

The Bible Notebook

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

That you may know Him

(John 20:31)

Volume 7

Chapters 19-21

By

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DEDICATION

To

Dr. Paul Brown

Pastor, Bible Professor, Powerful Preacher,
College President
(Hannibal LaGrange, ret.)

We share favorite stories about our hometown
(Sledge, Mississippi)

About This Volume

This is the last of seven volumes in my series of verse-by-verse studies from the Gospel According to John. In Volume Six, there is a recap of the seven I AM sayings of Jesus, as well as the seven SIGNS which are recorded by “the disciple Jesus loved” (John). There is much more. There is the unusual structure, the clear details one expects from an eye-witness to events, and the stated evangelistic purpose of the Fourth Gospel. And still, there is more.

Throughout this series on the Gospel According to John every effort is made to keep both the opening declaration and the stated purpose of the Book in mind. The Prologue begins with the words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, HCSB). Everything else we find in the Fourth Gospel fits, hand in glove, between that statement and the purpose John provides for us: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (20:30-31).

Volumes IV and V (Chs. 10-12, and Chs. 13-15) begin with highlights or major themes of chapters 1-9. This volume will begin with a similar brief recap of chapters 1-12.

In Chapter One, there is the Prologue, in which we find a statement about Jesus that destroys all cults, all false religions, and all heresies, as well as atheism and agnosticism. Yes, this Gospel has been around two thousand years and we still have cults, false religions, heresies, atheism and agnosticism, but their demise has been assured, as has the reward for all who embrace them. John begins this Gospel with the words, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were created by Him, and without Him was not anything created that was created” (KJV). The first chapter proclaims Jesus to be life, light, Savior, the Lamb of God.

In Chapter Two, Jesus, through the First Sign, declares Himself to be the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. In Chapter Three, we read: “For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life” (my paraphrase). In Chapter Four, He says to the woman at the well in Samaria, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life”(John 4:13-14, HCSB). Also, in Chapter Four, we have the Second Sign, the healing of an official’s son from a distance.

In Chapter Five, we find the Third Sign, the healing of a man who had been sick for 38 years (on the Sabbath), as well His declaration about His relationship with His Father. He also offers witnesses who support His claim to be the Son of God. In Chapter Six, He feeds five thousand men, plus women and children with a child’s lunch (the Fourth Sign). That evening His disciples were caught in a violent storm in the middle of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus came to them, walking on the water (the Fifth Sign). The next day, He declared, “**I am the bread of life.**”

In Chapter Seven, Jesus went to the Temple privately, but in the middle of the Festival of

Tabernacles, He stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him” (7:37-38). Without saying it in so many words, He is saying that He is water of life. He continues to make statements that support the great claims set forth in the Prologue.

In Chapter Eight, Jesus masterfully deals with a crowd bent on trapping him by forcefully dragging into His presence a woman caught in the act of adultery. When the scribes and Pharisees sought to paint Him into a corner from which there was no escape, He brilliantly put the ball back in their court. When they gave up and left, He dismissed the woman with an order for her to “Go, and from now on do not sin any more” (8:11).

In Chapter Nine, Jesus gives the sixth sign, the healing of a man born blind, after He had dealt with the question: whose sins caused his blindness, his or his parents’? The Jewish religious authorities were enraged that Jesus made a paste of spittle and placed on the eyes of the blind man on the Sabbath Day. They questioned the man about the One who had healed him and “He answered, **‘Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know.** One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see.” (9:25, bold added by this writer). Wow! What a testimony.

Chapter Ten is very special for a number of reasons. First, Jesus makes two unforgettable “I AM” statements in this passage. He said, **“I am the door to the sheepfold,”** and then He declared, **“I am the Good Shepherd.”** Second, this chapter reveals that Jesus fulfills the hopes and promises of Psalm 23. Third, Jesus offers assurance of eternal security to every single person to whom He gives eternal life, whether they understand it or not (whether they believe it or not!). The Savior never announces anywhere that He will grant temporary life to anyone who believes in Him.

In Chapter Eleven, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after making another of those amazing I AM statements. He declared to Martha, **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** In Chapter Twelve, we have the anointing at Bethany by Mary and the Royal Entry (commonly called the Triumphant Entry). In Chapter 13, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and explained the significance of it. He then predicted His betrayal by Judas. Next, He gave them His new commandment, that they should love one another.

In Chapter 14, as a part of His Farewell Discourse, Jesus announced that He was going to the Father to prepare a place for His followers. He then declared, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** Also, in chapter 14, Jesus promised, “Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Also, Jesus promised that when He returned to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit to minister in and through true believers.

In Chapter 15, Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper.” He went on to explain that those who love Him are the ones who Obey Him. Jesus taught that the world hates Him because it hates the Father, and it will hate those who follow Him. He also taught them about the ministry of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. In Chapter 16, Jesus, continuing His Farewell Discourse, promises that when He returns to the Father He will send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit to indwell His disciples to empower them, guide them, instruct them, and comfort them.

Chapter 17 records the “high priestly” prayer of our Lord as He looks ahead to His arrest, trials, suffering, and crucifixion. He prays that He will glorify the Father, that the Father will glorify Him, and that the Father will protect those current disciples, as well as others who come to know the Lord through their witness. In Chapter 18, we read about the arrest, the religious trials, and the civil trials to which Jesus was subjected.

SPECIAL NOTE: As in the earlier volumes, all Scripture, unless otherwise noted, will be from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). I served two terms on the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, and before attending my first meeting I was notified that I had been assigned to the Broadman and Holman Committee, the committee that oversees the work of the B&H Division of Lifeway. In the first meeting, we voted to recommend to the full board that we would commit ourselves to this new word-for-word translation of the Bible.

The General Editor, Dr. Ed Blum, met with us to answer questions. As translations of the various books were completed B&H would mail the hard copy to committee members. I soon fell in love with the HCSB. I found it as easy to read as the NIV and other versions, and as accurate as the New American Standard Bible, whose publisher would not give us permission, either to print the whole Bible, or to print the Scripture from the NASB in our literature. I received copies of the first New Testament published by LifeWay, as well as copies of the first complete Bible when it was published. One other note should be helpful. Since this series was prepared with an Internet Web Site in mind, I wanted to make it as user-friendly as possible. Therefore, references and sources will be identified immediately following a quotation, rather than by chapter notes, end notes, and bibliography. The Holman Bible Dictionary is identified as [HBD]; A. T. Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament is identified by the initials in brackets [ATR]. The Bible Knowledge Commentary will be identified as [BKC]; The New American Commentary as [NAC], and The New Commentary on the Whole Bible as [NCWB]. And so on.

This will allow the reader to identify the source without having to leave the screen he or she is reading, go to another page, and then return. In an effort to keep this series “user-friendly” there will be a certain amount of repetition. I have stressed that, while my Bible Studies are identified as Commentaries by the host of a major web site, I have always thought of them as The Bible Notebook (or The Sanders Bible Notebook). My prayer is that you will read this material, improve on it, and use it for the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 19

Jesus Is Tortured and Mocked

19:1 - HAD HIM FLOGGED. “*Then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged.*” It helps here to go back to Chapter 18 to see what precipitated this flogging which was ordered by Pilate. There, John wrote:

“Then Pilate came out to them and said, **“What charge do you bring against this man?”** They answered him, “If this man weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have handed Him over to you.” So Pilate told them, “Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law.” **“It’s not legal for us to put anyone to death,” the Jews declared.** They said this so that Jesus’ words might be fulfilled signifying what sort of death He was going to die” (John 18:29-32, bold added by this writer).

These fanatical Jewish leaders had paid Judas to betray Jesus, and then they subjected Him to a series of three illegal religious trials before bringing Him to appear before Pilate, the Roman governor of the province. It was very early in the morning, and Pilate was obviously not happy about the circumstances behind the charges. One wonders if perhaps Pilate had rather have had those religious leaders flogged.

“The account of Jesus’ trial before Pilate is the longest in the four Gospels. Whereas the other three accounts deal largely with the legal charges, John’s narrative places more importance on Jesus’s concern with Pilate and Pilate’s shifting attitude. Its psychological portrait of Pilate is comparable to that of the Samaritan woman well at Sychar (John 4) or that of the blind man (ch. 9). The Johannine presentation makes it more of an interview than a trial, though some legal details are plainly described” [Merrill C. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE COMMENTARY, Regency, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p. 174].

Pilate questioned Jesus in his private quarters, but the Jewish leaders would not enter lest they become contaminated and forfeit their right to participate in one of the holiest religious festivals on the Jewish calendar. Pilate Jesus back out to stand before them and declared, “I find no grounds for charging Him” (John 18:38b). Those Jewish leaders had gathered together a large group of people who cried out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.”

There were no legitimate grounds for charging Jesus with a capital offense, so why not release him? Pilate was an experienced Roman governor and knew the charges were spurious, yet he would not release Jesus for fear that these Jews would cause trouble for him with Caesar. They could fire off letters accusing him of malfeasance in office. The basis for those charges would be that they had found a man who was trying to incite an insurrection and taken him to the governor, but Pilate set him free. What could he do to set Jesus, an innocent man, free without making matters worse with the Jewish leaders? He decided to have Jesus flogged.

F. F. Bruce (The Gospel of John, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983) offer a reasonable explanation of Pilate’s decision:

“Since Pilate decided that Jesus was not guilty of the sedition with which he had been charged, he hoped that His accusers would be content if he inflicted a lighter punishment (than crucifixion). The infliction of any punishment on one who had not committed any crime was an injustice, but ordinary provincials did not enjoy the

legal protection extended to Roman citizens. Pilate probably reckoned that Jesus had been indiscreet in his public appearances and needed to be taught a lesson. Here again John's narrative is in line with that of Luke, according to whom Pilate said to Jesus' accusers: "nothing deserving of death has been done by him" (Luke 23:1f). "The severest form of beating was not normally inflicted as a punishment by itself but a prelude to a crucifixion or the like; thus in Mark's passion narrative (15:15; cf. Matt. 27:26) Jesus is sentenced to be scourged and crucified. This latter scourging (*phragello*) was a murderous form a torture; the whips with which it was carried out were reinforced with sharp pieces of metal or bone which left the victim's body a bloody pulp, and it is not surprising that this treatment was sometimes sufficient in itself to cause death. If the flogging (*mastigoo*) of John 19:1 was designed to teach Jesus a lesson, it may have been less severe than that, but any beating carried out by Roman soldiers was brutal enough" [BRUCE: p. 358].

19:2 - A CROWN OF THORNS. "*The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and threw a purple robe around Him.*" Jesus, though pronounced innocent by Pilate, had been brutally beaten, so He would have been bleeding from the horrifying wounds to His back. Next came the indignity of a mock coronation.

All my life I have seen pictures which depict Jesus wearing the crown of thorns, and movies which show Roman soldiers weaving a crown from a thorn vine or limbs from a thorn bush and then placing it forcefully on Jesus' head. I may not have asked questions about that crown of thorns in my youth, but now I have some. First, why a crown of thorns rather than a crown made of something that would not inflict such pain. Second, where did they find the thorns? Of course, they must have been near by. It is not reasonable to assume they lost a lot of time, or energy looking for them. I recently mentioned this to my long-time friend Dr. Leon Hyatt and he said, "There would have been no problem finding thorns in Israel. There are thorns everywhere. There are long, hard thorns and there are various kinds of thorns of different lengths and sizes."

My third question is simply this: do you know how painful a thorn puncture can be? I do, and one thorn puncture in the hand can be very painful. I mentioned this to my wife and she says she has vivid memories of getting thorns in her feet when she was a little girl, and they really hurt. Think about the agony they inflicted upon Jesus with the crown of thorns. That crown of thorns was not simply laid upon His head, the points were forced into His scalp. It is reasonable to assume that when the soldiers struck them with their club of reeds the points actually scraped His skull.

ILLUSTRATION. I dedicated this volume to Dr. Paul Brown, who hails from my hometown of Sledge, Mississippi. Paul and I have something else in common. He and I both took art classes under Dr. Samuel M. Gore at Mississippi College. Paul belonged in those art classes; I did not. As I recall, after I had taken my required class or classes in art, I signed up for another class: Art Perspective. It didn't take long for me to realize I had no perspective, at least none that would help me make an "A" in that class, but that was all right. Sam was a friend. We had fished together, and I had helped him dig post holes when he bought the property where he built his house. Then a friend

announced that Dr. Gore had given Mrs. Gore a “C” in an art class! I realized at that time that I was going to have to earn whatever grade I got out of that class.

Sam Gore, who was Head of the Art Department at Mississippi College for 42 years, is a godly man and a student of the Word of God. For years, he went to churches and various other institutions and sculpted *The Head of Christ*, or one of his other sculptures before groups of people. He sculpted *The Head of Christ* for international audiences and even traveled to South America to lead people in worshipping Jesus as he sculpted one of his favorite pieces for them.

Those who want to see sculptures by Dr. Gore may go to the Mississippi Agriculture Center on Lakeland Drive in Jackson, MS, the Baptist Medical Center in Jackson, and the campus at Mississippi College, where his amazing sculpture of *Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples* is prominently placed near Provine Chapel. His bust of Senator John Stennis is displayed, I am told, at the Stennis Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

Dr. Paul Brown was there when they installed the second of his giant murals on the outside wall of one of the buildings at the Mississippi College School of Law in Jackson. I had gone to visit Dr. Gore when he was working on this amazing bronze relief, and Paul was there for the installation. I went to see it soon after it was installed.

I have had the privilege of sitting down with Dr. Gore and listened as he explained why he made some of his key decisions as he was working on *The American Laborer*: “I had to take the left hand off and make it larger because the hand that holds the Bible should not be a wimpish hand.” Look at *The American Laborer* at the Mississippi Agricultural Center in Jackson and you will see that hand holding a Bible. His model was his father, the late Brother John Gore, who baptized my father. After enrolling at Mississippi College, I talked often with Bro. John Gore.

I have an oil painting by Sam Gore hanging on the wall over my desk. It is a painting of a cotton gin he painted in 1975 at Rolling Fork, MS. I first saw it hanging on a wall in his home, and having grown up on a cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta, I had an appreciation for the gin, the John Deere tractor, and the big cotton trailer parked on the scales. After it was weighed someone would use the large pipe that was lowered over the trailer to “suck” the cotton off the trailer. He gave that painting to my son John to give to me because he had seen that I liked it.

I also have a picture of Sam Gore as he worked on *The Head of Christ* during a worship service in our church. I have that picture under glass on my home desk, where it has been for years. It was larger than the sculptures he normally makes before firing them in a kiln. The reason for that, I assume, is that a large audience can see his work. Why do I write so much about Dr. Sam Gore and his sculptures? For one thing, he is very meticulous, and he makes his work as authentic and close to the Scripture as possible.

With that in mind, I have gone back and studied two sculptures of *The Head of Christ* with the crown of thorns. The first one he did for me years ago was given to a Methodist church after a piece from

the back of the head he had sculptured for me cracked while it was being fired. He said, "The people from the church showed up with a check and I gave them your sculpture!" He did another one and there was a little problem with it, so he "improved his technique" eventually delivered another one to me.

What I discovered when I compared the picture and the two sculptures is that he included a distinct vine and long limbs on the larger one he did for our worship service. He did several sculptures for me at two different churches and I have not compared them, but as I recall, the ones I witnessed had relatively long thorns. If driven into the head with enough force they might have killed a person, but that was not what the soldiers had in mind. The sculpture in my living room has the crown of thorns, but the thorns are woven close to the head and the points do not stick out very far. The reason for that is obvious - even to me. The long thorns could easily be broken.

Any head injury can be very painful and a crown of thorns pushed onto a person's head would be excruciating. The soldiers intended it to be painful. Remember that back in Rome their countrymen were being entertained by gladiators who were slaying lawbreakers. In time, audiences would be entertained as half-starved lions killed and devoured Christians. Conjectures have been offered as to the species of thorn used to make the crown. Bruce notes that the crown of thorns may have a date palm, "which were well adapted for the imitation of a 'radiate crown' such as oriental god-kings were depicted on coins as wearing" [Bruce, F. F., *The Gospel of John*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 359 - after this, BRUCE].

That which was taking place brings to mind the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. It was brutal from the very first, but it was about to get a lot worse. We shall see that Pilate announced that he found Jesus innocent of the charges the Jewish leaders had brought against him, yet he permitted this torture, and then ordered him scourged. Why would he do that? We shall see.

A PURPLE ROBE. The mock coronation continues as the Roman soldiers have their fun with Jesus. The flogging was not enough, nor was the crown of thorns. Now, the mockery becomes more intense as they take a purple robe and put it on Him. "According to Matthew 27:28, they first stripped him of his own outer garment. For other forms of mockery inflicted on Jesus, see Matthew 27:29" [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, NT, QuickVerse Bible Library, Parsons Technology, after this, NCWB].

19:3 - HAIL, KING OF THE JEWS! "*And they repeatedly came up to Him and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and were slapping His face.*" Remember that Pilate has announced to the High Priest and to the chief priests that he found Jesus innocent of the charges they had brought against Him. When they persisted in demanding that Jesus be crucified, Pilate, apparently in an effort to pacify their demand for the death penalty, ordered Jesus brutally scourged. That was followed by a mock coronation as the soldiers draped a purple robe around His bloody, lacerated back. Then they "repeatedly" (imperfect middle, showing repeated action), came to Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They were mocking Him by saluting Him as they would salute Caesar. One after another, they hailed Jesus as "King of the Jews!", and as they did so they slapped His face. The purpose in striking Jesus with their hands was to insult Him [Strachan, R. H., *The Fourth Gospel*, Student Christian

Movement Press, London, 1955, p. 315 - after this, STRACHAN].

This was brutal and they kept on doing it, both with Pilate's approval and with his announcement that Jesus was innocent of any crime that would merit crucifixion. We must remember that this extreme torture was not normally carried out against one who was not condemned to be crucified. In this case, according to various commentaries, Pilate, having announced that he found Jesus innocent of the charges, probably sought to satisfy the Jews by such brutal treatment. They, however, were not about to be satisfied with anything short of His death. It has also been suggested that the Jews were always complaining about the abuse to which Roman authorities subjected the Jews who came before the authorities. They may have complained when the soldiers abused others, but they wanted Jesus dead.

19:4 - PILATE WENT OUTSIDE AGAIN. *“Pilate went outside again and said to them, ‘Look, I’m bringing Him outside to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging Him.’”* Pilate was the Roman governor for the province, and as such he was despised by the Jews, and there can be little doubt that the animosity was reciprocal. Both Pilate and his Roman soldiers hated the Jews. He does not hesitate to mock them and their beliefs by parading Jesus before them wearing the purple robe and mock crown. He still insists that, “I find no grounds for charging Him.”

Interestingly, while some writers sense that Pilate is mocking the Jews, others suggest that “Pilate could not help being moved by this gross travesty of justice, so for the second time he attempted to unburden his feeling of guilt by pronouncing Jesus not guilty (see 18:38)” [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, QuickVerse Electronic Library, Parsons Technology - after this, NCWB].

“No indication had been given earlier in John concerning the release time of Barabbas, but if he was still in custody at that time of the call to ‘crucify’ Jesus (cf. the brief summary statements in Matt 27:21-22; Mark 15:11-13; Luke 23:18-21), then the contrast of the villain Barabbas and the nonviolent, mocked king here would have been exceedingly ironic.

“When Pilate came out of the Praetorium again to face the crowd of Jews who did not want to defile themselves, he must have thought that the sight of the emaciated looking Jesus would have been sufficient to justify his desire to release Jesus. What problem could such a pathetic figure engender among these rebellious Jews? Surely he was harmless. Pilate's forceful introduction of Jesus in ‘Here is the Man!’ is therefore loaded with sarcasm toward the Jews. Undoubtedly, however, John found this statement to be a powerful, ironic theological announcement that Christianity has preserved in its Latin form of *Ecce Homo*. As such it is also a theological affirmation that Jesus was indeed ‘the man,’ the second Adam, God’s Son, who dealt with the sin of the world introduced through the first Adam (cf. Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:22) Pilate’s second verdict was once again a declaration of innocence, namely, ‘I find no legal ground for the charge against him!’ Case closed? Not quite” [Gerald L. Borchet, *The Gospel of John*, The New American Commentary, The Bible Navigator,

Pilate Sentences Jesus to Death

19:5 - HERE IS THE MAN. *“Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Here is the man!’”* Pilate had gone out to announce to the Jewish leaders and to the crowd that he found no guilt in Jesus. Then, he apparently motioned to the soldiers who brought Jesus out so they could see his deplorable condition. There Jesus stood before the Jewish religious authorities and the crowd they had assembled, wearing a blood soaked purple robe and a crown of thorns. Blood must have been running down his face and neck from the thorns.

Once again, “Pilate’s attempt to free Jesus by an appeal to the crowd missed the mark. Their taste for His blood was beyond recall. Pilate’s words, **Here is the Man!** (KJV, ‘BEHOLD THE MAN!’ LATIN, *Ecce homo*) have become famous. It is strange that several of Pilate’s statements have become immortal. Jesus by that time must have appeared as a pathetic figure, bloody and **wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe**” [The Bible Knowledge Commentary, QuickVerse Electronic Bible Library, Parsons Technology - after this, BKC., bold in the original]. Pilate sincerely believes Jesus is innocent, and he does not want to give into the pressure being applied by the leaders of the Sanhedrin. It is possible that he is trying to go over the heads of the religious leaders to appeal to the crowd.

19:6 - CHIEF PRIEST AND TEMPLE POLICE. *“When the chief priests and the temple police saw Him, they shouted, ‘Crucify! Crucify!’ Pilate responded, ‘Take Him and crucify Him yourselves, for I find no grounds for charging Him.’”* Caiaphas was the high priest at this time and the “chief priests” may have included certain members of the high priest’s family and former high priests.

CRUCIFY! CRUCIFY! Many people are familiar with the Authorized Version: “they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*”, but we need to remind ourselves that the word “him” is italicized in order to show that the word was not in the original. The word was a scribal addition to help the reader understand the meaning. Robertson helps with the Greek construction: “Crucify him, crucify him (staurôson, staurôson). First aorist active imperative of staurôô for which verb see Mat 27:31, etc. **Here the note of urgency (aorist imperative) with no word for ‘him,’** as they were led by the chief priests and the temple police till the whole mob takes it up (Mat 27:22)” [Word Pictures in the New Testament, after this, ATR, bold added by this writer]. “The Jewish leaders displayed their hatred of Jesus and **shouted** for His death. Crucifixion was a shameful death, usually reserved for criminals, slaves, and especially revolutionaries” [BKC, bold in the original].

The chief priests and temple police wanted Jesus dead. They did not want Him scourged, mocked, or sentenced to prison. They wanted Him condemned by the Roman governor who has the authority to sentence him to die on a cross. These Jewish religious authorities were demanding that the Roman governor sentence a fellow Jew to die on the cross and they had a crowd of people with them to insist that He be crucified. This is hardly a position one would expect the chief priests and temple police

to take. Such was their hatred for Jesus, and fear of losing their authority over their fellow Jews.

PILATE RESPONDED. John recorded Pilate's response: "Take Him and crucify Him yourselves, for I find no grounds for charging Him." Of course, Pilate knew these people had no authority to crucify anyone. "Pilate was so moved by the lynching scene before him that he dared the Jewish leaders to usurp the exclusive Roman authority of capital punishment by crucifying their innocent captive themselves. The Jewish leaders were too shrewd to fall into this trap of forensic usurpation, however" [NCWB].

The powerful Roman governor is mocking the subjected people. They are trying to paint him into a corner and he is pushing back. They hate Gentiles, but their hatred for their Roman captors was particularly intense. Pilate knows that so he reminds them in a humiliating manner that whatever power they think they have is limited to Jewish religious matters.

19:7 - WE HAVE A LAW. *"We have a law," the Jews replied to him, "and according to that law He must die, because He made Himself the Son of God."* It would be easy for an uninformed reader to miss both the drama of the moment that was being played out between the chief priests and Pilate, and the intense animosity that existed between the Jewish leaders and their Roman masters. The chief priests and temple police want Jesus put to death and they will accept nothing less than that. Pilate has repeatedly told them he found no basis for the charges against Jesus, but these religious leaders react by pressing Pilate more intensely to crucify Jesus. The crowd which they had with them continued to shout for Pilate to crucify Jesus.

Now, rather than accusing Jesus of insurrection against Rome they accuse him of breaking a Jewish law. That was not likely to impress a Roman governor under most circumstances, but these people could swamp Caesar with letters charging Pilate with wilfully neglecting a Galilean insurrectionist, even after they brought Him to the governor's attention. Pilate must have felt that he could not simply ignore the charges they were bringing against Jesus, but he didn't want it to appear that he was giving in to them. You will remember the earlier interplay between Jesus and the religious leaders when He declared, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They angrily protested, "We are descendants of Abraham...and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can You say, 'You will become free'?" (John 8:32-33). Robertson notes that "At that very moment the Jews wore the Roman yoke as they had worn that of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Alexander, the Ptolemies, the Syrian (Seleucid) kings. They had liberty for a while under the Maccabees" [ATR].

HE MUST DIE. That was according to the law of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16) which called for death, if it could be proven. The blasphemy to which they appealed was Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.

"About the same time Pilate's wife sent him strange words: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent Man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of Him" (Matt. 27:19) [BKC].

Pilate was fed up with these Jewish leaders who refused to acknowledge the fact that they were at this moment wearing the yoke of Rome. They were increasingly pushing their demand that Jesus be crucified. Nothing else would satisfy them. After all, Caiaphas had declared that it would better for

one man to die than for the wrath of Rome to fall upon all of them. Borchet writes:

“In complete frustration with Pilate's manipulation, the Jews blurted out their real concern. It reminds one of Adam's impulsive admission to God that he knew he was naked and thus his disobedience was uncovered (cf. Gen 3:10). The charge of treason against Jesus was a Jewish sham, created to obtain a Roman sentence of death against him. But now their real concern was clear. The Jews refused to accept the fact that Jesus claimed to have a direct relationship with God, and therefore they interpreted his statements as though he ‘made’ himself the Son of God. The nuance in the meaning is slightly different. There is no doubt that Jesus made such a claim, but the evangelist would never say that Jesus made himself the Son of God because his repeated claim was that he served God as God's agent (cf. John 5:30, etc.).

“This new charge was the actual one the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mark 14:61-64) indicate was leveled against Jesus in the hearing before Caiaphas: a charge of blasphemy and not a charge of treason. But it clearly reflects the Jewish concern with Jesus not only of working on the Sabbath but more pointedly of being ‘equal with God’ (John 5:18). In Lev 24:16 blasphemy against the name of the Lord was regarded as extremely serious and punishable by stoning. For the Jews, Jesus had violated the law even though he had earlier countered their charges by calling Moses to his defense (John 5:45-47; 7:17). But they were not receptive to his arguments earlier, and they continued adamant here. They had earlier tried to stone Jesus for what they considered to be the current charge (cf. John 10:31-33), but he had escaped from them (10:39). They were obviously determined that it would not happen again. But the new charge had a striking affect on the governor” [NAC].

John Morris wrote the following article for *Days of Praise*, a daily devotional publication sent out to subscribers on the Internet by The Institute for Creation Research. The article, “Our Sins”, was published on September 4, 2010.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

As Christ hung on the cross, the Jewish leaders felt that He was guilty of blasphemy--a mere man, claiming to be God. In short, they felt that He was dying for His own sins. Their tragic misconceptions, however, were predicted centuries before, as recorded in the treasured 53rd chapter of Isaiah: ‘We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. . . . we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted’ (vv. 3-4).

“But not so! God did not punish Him for His sins, but for ours. ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities’ (v. 5). ‘For the transgression of my people was he stricken’ (v. 8).

“The penalty for sin has always been death, and even though ‘he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him’ (vv. 9-10). He was the perfect ‘offering for sin’ (v. 10) and ‘he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors’ (v. 12). Justice has been served! ‘He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many’ (v. 11).

“Furthermore, through His death, even our griefs have been borne and our sorrows carried (v. 4). In addition to all this, our peace has been gained through His chastisement and our healing has been accomplished with His stripes (v. 5).

“Such considerations can drive us only to the most complete prostration of wonder and amazement. Necessitated because ‘all we like sheep have gone astray,’ God’s justice has been satisfied, because Christ, in love, has taken upon Himself ‘the iniquity of us all.’ As in the hymn: ‘Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all’ [Dr. John D. Morris, President of *The Institute for Creation Research*]

19:8 - MORE AFRAID. “*When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever.*” How could their most recent charge have made Pilate, the governor, with the backing of the mighty Roman empire behind him have been frightened by this charge? The answer is probably neither simple, nor logical. He was the Roman governor and he would not have been afraid to use his army to control any kind of uprising. At the same time, he was a pagan and as such he had been conditioned from childhood to fear many gods. He was a superstitious pagan and the thought of coming under the wrath of some unseen god was disturbing to him. “The Jews’ charge of blasphemy backfired, for Pilate was now frightened rather than angered. What the Jewish officials were too blind to see, the Roman governor sensed intuitively—that the quiet captive in his presence was a truly unique Personality among men” [NCWB]. Borchet has written:

“Although there had been no indication of Pilate having fear prior to this verse, there was obviously still something that had been unsettling in the entire event for him. Now the words ‘Son of God’ produced a much more disturbing feeling. These words might not have put fear in the heart of a Jew, but for a superstitious Roman the situation may have been radically different. Indeed, Matthew apparently delighted in detailing elements of the *mysterium tremendum* in his testimony concerning Jesus, for he includes details like the opening of the tombs when the bodies of holy people rose after the death of Jesus (Matt 27:52-53), the great earthquake, and the descent of a lightning-like angel at the opening of Jesus’ tomb (28:2-3). In his parallel account of the hearing, Matthew included an intriguing note concerning Pilate’s wife warning her husband to cease and desist from his judgment of this righteous or innocent man because of an unsettling dream she had (Matt 27:19).

“Although John does not detail the full causes leading up to Pilate's greater fear here, the fact that Jesus could have been some sort of divine man obviously further unnerved him. Like all Romans, whose lives were bound up with the Pantheon and who had heard of stories about the gods visiting the earth in human form, the thought of a god-man in his presence would not have been welcomed for Pilate, even if he was not a religious person” [NAC].

A number of other commentaries agree. Here is an example:

“The Romans and Greeks had numerous myths about the gods coming to earth as men (note Acts 14:8-13), so it is likely that Pilate responded to the phrase ‘Son of God’ with these stories in mind. Already the governor had been impressed by the words and demeanor of our Lord; he had never met a prisoner like Him before. Was He indeed a god come to earth? Did He have supernatural powers? No wonder Pilate was starting to be afraid! Also, Pilate’s wife had sent him a strange message that he should have nothing to do with Jesus (Matt. 27:19). Jesus had even come into her dreams!”[Wilmington’s Guide to Bible Knowledge: The Life of Christ; QuickVerse electronic library, Parson’s Technology - after this, WILMINGTON]

19:9 - ASKED JESUS. *“He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus did not give him an answer.”* Commentaries, for the most part, skip the statement that Pilate went back into his headquarters, the Praetorium, to ask Jesus this question. We must remember that the chief priests, temple police, and the crowd they had recruited would not set foot in the home or office of a Gentile at this holy season. When Pilate asked Jesus where he was from, he was definitely not asking what country or province Jesus was from because he knew He was from Galilee (Luke 23:6).

JESUS DID NOT GIVE HIM AN ANSWER. This has no doubt caused a lot of questions over the years. Why, if Jesus came to declare Himself to be the Savior, did he not answer Pilate’s question. His refusal to answer Pilate fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7. “The silence of Jesus, like that before Caiaphas (Mark 14:61; Mat 26:63) and Herod (Luke 23:9), irritates the dignity of Pilate in spite of his fears” [ATR]. Clarke adds, “He had already told him that his kingdom was not of this world; and that he came to erect a spiritual kingdom, not a temporal one: John 18:36, 37. This answer he deemed sufficient; and he did not choose to satisfy a criminal curiosity, nor to enter then into any debate concerning the absurdity of the heathen worship” [CLARKE].

19:10 - YOU ARE NOT TALKING TO ME. *“So Pilate said to Him, ‘You’re not talking to me? Don’t You know that I have the authority to release You and the authority to crucify You?’* This response from Pilate is strong, tantamount to charging the prisoner with contempt of court, according to Robertson: “Unto me (emoi). Emphatic position for this dative. It amounted to contempt of court with all of Pilate's real ‘authority’ (exousia), better here than ‘power’ [ATR]

A logical question here is why did Jesus not answer Pilate’s question? One writer offers the opinion that it was “Because He had already answered it (John 18:36-37). It is a basic spiritual principle that God does not

reveal new truth to us if we fail to act on the truth we already know. Furthermore, Pilate had already made it clear that he was not personally interested in spiritual truth. All he was concerned about was maintaining peace in Jerusalem as he tried to expedite the trial of Jesus of Nazareth. Pilate did not deserve an answer!" [WILMINGTON]. That may be true, but we must also remember that Jesus is not trying to evade the cross, He is committed to it.

19:11 - YOU WOULD HAVE NO AUTHORITY. *"You would have no authority over Me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above. This is why the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin."* Pilate must have been surprised at this response. He had just challenged Jesus for not answering him and now that Jesus does answer him there could be no doubt that Jesus did not fear Pilate. Pilate was the Roman governor and according to the law of Rome he definitely had power over any prisoner. Yet, Jesus states a divine truth to which governors, kings, and politicians of every generation should give careful consideration. Both Peter (1 Peter 2) and Paul (Romans 13) stress that we are to submit to the authorities because God has ordained a law and order society for the protection and provisions of citizens. Pilate, though he did not understand it, had "no power against Jesus, for Jesus lived and died according to the divine authority" [NCWB].

THE ONE WHO HANDED ME OVER TO YOU HAS THE GREATER SIN. This shows clearly that "there are varying degrees of human guilt in the sight of God (cf. Matt. 12:39-42)" [NCWB]. One writer asks, "In this statement was Jesus referring to Judas, Satan, Caiaphas, the priests, or the Jewish people? Perhaps Caiaphas is the best choice since he is the one who handed Jesus over to Pilate. Pilate was guilty (cf. the words in the Apostles' Creed, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'). But Jesus put more weight on Caiaphas as the responsible one (cf. John 11:49-50; 18:13-14)" [BKC].

Some have suggested that Jesus had Judas in mind here, but that is doubtful as far as this writer is concerned. The Borchet agrees:

"Yet Judas--although he certainly was a 'deliverer' (12:4; 18:5), a devil-man (6:70; 13:27), and a thief (12:6)--did not technically deliver Jesus to Pilate. Bernard notes that it is remarkable that it is not told anywhere that Judas bore 'witness' against Jesus and that after Gethsemane he no longer is part of the story. That deliverance was technically done from Annas (18:24) to Caiaphas and on to Pilate (18:28,30). Moreover, it was Caiaphas, the 'high priest that year,' who issued the judgment following the popular raising of Lazarus that Jesus had to die and who also plotted to have him killed (11:49-53). Given this Jewish conspiracy, a number of commentators have argued that the deliverer must have been the Jewish hierarchy. Brown considers that John attributes the 'greater sin' to 'the Jewish nation and the chief priests,' and Haenchen joins him in assigning guilt more generally to 'the Jews.' Beasley-Murray, Morris, and Carson argue that the deliverer is singular and should refer to Caiaphas. In selecting this option they are following a long tradition that includes Westcott, who opined that while Pilate was guilty, the high priest was 'doubly guilty, both in using wrongfully a higher (spiritual) power and in transgressing his legitimate rules of action.' Some may tend to disagree on the issue of legitimate priestly procedure for the Sanhedrin, but **the probability is that the deliverer referred to here is the high priest.**

"The impact of Jesus upon Pilate must have been considerable because with some degree of emboldened determination Pilate returned to the crowd outside the praetorium" [NAC, bold added by this writer].

19:12 - PILATE MADE EVERY EFFORT. *“From that moment Pilate made every effort to release Him. But the Jews shouted, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!’”* Why is it that Pilate, the Roman governor, could not simply dismiss the charges and release the prisoner? He might have done that; he had the authority to do it, but as we have seen already these Jewish religious leaders knew how to create problems for the Roman governor. All they had to do was write to Caesar and accuse Pilate of malfeasance in office, incompetence, or a deliberate miscarriage of justice. These chief priests did not want to bring the wrath of Rome down on them but they knew they could make matters uncomfortable for Pilate.

NOT CAESAR’S FRIEND. They shouted, “You art not Caesar's friend.” “Later to Vespasian this (friend to Caesar) was an official title, ‘here simply a daring threat to Pilate...Caesar brooks no rival. Jesus had allowed himself to be acclaimed king of Israel in the Triumphal Entry (John 12:13; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38). The Sanhedrin have caught Pilate in their toils” [ATR].

Pilate sought to free Jesus but the chief priests, temple priests, and their supportive crowd returned to the first charge: insurrection. They charged that Jesus claimed to be a king. Pilate saw no evidence to support the charge of insurrection, and he had been frightened when the Jews charged Jesus with claiming to be a god. That charge was disturbing, but it did not merit crucifixion. Making Himself a king would set himself in opposition to Caesar. This was not a charge Pilate could take lightly, because “The Roman emperor then on the throne was exceedingly jealous and tyrannical, and the fear of losing his favour induced Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands” [BOUNDS]. Tiberius was the Roman emperor at this time, and “he was sick, suspicious, and often violent. Pilate had plenty to cover up and he did not want an unfavorable report to go to his boss. If he had to choose between showing his loyalty to Rome or siding with a despised and strange Jew, there was no question in his mind. The dilemma had to be resolved so Pilate made the official decision” [BKC].

19:13 - WHEN PILATE HEARD. *“When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge’s bench in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Hebrew Gabbatha).”* At first, Pilate had taken Jesus into his headquarters to ask where he had come from, and now he takes Him back outside to appear before the chief priests of the Jews. Robertson notes that Pilate “Took his seat upon the bēma’ (the raised platform for the judge outside the palace as in Acts 7:5). The examination is over and Pilate is now ready for the final stage” [ATR]. When Pilate heard the Jewish religious leaders shout that he was no friend to Caesar if he let Jesus go, he began to cower. He had found no fault in him, but if it came down justice for Jesus or safety for Pilate, the Roman governor could be counted on to cover his own tracks.

STONE PAVEMENT. Pilate not only had a seat in his headquarters, and probably in a court room, he had a judgment seat out on this raised area above those who gathered there, but refused to enter the house, court, or headquarters of a Gentile on a holy day. The pavement, according to Barnes, “was an area or room of the judgment-hall whose floor was made of small square stones of various colours. This was common in palaces and houses of wealth and splendour” [BARNES].

GABBATHA. The word Gabbatha, John tells us, was a Hebrew word. In reality, it was a word borrowed from their long ago captors, the Babylonians: it was “The Chaldean name Gabbathâ, an elevation, was apparently given because of the shape” [ATR].

19:14 - PREPARATION DAY FOR THE PASSOVER. *“It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about six in the morning. Then he told the Jews, ‘Here is your king!’”* It was preparation day “of the passover (paraskeuê tou pascha). That is, Friday of passover week, the preparation day before the Sabbath of passover week (or feast). See also verses John 19:31, 42; Mark 15:42; Mat 27:62; Luke 23:54 for this same use of paraskeuê for Friday. It is the name for Friday today in Greece” [ATR]. Clarke expands this somewhat by noting that it was

“the time in which they were just preparing to kill the paschal lamb. Critics differ widely concerning the time of our Lord’s crucifixion; and this verse is variously understood. Some think it signifies merely the preparation of the Sabbath; and that it is called the preparation of the passover, because the preparation of the Sabbath happened that year on the eve of the Passover. Others think that the preparation of the Sabbath is distinctly spoken of in John 19:31, and was different from what is here mentioned. Contending nations may be more easily reconciled than contending critics” [CLARKE].

SIX IN THE MORNING. No explanation is needed when we read this in the Holman Christian Standard Bible, but the New King James has “about the sixth hour”, which is confusing unless we distinguish between Roman time and Jewish time. Roman time, it was about 6:00 A.M. when Pilate rendered his final decision. “Mark (Mark 15:25) notes that it was the third hour (Jewish time), which is 9 A.M. Roman time, when the crucifixion began. Why should John give Jewish time writing at the close of the first century when Jerusalem and the Jewish state passed away in A.D. 70? He is writing for Greek and Roman readers” [ATR]. Robertson is right. John was writing this account some sixteen years after Jerusalem fell to Roman General Titus in A. D. 70, and perhaps a generation after the first of the Synoptics had been written. Robertson did not comment on the difference between John’s timing and Mark’s time. It is understandable that if Pilate gave the order at 6:00 A. M. it would take three hours for the Roman soldiers to get ready, for Jesus to carry His cross to Golgotha, and for them to nail Him and two thieves to their respective crosses, and then raise them and drop the crosses into the existing holes prepared for that purpose.

Some New Testament scholars tell us that this time tells us that all three hearings before the Jewish authorities (Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) were held in violation to Jewish law. They not only had those hearings during the night or early morning hours, they had taken Jesus to Pilate very early in the morning. Pilate had heard the charges, had Jesus scourged, mocked, ridiculed, shamefully abused, and tortured, before he took Jesus back out before the Jewish leaders on at least two occasions to insist that he found no basis for the charges against Him.

HERE IS YOUR KING! One can sense Pilate’s sarcasm as he announced, “Here is your king.” The sarcasm is directed at the chief priest and the others who were there to support them, and not at

Jesus. They had pushed him, in spite of his declaration that he found no basis for accusing Jesus of any crime that should merit crucifixion. Still they insisted, and here is an “in your face” retort. The Jewish leaders hated him and he shows here that he hated then and detested having to deal with them.

19:15 - CRUCIFY HIM! *“But they shouted, “Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests answered.”* When I was a student at Mississippi College, I took a class in Speech under Miss Nellie McGhee, one of the most humble, gracious, and dedicated ladies I have ever known. I don’t remember the title of the class but the focus was interpretive reading of the Bible and it may have been, Oral Interpretation of the Bible. After reading a passage, the student was often subjected to a series of questions: “Joseph was taxed with Mary...?” The Scripture came alive when she read it. When I read this verse I wonder how Miss Nellie would read it. If every pastor followed her advice he would read the text for his sermon aloud several times before reading it on Sunday morning.

Since 1979, when we first witnessed the scene of the take over of the American Embassy in Iran by “Students”, we have been treated to enraged crowds demanding one thing or another: death to Jews, death to Americans, and more recently, death to Slamon Rushdee. They put the Vietnam War demonstrators in California to shame. While there was no effort to take over Pilate’s headquarters, this crowd, spurred on by the chief priests, kept shouting back at the Roman governor, “Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!”

Let us be clear about one thing here. This Jewish crowd, and their leaders, were grounded in the Law and the Prophets, not in the pagan Koran. They had been led by the chief priests to believe they were serving Yahweh by demanding the death of Jesus. They were under the yoke of Rome so they knew they must not break Roman law. There was a limit to how far they could go. There would be no looting, no attacks on Roman soldiers, no one was burned in effigy, no fire bombs were being thrown. The difference between religious background and values of this Jewish crowd and modern day Muslim riots are almost beyond description. However, the emotions were very real, and the determination to see Jesus crucified brings some of those pictures to mind.

PILATE SAID. The Roman governor had been pushed into a corner by the charges brought against Jesus by the chief priests. They, the temple police, and their prepared crowd hated Pilate, they hated all Romans, all Gentiles. At the same time, there was no other way to have Jesus crucified than to bring charges against Him when they appeared before Pilate. This is one of those verses I would like to hear Miss Nellie McGhee read. Better yet, I would like to hear her question my roommate about how well he captured the emotions of the moment. I would not like to have her question me, however. When she questioned my roommate, Ernie Sadler, I would whisper facetious answers to him. Miss Nellie asked, “Mr. Sadler, what is a manger?” He answered, “A horse trough, Johnny said.” I expected her to say something to me but she didn’t.

I can picture a sneer on Pilate’s face and hear the bitter resentment in his voice as he asked, “Should I crucify your king?” They had pushed him into pronouncing the death sentence against Jesus. They had rejected his effort to release Jesus by demanding that Barabbas be set free rather than Jesus. His

authority had been challenged and his position used against him. He hated that, and he hated them. This question was a slap in the face of every member of this crowd, and possibly more so to their leaders.

WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR! This was the response of the chief priests, who hated Caesar as well as the governor. Yet, they would use Caesar's name and the Pilate's authority to have the Son of God crucified. I know a Jewish attorney who told my brother that when he was growing up in New Orleans other boys would call him "Christ killer." That is certainly no way to convince a Jew that Jesus loves him. It is also bad theology. The crowd, we should remember, that shouted, "Crucify Him!", was not the same crowd that shouted "Hossana" to Him during His Royal Entry a few days earlier. All Jews did not crucify Jesus. All Romans did not crucify him. Who crucified Jesus? You and I did. I once heard Adrian Rogers say that Dr. R. G. Lee once joined a tour group that went to the Holy Land. When they came to Golgotha, the Jewish tour guide asked, "Has any one of you ever been here before?" Dr. Lee raised his hand. The tour guide asked, "When were you here?" Dr. Lee, in his rich South Carolina drawl, said, "Two thousand years ago."

19:16 - HE HANDED HIM OVER. *"So then, because of them, he handed Him over to be crucified. Therefore they took Jesus away."* Because of the demands of the chief priests and the shouts, "Crucify Him," from the crowd they had assembled for that purpose, Pilate, ever the politician and ever looking out for his personal interests, handed Jesus over to "them", meaning the soldiers, to be crucified. Pilate had made up his mind in the last few minutes, even though he had already pronounced him not guilty of a capitol offence on more than one occasion. God knew that Jesus would be crucified 1000 years earlier (see Ps. 22), hundreds of years before crucifixion became a common means of execution. Of course, God knew it from the foundation of the world. Robertson rightly notes that "To be crucified" (*hina staurôthêi*) is a "Purpose clause with *hina* and the first aorist passive subjunctive of *staurôô*. John does not give the dramatic episode in Mat 27:24 when Pilate washed his hands and the Jews took Christ's blood on themselves and their children. But it is on Pilate also" [ATR].

THEY TOOK JESUS AWAY. For the first time ever I will quote from the new Holman Christian Standard Study Bible, which I will hereafter designate as: HCSB. "Jesus set out to carry His own cross until He collapsed. Simon of Cyrene was then pressed into service, and he carried it to the crucifixion site (Mt. 27:32) [HCSB].

Jesus Crucified

REMINDER: John is writing this Gospel account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ decades after the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) had been written. Matthew was an apostle. Mark grew up in Jerusalem. In fact, I read many years ago that some writer wondered if Mark was the young man who fled naked into the night after someone caught hold of the sheet he had thrown around himself before going out to investigate the noise when the temple police bringing Jesus back into town from Gethsemane. Others have speculated that the upper room where Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples was in John Mark's home. Luke the physician, the only Gentile to write one of the Gospels, was Paul's friend, companion, and partner in missions. He carefully researched everything he wrote

in both the Third Gospel and The Book of Acts. John was inspired to write the Fourth Gospel, not because the story of Jesus was unknown, but for some other reason. He tells us what that reason was: “But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). This is the evangelistic Gospel.

Any Harmony of the Gospels (A. T. Robertson, B & H Harmony of the Gospels, and others) will show that John was not writing simply to give a fourth account of the same accounts, but to convince people that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of all who believe in Him. Remember this: no one had a better view of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ than John had. Who reclined next to Jesus at the last Supper? Who asked Jesus who would betray Him? Who made the request that got Peter into the courtyard where he denied Jesus? Who stood with Jesus’ Mother at the foot of the cross? To whom did Jesus give responsibility for his mother Mary? Who was the lone surviving apostle? Who was the “go to” man when there was a serious theological question? Who was quoted by Polycarp and others of his generation to answer questions about Jesus?

The Fourth Gospel was not simply an attempt by the last of the apostles to leave an account with his name attached to it. There is no attempt to correct errors made in the Synoptics. There were none. The Holy Spirit inspired all four Gospels and that means that Christians and the Lord’s church need all four accounts. If either Gospel becomes stale or boring to any individual there is one solution for him. He needs to be born again! With this in mind, consider the possibility that the Gospel of Matthew may have been spread over the Roman world much earlier than some of us were taught in Seminary.

“To be brief, the *Magdalen Papyrus* was copied out between the mid-40s and AD 50. But we must also bear in mind that this particular papyrus was itself but a copy of an even earlier original, though by how many removes we cannot know. The fragments were discovered in Egypt, which tells us further that the Gospel of Matthew at least had gone overseas from Palestine at a very early date, and if an Egyptian could obtain a copy of it in such early years, then why not a Roman whose empire at that time embraced both Egypt and Palestine, the very land where the Gospels were written - and particularly a high-ranking Roman in the military whose duties required himself and his enquiring scholarly wife to travel and have contacts throughout the length and breadth of the Empire?” [William R. Cooper, *Old Light on the Roman Church*, Middlesex, England, 2005, p. 34].

Dr. Cooper, who had the advantage of doing research in libraries, museums, and at sites not readily available to most of us in America. With that in mind I will return to Dr’ Cooper’s comments:

“There is therefore sufficient evidence for us to conclude that Pomponia, who would have married Plautius in about the year AD 40, was herself in Dalmatia from before AD 40 and until AD 43, when she accompanied her husband to Britain. She may therefore have come into contact with the written Gospel of Christ (perhaps Matthew’s) *before* AD 43, i.e. within just ten years of the Resurrection, whilst still in

Dalmatia.

“Yet that is not the only possibility, for there is a most intriguing piece of information hidden away in the writings of Gildas, a 6th-century British author, which suggests that Pomponia *could* have first encountered the Gospel in Britain itself. The arrival of the Gospel here, he says, was indeed an early event: “This happened first, as we know [*ut scimus*], in the last years of Tiberius Caesar....”⁹⁰

Now, Tiberius reigned from AD 14-37, thus placing the arrival here of the Christian faith within just four years of the Resurrection, a by no means impossible event, for news and documents travelled surprisingly fast through the Roman Empire, and four years is a long time” [Cooper, William R., *Old Light on the Roman Church*, 2005, p. 35].

19:17 - CARRYING HIS OWN CROSS. “*Carrying His own cross, He went out to what is called Skull Place, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.*” Jesus had been scourged mercilessly between 6:00 A. M. and 9:00 A. M., and after that he had been slapped in the face to the mocking barbs of the Roman soldiers, who had plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on his head and then hit the crown with a club that had driven the points of the thorns into His scalp.

He had lost a lot of blood but they still made Him carry His own cross to Golgotha. Jesus bore His own cross for some distance, but He could not carry it all the way to Golgotha. He had lost sleep, been treated mercilessly by the Jewish leaders, taken to the Roman governor where under pressure from the chief priests, Pilate had him flogged by Roman soldiers who mocked Him, tortured Him beyond belief. Jesus was doing his best to carry His cross alone, but because of the blood he had lost from the thorns, the scourging, and the over all abuse a the hands of the Roman soldiers he faltered along the way. When he could no longer carry the cross Simon, a Cyrenian, was pressed into service to carry it the rest of the way (Matt. 27:32).

Various writers tell us that a criminal condemned to be crucified was required to carry his own cross, but Jesus, tired from the loss of sleep, the trials to which He was subjected, and the blood He had lost simply gave out before He reached his destination. It was at that point, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross for Jesus (Mark 15:21; Mat 27:32; Luke 23:26). “See Mark 15:22; Mat 27:33; Luke 23:33 for the meaning of ‘place of a skull’ or Calvary and Golgotha in Hebrew (Aramaic). Luke has simply Kranion (Skull), a skull-looking place” [ATR]. Jesus was apparently a strong, rugged man, but His strength had been drained by the hours of trials, and cruel torture for which Roman soldiers were known.

John simply tells us that Jesus was made to carry his own cross, but as mentioned above, the synoptic Gospels tell us that a man named Simon, a Cyrenian, was forced to carry the cross for Him (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:36). “Most likely, Jesus carried the cross (usually the horizontal cross beam) at first; but then, having become weak because of the flogging, Simon took over (Morris)” [NCWB].

HE WENT OUT. This means that He went out side the city, “Where Jewish customs prescribed that executions should take place (Lev. 24: 14,23; Num. 15:35-36; Dt. 15: 5; 21:19-21; 22:24; cp. Heb. 13:12) [Holman Chrstian Standarded Study Bible (HCSSB)].

GOLGOTHA. The meaning is “Hill of the Skull.” The Holman Bible Dictionary carries this brief note: “GOLGOTHA (gahl’ guh tuh) Place name transliterated from Aramaic and or Hebrew into Greek and then into English meaning, ‘skull.’ In Mark 15:22, the Hebrew name for the place where Jesus was crucified. The Latin equivalent is calvaria. Both words mean ‘skull” [HBD].

19:18 - THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM. *“There they crucified Him and two others with Him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.”* At Golgotha the soldiers prepared Him for the crucifixion by throwing Him across the cross and nailing His hands to the crossbar and his feet to the upright. The nails were probably driven through the wrists of the condemned criminal by Roman soldiers for the simple reason that when the prisoner’s weight was suspended from the nails they might pull through the palms of his hands after a few days. The wrist was considered a part of the hand. The nail was driven through the prisoner’s feet to allow him to push up enough to catch his breath, since hanging by the hands would cause the diaphragm to close off so the condemned man could not breathe without pushing himself up with his feet. Anything to impose greater pain, agony and humiliation.

TWO OTHERS. Jesus was crucified between two thieves (19:17, 18; cf. Matt. 27:31-34; Mark 15:20-22; Luke 23:26-33). Yahweh revealed this to Isaiah (Ch. 53) in the Eighth Century B. C. That is one of the most amazing and persuasive of all the Messianic prophecies in the entire section of the Old Testament known as The Prophets. I once read an article about a Jewish father who went to his son’s school and charged a teacher with reading the New Testament Scripture about the crucifixion to his class. The principal sent for the teacher and asked him about it. The teacher denied it, and went back and got his Bible and began reading Isaiah 53 to the father, which prompted the parent to say, “There! You see? He is reading about the crucifixion of Jesus!” The teacher showed the man that he was reading from Isaiah 53 and the man said that chapter was not included in his Scripture. That article stated that Isaiah 53 was sometimes left out of the modern Hebrew Scripture for fear that it will be seen as a Messianic prophecy about the crucifixion.

19:19 - A SIGN. *Pilate also had a sign lettered and put on the cross. The inscription was:*

*JESUS THE NAZARENE
THE KING OF THE JEWS’*

The chief priests had forced Pilate’s hand, but he struck back with this sign, which was sure to provoke a loud denial that Jesus was the “King of the Jews” by the religious leaders. Their protests may well have been about as loud as the cry, “Crucify Him!” only a short while before Jesus was condemned to die on the cross.

Little did Pilate realize the significance of his sign, for Jesus is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but none of that meant anything to Pilate. What did matter to him he

took care of with the sign. The chief priests had tried to force him to have Jesus crucified by insisting that He was leading an insurrection against Rome. He found Jesus innocent of that charge, but they claimed that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which, according to their law, demanded that He be crucified. This sign was a slap in the face of the high priest, chief priests, every member of the Sanhedrin, and of the various religious sects among the Jews.

19:20 - READ THIS SIGN. *“Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.”* The city of Jerusalem was overrun with Jews who had come from all over the Roman world for Passover. When the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 people in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days later, there were people in Jerusalem from some seventeen different nations. There may well have been people at Passover from as many or more countries. Many of the citizens and countless visitors read this sign. Golgotha was near enough to the city for it to be seen by the throngs who camped out while there for Passover, as well as those who stayed with friends or relatives, and by local residents.

HEBREW, LATIN, AND GREEK. There were three reasons so many Jews read Pilate’s sign, which proclaimed Jesus to be “THE KINGS OF THE JEWS”. First, there were thousands upon thousands of worshipers in Jerusalem for Passover. Second, the sign was placed in such a place that it could be easily seen by countless worshipers. Third, the sign was printed in Hebrew, the language of Palestinian Jews, as well as many Hellenistic Jews; in Latin, the official language of Rome and therefore a language known by Jews throughout the Roman Empire; and Greek, the language Alexander the Great had spread across what we may think of as the known world. Greek was the common language of the empire, the language of the market place and the business world. Even if Hellenistic (non-Palestinian) Jews did not know the Hebrew language well enough to understand the message posted on the cross over Jesus’s head, he would be able to read the Greek.

19:21 - THE CHIEF PRIESTS. *“So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Don’t write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”* These were the religious leaders most responsible for forcing Pilate to have Jesus crucified. They were committed to the celebration of Passover, and preparing for it even as they plotted against the Messiah, charged the Son of God with claiming to be the Son of God, and no doubt gloated over His pain and humiliation as they watched Him hanging on the cross. They were celebrating one of the holiest days on their calendar by rejoicing in the intense pain, deep humiliation, and brutal death of the Messiah, whose death they celebrated every time they observed a Passover. Every Passover they celebrated promised the sacrifice of the Messiah. Paul was inspired to write, “Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7).

These chief priests still had access to Pilate, even if they couldn’t go into his headquarters building because to do so would leave them unclean and thus unfit to observe Passover. They were especially agitated by the sign and vehemently demanded, “Don’t write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews.’”

19:22 - PILATE REPLIED. *“Pilate replied, ‘What I have written, I have written.’”* There can be

no doubt that Pilate enjoyed their frustration and anger immensely. They had conspired to force him to have Jesus crucified, but he is not about to give in to their demands now. He brushed them off with the words, “What I have written, I have written.” This would stand up before any tribunal in the Roman Empire, and he did not fear their protests to the emperor.

19:23 - TOOK HIS CLOTHES. *“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top.”* The whole scene is shocking when you stop to look at what was going on at the foot of the cross to which the Son of God was nailed, where He was dying for the sins of the world. However, “Christ’s hour of apparent defeat was in reality his moment of greatest triumph, for in addition to paying for the sins of the world, Jesus fulfilled many OT prophecies about his sufferings and death (compare the four Gospel accounts)” [NCWB]. The Suffering Servant passage (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) and Psalm 22 are without a doubt two of the most familiar OT passages which prophesied the crucifixion and Psalm 22 was written a few centuries before any nation used crucifixion as a means of execution.

While Jesus was pouring out His life to cover the sins of the world, including those soldiers, they were dividing His clothes. The “clothes (himatia, outer clothes) of the criminal were removed before the crucifixion and belonged to the soldiers. Luke (Luke 23:34) mentions the division of the garments, but not the number four. The four pieces would be the head gear, the sandals, the girdle, the tallith (outer garment with fringes)” [ATR]. Amazingly, David was inspired to write of this one thousand years before Jesus was crucified (Psalm 22).

THE TUNIC. The tunic, or outer garment, was seamless. The coat was without seam (ho chitôn araphos). For chitôn (the inner garment) see Mat 5:40. Araphos is compound of a privative and raptô, to sew together, and so seamless (unsewed together)...” [ATR]. There were four soldiers, and other writers agree with Robertson that this was “the usual quaternion (tetradion, Acts 12:9) besides the centurion (Mark 15:39; Mat 27:54; Luke 23:47)” [ATR]. However, since the crucifixion of three prisoners was being carried out in a Roman territory where Roman soldiers were stationed to maintain order, there can be no doubt that these “executioners” were serving under the watchful eye of other Roman soldiers.

19:24 - LET’S NOT TEAR IT. *“So they said to one another, ‘Let’s not tear it, but toss for it, to see who gets it.’ [They did this] to fulfill the Scripture that says: They divided My clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for My clothing. And this is what the soldiers did.”* The suggestion must have seemed a logical one to the four men, for they were in agreement. They were unknowingly fulfilling a one thousand year old prophecy. My wife has taught school for many years, and for fifteen years she was but one of a number of our church members who taught in our local school. It soon became apparent to me that these experienced teachers could predict where some students would end up, while in high school, or soon after graduation. The principal of that school, Lavelle Hammett, stood with me at Acadian Baptist Camp in Eunice, LA, once and looked out over a group of our young people. He said, “I am looking at the students who will be the valedictorian for the next few years right now.” I watched and he was right.

I was speaking at the Baccalaureate service one year and commented to Mr. Hammett on how the students looked in their red robes. He said, “You will be reading about some of them in a few years.” I did, and it was not a good thing. Teachers often mentioned that “third grade class” or the “fourth grade class” that was going to be a problem all the way through school. I watched and most of their predictions proved them to be right. They had a lot more experience with the students than I, and they saw them all day when their parents were not with them. Of course, those who were actively involved in a local church would not be involved in some of the negative behavior, or show the same attitude in school as those who were always getting into trouble. I was amazed, and still am, at the predictions teachers make about classes.

Here, we find a one thousand year old prophecy which was being played out before the eyes of the world, and the religious leaders were totally ignorant of its significance. They knew rule and ritual, but were ignorant of the Word of God. One writer notes that

“The **seamless tunic (undergarment)** may be significant as the type of garment which the high priest wore, yet John did not expound on this point. John saw the significance in the fulfillment of Psalm 22:18, in which the poetic parallelism in that verse was fulfilled in two separate acts: (a) **They divided My garments** and (b) they **cast lots for My clothing**. That Jesus died naked was part of the shame which He bore for our sins. At the same time He is the last Adam who provides clothes of righteousness for sinners” [BKC, bold in the original].

COMPARE TO THE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNTS (19:23-24):

“In comparison to the Synoptic reports (Matt 27:35b; Mark 15:22b; Luke 23:34b) the narrative concerning the soldiers dealing with Jesus' clothing in John is much longer and more specific. The picture presented is one of a squad (or quaternion) of soldiers completely unconcerned about the dying victims on the crosses and instead engrossed in dividing the spoils of the event. It is a stark reminder of pictures of a conquering army picking through the belongings of dead opponents to acquire booty for the personal enrichment of the victors. Crucifixion was for this squad of soldiers a business enterprise. Dividing the clothes was a matter of sharing the basic garments, undoubtedly like sandals, a belt, and perhaps a head scarf, and so forth. But the seamless tunic (chiton) caught their attention, and they agreed that rather than ripping it into four pieces, they could enjoy a game of chance and see who could win the prize by challenging each other in ‘casting lots.’ Clearly each of the four evangelists noted the fact that those who crucified Jesus were involved in gaming for his clothing, but John saw in the two lines of the synonymous parallelism at Ps 22:18 a distinction between dividing the garments and casting lots for the clothing, and he viewed these acts by the soldiers as a clear fulfillment of Scripture” [NAC].

DIVIDING THE CLOTHES OF JESUS. Modern day readers may find it hard to believe that the law permitted soldiers to divide the clothes of a condemned man right at the foot of the cross upon which

the man was being crucified, and right before his family and friends. John was standing with Mary at the foot of the cross at this very moment. My friend, Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England, a brilliant scholar whose research in certain areas goes beyond that of anyone else with whom I am acquainted, has provided us with information, not known by even many who are recognized as New Testament scholars in America, thanks in part to the ancient documents that are available to him in England and in part to the tenacity of a true historian and research specialist. Here is a brief introduction to a man named Richard Hunne, who challenged the right of a Roman Catholic priest to claim any possession a man left behind as a reward or charge for conducting a funeral service.

“The pre-Reformation story of the London merchant Richard Hunne, and how he challenged the great abuses of the church, being murdered for his pains by certain church officers. What Hunne achieved very much impressed and influenced Henry VIII and determined the course of the Reformation in its earliest years.

Introduction

“We come forward now some 1100 years to the time when Europe, and England in particular, stood upon the very threshold of the Reformation. We see a Europe that is locked fast in the stranglehold that the papacy of Rome had placed upon it centuries before. But we see, in particular, the deep dread that Rome had of the true Word of God becoming known among the people, and its deep enmity towards those who sought to read that Word in their mother tongue. It is an enmity and dread that showed itself candidly in the case of Richard Hunne, and because his story is told nowhere else these days, we will tell it here.

“On Saturday, 29th March 1511, an argument developed between Richard Hunne and a priest, whose name was Thomas Driffield. The occasion was the funeral of Richard Hunne’s five-week old son, Stephen, who had died at the Whitechapel home of his wet-nurse, Mistress Agnes Snowe. Thomas Driffield had just conducted the baby’s funeral at the local church of St Mary Matfellow, and he demanded as his fee for burying the child the christening gown in which the child’s body had been wrapped.¹ The gown was an expensive garment which the priest would normally have sold, pocketing the proceeds. Richard Hunne, meanwhile, was one of the wealthiest merchants of London, famous for the scale of his giving to the poor, and he could easily have afforded to give the gown away and buy a hundred more to replace it. Yet Hunne refused to give the gown to the priest. He pointed out that for his mortuary fee (as the payment was then known), the priest was entitled - under *church* or canon law - to the most valuable possession of the deceased. But as neither a child - nor indeed a dead person - could be deemed to own anything under the *civil* law of England, it followed that the priest was not entitled to it. The gown was Richard Hunne’s property, not Stephen’s, and as Richard Hunne was still living, the priest had no claim to it. And so the two men parted with great enmity.

“Now, at first sight the argument seems petty. But behind it stood some of the most important issues of the day. The priest was claiming something to which he was entitled under ecclesiastical law. But Richard Hunne was countering his claim with civil law - the *king’s* law, in other words. And the question which would not have been lost on any of those who witnessed the row - nor indeed on either of the two antagonists themselves - was simply this: Which system of law was to prevail in England? That of the church, or that of the king? In other words, Richard Hunne was questioning - long before Henry VIII was to do so - who held the supremacy in this land of England, the king or the pope? He was not to hear the last of it (bold added by this writer).

“Mortuaries, or fees for burying the dead, had long been a cause of great bitterness between the clergy and the laity, and not without reason.² When the item claimed by the priest - the local plough or breeding-bull perhaps - was the surviving family’s only means of livelihood, as was often the case, then it could mean destitution, homelessness and ultimately starvation for those left behind. And while much of Richard Hunne’s wealth would have been expended upon the relief of such families, his ability to combat the abuse was severely limited. If he challenged the system of mortuaries on theological grounds, then he would open himself to the deadly charge of heresy. So instead of theology, he was to use the civil laws of England to counter the financial claims of Rome. As we shall see, having embarked upon his course, his attention was to focus upon one particular law of England, the Great Statute of Praemunire, which was first enacted in 1393 under Richard II, though used since that date - when at all - with little or no effect.³

“Richard Hunne’s challenge was to hit the London scene like a bombshell, its echoes reverberating through the distant courts of Rome itself, when Pope Leo X found it necessary to thunder timely anathemas in the Lateran against those who would dare to suggest that the clergy ought to be subject to the same secular powers as the laity. But it was too late, for Richard Hunne was to set Church and State together upon a collision course, and once the legal process was set in motion, no man, be he pope or king, would be able to stop it.”

[Dr. William R. Cooper, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH, a formal paper (Thesis) written during his academic pursuits and incorporated into the book by the above title. Richard Hunne became a martyr when he was arrested and murdered under orders from a church official. His crime? He owned copy of, and read the Scripture in English!]

Jesus Provides for His Mother

19:25 - STANDING BY THE CROSS. *“Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His*

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mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” Mary was the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, and as such, an honored and blessed woman. At no time is she referred to as anything more than a wife to Joseph and mother to Jesus and his half brothers and sisters. She is not God and she is not the mother of God. She was the earthly mother of the incarnate Christ, who was known all over the country as Jesus of Nazareth. My good friend Wayne Whiteside is a pastor in Farmerville, Louisiana, but for many years he has traveled on a regular basis to minister to prisoners on death row in Texas. He has often prayed with condemned men, and walked with them until they are strapped to the table where they will receive their lethal injection. He sits with family members as they watch their son, brother, or father receive that lethal injection. He has shared on many occasions his ministry to families under those circumstances. John is here sharing an eye-witness account, as he stresses in the First Epistle of John, as well as in this Fourth Gospel. He stood among these women, but he was standing with Mary, the mother of Jesus, during those painful, shameful hours while Jesus was dying on the cross.

Here, John gives us a picture that is “In stark contrast with the cruelty and indifference of the soldiers, a group of four women watched with love and grief” [BKC]. John was not inspired to tell us where the other apostles were at this time. He focuses on those who stood with Mary at the foot of the cross, looking up at Jesus, and across at the soldiers who were dividing His clothes. Mary and the other women mentioned here were standing in

“Vivid contrast this to the rude gambling of the soldiers. This group of four (or three) women interests us more. Matt. (Mat 27:55) spoke of women beholding from afar and names three (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee). Mark also (Mark 15:40) names three (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome). They have clearly drawn near the Cross by now. John alone mentions the mother of Jesus in the group. It is not clear whether the sister of the mother of Jesus is Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee or the wife of Clopas. If so, two sisters have the name Mary and James and John are cousins of Jesus. The point cannot be settled with our present knowledge” [ATR].

One might join Robertson in wondering if two sisters would be named Mary. While it seems strange, stranger things have happened when parents were naming babies. My long time friend, Dr. Irene Steward, once told me that her grandfather had five sons and named all of them Anthony (first name or middle name). One was known as Big Tony, and another as Anthony, and another Little Tony. One was known as “Lucky”. So, it is possible that two sisters would have been named Mary, but not very likely.

19:26 - JESUS SAW HIS MOTHER AND THE DISCIPLE. *“When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’* After reading the entire Gospel According to John it would be surprising if anyone doubted that “the disciple He loved” could have been anyone other than His apostle John.

WOMAN, HERE IS YOUR SON. The woman was, of course, His mother Mary, and without a doubt, “the disciple He loved”, whom He addressed here as “your son”, was none other than the apostle John, who penned this Fourth Gospel. He makes it abundantly clear that he was an eye witness to the things of which he wrote. Look at the way he introduces the First Epistle of John:

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have **seen** with our eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—what **we have seen and heard we also declare to you**, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3, bold added by this writer).

SPECIAL NOTE: This writer is well aware of the repetition at points, and while any writer might be just a little uncomfortable with it, this is being written for pastors and layperson to download it from the SermonCity.Com web site. The repetition has been deleted in places, but in other places it seems more practical to leave it there rather than add a note asking the reader to go to another reference, which may well be in another volume.

When Jesus looked down to the foot of the cross, He was looking down at a host of people, and He was looking into the eyes of His earthly mother and His beloved disciple. Where were the other disciples? Where were His half-brothers and half-sisters? Of course, we are not given this information, and had it been important for us to know that I feel sure that information would have been provided. Many assume that, since his name is no longer a part of the narrative, Joseph must have been dead. It seems inconceivable that Mary would have been standing there without Joseph, had he been alive. With His father Joseph dead, Jesus would have been the head of the family, and as such, the One who was responsible for His mother. In His last decision regarding His mother, He must name the person to whom He would commit her care. What about His half-brothers? They were still unbelievers. Jesus committed His beloved mother to a believer, some believe to a first cousin. Jesus, who knew “what was in every man”, knew the one to whom He would commit her care. Beyond this, anything else is mere speculation. At the same time, this assignment of His mother’s care to John is worth our consideration, and in doing so, consider Clarke’s commentary here:

“This is a remarkable expression, and has been much misunderstood. It conveys no idea of disrespect, nor of unconcern, as has been commonly supposed. In the way of compellation, man! and woman! were titles of as much respect among the Hebrews as sir! and madam! are among us. But why does not Jesus call her mother? Probably because he wished to spare her feelings; he would not mention a name, the very sound of which must have wrung her heart with additional sorrow. On this account he says, Behold thy son! this was the language of pure natural affection: ‘Consider this crucified man no longer at present as any relative of thine; but take that disciple whom my power shall preserve from evil for thy son; and, while he considers thee as his

mother, account him for thy child.’ It is probable that it was because the keeping of the blessed virgin was entrusted to him that he was the only disciple of our Lord who died a natural death, God having preserved him for the sake of the person whom he gave him in charge. Many children are not only preserved alive, but abundantly prospered in temporal things, for the sake of the desolate parents whom God has cast upon their care” [CLARKE].

However we look at it, this is one of the most moving notes in the narrative, or in all of human relationships, for that matter. Jesus is dying on the cross, but still thinking of others above His own suffering, and remember that the cross was designed to be a brutal means of execution, yet He made sure His mother was committed to one who would provide protection and provisions for her.

19:27 - HERE IS YOUR MOTHER. *“Then He said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”* This completes the moving story of Jesus, even as He was dying on the cross, He was taking care of His mother. He committed her to a young man in whom He had absolute trust.

“The anguish of Jesus’ **mother** fulfilled a prophecy of Simeon: “A sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2:35). Seeing her sorrow **Jesus** honored **His mother** by consigning her into the care of John, **the** beloved **disciple**. His brothers and sisters being in Galilee, were not in a position to care for or comfort her. The words of Jesus to Mary and the beloved disciple were His third saying from the cross (the first one recorded by John). In the other Gospels Jesus had already given a respite to the Roman executioners (Luke 23:24) and a pardon to one thief (Luke 23:42-43)” [BKC].

The apostle John proved he was worthy of Jesus’s choice by taking her “into his home”. For how long did Mary live in John’s home? Again, if that information was critical to our salvation or our understanding of our salvation, the information would have been provided. Did Mary remain in John’s home even after he began working in the Gentile world? This writer assumes that Mary had died before John became overly involved in the spread of the Gospel beyond Palestine. If Jesus was crucified at age 33 in A.D. 29, His mother may well have been from 48 to 50 years old. John and Peter were both apparently the two disciples who were providing leadership for the church in Jerusalem at the time of the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15 and Galatians 2) in A. D. 51, and if that date is right, Mary, had she still been alive, would have been more than 20 years older, or somewhere in the neighborhood of 72 years old. Had she lived long enough to see the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, she would have been much older. This Gospel was written 16 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. If she was still alive when John began his work in and around Ephesus, Mary’s care may well have been passed on to her son James, who was the key leader in Jerusalem for many years (there is absolutely no Scriptural or historical basis for that speculation). However, James was her son and he is the one to whom Paul reported at the completion of his final missionary journey.

Sadly, many people refer to Mary in unbiblical ways. She is not the “mother of God”, she was the servant of God. She was indeed blessed among women, but she was a human mother and never

anything beyond that. While recuperating from a surgical procedure, I watched a part of an old western movie, possibly because of the star of the film, Gregory Peck, and possibly because I didn't go to a lot of those old movies when I was growing up seven miles west of the little town of Sledge, Mississippi.

In this movie, a man rode into town looking for the men who had murdered his wife. He soon met a young lady he had known before he met his wife. Sensing his anger, the young lady invited him to go to church with her. He declined, telling her that he no longer went to church. The young lady, possibly Loretta Young, motioned toward the church and said, "There is a woman in there you need to talk to." This was not a Roman Catholic church in the movie and there is no effort here to make that identification. What must be pointed out, however, is the fact that Mary has been dead for two thousand years, and none of the early disciples worshiped Mary. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to go into a church to talk with "a woman", or a man for that matter. Mary worshiped her Lord and Savior. She was not worshiped by the early church, and she was never known as the "mother of God". During the Reformation, many called this Maryolatry. Borchert writes:

"The significance of those statements is further defined by the evangelist's editorial note that 'from that time on this disciple took her into his home.' The traditional role of the oldest son in a Jewish family was to provide for the care of the mother when the husband or father of the house was no longer around to care for the mother. It seems clear that Jesus here fulfilled his family responsibility as a dutiful son.

"But, as Beasley-Murray has indicated, some traditional Roman Catholic interpreters have turned this idea on its head and viewed the testamentary statements as placing the disciple under the care of Mary. Thus the church was so assigned as well. This ecclesiastical reassignment to Mary has thus been viewed as the final task of Jesus (rather than his redemptive death); and having finished his work (19:28), he was ready to die. Thus Brown stated: 'We suggested [in connection with the Cana story] that if Mary was refused a role during the ministry of Jesus as it began at Cana, she finally received her role in the hour of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection.'

"Moreover, he continued, 'In becoming the mother of the Beloved Disciple (the Christian), Mary is symbolically evocative of Lady Zion, who after the birth pangs, brings forth a new people in joy.'

"The contrast between the goods-seeking soldiers and the observant friends at the cross is thus complete. Jesus, who was concerned to care for the disciples at the time of his arrest (18:8), was likewise concerned to care for his mother at the time of his death while the soldiers played their game for his clothes" [NAC].

Whatever one calls the worship of Mary, it is unscriptural, but we must not let that distract us from John's account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nor will it rob me of the love I have for that lady who was so greatly honored by the Lord that she was chosen to be the earthly mother of His

Own Incarnate Son. My friend, Dr. William R. Cooper, sent me a copy of his genealogy: 148 generations, from his grandchildren back through a royal line through Japheth to Noah. Mary's genealogy did not cover as many generations, but whose could be more amazing: Adam to Noah, to Abraham, to David, and the royal line down to the Incarnation.

The Finished Work of Christ

19:28 - JESUS KNEW. *"After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, He said, 'I'm thirsty!'"* That is, after Jesus had committed the care of His mother to His beloved disciple, He returned His thoughts to His mission and His current circumstances. He knew at then that everything that must be accomplished had been accomplished. **THAT THE SCRIPTURE.** Now, this is interesting. I have often wondered about it. Was Jesus mentally checking off Messianic prophecies: Okay, I can cross off the trials, the desertion of My followers, the suffering at the hands of Pilate's soldiers, being nailed to the cross. Now, in order to cross off one more item, I must cry out, "I am thirsty!" No, it could not have happened that way.

That is not the Christ we know through the Scripture. How then can we be sure? Robertson provides both the critical help and draws the logical conclusion: "Might be accomplished (teleiôthêi). First aorist passive subjunctive of teleioô rather than the usual plêrôthêi (verse John 19:24) with hina. John sees the thirst of Jesus in Ps 69:21. Jesus, of course, did not make the outcry in any mechanical way. Thirst is one of the severest agonies of crucifixion. For the 'perfecting' of the Messiah by physical suffering see Heb 2:10; Heb 5:7" [ATR, bold added by this writer]. When Jesus cried out He was genuinely thirsty, but this cry and the response fulfilled a one thousand year old prophecy. At the same time, it is somewhat paradoxical that the One who clearly reveals Himself to be the Water of Life cries out, "I'm thirsty." John had written in an earlier chapter: "On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him'" (John 7:37-39).

It gets even better. The religious Jews, convinced they were doing God a favor, crucified their long-awaited Messiah, while protecting themselves from anything that would defile them so they would be prevented from observing the Passover celebration. In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is our Passover! Their Passover held out promises of the Messiah; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Now, these religious experts hear Jesus cry, "I'm thirsty." They were experts on the Law and their history, yet they so blinded by their hatred for Christ that they totally missed the message many Christians miss today. Paul explains that when the Israelites in the wilderness cried out for water, God miraculously provided water from a rock. That water probably filled a depression that one explorer (Bob Carnuke) estimated to be one-half mile wide and two miles long. It provided water for two million people in the desert. The explorers have produced a video that shows a giant rock that was split from the bottom up and eroded by water. What does that rock have to do with Jesus, or His cry, "I'm thirsty"? Paul answers that question for us:

“Now I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:1-4 (HCSB, bold added by this writer).

19:29 - A JAR WAS FILLED. *“A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on hyssop and held it up to His mouth.”* A jar full of sour wine was “sitting there” (middle voice). John witnessed it. We must not confuse this with the Synoptics, where we see that Jesus refused to drink what was offered. This is not “vinegar drugged with myrrh (Mark 15:23) and gall (Mat 27:34) which Jesus had refused just before the crucifixion” [ATR]. Giving Jesus “wine vinegar, a sour wine, fulfilled Psalm 69:21. Putting the vinegar-soaked **sponge** on the end of a hyssop plant stalk seems odd. Perhaps this detail points to Jesus dying as the true Lamb at Passover, for hyssop was used in the Passover ceremonies (cf. Ex. 12:22)” [BKC, bold in the original].

19:30 - IT IS FINISHED. *“When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” Then bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”* Interestingly, as noted above, Jesus received the sour wine or “vinegar (a stimulant), though he had refused the drugged vinegar” [ATR]. Now, Jesus speaks His sixth word or saying from the cross, this time it is the single Greek word *tetelestai* which means “It is finished (tetelestai). Same for as in verse John 19:28. A cry of victory in the hour of defeat like *nenikêka* in John 16:33. Jesus knew the relation of his death to redemption for us (Mark 10:45; Mat 20:28; Mat 26:28)” [ATR]. “Papyri receipts for taxes have been recovered with the word *tetelestai* written across them, meaning ‘paid in full’” [BKC, bold added by this writer]. This word, spoken at this time is especially significant. Note that Jesus did not say, “I am finished,” He said, “It is finished.” His redemptive work was finished. Nothing remained to be done. “He had been made sin for people (2 Cor. 5:21) and had suffered the penalty of God’s justice which sin deserved. Even in the moment of His death, Jesus remained the One who gave up His life (cf. John 10:11, 14, 17-18)” [BKC].

BOWING HIS HEAD. John did not say that His head dropped. Jesus bowed His head. This detail is found only in John, the disciple who stood at the foot of the cross, with Mary, looking up into the face of His Lord. It is not that He died and His head slumped to His chest. He bowed His head in humble submission to the father, but with the victory in His hands.

From Luke’s Gospel, we learn that Jesus bowed His head and uttered the seventh saying from the cross: “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.” (Luke 23:46). Jesus dismissed His spirit.

This differs from “the normal process in death by crucifixion in which the life-spirit would ebb away and then the head would slump forward” [BKC]. It is significant that the Roman soldiers did not announce that Jesus was dead, He made His own announcement. He was in charge of what happened

that day, the Jewish authorities and Roman officers were simply doing the work for Him. First, He committed His spirit to His heavenly Father, and then “He gave up His spirit.” Had He not said that no one could take His life, but that He would give His life?

Jesus’ Side Is Pierced

19:31 - PREPARATION DAY. *“Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men’s legs broken and that [their bodies] be taken away.”* John has told us in 19:14 that it was preparation day for Passover. He was writing a half century after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the Gospel had spread, in some places, like wild fire, and as it spread the church was becoming more and more a Gentile church. John had been inspired to write in the Prologue: “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13). When studying the Fourth Gospel, never take your eye off the Prologue, or the stated evangelistic purpose. So, what does that have to do with this verse? John is explaining to Gentiles what had happened in Jerusalem. They would not appreciate the activities or the significance of the “preparation day” or the Sabbath Day without a note of explanation.

“As indicated in 19:14, it was the day before Nisan 15, the day before Passover; it was the day of Preparation, the day on which the lambs were slaughtered. But at this point in the Gospel the evangelist makes a special note because in that year Nisan 14 was also the day before the Sabbath, as though to emphasize the irony of the fact that it was to be the high day of Passover week. The Lamb of God (cf. 1:29,36) had died along with the Passover lambs, and that confluence of events must have seared itself into the mind of John” [NAC].

LEGS BROKEN. To a first time reader today this must seem like a strange request, but John’s explanation would have helped those First Century readers understand why this request was made.

“The Romans normally left victims on crosses until they were sure they had died, so flesh-eating animals could chew at their feet, and birds of prey could pick at them even while they were still living. Therefore, given the high celebration of the Jews, who were concerned about the land being cleansed of its contamination for Passover, they asked that the bodies be removed from the crosses by sunset (cf. Deut 21:22-23). Usually in such cases, to hasten death, as indicated in the Excursus 23 on the subject of crucifixion, the leg bones were broken so that the death of the victim would be hastened from this crucifragium. This act would quicken death because of an inability to breathe. The story of this final request of the Jews is dripping with irony. With this final desire for ritual purity noted, the Jews fade from the picture in this Gospel. Their role was finished, but little did they know that this petition to Pilate was unnecessary” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

SPECIAL NOTE. Most true believers have read this account many times, but some may not appreciate the significance of this request. Perhaps it would be best to look at that Jewish Law that was the basis for this request, but as we read we should remember that these religious leaders had demanded, on perjured testimony and spurious claims that Jesus must be crucified. They were guilty of murder, yet they demanded that another law be observed. The Law stated: “If anyone is found guilty of an offense deserving the death penalty and is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, you are not to leave his corpse on the tree overnight but are to bury him that day, for anyone hung [on a tree] is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deut 21:22-23, bold added by this writer). Murder would not defile the land, but a body on a cross would!

19:32 - BROKE THE LEGS. “*So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with Him.*” Upon Pilate’s order, the soldiers came forward and broke the legs of the men on either side of Jesus. “The smashing of the lower leg bones was called in Latin the *crurifragium*. This caused death to occur fairly quickly by shock, loss of blood, and inability to breathe (the chest cavity would bear the pressure of the body’s weight after the legs were broken). Without this procedure, a person could live for many hours or even days. This *crurifragium* was done to the two thieves on each side of Jesus” [BKC].

Some may conclude that the reason the religious leaders asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the two thieves who were crucified with him broken was that they had compassion for them, but that explanation is inadequate to cover the subject or answer the questions that may come to one’s mind. The Romans wanted the cross to be as agonizing an experience as possible, not only to punish the convicted party, but also to make an impression on passers by. We are familiar with the pictures of the nails through the hands, probably through the wrist joint so the nails would not pull through the hand. The crucified person was suspended from those nails through the cross piece of the cross. The feet were nailed to the cross in such a way that when the man’s breath was cut off by the pressure on his diaphragm, he could push up with his legs until he could fill his lungs with air. He could only hold himself in that position for a brief period of time before he would have to lower himself again. When the breath was cut off he would have to push himself back up so the pressure was removed from the lungs and he could get enough oxygen to keep him alive. The Jews knew that if the legs were broken the man could not push himself back up to breathe and he would soon die of asphyxiation (suffocation).

Some people who were crucified hanged on a cross for days, but in Israel that violated their law, so Pilate gave in to their request. One wonders if it is possible that Pilate gave in to their request because of Jesus, and not because of the two thieves? After all, he knew Jesus to be innocent of the charges when he sentenced Him to be crucified. He had not been comfortable with that decision. When the soldiers went to break their legs they found that Jesus was already dead. “In the only known archeological find of a crucifixion, which came to light in 1968, the skeletal remains revealed that the lower legs had been shattered by a single blow. This illustrates this passage. **Because** of the Law (Deut. 21:22-23) a body was not to remain exposed on a tree (or cross) overnight and certainly not on a **Sabbath**. A person so executed

was under God's curse and his body if left exposed would defile the land (cf. Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13)" [BKC, bold in original].

19:33 - DID NOT BREAK HIS LEGS. *"When they came to Jesus, they did not break His legs since they saw that He was already dead."* The religious leaders knew all about the law instructing them not to leave a body on a tree over night, but they did not remember that God had revealed a thousand year earlier that no bone in Jesus's body would be broken. "It is almost as though John wanted his readers to know that the Lamb of God died complete and unblemished because the broken legs might not have provided the church with such a wonderful picture of the perfect lamb (cf. 1 Pet 1:19; cf. also the inauguration of Passover and the unblemished lamb in Exod 12:5). This righteous Jesus, John would later proclaim, died as the atoning sacrifice for the whole world (cf. 1 John 2:2). Although Passover and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) are different events in the Jewish calendar, in Johannine theology they have been merged in the death picture of Jesus Christ" [NAC].

HE WAS ALREADY DEAD. I believe Barnes misses the point when he writes, "The death of Jesus was doubtless hastened by the intense agony of the garden, and the peculiar sufferings endured as an atonement for sin on the cross" [BARNES]. Have we not seen that Jesus yielded up His life, that no one took it from Him? Yes, the agony of the garden was significant and the scourging was severe, but the two thieves would have been scourged before they were crucified. They might have lived another day, or perhaps two or three days, had their legs not been broken.

19:34 - BLOOD AND WATER. *"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out."* Vincent's comments cover this verse exceptionally well:

"John saw a special significance to the blood and water that came from the wound in the side. For one thing, it proved that Jesus had a real body (see 1 John 1:1-4) and experienced a real death. By the time John wrote this book, there were false teachers in the church claiming that Jesus did not have a truly human body. There may also be a symbolic meaning: the blood speaks of our justification, the water of our sanctification and cleansing. The blood takes care of the guilt of sin; the water deals with the stain of sin. Some students connect John 19:34 with 1 John 5:6, but perhaps the connection is weak. In 1 John 5, John deals with evidence that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh; and he presents three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood (1 John 5:6, 8). The Spirit relates to Pentecost, the water to His baptism, and the blood to His crucifixion. In each of these events, God made it clear that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be, God come in the flesh. In fact, in John 19:35, the apostle makes it clear that the water and blood should encourage his readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ (see John 20:31)" [VINCENT, bold added by this writer].

I once read that a doctor in Memphis said he had witnessed water and blood flowing from a man who died of a motorcycle accident. He explained that, while it is extremely rare, a severe trauma can cause both water and blood to come from an individual whose death has been especially traumatic.

Many extra-biblical stories have been associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ over the centuries. Clarke provides us with an example: “The soldier who pierced our Lord’s side has been called by the Roman Catholic writers Longinus, which seems to be a corruption of logch, lonche, a spear or dart, the word in the text. They moreover tell us that this man was converted- that it was he who said, Truly this was the Son of God- that he traveled into Cappadocia, and there preached the Gospel of Christ, and received the crown of martyrdom. But this deserves the same credit as the other legends of the Popish Church” [CLARKE].

There can be no doubt that Gentiles who heard about a person who had been crucified, who had a spear thrust into his side and probably into his heart, but after three days appeared to many different people on numerous occasions might draw their own conclusions about what had happened. The Docetic Gnostics were convinced that Jesus was not actually human, but only seemed to be. John stresses over and over that he was an eye witness who had seen Him, touched Him, heard Him, and knew Him. Here, he offers an eyewitness account of the crucifixion, including seeing the soldier ram a spear through his side and no doubt into His heart. John is writing this Gospel knowing that some who would read it, or hear it read, doubted that Jesus was fully human and rejected that the Son of God could die. He tells them that he was an eyewitness to the crucifixion (see vs. 35).

The piercing of His side was all the proof John and other witnesses to the crucifixion needed. Many theories concerning the nature of this blood and water have been offered. Borchet has written:

“Some medical theories have argued that instead of the side being punctured the upper pericardial sac was pierced, which resulted in the separated blood and water flowing out. Others have suggested that the separated mixture filled the lungs and rib cage and then the lower membrane containing the separated mixture was punctured. Whichever medical explanation may be correct, it is highly unlikely that the idea of a bleeding heart is the most adequate representation of the picture here presented.

“Still others would argue that the statement is a highly developed Johannine symbolic representation of the Eucharist or communion. One of the most novel symbolic representations was a film portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus in which when he died, it began to rain. Thus, after the soldier pierced his side, blood flowed down and mixed with rain water. Of course, this latter view hardly represents the meaning of the text. On the other hand, the symbolic Eucharistic view hardly provides an adequate explanation for the origin of the story. C. Koester, whose major work is on symbolism, notes the connection to communion through John 6:51-55; his major focus on water as a Messianic theme is connected with the Spirit. But given the symbolic nature of the Gospel, this statement in John must have given rise to the development of the practice in some traditions where the Eucharistic drink element is enacted as a mixture of wine and water.

The basis for such an identification is undoubtedly to be found in the symbolic

statements of John 6:53-55, where the drink is identified with Jesus' blood and the bread with Jesus' flesh (6:51). But this blood/drink symbolism may not be viewed as fully dealing with the inclusion of the water. So when one enters the realm of symbolic speculation, I have heard it argued strongly that the water here could equally represent the water of baptism, and some have suggested that it should be linked to such ideas in John 3:5, though the statement of 'blood and water' would here seem to imply a reverse order. But note the order of 'water and blood' in 1 John 5:6.

"Nevertheless, it is probably best to curtail such unrestricted symbolic speculation because it can quickly lead to allegorizing the text. It is perhaps sufficient to note here that for John this story was obviously quite significant theologically and historically because of his special footnote concerning the witness and his authenticity in 19:35" [NAC, bold added by this writer].

NOTE: Before including the above notes from the New American Commentary I read them over and over and finally decided to either include all four paragraphs or leave all four of them out. After reading these paragraphs several times I elected to include them as they were written. When I received an announcement that this new commentary would be published as volumes were written, I signed on to receive each volume as soon as it was printed. After some time, I was elected to serve on the Board of Trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources and during my two terms on the board they sent trustees free copies of each volume as soon as they were printed. I do not hesitate to recommend it to young pastors and to lay-persons who want to study the Bible.

19:35 - HE WHO SAW THIS. *"He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth."* An incipient Gnosticism was making its way into the church by the end of the First Century, and John must have been aware of this fact. New converts came into the church and did not want to give up beliefs they had embraced before they were saved. The Docetic Gnostics believed that God could not become flesh without being contaminated, so Jesus only seemed to be human. Other branches of Gnosticism held totally unbiblical positions about God and matter. God is good and matter is evil, they taught, and for that reason Jesus could not have touched matter without contaminating Himself. For a discussion of this position, see the Prologue (John 1:1-18) where this writer (Vol 1) deals with the foundation for this Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

John's answer to those false claims was stated in the Gospel, but that did not squelch the heresy. Some two or three years later, he was inspired to write the First Epistle of John in order to provide assurance of salvation to true believers, and to refute the false claims of the Gnostics. This verse has been printed earlier in this study, but so that the reader will not be forced to leave this page and then return to it, it is copied again here, along with a second passage from 1 John:

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you

the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us - what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-4, bold added by this writer).

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now” (1 John 4:1-3, bold added by this writer).

HIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE. Speaking of himself, John adds, “His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth.” What would the modern scientific or literary world give to find such strong evidence in their field as John provides for the life and death of Jesus Christ. Charles Dawin wrote a book that denies the Genesis account of Creation, and the scientific world rushes to embrace his theories. I spent hours watching videos in which Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. Duane Gish debated well known evolutionists, and other videos in which Dr. Morris spoke about the evidence for special creation. As I watched and listened I began to see that Morris would present the testimony of one evolutionist, and then quote another evolutionist whose research completely refuted the first evolutionist’s claim.

Evolutionists were excited about the Neanderthal man, and before long high school teachers were telling students that scientists had discovered the “missing link”. When they discovered the truth about “Lucy” or the Nebraska Man, evolutionists did not announce that earlier claims has been refuted. The Nebraska Man was not a man at all, but an extinct pig, which, by the way, was not extinct after all! The world wants to believe a lie and will search for “evidence” that the lie is the truth. At the same time, we have powerful proof that this Gospel account is true, but the world refuses to accept it. Mature, well informed Christians who study the Gospels will find the Holy Spirit illuminating their hearts and minds so that they will know the truth. John here affirms what he and the Synoptics have written about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as well as His appearances, Ascension, and His promised return.

John was an eye witness to the events of which he wrote. In his youth, he and his brother James sought preeminence among the apostles, but after standing at the foot of the cross and seeing the agony to which Jesus subjected Himself in order to provide for our salvation, John became one of the key figures of the First Century Church, along with Peter, James the half-brother of Jesus, and Paul (and others of whom we have limited information).

All the other apostles had died a martyr’s death, and John, if tradition can be believed, would eventually pay the supreme price for his testimony about Jesus. There were more martyrs in the last seven decades of the First Century than one can imagine. We know about the martyrdom of Stephen (see Acts 6), but how many know what happened to Aristobulus? Paul, in closing out the Epistle to

the Romans sent his greetings to a number of saints there. For example, he wrote, “Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life” (Rom. 16:3-4). Why then did he write, “Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus” (Rom. 16:10)?

According to Dr. William R. Cooper, (*Old Light on the Roman Church*), by the time Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, Aristobulus had left Rome for Britain to spread the Gospel there. For that reason Paul sent his greetings, not to Aristobulus, but to those of his household. In time he was martyred for telling the people of Britain about Jesus Christ. Caradoc and his army had defeated the Roman army in more than 30 pitched battles before he was betrayed and his family captured and taken to Rome. When the entire family fell down before Caesar, Caradoc refused to bow, but crossed his arms and gave the emperor a piece of his mind. Everyone present agreed that he was too courageous to kill.

As an interesting side note, Dr. Cooper has written that Aristobulus left for Britain in the company of Bran, the father of Caradoc, who was being sent back as to be a sort of puppet king (under the authority of Rome). They had apparently been gone from Rome long enough for Paul to get word of it before writing the Epistle to the Romans (around A. D.58).

His family was placed in the home of a godly woman, the Lady Pomponia, who was instrumental in leading them to faith in Jesus Christ. Dr. Cooper’s research unveiled some interesting facts about this family. Caradoc’s son Linus was the first bishop of the church at Rome (not Simon Peter). Linus was martyred in A. D. 81 under Domitian. Countless others in Rome were martyred during the First Century. Claudia, the daughter of Caradoc and sister to Linus was, according to Dr. Cooper the only one of Caradoc’s family who was not martyred [Old Light on the Roman Church, p. 19]. She married the son of Lady Pomponia, Pudens. Paul mentions them in his Second Epistle to Timothy: “Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers” (2 Tim 4:21). In Romans, Chapter 16, Paul wrote, “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother—and mine” (Rom. 16:13). Roman Christians called Linus, “The most saintly Linus, brother of Claudia [Cooper, p. 19]. Claudia, it was reported wrote many of the hymn Christians sang in the First Century. Dr. Cooper learned that, with little if any doubt, that Pudens was the last name of Rufus, and it would seem that the reference to “his mother and - mine” denotes the Lady Pomponia, whose name they could not mention without placing her life in danger. That is a long and involved story, but one for which Dr. Cooper has made a strong case. We could go on and on with stories of saints who professed faith in Jesus Christ, only to be martyred for their effort. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to open the First Epistle with

Modern day New Age movements have their roots in Eastern Mysticism, which in turn, has its roots in ancient Gnosticism, and ultimately in the lie Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden. Both John and Paul refute Gnosticism in its various forms. In both the Prologue to this Gospel and The First Epistle of John, the aged John destroys the central tenets of both Eastern Mysticism and Gnosticism.

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our

eyes, what we have observed, and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may have fellowship along with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1 John 1:1-4).

At the time John was writing this Gospel, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, no other living person could provide so powerful an eye witness account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as he. If we could have followed John around for a few days, it would be interesting to know how many times we would hear someone ask him questions about his personal relationship with Jesus when he followed Him for those three years..

19:36 - THE SCRIPTURE. *“For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of His bones will be broken.”* “These things” denote the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and in a broader sense, the life and ministry of Christ. The things of which John has written happened “so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.” If John had stopped there, we might wonder what Scripture he had in mind, but he provides that information: “Not one of His bones will be broken.” Those who connect this with the paschal lamb which was slain at Passover, cite Exodus 2:46: “It is to be eaten in one house. You may not take any of the meat outside the house, and you may not break any of its bones” (Ex. 12:46). That seems appropriate, especially when we consider that Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7, bold added for emphasis). Bible students will recall the words of David, “He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken” (Ps. 34:20).

19:37 - ANOTHER SCRIPTURE. *“Also, another Scripture says: They will look at the One they pierced.”* Another verse (other than Ex. 12:46 and Ps. 34:20, mentioned above) reads, “Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem, and they will look at Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for Him as one weeps for a firstborn” (Zech 12:10, bold added by this writer). That is amazing when you think about it. Three times over hundreds of years, the Holy Spirit inspired Moses, David, and Zechariah to record the prophecy that the Messiah’s side would be pierced.

THE ONE THEY PIERCED. Does the statement, “they will look” point to (1)all witnesses of the crucifixion; (2) to the Roman soldiers who were in charge of the crucifixion (one of whom actually thrust the spear into His side); (3) to all who witnessed the crucifixion; (4) or to all who would see the scar after Jesus arose? John saw them when they pierced His side, he saw the blood and water flow from His side, and he saw the scar when Jesus showed it to Thomas. He was an eye witness to those events.

In A. D. 70, the temple had been destroyed by the Roman army under Titus and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and surrounding regions scattered throughout the Roman world (the Dispersion). During the last quarter of the First Century, Christians living in the region around the seven churches of Asia

Minor would read, or hear someone read this Gospel, as well as the letters Jesus dictated to John ,who wrote them down (Rev., Chs. 2 and 3) and then sent them to those churches. Most believers in this area would have known that “the disciple Jesus loved” preached, taught, and counseled believers in Ephesus. When they had questions about whether or not Jesus was really human, or questions about His life, ministry, miracles, and His Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, His present work, or His promised Return for His saints, they could contact the Apostle John.

The soldier who pierced His side with the spear saw the gash. John, Mary, and others saw the blood and water flow from the wound. John was among the disciples who saw the scar in the side of the risen Lord when He appeared to them (with Thomas absent) that first Sunday, and again a week later when He appeared to the eleven disciples. Little did the Elder John realize when he was writing this Gospel that some ten years later he, by then an exile on Patmos, would be privileged to see and record the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In Rev. 5:6, John saw the Lamb of God standing “like a slaughtered lamb.”

The scar in His side was a powerful testimony to the fact that Jesus died for our sins. “By piercing Jesus’ side, they provided the identifying scar by which the risen Christ would reveal himself to his hesitant disciples (20:19, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28) and later to the repentant Jewish nation as a whole (Rev. 1:7)” [NCWB]. In Paul’s First Epistle to the church at Corinth, he referred to Jesus as “Christ our Passover” (1 Cor 5:7). It is an affirmation of the fact that Jesus fulfilled all the hopes of the Passover, from the first one to the one the Jewish religious leaders were now protecting and defending by their murderous plot to have “Christ our Passover” crucified.

Jesus Is Buried

19:38 - JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA. *“After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus’ body. Pilate gave him permission, so he came and took His body away.”* The Holman Bible Dictionary carries this note on Joseph of Arimathea:

“Also important in the New Testament is Joseph of Arimathea, a rich member of the Sanhedrin and a righteous man who sought the kingdom of God (Matt. 27:57; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50). After the crucifixion, Joseph, a secret disciple of Jesus, requested the body from Pilate and laid it in his own unused tomb (Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42). Arimathea is probably the same as Ramathaim-zophim (1 Sam. 1:1) northwest of Jerusalem” [HBD].

That Joseph had been a “secret disciple” of Jesus while He was alive, may be interpreted by some as cowardice. However, in this case, in order to make that case in anything but a general way one would need to compare him to the disciples who abandoned Jesus. His closest disciples could not comprehend what He had told them about His appointment with the cross, or His resurrection. Had Joseph of Arimathea not taken steps to provide a burial place for Jesus, He might have been buried in

the potter's field, and that would have broken Isaiah's Eighth Century B. C. prophecy: "They made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man at His death" (Is. 53:9).

Joseph of Arimathea is identified here as a disciple, "but secretly because of his fear of the Jews." I don't know from whom I borrowed the statement that there is no such thing as a secret disciple, because, "either the secret will destroy the disciple, or the disciple will destroy the secret." Dr. R. R. Pearce at Mississippi College "pierced" any conviction I might have had that I had ever had an original thought, so I will not claim that statement to be original with me. My first question concerns both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. How could they have been "secret" disciples? My conclusion is that following the crucifixion of Jesus they ceased to be secret disciples.

Following Pentecost, when the true believes were filled with the Holy Spirit, they became dynamic witnesses for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). All the apostles and countless other disciples would become martyrs for our Lord. If they had kept it a secret they would not have been martyred. That is not to condemn those who lived in the city of Rome during the during the persecutions under Nero and Domitian (A. D. 81-96). Many of the saints during those days lived in the catacombs underneath the city of Rome, but did not stop witnessing or cease to worship. They were very careful to whom they mentioned Christ, but they continued to honor and serve Him.

ILLUSTRATION: SIMON KENTON. In his book, *The Frontiersman*, Alan Ekkart begins a series of stories about the winning of the West, beginning before the Revolutionary War when Simon Kenton was born. When he was a colossal youth of fifteen he hit a man, and convinced the man was dead, fled into the wilderness and emerged elsewhere under an assumed name. When he learned that the man had survived he began using his own name again. He became a highly respected Indian fighter, and at one time he was a guide for General George Washington. Daniel Boone said he was the only man he had ever gone into the woods with he never had to worry about. When Boone's fort was under attack by Indians, Boone, Kenton, and a few others slipped out to get water and they were attacked. Boone fell and Simon Kenton scooped him up and began running for the gate where they were cut off by a an Indian. Kenton threw Daniel Boone into the man and dispensing with him, he grabbed up Daniel Boone and ran on into the fort.

Years later, the man who had marked off thousands of acres in Kentucky, only to see much of it taken away by others in court, attended an open air revival. After the service, the pastor spoke with him and Simon Kenton asked him to walk out deeper into the woods with him. There, he told the pastor he wanted to talk with him, but he wanted him to promise never to tell anyone about their conversation. He wanted to know how to be saved! The pastor shared the Gospel with him and Simon Kenton committed himself to the Lord. Upon rising from prayer, he turned and ran back into the area where the revival was being held, shouting about what had just happened to him. The pastor caught up with him and said, "I thought you wanted to keep this a secret." Simon Kenton said, "This is too good to keep a secret!"

ILLUSTRATION: FRIENDLY FIRE AND GOD'S SHIELD. My good friend Charles Roberts has recently retired after serving for 34 year as pastor of Denman Avenue Baptist Church, Lufkin, Texas.

He told me recently that he is writing a journal every day and he is writing about some of the highlights of his ministry. One entry, dated October 6, 2010, focused on “Friendly Fire.” So many attacks on pastors today might be thought of as friendly fire - attacks from church members instead of unsaved people who, whether they know it or not, are enemies of the Lord.

When we are victims of “friendly fire” we must turn to the Lord as our shield against those fiery darts. David wrote, “**The Lord is my strength and my shield**” (Ps. 28:7). The Lord sent Jonathan to be David’s shield when Saul was trying to kill him. I thank the Lord for some outstanding and courageous saints the Lord has sent to be a shield to me over the years. I am deeply indebted to many whose names I will not print here. Today, I asked myself if I have been a shield to others.

I then recalled something I had not thought of in decades. I was around sixteen years old when our 4-H leader picked me to go to Forestry Week at Leroy Percy State Park near Hollindale, Mississippi. Boys from various schools were getting acquainted, both inside the building where we were staying, and out on the softball field. I started as a freshman on my baseball team, but I had never seen a fast pitch softball pitcher before that first day, except on television. One boy was blazing the ball across the plate. Everyone was talking about him when we walked out to a lake. The boy picked up rocks and began throwing them underhanded out onto the lake. I picked up a few rocks and threw farther than he did, which surprised everyone -and I mean everyone. I had never tried throwing underhand with a rock or a ball. Let me be perfectly honest: the other boy could throw the ball across the plate, whereas I only tried to keep the rocks over the lake. Still, the other boys could hardly believe what they saw.

That evening, I heard a number of boys mocking a younger, smaller boy: “Hey, look at him. He’s got a Bible!” “Yeah, what are you doing with that Bible?” “Why did you bring a Bible to camp?” Others surrounded the boy and joined in calling him a sissy. I knew I had to do something, both to declare my faith in Christ, and to go to the defense of the young boy. I walked down the aisle between the bunks and, without saying a word to any of those who were mocking him, I introduced myself to the younger boy and talked with him a few minutes, and then I went back to my bunk and pulled out my Bible and began reading it. No one said another word to him. Now, I realize that the Lord was using me as a His shield for that younger boy.

I took my new HSCB Study Bible to Chemotherapy early in October (2010) and showed it to a number of people, mostly nurses. One seemed totally disinterested. Two weeks later, I took it back and opened the study Bible and read from it for about four hours. I had an opportunity to show it to more nurses, and talk with other patients.

I did not try pressure tactics, but when some saw me reading or showing the new Study Bible to nurses and asked me about it, it gave me an opportunity to share a word about the Word with them. Jesus said, “Going into all the world.....” As we are going here and there in the world the Lord will provide an opportunity for us to witness for Him.

19:39 - NICODEMUS. “*Nicodemus (who had previously come to Him at night) also came, bringing*

a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes.” Nicodemus was a highly respected member of the Sanhedrin and many have accused him of cowardice when he went to visit Jesus by night, but since Jesus was totally surrounded by people all day, when else might he have had an audience with Him? John (Ch. 3) tells us that Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Possibly the best known verse in the Bible is John 3:16, where Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV). When he saw Jesus hanging from the cross, he joined Joseph of Arimathea in taking His body and preparing it for burial.

75 POUNDS OF MYRRH AND ALOES. “The amount surely is surprising--about a hundred Roman ‘pounds’ (litas) of spice. That amount would be roughly the equivalent of sixty-five pounds of spice or nearly thirty kilograms in terms of modern weights. It was truly an immense amount of spice. Indeed, it was enough spice to bury a king royally. The Johannine Death Story thus makes clear that Jesus was a King. He acknowledged that fact before Pilate (18:37). He died enthroned on a cross with his title placarded in three strategic languages announcing his kingship (19:19-20). And finally, he was here appropriately buried as a king” [NAC].

The new tomb into which they placed the body of Jesus was none other than that of Joseph of Arimathea himself. Is it possible that the myrrh and aloes Nicodemus provided for the burial were spices he had saved for his own burial? He may have had them for a business purpose. We can only speculate. The important thing is that he did not hesitate to use them.

19:40 - JESUS’ BODY. “*Then they took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews.*” The HCSB is not only a word for word translation (the words “dynamic equivalent” notwithstanding). It is here grammatically correct. It is Jesus’ body, not Jesus’s body. Robertson offers this note:

“The Synoptics tell about Joseph of Arimathea, but only John adds the help that Nicodemus gave him in the burial of Jesus, these two timid disciples, Nicodemus now at last taking an open stand. At the first (to prôton). Adverbial accusative and reference to John 3:1. Mixture (migma). Late word from mignumi, to mix, only here in the N.T. Many old MSS. have here heligma (roll), from helissô (Heb 1:12), another late word here only in N.T. It was common to use sweet-smelling spices in the burial (2Ch 16:14). Pound (litas). Late word for twelve ounces, in N.T. only here and John 12:3. Nicodemus was a rich man and probably covered the entire body with the spices” [ATR].

WRAPPED IT IN LINEN CLOTHS. Note carefully how John, an eye witness to many of the events of the day, said they “wrapped it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews.” John knew Jewish burial customs and notes that it was their custom to wrap the body with linen strips, which would have been wound around His body. We will see later that they used linen strips to wrap His head. This account destroys any claim that the shroud of Turin might have been the burial cloth used when they buried Jesus. That cloth had apparently been used to

wrap a body end over end, not around the body. Vincent writes:

“Joseph arranged to have the tomb hewn out, and the men assembled the cloths and spices needed for the burial. They may have been hiding in the tomb all during the six hours of our Lord’s agony on the cross. When they heard, ‘It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!’ they knew that He was dead; and they went to work. They boldly identified with Jesus Christ at a time when He seemed like a failure and His cause hopelessly defeated. As far as we know, of all the disciples, only John was with them at the cross” [VINCENT].

19:41 - A GARDEN. *“There was a garden in the place where He was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it.”* “It was Joseph’s mausoleum, a rock tomb hewn out of the mountain side (Mark 15:46; Mat 27:60; Luke 23:53), a custom common with the rich then and now. For royal tombs in gardens see 2Ki 21:18, 26; Neh 3:16” [ATR]. “Bernard argued at this point that Nicodemus must have had at his home these spices because he would have hardly had time to collect or purchase them. But perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus divided their tasks, one going for the spices and the other seeking the release of the body. Both suggestions, however, are speculations” [NAC]. This fulfills another part of the prophecy of the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 52 and 53. He was crucified between two thieves, but He was the first to be buried in a tomb carved into the face of rock formation, in the garden of a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea.

19:42 - THEY PLACED JESUS THERE. *“They place Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation and since the tomb was nearby.”* “The Sabbath was about to dawn. Jesus had finished the work of the ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17), and now He would rest” [VINCENT]. If John was the only witness standing with Mary at the foot of the cross, he would most certainly have gone with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus when they buried the body of Jesus. The women who came on the first day of the week knew exactly where to find the tomb, so a number of His followers must have followed them to the tomb. The New Commentary on the Whole Bible offers a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

“The striking combination of Christ’s degrading crucifixion and sumptuous burial fulfilled the predictions of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and displayed to all the world that God would tolerate no further humiliation of his Son once the awesome work of redemption was accomplished. Little did Christ’s disciples realize what further triumphs lay in store for the immortal Son of God!” [NCWB].

CHAPTER 20

The narrative of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus continues in this chapter. More than fifty years after these events John, without a doubt the disciple Jesus loved (20:2), was inspired to write this Gospel account of the events associated with the death and resurrection of the Lord. There are at least three things we will want to keep in mind here: (1) No one living in A. D. 86 knew the story of the resurrection of Jesus as did John; (2) John had no doubt repeated his eye witness testimony

hundreds of times; and (3) John is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so we know we are reading exactly what God wants us to know. We should read this along with the Synoptics in order to glean all we can from the Scripture, but we must remember that this is the evangelistic Gospel, which explains why so many events that run parallel in the Synoptics are not always found in this Gospel.

We must also continue to keep the Prologue (John 1:1-18) in mind, and then relate all we read to the purpose of this Gospel (John 20:31). John, whom some believe to have been the first cousin of Jesus, had a reversed bird's eye view of the crucifixion. He stood with Mary at the foot of the cross, looking up into Jesus' face. John was also the first person on earth to believe Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing the risen Lord. As we read this account we see nothing of the obnoxious pride, youthful ambition, or self serving tactics John, his brother James, and their mother had once shown when they approached Jesus with the request that He appoint one to sit on His right hand and the other to sit on His left hand when He established His kingdom. Now, John is content to refer to himself only as the disciple Jesus loved. John may have been the lone surviving eyewitness to the risen Lord. In the next chapter, it seems to be implied, and this writer infers that John was kept alive for a special purpose, which includes writing this Gospel, the Three Epistles of John, and the Revelation. Gerald Borchet provides us with an very good introduction to this chapter:

“The hinge point of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. The resurrection is the authentic foundation for Christianity, for the church, for Sunday worship, for Christian colleges and seminaries, and for the Christian proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Without the resurrection Christianity would be an empty shell (cf. Paul's strategic statements in 1 Cor 15:14-19).

“...Obviously the resurrection accounts in the Gospels may not convince those who are committed to the rationalistic perspectives of theologies and philosophies of suspicion. But this commentary is not written from that perspective...

“The Gospels are not mere history books. They are testimonies concerning the life, death, and resurrection of the most unique person ever to set foot on planet Earth. Moreover, especially the Johannine evangelist did not write his Gospel to give a mere blow-by-blow account of all that Jesus did, as is stated clearly in the Gospel itself (cf. 20:30; 21:25). This evangelist purposely wrote his work to bring people to believe in Jesus so that they might experience the marvel of a new way of life (20:31). Furthermore, he wrote his first epistle to spell out the implications of that life (1 John 1:1-4; 5:20). The Johannine evangelist was an evangelistic theologian, not a mere newspaper reporter. But he used the facts he selected to present the exciting message about Jesus.

“Finally, before turning to the specific analysis of these two chapters, it is well to be reminded of what I have stated in connection with John 2:22, namely, that this entire Gospel is written from a post-resurrection perspective. Everything that had been stated in the Gospel assumes that Jesus, the Son of God, is no longer dead. Every

word is based on the fact that he is alive and has ascended to the Father (20:17)...

“This Gospel is a proclamation of victory over the forces of evil. Even the death of Jesus and the themes of the hour and of glorification that point to his death are all to be read in the context that Jesus is alive and victorious. He is God's answer to the plight of humanity. He is King Jesus, the Lord!”... [NAC].

The Empty Tomb

20:1 - ON THE FIRST DAY. “*On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.*” The first day of the week marked the third day the body of Jesus had lain in the tomb, including a little time on Friday, all day on the Sabbath, and Sunday morning.

Mary Magdalene and other women agreed to go to the tomb early on the first day of the week, so that they might complete the burial preparations which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had begun before the Sabbath began. They had been forced by the approaching Sabbath to do a rushed job of it, so these women had come to finish that task. Their primary concern was how they would get into the tomb. They would have to depend upon passers by, or possibly some Roman soldiers to move the stone that sealed the entrance to the tomb.

THE STONE HAD BEEN REMOVED. The women had, as John tells us in this verse, been wondering how they would get the stone removed from the entrance to the tomb. Little could they have appreciated how the Lord was working to proclaim and affirm the resurrection of His Son. Vincent provides us with a brief overview of the scene and the events of the morning:

“What they did not know was that an earthquake had occurred and the stone had been rolled back by an angel! It seems that Mary Magdalene went ahead of the other women and got to the tomb first. When she saw the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, she concluded that somebody had broken into the tomb and stolen the body of her Lord. We may criticize Mary for jumping to conclusions; but when you consider the circumstances, it is difficult to see how she would have reached any other conclusion. It was still dark, she was alone, and, like the other followers of Jesus, she did not believe that He would return from the dead.

“She ran to give the news to Peter and John, who must have been living together at a place known to the other believers. Perhaps it was the Upper Room where they had met with Jesus. Mary’s use of the pronoun ‘we’ is interesting, for it included the other women who at that moment were discovering that Jesus was alive! (see Mark 16:1-8 and Luke 24:1-8) The women left the tomb and carried the angels’ message to the other disciples.

“It is significant that the first witnesses of the resurrection of Christ were *believing women*. Among the Jews in that day, the testimony of women was not held in high regard. It is better that the words of the Law

be burned,' said the rabbis, "than be delivered to a woman." But these Christian women had a greater message than that of the Law, for they knew that their Saviour was alive.

"Mary's faith was not extinguished; it was only eclipsed. The light was still there, but it was covered. Peter and John were in the same spiritual condition, but soon all three of them would move out of the shadows and into the light" [VINCENT].

20:2 - SHE RAN TO. *"So she ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"* Mary Magdalene was totally committed to Jesus when He was alive. He had forgiven her and delivered her from her slavery to sin. She had stood at the foot of the cross and grieved for Jesus as He died for her sins, even though she did not fully appreciate what was happening at the time. She was among the first to visit the tomb on Sunday morning, and she may well have been the one who recruited the other women to go with her to complete the anointing of His body which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had begun.

The tomb had been closed with a large round stone which could be rolled into place to seal it (Mark 16:3-4). It "had been sealed by the authority of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:65-66). The women were amazed to see an open and apparently empty tomb... They assumed that grave robbers had desecrated the tomb" [BKC]. When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been moved from the entrance to the tomb she ran to tell Simon Peter and John that someone had removed the body of Jesus from the tomb and "we" (she and the other women) did not know where they had put His body. Clarke notes that "This was after the women had seen the angels, who said he was risen from the dead, Luke 24:4" [CLARKE]. Robertson notes that the verb for "she ran" is the "Vivid dramatic present indicative of trechô. John deals only with Mary Magdalene. She left the tomb at once before the rest and without seeing the angels as told in the Synoptics (Mark 16:2-8; Mat 28:5-8; Luke 24:1-8). Luke (Luke 24:9-12) does not distinguish between the separate report of Mary Magdalene and that of the other women" [ATR].

20:3 - PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLE. *"At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb."* There is no doubt in this writer's mind that the other disciple was none other than John himself. In his youth, as mentioned earlier, he and his brother James had sought glory, honor, and power. Now he simply calls himself the disciple Jesus loved, or as here, "the other disciple." It would be interesting to know how many times John had told this story, in sermons, Bible studies, and in personal witnessing in an effort to persuade people to place their faith in Jesus Christ.

Upon hearing Mary Magdalene's excited report, Peter and John left immediately for the tomb. This was an interesting combination. It is possible that Peter was the oldest apostle and John the youngest. There is no proof of that, but this is the conclusion this writer has drawn. After Pentecost, Peter and John were often mentioned together. They had been a part of the inner circle of disciples during the Lord's earthly ministry. James, John's brother, had been killed by Herod in A. D. 44.

20: 4 - THE TWO. *"The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to*

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the tomb first.” The narrative carries all the earmarks of a first hand account. John was relating a personal experience. He and Peter left the place where they were staying and began running to the tomb where Jesus had been buried. John, possibly because he was younger, or because he was simply faster, arrived at the tomb first.

20:5 - THE LINEN CLOTHS. *“Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in.”* Upon his arrival at the tomb, John “stooped down” and looked into the tomb. What he saw was the linen cloths that had been wrapped around His body lying right where they had placed Jesus’ body. He looked into the tomb, but did not enter.

20:6 - ENTERED THE TOMB. *“Then, following him, Simon Peter came also. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there.”* When Peter arrived, a little after John, he rushed on into the tomb, just as we have come to expect of Simon Peter. After he entered the tomb he saw the linen cloths lying, we may assume, exactly where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had placed Jesus’ body. Peter had plenty of time to observe both the place where they had placed the body of Jesus, and the linen cloths lying where the body of Jesus had lain.

20:7 - THE WRAPPING. *“The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a separate place by itself.”* Peter obviously took special note of the linen cloths lying where the body of his Lord had been placed. The cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head had been folded was lying “in a separate place by itself.” The long, narrow strips that had been wrapped around His body may have simply collapsed right there. Another possibility is that the risen Jesus may have simply folded these cloth strips and laid them down there. He was in no great hurry and He was in no danger. No force on earth was a threat to Him now. This writer is convinced, however, that the cloths simply collapsed as Jesus arose from the dead.

This clearly refutes any claim that the shroud of Turin could have been the burial cloth that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped around Jesus. The shroud of Turin, assuming it was used to wrap a body for burial, was wrapped length wise over a body, not round and round the body. John is describing cloths strips that had been wrapped round the body of Jesus. This proof is enforced by the separate cloths that had been wrapped around His head. John is describing the way bodies were buried in Israel at the time of Christ. The shroud of Turin was at one time dated around the 13 century, not the first century, but the Catholic church rejected that evidence.

Tenney notes that when Peter entered the tomb he saw “that the headcloth was not lying with the other pieces but was rolled up in a place by itself. This means that headcloth still retained the shape the contour of Jesus’ head had given it and that it was still separate from the other wrappings by a space that suggested the difference between the neck of the deceased and the upper chest, where the wrappings of the body would have begun” Peter must have been wondering why the graveclothes were left in this position if the body had been stolen. A robber would not have left them in that good order” [TENNEY, Merrill, The Gospel of John, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*].

20: 8 - THE OTHER DISCIPLE. *“The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then entered*

the tomb, saw, and believed.” The other disciple, (John), was the one who was writing this inspired account. He had reached the tomb first and looked into it but did not enter it until after Peter arrived and then he entered the tomb. John entered and looked at the evidence and believed. What did he believe? The answer seems obvious. He believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. But there is more: John believed without having seen the risen Lord. Bruce commented on the difference between the faith of John and that of the others: “The beloved disciple believed in his resurrection even before he saw him alive again - not indeed because he saw the empty tomb, but because the disposition of the grave-clothes suddenly made the the truth clear to him” [Bruce, F. F., *The Gospel of John*, p. 186].

John, dealing with the resurrection of Jesus here in a narrative manner, is simply stating the facts as he saw them, but when we move from John’s Gospel we discover in Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles, and the Revelation that any mention of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is incomplete without the resurrection. When Paul preached about the crucifixion the people listened, but when he proclaimed the resurrection of Christ many rejected his message and some of those turned against him. Thousands were crucified according to the Roman justice system. One, and only One, who was crucified was raised from the dead, and that One was Jesus Christ.

We must connect the Resurrection of Jesus Christ with the purpose of the Fourth Gospel. John states the purpose clearly: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). The Resurrection of Jesus places God’s stamp of authenticity on the Prologue to this Gospel (see John 1:1-18). With the Prologue and purpose stated so clearly we should agree with Borchet that

“The hinge point of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. The resurrection is the authentic foundation for Christianity, for the church, for Sunday worship, for Christian colleges and seminaries, and for the Christian proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Without the resurrection Christianity would be an empty shell (cf. Paul’s strategic statements in 1 Cor 15:14-19). Christianity and the Gospel of John are hardly based on nonmaterial visions and the removal of the body from the ancestral tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, as was argued by J. Klausner. Neither is Christianity merely built on faith in the mythologically conceived Easter faith of the early disciples so as to be just faith in faith as was proposed by R. Bultmann” [NAC].

Kirk Cameron and his television team have gone out and interviewed people on the street. On one television program they asked people what they believed about heaven and hell. To some, there is no heaven and no hell. Others insisted, “If there is a heaven I will be there because I am a good person.” One man even suggested that this life is hell and when we leave this life we go to heaven. We find the answers in the Bible, and then only as the Holy Spirit illuminates the hearts of believers.

The Scripture proclaims the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and Paul tells us that “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). I have often stressed that various books in the Bible contain

valuable historical data. Francis Schaeffer also stressed this. When a writer states that “The Gospels are not history books,” I want to stress that the Gospels are not limited to historical information, but Luke tells us of his research in introducing both the Gospel According to Luke and the book of Acts (see the introductions). Having stated that, I am in agreement with Gerald L. Borchert’s statement concerning the Gospels:

“They are testimonies concerning the life, death, and resurrection of the most unique person ever to set foot on planet Earth. Moreover, especially the Johannine evangelist did not write his Gospel to give a mere blow-by-blow account of all that Jesus did, as is stated clearly in the Gospel itself (cf. 20:30; 21:25). This evangelist purposely wrote his work to bring people to believe in Jesus so that they might experience the marvel of a new way of life (20:31). Furthermore, he wrote his first epistle to spell out the implications of that life (1 John 1:1-4; 5:20). The Johannine evangelist was an evangelistic theologian, not a mere newspaper reporter. But he used the facts he selected to present the exciting message about Jesus.

“Finally, before turning to the specific analysis of these two chapters, it is well to be reminded of what I have stated in connection with John 2:22, namely, that this entire Gospel is written from a postresurrection perspective. Everything that had been stated in the Gospel assumes that Jesus, the Son of God, is no longer dead. Every word is based on the fact that he is alive and has ascended to the Father (20:17).

“This Gospel is a proclamation of victory over the forces of evil. Even the death of Jesus and the themes of the hour and of glorification that point to his death are all to be read in the context that Jesus is alive and victorious. He is God’s answer to the plight of humanity. He is King Jesus, the Lord!” [NAC].

29:9 - DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURE. *“For they still did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead.”* The Bible student who reads this verse might conclude that the disciples, after following Jesus for three years should have anticipated His resurrection. However, this verse tells us that they “still did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead.” What Scripture was it that they did not understand? Try this Davidic Psalm: “Therefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices; my body also rests securely. For You will not abandon me to Sheol; You will not allow Your Faithful One to see decay” (Psalms 16:9-10). Sheol is the realm of the dead. Vincent offers the following comments on Scriptures John may have had in mind:

“Paul saw the Resurrection in Psalm 2:7 (Acts 13:33). Peter saw it in Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:23-36 and note 13:35). Peter also referred to Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35). The statement ‘He shall prolong His days’ in Isaiah 53:10 is also interpreted as a prediction of Christ’s resurrection. Jesus Himself used the Prophet Jonah to illustrate His own death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 12:38-40); and this would include the ‘three days’ part of the message. Paul saw in the Feast of Firstfruits a picture of the Resurrection (Lev. 23:9-14; 1 Cor. 15:20-23), and again, this would include ‘the third

day.’ Some students see the Resurrection and ‘the third day’ in Hosea 6:2” [VINCENT].

Had Jesus neglected to prepare His disciples for his death and resurrection? No, He had tried to prepare them, but they were slow to learn what they didn’t want to hear. “Jesus had repeatedly foretold his resurrection, but that was all forgotten in the great sorrow on their hearts. Only the chief priests and Pharisees recalled the words of Jesus (Mat 27:62). Must (dei). For this use of dei concerning Christ's death and resurrection see Mark 8:31; Mat 26:54; Luke 9:22; Luke 17:25; Luke 22:37; Luke 24:7, 26, 44 John 3:14; John 12:34; Acts 1:16. Jesus had put emphasis on both the fact and the necessity of his resurrection which the disciples slowly perceived” [ATR].

20:10 - WENT HOME. “*Then the disciples went home again.*” They left and went “Either to their own houses, if they still had any; or to those of their friends, or to those where they had a hired lodging, and where they met together for religious purposes” [CLARKE]. An interesting side note here is that John had taken Mary, the mother of Jesus to his own home (19:27) and there is no doubt that he now “hurried home to tell her the glorious news as he believed” [ATR].

Mary Magdalene Sees the Risen Jesus

20:11 - MARY STOOD OUTSIDE. “*But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb.*” See Luke, Chapter 22 and compare the two accounts of the visits to the tomb. After Peter and John had returned to their homes, or to the homes where they were staying while in Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene remained behind at the tomb. Any pastor who has much experience at funerals and at cemeteries can recall more different responses to death that one might imagine. Some people are so caught up in renewing old acquaintances, recounting family memories, sharing anecdotes concerning the deceased, recalling the character and commitment of the loved-one who has passed away, that they scarcely notice the mother, sister, or daughter who seeks a moment of quiet time to deal with her grief. Mary’s grief was deep and genuine, and she wanted to spend a little more time at the tomb. She was not ready to leave when Peter and John left. She was standing outside the tomb, but facing it, crying. Jesus had forgiven her and cleansed her. She was grieving deeply, and in her grief she stooped down and looked into the tomb.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was a young pastor in Bastrop, Louisiana, I received a call from a hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, informing me that a Bastrop man was in critical condition in ICU. A number of his family members were members of our church. When I arrived at the hospital, I spoke with family members and learned that there was a critical need for blood. The man’s son was going back to Bastrop to get some people to go back to Jackson to donate blood to replace the blood the hospital was giving his father.

After we returned to the hospital, I was visiting with the family when I happened to glance off to the side. There, sitting at the end of a sofa all alone was the man’s youngest child, a young girl in her mid-teens. I had never seen a more defeated look, or a more grief stricken expression on a person’s face. She was a member of our Sunday School, but she had never committed herself to the Lord. I moved away from the crowd in the waiting room and knelt down at the end of the couch and asked

her how she was doing. She didn't say anything, but I continued, (using what I recalled from those counseling classes!). When it seemed that she was recovering from some of the fear and anxiety, I asked her if she would like to ask the Lord to give her eternal life. She nodded and I went over some verses that tell us how the Lord saves all who will call on him in faith. Then, I asked, would you like to pray right now and ask the Lord to forgive your sins and give you everlasting life. She looked at me and said, "You mean that's all there is to it?" I assured her that was all anyone needs to do: simply come to Him as a little child, in simple faith. She was saved that night while her whole family talked about where they had been and what they were doing when they received the call about their father, grandfather, uncle, or friend. I had her father's funeral some time after that, and I had the joy of symbolically burying the daughter, as I took her under the water, I said, "we are buried with Him in baptism," and as I raised her from the water, I added, "and raised to walk in newness of life."

20:12 - TWO ANGELS. *"She saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where Jesus' body had been lying."* John is simply recording the story he had no doubt heard from Mary herself. John and Peter did not see the angels. Matthew and Mark mention only one angel, possibly because Mary had mentioned the one who spoke to her. "John must not have yet told her that Jesus was risen. He probably was too stunned and puzzled to say anything significant. Mary looked **into the tomb and saw two** individuals who were **angels**. In the Bible when angels appeared to people, they looked like men; they did not have halos or wings. In certain visions, winged beings appeared (e.g., Isa. 6) but the norm for angels was that they were in human-like forms" [BKC, bold in the original]. It seems that angels commonly appeared in white, shiny robes, but there is no hint

of wings and halos in most cases where angels are mentioned. There are exceptions where heavenly beings are seen with wings, as with the Seraphims in Isaiah's vision (Isaiah, Ch. 6).

20:13 - WHY ARE YOU CRYING? *"They said to her, 'Woman, why are you crying?' 'Because they've taken away my Lord,' she told them, 'and I don't know where they've put Him.'" The two angels Mary had seen when she stooped down and looked into the tomb spoke to her, asking her why she was crying. They addressed her simply as, "Woman." This was not an address that implied disrespect in any way. They simply asked her why she was crying.*

THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD. In response to His question as to why she was crying, Mary replied from her heart, "They've taken away my Lord," and then added, "I don't know where they have taken Him." John is providing us with the narrative, and there is no need to speculate, or to read between the lines here, but that has never stopped a preacher. Both Clarke and Barnes concluded that Mary had assumed that the disciples who buried the body of Jesus had hastily placed him in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea because the Sabbath was approaching, and that they intended to move him after the Sabbath. Mary, and the other women, had that been the case, would have been preparing spices to complete the anointing of His body before it was moved to another location. In such case, she would have assumed that the disciples who had buried Him would have returned to move His body as soon as possible.

There is no real reason to assume that this was the case, but neither can we prove otherwise. At the time of this exchange, Peter and John, as well as the other women who had gone to the tomb with Mary had already left.

20:14 - SAW JESUS. *“Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.”* In the previous verse we have seen that Mary saw two angels sitting inside the tomb, one where the head of Jesus had been and the other where His feet had been. They asked her why she was crying and she replied that “they” have taken away my Lord and I don’t know where they have put Him. Clarke notes that “John omits what the angels said to the women about Christ’s being risen; probably because it was so particularly related by the other evangelists: Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:6, 7; Luke 24:5-7. Mary was so absorbed in grief that she paid but little attention to the person of our Lord, and therefore did not at first discern it to be him; nor could she imagine such an appearance possible, as she had no conception of his resurrection from the dead” [CLARKE].

20:15 - WOMAN. *“Woman,’ Jesus said to her, ‘why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’ Supposing He was the gardener, she replied, ‘Sir, if you’ve removed Him, tell me where you’ve put Him, and I will take Him away.’* Jesus’ question was the logical one under the circumstances. Mary was in such grief that she was not thinking clearly, and it is possible that in such grief she simply did not focus on Him. It is interesting, however, that people will speculate on the reason she did not recognize Jesus from His appearance, or His voice at first. “Mary talked with Jesus but still did not realize who He was. Some suggest that Jesus’ appearance was changed; others say she had a temporary ‘blindness’ as did the Emmaus Road disciples who ‘were kept from recognizing Him’ (Luke 24:16) until His act of disclosure. Others say that possibly the tears in her eyes kept her from recognizing Him” [BKC].

Those who have a problem with this may not have stood where most pastors stand from time to time before, during, or after a funeral service. When my mother died my younger son Mark was only seven or eight years old. The family visited with friends, often expressing appreciation to those who had visited my mother, prayed for her, or shown their friendship in some other way. At one point, Mark walked up to the open casket and stood there by a lady he had never seen before. In a voice that indicated to Mark that she was speaking from her heart, the lady simply said, “She loved me when I was good, and she loved me when I was bad.” Mark didn’t have any idea who the lady was, but some of us did, from his description. I don’t know that the lady was ever aware of the fact that someone was standing beside her when she spoke.

Death can be confusing to the young. My niece Kerri was three or four years old when a church member died. Her father, Jimmy Furr, was pastor the church in Mississippi at the time and when they went to the visitation Kerri drifted over to where a lady stood looking down into the casket. Kerry, of course couldn’t see into the casket but she looked at the lady and said, “Do you have a problem with that?” The lady looked down at her and said, “No, Honey, I don’t. Kerri said, “Well if you don’t, I do.” The lady leaned down and picked her up and began to explain that “Mr. Smith” is not here, he is in Heaven.” Kerri said, “He left his face.”

We recall cute things a child like Kerri might say at a time like that, but we had rather not remember

what some adults say, especially when the deceased was not a Christian, or the visitor was lost and had no hope of seeing his loved one again. There are times when a family member simply will not leave the casket after the sermon. The pastor may try to encourage the person to go with other family members to the cemetery for the interment. Sometimes, family members almost have to drag the grief stricken relative away from the casket. As a pastor who has stood at the head of many caskets, under those circumstances and offered a word of comfort and assurance to family members at the interment, I do not question Mary's grief, not the effect it had on her.

Years ago, when I was pastor in another town, a lady came to our church for a morning worship service. After the service she told me she needed to talk with me. She said that she had seen my picture in the local paper and told herself, "If I don't go and talk with him I may not ever talk to anyone else." She said, "I am lost and want to be saved. I played the piano for this church when I was younger, and I have played for the church near my home for several years. I didn't know what people might think if I admitted publically that I was lost." She added, "When you stood by my husband and me at the visitation for our little Timmy, I knew I was lost and needed to be save, but I just couldn't bring myself to say anything to you then." She prayed that day, asking Jesus Christ to save her and giver her eternal life, and He did.

The point is, regardless of this writer's verbosity, we would probably be wise not to assign motives, evaluate emotions or identify problems during a time of deep grief. We have no way of knowing what was going through Mary's mind at the moment. I am convinced that she was asked about that many times afterwards.

SIR. In speaking about Jesus, Mary calls Him Lord, but in speaking to Him she calls Him "Sir." Robertson writes that her address was " Clearly not 'Lord' here, for she thought him to be 'the gardener.'" [ATR].

IF YOU HAVE REMOVED HIM. This is the condition of the first class (assumed to be true), with emphasis on "you". At this point, "a new idea struck Mary as mistaken as the other one. Jesus had repeated the question of the angels, but she did not recognize him" [ATR], and she jumped to an illogical conclusion. However, in her heart she was ready and willing to do whatever was necessary to be sure her Lord had a proper burial. The reality of the resurrection had not sunk in at this point.

20:16 - MARY. "*Mary!*" Jesus said. *Turning around, she said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' — which means 'Teacher.'*" John continues the narrative and the reader may simply read what he wrote, or do as some will always do and assign motives, attitudes, and emotions. Experienced pastors, as noted above, have witnessed the effects of grief on a variety of individuals, but it is one thing to observe how others deal with grief, yet another matter when one must deal with it himself. When my father died the funeral director invited my wife and me into his office, seated himself, looked up and began to express his sympathy. I stopped him and said, "Ron, I appreciate what you are doing, but it is not necessary. I grieved for my father for eight years and when he died I thanked the Lord for giving him a release from the illness."

I have seen people at funerals who seemed to be facing their grief calmly until another family member broke down, and then that individual becomes overwhelmed by grief. Under the circumstances, an individual may become so overwhelmed with grief that he or she is oblivious to other people and what they might be saying.

Mary was obviously deeply effected by her grief. When she saw that the body of Jesus was not where the disciples had laid it she was overcome by both grief, confusion, and a desire to locate the body of Jesus so she could properly anoint it. Jesus called her name and “Mary must have turned away in grief as she talked, for at the sound of her name (Mary) she turned back toward her living Lord with the one word “Rabboni”! [NCWB]

“Because of her grief Mary did not notice anything unusual. Their question and her answer set the stage for the greatest ‘recognition scene’ in all of history (perhaps the second greatest is “I am Joseph”; cf. Gen. 45:1-3). The appearance of Jesus to Mary was so unexpected that **she did not realize that it was Jesus**. The fact that He appeared to Mary rather than to Pilate or Caiaphas or to one of His disciples is significant. That a woman would be the first to see Him is an evidence of Jesus’ electing love as well as a mark of the narrative’s historicity. No Jewish author in the ancient world would have invented a story with a woman as the first witness to this most important event. Furthermore, Jesus may have introduced Himself to Mary first because she had so earnestly sought Him. She was at the cross while He was dying (John 19:25), and she went to His tomb early on Sunday morning (20:1) [BKC].

20:17 - DON’T CLING TO ME. “*Don’t cling to Me,*” Jesus told her, *‘for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God.’* New Testament scholars debate the translation here and some assign motives. Did Jesus say, “Don’t touch me,” or did He tell her to “cease clinging to me”? Some make a distinction between “don’t cling to Me” and “stop clinging to Me.” As Borchert states, “The NASB rendering ‘stop clinging to me’ may be a little too harsh. The NLT ‘don’t cling to me’ seems to be a little more nuanced. The statement does not seem to be a rejection of touching Jesus because that would vitiate against the invitation to touch or handle him in Luke 24:39 and the invitation to Thomas to touch his hands and his side (John 20:27; cf. also the women touching his feet in worship at Matt 28:9)” [NAC].

Let’s face it, a person might say, “Stop clinging to me” in a way that might sound like “Get your hands off me!” The person addressed would be deeply hurt. There is no way Jesus was rebuking Mary Magdalene in such a harsh manner. There can be little doubt that Jesus was gentle with Mary, but the question remains: why did He tell her to stop clinging to Him?

The answer seems fairly simple. Mary did not just touch Jesus, she grabbed hold of Him and continued clinging to Him. He did not tell her not to touch Him, but to stop clinging to Him. There was no problem with her touching Him, and what we learn from Jesus’ invitation to Thomas to touch His hands and His side. On another occasion, Jesus ate with His disciples, so there seems to have

been no such restrictions imposed by Him during the time between His resurrection and His ascension. “Jesus allowed the women to take hold of his feet (ekratêsan) and worship (prosekunêsan) as we read in Mat 28:9. The prohibition here reminds Mary that the previous personal fellowship by sight, sound, and touch no longer exists and that the final state of glory was not yet begun. Jesus checks Mary's impulsive eagerness” [ATR]. Jesus may well have spoken these words because Mary had other things she needed to do for Him.

NOT YET ASCENDED. Jesus does not explain what this has to do with Mary's clinging to Him, but one would like to think that if this statement had been critical Jesus would have explained it, or the Holy Spirit would have inspired John to provide us with the answer. Borchet has written:

“The more difficult issue involves Jesus' statement concerning the fact that he had not yet ascended to the Father/God. In trying to deal with this issue some have suggested that Jesus must have ascended between the story of Mary and then returned to earth in time for the following stories involving the disciples and Thomas in order for Jesus to be touched. Such a suggestion, however, is a misunderstanding of John and is based on the translation of haptou as ‘touch’ in the KJV and elsewhere.’

“The purpose of this ascent statement must have been to indicate to Mary that the way of relating to the resurrected Lord would no longer be through the physical senses because the ascent would terminate such encounters. Accordingly, clinging to the physical patterns of the preresurrected Lord was no longer possible. Even her efforts at revering a body in a tomb were gone because the tomb was empty” [NAC].

While Jesus did not explain His statement that He had not ascended to the Father yet, that does not mean that what the Scripture says about the time Jesus spent in the tomb, and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are not important. Each appearance was significant and we can learn from each one. It is a fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. The testimony of those who saw the resurrected Savior was convincing enough that the sharpest minds in the Sanhedrin could not stop the stories from spreading, or people from believing when they heard witnesses testify that they had seen the risen Lord.

“The physical reality of the resurrection is therefore fully asserted in the Gospels, and one must not use the Pauline appearance references as the basis for interpreting the Gospel resurrection stories as involving merely ‘spiritual’ appearances. Even Paul recognized that his experience of the risen Lord was out of the temporal pattern (1 Cor 15:8). But when John wrote the Gospel, he asserted that the physical touching and seeing of Jesus had at that time ceased on earth and that confession of Jesus had to be made without seeing or touching him, as Mary, the disciples, and Thomas had been able to do (John 20:29).

“On the other hand, it is interesting to view the glorification of Jesus, which was expressed in terms of the ‘lifting up’ of Jesus (John 3:14-15; 12:32; etc.) as not merely

focused on Jesus' death but also as a return to glory in the presence of the Father (cf. 17:5). When one sees the glorification of Jesus in this perspective, Johannine theology tends to merge the resurrection and ascension into a single concept, even though it may not have been a single event as in the Lukan writings (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11)" [NAC].

ASCENDING TO MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER. After telling Mary to stop clinging to Him, He said, "I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God." Does this not give us a clue as to why He had told her to stop clinging to Him? Of course it does. He had a mission for her: "Go tell My brothers that I am ascending to My Father and your Father." One writer reminds us that "The language gives no indication that this ascension would be in the future. We must be careful not to superimpose a timetable upon John's Gospel that is not indigenous to John's narrative. According to John's chronology, the Lord would arise from the dead, ascend to the Father, and then come to the disciples—all within 'a little while' (see 14:2, 3, 18-20, 23; 16:16-22..." [NCWB].

Remember that when the women who had gone to the tomb early on Sunday morning and found that the stone that sealed the entrance had been moved and that the body of Jesus was missing they rushed away and told Peter and John, who immediately ran to the tomb, John arriving first but Peter entering first. This note within itself is refreshing because it carries a note of authenticity and personal witness. John, the author of this material, was an active participant in these events.

Upon seeing the burial cloths that had been wrapped around the body of Jesus lying as though they had just collapsed, and the bandages that had been wrapped around His head in a separate place, John believed, without having seen Him, that Jesus had risen from the dead. Mary believed when she saw Him, as did others of His disciples.

BROTHERS. Following the resurrection, or because of it, Jesus' disciples are now called His brothers (see Matt. 28:10). "Resurrection creates this new relationship because it provides for the regeneration of every believer. First Peter 1:3 says that we have been born again to a new hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. As possessors of the divine life (see Eph. 4:18) and partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), all the believers have become Jesus' brothers, having the same God and same Father" [NCWB].

20:18 - ANNOUNCED TO THE DISCIPLES. "*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them what He had said to her.*" In obedience to Jesus, Mary rushed away to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord. "The disciples (brethren) did not believe Mary's story nor that of the other women (Luke 24:11; Mark 16:11). Paul does not mention the vision to Mary or the women in 1Co 15:5-7. But Mary Magdalene was the first one to see the Risen Lord" [ATR]. This part of the story "concludes in a typical biblical fashion of a theophany in which the one who receives an experience of God or the angel of the Lord is usually also given some form of commission (cf. Judg 6:25-26; Isa 6:8-13)" [NAC].

Mary was told to go tell His disciples that Jesus had risen. In time they would understand the significance of the Resurrection of Jesus as it related to the His mission and ministry, including His virgin birth, His message, the Resurrection and Ascension. Mary simply announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord. This was the first appearance story in the Gospel According to John. In the first place, it was amazing, in that day, that something so amazing would have been announced to a woman. God is also announcing that neither He nor His church discriminate against women.

After my commentary on Philippians, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*, was published my son Mark gave a copy to a young professional, a lady who practiced law and had received some recognition when asked to serve in some federal position. One day, he introduced me to the lady and she began telling me how much she enjoyed my commentary: “I really like what you wrote in your book, and I normally don’t like to read Paul’s letter.” Coming around a desk, she said, almost confidentially, “Paul was strictly a product of his time, wasn’t he?” I said, “Paul may have been a product of his time, but the Holy Spirit was not, and He is the one who inspired Paul to write those epistles.”

Some have called it to our attention that it is truly amazing that John chose to tell the story of this grieving woman who was chosen to be the first to tell others that she had personally seen the risen Lord. For three years certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, had traveled with Jesus and His disciples, so it is not surprising that neither Jesus nor John discriminated against women. When people call the Bible a sexist book they really do not understand the Scripture. God created men as men and women as women, and he assigned different roles to men and women. As far as their worth to Him and value to His kingdom are concerned, He does not discriminate. We may be in heaven before we fully appreciate that. Borchert seems to agree:

“Carson concludes his analysis of this story with the note that ‘there is no reason to think that they [the disciples] reacted any better than they did to the women’s report of the empty tomb (Luke 24:9-11),’ but the Johannine Gospel is not merely about an empty tomb. John may have started his account at 20:1-2 in this manner, but 20:3-10 led the beloved disciple to believing, and this story at the tomb moves the reader’s attention from the tomb to the living Jesus.

“Thus the evangelist has a very different focus in telling his stories. In John people become models of experiences with Jesus, and Mary is a model of someone who comes to see but at first has to react inappropriately until Jesus corrects her reaction. The Mary story has a message for every Christian. You cannot take control of Jesus! But you can acknowledge him” [NAC].

The Disciples Commissioned By the Lord

20:19 - IN THE EVENING. *“In the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews. Then Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’”* Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene early in the

morning of the first day of the week, which was the morning of His resurrection. It was on that same evening that He appeared to His disciples. This appearance must have astounded the disciples when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst, having come through a locked door. “He could do this because resurrection and the subsequent glorification had altered his form. In resurrection, he had become life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:42-45). At the same time, he still retained his humanity—but a glorified one.

In resurrection, he was the same person in a different form (see Mark 16:12). In this new spiritual form, he was able to transcend all physical barriers. He was able to penetrate matter and even penetrate men” [NCWB]. He could, and did appear and disappear at will.

Robertson reminds us that the time would have been between six and nine (John. 6:16). “John often uses this note of time (John 1:39; John 5:9; John 11:53; John 14:20; John 16:23, 26). The addition of *têi miâi sabbatôn* (see John 20:1 for this use of *miâi* like *prôtêi*) proves that John is using Roman time, not Jewish, for here evening follows day instead of preceding it” [ATR]. In other words, in Roman time, 6-9 would still be the first day of the week (as it is with us today).

DISCIPLES WERE TOGETHER. The word “disciples” here denotes the apostles, but as we will see, Thomas was not among them. They had been His disciples for three years, following Him and learning from Him (which activities would identify them as His disciples). The word disciples conveys those two ideas: (1) a follower and (2) a learner. Judas was a traitor and he had taken his own life after betraying Jesus. Thomas, as we shall see, was not with the other ten disciples this evening. Why were these disciples all together in one place? John tells us that “the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews.” They had traveled together for three years and they needed to be with one another now that they knew the crucified Jesus had risen from the grave. John was one of those disciples, so this is not only inspired Scripture, it is an eyewitness testimony. Paul, in Galatians 2, identifies John and Peter as pillars of the church, and that book was written some three decades after this night when Jesus appeared to them.

JESUS CAME. The disciples were together in a room with the door locked. John would not have made a mistake here. He was there and he knew the outer door was locked, as well as the door to the room where they were meeting. Suddenly, Jesus was standing with them in the room. Some writers give a different slant to this, obviously to explain the miraculous appearance of Jesus through a locked door. Some have even suggested that the door was only closed and Jesus had only to open the door and step into the room. No reading of this passage can justify that interpretation. Some have suggested that there is no claim that His entrance was miraculous, and that a miracle may not have been necessary. However, John seems to be about as clear on this as one can be. The door did not have to have a modern day lock that required a key to unlock it, even though certain facilities, like prisons, did have locks that were opened with a key. Most homes, until the 20th century were locked with bolts or with a stringed latch. At night, the family simply pulled the string inside and the door was locked. Some also added bars.

John tells us that the doors were locked for fear of the Jews, but how much danger were they in that night? They seemed to harbor more fear than was necessary, since Jesus, after identifying Himself to the soldiers and guards in the garden, and asked that His disciples be permitted to go free, and the

officials did not seem to be interested in arresting them. "I told you I am He," Jesus replied. "So if you're looking for Me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the words He had said: "I have not lost one of those You have given Me" (John 18:8-9).

We might add that the soldiers and guards permitted the disciples to go free, but that did not mean that they did not have to be concerned about the religious leaders who had gone to Pilate with trumped up charges and insisted that He be crucified. "Some think, therefore, that they had the doors not only shut, but barricaded: nevertheless Jesus came in, the doors being shut, i.e. while they continued shut. But how? By his almighty power: and farther we know not. Yet it is quite possible that no miraculous influence is here intended. The doors might be shut for fear of the Jews; and Jesus might open them, and enter in the ordinary way. Where there is no need for a miracle, a miracle is never wrought" [NAC, bold added by this writer]. This writer disagrees with the above statement that "it is quite possible that no miraculous influence is here intended." What happened here was definitely miraculous. Jesus stepped into the room through a locked door.

John has omitted the appearing of Jesus to the other women who came from the tomb, Matthew 28:9, and that to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, Luke 24:13, which all happened in during the same day. Quoting again from the NAC:

"The disciples would indeed be found that night, but not by their enemies. Jesus appeared in the locked room! Readers of this story are often tempted to ponder what kind of body Jesus could have that passed through walls or doors and yet was physically present so that he could be touched (cf. not only John 20:27 but also Matt 28:9; Luke 24:39) and even eat physical food (cf. Luke 24:41-43). The Gospel writers did not and undoubtedly could not explain such a mystery. What the early followers of Jesus did was witness to what they saw and touched (cf. 1 John 1:1)" [NAC].

PEACE TO YOU. This was the typical salutation at that time and place. Clarke notes that it was "His usual salutation and benediction. May every blessing of heaven and earth which you need be granted unto you!" [CLARKE].

OVERVIEW OF THIS VERSE: This passage is significant to believers of all ages. For one thing, it helps us to understand the importance early believers place on the first day of the week. During Paul's ministry he tried to go to Jerusalem for the major feast days, especially Passover. He had a special mission strategy, which included (1) following the major Roman highways to the major population centers; (2) going to the synagogue to worship on the Jewish Sabbath; and (3) when forced to leave the synagogue, he and other believers found another place to assemble and they started a church there. Borchert provides additional information on this subject:

"This story continues the unfolding of mystery. It begins with the notation that the time was evening. In other words, there was still darkness gripping the disciples. On the other hand, it was the first day of the week, the day that would become their day of rejoicing. That unbelievable day would change the way they would view everything.

It was a new day for worship and remembrance. That day would become known throughout Christian history as the ‘Lord’s Day’ (cf. Rev 1:10). This remarkable day would foreshadow the coming eschatological ‘Day of the Lord,’ a day predicted in the prophets (cf. Isa 2:11-19; 11:11; 12:1,6; Jer 31:6,27-34; Ezek 34:11-12; Joel 2:1-2,11,31; Amos 5:18-20; etc.) and reaffirmed in the New Testament (cf. John 6:39-40; 12:48; Matt 24:22,36; 26:29; Rom 2:5,16; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:2-4; Heb 10:25; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:10-11; Rev 6:16-17; 16:14; etc.). This first day of the week became the dividing day in history, the day when God revealed his power in an unmistakable manner” [NAC].

Let us remember that the Old Testament Sabbath began at 6:00 P.M. on Friday and ended at 6:00 P. M. On Saturday. Jesus did not command His followers to cease observing the Sabbath, but it seems that when persecution by non-believing Jews may have led Christians to begin observing Sunday as the Lord’s Day. In time, the Roman Catholic Church formally named Sunday officially the Lord’s Day.

Vincent’s comments are worth our scrutiny:

“Our Lord rested in the tomb on the Sabbath and arose from the dead on the first day of the week. Many people sincerely call Sunday ‘the Christian Sabbath,’ but Sunday is not the Sabbath Day. The seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, commemorates God’s finished work of Creation (Gen. 2:1-3). The Lord’s Day commemorates Christ’s finished work of redemption, the ‘new creation.’ God the Father worked for six days and then rested. God the Son suffered on the cross for six hours and then rested.

“God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a special ‘sign’ that they belonged to Him (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Neh. 9:14). The nation was to use that day for physical rest and refreshment both for man and beast; but for Israel, it was not commanded as a special day of assembly and worship. Unfortunately, the scribes and Pharisees added all kinds of restrictions to the Sabbath observance until it became a day of bondage instead of a day of blessing. Jesus deliberately violated the Sabbath traditions, though He honored the Sabbath Day.

“There were at least five Resurrection appearances of our Lord on that first day of the week: to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), the other women (Matt. 28:9-10), Peter (1 Cor. 15:5 and Luke 24:34), the two Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13-32), and the disciples minus Thomas (John 20:19-25). The next Sunday, the disciples met again and Thomas was with them (John 20:26-31). It would appear that the believers from the very first met together on Sunday evening, which came to be called ‘the Lord’s Day’ (Rev. 1:10). It appears that the early church met on the first day of the week to worship the Lord and commemorate His death and resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2) [VINCENT].

Jesus rose from the dead after the Sabbath was over. He arose on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). The change from worshipping on the seventh day to worshipping on the first day of the week did not happen at first because of some apostolic or church decree. It was brought about "from the beginning by the faith and witness of the first believers. For centuries, the Jewish Sabbath had been associated with Law: six days of work, and then you rest. But the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, is associated with grace: first there is faith in the living Christ, then there will be works" [VINCENT].

Vincent continues:

"There is no evidence in Scripture that God ever gave the original Sabbath command to the Gentiles, or that it was repeated for the church to obey. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the church epistles, but the Sabbath commandment is not repeated. However, Paul makes it clear that believers must not make 'special days' a test of fellowship or spirituality (Rom. 14:5ff; Col. 2:16-23) [VINCENT].

One wonders whether or not God had ever planned for believers to worship Him on any day other than the Sabbath. If the Jews had embraced Christ as Savior, might they not have continued worshipping Him on the Sabbath? I am sure we would stir up some strong feelings should that be debated in some quarters.

20: 20 - HE SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS. "*Having said this, He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*" According to Luke 24:37-39, the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost, but "His physical appearance reassured them that it was Jesus himself in their midst" [NCWB]. Jesus showed His disciples the scars in his hands and side. Luke (Luke 24:39) adds that He also showed them His feet. "Showed" is first aorist active indicative *deiknumi*. There was no mistaking what these disciples saw. This was no apparition. Jesus made a point of showing them His scars. They would not forget it. "This body, not yet glorified, retained the marks of the nails and of the soldier's spear, ample proof of the bodily resurrection against the modern view that only Christ's 'spirit' arose and against the Docetic notion that Jesus had no actual human body" [ATR].

The disciples had been mourning for Jesus and hiding out for "fear of the Jews." Now they are rejoicing in the surprising appearance of Jesus in their midst. "And just as he promised before his crucifixion, their weeping and mourning turned to an effervescent experience of joy (cf. 16:20). Although the appearance stories on the road to Emmaus and the meeting in Jerusalem in Luke (24:13-35,36-42) are quite different, the experience patterns in that Gospel are quite similar. A surprised identification of the physical Jesus with the risen Lord that results in an enthusiastic response at the realization that he was alive is a common characteristic of the Gospel witnesses" [NAC]. His disciples might have been arrested in the Garden with Jesus, but Jesus asked for their freedom and it was granted. However, continued to fear the Jewish religious leaders who had the authority to have the temple police to arrest them. So they met at night behind locked doors under the fear of the Jews. "(What a contrast with their boldness about seven weeks later on the day of

Pentecost!) Jesus passed through the door, as indicated by the fact that when the doors were locked, He came and stood among them (cf. v. 26). This showed the power of His new resurrection body. But His body had substantial form and continuity with His pre-Cross body (cf. v. 27)" [BKC].

20:21- PEACE TO YOU. *"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! Just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'"* As soon as He appeared to them, Jesus had said, "Peace to you" (vs. 19). Now He repeats it. Jesus, under the circumstances, would not have been repeating Himself without a purpose. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the One who dispenses peace, and the One who empowers believers to live in the unique peace He offers. They may not have remembered His earlier statement on peace: "Do you think that I came here to give peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!" (Luke 12:51).

He says "Peace to you!" here, but He had promised them that they would become His martyrs. On one occasion, Jesus said, "Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34). Jesus came to give those who believe on Him a peace that passes all understanding, but the peace He offers is not the fickle peace the world continually seeks, but never enjoys for any period of time.

This writer has had a lot of experience with this kind of peace. After being told by one doctor on a Monday that he didn't believe my chest pain was coming from a heart problem, I continued to experience pain in the left part of my chest, just below the collar bone. I was working out with heavy weights at my health club, and accepted my doctor's opinion that I had strained a pectoral muscle. The next day, I left the gym without working out, and started home. It seemed that every time I tried to turn I was blocked, until I came to Cypress in West Monroe, LA. I was able to get in the right lane and turn on a street I never liked to travel. There is no space between the two west bound lanes and the two east bound lanes. Just a double yellow line. The traffic is heavy and some drivers are impatient.

As soon as I settled on Cypress the thought came to me as clearly as any thought I have ever had: "It doesn't make sense to drive all the way home and then have to turn around and drive back to the hospital. I should stop at Glenwood Regional Medical Center." I tried to dismiss the feeling, but it only became stronger. Going to the emergency room was not something anyone would have expected of me, but when I got to Thomas Road I turned left, and then I turned into the entrance to the emergency room parking area, with one thought in mind: "If there is no parking space open I will drive on home." Both feet had been damaged by bars and "appliances" two doctors had prescribed for my feet in Texas. They had come very close to totaling me out with their "appliances". Two orthopedists confirmed that and explained it years later. I knew I couldn't walk very far, and I was relieved when a parking space was open right in front of me as I entered the parking lot.

I walked into the emergency room and saw that both windows were occupied. I immediately began debating whether or not to stay and take a chance on a window being open before my feet forced me to leave. I was trying to decide whether or not to try to stand until one of the windows was clear, or leave and drive home, which would have taken about 30 minutes to get home. Highway 15 was

under construction and we had to take a significant detour. Just before I made the decision the door to ER swung open and a nurse asked, "Can we help you?" I have observed emergency rooms for years and that simply does not happen!

The ER doctor and two nurses went to work on me. The doctor finally told me he didn't think it was my heart, but he would order a stress test. While he was filling out papers to release me I had a major heart attack on the table. The nurses caught it and the doctor told me I should thank some very alert nurses.

I was in ICU for two weeks before they finally settled on by-pass surgery. They debated trying a new procedure called a stent, but finally agreed on the surgery. One day, my cardiologist, Dr. Tommy Causey, came into my ICR room and stopped and said, "The nurses out there are absolutely amazed at the way you are dealing with this." They would come in and ask, "How do you feel?" I would tell them I felt great. They would then ask, "You are not tired?" or "You are not weak?" I would always tell them that I was not tired, I was not weak, and I was not worried. I didn't know why they were so surprised. I told them that I had submitted myself to the Lord and to the medical staff and I was trusting them. They did say that my physical condition was a major factor. I had bench pressed 360 pounds a few days earlier and set a goal of bench pressing 400 pounds on my sixtieth birthday (a lot depended on a shoulder strain).

I had a peace they did not understand and it sustained me. I also had an opportunity to be a witness for Jesus Christ in ICU at two different hospitals, Glenwood and St. Francis. Let me stress that I did not muster up the courage to face my surgery and recover in such a way that others might have been impressed. This was a peace that the Lord gave me. Another thought became very real to me: it was as though the Lord was reminding me, "You didn't choose Me, I chose you."

In the Spring of 2010, I entered the Monroe Surgical Center to have a new battery installed in my pace maker and defibrillator. They decided on adding a wireless lead, but when the surgeon missed the lead they had to have someone else come in the next day and install it surgically. They let fluid build up in my lungs and then my cardiologist brought in a lung specialist and they really got busy with me. Most of the nurses there were unusually committed to the Lord and we talked often about the Bible and their commitment. There were very fewer patients there over the week end, so we had an opportunity to visit more than one normally would. They told me they could stand in the hall and hear me breathing through the closed door. One came in one day and asked, "Do you know you are in heart failure?" I assured her I did know that, and she asked, "how long have you known it?" I said, "About fourteen years." Dr. Hammett, the pulmonologist, came in one day and said, "The nurses here are saying some pretty amazing things about you. I am impressed?" I was surprised! I didn't know what they were saying, but I was genuinely surprised, whatever it was.

Once again, I did not generate the faith, courage, or strength to meet my challenges in a way that would produce the peace I experienced. The Lord gave me that peace, just as He gives us the faith that is compatible with His Grace. That is faith unto salvation. I have spent a lot of time worrying over little things. I have failed to meet small issues with the faith that I realize now was never

applied. I can recall many times when I fretted over little things, in the pastorate, in business, in relationships. But when it came to life and death issues there was a peace in my heart and mind that would accept no worry, doubt, or fear. While I cannot explain it, I do know that Jesus really does give those who believe in Him a peace that passes all understanding.

I ALSO SEND YOU. Jesus, as soon as He said, “Peace to you,” He added, “Just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Every serious Bible student is aware of the fact that the two statements Jesus makes here are consistent with the message of both the Synoptics and the Gospel According to John. In the first placed, the Father sent the Son into the world with a special purpose in mind. That the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world is stressed in John 3:16 and numerous other passages in the New Testament. Various writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit to emphasize that great truth. In this verse, Jesus Himself boldly makes that statement. The Father had sent the Son, and in sending Him, “God made it eminently clear that Jesus was to be the Savior of the world (cf. 4:42). Moreover, Jesus’ loving concern for his followers is repeatedly expressed in the Farewell Cycle, and his love was to be duplicated in the Christian community (cf. 13:34-35; 14:18-21; 15:12-17; 16:23-24; 17:25-26)” [NAC].

The second statement, “I also send you,” has received a lot of attention by students of the New Testament. Does Jesus issue Great Commission both here and in Matthew 28:19-20? Some seem to think so, but when I hear that I am reminded of an article I wrote many years ago for *The Outreach Magazine*, a publication of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now, LifeWay Christian Resources). I was asked by the editor, Mavis Allen, to write a few articles. I was her mother’s pastor in Bastrop, Louisiana, and I spent a lot of time with various members of her family over a period of some 30 years. Mavis came to our home and made pictures of my young sons and published them from time to time in the magazine. I opened the magazine one time and was surprised to see my sons covering the whole first page.

I wanted to do a good job for Miss Allen, so I invested a lot of time in the article I wrote on soul winning, or outreach. The verse I focused on was Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” In that article, I made the statement that Jesus was repeating the Great Commission to His disciples just before His Ascension. I was thinking of the urgency of that commission. Dr. H. Leo Eddleman, who had been president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, had become a close friend back when he and I would often be the only ones in the gym. He and my pastor, Henning Andrews, were good friends and his father had been pastor of my home church at one time.

Dr. Eddleman was preaching a revival for us in Bastrop, Louisiana, and writing his commentary on the Book of Acts when he had even a few minutes free. I was preparing a study guide for Acts and getting ready to teach it, so I often picked his brain on difficult passages, like Acts 2:38 and Acts 19:1ff. I mentioned the article I had written and told him that I had written that Jesus had repeated the Great Commission before His Ascension. Dr. Eddleman, who had majored in Greek in Seminary, and was recognized by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as “having the best working knowledge of Hebrew

of any non-Jew in the United States. He said, “Johnny, Jesus was not repeating the Great Commission. That was not necessary. What he was doing was stating in a predictive sense that His disciples would carry out the Great Commission, once the Holy Spirit came and indwelt believers.” That makes a lot of sense, as he usually did over a period when I would pick his brain.

So, is Jesus giving the Great Commission here, only to repeat it before His Ascension, or is He simply stating a fact they had heard before? In the first place, He connects His being sent by the Father to His sending them into the world to win lost people, baptize them, and disciple (train) them. “His ‘sending’ (pempo, present tense) of his followers was to be patterned on the fact that the Father ‘sent’ (apestalken, perfect tense) him. No major distinction should be made here in the use of two different verbs. The use of the perfect rather than the aorist in reference to the commission of Jesus should be understood to indicate that the mission of Jesus still continues and that the divine mission is not merely in mortal hands” [NAC].

One might also ask whether Jesus was commissioning those ten Apostles present in that room (Thomas being absent and Judas dead), or was He commissioning all believers to be His witnesses? Some see this as a commissioning of His apostles, and that may have some merit. There is no doubt that Jesus had told His disciples what He expected of them any number of times over the past three years. He had sent them out on a mission trip to give them practical experience. The Great Commission, however, applies to all believers. To sum it up, “Jesus graced them with his peace and then commissioned them just as he had been commissioned by the Father. The disciples were to be his ongoing testimony, even as he had been the Father’s. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son now sends the apostles. But before doing so, he imparted the Holy Spirit into them” [NCWB].

20:22 - HE BREATHED ON THEM. “*After saying this, He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’*” This verse has spawned debates among sincere Christians for a long time. In Acts, Luke wrote that the Father sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Jesus, we must remember, is the fulfillment of Passover: Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). He promised that He would return to heaven and send the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower saints on the day of Pentecost. Is this verse a contradiction here? Of course not, as Borchet explains by quoting Westcott:

“in Acts Luke assigns the experience of receiving the Spirit to Pentecost or fifty days after the Passover (Acts 2:1-3) while John in this verse links the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Easter events. Westcott argued that because there was no article attached to *pneuma hagion* this event marked a spiritual endowment given to the disciples in order to prepare them for the Pentecost event. In this way he distinguished between the work of new birth and the Spirit's work in empowering believers for ministry” [NAC, bold added by this writer].

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. Here, John tells us that Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” He also told them that He would return to heaven and send the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower believers (Acts. 1:8). Which is it? Who is right, John or Jesus?

Before we answer that question, here is another one: Did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost? The Authorized version, not taking away anything the KJV, has contributed to mankind and to the Kingdom of God, has been the source of some measure of confusion for rendering the Greek word for Spirit, “Ghost”. The Greek word means air, wind, or breath, rather than ghost. Christians are rightly celebrating the 400th anniversary of the publishing of the Authorized Version, the KJV at the very time I am writing these words (2011). The HCSB, the NASB, and other translations rightly translate the word “Spirit”, and it is correctly capitalized because the Holy Spirit is a Person, the Third Person of the Trinity. But, why belabor that point? It is because I have heard so many people over the years make the claim, “I prayed for the Holy Ghost at church last night until I got “it”. The Holy Spirit is no more an “it” that Jesus is an “it”.

In John 7:39, the Spirit is also mentioned without using an article in Greek. In fact, the “Holy Spirit” is referred to over fifty times in the New Testament without the article, three times in the Gospel According to John (1:33; 14:26; 20:22).

“John viewed the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and the ascension of Jesus as a unified event. Does that mean it is impossible to harmonize/reconcile the Johannine and Lukan (Acts) texts, as Barrett has stated? Or does it mean that the Johannine writer played loose with history or created the stories to suit his own purposes or was polemicizing against Acts, as J. Koehler argued? The answer to these questions must be a resounding no! So, just as God, who in Gen 2:7 (cf. also Ezek 37:9) breathed into man the breath of life and he became a ‘living being’ (nephesh hayyah), Jesus also breathed into his followers the new breath and let the Spirit loose among his followers so that they might be empowered to do his will” [NAC].

The love of God reaches out to sinners with a promise of salvation, sanctification, and glorification to all who receive Jesus Christ by faith, through grace. At the same time, the holiness of God will not allow Him to receive or approve anyone whose life stands in opposition to His holiness.

The root word for Spirit is *pneuma*, which may mean spirit, wind, air (or blow, as in breath or breathing). The Greek word is the source for a number of words we used today. The early American automobile owners, I am told, rejoiced when they were able to buy pneumatic tires for their automobiles. They were called pneumatic because they were filled with air. The air was pumped into inner tubes, the earliest of which were made from red rubber. My father told me they cut up old red inner tubes and used the strips in making sling shots, and that they worked a lot better than the black ones that came out later. There was more “stretch” to them (more elasticity). During the Great Depression, my father said, they hunted with sling shots because they couldn’t afford shotgun shells at times. They were not just hunting for sport, they were trying to “put meat on the table.” He killed squirrels with a sling shots. Later, manufacturers came out with tubeless tires, which are still pneumatic because they are filled with air before mounting on an automobile.

There are other ways we use the word. I have an air compressor in my shop and also some tools that I

use with it. They are called pneumatic tools (wrenches, nail guns, staple guns, etc). They are powered by air from the air compressor.

The same word comes into play when we speak of pneumonia (which has to do with one's breathing). God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Jesus breathed on His disciples and told them to "Receive the Holy Spirit." Whatever else He may have meant, He was preparing them to receive the Holy Spirit in full measure on the Day of Pentecost. At the same time, He was blessing them with the Holy Spirit at that moment, and for the time they would have to wait for His Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit for the dispensation (time or era) to which they must look, the dispensation in which Christians live today, and shall live until our Lord returns.

FOR THOUGHT: *One of the most important attributes of God is His holiness. Someone may ask, "How can a God who is supposed to love us let something bad happen to good people?" In the first place, the Scripture tells us that no one is there are no good people. We may do good works as human beings, but as God judges, no one is good: "there is no one who does good, there is not even one" (Romans 3:12).*

God is love, but He is more than that. As the Creator He is set apart from all He created. He is above it, He sustains it, and He uses it to serve His purpose. God is also, as noted above, holy. He is different from that which He created. He is set apart from the things He created. We must be prepared to answer in our day those who claim they see God in all He created. God created all things, but transcends all things. All He created testifies for and of the Creator. We must also be ready to answer the New Age movements, who were open in the 1970s, and 1980s, but when Christian leaders began to identify the movement for what it is, they moved under the umbrella of Post-Modernism. That umbrella, by the way, is broad enough for Humanism and all the New Age movements. The religion of the New Age movements is monism (All is one and one is all).

My brother-in-law, Jimmy Furr, was for twelve years one of the leading authorities in America, and one of the most popular speakers on New Age Movements. He worked as Regional Director for the Interfaith Witness Department, a division of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. When he was still learning about New Age movements, he flew to Los Angeles to attend a major New Age convention. At one point, a lady walked up to him and said, "I know you." Surprised by her statement, he asked, "You do? How do you know me? She said, "I am you." All is one, and one is all.

Those who remember the angel craze back in the eighties and nineties may find it interesting that one of the most popular programs on television for several years featured New Age angels. The show? *Touched by an Angel*. Another popular television show, *Texas Rangers*, featured New Age philosophies from time to time. Chuck Norris is a committed Christian and while he was simply playing his role, when he the character he portrayed went into a trance and received communication from someone who had been buried alive, or read the mind of his American Indian friend from a distance, that denotes New Age religious practices.

The purpose of mentioning those two television program is not to criticize the stars. It does, however, reveal that a lot of people in the entertainment industry were influenced by New Age religious views. The modern Christian must understand the difference between Jesus Christ, the Son of the one and only Creator. When they speak of the Christ in you, that is not the Christ of the Bible, the Word (John 1:1), by whom all things were created. Through books, magazines, tapes, and live lectures, they assured members and prospective members that if you want to find Christ, just look within yourself. You will find that you are your own Christ. This is a satanic message, as surely as the movement is satanic.

The New Agers have room under their tent for any religion, as long as it is not mono-theistic. Jimmy Furr and friends set up a tent at a huge New Age extravaganza in Florida a number of years ago and from their booth began giving away New Testaments. People in the area unleashed angry verbal attacks on them. They had room for any and all religions, just as long as they could not say, "This is the only way." That is exactly what every Christian must say: Jesus is the only way by which any person can be saved. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

20:23 - IF YOU FORGIVE. *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* This is another of those verses that require prayerful consideration. Did Jesus ever transfer the right to forgive sins to the apostles, or to other disciples? Is that what he is doing here? The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers a reasonable solution to a seeming problem here:

"Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31-34). Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven's terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus' sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is not forgiven" [BKC].

Robertson offers a scholarly Greek word study before concluding that

"The power to forgive sin belongs only to God, but Jesus claimed to have this power and right (Mark 2:5-7). What he commits to the disciples and to us is the power and privilege of giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God by correctly announcing the terms of forgiveness. There is no proof that he actually transferred to the apostles or their successors the power in and of themselves to forgive sins. In Mat 16:19; Mat 18:18 we have a similar use of the rabbinical metaphor of binding and loosing by proclaiming and teaching. Jesus put into the hands of Peter and of all believers the keys of the Kingdom which we should use to open the door for those who wish to enter. This glorious promise applies to all believers who will tell the story of Christ's love for men" [ATR].

The New Commentary of the Whole Bible adds: In

“any literal and authoritative sense, this power was never exercised by one of the apostles, and plainly was never understood by them as possessed by them or conveyed to them. The power to intrude upon the relation between men and God cannot have been given by Christ to his ministers in any but a ministerial or declarative sense—as the authorized interpreters of his word, while in the actings of his ministers, the real nature of the power committed to them is seen in the exercise of church discipline” [NCWB].

Thomas Sees Jesus and Believes

20:24 - THOMAS. “*But one of the Twelve, Thomas (called ‘Twin’), was not with them when Jesus came.*” John was the first person on earth to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead without seeing Him first (John 20:8), but not the first to see the risen Lord. That honor had gone to Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus appeared at the tomb. John was among the ten apostles who were meeting in a locked room when Jesus suddenly appeared to them. He offers the simple historical note that Thomas was not with them when Jesus appeared to them on the Sunday evening after Jesus had risen and appeared four times to various followers. There is no way John would ever forget this incredible experience. He probably would not have forgotten who was present and who was absent, nor would he forget what happened eight days later when Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles.

I walked into a health club in Greenville, Mississippi a number of years ago, and as I entered the large room where men worked out on certain days and women on other days (many health clubs became “bi-vocational”, but that would come later). As I entered the main workout room I walked into the middle of a heated debate. Little did I realize that I would be caught up in it.

Jack, a tall body builder I had talked with on numerous occasions, glanced my way and turning to the man he had backed up against the wall, said, “Here’s a preacher, ask him!” I was returning from a trip to a Memphis hospital to visit my father, as I recall, and only wanted to get in a brief workout, a few minutes in the steam room and whirlpool, and a shower before getting on the road to Louisiana again. I really didn’t want to get involved, but with Jack’s insistence, I knew I needed to stop and listen to what he was saying.

The man Jack had backed up against a wall was a man from New York who had moved to the area to teach in a university an hour or so from the health club. The man was narcissistic in his attitude toward Jack and the other men, condescending toward them, and arrogant in greeting me. He was having a lot of fun with them. They had been discussing the Iran hostage crisis when the professor made the statement that you could not blame those Muslims because there was no way they could know anything about Jesus Christ. In fact they had no way of knowing Jesus ever lived, he insisted, because no Roman historian ever mentioned Christ. The professor turned to me and asked, “Can you name any First Century historian who ever mentioned Jesus? I said, “Yes, I can”, as I recalled two Roman historians (Tacitus and Suetonius) who had mentioned the reason Nero ordered Christians out

of Rome. They noted that it was because of one “Christus” that he handed down that ruling.

The professor demanded, “Name them!” I said, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” The man wreaked of arrogance and condescension as he countered, “Those were not historians, they were gospel writers. Can you name one historian who ever mentioned Christ?” I said, “Yes.” Again, he demanded, “Name them!” Again, I said, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” It seemed obvious that the professor thought he was talking with some religious nut. He shook his head and laughed as he said, “Those are not historians! They were gospel writers. Can you name any historian who ever mentioned Christ?” Again, I said, “Yes”, and again he demanded an answer.

Finally, I said, “I know what you are looking for, and I can tell you that two Roman historians did mention Christ. I mentioned Tacitus, but then added, “I will not concede my point. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were Gospel writers, but they were also historians. In fact, I said, “Luke’s credentials as an historian have been irrefutably established by a number of people. At that time there were people who were looking at the off season voyage of the ill fated ship that was taking Paul to Rome after he, as a prisoner in Caesarea, had appealed to Caesar. Using computers, they determined that the storm would have blown the ship off course and driven it exactly the way Luke described it.

I might have added that John, the last Gospel writer, often gave a personal (eye witness) account of events surrounding our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. John and Luke were not “just” historians. They were much more. Anyone who makes a serious study of Communism in the old Soviet Union will have to deal with historical determinism, just as Americans must deal with historical revisionism. If history did not support what early Communists taught, they ordered their “historians” to rewrite their history in order to come to the conclusion they wanted. In America, if you read a history book that leaves out George Washington’s prayer, or his comments about the Lord, look up what David Barton (*Wall Builders*) has written, or what he has in his library that tells us of the deep faith of many of the Founders.

20:25 - WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD. *“So the other disciples kept telling him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘If I don’t see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!’”* John and the other disciples who had been together when Jesus appeared to them found Thomas and told him that Jesus had appeared to them: “We,” they exclaimed, “have seen the Lord.” It is interesting that they did not announce that they had seen Jesus of Nazareth, they said they had seen the Lord. In the Pauline Epistles, Jesus is often called “Lord”, whereas God the Father is usually called God, or God the Father. Jesus is called the Lord, Christ, or our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Borchet explains:

“The use of the term kyrios is fascinating in this Gospel. Sometimes it merely seems to mean ‘sir’ (cf. 4:11,15,19; 5:7; 9:36). At other times it seems to be used to address Jesus as an important leader or rabbi (cf. 6:31; 11:3,12,21,27,32,39; 13:6,25,36,37; 14:5,8,22; 20:2,13). At one point Jesus accepts for himself their use of the term ‘Lord’ (13:13-14). But as one moves through the resurrection stories, the term begins to take on a much clearer identification and has a divine confessional ring, as it

appears here in 20:20 and in 21:7 (also apparently in Mary's report at 20:15). But the term reaches the confessional epitome with the formulaic announcement of Thomas in 20:28. The editorial statements of the evangelist concerning the Lord in 4:1; 6:23; 9:38; 11:2; 12:21 must therefore imply significant theological weight as well" NAC].

IF I DON'T SEE. Thomas responded with the words that have for two thousand years identified himself as Doubting Thomas: *"If I don't see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!"* Thomas is often severely condemned for his absence from the room when Jesus appeared the first time, as well as his refusal to believe their testimony. For example, Clarke takes him to task for separating himself from the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them: "And, by absenting himself from the company of the disciples, he lost this precious opportunity of seeing and hearing Christ; and of receiving (at this time) the inestimable blessing of the Holy Ghost. Where two or three are assembled in the name of Christ, he is in the midst of them. Christ had said this before: Thomas should have remembered it, and not have forsaken the company of the disciples" [CLARKE].

If Thomas had refused to join them in that locked room we might agree with him to a point, but we really do not know why Thomas was absent at that time. How do we know he was in rebellion against Jesus or the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them? We are not given enough information to draw that conclusion. While thinking about that, it would be a good idea to weigh the information we are given here against an earlier commitment he had made to Jesus. After Jesus received word that his friend Lazarus was dead, he delayed three days before going to visit his sisters. John records what happened after the delay: "So Jesus then told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died. I'm glad for you that I wasn't there, so that you may believe. But let's go to him.' Then Thomas (called 'Twin') said to his fellow disciples, 'Let's go so that we may die with Him'" (John 11:14-16). At that moment one would hardly call him Doubting Thomas.

Thomas stated in no uncertain terms that he would never believe that Jesus has risen and appeared to them unless he could see and touch the wounds in his hands, and put his hands in the wound in his side. Was he doubting that Jesus has risen, or was he stubbornly rejecting the testimony of his friends. Today, we may hear something and respond with something like, "Seeing is believing," yet remain open to proof. I am not trying to justify Thomas, but I refused to condemn him as severely as some have through the ages. Martin Luther once said, **"If you do not confess Christ at the point of attack, you have denied Him, regardless of how loudly you profess to believe in Him."** That being the case who among us has not shown doubt, and who among us has never denied Him?

When I tried to recall those words which Martin Luther wrote over 500 years ago, I forgot the word "attack". I tried several words, but knew immediately I had the wrong word. I asked my good friend, Dr. Gene Jeffries, if he could help me, but before I heard back from him I recalled the word. Dr. Jeffries responded the next day: "Johnny, being the genius I am, I relied upon Jerry Beavan for the source of the Schaeffer quotation on Luther. Beavan wrote as follows...

"This may be the quote referred to, and it may have been modified by Schaeffer to

make the point he had in mind . . . it is essentially a play on words, making the distinction between ‘professing’ Christ and ‘confessing’ Christ.

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point” (from *The Great Evangelical Disaster*).

“Schaeffer was not the greatest of scholars, although he did develop a very effective populist theology, and attracted a very loyal company of seekers and followers. During that period in Europe when I accompanied Carl Henry in visiting Karl Barth in Basel, we also visited Schaeffer in L'Abri. I hope this helps . . . JB [Dr. Jerry Beavan].

Dr. Gene Jeffries has been one of my “go to” men when I had a question about Greek, and Dr. Jeffries has assured me that Dr. Beavan is his “go to” person when it comes to Greek. Those who have read the *Christianity Today Magazine* may recall the great contributions Dr. Beavan has made to that magazine. I have both heard Dr. Carl F. H. Henry and read his work, and if he asked Dr. Beavan to travel with him to visit Barth and Schaeffer, I can understand why Dr. Jeffries respects him.

Thomas has often been condemned and vilified by Christians because of the doubt he expressed upon hearing that the other disciples’ claim that Jesus had appeared to them.

“But throughout this Gospel he has been presented as a realist, a person who evaluated situations on the basis of what he could perceive. He understood the dangers of going south to Judea (11:16), and he wanted more than words in order to follow Jesus to his place of preparation (14:5). But he was willing to take risks for Jesus (11:16), and in these verses he is also capable of reaching magnificent conclusions. Thomas is not merely a pathetic doubter. He is a paradigm of many Christians who are capable of great possibilities as well as hesitations in faith” [NAC].

20:26 - AFTER EIGHT DAYS. “*After eight days His disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, ‘Peace to you!’*” After eight days, meaning that day plus seven more, Jesus made another miraculous appearance to the eleven apostles (twelve minus Judas) on next Sunday evening. Though we are not given that information, I believe we may safely assume that they were meeting in the same room. The doors were locked. John uses the plural, “doors” rather than the singular, “door”. Does this mean that both the door to the house and the door to this room were locked? It would seem so.

THOMAS WAS WITH THEM. John’s narrative is rich in personal interests, as well as eternal truth. “At their next meeting, eight days later, Thomas was present when Jesus appeared again. When he saw Jesus, doubting Thomas became believing Thomas; he exclaimed to Jesus, **My Lord and my God.**

This is one of the clearest affirmations of Jesus' deity in the NT. (See also John 1:1, 18; 8:58; 10:30; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20 in NASB or NIV.)" [NCWB].

Thomas is often called "doubting Thomas", but the student of the New Testament should be aware of the courage and faith of this Apostle. The Lord was not through with him yet.

JESUS CAME. Robertson notes that John uses the "vivid dramatic present" tense: he suddenly appeared, coming through a locked door, just as He had done one week earlier (John 20:19)" [ATR]. There are people who will not believe that Jesus appeared through a locked door, any more than they believe He could walk on water. I have often said, "If you don't believe God could create all things just as we are informed in Genesis, Chapter 1, please spell your God with a small 'g"! I spell my God with a big "G" because My God is a big God, and a powerful God." A locked door was no challenge to the Son of God. Barnes associates this timing with the Christian practice of Sunday worship:

"From this it appears that they thus early set apart this day for assembling together, and Jesus countenanced it by appearing twice with them. It was natural that the apostles should observe this day, but not probable that they would do it without the sanction of the Lord Jesus. His repeated presence gave such a sanction, and the historical fact is indisputable that from this time this day was observed as the Christian Sabbath. See Acts 20:7; 1Co 16:2 Re 1:10" [BARNES].

It is possible that some of the early Jewish Christians wanted to worship with their unconverted Jewish friends and family members on the Jewish Sabbath, and then with Christians on Sunday.

PEACE TO YOU. This was the traditional Hebrew greeting, but it seems to take on special significance when spoken by the Prince of Peace. He is the One who offers to all believers a peace which passes all understanding. My good friend, Gene Abbey, responded to a statement in Sunday School by saying, "I have looked death in the face, and I wasn't afraid." I knew, from personal experience, exactly what he meant.

20: 27 - HE SAID TO THOMAS. *"Then He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and observe My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer.'" As far as we can tell from John's account, Jesus appeared suddenly, said, "Peace to you," and immediately turned to Thomas and began addressing the objections Thomas had offered when the other disciples had told them that Jesus had appeared to them the previous Sunday. He knew exactly what Thomas had said, and immediately addressed his objections. Thomas had said, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!"* (See verse 25 in this chapter.) Now, Jesus invites him to put his finger in His hand, and to reach out and put his hand into the wound in His side. This must have been the last thing Thomas expected, and one wonders what was going through his mind when the Lord spoke those words to him.

POINT TO CONSIDER: *How did Jesus know what Thomas had said? Today, the risen, ascended Lord is omnipresent, everywhere at the same time. But what about the resurrected, but not yet*

ascended Lord? All we actually know is that He made a number of appearances to disciples. Where was He at other times, the times when He was not visible to anyone anywhere? When He was in the flesh He could only be one place at a time, but now He could appear at will and disappear at will. Could He, however, “monitor” a number of conversations at the same time? In different places? Someday He may answer those questions for us.

A BELIEVER. Jesus, without waiting for a response, continued, “Don’t be an unbeliever, but a believer.” As Robertson points out, the first part of Jesus’ statement is the “present middle imperative of ginomai in prohibition, ‘stop becoming disbelieving.’ The doubt of Thomas in the face of the witness of the others was not a proof of his superior intelligence. Sceptics usually pose as persons of unusual mentality. The medium who won Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to spiritualism has confessed that it was all humbug, but he deceived the gullible novelist. But Thomas had carried his incredulity too far. Note play on apistos (disbelieving) and pistos (believing)” [ATR]. What Jesus desires of every unbeliever is simply this - believe! There can be no doubt that when Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and My God,” this was a confession from the depth of his being. “Doubting Thomas became believing Thomas; he exclaimed to Jesus, **My Lord and my God**. This is one of the clearest affirmations of Jesus’ deity in the NT. (See also John 1:1, 18; 8:58; 10:30; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20 in NASB or NIV.)” [NCWB, bold in the original].

20:28 - MY LORD. “*Thomas responded to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’*” What an amazing response! He might have said most anything from an excuse to an apology, but he did neither. He seriously, fervently confessed, “My Lord and my God!” While I would not say this is the high point of the Fourth Gospel, it is certainly one of the great proclamations of this Gospel.

“Thomas’ response, **My Lord and My God!** is the high point of the Gospel. Here was a skeptical man, confronted by the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. He announced that Jesus, the Man of Galilee, is God manifest in the flesh. Thus the truths in the first chapter were realized personally in this apostle (1:1, 14, 18). The Resurrection (a) demonstrated that what Jesus predicted about His being raised was true (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; John 2:19), (b) proved that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4) and was sent by God (‘vindicated by the Spirit,’ 1 Tim. 3:16), (c) testified to the success of His mission of salvation (Rom. 4:25), (d) entitled Jesus to a position of glory (1 Peter 1:11), and (e) proclaimed that Jesus is the ‘Lord’ (Acts 2:36)” [BKC, bold in he original].

20:29 - BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN. “*Jesus said, ‘Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who believe without seeing.’*” Neither pen nor tongue of man can improve on Jesus’ response to Thomas’ confession. It is not enough to say that “seeing is believing”, for that statement is often made in a joking manner. “Though Thomas hailed Jesus as his Lord and God, Jesus reproved Thomas’s way of faith—for he first saw and then believed. The blessed ones are **they that have not seen, and yet have believed**. This blessing would be effective for the millions of Christians who have never seen Jesus yet believe in him (see 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:8)” [NCWB, bold in original]. This blessing is freely bestowed upon all who simply believe in Jesus. I have never seen Jesus in the flesh, nor heard him with my ears, but I am absolutely convinced that I am going to see

Him in the very near future, either when He returns for His church or when I die and hear Jesus say, "Come ye blessed of My Father." Vincent offers a fitting summary to this verse:

"It is an encouragement to us to know that the Lord had a personal interest in and concern for 'Doubting Thomas.' He wanted to strengthen his faith and include him in the blessings that lay in store for His followers. Thomas reminds us that unbelief robs us of blessings and opportunities. It may sound sophisticated and intellectual to question what Jesus did, but such questions are usually evidence of hard hearts, not of searching minds. Thomas represents the 'scientific approach' to life—and it did not work! After all, when a skeptic says, 'I will not believe unless--' he is already admitting that he does believe! **He believes in the validity of the test or experiment that he has devised!** If he can have faith in his own 'scientific approach,' why can he not have faith in what God has revealed?"

"We need to remind ourselves that everybody lives by faith. The difference is in the *object* of that faith. Christians put their faith in God and His Word, while unsaved people put their faith in themselves" [VINCENT, bold added by this writer].

The Purpose of the Gospel According to John

20:30 - MANY OTHER SIGNS. "*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book.*" New Testament scholars, and interested students, join in seeing this as John's inspired statement as to the purpose of this Gospel account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The timing and place are interesting. We do not find it in connection with any of the miracles Jesus worked during His earthly ministry. It follows the second miraculous appearance of Jesus to the full group of disciples who were gathered together one week after His first appearance (when Thomas was absent), probably in the same place). He suddenly appeared before them, even though the door was locked. Why did John not give the purpose for which Jesus worked those miracles after He fed the five thousand men plus women and children? Why not insert it after they had seen Jesus walk on water? Two reasons come to mind: (1) it seems appropriate to place it near the end of the Gospel, before Jesus ascended into heaven, and (2) the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the crowning miracle of the New Testament. In fact, it is the crowning miracle of the entire Bible, and certainly the greatest miracle of human history. As stressed earlier, when the New Testament speaks of the Resurrection, we should think in terms of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ together. Neither is complete without the others.

Apart from the Resurrection there would be no salvation, for the enemy (Satan) would have been victorious, and no one could be saved if Jesus had not defeated death, hell, and the grave. Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10 that one must believe in the Resurrection in order to be saved.

"To have read this Gospel and not believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is to have missed John's purpose for writing it. This Gospel is focused on the person, Jesus. He is the Christ, the Son of God, who came to give life to those who believe in his name (i.e., his identity). This Gospel constantly

dwells on this theme. Significantly, John wrote this Gospel primarily to encourage those who already believed to continue in their faith. This can be inferred because John used the present tense for the subjunctive verb *pisteuo*??, rather than the aorist (according to the best manuscript evidence). **The aorist would have indicated initial belief, but the present indicates continual belief.** If indeed John intended this Gospel to go to those who already believed, **we can understand why this Gospel has so much more theological, spiritual, and experiential depth than the Synoptic Gospels.** Without detracting from the other Gospels, it is generally admitted that **John's is the most profound.** At the same time, it is **the most simple.** New believers benefit from it, and so do the most mature" [BKC, bold added by this writer].

John tells us not only that the miracles he was inspired to include in this Gospel were a testimony about Jesus and His ministry, but many other works were performed in the presence of His disciples which are not recorded in the Fourth Gospel. While it would be interesting to know many more of the miracles He performed, the ones selected for our reading in the Fourth Gospel are sufficient to bear out the purpose of this Gospel.

20:31 - SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE. *But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.* When Jesus fed the five thousand men, plus women and children, He was trying teach those people a very important lesson, and He did not leave it to that multitude or to the modern reader to figure out His purpose. He said, **"I am the bread of life"** (John 6:48). When He arrived in Bethany and found Martha grieving, He and offered her comfort which she could not fully comprehend at first. Even before raising Lazarus from the dead, He said to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

When He healed the man who had been born blind was He not teaching that He is the Great Physician? When He walked on the surface of the Sea of Galilee was He not demonstrating to His disciples that He is the Lord of the universe? Who better than the Agent of Creation to demonstrate His lordship over the elements?

When all the signs recorded by John are considered, Jesus was teaching those who witnessed the signs that He is the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God. That which is declared in the Prologue to this Gospel is demonstrated and illustrated by the signs, and just in case anyone missed His purpose, He states it clearly at this time. Further more, the Holy Spirit, who miraculously inspired John to record this statement, has miraculously preserved the Scripture over the centuries, and He miraculously illuminates the minds of believers so that they may understand it and apply it in their daily life and ministry.

BY BELIEVING. So there could be no misunderstanding here, Jesus states the purpose of His miracles. It was not that readers might have a generic awareness of His identity. When I was growing up, and when I was a young minister of the Gospel, I often asked people if they believed there is a God, and even asked, "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God." I don't remember anyone in our section of the Bible Belt who told me they did not believe Jesus is the Son of God. I even asked that

question of prisoners in the Hinds County jail in Jackson, Mississippi, and there were some hard cases there; and still no one said, "I don't believe that." That included murderers. I asked prisoners at the Mississippi State Penitentiary if they believed in God, and if they believed Jesus is the Son of God. Things have changed a lot since then, but the prisoners who filed into the mess hall to hear my message were quiet and respectful. I had one young man to walk by me, who gave every appearance of waiting for his opportunity to shake hands and speak to me. Instead, just as he reached me he gave a quick jerk of his left shoulder, looked past me and kept walking, as though he had nothing but contempt for the message he had heard. That happened only one time.

I visited in homes and asked people if they believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I would even hold up my Bible and ask, "Do you believe this is the Word of God?" I do not remember anyone who said he or she did not believe that. Where it got interesting was when I went beyond that to ask if they had ever asked the Lord to forgive their sins, and give them eternal life. That is when I heard about the deacon or Sunday School teacher in the community who did a lot worse than they. Or, they might say, "I don't believe God can save me, as bad as I have been."

Jesus clearly taught that "By believing you might have life in His name." It is important to stress that believing in His name is tantamount to believing in Him. It helps to remember that in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, the word "name" is often used to denote the person, so "in His name" means that one must place his or her faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

In the Book of Isaiah, the Lord brought serious charges against His Chosen People with some very interesting words: "The ox **KNOWS** its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding trough, [but] Israel **DOES NOT KNOW**; My people do not understand" (Isaiah 1:3). I am indebted to the late Dr. J. Hardee Kennedy, the Old Testament and Hebrew scholar who was often quoted by other professors and highly respected by students when I was at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The man we called Judge Kennedy was among the most gifted, accomplished, and respected Hebrew scholars of his day. He explained that the Hebrew word for "know" which God used in the statement, "The ox knows its owner," means to recognize, identify, and associate certain things with its owner (my paraphrase). The ox knows its owner by sight, sound, and smell. It either loves its master or fears him, based on its experience with him. On the other hand, Israel did not "know" Him (Yahweh) experientially, personally, intimately (again, my paraphrase).

Countless numbers of people, not only in America, but in what was once known as the Bible Belt, have about the same knowledge of God that a dog or horse has of its owner. Many of those are church members who were baptized as babies or young children, but have never place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Some are counting on something someone else does for them. They place their hope in something a pastor or priest does for them while they are alive, and some even believe someone can do something to get them into heaven after they are dead. A dear friend to my family once said, "I have spent a fortune to get people out of purgatory." When another son died, a family member asked, "Are you going to pay to get him out of purgatory?" She said, "No. There is no purgatory. You must believe in Jesus Christ. Your brother is in heaven now."

Some people depend on baptism, and others believe good works will save them. Still others believe that belonging to one particular church or denomination is necessary for salvation. Paul answers those claims: “For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

SUMMARY STATEMENT. One would be hard pressed to find a more succinct summary of the first twenty chapters of John than that statement Borchet makes in the New American Commentary:

“These twenty chapters of John are a masterpiece of literary construction. They are artistically designed like a symphony yet pointedly focused; simplistically worded for the reader yet intensely complex in meaning; and dramatically engaging in the stories yet very deliberate in the speech presentation. The Gospel is a marvel of inspired writing. And its concluding two verses sum up its purpose in what has to be one of the great classic summations of biblical literature. Although the evangelist acknowledged that much had been left untold, the reader would have to be exceedingly dense if he or she were unable to perceive the point of the work” [NAC].

CHAPTER 21

The Epilogue

PERSONAL NOTE: This writer must admit to changing his mind after being influenced by various writers who have written commentaries on the final chapter in the Fourth Gospel. I had more or less associated the final chapter with what seems to be the conclusion of the book (Jesus commissioning His disciples, His words to Thomas, and the stated purpose of the Gospel in 20:30-31). I do not see the final chapter of the Gospel According to John as an editor’s note at the end of the book, nor do I see it as an Appendix to the Gospel. For this reason, I join more experienced writers in identifying Chapter 21 as The Epilogue. Maybe. Possibly. However, I am comfortable in moving from Chapter 20 to Chapter 21 without stopping to consider the issue, as do various writers.

The question then remains, what is the purpose of the Epilogue? Some wonder whether John wrote this chapter immediately after the conclusion in Chapter 20, or at a later date. Some have suggested that others may have assisted John on the final chapter. Clearly, there was, and is a reason for this final chapter. One thing we must never do is to forget that the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of this chapter, just as surely as He was the divine Author of the first twenty chapters. There is no reason to conclude that Chapter 21 was added by someone else at a later date. There is no compelling reason to insist that the final chapter was not a part of the Holy Spirit’s plan for this Gospel from the beginning.

For obvious reasons, we must consider Simon Peter’s role in the final chapter. Jesus had appeared to Peter once before this time, and if his restoration was the main issue, why was this not done in private, unless Jesus wanted to restore him before the other apostles? There is no doubt that He had His

reason. Peter had denied Jesus to servants around the fire in the courtyard of Annas, former high priest, and father-in-law to Caiaphas, the current high priest. Now, Jesus will give him an opportunity to confess Him before others. However, if that had been the only reason, why did He not give Peter that opportunity when He appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:5); to the ten disciples one Sunday (Thomas missing); or the eleven disciples the next Sunday evening? Why the seven beside the Sea of Galilee rather than the eleven back in Jerusalem? Jesus most definitely had His reason for what He did.

There is one thing this chapter does not do. It did not ordain Simon Peter as the first bishop of the church at Rome, nor did it ordain him as the first pope over all churches and over all Christians. Dr. William R. Cooper clears up a number of issues in his remarkable work, *Old Light on the Roman Church*:

“As an indication of just how far and how quickly the Roman church began to depart from the Gospel of Jesus (if we are to consider the hypothesis of a post-apostolic composition for the letter), we can do no better than consider the letters that Clement wrote from Rome to the Corinthian church. Clement, whom modern Catholic authors refer to as an early pope, was bishop of the church at Rome after Linus and Anacletus, and was thus (given the fact that Peter never was bishop of Rome) only the third bishop of that church, flourishing in the mid-90s of the first century” [Cooper, William, bold added by this writer].

Dr. Cooper and I exchanged a number of messages about the first three bishops of the church at Rome. I was asking questions and he was answering them. Peter could not have been a bishop of the church at Rome, since the first man to claim that title was Linus (who became a martyr) and was replaced by Anacletus, who in time was replaced by Clement, who did not hesitate to try to impose his will and authority on the church at Corinth. He assumed that the church at Rome should have control over other churches.

Now, in returning to this final chapter in the Fourth Gospel, the NAC carries an introductory note that is worth considering:

As for the organization of this chapter, it falls naturally into three segments with the middle section also conveniently being subdivided into three subsections. Thus I would accept an organization for the chapter that is somewhat comparable to that of Beasley-Murray. The three major segments of this Epilogue are: (1) the revelation to the seven by the Sea of Tiberias (21:1-14), (2) the three-part conversation between Jesus and Peter (21:15-23), and (3) the authentication and conclusion to the Epilogue and the Gospel (21:24-25). The middle segment I would divide into: (i) the reinstatement of Peter following his denial (21:15-17), (ii) the prediction of his martyrdom (21:18-19), and (iii) the prediction concerning the beloved disciple in response to Peter’s question (21:20-23)” [NAC].

Adam Clarke suggests an outline for Chapter 21:

Jesus shows himself to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias, 1-5.

The miraculous draught of fishes, 6-11.

He dines with his disciples, 12-14.

Questions Peter concerning his love to him, and gives him commission to feed his sheep, 15-17.

Foretells the manner of Peter's death, 18,19.

Peter inquires concerning John, and receives an answer that was afterwards misunderstood, 20-23.

John's concluding testimony concerning the authenticity of his Gospel, and the end for which it was written, 24,25 [CLARKE].

The Third Appearance of Jesus to His Disciples

21:1 - JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF AGAIN. *“After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way:”* Jesus revealed Himself a number of times during the 40 days between His Resurrection and His Ascension. In fact, there are at least ten appearances recorded in the Gospels. Robertson explains that “Revealed Himself” (ephanerosen heauton) is the first aorist active indicative of phaneroō with the reflexive pronoun (cf. John 7:4; John 13:4). For the passive see John 1:31; John 21:14. Jesus was only seen during the forty days now and then (Acts 1:3)... The word phaneroō is often used of Christ on earth (John 1:31; John 2:11; 1Pe 1:20; 1Jn 1:2), of his works (John 3:5), of the second coming (1Jn 2:28), of Christ in glory (Col 3:4; 1Jn 3:2)” [ATR]. In *The New Commentary on the Whole Bible*, the writer claims there were six appearances of Jesus in or a round Jerusalem, but when I count the ones he lists I count only five:

“John 21, an epilogue, records Jesus’ appearance to the disciples beside the sea of Tiberias (Galilee). Jesus had made at least six appearances in (or around) Jerusalem: (1) to Mary Magdalene, Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18), (2) to the other women (Matt. 28:8-10; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:9-11), (3) to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5), (4) to two disciples (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23), and (5) to the disciples with Thomas (John 20:24-29). After the Jerusalem appearances, the disciples evidently returned to Galilee. Jesus made more appearances there: (6) to the disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18); (7) to five hundred believers (1 Cor. 15:6); (8) to James, his brother (1 Cor. 15:7); and (9) to the seven disciples who went fishing on the sea of Tiberias. Prior to his resurrection, the Lord had told his disciples that He would meet them at an appointed place in Galilee after he arose (see Mark 14:28). But due to their unbelief and fear, they remained in Jerusalem. So Jesus first appeared to them in Jerusalem and then in Galilee. After the Galilean appearances, they were to return to Jerusalem, where he would again appear

to them and tell them about the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit” [NCWB. Numbers in parentheses added by this writer].

This writer was right when he said there were six appearances of Jesus in or around Jerusalem, but he failed to include Jesus’ appearance to the ten disciples (Thomas was absent that time). If we add that appearance that will bring the number of appearances to ten. Some lists of the appearances of Jesus between His Resurrection and His Ascension may list duplicates, most likely in an effort to correlate the four Gospel accounts of these appearances. Some are dogmatic in listing ten appearances, while others list more appearances. Dr. Thompson (Thompson’s Topics, The Thompson Chain Reference Bible) lists thirteen appearances, one of which may be debatable, and that is an appearance to the eleven before He appeared to ten disciples when Thomas was absent. If Jesus had appeared to the eleven disciples, Thomas should not have doubted that He had appeared to the ten. Here is Thompson’s Topics list:

- 1) To Mary Magdalene - Mark 16:9
- 2) To the other women - Mat 28:9
- 3) To two disciples - Luke 24:15
- 4) To the eleven disciples - Luke 24:36
- 5) To Peter) - 1Co 15:5
- 6) To the ten, Thomas absent - John 20:19
- 7) To the eleven disciples - John 20:26
- 8) At the Sea of Galilee - John 21:1
- 9) To five hundred brethren - 1Co 15:6
- 10) To eleven disciples in Galilee - Mat 28:17
- 11) To James - 1Co 15:7
- 12) At the time of his ascension - Luke 24:50
- 13) To Paul at his conversion - Acts 9:5; 1 Co 15:8

Jesus did appear to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus and called him to be His apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was also called to carry the Gospel to his own people (the Jews) and to kings and others in authority.

SPECIAL NOTE: In the days before Easter, 2011, one satellite network advertised a program set for day before Easter which would explore the 40 days between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus, with a special note that these were the most mysterious days of His life on earth. The ads showed a man, obviously representing Jesus, walking through the country side of the Holy Land. I did not watch the program but from what I saw in the ads it seemed that they were saying that since Jesus only appeared ten times, He had to be hiding out from the people, walking back and forth (without being seen?), or possibly He visited other places. Their error was in assigning to the risen Christ the limitations of the flesh.

We must remember that, while the human Jesus was walking among people on earth, He was as much God as if He was not human at all, and He was much human as if He had not been God at all. Following His Resurrection, He appeared to individuals (Mary Magdalene), to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to ten disciples (minus Thomas), to the eleven apostles, and to over 500 at one time. Of particular interest is the fact that on two occasions He appeared suddenly before His disciples even though they had secured themselves behind locked doors (plural - not just one locked door, but at least two). He could obviously appear when and where He chose to appear, and then disappear at will. People have speculated on what He was doing during the time unaccounted for between His Resurrection and His Ascension. If it had been important for us to know that the Holy Spirit would no doubt have revealed it through those inspired to write the Four Gospels, but He did not do that. Those who try to solve that problem may be exchanging exegesis (taking our from Scripture) for eisegesis (reading into the Scripture that which is not revealed), or they may simply be guessing to satisfy their curiosity.

BY THE SEA OF TIBERIAS. The word rendered “by” can also be translated “upon” but there is no reason to assume that this meeting was out on the Sea of Tiberias, or the Sea of Galilee. Tiberias was the capital city of Galilee and apparently the name Sea of Tiberias was used, at least by some, interchangeably with the Sea of Galilee. For example, in John 6:1, the HCSB has, “After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias).” The New American Standard reads the same way. If this was not the appearance by the Sea of Galilee that Jesus scheduled earlier, the visit of which we read in Matthew 28:7, 16, and Mark 16:7, then this would make ten appearances of Jesus before the Resurrection, and of course, the appearances to James and Paul would make 12 appearances.

21:2 - HIS DISCIPLES. “*Simon Peter, Thomas (called “Twin”), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two others of His disciples were together.*” John tells us that there were seven of the Lord’s remaining eleven apostles present beside the Sea of Tiberias at this time. No note is offered as to where the other disciples were. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew (not present at this time), as well as James and John had made their living fishing on the Sea of Galilee before Jesus called them to follow Him. Nathanael was a native of Galilee and no doubt had spent a lot of time by, or on, the giant lake. In fact, Luke calls it a lake whereas the native Palestinians called it the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias.

One writer suggests that the number seven may have been used here to denote all of the disciples

since the number seven, like the number twelve, carried special religious significance. The number twelve seems to have implied religious completion or organization (12 tribes of Israel, 12 Apostles). The number seven is the sum of two other significant numbers: the number three (the divine number, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) plus the universal number (four corners of the earth, four winds - north, south, east, and west) equals seven, the number for perfection, maturity, or completion. While I am aware of the significance of various numbers in Scripture, I doubt that this is the best application here. There were simply seven of the Lord's disciples present at this time and in this place.

21:3 - GOING FISHING . *"I'm going fishing," Simon Peter said to them. 'We're coming with you," they told him. They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing ."* The angel at the tomb had promised that Jesus would meet His disciples in Galilee (Matt. 28:7). I served as pastor of a church in Bastrop, Louisiana, for 13 years, and during that time it was not unusual for me to receive a phone call from my brother James, or friends like Mack Powell and John Shoffner, who might begin by saying, "You want to go fishing in the morning?" If I could get off I would say, "Sure. Where do you want to go?" Then we would discuss whether we wanted to try for bass, crappie, or bream. If we were going to fish for bass I might ask, "What are they hitting at Bussey (reservoir) now?" Or, "What are they hitting at the Cut-off?" This was recreational fishing. We fished for the pleasure of landing a big fish, or a whole stringer full of bream or crappie. We also enjoyed eating our catch. This, in my opinion, is not what Simon Peter had in mind here.

I have also known some people who fished commercially. They used nets and trot lines to catch fish which they would sell to the public themselves, or sell to a fish market. Those people were called commercial fishermen. They fished for a living. I am convinced that this is what Peter had in mind. He and his brother Andrew were making their living fishing on the Sea of Galilee (or the Sea of Tiberias) when Jesus called them to follow Him. James and John were also commercial fishermen, working with their father Zebedee on the same body of water, when Jesus called them to follow Him. They left their nets and followed Jesus. For three years these men had followed Jesus, learning from Him. In fact, the very word disciple carries these two meanings: follower and learner. They followed Jesus and learned from Him.

They had followed Him in good times and bad. They had seen Him feed five thousand men, plus women and children, with a child's lunch. They had seen Him walk on water, heal the sick, calm a storm, and raise the dead. They had seen Him arrested, tried, and crucified. He had appeared to them and talked with them at least two times after His resurrection, but that had not dispelled their apprehension about their future.

"The disciples had gone to Jerusalem and had experienced a tumultuous series of events: the Triumphal Entry, the expectation of a new kingdom, a betrayal by a trusted friend, near arrest, denial of Jesus by their leader Peter, the agonizing crucifixion of Jesus, the Resurrection, and the manifestations of the risen Lord. Understandably they were confused and unsure of the future.

Peter went fishing since he may have misunderstood the Lord's **commission** (20:22). Peter also had a family

to support and undoubtedly had a sense of failure over his sin in denying the Lord. His leadership quality is evident in that six other disciples went with him. Their lack of success without Jesus' aid (cf. 15:5) and their great catch with His help gave them direction for their new lives" [BKC].

POINT OF PERSONAL CONVICTION: I recently jotted down a note that I have concluded that there is coming a time when there will be no more evolutionists. Everyone in Heaven will understand fully that they are there because of their Creator. Everyone in hell will be forever conscious of their rejection of the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. That knowledge will contribute to the conscious, eternal torment to which every person in hell will be subjected. I might add that there will a time in the future when there will be no more atheists. Everyone will know there is a God. Those in Heaven will know that they are there because they placed their faith in Jesus Christ, and those in hell will understand fully that they are in hell because they rejected Him. There is coming a time when there will be no more agnostics. All those in heaven will know for a fact that God is real, and that they are in Heaven because of their faith in Jesus Christ. All those souls in hell will be eternally conscious of the fact that they are going through conscious, eternal torment because they rejected Him.

If we move away from that issue for a moment, we may ask, why would anyone question such a long list of scholars? Paul wrote, "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time, most of whom remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:3-6, bold added for emphasis by this writer).

Jesus had already had a face to face meeting with Peter, as well as two opportunities to speak with Him when he appeared to the ten disciples and then one week later to the eleven disciples. Jesus might have spoken with Simon about His plans for him when he appeared to him alone, and He may have done so. We do know that Jesus focused His attention of Simon Peter following the meal by the Sea of Galilee. We can be sure that Jesus was not preparing Peter to become the first bishop of the church at Rome, let alone pope over all the churches. In opening comments about this chapter I noted that the first three bishops of the Roman church were Linus, son of Caradoc (from Briton), Anacletus, and Clement of Rome (according to Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England). Dr. Cooper has had access to libraries and museums most Americans cannot imagine, and he has spent decades doing research and writing about these matters.

While I have no real problem with those who insist that this encounter was all about confronting Peter with his denial of Jesus, I would caution those who become especially focused on this that it may not be all wise to be too dogmatic about it. As I once heard the late Adrian Rogers say, "I may be dogmatic about this, but I am not bulldog-matic about it." I am willing to agree that Jesus may have had Peter's denials in mind when he spoke to him by the Sea of Galilee. I am just not bulldog-matic about it.

WE'RE COMING WITH YOU. There can be no doubt that Simon Peter was the leader among the

Apostles, so it should not be a surprise that the other six men (Thomas -called Twin' - Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of His disciples") who were with him by the Sea of Galilee would go along with him. It should not be surprising that Peter would choose to return to his former profession as a commercial fisherman when we consider the fact that he had a family for whom he must provide. Having said that, there are two questions we may want to consider here. First, how had Peter provided for his family during the three years he had followed Jesus? Second, was Peter planning to return to his life as a fisherman on permanent basis, or on a temporary basis, until he knew what he should do to serve Jesus?

THEY CAUGHT NOTHING. Even an avid sports fisherman knows what it is like to have "bad luck" on a fishing trip, but these are commercial fishermen, men with experience fishing this body of water. Peter, James, and John, and possibly others, knew where to fish and how to cast nets, yet they had caught nothing all night. When I was a young pastor, as mentioned previously, I often fished with the late John Shoffner, who had a way of finding fish, and then he had a way of finding out what bait they would hit. When we fished Bussey Brake Reservoir, near Bastrop, Louisiana he showed me the sweet holes (or honey holes). If the fish were biting we would catch enough to enjoy our fishing trip. One day as we were driving to the lake, John pointed to a pasture on the left side of the road where there was a small herd of cattle. He said, "If you watch those cows you will know whether or not the fish will be biting. If the cows are lying down, chewing their cud, you are not going to catch many fish, but if they are up grazing, you can expect to catch fish." This was obviously a conclusion drawn by local fishermen, most of whom worked for one of the two International Paper Company mills in Bastrop. They saw each other regularly and knew when the fish were supposed to be biting. I never tested the grazing cow theory, but neither did I reject it completely.

There were other bodies of water which we fished from time to time. One morning we drove east of town to the Bayou Bonnie Idee, where we put in and began fishing various spots. We were fishing for bream, but having no luck. After some time, John, using the electric trolling motor, eased us into a new spot between some dead snags. I was fishing around the back of the boat when John said, "Johnny, take everything off your line but the hook." No weight and no quill? I had never done that before, but John said, "They are cleaning out a nest and striking everything I flip in that spot right over there. I followed his directions and we caught well over one hundred fish that morning. I made a mental note of the place and that afternoon Mack Powell and I caught 45 more nice bream before it got dark. I had fished a lot when I was growing up, but we "grabbed" for catfish (ran our hands into holes in cypress trees and logs) in Moon Lake, a large oxbow off the Mississippi River, not too far from the little town of Lula, Mississippi. We also caught a some larger catfish in logs in Six Mile Lake, between Lula and Sledge, Mississippi.

I fished for sport, and at times for catfish for family and friends, or for a church fish fry. Peter, James, John, and the others were not fishing for fun, they were fishing to catch fish to sell to pay for food and other things their families needed. They knew where and how to fish, and they didn't have to depend on the grazing habits of a herd of cows. They cast nets, so they didn't have to wonder whether or not the fish were biting. Still, they caught no fish.

21:4 - JESUS STOOD ON THE SHORE. *“When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore. However, the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.”* Robertson explains why the disciples did not know that it was Jesus whom they saw on shore: “When day was now breaking (prôias êdê ginomenês). Genitive absolute and note present middle participle (dawn coming on and still dark). In Mat 27:1 the aorist participle (genomenês) means that dawn had come....” [ATR]. There was enough light to see a man on the shore, but not enough light to identify the man. The note in the Life Application Bible is not as technical, but it agrees with the above explanation while reminding the reader of one purpose in this appearance: “Jesus had come to make another appearance to the disciples, especially to Peter. Perhaps because of the distance, haze over the water, or lack of light this early in the morning, the men in the boat did not recognize the man on the shore” [LAB].

The New Commentary on the Whole Bible offers a little more insight into the reason for this appearance: “Little did Peter know that Jesus was standing on the shore, waiting for the coming of dawn, waiting for the chance to make another appearance to the disciples, especially Peter. The repeated miraculous draught of fish was particularly intended to affect Peter. It did. Peter did not say a word as he dragged the net full of fish to shore and then (with the other disciples) ate the breakfast the Lord had prepared even before they caught the fish” [NCWB]. The dialogue between Jesus and Peter affirms the suggestion that this appearance focused on Peter, which certainly did not minimize the blessing of the fellowship and meal to the other six apostles, but it might help to explain why the other disciples were not present for this appearance. This was not a scheduled appearance.

21:5 - JESUS CALLED TO THEM. *“Men,’ Jesus called to them, ‘you don’t have any fish, do you?’ ‘No,’ they answered.”* John is a narrator, telling the reader his story. One would wonder how many times the Beloved Disciples had told this story over the five plus decades since the Lord’s Resurrection. The HCSB renders the Greek word (Paidia) “Men”, whereas the word literally mean children. Others render it “boys”, which probably did not surprise any of the disciples. My father’s first cousin, Lloyd, often used the word “lads” when speaking to a group of younger men and boys. My father was a farmer in the Mississippi Delta, seven miles west of Sledge. I still recall times when he would address younger men as boys: “You boys ready to go to work?” I never heard him used the term in a derogatory or condescending way.

YOU DON’T HAVE ANY FISH, DO YOU? Jesus question anticipates a negative answer. A sports fisherman today might observe friends as the pull up to the boat dock and, observing their behavior, say, “You didn’t catch anything, did you?” Or, he might ask, “Did you have any luck?” when the answer seems obvious to him. Jesus knew the answer, but he wanted them to answer Him. Those returning from a recreational fishing trip would not have been happy about having “no luck”, but to a commercial fisherman this was a little more serious. Not knowing who was asking, they simply answered, “No.”

21:6 - CAST THE NET ON THE RIGHT SIDE. *“Cast the net on the right side of the boat,’ He told them, ‘and you’ll find some.’ So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.”* Why Jesus told them to cast their net on the “right side” of the boat has prompted an interesting amount of speculation. One writer holds that they were casting their net on the left side

because that was the side away from the shore, and for that reason they were casting the net toward the deeper water. Another writer inferred that the right side was associated with good luck. No reason is given for His telling them to cast the net on the right side, other than the fact that Jesus knew there were fish on the opposite side from the side from which they were casting their net. The simple fact is that the boat may have had the bow toward the bank where Jesus was standing. On the other hand, the stern may have been toward the shore and the bow toward deeper water. The point still is that Jesus knew supernaturally that they would catch fish if they cast the net to the other side. They did, and they caught more than they would ever believed.

Interestingly, F. F. Bruce translates verses 5 and 6 this way: “Boys, have you got anything to eat?’ ‘No’, they answered. ‘Shoot the net to the starboard,’ He said, ‘and you will find some.’ They did so and now they were unable to haul it in because of the large catch of fish” [BRUCE, p. 399]. The use of words like “shoot the net” and “starboard” are interesting, to say the least.

SO THEY DID. Someone standing on the beach told them to cast the net on the other side, and having no other course, other than giving up, they did as He commanded. It seems sufficient to say that Peter and the others made the decision to go fishing, and they put out in a boat that may well have belonged to Peter and Andrew. For three years they had followed Jesus, but He had been crucified very recently, and even though He had appeared to ten of them at one time (Thomas was not with them), and then to the eleven several days later, they were at loose ends without Jesus there to lead them. They had committed themselves to Jesus, but now he was dead and would no longer travel with them as He had in the past. They are about to discover that Jesus could look after them even more effectively now than before. He was no longer limited by a human body. They now understood that He could take care of them better now than before His crucifixion.

The Life Application Bible offers the following comment:

“The disciples, tired as they were, responded to the obvious authority in the voice, and cast their nets to starboard—and a miracle occurred! This recalls Luke 5:1-11, **another occasion where Peter and the other disciples were fishing on the sea, catching nothing. Jesus gave a command to go out into the deep water. Peter, though doubtful, followed Jesus’ orders.** When they obeyed, a miracle occurred! When Peter saw the first miracle, ‘he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’ (Luke 5:8 nrsv). He recognized beyond Jesus’ power a holiness that was not part of his own life.” [LAB, bold added by this writer].

Can there be any doubt that Peter recalled both instances many times? What a great sermon illustration that must have made when Peter was preaching after the Ascension, and after Pentecost. The lesson we learn here is that Jesus can care for us today as well as He did for those disciples in the First Century.

21:7 - IT’S THE LORD! - *“Therefore the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It’s the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer garment around him (for he was stripped) and lunged into the sea.”* There is no doubt in this writer’s mind that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was John, the one who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this Gospel account of

the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Why was John the first of the apostles to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, even though he had not seen Him at the time? Why was he the disciple who recognized Jesus here before the others did? Even more amazing is the fact that the young self-serving, power hungry disciple who, along with his brother James, once sought power and recognition over the other disciples, now writes one of the greatest stories ever told, and only refers to himself as “the disciple Jesus loved.” Interestingly, the first disciple to believe Jesus had risen (without seeing Him) was the first to recognize Jesus from the boat, approximately one hundred yards from shore. He was also the one chosen by the Lord to receive the Revelation with which the Lord closes out the Holy Scripture.

WHEN SIMON PETER HEARD. As soon as John said, “It’s the Lord,” Peter immediately began getting ready to go to Him. “This psychological insight into Peter’s character reinforces the historical reliability of John’s eyewitness testimony. Peter’s action contrasts strikingly with the time he started to sink in the water (Matt. 14:30)” [BKC]. Quoting again from the LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE:

“On this occasion, Peter is again a central character. Jesus identified himself by his unexpected and seemingly useless request. The fishermen’s actions involved them in another miracle. If the request did not give them a clue, the results unmistakably pointed to the power of their Lord. Both John and Peter recognized that Jesus was behind the overwhelming catch of fish. Though he must have been ashamed of his sinfulness (the recent denial of Jesus was still fresh in his mind), Peter rushed to be with Jesus. A little later Jesus had some special words for him” [LAB].

After reading from a number of commentaries and various Bible Study Notes, and finding that they almost all agree on Peter’s guilt and Jesus’ desire to forgive him and, in essence, re-commission him. I continue to ask myself whether or not these writers, who are far more qualified than I, have not considered a possibility that seems logical to me. I will look again at Thompson’s list of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances:

- 1) To Mary Magdalene - Mark 16:9
- 2) To the other women - Mat 28:9
- 3) To two disciples - Luke 24:15
- 4) To the eleven disciples - Luke 24:36
- 5) To Peter) - 1Co 15:5
- 6) To the ten, Thomas absent - John 20:19
- 7) To the eleven disciples - John 20:26
- 8) At the Sea of Galilee - John 21:1
- 9) To five hundred brethren - 1Co 15:6
- 10) To eleven disciples in Galilee - Mat 28:17
- 11) To James - 1Co 15:7
- 12) At the time of his ascension - Luke 24:50
- 13) To Paul at his conversion - Acts 9:5; 1 Co 15:8

I added the bold print to make a point. As noted earlier, Thompson lists an appearance to the eleven, based on Luke 24:36. What John does not record is the appearance to the two disciples on the road to

Emmaus. Following His visit with them, they went immediately to tell His disciples they had seen the Lord. Luke tells about this visit:

“That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, who said, ‘The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!’ Then they began to describe what had happened on the road, and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

“And as they were saying these things, He Himself stood among them. He said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. ‘Why are you troubled?’ He asked them. ‘And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.’ Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet. But while they still could not believe for joy, and were amazed, He asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and **He took it and ate in their presence**” (Luke 24:33-43, bold added by this writer).

Some may agree with Thompson, and for them the question is, if Jesus appeared to the full group of eleven, how is it that Thomas was absent, and if he was absent, why did he not believe the others when they told him Jesus had appeared to them? Some seem to believe this was the same as the visit to the “eleven” (eleven minus Thomas?).

HERE IS MY QUESTION: How is it that various students of the Word are so insistent that this visit by the Sea of Galilee was focused on restoring Simon Peter? Peter had already had a personal visit from Jesus: “The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!” (Luke 24:34). Does anyone really believe Simon Peter stood face to face with Jesus without asking His forgiveness for denying Him to the servants in the courtyard? If Thompson is right, Jesus appeared (1) to Simon,(2) to the eleven, (3) to the ten, (4) to the eleven. Simon would have had four opportunities to ask forgiveness. If others are right, He appeared to (1) to Peter, (2) to the 10 (Thomas being absent), and (3) to the eleven, Peter would have had three opportunities to repent and be restored before the appearance beside the Sea of Tiberious (Sea of Galilee). If Jesus had appeared to the eleven disciples plus the two disciples to whom He had appeared on the road to Emmaus, Thomas could not claim that he did not believe the report of the ten to whom He had appeared in his absence.

Now, with this in mind, consider the appearance of the risen Savior to the seven disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus definitely focused His attention on Simon Peter, after fellowship and a meal with the entire group. This much is obvious. Jesus, without any doubt, prepared Simon for his position of leadership during the early stage of the spread of the Gospel. Paul would write: “... they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised. For He who was at work with Peter in the apostleship to the circumcised was also at work with me among the Gentiles” (Gal 2:7-8).

TIED HIS OUTER GARMENT. As soon as John said, “It is the Lord,” Peter “tied his outer garment around him (for he was stripped) and lunged into the sea.” The Authorized Version reads, “...Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea” (KJV); whereas the New King James Version has, “...Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea” (NKJV). The New American Standard Bible (not a version of an earlier translation) renders it, “...So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea” (NASB). The bold added was by this writer for emphasis. Why would this writer make these comparisons? The answer is that he listened to a Sunday School teacher, who, with some hesitation, note that the disciples had stripped off all their clothes while they were fishing. That is not what this verse means, and it is not what the word used is conveying to the reader. Clarke explains that the words, “He was naked” in the KJV means that he had removed his upper garment. He adds:

“In 1Samuel 19:24, when Saul had put off his imatia, upper garments, he is said to have been gummov, naked; and David, when girded only with a linen ephod, is said to have been uncovered, in 2Samuel 6:14, 20. To which may be added what we read in the Sept. Job 22:6, Thou hast taken away the covering of the naked; amfiasin gummwn, the plaid or blanket in which they wrapped themselves, and besides which they had none other. In this sense it is that Virgil says, Geor. i. 299: Nudus ara, sere nudus, i. e. strip off your upper garments, and work till you sweat” CLARKE].

It was not uncommon for this writer to see teenaged boys and young men with their shirts off working in the fields along side the road. Someone who had not worked in those fields in the days before pre-emergence chemicals might have assumed that they wanted a sun tan, and with some that might have been the case. However, there were others who pulled off their shirt because of the nature of the work. I well remember that when I worked on our farm the back of my shirt would be white with salt from my sweat by the middle of the morning every day. For that reason, I often pulled off my shirt when driving a tractor. When lunch time came I would find a shade and cool off a little while before putting my shirt back on so I could go into the house for dinner. Simon Peter and his fishing partners may well have taken off their upper garment because of the heat, but it might have been because the work they were doing caused them to perspire rather freely. They may have taken their upper garment off because of the odor of the fish - in this case, the fish they had hoped to catch.

21:8 - NOT FAR FROM LAND. “*But since they were not far from land (about 100 yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.*” John does not comment on the depth of the water, or whether or not Peter had to swim part of the way to shore. There is no doubt that a man who made his living on this huge lake would have no problem swimming 100 yards, but near the shore the water would have been shallow enough for him to have waded most of the way.

With the huge catch of fish, the rest of the disciples would have had their hands full dragging the net into the 100 yards to shore. This would possibly explain why no other disciple swam in to see Jesus. After his recent denial of the Lord, Peter must have felt compelled to go to Him at once. Another

possibility is that after Jesus had appeared to him earlier, he was especially anxious to go to Him this time. Still another explanation might focus on the impulsive nature of Simon, son of John. How often was Peter the first to speak on any subject? When he and John ran to the tomb after hearing the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb, who ran on into the tomb? Simon Peter.

Emphasis is placed on the huge catch of fish. The net was so full that no attempt was made to pull it into the boat. They simply dragged it to the shore. Once again, John shares a little tidbit of information that shouts, "I was there!"

21:9 - A CHARCOAL FIRE. *"When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread."* One writer states that "Jesus had prepared a breakfast of charcoaled fish with bread for the hungry disciples" [BKC, bold in the original]. That statement may satisfy most readers, but some wonder, did Jesus gather the wood and start a fire? Had some other fisherman left a fire burning? Did Jesus miraculously provide a fire? Interestingly, some hold that since there is no mention of a miracle Jesus may have found a fire when He appeared there, or He may have started a fire. One would not expect to find a fire burning unattended today, but at the time, if there was nothing combustible nearby a fisherman might leave a fire burning for some time, hoping to find live coals there when he returned the next morning. Pioneers, in cold weather, would put a "back log" on the fire in the fireplace so they might have live coals which they could fan into a flame the next morning.

Barnes sees no miracle here: "We have no knowledge whence this was produced-- whether it was, as Grotius supposes, by a miracle, or whether it was a place occupied by other fishermen, where they also might cook the fish which they had caught. As no miracle is mentioned, however, there is no reason for supposing that any existed in the case" [BARNES]. Clarke, on the other hand, writes: "This appears to have been a new miracle. It could not have been a fire which the disciples had there, for it is remarked as something new; besides, they had caught no fish, John 21:5, and here was a small fish upon the coals, and a loaf of bread provided to eat with it. The whole appears to have been miraculously prepared by Christ" [CLARKE]. Clarke seems to have the better grasp of the situation.

21:10 - BRING SOME OF THE FISH. *"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus told them.* John continues the narrative. He must have told this story countless times between the time of this appearance by the risen Lord and the time he was inspired to write this Gospel account of the life and ministries of Jesus Christ. Understandably, few commentaries carry notes on this verse. Robertson does remind us that "They had caught the fish by Christ's direction" [ATR]. Jesus already had some fish on the fire, but since there were eight people to feed, more fish would be needed.

21:11 - HAULED UP THE NET. *So Simon Peter got up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish—153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.* Peter was the first one to reach the shore where Jesus was waiting with a few fish on a fire. The other disciples were dragging the net toward the shore, the catch being too heavy to load into the boat (21:6), and as soon as Jesus asked them to bring more fish for them to eat, Peter rushed back to meet them and took the net and dragged it to where Jesus was waiting for them.

153 OF THEM. Interestingly, some writers try to explain the number of fish they caught in their net on one cast. I wonder whether or not those writers are fishermen. It would be more unusual for fishermen not to count the number of fish they had caught. Understandably, commercial fishermen who fish in the ocean calculate the weight or volume of their catch, but it is common for sports fishermen, as well as commercial fishermen who fish on a smaller scale to count their fish. As a matter of fact, fish and game laws limit the number of “game” fish one can catch per day. Years ago, as I mentioned above, John Shoffner and I went to a new place to fish and we tried several places before he found a place where large bream were biting. We caught 108 fish in an hour or so. I had already accepted an invitation to go fishing with Mack Powell after he got off work. We went back to the same place and caught 45 more fish. I am not at all surprised that the disciples counted the fish, or that John remembered how many they caught. We counted our catch and I still remember the number.

THE NET WAS NOT TORN. Both the number of fish and the fact that the net was not torn testify to the authenticity of the narrative. There were 153 large fish, and in the days before nylon nets a large catch would put a strain on the cords that made up the net. Seven men could attest to the number of fish in the net.

21:12 - COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST. *“Come and have breakfast,” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, ‘Who are You?’ because they knew it was the Lord.”* Once again, John’s testimony, even if this Scripture had not been inspired by the Holy Spirit, has the ring of authenticity to it. He was one of the seven disciples who had fished all night without catching anything, and he was a part of the group to whom Jesus spoke and told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. “The disciple whom Jesus loved” was the one who recognized Him and identified Him to the other disciples. It would be interesting to know how many times John had repeated this story over the years, and the impact it had on listeners.

My grandfather, Lee Cofer, was probably one-half English, one-quarter Choctaw, with a bit of German and Irish thrown in for good measure. Some of his ancestors may well have held certain superstitions, and let’s face it, some may have been influenced by certain practitioners of the occult. When I was a young boy I heard him tell stories about “haints” (a place that was reputed by others to be haunted was, to him and some of his neighbors, a place “that had haints”). When he began telling us about something he had seen or heard he had a ready audience. We listened carefully to him. Some believed a certain wooded trails, or a house was “hainted.”

My father, Joe Sanders, viewed all such stories as superstitions, and in time, so did I. However, when my maternal grandfather told a story about “haints” he had everyone’s attention. For one thing, he was a humorous story teller who spoke with a hint of an old South drawl, with just enough of a speech impediment that demanded close attention. Years after he entered a nursing home in Water Valley, Mississippi, I mentioned his name to Jim Allen, a man who worked in the old Baptist Book Store (now LifeWay Christian Store) in Jackson. Jim had worked as a deputy sheriff in Yalobusha County when he was a younger man. As soon as he heard my grandfather’s name, he began telling a story in my grandfather’s accent, including his slight speech impediment. I did not think he was being offensive, nor would my grandfather.

While still a teenager my grandfather had some kind of encounter, whether real or imaginary I would not know, but he raced his horse down the road toward his home. When he got there he leaped from the horse and ran for the house, only to find his older brother, Jimmy, asleep on the porch. It was summer time and Uncle Jimmy found his bedroom too hot for comfort, so he took a quilt and spread it out on the porch where there was enough of a breeze for comfort. He went to sleep there. Uncle Jimmy was a very tall man, but when my grandfather hit the porch and saw him he scooped him up and ran into the house and dropped him onto the floor. He had saved his brother from the “haint”!

My paternal grandfather, Johnny (John Wesley) Sanders, was about the same size as my maternal grandfather (a hair under six feet, both weighing 180 pounds), and that at a time when a six footer was called “a giant of a man”. He was killed in a hunting accident when my father was four years old. When I was a small boy, family and some neighbors were still talking about his physical strength and courage. At one point in his young life, neighbors began talking about a cemetery that was haunted. Some told of riding by the cemetery at night and being frightened by some huge, dark figure that made a lot of noise when it chased them. It sounded like a chain being dragged behind whatever it was. Soon they were avoiding that road at night whenever possible.

When my grandfather needed to go home late one evening, he took the road by the cemetery. He was riding in a wagon pulled by mules or horses. By the time he reached the cemetery it had been dark for some time, but there was a full moon, so he could distinguish trees, headstones, and other objects. Sure enough, he heard the noise and looking back, saw some huge form giving chase. He also heard the noise of feet hitting the road and the sound of a chain being dragged behind it. He stopped and waited for whatever it was that had frightened so many people to reach his wagon. When it reached the wagon it stopped and he could see that it was a bear with a chain around its neck. He took it into town and they discovered that the bear had escaped from a traveling circus. It had spent almost its entire life with men and women, and with wagons and horses. He wanted to join the driver, horses and wagon, but instead he frightened them.

When first hand accounts of such encounters were told people listened closely. I not only listened, but more than sixty years later I still remember every detail of the story, which is not bad for a man who once forgot his wife’s name. One cannot imagine something like this happening without some explanation and in this case there was a logical explanation. In the story about this appearance by Jesus following His crucifixion, we have John’s testimony, the testimony of the other six disciples, and the practical aspects of the experience. They had fished all night and were both tired and hungry. Jesus invited them to “come and have breakfast.” What could have been more natural than the invitation to have breakfast?

THEY KNEW WHO HE WAS. John tells us that “None of the disciples dared ask Him, ‘Who are You?’ because they knew it was the Lord.” John recognized Jesus first, and identified Him to the others. Simon Peter jumped into the water and made his way to the shore where Jesus was. Jesus invited them to bring some more fish so they would have enough for all of them for breakfast. No one needed to ask who He was. They all knew.

21:13 - JESUS CAME, TOOK THE BREAD. *“Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.”* Some writers have little to say on this verse other than repeat the narrative, and perhaps add that John does not say here that Jesus ate any of the bread or fish. It seems interesting to this writer that recognized Bible scholars would not only stress that the Scripture does not say that Jesus ate with the seven disciples, but go on to elaborate why He might have served them without eating of the bread and fish Himself. Barnes, for example writes:

“It is not said that Jesus himself ate with them, but he gave them food. The design of this interview seems to have been to convince them that he had truly risen from the dead. Hence he performed a miracle before they suspected that it was he, that there might be no room to say that they had ascribed to him the power of the miracle through friendship and collusion with him. The miracle was such as to satisfy them of its truth, and was, in accordance with all his works, not for mere display, but for utility. He remained with them, was with them at their meal, conversed with them, and thus convinced them that he was the same Friend who had died” [BARNES].

One wonders if there is the fear that if we claim that Jesus ate real food after the Resurrection, some might question the legitimacy of the Resurrection claims. That, however, is not necessary here for the simple reason that Peter mentioned eating with the risen Lord: “Their meal together stamped an indelible impression on their minds. Years later in his preaching Peter spoke of himself as a reliable witness who ate and drank with Jesus after His resurrection (Acts 10:41)” [BKC]. The Life Application Bible Commentary carries the following note:

“This special meal with the risen Jesus had a profound effect on these seven disciples. Peter would later make claim to his reliability as a witness of Jesus by saying, “He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:41 niv). John does not record that Jesus ate anything, but Luke 24:41-43 describes an appearance of Jesus where he did eat some fish” [LABC].

To me, there is no problem in seeing Jesus eating with His seven disciples at this time. There is another point that is worth considering: Who served this meal? Of course, Jesus did. The Son of God served His slaves! When Jesus ate the Last Supper with the twelve disciples, who served the bread and the wine? Jesus did. Judas, we will remember, left after Jesus had served him the bread. Then, what did Jesus do? John tells us that **He washed the feet of His disciples** and,

“When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His robe, He reclined again and said to them, “Do you know what I have done for you? You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you. ‘I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:12-17, bold added by this writer).

The world expects servants to serve their master. Jesus commands us to serve others and He set the example for us.

21:14 - THE THIRD TIME. *“This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.”* John states the fact that Jesus is now appearing to a group of the disciples for the third time after His resurrection. This calls into question Thompson’s list of the appearances of the Lord following His resurrection (see notes on 21:1, above). An excerpt from Dr. Thompson’s list shows that he has this as the fourth appearance to His disciples:

- 4) To the eleven disciples - Luke 24:36
- 5) To Peter) - 1Co 15:5
- 6) To the ten, Thomas absent - John 20:19
- 7) To the eleven disciples - John 20:26
- 8) At the Sea of Galilee - John 21:1

Robertson sees Jesus’ visit in Luke 24:36f as the same visit as John 20:19. There can be no doubt that this was the third appearance of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection. Earlier appearances, to Mary Magdalene and the other women, were also made to His disciples, but the emphasis here is on His appearances to His called out apostles. John simply calls them disciples in this Gospel, possibly a testimony to his humble submission to his Lord after a period of youthful pride and arrogance early in his walk with Jesus. He and his brother sought the highest positions, one at the right hand of Jesus and the other at His left hand, but in this Gospel John simply refers to himself as the disciples Jesus loved. He was given apostolic authority but there is no indication that the mature John sought honors, power, or prestige. He sat at the feet of His teacher, learned the value of meekness and applied it in his daily walk with the Lord.

Peter Confesses His Love for Jesus

21:15 - JESUS ASKED PETER. *“When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said to Him, ‘You know that I love You.’ ‘Feed My lambs,’ He told him.”* This writer assumes that the word “they” includes Jesus. There is no legitimate reason for the assumption that Jesus did not eat with His seven disciples, since He had eaten with them earlier (Acts 10:41). It is a simple matter here to follow John’s narrative: Jesus prepared a meal, served it, and sat down and ate with His disciples.

As they finished their breakfast, Jesus looked to Simon Peter and asked, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these.” It would be interesting to know what transpired between Jesus and Peter when He had appeared to him earlier, but we are only told that Jesus appeared unto him. Why, some may wonder, did Jesus not deal with Simon Peter privately instead of challenging him in the presence of these other disciples. Peter had insisted that even if everyone fails Jesus he would not (Mark 14:29). Did the Lord have this in mind when he began asking Peter this question? Possibly, but we are not given that information here. Is it possible that since Peter had denied Him in front of witnesses He is giving him an opportunity to confess Him in the presence of others? That is certainly

possible.

Jesus must have drawn the silent interest of the other six disciples when He began to question Peter. He asked, “Do you love me more than these?” Preachers and Bible teachers have proposed various answers to the question as to whom Jesus mean by “these”. Some preach passionately that Jesus is asking Peter if he loves him more than he loves the other disciples. Others have suggested that He was asking Peter, Do you love me more than these (other disciples) love me? Some are content to believe that He was asking Peter, Do you love me more than you love these fish, or the boat and nets. With these possible answers in mind, let us see how various Bible scholars interpret this question. The New Commentary on the Whole Bible considers various possibilities before giving an opinion:

“According to the Greek, this could also be rendered, “Do you love me more than these men love me?” or “Do you love me more than these men?” or “Do you love me more than these things?” (i.e., the fish, the boat, and all things related to the fishing occupation). All three renderings are compatible with the context (especially the first and third), but in the light of the fact that Peter had claimed, in the presence of all the disciples, that he would never forsake the Lord, even if all the others did (see Matt. 26:33; Mark 14:29; John 13:37), it seems that Jesus was exposing Peter for having thought he loved Him more than the other disciples did” [NCWB, bold added by this writer].

The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers the following solution:

“What did Jesus mean by ‘these’? **Jesus probably was referring to the disciples**, in light of Peter’s proud statement that he never would fall away no matter what others did (Matt. 26:33, 35; Luke 22:33; John 13:37). Jesus’ threefold question and threefold commission of apostolic mission contrast directly with Peter’s three denials. Three times Peter said he did not even know the Lord (18:17, 25, 27); now three times he said he loved the Lord (21:15-17). No matter how great a person is, he may fall (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12). But God’s grace and forgiveness will restore the repentant. This provision of grace would be important, for the church would soon face great persecution and even church leaders would waver in their commitments” [BKC, bold added by this writer].

Robertson, as usual, focuses on the grammar and definition as well as the translation, so his comments are usually worth consideration:

“I love thee (*philô* su). Peter makes no claim here to superior love and passes by the ‘more than these’ and does not even use Christ’s word *agapaô* for high and devoted love, but the humbler word *phileô* for love as a friend. He insists that Christ knows this in spite of his conduct” [ATR].

The late W. O. Vaught, long time pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas, taught his people the difference between various words for love in the Greek language. Some pastors preach that Jesus was asking Simon Peter if he loved him with a godly love (*agapao*), but a rebellious Peter answers, “I love (*phileo*) you with a human love.” Some make it seem that Jesus is asking, “Do you

love me with a godly love, but Peter answers, Lord, you know I like you. That is not what was happening here. Even though *agapao* is a special kind of love, it is not enough to say that it means Christian love while *phileo* means a worldly love. Vaught pointed out that the Father used *phileo* for His love for His Son, whereas Jesus stated in John 3:19: “This, then, is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19, bold added by this writer). Vaught stressed that we find here evil men loving evil with an *agapao* kind of love.

Vaught explained that *agapao* is used of a mental attitude kind of love, whereas *phileo* is used of a deep, personal love, the love the closest of friends have for each other. This is the kind love David and Jonathan had for each other. In such case, Peter was not trying to be evasive, and he was not refusing to confess a love for Jesus. Nor was he saying, “I may not love you, but I like you.” He had indeed denied Jesus three times, but he had repented with bitter tears. We should probably remind ourselves that both Jesus and Peter were speaking Aramaic, not Greek. The Holy Spirit inspired John to record this in the Greek, which is the ideal language for the Gospel. When we have a problem with a translation we can always go back to the Greek for answers, or ask someone who knows Greek for help, especially if that person has demonstrated both knowledge of Greek and integrity in his work. **FEED MY LAMBS.** Jesus uses the present active imperative: begin feeding My lambs right now! Is Jesus making any significant variations in His command to feed His Lambs, take care of my sheep, and feed My sheep? We are not given enough information here to make that assertion.

“Three times Jesus commissioned Peter to care for the flock: **Feed My lambs;** (v. 15); **Take care of My sheep** (v. 16); **Feed My sheep** (v. 17). Some Roman Catholics assume that this asserts Peter’s primacy, but this is foreign to the passage (cf. 1 Peter 5:2). In Jesus’ three questions of love (*agapas, agapas, and phileis*) and His three commands of duty (*boske, “tend”; poimaine, “herd, lead to pasture”; boske*) various Greek synonyms are used. *Since it is difficult to see any consistent distinctions that John intended, most scholars see these as stylistic variations*” [BKC, bold italics added by this writer].

21:16 - A SECOND TIME. “A second time He asked him, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said to Him, ‘You know that I love You.’ ‘Shepherd My sheep,’ He told him.” It would be interesting to know what Peter was thinking when Jesus addressed him the second time as “Simon, son of John”. There are children who know they are in trouble when a parent calls them by their full name. Bill’s parents call him Bill, but if he ever hears one of them call out in a loud, stern voice, “William Roy Hammett, you get yourself in this house!”, he knows he’s in trouble. Peter must have noticed the way Jesus addressed him. However, there may have been other times when he called him Simon, son of John.

DO YOU LOVE ME? Robertson notes that Jesus asked, “Lovest thou me? (agapâis me;).” He explains that, “This time Jesus drops the pleon toutôn and challenges Peter’s own statement. Peter repeats the same words in reply” [ATR]. There can be little doubt that Jesus was putting Simon Peter on the spot by repeating the question He had just asked him. Neither can there be any doubt that Simon Peter became suddenly aware of the fact that Jesus is now putting him personally on the spot. He did not move on to John, James, or one of the others. Peter was the one who had denied him

openly three times just as Jesus had foretold, and he may not have made that connection after the second question, but it would be interesting to know how often Simon had recalled his denial with deep anguish. It must have registered with Simon that Jesus was focused on him, not the other six disciples. Under similar circumstances, one would imagine that Peter is wondering when Jesus is going to begin asking the other disciples that question.

YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU. Simon repeats his previous answer, word for word. He is not saying, “Lord, I may not love You, but I like You.” He may well have been grieved when Jesus asked him the same question again, but I am convinced that he spoke from a heart filled with a deep and sincere love for Jesus,

SHEPHERD MY SHEEP. We have one word in English for feed, but Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in Aramaic and John translated it into Greek when he was writing this. Did John make a mistake here? Absolutely not! This is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit who inspired every word of Scripture. If anyone wants to argue the issues of inerrancy of Scripture, let me be perfectly clear here: when I stand before my risen, ascended, interceding, returning Lord and He tells me I took His Word too seriously, then I will ask His forgiveness, but until then I will hold to the inerrancy of God’s Holy Word.

Jesus had told Peter after the first question and answer (previous verse) to feed His sheep. Barnes writes, “The word here rendered feed...is different from the word in the previous verse. It has the sense of governing, caring for, guiding, protecting --the kind of faithful vigilance which a shepherd uses to guide his flock, and to make provision against their wants and dangers. It may be implied here that the care needed for the young in the church is to instruct them, and for those in advanced years both to instruct and govern them” [BARNES]. The Holman Christian Standard Bible removes the need for an explanation, but all who read this will not be reading from the HCSB. Barnes gives us a good definition of the faithful shepherd (“governing, caring for, guiding, protecting”). He also elaborates on those duties and qualities (“the kind of faithful vigilance which a shepherd uses to guide his flock, and to make provision against their wants and dangers”).

Today, the faithful pastor shepherds the flock, the Lord’s church. He provides spiritual food, he loves the members of the church he serves, he provides guidance when that is needed, and he remains vigilant at all times to protect the sheep from false prophets (wolves in sheep skin).

23:17 THE THIRD TIME. *“He him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ He said, ‘Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.’ ‘Feed My sheep,’ Jesus said.”* When Jesus addressed him in this manner the third time, Peter could not have missed the fact that the Lord had now called him by his given name and identified him as the son of John three times. Was he overwhelmed with guilt for having denied his Lord three times? There was no denying that He had denied Jesus three times, and even though we are not told that Jesus was keeping score here, we can be sure that He had not forgotten that Peter had denied Him three times.

The number three at this time was the divine number and represented the Trinity, but to assign any special significance here would be reading into this passage our own feelings or thoughts (eisegesis) rather than taking out from the passage what is specifically taught (exegesis). It would not be surprising to learn that Peter was often asked if he found any connection between his three denials of Jesus and the three times Jesus asked him if he loved him. Jesus may well have had this in mind. We are simply not given that information.

DO YOU LOVE ME? Jesus had twice used *agape* ' in asking Peter if he loved Him. This time he uses Peter's word (*phileis*), which may be why many interpreters to assume that Jesus noted Peter's first two responses and then used the same word Peter had used the third time He asked Peter the question. He now asks, "Simon, son of John, do you really love (*phileis*) me?" He might have asked that question of any one of the seven disciples there by the Sea of Galilee, but He asked Peter three different times if he loved Him. Again, some say Jesus had given up on getting an answer because Peter refused to say he had the *agape* ' kind of love for Him. By the third time, Peter may have connected his three denials with these three times Jesus had asked him the same question. Is it not possible that each time he was asked that question, Peter responded with a word that stressed the depth of his love for the Lord? He had the same kind of personal love for Jesus that Jonathan had for David. Peter may well have been stressing the depth of his love for Jesus rather than telling Him, "well, I like You."

Many writers do not agree, which is not surprising. The author of the material in the New Commentary on the Whole Bible, a commentary I normally like, offers this comment on verses 15-17:

"Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him (21:15-17). The first two times Jesus used the Greek word *agapao* _ and the last time *phileo* _ to express two different kinds of love. In all three of his responses, Peter used the word *phileo* _ . The Greek word *agapao* _ designates the most noble action of love, for this word indicates volitional, responsible love, love that emanates, not so much from the emotion, as from the rational soul. This is the sort of love one uses in choosing to love the unlovely, the unattractive, and unbecoming. This is the kind of love God has for the world; it is a divine love, a love not easily appropriated by us self-centered mortals. The Greek word *phileo* _ designates the action of love that emanates from liking someone or something. It conveys the idea of fondness. Peter, quite honestly, told Jesus that he was fond of him. Peter could not say that he had demonstrated *agape* _ love. In fact, he had failed to exercise self-sacrificial love at the time of Jesus' trial. Three times Peter denied him; three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. **The third time, stooping to Peter's level, Jesus asked Peter if he was fond of him.** Peter told him what he already knew: 'I am fond of you' [NCWB, bod added by this writer].

This writer is persuaded that this is not what Peter was trying to convey to the Lord. Yes, he did deny knowing the Lord three times, but he had repented with bitter tears. He had already had one opportunity to visit with the risen Lord before this, and he had seen him with others of the eleven disciples on two other occasions.

As mentioned previously, this writer prefers the definitions given by the late Dr. W. O. Vaught. But,

who was W. O. Vaught? Dr. H. Leo Eddleman was president of New Orleans Theological Seminary when I was a student there. His father had, at some time in the past, been pastor of the Lula Baptist Church in Lula, Mississippi. That church sponsored our rural mission when I was growing up between Lula and Sledge, MS. Dr. Eddleman and my pastor, Henning Andrews, were good friends and Brother Andrews had assured me that Dr. Eddleman was both brilliant and courageous. I found that to be true, so one time when Dr. Eddleman was preaching a revival for me I asked him to go to my study and when we got there I told him I would like to ask him some questions and tape his answers. He had no problem with that, so I asked one question after another for one hour. At one point, I asked, "Who are the most outstanding leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention today?" He gave me a number of names and one of those was W. O. Vaught, whom he appreciated as a Bible scholar.

Dr. Vaught used some interesting words in explaining the *agape* kind of love. He called it a mental attitude kind of love because it can be commanded. You cannot command romantic love and you cannot command the close friendship kind of love. The *Phileo* kind of love says much more than "I like you." It is the kind of personal love that grows as two people learn more about each other. It can, and should be cultivated, but it is not a love one can command. A new family, say the Greens, moves into the neighborhood and the pastor meets them and introduces them to the Browns and then tells them he would like to see them become close friends. They soon see that they respect each other and appreciate their commitment to the Lord, but that is the only thing they have in common. Mr. Brown likes to sit in his recliner and watch sports on TV. Mr. Green hunts and fishes and cannot stand to be cooped up in the house on a beautiful Spring or Fall day. Mr. Green begins fishing with Mr. Smith and Mrs. Green discovers that she and Mrs. Smith share a lot of the same interests. As time passes, they grow to love each other more and more. This is the kind of love Dr. Vaught defined as *phileo* love, even though he did not use this writer's illustrations.

Vaught reminded his listeners that, while many people refer to the *agape*' type love as Christians love, or godly love, we are told in places that God love the Son with *phileo*' love. Furthermore, as pointed out above, in John 3:19, we are told that evil men love darkness (moral or spiritual evil) with an *agape*' kind of love. The point, to this writer, is that neither Jesus nor Peter were playing word games. We must also remember that the two words are often used interchangeably, and we might remind ourselves that Jesus and Peter were speaking Aramaic, not Greek.

This does not establish Peter as the first pope. "Some Roman Catholics assume that this asserts Peter's primacy, but this is foreign to the passage (cf. 1 Peter 5:2). In Jesus' three questions of love (*agapas, agapas,* and *phileis*) and His three commands of duty (*boske, "tend"; poimaine, "herd, lead to pasture"; boske*) various Greek synonyms are used. Since it is difficult to see any consistent distinctions that John intended, most scholars see these as stylistic variations" [BKC, Bold added by this writer. See comments on 21:15 for the fuller not from the BKC]. Dr. William R. Cooper, in his remarkable, though as of yet unpublished book, *Old Light on the Roman Church*, lists the first three bishops of the church at Rome: (1) Linus, son or Caradoc of Briton, (2) Anacletus, and (3) Clement of Rome. The title focuses on the original church at Rome, not the Roman Catholic Church, of which no one had conceived before the death of Peter, Paul, and John.

FEED MY SHEEP. Robertson renders “Feed my sheep (boske ta probatia)” and adds that “Many MSS. both here and in verse John 21:16 reads (sheep) instead of probatia (little sheep or lambs) [ATR]. Borchet provides us with a summary of this account:

“It is almost as though the evangelist is affirming the well-known concept that for a person to become right with God and gain a sense of release from the past sense of rebellion that that person should face the reality of where the deviation or sin occurred.

“The issue of denying the Lord became a significant problem in the early church during times of persecution, and processes of reinstatement were debated. Hardliners were often not willing to accept those who denied their Lord while others may have tended to accept such deviants too easily. This periscope of the questioning of Peter must have served as a model of a median position willing to reestablish deviants but not without testing their commitment”[NAC].

21: 18 - I ASSURE YOU. *“I assure you: When you were young, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don’t want to go.”* Many of those who grew up with the Authorized Version (King James Version) remember the words, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee...”, and may still prefer it to the HCSB or the NASB. However, the words here are easily understood.

WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, Jesus declared, “you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted.” This denotes the freedom Simon Peter had enjoyed when he was young, and still had at this at this time. No doubt, Jesus had watched Peter throw on his robe and tie the belt before he had jumped into the water and waded ashore to see Jesus. Peter and all the others understood what Jesus was saying. In the three years Simon Peter had followed Jesus, the Lord had seen him, as well as the other disciples, throw on their outer robe and tie the cord before starting out for the day.

What we have here is John’s narrative of one of the last encounters of the disciples with the risen Lord. Jesus is being very open with Simon Peter. If he really loved the Lord as deeply as he professed, he should be aware of the price. When Adolph Hitler mesmerized the masses with his emotional speeches, he never told the people he was setting a course that might well lead, not only to their destruction, but also to the slaughter of millions of people, plus a humiliating defeat at the hands of the allied forces. Karl Marx stood before sixteen other men in a dark smoke filled room in 1847 and declared, “We shall take the world!” He promised victory without mentioning the price millions would pay. Jesus is being perfectly candid with Peter, as He had been with others. Those who follow Jesus should be prepared to pay a high price for it.

At the time John was writing these words, around A. D. 86, he was the only one of the disciples who had not laid down his life for their obedience to the Lord’s Great Commission. John would write the three epistles that bear his name, and finally the Revelation (around A. D. 96) before his martyrdom. I have mentioned the book, *Old Light on the Roman Church*, by Dr. William R. Cooper of Middlesex, England. After reading this work, two or three times, I began turning to certain sections and reading

them again. One day it hit me: a certain individual believes in Jesus Christ, declares his faith, and obeys the Great Commission, and is put to death for it. He believes, he witnesses for Christ, and he is martyred. That happened over and over during the first century, and countless numbers have given their lives for the Lord since that time. In some parts of the world, to profess Christ means a brutal death at the hands of Muslim or Hindu neighbors. It also means slavery for the children of the murdered saints in some parts of the world.

There are many religions in the world, but the most intense persecution has been reserved for those who profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. One should not be surprised that this is the case. Satan declared war on God when he and his demonic followers were cast out of heaven. In the Old Testament, he sought to corrupt God's highest creation, and when the Lord promised a Redeemer, the devil did everything he could think of to prevent that from happening. Then, when the Messiah was born the devil sought to destroy the infant Jesus. Having failed at that, he tempted Jesus three times (Matthew, Ch. 4) to get Him to compromise in the commitment He had made to die for the sins of the world. Today, Satan uses every weapon in his arsenal to keep people from believing in Jesus for their salvation, and when that fails he focuses on keeping Christians from being sanctified and from winning others to faith in Christ.

Somewhere around 1985 I was making a hospital call in Jackson, Mississippi as I often did at the time. I often stopped by a health club for a work out before returning home. One particular day I was sitting in the sauna when I heard a retired veterinarian, with whom I had numerous talks, speaking to a retired pastor. My veterinarian friend loved nothing more than reading dictionaries and challenging people to define a particular word. He said he had about seventy dictionaries in his home. The first time I remember meeting the man I was in the swimming pool and heard him shout out profanity, including the use of God's name in vain. In time we had a number of conversations about the Bible. On this particular day I heard him talking with the retired pastor about something he had read about Satan. He said someone had written a book in which he said that blemishes on various bodies in space were caused by Satan lashing out at God after he was thrown out of heaven. I waited for the retired pastor to respond but heard no response. I stepped out of the sauna and said, "You will find that statement in the book, *From Eternity to Eternity*, by Erich Sauer." Sauer (1898-1059) was a German Christian. We had another conversation that I tried to guide toward Christ. Sadly, the last time I saw this man he showed no sign of interest in the Lord, except to launch an argument which would permit him to shock or silence a Christian, especially a pastor. Satan knew a lot more about my friend than my friend knew about Satan. He has no idea the control Satan had over his life.

BUT WHEN YOU GROW OLD. Jesus continued, "But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go." Even though it may have taken some time before Simon Peter realized the full significance of this statement, John, now some twenty years after the martyrdom of his brother in the Lord, understood clearly what Jesus was saying. Peter, when he was young, could tie his belt around his robe and begin walking from one place to another.

STRETCH OUT YOUR HANDS. The day was coming, however, when he would not be able to go where he wanted. He would be ordered to hold out his hands for guards to bind them and lead him to

the cross on which he would die. Peter would no longer have control of the situation. Someone else would tie his hands and, as Jesus said, lead him where he did not want to go. He would have no choice as to whether or not he would be crucified. According to tradition, Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he did not feel that he was worthy to be crucified the same way as the Lord.

21:19 - HE SAID THIS TO SIGNIFY. *“He said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, He told him, ‘Follow Me!’”* Jesus knew that Simon Peter would become a martyr for Him. Most Bible students are familiar with the etymology of the word martyr. The Holman Bible Dictionary carries this brief note: “The transliteration of a Greek word meaning ‘witness,’ in particular one who gives his life for a cause. In later usage it was applied to those who died because of their faith in Christ rather than recant. The transliteration was used for these persons and the translation ‘witness’ came to be used for those who testified of Christ but were not put to death” [HBD]. From this we see that the Greek word translated martyr is also translated witness, and to be a witness for Jesus Christ in that day was to put the believer’s life on the line. There are many places in the world where a witness for Christ can expect persecution and, or death. Countless numbers have been slain by Muslims and Communists over the past century.

FOLLOW ME. The gospel Jesus preach, especially the declaration that He was the Messiah, led the religious leaders of His own nation to plot and force his death on the cross. Jesus did not want Peter to die at the hands of the soldiers and guards in the Garden of Gethsemane, but He called him to a ministry that would lead to his martyrdom. Peter would preach the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ until he was arrested and, according to tradition, crucified up-side down. In fact, if ancient traditions can be believed, all of the eleven true apostles became martyrs for Jesus Christ.

A Rumor Corrected by John

21:20 - SAW THE DISCIPLE JESUS LOVED. *“So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them. That disciple was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, ‘Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray You?’”* Jesus had prepared a meal and He and His disciples had eaten what He prepared. Either Jesus turned to Simeon, or as some believe, He and Peter walked away from the fire, with John following at a close enough distance to hear what they were saying. John, the young firebrand, who once sought a position of power and honor, along with his brother James, is now content to leave out any personal reference to himself. However, as mentioned before, most Bible student have little doubt that “the disciple Jesus loved” was John. He was the one who had asked Jesus at His last meal with them, “Lord, who is the one who is going to betray you?”, when Jesus had, at the last supper, announced that one of them would betray Him. John tells us that it was Peter who had asked him to ask Jesus who would betray Him. John was the one who reclined at the table to Jesus’ right side, which afforded him an opportunity to ask Him quietly. Jesus had indicated that Judas was the one who would betray Him.

21:21 - WHAT ABOUT HIM. *“When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, ‘Lord—what about him?’”* Simon Peter continually shows his “old sin nature”, or carnal nature. Of course, that means that most of us can identify with him at some time or another. Jesus had just told him that he would be chained

and led off to a cross on which he would die for his love for and obedience to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It has been suggested that Jesus may have led Peter off from the others because Peter only asks about John. If that had been the case, John must have followed them, or walked away with them. Whether they were with the others or separate from them, Peter, upon this prophesy, looked up, saw John, and asked Jesus, "What about him?" Was Peter genuinely concerned about John's welfare, or was he doing what fallen man has been doing since the Garden of Eden - pointing the finger at someone else?

Who has not observed this kind of behavior among toddlers. A vase is knocked off the table and when the mother asks, "Did you break my vase", the child says, "I didn't do it," and pointing at her brother, adds, "He did it." She denied guilt and then pointed the finger at her brother. That works both ways; she may have learned it from her brother.

In school this kind of response is seen all the time. Some rule is broken and when the teachers asks "little Johnny" if he did it, he denies guilt and points to his best friend and says, "He did it." When I was in the seventh grade I hurt my left hand and had a bandage on it. The teacher gave us a test and I raised my hand and when she recognized me I held up my left hand and asked, "What do you want me to do?" Immediately, my fellow class members, including some of my best friends, began saying, "He's right handed, he's right handed." So many of them were saying it that the teacher did not understand what they were saying and told me to find something to read while the others took the test. My wife Becky has often told me that children have not changed. They still deny guilt and tell on their friends.

Simon Peter, as soon as he learned he would be martyred for confessing Jesus Christ as his Savior, pointed to John and asked, "What about him?" From what John records here it is possible that his friend Peter was only concerned for John's welfare, but based on Jesus' response, that was probably not the case. Peter, James and John made up the inner circle of disciples. Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John into the Garden to watch while he went a little farther to pray. Who did Jesus take with Him to witness the Transfiguration? Who was it whom Peter asked to ask Jesus who would betray Him. It was John, the disciple who reclined to the right of Jesus at the last supper, in such a position that if he looked Jesus in the eye he would have to lean against His chest. Is it possible that Peter asked his question out of concern for John? We may remind ourselves that James, John's brother, was also a part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, but Peter did not ask about James (who was the first apostle to become a martyr in A. D. 46).

To assign guilt to Simon Peter here may well be judging him without sufficient evidence. The modern believer should be very careful when he condemns him. Peter would become the leader the Lord knew he could be after he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The man who preached the first Christian sermon in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) was a very different man from the man whom Jesus questioned there by the sea. Paul tells us he charged Simon Peter with hypocritical behavior in Antioch of Syria after he separated himself from a group of Gentiles and attached himself to Judaizers from Jerusalem. It seems that with each blunder like that Peter grew a little more.

21:22 - IF I WANT HIM TO REMAIN. *"If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered,*

“what is that to you? As for you, follow Me.” This is the condition of the third class (not yet determined). Jesus manifested genuine humility during his earthly ministry, but there is no mistaking His authority here. He is the master and His followers are referred to as His children, His brothers, or His slaves in the New Testament.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible uses the word “slave” whereas earlier translations and versions use “servant”. I served two terms on the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources and I served on the Broadman and Holman Committee. In my first meeting with the B&H Committee we voted to go forward with the proposed Holman Christian Standard Bible. Dr. Ed Blum, the General Editor, met with our committee to answer questions about the translation. Later, at lunch, LifeWay President, Dr. Jimmy Draper, brought Dr. Blum to the table where I was sitting with other board members, including an Hispanic Director of Missions from Florida who had asked why the HCSB translators had used “slave” instead of “servant” in translating the word from the Greek manuscript. Dr. Blum said, “We used ‘slave’ because that is the word Jesus used. When you were saved you became His; you were bought with a price, and that price was the blood of Jesus Christ.”

A pastor at my health club assured me that the service is voluntary, but I assured him that a slave’s service is not voluntary. You either serve Christ or you sin. There is no middle ground between obedience and sin on which anyone Christian can stand. You are either obeying Him or disobeying Him, which is sin. If we are not obeying Jesus we must repent and ask His forgiveness.

Since this verse is a part of the narrative here the reader might acknowledge it with a nod and move on to something he considers more serious, but to do so is to miss a very important point. Jesus is sovereign, man is not. Paul wrote:

“I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in His own time. He is the **blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, the only One** who has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom none of mankind has seen or can see, to whom be honor and eternal might. Amen” (1 Tim 6:13b-16, bold added by this writer).

UNTIL I COME. Jesus once again mentions His return. During His earthly ministry He stated that only His Father in Heaven knew the exact time of His return. Believers are taught to be alert for He will come as thief in the night, meaning when He is not expected. In His farewell address, Jesus announced: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

WHAT IS THAT TO YOU? Robertson sees the construction here as “A sharp rebuke to Peter’s keen curiosity” [ATR]. Coming from the tongue of the risen Lord that would indeed seem to have been a sharp rebuke. Robertson is not alone in making this claim: “Jesus sharply rebuked Peter for being curious about God’s will for another’s life” [BKC].

AS FOR YOU, FOLLOW ME. Having been told of his own destiny, Simon wanted to know what would happen to John. Instead of answering that question, Jesus, after a sharp rebuke, ordered “follow Me.” His words, “as for you” seem to make his statement even more personal to Simon Peter. Jesus appeals to lost people to come to Him and follow Him, but he commands the apostle Simon, son of John to follow him. “Ancient writers state that, about thirty- four years after this, Peter was crucified; and that he deemed it so glorious a thing to die for Christ that he begged to be crucified with his head downwards, not considering himself worthy to die in the same posture in which his Lord did. So Eusebius, Prudentius, Chrysostom, and Augustin” [CLARKE].

21: 23 - THIS REPORT SPREAD. “*So this report spread to the brothers that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?’*” It would be interesting to know how this rumor got started. Did John tell others that Jesus had said he would not die, or did Simon Peter spread the story? It is possible, even probable, that the other five disciples heard what Jesus said and began repeating it as soon as they were back among other believers. Those to whom they told the story would have repeated it to others. John tells us that the story spread “to the brothers.” That means that the story spread among believers that John would not die, but remain alive until the Lord returned.

THAT THIS DISCIPLE WOULD NOT DIE. While we are not told exactly how, or for how long the word spread, we know that many believers apparently believed that John would remain alive until Jesus returned. Regardless of how it happened, the word spread. “In essence, the Lord said that John *could* stay alive until his coming (if the Lord so willed), not that John *would* stay alive until His return. The Lord’s sovereignty over each man’s life was the issue, not the duration of John’s life. Each man is responsible to follow the Lord according to what the Lord has revealed to him. The command is clear: follow thou me” [NCWB]. This Gospel was written around A. D. 86, and it would be interesting to know if some of those Jewish Christians who were a part of the dispersion following the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple and in A. D. 70 were still repeating that story.

IF I WANT HIM TO REMAIN. John sets the record straight. Jesus said, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?” Once again, Jesus asserts His sovereign authority over the disciples. That sovereignty is still in effect today. He has total authority over His church. He knows what price His followers will pay for their loyalty to Him. He also knows those who are genuine followers and those who are followers in name only. Those citizens of the Kingdom of God who are willing to submit to His sovereign reign do not have to wonder either about His sovereign will, or their eternal destiny. All the true believer has to do is to go to the Word of God and let the Holy Spirit guide their study and lead them as they yield to His sovereign will in every day life. The Scripture will never mislead anyone, and the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent to indwell His saints upon His Ascension back into Heaven, will lead believers in their walk with Him.

THE EPILOGUE

21:24 - THIS IS THE DISCIPLE. “*This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.*” Once again, the author does not identify himself by

name, only as the disciple Jesus loved (see 21:20). This is proof positive that the beloved disciple wrote this Gospel. As mentioned before in this volume, there had been a time when a very youthful John, along with his brother James, sought a position of honor and power in the Kingdom Jesus would establish. Now, John was happy to be the slave of Jesus Christ. It was enough for him to refer to himself as the disciple Jesus loved.

WE KNOW THAT HIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE. John was the one writing this account, but here he uses the plural. “The plural here seems intentional as the identification and endorsement of a group of disciples who know the author and wish to vouch for his identity and for the truthfulness of his witness” [ATR]. Some believe what we see here is a verse added by a group of elders in Ephesus where John had worked so long. John may have been thinking of his fellow apostles, but He had already outlived the better known disciples by some twenty years, so it is doubtful that he meant he and some of the other apostles. Is it possible that he was using the “ministerial we” in this verse.

21:25 - MANY OTHER THINGS. *“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if they were written one by one, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.”* When writing an historical narrative about any great person’s life, the author researches, makes notes, and then tries to decide which stories or events should be included in the book. In this case, however, the Holy Spirit, who inspired every word of Scripture, would have determined which miracles would be included in the Fourth Gospel.

If John had been acting on his own, one wonders how many volumes he might have filled. That, however, was not the case. That which was recorded is exactly what the Lord wanted the people of that day to know, and it is exactly what He wants the modern reader to know. No effort is made to answer all the questions one might ask. At the same time, the modern reader has no advantage over the first century reader, or the reader of any century in between.

IF THEY SHOULD BE WRITTEN DOWN. This is the condition of the third class (not yet determined) “with ean and present passive subjunctive of graphō, If they should be written one by one (in full detail)” [ATR]. The Holy Spirit determined what would be recorded. Barnes offers a strong endorsement for the inspiration of Scripture at this point:

“This gospel contains in itself the clearest proof of inspiration. It is the work of a fisherman of Galilee, without any proof that he had any unusual advantages. It is a connected, clear, and satisfactory argument to establish the great truth that Jesus was the Messiah. It was written many years after the ascension of Jesus. It contains the record of the Saviour’s profoundest discourses, of his most convincing arguments with the Jews, and of his declarations respecting himself and God. It contains the purest and most elevated views of God to be found anywhere, as far exceeding all the speculations of philosophers as the sun does the blaze of a taper.

“It is in the highest degree absurd to suppose that an unlettered fisherman could have originated this book. Anyone may be convinced of this by comparing it with what

would be the production of a man in that rank of life now. But if John has preserved the record of what has occurred so many years before, then it shows that he was under the divine guidance, and is himself a proof, a full and standing proof, of the fulfillment of the promise which he has recorded-- that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, John 14:26. Of this book we may, in conclusion, apply the words spoken by John respecting his vision of the future events of the church: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this book, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand," Rev 1:3" [BARNES, bold added by this writer].

I SUPPOSE. It is interesting that John switches back to the first person here. This is significant for the modern reader, but probably more so to the readers of the latter part of the First Century, and those of the first half of the Second Century. It would be interesting to know how many church leaders of that era sat and listened to the aged apostle as He expounded on the life, miracles, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Perhaps John's best known disciple was Polycarp, the aged bishop of Smirna who was burned at stake when he was eighty-six years old.

THE WORLD ITSELF COULD NOT CONTAIN THE BOOKS. Robertson writes that this is the "Future active infinitive in indirect discourse after oimai. This is, of course, natural hyperbole, but graphically pictures for us the vastness of the work and words of Jesus from which the author has made a small selection (John 20:30) and by which he has produced what is, all things considered, the greatest of all the books produced by man, the eternal gospel from the eagle who soars to the very heavens and gives us a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" [ATR].

The New Commentary on the Whole Bible, New Testament, comments on the final two verses of the Gospel According to John:

"The last two verses of the Gospel contain the colophon that attests to the veracity of John's written testimony. John's testimony is trustworthy because he was that disciple whom Jesus loved and that disciple who was an eyewitness of Jesus' life and ministry. The statement **we know that his testimony is true** is the attestation of some of John's contemporaries who knew that what John wrote was true. Some scholars think these contemporaries were the Ephesian elders. (John resided in Ephesus in his later years)... John's final statement (**I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written**) is NOT a mere hyperbolic expression but an affirmation of the fact that his materials were far from being exhaustive" [NCWB, bold included in commentary].

This writer will let Gerals L. Borchet, author of the New American Commentary on The Gospel of John provide the summary to this conclusion to this volume:

"As I have indicated in the Introduction within the section on authorship, this verse has been the subject of varying views. From my perspective the witness who stands behind this Gospel is John. The 'we,' who knew that the testimony was authentic, however, must refer to a community prepared to assert the legitimacy of that disciple's

witness...

The meaning of 'wrote them down' has also led to differences of opinion. Did it mean the writer actually wrote down the words, caused them to be written down, as was probably the case with Pilate (19:19), or did he use a more free style amanuensis (scribe)? Whether it was the first or second, the difference would be minimal, though the second option might explain the references to the witness as the beloved disciple. But it is very unlikely that any such scribe who penned the Gospel would be at liberty to edit freely the work or to put the document in his own form, as in the third case after the pattern of an official business letter or legal document. Such an edited document might well be acceptable in the business world, but how would such a document as a Gospel relate to its authentication? Truth is a primary theme in John, and truth of witness is a particular emphasis of this verse" [NAC].

John, the Unique Gospel

In the introduction to the series of commentaries on the Gospel According to John, this writer included the following lists that should be of interest to most Bible Students:

SIGNS IN THE JOHN'S GOSPEL

1. Changing water to wine, 2:1-11.
2. Healing of an official's son from a distance, 4:46-54.
3. Healing the sick, 5:1-14.
4. Feeding 5000 men, plus women and children, 6:14.
5. Walking on water, 6:16-20.
6. Healing of a blind man, 9:1-34.
7. Raising of Lazarus from the dead, 11:38-44

THE I AM SAYINGS OF JESUS IN JOHN

1. I am the bread of life - 6:35.
2. I am the light of the world - 8:12.
3. I am the door of the sheep - 10:7-9.
4. I am the good shepherd - 10:11.
5. I am the resurrection and life - 11:25 -26.
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life - 14:6.
7. I am the true vine, 15:1ff

JESUS' SEVEN SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS

1. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34, NKJV)
2. And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)
3. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:26-27)
4. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46)
5. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" (John 19:28)
6. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. (John 19:30).
7. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46).

The Gospel According to John is unique in that it does not follow the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in recording events in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The word Synoptic simple means seeing alike. It is usually recognized as the Evangelistic Gospel.

It begins with a refutation of all false religions and cults, with a particular emphasis on Gnosticism, a philosophy many non-Jewish believers had grown up with and sought to integrate it into the church. John began the Prologue with these words,

“In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome” (John 1:1-5, HCSB).

This not only refutes the Gnosticism of the First and Second Centuries, it destroys Eastern Mysticism and drives the final nail into the coffin of the New Age Movements.

Redemption, or salvation is a major theme of the Fourth Gospel. One of the best known verses in the Bible, and certainly the best known verse that tells us how one is saved it John 3:16: **“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will**

not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, HCSB, bold added by this writer). Many believers memorized this verse in the King James Version: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Jesus assures all who believe in Him to receive His salvation that they are saved forever:

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one” (John 10:28-30).

That passage assures the believer that once we are saved by grace we cannot lose our salvation (1) accidentally, (2) intentionally, or (3) incidentally. Amen!

Appendix

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHAPTERS

From the Introduction to Chapter 16 in this volume

In Chapter One, there is the Prologue, in which we find a statement about Jesus that destroys all cults, all false religions, and all heresies, as well as atheism and agnosticism. Yes, this Gospel has been around two thousand years and we still have cults, false religions, heresies, atheism and agnosticism, but their demise has been assured, as has the reward for all who embrace them. John begins this Gospel with the words, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were created by Him, and without Him was not anything created that was created” (KJV). The first chapter proclaims Jesus to be life, light, Savior, the Lamb of God, the Messiah.

In Chapter Two, Jesus, through the First Sign, declares Himself to be the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies. In Chapter Three, we read: “For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life” (my paraphrase). In Chapter Four, He says to the woman at the well in Samaria, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life”(John 4:13-14, HCSB). Also, in Chapter Four, we have the Second Sign, the healing of an official’s son from a distance.

In Chapter Five, we find the Third Sign, the healing of a man who had been sick for 38 years (on the Sabbath), as well His declaration about Jesus’ relationship with His Father. He also offers witnesses who support His claim to be the Son of God. In Chapter Six, He feeds five thousand men, plus women and children with a child’s lunch (the Fourth Sign). That evening His disciples were

caught in a violent storm in the middle of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus came to them, walking on the water (the Fifth Sign). The next day, He declared, **“I am the bread of life.”**

In Chapter Seven, Jesus went to the Temple privately, but in the middle of the Festival of Tabernacles, He stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him” (7:37-38). Without saying it in so many words, He is saying that He is water of life. He continues to make statements that support the great claims set forth in the Prologue.

In Chapter Eight, Jesus masterfully deals with a crowd bent on trapping him by forcefully dragging into His presence a woman caught in the act of adultery. When the scribes and Pharisees sought to paint Him into a corner from which there was no escape, He brilliantly put the ball back in their court. When they gave up and left, He dismissed the woman with an order for her to “Go, and from now on do not sin any more” (8:11).

In Chapter Nine, Jesus gives the sixth sign, the healing of a man born blind, after He had dealt with the question: whose sins caused his blindness, his or his parents’? The Jewish religious authorities were enraged that Jesus made a paste of spittle and placed on the eyes of the blind man on the Sabbath Day. They questioned the man about the One who had healed him and “He answered, ‘Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know. **One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see.**’” (9:25, bold added by this writer). Wow! What a testimony.

Chapter Ten is very special for a number of reasons. First, Jesus makes two unforgettable “I AM” statements in this passage. He said, **“I am the door to the sheepfold,”** and then He declared, **“I am the Good Shepherd.”** Second, this chapter reveals that Jesus fulfills the hopes and promises of Psalm 23. Third, Jesus offers assurance of eternal security to every single person to whom He gives eternal life, whether they understand it or not (and whether they believe it or not!). The Savior never announces anywhere that He will grant temporary life to anyone who believes in Him.

In Chapter Eleven, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after making another of those amazing I AM statements. He declared to Martha, **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** In Chapter Twelve, we have the anointing at Bethany by Mary and the Royal Entry (commonly called the Triumphant Entry).

In Chapter 13, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and explained the significance of it. He then predicted His betrayal by Judas. Next, He gave them His new commandment, that they should love one another.

In Chapter 14, as a part of His Farewell Discourse, Jesus announced that He was going to the Father to prepare a place for His followers. He then declared, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** Also, in chapter 14, Jesus promised, “Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Also, Jesus promised that when He returned to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit to minister in and through true believers.

In Chapter 15, Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper.” He went on to explain that those who love Him are the ones who Obey Him. Jesus taught that the world hates Him because it hates the Father, and it will hate those who follow Him. He also taught them about the ministry of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 16, Jesus promised that when He went back to Heaven He would send the Holy Spirit, the divine Comforter. He said, “But now I am going away to Him who sent Me..... I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in Me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (John 16:5-12). 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (16:13).

In Chapter 17:1-5, Jesus prays for Himself: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You”(17:1). In 17:6-19, He prayed for His disciples: “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those You have given Me, because they are Yours. All My things are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one just as We are” (John 17:9-11). In 17:20-26 Jesus prayed for all saints of all ages.

In Chapter 18, Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and taken to Annas. Peter denied Jesus to servants (18:15-18). Jesus is questioned by Annas (18:19-24). Simon Peter denied Jesus twice more (18:25-27). Jesus was taken to Pilate where the Roman governor questioned Him (18:18-38a). Barabbas was chosen for release rather than Jesus (18:18b-40).

In Chapter 19, Jesus was subjected to physical torture and mocked ruthlessly. He was sentenced by Pilate to be crucified (18:5-16a). In 19:17-24, we see Jesus was on the cross. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to His mother, “**Woman, here is your son.**” Then He **said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.**” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (John 19:26-27). In 19:28-30, Jesus bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. John gives his own personal testimony about the fulfillment of OT prophets when the Roman soldiers pierced Jesus side (19:1-37). The burial of Jesus is recorded in 19:38-42.

In Chapter 20, the disciples find that His tomb is empty (20:1-7. After hearing the news, Peter and John ran to the tomb. “The other disciple (John), who had reached the tomb first, then entered the **tomb, saw, and believed**” (John 20:8). In 20:11-18, John records Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene. In 20:19-22, Jesus appears to ten disciples (Thomas absent), who were meeting behind a locked door. Thomas was not with the others when Jesus appeared to His disciples the first time, but eight days later, Jesus appeared to the eleven and invited Thomas to touch the scars in his hands and side (20:24-29). John states the purpose of this Gospel: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

In Chapter 21, Jesus made a dramatic appearance to seven of His disciples beside the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee), told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat, where they caught 153 fish, and then He served them breakfast. In 21:15-19, Jesus commissions Simon Peter to feed His sheep, after Peter confess his love for Jesus three times. In verses 20-23, John corrects the false rumor that Jesus had said that he (John) would be left on earth until Jesus' return. What Jesus said was, "If I want him to remain **until I come, what is that to you?**" (John 21:23). In 21:24-25, John identifies himself as the author of this Gospel, and the one Peter has asked about when Jesus foretold Peter the manner of his death. John, then, is the disciple Jesus loved. He is the author of the Fourth Gospel.