey) fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament (See Zachariah 9:9, Psalm 118:26). Nor did the disciples understand (vs. 16), but they would later (see John 14:17 and Matthew 13:11-12).

These two events, the plot to kill him and the surge of messianic excitement mark the beginning of Jesus' final week. By the end of that week, he would be in the tomb. It was the custom of ancient kings to enter their cities after a great victory (1 Samuel 18:6). Jesus does so before the fight in the sure and certain hope of victory. Victory is sure in Christ.

12:20-26

This event in the life of the Lord Jesus is remarkable, especially so since it occurred on the cusp of his passion. Why did these Greeks approach Jesus at this time? These were Gentiles, "God fearers," who had come to worship at Jerusalem (Luke 7:1-5; Acts 8:27). They were separated from the inner court by the "middle wall of partition," and only admitted to worship in the

Outer Court, the Court of the Gentiles. Remember as Jesus cleared this area of the traders, he announced that the Temple was a house for prayer "for all nations" (Mark 11:17; Isaiah 56:7). Could it be that this comment stirred the curiosity of these Greeks?

At any rate, this request of the Greeks initiated something, and this was the first time that Jesus said that "his hour had come" (see 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus begins to instruct with four important lessons, first, the Principle of Life (vss. 24-26), second, the purpose of the Son (vs. 27), third, the pleasure of the Father (vss. 28-30), and finally, the presence of the Light (vss. 31-36).

Let's consider this great principle of life (vs. 26). We are not told if these Gentile inquirers ever met with Jesus. But Jesus used their request as an opportunity to give an important lesson—there is no life without death. Glory and life come through humiliation and death, the cross must come before the crown. This was the path of the Saviour, and it must be our path also (Luke 24:26). In his agrarian culture, Jesus' illustration of the grain of wheat would have been well understood (vs. 24).

Jesus is of course referring to himself—his own life, as the grain of wheat, must be given in sacrifice

before he can bring life to others as the Bread of Life (6:33-58). But Jesus is speaking here to the Greeks, and they must understand this principle, and us today, or the crucifixion will appear foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). If we are going to experience eternal life, we must follow Jesus in his sufferings, even unto death, as many did (vs. 26, Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 1:10-12, 2:11-13; Philippians 3:10).

12:27-36

The request of a few Greeks to interview Jesus has initiated something. First, the principle of the cross before the crown, which to a Greek mind would sound foolish and counterproductive (1 Corinthians 1:23). Second, these Gentiles coming to Jesus ignited the thought that Jesus appointed time had come (*"his hour"* vs. 23, 27), and although the thought of the cross looming over him trouble Jesus (vs. 27 agitated or distressed), yet he would not shrink from it because for this purpose he had come into the world.

Third, Jesus acknowledged that this was all according to the will and pleasure of the Father (vss. 27-30; 6:39, see Isaiah 53:10)—the voice from heaven confirmed this to all there (vs. 30). God would be glorified because judgement had come

into the world in the person of the Son (vs. 31), who would judge between death and life, light and darkness, sin and righteousness. Sin darkness and death would be destroyed, and the "ruler of this world" would be condemned and cast out (vs. 31).

Finally, Jesus pointed out to the gathered crowd, the presence of the light among them, which they could not see! (vs. 35). He had spoken in the first person (vss. 23-27), of his soul being troubled, and of him being "lifted up from the earth" (vs. 32), and still they asked him, "who is this Son of Man? (vs. 34). Walk in the light, and believe the light (vss. 35-36), that you may become "sons of light" (vs. 36).

12:37-43

Jesus had worked many signs among these people (vs. 37; 2:23), he had told them plainly that "the light" was among them (vs. 36), and they had even hailed him as the "king of Israel" (vs. 13). Yet these people were still in darkness and rejected the Messiah.

In this section (vss. 36b-43), the author takes some time out of the events to reflect on the lack of response to the ministry of Jesus and the Jews rejection of him as their Messiah (See a similar portion from the apostle Paul in Acts 28:25-29,

Romans 10:16). John has already shown us this rejection (1:11), but here he looks back to what the Holy Spirit had said on the subject from two portions of Isaiah's prophecy—first in Isaiah 53:1 and then stretching back to Isaiah 6:10.

The ministry of Jesus, rather than causing the people to "*turn and be healed*," had the same effect on the Jews as Isaiah's ministry had on the people of his day—they hardened their hearts (vs. 40). John highlights three steps in their destruction. First, their unbelief, which we have seen before (2:23). But here (vs. 42), many of them "believed," that is, that acknowledged, intellectually that Jesus was the Messiah, but they rejected him, for fear of the Pharisees (vs. 43).

Second, they hardened their hearts, or they became hardened against the Lord, as Pharaoh had under Moses' preaching. Third, God judged them. Jesus' ministry had fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, for judgement has come into the world (vs. 31).

12:44-50

Some Samaritans had believed in Jesus from the town of Sychar (4:39), and some Gentiles also (12:20-26), but the Jews, his own people, had

rejection him. In this book, John has been repeatedly showing us that Jesus is the Saviour of the world (i.e. not just for the Jews – 1:29; 3:16; 4:42). Here, as Jesus takes his leave of them (vs. 36), he calls out with the indiscriminate "whoever," – Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, or even those in the ruling classes of the Jews who refused to trust him, despite recognising his integrity and authenticity (vss. 42-43).

In this call to sinners, Jesus emphasises the fact that he has not come on his own authority, but on the authority of "him who sent me" (three times, vss. 44, 45, 49). To believe in, to see, and to hear Jesus is to believe in, to see, and to hear the Father. This is the last call to the unbelieving world; the next chapter brings us into the scenes of the Upper Room with his disciples.

Notice the verbs that Jesus used of those who trust him – believe (vs. 44), see (vs. 45), hear (vs. 47). The alternative to these is to reject Jesus (vs. 48). Judgement will come in the end (vs. 48) and will be determined by the word and ministry of Jesus, but Jesus is clear that he has not come to judge, but to save (vs. 47), and to give light (vs. 46).

13:1-5

When Israel looked for a king in the days of Samuel, the Lord told them that their king would take their sons for war, their daughters for perfumers, cooks and bakers, their land and their crops, etc. (1 Samuel 8:10-18). In short, their a king would only use them to serve himself. The contrast is stark, between their earthly king and Jesus who came as a servant-king.

The Lord Jesus and his disciples gathered at Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. This was the last Passover that Jesus celebrated. Reclined at the table before the meal, Jesus knew that his hour had come. He had arranged it, so that this time could be spent with his disciples. Away from the glare of the world, and the clammer of life, Jesus had one final message that he wanted to teach them, not just in word, but by acting it out with them. Here, on this final evening, his disciples had a most blessed time of fellowship and instruction, and here the Father is glorified when Jesus took a towel and began to wash his disciple's feet. This servant heart is on display as example for all his disciples, then and now.

13:6-20

This event marks the beginning of a long evening in the Upper Room when Jesus instructed (13:1-38), comforted (14:1-31), encouraged (15:1-16:33) and prayed for (17:1-26) his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion and departure from them (see 18:1).

Verse 12 is the key to this paragraph. This was clearly a symbolic act of humility. Jesus was teaching his disciples a principle and not instituting a practice for the Church (we do not practice Maundy Thursday). Verses 6-11 deal with Peter's refusal to allow Jesus to wash his feet and the lessons that flow out of that, while in verses 13-20 Jesus instructs his disciples on humility. Twice Jesus refers to the presence of Judas who would betray him, but it seems that it did not register with the disciples (vss. 10, 18-19). John is writing this later of course, to show the divine insight of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus gives two reasons for his actions that evening. First, as an explanation of his ministry to us (Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:5-11). The disciples need to be served by Jesus before that can go out into the world. They would realise this later (vs. 12, Acts 4:13). The disciples sat in silence, but Peter could not restrain his contempt at the thought of Jesus stooping so low to serve him. If

we are not willing to allow Jesus to serve us, to feed us from his word, then we have no part with him (vs. 8).

Second, as an example of our ministry for him (vs. 15). Union with Christ in salvation changes everything. It not only addresses the question of our eternal destiny, but it affects the way we live here on earth. If we know the truth, we will do the truth (vs. 17). Jesus' disciples must be willing to serve at other's feet, to sit in uncomfortable places and have difficult conversations, as Jesus did here.

13:21-30

Jesus has indicated previously, with comments that seem to us to be obvious, that the betrayer sat among them in the Upper Room that night (vss. 10, 18-19). The disciples, however, didn't seem to pick up in these rather pointed hints. In fact, they seem clueless right up until Judas actually left the room (vs. 29), even when Jesus had stated clearly; "one of you will betray me" (vss. 21). How **dull** and spiritually sluggish we can be as disciples of Jesus (see Hebrews 6:12).

How **graciously** Jesus identifies the betrayer; by giving him the morsel of bread (vs. 26). This was an act of friendship and fellowship, and a special honour. This was Jesus, his arms of friendship

outstretched to the end in a final appeal to Judas. As Jesus peered into the secrets of his heart, Judas must have been reminded of the divine nature of the Messiah, but the work had already been done in his heart by Satan, and he sinned against knowledge, just as Adam had (vs. 27).

How **composed** Jesus was in the face of such betrayal; "what you are going to do, do quickly." (vs. 27). Jesus was not afraid of Judas, or of the plans that Judas had conceived against him. Jesus knew that these plans were in keeping with the will of the Father (Acts 2:23). But it is interesting to compare Jesus' composure here with the bloody sweat in the garden (Luke 22:39-46). In the garden, the agony was not because of the impending physical suffering, what men could do to him, but an agony of soul, and the anticipation of separation from the Father.

How **different** the condition of Judas is to that of Jesus' disciples. Judas went out into the night, literally and spiritually (vs. 30), while Jesus' disciples are sitting in comfortable and loving fellowship with the Prince of Life, the light of the world (9:5).

13:31-35

Judah has left the room, and Jesus is now free to speak freely to "his own" (vs. 1). In this short section (vss. 31-35), which serves as an introduction to the lengthy discussion of the evening, Jesus introduces three primary themes.

First, the glory of God (glory or glorified is mentioned five times in vss. 31-32). Nothing glorified God more, than the death of Jesus Christ, and nothing should, therefore, give us more present peace, lasting hope, and God-glorifying joy, than the death of Jesus Christ.

Second, the departure of Jesus from this earth through suffering (vss. 31, 33). Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. Peter will pick up on this thought immediately (vss. 36ff), and it will inform much of the conversation that evening. But Jesus introduced this theme with a term of affection; "my little children" (vs. 33), and a phrase that John would later use in his first epistle, (1 John 2:1,12,18; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21).

Third, the mutual love of the saints, (vss. 34-35). Jesus introduced this idea of an active Christian love in the context of suffering and hostility in the world. Mutual Christian love is not just a theological imperative, but a functional dynamic of the

Church—it is a support network, an encouragement and a comfort for the saints. Jesus, who laid down his life, is the embodiment and the supreme example of this love.

This commandment to love is an old one (Leviticus 19:18), but presented here as "new" in the context of the new covenant, written on the heart (Jeremiah 31:31-33), motivated and modelled by the love that Jesus has for his people (vs. 34), and worn before the world as a badge of true and genuine discipleship (vs. 35).

13:36-38

Following on from exposing the wickedness that creeps in among the people of God (vss. 21-30; Acts 20:29), Jesus continues to expose the weakness that characterises many of God's people. Peter is not the only weak disciple, with doubts and questions (nor the last), but Peter is an easy target, for he more than any other was prone to over sell his zeal and over stretch his abilities. What transpired between Jesus and Peter in the conversation that evening reveal soaring levels of spiritual blindness, immaturity and conceited self-confidence that would no doubt, have made Peter cringe had he read it in later life. In the mercy of

God, he died before John wrote his account of the Gospel.

Having said all that, and hopefully learned something in it, we must not forget that what Peter said to Jesus on this occasion, was born out of a deep love for him. Peter, and later Thomas (14:5) wanted to know where Jesus was going and wanted to go with him. Perhaps Peter's zeal was emboldened by the fact that Judas had just been revealed as the betrayer. Ironically, however, Peter who set himself up as a close projection officer to Jesus, willing to lay down his life for the Messiah, would later deny Jesus when faced by a little maid (John 18:15-18; 25-27). Peter thought he could protect Jesus, when he could not project himself against Satan, he thought that Jesus needed him, when in reality Peter needed Jesus (Luke 22:31-32).

Peter used the same phrase Jesus used of himself for his sheep, John 10:15). We are reminded here how much we must grow as Christians. No doubt Peter looked back. How immature we can be in our thinking about protecting Christ, his Church or Christianity. Jesus, the Saviour of the world, will soon lay down his life for Peter, but Peter a Galilean fisherman, thinks he can be a close projection officer to Jesus and lay down his life for the

Messiah. Peter thinks he as Jesus covered, when in fact Jesus has Peter covered. We are reminded of how the Lord pudges our conscience. No doubt Peter read John's account of the gospel with a sense of embarrassment, but also with the joyful realisation of how Jesus had graciously accommodated his immaturity, and how

14:1-4

This section of John's Gospel really begins at 13:36 when **Peter** interrupted Jesus with a question; "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered that question (13:36-14:4), and a follow-up question from **Thomas** (14:5-7), and another from **Philip** (14:8-22), and yet another from **Judas** (not Iscariot), (14:22-16:16). In this long section then, spanning Chs. 13-16, Jesus is speaking to all his disciples but answering questions from specific men. Ch. 16:29-33 sums up their response.

When Jesus told his disciples that he was "going away" (13:33), they were confused and disturbed. Understandably so, for Jesus himself was troubled (13:21). In the confusion, Peter would deny him (13:38), and most would abandon him (16:32). However, regardless of all that he knows would happen to them during his passion, Jesus

continued to speak comfort and hope into the situation. All things were working together for good (Romans 8:28).

Throughout the discussion, Jesus helped them to understand what he meant by his "going away," and directed their attention to that final resting place that Jesus would prepare for them (14:3). In his answer to Peter here (vss. 1-4), Jesus used the word "rooms." This word (*monē*) comes from the verb, to stay or to abide, and in the noun form, means a place of residence, or a home. It is found only twice in the Bible, and only in this chapter (vss. 2, 23). Jesus' use of this word is important and gives us an insight into this entire discussion. In short, Jesus has a home prepared for us in heaven (vs. 2), but until we get there, he has made his home in us (vs. 23), to help us on the journey (vs. 16), and to guarantee our safe arrival (Ephesians 1:13-14). Let not your heart be troubled! (vs. 1).

14:5-9

Jesus' statement about leaving the disciples (vs. 33) sparked a series of questions among the disciples. Peter of course, was first to respond (13:36-14:4), about where Jesus was going, and if he could follow him. There is reference here to the cross, but also then, afterwards to "Father's house" (14:2).

At this point the disciples do not properly understand the way to God or the knowledge of God. Thomas asked about "the way" to the Father's house (vs. 5), and Philip just wants to see the Father (vs. 8). Both these questions fail to acknowledge Jesus, the Son, sitting before them, who is the only way to the Father (vs. 6) and through whom alone we can know God.

Philip's response is the most shocking. Let me paraphrase vs s. 7-9;

- Jesus: "to know me is to know the Father."
- Philip: "Show us the Father and it is enough for us"
- Jesus: "How can you say that, Philip, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me?"

While they don't deny it, as the Jews did (5:17-18), the disciples are still trying to get their head round that fact that Jesus is co-equal, co-eternal and co-authoritative with the Father (vs. 10). Perhaps this is why Jesus developed his answer to Thomas the way he did, to make it abundantly clear that he is not just the way to God, but the truth of God and the life of God is bound up in him, the Son of God

(vs. 6). Jesus is not just a teacher sent from God (3:2), but God himself. Jesus is not the "light" of the Sun (John 8:12, 9:5; 12:46), he is the Sun itself (Malachi 4:2).

14:8-21

The conversation between Jesus and his disciples is easily divided by observing the questions or comments of the disciples. Here we come to mystic Philip's comment; he just wants to know God, without Jesus or a mediator (vs.8). Philip's desire to see the Father has a ring of piety to it, but it denies the necessity of the Son and ignores the Holy Spirit.

Many Bibles and commentaries divide the text at verse 15, but we should not miss the connection between believing in Jesus (vs.10-12), seeing the Father (vs.9), and having the Holy Spirit (vss.15ff). Let me summarise Jesus' answer to Philip.

God the Father has revealed himself through the Son (and only through the Son). If you accept the Son (his works and words, vss. 10-11), you have accepted God the Father. If we ask in Jesus' name, the Father hears us (vss. 13-14), and if we love and obey Jesus, he will send us his Spirit (vss. 15-16). Our relationship with the Son by faith guarantees our relationship with the Father and the Spirit. In

fact, acceptance of the Son means that the Spirit makes himself known as God in us, by the Holy Spirit (vs. 21).

14:22-31

Jesus had already told the disciples that he would send a Helper when he answered Philip (vss. 15-21). But Judas Thaddeus, the brother of James and author of the little epistle of Jude (see Matthew 10:3), comes with a follow-up question – "how can it be that you can show yourself to us and not be seen by the world?" (vs. 22).

Judas of course is visualising a physical appearance, when Jesus is speaking about a spiritual manifestation. Jesus sums it up in vs. 23; if we love and obey me, I and the Father will love you, and we will make our home in you. Jesus is referring to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who was sent by the Father and the Son. Jesus continued, this is not me "talking out of school," but this is the word of the Father himself (vs. 24).

The point that Jesus is making to Judas, is the key difference between the unbeliever and the believer in this world—the believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him/her as "the Helper"—the One who

comes along side as a comforter and advocate. The word is used only five times in Scriptures and all by John (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1). There are two ways then, that Jesus will show himself to the believer and not be seen by the world. **First**, through the Holy Spirit, he will teach us, and bring things (that Jesus has said) to our remembrance. James picked up on this promise in his letter (James 1:5). **Second**, through the Holy Spirit he will give a peace that the world does not give (vs. 27). Again, Peter picked up on this promise in his first letter (1 Peter 5:7).

If the disciples understood the full import of why Jesus was leaving, they would have rejoiced (vs. 28). He is going to the Father as the victorious conqueror, so that he can benefit the whole Church by his indwelling presence.

15:1-17

The "rise and let us go" (14:31) shows that Jesus had finished his answer to Judas (14:22ff) and has moved on. Jesus is still discipling these men who will carry on his work on earth after he is gone (vs. 16). They would have understood very well the image of the vine.

There are three major truths taught from this image. **First**, disciples are branches of the vine (vss. 1-6). Jesus continues to show the disciples the connection between himself and the Father (and where they fit into this picture). The emphasis here is that the Father planted the vine and will get the glory for his prized vine (vs. 8). It is the Father who identifies and distinguishes the true and fruitful branches from the false and fruitless branches; the one he prunes and matures, the other he cuts off and burns.

Second, Jesus shows that disciples must be fruitful branches, because unfruitful branches are cut off and destroyed (vss. 6-11; see James 2:14-26). The emphasis of this sections is mutual abiding; we abide in Jesus by his Spirit and Jesus abides in us by his Word (vs. 7). **Third**, Jesus shows the unity of the branches; the branches must see their connection with the other branches (vss. 12-17). We, the branches, are to love one another as Jesus loved us (i.e. sacrificially, vs. 12). We are not just "servants" of the vine bearing fruit, but we are "friends" with the vine, with a common and united purpose (vs. 15).

Fulfilment in the Christian life, (ie. "Fulness of joy," vs. 11) is knowing that we have been chosen (vs.

16), abiding in Jesus (vs. 4), loving one another (vss. 12,17) and growing spiritual (vss. 4,8,16b).

15:18-16:4a

It might appear to be an abrupt and irregular change of subject from speaking about abiding in Christ (vss. 1-17) to the hatred of the world (vss. 18-27). But there is a connection. Part of abiding is loving the brothers and sisters (vs. 17), and perhaps Jesus is contrasting this key characteristic (love) with that which characterises the world. Or perhaps more likely (see 16:1), he is answering the concerns and fears which so often arise in our hearts when we are faced with the demands of the gospel—what will the world (this person or that person) think ... how will the world react?

The word "hate" here can mean anything from persecution to simply being ignored, thought less of or treated with indifference. This is often our greatest fear, and it is fair to say that this is one of the primary obstacles for the disciple of Jesus—it impedes our obedience to our Lord, blurs our vision for the Church and distorts our love for other believers.

Jesus wants these disciples not just to be fruitful (vs. 16), but to be ready for opposition (16:1). For

this they need to understand the reason behind this hatred; their identity with Jesus immediately puts them at odds with the world. Jesus suffered at the hands of the world, and they should expect to also (vs. 20). He also wants them to understand that he will provide the necessary and sufficient Helper so that they do not fall away (5:26, 16:1).

16:4-16

There are life situations that we must grow into. All the information at the beginning would be overwhelming and unnecessary (vss. 4b, 12). The Lord Jesus is about to leave these men, and he knows his sheep. He has many things to tell them (and us), and he has designed and purposed the best way to teach us—by his Holy Spirit. Jesus presents the coming of the Holy Spirit as the culmination of his own work (see Acts 1:4-5). He must go away (vs. 7) and accomplished his work and be exalted to the right hand of God. Only then could the Spirit come with authority (vs 13).

The work of the Spirit is extensive; first, in the world (vss. 8-11). It is the Holy Spirit who enables sinners to see themselves as they really are—he removes the delusion and deception of self and convinces sinners that they are sinners (vs. 9). He shows sinners that there is one who is righteous for all

who will accept him (vs. 10; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). And then the Holy Spirit shows sinners that Jesus has passed judgment on (condemned) the "ruler of this world" (vs. 11; see also John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 12:7-12).

Second, in the life of the Believer. He is our helper (vs. 7), our guide (vs. 13), and our teacher (vs. 15), and as such he is the supreme glorifier of Jesus. He will speak of Jesus to us, and reveal Jesus through us, by what the apostle later calls the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-26).

16:17-24

At this point in the evening, the disciples were still processing the news that Jesus is leaving. Three times already that evening, Jesus had used the phrase "little while" (12:35; 13:33; 14:19), and here he brings it up again (seven times in these verses, vss. 16-19), and the disciples plainly admit that they don't know "what he is talking about" (vs. 18).

They talked among themselves but hesitated to ask him directly, "what does he mean?" (vs. 19). Jesus did not reprove them; nor did he directly answer their question. Rather Jesus asserted his own conviction that this transition they are currently experiencing will work out for their good (vs. 20,

Romans 8:28). Four lessons the Lord teaches his disciples (and us) here, about his death in a "little while," when they would not see him, and his resurrection a "little while" later when they would see him (vs. 16).

First, we should be afraid to ask the Lord for light when difficult questions arise (vss. 19-20). The Lord already knows the wrestling of our hearts. **Second**, even when we do not understand the prophetic word (vs. 18b), we can be sure that the Lord's thoughts towards us are for our good (vs. 22; Jeremiah 29:11). For example, this is a good principle to remember when reading and wrestling through the book of the Revelation.

Third, wrestling through the difficulties, and trusting through the darkness of this situation, the Lord tells his disciples; one, that their sorrow will be turned into joy (vs. 20). Two, their joy will be so deep that they will forget the sorrow—as a mother does her labour (vs. 21), and three, no one will be able to take the joy from them (vs. 22). **Fourth**, questions will be turned into prayers. When he leaves, Jesus said, and the Spirit comes, the disciples will no longer be asking him questions (vs. 23a), but will request the father through Jesus (vs. 23b). This difference between asking question and requesting in prayer, is highlighted by a

different Greek word for "ask"). In short, the Spirit will bring joy (vs. 22), and the Spirit will enable prayer (vs. 24).

16:25-33

Before praying with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus left them with a few words of explanation and encouragement. It was essentially a benediction. What Paul would later gave to the Corinthians and at other times, as a prayer in summary, (2 Cor. 13:14), Jesus gives here with explanation; the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 33), the Love of God (vs. 27), and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who was yet to come (vs. 25, see also vs. 13).

First, the grace of Jesus Christ, or the grace that is in Christ, or though his work as our Mediator. He had told these men of his going away in "proverbs" (KJV), or "figures of speech" (ESV), but now he tells them plainly that he is leaving the world and going to the Father (vs. 28). Although well intentioned, the disciples are short-sighted and tell him that they've now got it, the penny has dropped (vs. 30). But Jesus reminds them not to be so quick to think that they have understood and embraced the truth, for within a few hours they will have scattered and forsaken him (think of Joshua in Joshua 24:19). We

need faith for every aspect, and for every phase of life. Even with all our weakness and failure, Jesus reminds us that he has overcome the world, and that we are therefore to "take heart" (vs. 33).

Second, the love of God. Scholars and commentators have often highlighted the fact that Paul's benediction begins with "the grace of the Lord Jesus..." and not the "love of God." The words of Jesus here give some explanation, because Jesus tells his disciples that the Father loves them because they have loved Jesus and have believed that Jesus has come from the Father as our mediator (vs. 27). This is not just the love of the Creator for his creation, or a mere benevolent love, but the everlasting love of God for his elect.

Third, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. "In that day" (vs. 26) when the Holy Spirit comes, our relationship with the Father will not be a mechanical, static relationship, but a living, vibrant and dynamic one, because the promise of the Father will have come to dwell with and in his people (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4).

17:1-5

This prayer is arguably the most significant prayer in the history of humanity. It reaches back into the

eternal decrees of God (vs. 5) and brings with it the purpose of God through history, looking forward to a better world (vs. 24). From the time of the Reformation, this prayer has been referred to as "our Lord's high-priestly prayer." This is a very apt descriptor, for here Jesus consecrates himself to the work that he has been sent to do (vs. 19); i.e. to glorify God on earth by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin and then representing his people as their High Priest in heaven. Here we see Jesus as our Mediator. He is both the priest making the offering and the sacrifice being offered.

This is jewel in the crown of that last evening with his disciples. Jesus has washed their feet, taught and encouraged them in his truth and now he comes to the final act of prayer before he leaves them. Jesus had just told Peter, earlier that evening that he had prayed for him (compare Luke 22:31-34 and John 13:36-38). Now Peter can hear the content of that prayer with his own ears. The prayer is divided into three parts; Jesus prays for himself (vss. 1-5), Jesus prays for his disciples who would be the apostles and foundation of the Church (vss. 6-19; Ephesians 2:20), and Jesus prays for all who would come to believe everywhere and throughout all ages (vss. 20-26).

In this first part Jesus makes one request; glorify your son (vs. 1), and glorify me (vs. 5), which is the foundation of this entire prayer. "The hour has come," appointed and commissioned by the Father (vs. 18) that he must be glorified through suffering in order that he would give eternal life to those whom the Father has given him so that the Father would be glorified. The focus here is that eternal life that Jesus has purchased. This is not simply the continuation of life (unending existence), but a relationship with the Father and with his Son (vs. 3). By providing this, Jesus himself will be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11). But by it, he will enlighten his people (6:63), preserve (vs. 11-12) and sanctify them (vs. 17), fill them with joy (vs. 13; see also 15:11), and bring them home (vs. 24). In this the Father will be glorified (vs. 1).

17:6-19

After the two petitions that the Father would glorify his Son (vss. 1-5), Jesus brings his disciples before the Father. Again, there are two petitions on behalf of the disciples in this section; that he would "keep them" (vs. 11) and that he would sanctify them (vs. 17). Two general observations need to be made concerning this prayer. First, what Jesus prays here for his disciples and what is true of them will also apply to the saints of every age through the

ministry of the disciples (later the apostles). Second, in this section (and the next section also vss. 20-25), only two petitions are made, which teaches us something of the nature of Christ-like prayer.

[1]. The primary goal of prayer is the glory of God (vss. 1-5). [2]. Prayer is reasonable and relational communion with the Father, not merely presenting a list of petitions. Jesus takes time to reason with the Father and to tell the Father all that he has done in obedience to the Father's will. We too can come, reasoning with the Father in the basis of all that Jesus has done in us and for us. [3]. Our petitions in prayer should not be nebulous and generic, but specific and deliberate. Jesus makes it clear that he is not praying for the world in general, but for his disciples (vs. 9). [4]. Prayer focuses (or will help us to focus) not on personal or earthly needs but on kingdom needs—it is the growth and development of the kingdom of God's grace both in the world (vs. 11) and in the individual (vss. 10, 17).

Jesus has glorified the Father in his obedience (vs. 4). He has revealed the Father to the disciples (vs. 6), giving them and teaching them the Word of God (vss. 8, 14), and prayed from them (vs. 9). Now he must leave them, and he petitions the Father on

their behalf. This prayer for the disciples will be answered by the coming of the Holy Spirit, who will "keep" (vs. 11; Ephesians 1:13-14) and "sanctify" (vs. 17; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Corinthians 6:11) his people.

17:20-26

Having prayed for himself (vss. 1-5), and for those who would become the apostles (vss. 6-19), Jesus builds on this by bringing before the Father all who would believe in the future (vs. 20). Jesus presents two requests to the Father on behalf of his Church. The future of the Church rested on the work of the Apostles (vs. 20; Ephesians 2:20).

First, that they may be one. The main thrust of Jesus' prayer is that those whom the Father has given him would be united as one, in one spiritual body. Jesus, possessed with the fullness of the Godhead will unit his people in himself (vs. 23). Although this unity will be reflected on earth, the unity that Jesus prays for here is not a unity created by us on earth, but by the Father through the atonement of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Unity in diversity among the saints on earth is a reflection of the unity in diversity found in the Godhead. The Church is a reflection of God, and a testimony to the world.

Second, that they may be with him (vs. 24). The wording of vs. 23 implies that this work of unity is progressive and will one day be perfected when we are finally with him in the glory that he had before the foundation of the world and the fall into sin (completed, see Ephesians 4:13).

Notice the motivation behind these two petitions, i.e. the vindication of the Son before an unbelieving world (vs. 21, 23). The work of Jesus will be accomplished, and he will be vindicated when the elect is gathered in from the world by a saving knowledge of the Son of God and when the unbelieving world recognises that he was indeed sent from the Father as the Saviour of the world (vs. 23). Another important part of Jesus vindication is tied up with the vindication of his people – for the world which has hated us, will recognise that God has loved us, even as he loves his own Son.

This prayer will be answered when God's chosen people grow in a deeper knowledge of the Son (vs. 25-16), but the ultimate answer will be when every last one of God's people is brought with Jesus in the glories of their heavenly home (vs. 24) and the world bows the knee in eternal recognition of the Son of God (Romans 14:11).

18:1-11

Jesus has spent the evening with his beloved disciples and is now about to enter into his passion. John does not include the prayer of agony that the other evangelists include, but we should remember that what happened here was after Jesus' prayer "let this cup pass from me..." (Matthew 26:36ff; Mark 14:32ff; Luke 22:39ff). The route that Jesus took over the brook Kidron, had been typified in the Old Testament when David crossed the same brook in his distress (2 Samuel 15:23). Here Jesus crosses the brook on behalf of others. Judas, the erstwhile disciple had, in a premeditated plot brought the soldiers to the place where Jesus had often been with his disciples (vs. 2). That garden which had been a place of intimate communion with the Lord would become the place of condemnation for Judas (Matthew 27:3-5). John tells this story (leaving out details that others include) in such a way as to highlight the purpose and power of Jesus.

A Man with Purpose vs. 11). Notice how Jesus voluntarily surrendered to the arresting soldiers, identifying himself several times as the one they were looking for (vss. 5, 6, 8). Peter, displaying the spirit of the Zealots, was prepared to defend Jesus and manifest his faith by force. But Jesus rebuked him and explained to him why he was surrendering

so willingly to the soldiers. Peter would come to understand that Judas' betrayal and the soldier's wicked actions were fulfilling the will of the Father – the cup that Jesus must drink (vs. 11; Acts 2:23). The purpose of Jesus was not only to drink this cup alone, but also to protect his disciples, thus he requests of the soldiers "let these men go" (vs. 8).

A man with Power. Notice the power of Jesus words "I am." Three times Jesus uses these two words "I am," harking back to the words of Yahweh to Moses and identifying the covenant God of Israel (Exodus 3:14). In Jesus the Godhead was "veiled in flesh" to use the words of Wesley. It was the power of this God that threw the soldiers to the ground (vs. 6). We will see also that Jesus is the **man of prophecy** (vss. 12-14).

18:12-14

John is setting the stage for the passion of Christ both historically and theologically. Historically this arrest was deemed serious enough to require the cohort and the commanding officer (vs. 12). While the crucifixion was Jewish motivated, it was Roman controlled, as they were the occupying authority (Acts 2:23). Annas had been appointed the high priest from AD 6-15. He had been an influential figure, evident from the fact that Jesus was brought

"first' to him (vs. 13), even though his son-in-law Caiaphas was the current high priest and had already given his advice (vs. 14; See also 11:49).

We should notice also that they "took" (ESV, arrested) and "bound" him. This was in fulfillment of Scripture, as Abraham bound Isaac (Genesis 22:9), and as the sheaf of first fruits was bound and brought to the priest (Leviticus 23:10), so Jesus must be bound. This binding typifies the binding of his people by death and hell (Psalm 18:4-12), with no hope of releasing, except in Jesus alone, who has been bound "to us," "with us" and "for us." In Jesus we have the assurance and hope of release, for it is not possible for him to be held by it (Acts 2:24), nor for us who are in him.

18:15-18

The arresting officers have brought Jesus to the high Priest, who it seems is Annas although he was no longer serving as high priest (see 24). John does not identify the "other disciple." It is likely not one of the twelve but well known to both John the author and to Peter, and well-known also to the high priest (the Greek indicates a friend, vs. 16). Peter was evidently afraid to go in to such a hostile environment, but the other disciple went out and brought him in (vs. 16).

The question from the servant girl is framed in such a way that she expected the answer 'no.' If Peter had been confident in his relationship with Jesus, he would have answered something like, 'yes actually, I am.' But she had made it easy for Peter to agree with her and to answer 'no.' The charcoal fire has become a feature of that evening (Mark 14:54; Luke 22:55), as Peter stood warming himself among the officers who had arrested Jesus and servants of the high priest (see also vs. 25).

The tension within Peter that night, between love for Jesus and the fear of man was intense. Peter's fall is breathtaking, considering the fact that he had spent the evening in discussion with Jesus, received the Lord's supper and has just emerged from the place of prayer in Gethsemane with him. The fault lay, in part in the fact that Peter did not "watch and pray" as the Lord had commanded him (Mark 14:38; Luke 22:46).

18:19-24

In this first round of questions, the high priest is interested in two things: the disciples of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus. How many disciples did he have and how great a threat did they pose? Jesus does not allow his disciples to be drawn into the

discussion. He had already asked that they would be let go (vs. 8). This was Jesus' hour, and he must suffer alone (Isaiah 63:3). But something else ironically, the disciples at this point were a threat to no one. Peter was outside denying his Lord and the others had scattered (John 16:32).

Regarding the teaching of Jesus, this was all in the public domain. Perhaps the high priest was aware of the discussion that evening in the upper room, but even there Jesus was not speaking in secret codes or hidden messages to his disciples—it was all a matter of public record, and he had taught publicly in the temple (7:14). Jesus had nothing to hide in his teaching, but neither did he feel the need to repeat it to gratify the high priest (vss. 20-21). He could do his own research.

The line of questioning established by the high priest was going nowhere when the officer (the temple security) struck Jesus, accusing him of insulting the high priest. Paul would later apologise for insulting the high priest as it was against Jewish law (see Acts 23:2-5; Exodus 22:28). But Jesus offers no apology, for he had not broken the law. Jesus challenged them to bring charges against him if he had spoken incorrectly (vs. 23), which of course they could not do, so they sent him to the Caiaphas, the ruling high priest.

18:25-27

John's account of Peter's denial is split up by the questioning of the high priest, giving the impression that Peter's time at the fire was drawn out. He had time to think, to process where he was, what he was doing and what he had said previously. The point is, Peter continued in his place. After so long into the night, Peter was still standing warming himself at the fire. We must conclude that he stayed there out of love for Jesus, but the place of love and devotion, and the place of Christian service can often be a place of greatest temptation and testing.

John's knowledge of the situation that evening is quite detailed. Peter had succumbed to his fear of the maid at the door (vs. 17), and to those gathered around the fire (vs. 25). Now a relative of Malchus, (the man whose ear Peter had cut off) asked Peter the same question. This reference to Malchus serves to heighten the inner weakness of a man who was so outwardly bold. Finally, Peter denied the third time, and he heard the rooster crow. No rooster's crow ever penetrated so deep into the heart of man like the rooster that morning. Peter had, for a third time made a verbal denial of his friendship with Jesus, and the pain of such a fall

burned deep, as Jesus looked at the fallen Peter (Luke 22:61).

18:28-32

It is around dawn on the Friday of the Passion Week. Peter is somewhere in the city weeping in repentance (Luke 22:62), while Judas has hanged himself, full of remorse but unrepentant (Matthew 27:3-10). It is Passover Week, and on that day, the day before the Sabbath, the Jews would slaughter a lamb and eat it after sunset. Ceremonial law forbids them entering Gentile or pagan house, so Pilate's praetorium, the headquarters of the Roman military governor, is out of bounds. The fact that John highlights this shows the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, who were already defiled in their condemnation of Jesus, but were careful over mere ritual cleanliness (See Jesus' condemnation of the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23, esp. vs. 25).

Pilate opened the enquiry with a question to the Jews; what accusation do you bring? He already knew this (Luke 23:2), but Pilate was treating this as a new trial, over which he as the Roman governor would preside. They were not interested in another trial and told Pilate that he had already been found guilty (vs. 30)—they simply wanted a death sentence. The Jews had the power to condemn a

man to death, but they needed Roman authority to carry out the death penalty, but Pilate would not go along with their conceit. If the Jews had the right to put a guilty party to death, they would be already stoning Jesus (Leviticus 20:27). But Jesus had already said what kind of death he would die (vs. 32; see also 3:14, 12:32,33).

18:33-40

The Jews have turned Jesus over to the Romans and called for the death penalty (vs. 31). The angle that the Jews had taken in their accusation against Jesus was clearly to stir the Roman fears of insurrection—they had accused him of, not just claiming to be the Christ (a Jewish problem), but also of misleading the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2). Pilate senses that something is a little strange about the whole situation, for it was unusual for the Jews to turn one of their own over to the Romans (see vs. 35).

Unable to throw Jesus' back onto the Jews (vs. 31), Pilate has a private interview with him (vss. 33-38). His line of reasoning was to determine whether Jesus posed a threat to Roman authority. Jesus indicated to Pilate that kingship, as the Jews spoke of (vs. 34), is not have the same idea of Kingship that Pilate might think of, and he develops this as

the questioning continues; "my kingdom is not of this world," and I am not a threat to the Roman authority (vs. 36). Pilate is satisfied that Jesus is not a treat, but it raises more questions in his own mind, perhaps scornfully; "so, you are a king" (vs. 37) and "what is truth" (vs. 38). Although his spiritual quest was not fulfilled, he could find no fault in Jesus and was willing to hand him over for release.

The Jews choose Barabbas over Jesus, because sin has so distorted humanity that men rather deal with social and personal insecurity than accept the reality of Jesus or trust the living God (vs. 40). Was this not the same principle that motivated the Israelites to want to return to Egypt (Numbers 11:5)?

19:1-16

There are several important layers to this story with immediate, universal, cosmic and eternal implications. **First**, the immediate and those involved think that the world revolves around them. The Jew's in their hatred of Jesus just want him to go away (vs. 15). He has interrupted their religious formalism. Pilate who thinks this is a mere Jewish squabble, is trying to find a compromise to release Jesus because he finds no fault in him (vss. 4, 6). Pilate's wife, who may have more insight that

anyone among them, has input, only adding to his turmoil (Matthew 27:19). Between a rock and a hard place, Pilate hoped that a flogging, which was a cruel and bloody affair, along with mockery, a pantomime of royal robes and thorny crowns, would satisfy the crowds (vss. 4-5, see also Luke 23:16). The Jews were thirst for his blood, crying "crucify him, crucify him," and now bringing the real reason for their call for his death, that Jesus had claimed to be God (vs. 6-7).

Another layer to this remarkable story is the sovereign purpose of God. Pilate thought he was the sovereign, that he had the power either to release or crucify (vss. 10-11). But Jesus told him that the final authority was from above, with God. Yes, Pilate was responsible, but those who handed him over (the Jews) had the greater sin (vs. 11).

There is another layer here however, and every detail plays into it—the royal robes, the crown of thorns, the spitting in his face (Matthew 27:30; Mark 15:19), the sign written for the cross, "king of the Jews" all fulfils the part that Jesus must endure as our Saviour, the Suffering Servant of the Lord (Psalm 22, Isaiah 50:6; 52:14-53:6), who bore the curse of thorns brought on by Adam's sin (Genesis 3:18).

19:17-27

We come now to the crucifixion of Jesus, long prophesied in the Old Testament by the prophets and in the types and figures. Here, in the first line we see two fulfilments; he "went out" (outside the camp, Leviticus 16:27; Hebrews 13:11-13), carrying "his own cross" (remember Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice, Genesis 22:1-6). This was a public Roman execution, so the title on the cross was written in three languages so that all could read: in Latin, Greek and Aramaic. Pilate has made a few remarkable statements (see 18:38; 19:5; 14-15; Matthew 27:22), and in the providence of God he declared to the world, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (vs. 19). What Pilate had written was indeed a fact, but the Jews did not accept it and asked that it be changed to "he said he was..." (vs. 21). Pilate refused (vs. 22).

The scene at the cross was busy; the chief priests arguing about the title, the soldiers casting lots for Jesus' clothes, revelling in the spoils of their work (23-24, see also Psalm 22:18), and the bystanders who had gathered to see the spectacle (Matthew 27:47). But among those who had gathered, there was a small group of faithful disciples, lonely in the crowd—a picture of what the Church must be in a revelling and unbelieving world (vs. 26-27). These

women who attended the crucifixion believed what Pilate had written, and in the confusion, they had rested their souls in their dying Saviour, as the "King of the Jews."

19:28-30

"After this..." show that Jesus had accomplished Father's will in every detail, and the prophecies of the Scripture (vs. 28). Although by all appearances, Jesus is defeated, yet he had carried the battle to the gate and even now in death he is the victor.

He cried "I thirst" (Psalm 22:15; 69:21) and was given vinegar on a sponge. The Romans kept vinegar at the crucifixions, some think to stop the bleeding and prolong the suffering, hence the sponge which could be applied to the wound. After receiving the sour wine (vinegar), Jesus bowed his head and "gave up his spirit" (vs. 30). The Scriptures tell us that "no man has power over his spirit or over the day of his death" (Ecclesiastes 8:8), but Jesus did. Jesus gave us his spirit willingly in an atoning death, for helpless humanity.

19:31-37

From the trial in Pilate's judgement hall when Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jews at 6.00am, the Jews

have been pursuing Jesus to the death, not just out of hatred, but ironically so that they might not violate their laws regarding the Sabbath. The Jews would commit murder for the sake of religious (Levitical) purity. Notice that John uses the Roman method of measuring time, from 12 midnight, whereas the Synoptic writers use the Jewish. We know from the other writers that Jesus died at 3.00 in the afternoon (vs. 30; Luke 23:44).

At any rate, all of this happened on Friday, "the day of preparation" for the Sabbath (vss. 14, 31), and according to Jewish law a body should not be left on a tree overnight (vs. 31, see also Deuteronomy 21:22-23). At 6.00pm the Passover week would begin, and the Jews wanted Jesus off the cross, so they sent a delegation to Pilate to speed up the process and break the legs of the victims. When the soldier came to Jesus, he discovered that Jesus was already dead, so rather than break his legs, the soldier thrust his spear into the side of Jesus piercing his heart and out flowed blood and water. It was the blood of our redemption that atoned for our sins and satisfied the justice of God.

All of this happened because the prophecies of the Old Testament must be fulfilled that Jesus' bones would not be broken (Psalm 22:16-17; 34:20), and they will look on him whom they have pierced

(Zechariah 12:10, see also Revelation 1:7). The Jewish leader saw this, just as well as John witnesses it, and they should be recognised these Old Testament passages.

19:38-42

Out of the shadows, fearful and nervous no doubt, we see Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus come to take the body of our Lord. Both these men were wealthy and well positioned and risked the disfavour of their peers, and perhaps their careers by taking this action. It was an act of faith.

It was also an act of generosity for the spices they brought were not cheap, but very costly and in large amounts. It was also an act of love for Jesus, and respect, that the body which had not been embalmed, would be perfumed for the grave. If these two men were prepared to do so much for a dead Jesus, should we not be willing to do so much more for a Jesus who lives in the power of an endless life and cannot die again (Hebrews 7:16).

20:1-10

John's account of the resurrection focuses on a series of appearances (to Mary Magdalene, vss. 11-

18; the disciples, vss. 19-23; Thomas, vss. 24-31). First, he brings us to the empty tomb.

We should visualise the servants or friends of Joseph and Nicodemus carrying the spices and preparing the body of Jesus to the tomb on the Friday evening. The Sabbath had interrupted their care for the body of Jesus, and so the women rushed to the tomb with more spices to anoint the body (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-12).

"They" (vs. 2), possibly the soldiers or the Jewish leaders had removed the stone and the body from the tomb, and the women rust to Peter and the other disciples (John), who in turn rush to the tomb. John ran ahead and looked in and "saw" the linen clothes, but Peter came and entered the tomb and "discerned" what had happened. Together in the empty tomb the two disciples believe that the body was not removed, but that he had risen from the dead.

20:11-18

What Peter and John believed, or how much they believed is unclear (vs. 8). They left the tomb without a word to the women, went back to their

homes (vs. 10, i.e., their lodgings) and later that evening met together behind locked doors (vs. 19).

Mary waited at the tomb weeping aloud (sobbing). The word is used four times in the text; twice the narrator tells us (vs. 11), once when the angel asked her, "why are you weeping" (vs. 13), and once when Jesus asked her (vs. 15). Mary was weeping because "they' had taken Jesus away, she did not know where he was (vs. 13), and she wanted to anoint his body and lay him to rest (vs. 15, Mark 16:1).

The appearance of Jesus to Mary and the other women (vss. 16-17) is one of the most heartwarming events recorded in Scripture, especially in the way Jesus identified with her (and us) – *"to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"* (vs. 17).

20:19-23

The overwhelming and controlling emotion in Mary's case was confusion (vs. 13), for Thomas it was doubt (vs. 25), but for the disciples it was fear. On the evening of that first Lord's Day, they had hidden themselves away and locked the doors (vs. 19). Yet in the case of all involved, they loved the Lord Jesus. In each case also, Jesus appeared to

relieve the pain of that emotional stress and to give clarity of thought by the assurance of his resurrection and the reality of his presence.

Jesus appeared, i.e. "stood among them" that evening to bring peace, purpose (vs. 21), and power (vss. 22-23). The power, or empowerment that Jesus promised (see vs. 23) was not an arbitrary power based on their own personal whim or choice. Only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7). This verse needs to be explained in the light of other Scriptures. On the authority of the Word of God and by the Spirit of God, the apostles (and believers today) confirm what God has already declared. The Church as a whole, judges (1 John 4:1-2), and declares those who are "within" the Church or without" (1 Corinthians 5:12; 2 Timothy 3:5).

20:24-31

Where Thomas was the week following the resurrection is unclear. He had declared his refusal to believe unless he could not only see but feel the wounds of Jesus (vs. 25).

This was a bold statement of unbelief and perhaps we could conclude that his absence on that first Lord's Day evening (vs. 24), and the eight-day gap

indicates some indifference. He certainly has not the zeal of Mary and the other women, or of Peter and John. At any rate, he is with the disciples on the second Lord's Day evening, and Jesus graciously appears again, and again declaring peace (vs. 26). But Jesus singled Thomas out that evening and invited him to look, touch and be convinced. What a gracious Saviour, who condescends to our weakness so that we might be convinced and believe, and this was the reason who John wrote—so that we might believe and have life (vs. 30-31).

Thomas' declaration of faith is equally bold and a great confession of the deity of Jesus Christ. Sincere and passionate as Thomas' confession was, Jesus leaves him (and us) with the important lesson that tangible evidence is not sufficient grounds for faith – "blessed are those [us] who have not seen and yet have believed" (vs. 29).

21:1-14

The summary and purpose statement in 20:30-31 serves as a fitting conclusion to the book, causing some scholars to think that this last chapter was written added by another author. Style and phraseology, however, indicates that John is the author of this last chapter, and the concluding

statement was coming of the back of Thomas's confession of the deity of Jesus for the purpose of highlighting the necessity of faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

At any rate, this paragraph continues the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. This difference here is that Jesus appears not to prove his resurrection, but to confirm his love for them (vss. 1-14) and the commission he had given them (vss. 15-19). Peter, no doubt still reeling from his denial (18:15-18) has been subdued since and decided to go fishing. Six of the other disciples take up his suggestion and go with him (vss. 1-3). The names of all the disciples is not known to us (21:2 "*and two others*").

In the morning when they have caught nothing, Jesus stood on the shore and called them. Jesus' presence with the disciples that morning (and with us still today) brought several surprising encouragements. First, gave them success in their work, although it was a distraction from the work they had previously been given (20:21). Second, he invited them for breakfast which he had prepared (vs. 12). The grilled fish was not their catch but provided by Jesus along with the bread, harking back to the feeding of the 5000 and looking forward to their work of feeding the Lord's flock.

21:15-19

After breakfast on the beach, Jesus entered a conversation with Peter. Perhaps Jesus used the name "Simon" to remind Peter that he was not quite the rock he thought he was, or as the name "Peter" suggests?

Jesus begins a line of questioning that draws Peter in; "do you love me more than these?" (vs. 15). The "these" by which Jesus draws the comparison could point to the other disciples, but most likely refers to the fish he has just caught, and which represented his life as a fisherman. Peter had previously told Jesus "I will lay down my life for you" (13:37) and now he was back at the fishing. It was a line of questioning intended to confirm his commitment to Jesus, even unto death (vs. 19), and since Peter had denied the Lord three times, so Jesus demanded a three-fold affirmation (vss. 15-17).

The verb that Jesus used for love was the word "agape" which is a love of choice and commitment. Peter replied with the verb "phileo" which is a love of affection. The different words identify different aspects of love; both are important. Was Peter's confidence so dented, or was it an indication of humility, that he could not or would not affirm his agape love to Jesus? And did Jesus condescend to

this weakness when he adopted Peter's word "phileo"?

Whatever level of love Peter had for Jesus or whatever intensity of that love; the commission given to Peter each time was the same. Jesus had previously used the image of "fisher of men" (Mark 1:17). Now he changes to the image of a shepherd with his flock; he is commissioned to "pasture my lambs" (vs. 15), "shepherd my sheep" (vs. 16) and "pasture my sheep" (vs. 17).

21:20-25

Does Peter's question about John indicate a distraction from the commission of Jesus, or was he seeking to deflect attention away from himself? Whatever the motivation behind the question, Jesus abruptly told him it was none of his business.

Peter had just been told that he would die a martyr's death (vs. 19), most likely under the persecution of Nero (AD 64/65). If John remained alive until Jesus returned, that was nothing to do with Peter. What Peter learned, and what we must learn and remind ourselves, is that we have each to obey the Lord. We must be like Jesus; focused on our own task (Hebrews 12:1-3) and should not

compare our lives or our ministries with other servants of God (see also Romans 14:4).