

The Gospel of John

There are long held traditions in the church. Some of them good, some not so good. Some are not bad, but may or may not be correct. For example – the belief that John the Apostle wrote the Gospel of John (and 1, 2, & 3 John & Revelation).

Scholars are divided on the authorship of the Gospel of John and the study of the things they consider in their decisions are a study in themselves. However, the Gospel of John appears to be written by an eyewitness of the gospel events. The writer even inserts himself in the gospel – as Mark did in the garden story.

So, for our study, we're going with John, the brother of James, a son of Zebedee.

Scholars agree that the Gospel of John was the last of the four gospels to be written. The date is usually given somewhere in the last decade of the 1st century – so between the year 90 & 100.

It is easy to note that there are some differences in John's gospel and the other three. It contains a great amount of material only found in John's gospel. It is also stylistically different, as we will note in the opening verses of chapter 1.

But the question remains as to why anyone would write a fourth gospel so many years after the death & resurrection of Jesus. Weren't the other gospels in circulation by then?

Yes, but remember that everything was hand written and not as widely circulated as we would think.

Also, John's gospel was written to combat and or correct two issues in early Christianity.

The first was the gnostic heresy which depicted Jesus as divine only. These folks said that Jesus only seemed to be human, but never was. The name of this heresy was Docetism, which comes from the Greek word, to seem.

The second issue was also presented by gnostic Christians, and it had to do with the Christian life. Some of them believed that humans – after confessing Jesus, could no longer sin. Not really sure how they got that, but it was their belief.

The second things Gnostics were saying was that Christians were above the law, and that human standards did not apply.

Both of these – could not sin – and human standards do not apply – meant that there were a lot of gnostic Christians whose lives were morally suspect.

So, qualities of the Christian life, and Jesus' humanity, are emphasized throughout John's gospel.

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

It is believed that John's gospel was written from Ephesus, which became the center of Christianity in the later part of the first century. While there were many Jewish Christians there, their thinking, and speech, was heavily influenced by the Greek world.

The word we translate as Word in the opening verses of John's gospel was a Greek word, Logos. It was a word that had been used by Greek philosophers to depict divine reason – or we might say intelligent design.

John borrows that word and makes it his own for the sake of pagan converts. In other words – hey you pagans, you think you know about intelligent design, well that intelligence was with God – and is God, from the very beginning.

Now, in the beginning, does that mean that there once wasn't God? No, John's Gospel starts as Genesis starts – in the beginning. In the beginning of time as we know it.

Proverbs 8 contains what is known as the hymn of wisdom, and when we read it we can see one of John's influences for his opening verses. Listen to it, then listen to the opening verses.

Proverbs 8:22 – “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,^{[c][d]}
before his deeds of old;

²³ I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.

²⁴ When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs overflowing with water;

²⁵ before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,

²⁶ before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.

²⁷ I was there when he set the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he established the clouds above
and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

³⁰ Then I was constantly^[e] at his side.

I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Remember John's gospel was written in part to combat gnostic heresies. One of those heresies was that God did not create all things, only the good things. So, John writes – Without him nothing was made that has been made.

We find this emphasis in other NT writings, as well.

Colossians 1:16 – For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Hebrews 1:2 – in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

While John was writing to a world heavily influenced by Greek culture, and while he uses words like Logos/Word to connect to them, he is very much grounded in the imagery of the OT, as we saw with Proverbs 8.

We continue to see this influence.

John 1:4 – In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Psalms 36:9 – For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

John 1:5 – The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.

Note the present tense of the word shines. Again, battling a gnostic heresy that claimed that God created the world and then left it alone. Many people still believe this.

No, God's light shines – is still shining – will always shine into the darkness.

The word overcome at the end of verse 5 is translated in some Bibles as understood, or comprehended. Many times in the ancient Greek, a word is translated in various ways depending upon its context.

Overcome, or overtaken, is probably a better translation, although both can be significant in a theological context.

We will now go from the creation of the world to John the Baptist. Like Mark's gospel, we have no birth narratives in John.

John 1:6 – There was a man sent from God whose name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Whose name was John. He is never called John the Baptist in this gospel.

By the time this gospel was written there were followers of John the Baptist, and their number for decades rivaled that of followers of Jesus. So, we have – He himself was not the light, he came only as a witness to the light.

John 1:9 – The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Verse 11 reflects what Jesus said so many times in our study of Matthew/Mark/Luke – that he came first to Israel. Here, John indicates that they did not receive him. Meaning, as a whole people they did not receive him.

Obviously, many Jews did receive him, John being one of them. But, Judaism did not come to its fulfillment as it should have. Or – Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism.

John 1:12 – Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Some use the term – children of God – freely to mean that we are all human. But, according to the NT, especially John’s writings and Paul’s writings, not every person is a child of God in the sense of being part of God’s family.

Paul uses the metaphor of being adopted into God’s family. John, as we have here, uses a Greek philosophical image of regeneration. We will see this image again in John 3:16.

The NIV, which I read, isn’t the best translation for verse 13 – nor of human decision or a husband’s will.

The Greek literally says, not of man’s will. Well, that should be interpreted as mankind or human.

At any rate, Here in the first chapter of John, the gospel writer is talking about a new birth, being born again.

John 1:14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We could spend an entire study session on this one verse.
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us –
We return to the Logos, and this verse directly opposes gnostic belief. Gnostics believed that Jesus was not human, only divine.

Christian belief, clearly stated here, is that God left heaven and became human.

We have seen his glory – John speaks for himself and other eyewitnesses not only to Jesus, but to the resurrected Jesus.

The glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father – How did God leave heaven and yet remain in control of the universe? This verse seeks to address it. The father remained. But remember verse 1 – the Word was with God and the Word was God.

John 10:30 – “I and the Father are one.”

John 1:15 – (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”)

Again, John stresses John the Baptist saying that Jesus surpasses himself, because of the Gnostics.

The way it is written, the one who comes after, he was before me – speaks of the pre-existent Logos.

John 1:16 – Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

This verse follows verse 14, as 15 was editorial. His fullness is Jesus’, the Logos. His fullness refers to his divinity (though he was flesh).

Colossians 2:9 – For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

Now verse 16 has been translated in various way.

KJV – And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

NRSV – From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

NIV – Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

Grace upon grace is probably the best translations.
Morning by morning new mercies ...

John 1:17 – For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

This verse is interpreted by many to show the superiority of the New Covenant over the old.

When Moses was about to receive the tablets from God he asked that he could see God's glory. God's response ...

Exodus 33:20 – “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

But we have seen God's son – the Logos, the Word/God that became flesh ...

John 1:18 – No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^[b] is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

This verse is translated in various ways, many of the older texts have instead of one and only son – the only begotten son.

Also older texts have instead of – Who is himself God – have who is in the bosom of God.

Yet even in the older translations the meaning is the relationship between God and Jesus, they are one. Jesus is God in the flesh.

These first 18 verses are called the prologue, and in it John has introduced a number of words that he will use throughout the gospel: life; light; darkness; glory; truth; to be born of God, to name a few.

Verse 19 begins a section on the witness of John the Baptist, his testimony and his followers.

John 1:19 – Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders^[c] in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

The NIV and other modern translation have Jewish leaders instead of just the Jews. The original does have just the Jews, but it was understood that he was referencing the leaders.

John 1:21 – They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

So John denies three things. First, in verse 20 he denies being the Messiah. In Verse 21, he denies being Elijah and then he denies being ‘the Prophet’.

Well, we know he wasn’t the Messiah. What about Elijah? It was traditionally believed that Elijah would return to herald in the news of the Messiah.

Malachi 4:5 – “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.”

John denies being Elijah. But what about ...

Mark 9:11 – And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹² Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³ But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

Or the words of Jesus in ...

Matthew 11:14 – “And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.”

Well, by saying ‘if you are willing to accept it ...’ Jesus was making it clear that he was speaking spiritually, which is how we understand what the angel said when foretelling the birth of John the Baptist in Luke 1.

Luke 1:17 – And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The Jewish expectation was that Elijah would return in bodily form, while Jesus and John the Baptist make it clear that it was a spiritual metaphor.

Sort of like Jesus saying he would give us power to handle snakes and scorpions – many take it literally when it was a spiritual metaphor indicating difficult people.

The spirit of Elijah was a metaphor indicating the power of his preaching.

But what about the last question in verse 21 –

John 1:21 – “Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

If you were to turn to Deuteronomy 18 there is a section that study Bibles have as “The Prophet.’ In it Moses says ...

Deuteronomy 18:15 – The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

This reference to ‘The Prophet’ is referenced again a few times in John’s gospel.

John 1:22 – Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”^[d]

²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

²⁶ “I baptize with^[e] water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John was baptizing, but in this gospel he doesn't baptize Jesus as recorded in the other three gospels.

John 1:29 – The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

This emphasis on taking away our sin is found throughout John's gospel and his other writings:

1 John 1:7 – the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all^[b] sin.

1 John 2:2 – He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 3:5 – you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins.

And others.

By the way – we are familiar with the phrase, Lamb of God. It is only used twice in the entire Bible, and both in this chapter. Where did John the Baptist get the phrase? Probably from Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:7 – He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

Isaiah 53:12 – For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

John 1:30 – This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ (referring back to verse 15) ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”^[f]

So no depiction of John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan, but seems to be inferred.

In verse 34 the NIV reads ‘God’s Chosen One’. Many others read it as ‘the Son of God’. The term God’s Chosen One is found in many of the older manuscripts, and many scholars believe that it is likely the original words used.

Luke 1:35 – The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter^[g]).

According to John's gospel, the original followers of Jesus were followers of John the Baptist.

Also, in this gospel, Jesus is declared to be the Messiah early in the story, and by Andrew. Of course, as we have studied in the previous gospels, whether or not they understood the Messiah to be something other than a national leader is questionable.

In the next passage we encounter two disciples who are more prominent in this gospel than in the others.

John 1:43 – The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

In the synoptic gospels, Philip is only mentioned in the list of apostles. In this gospel he is mentioned by name four times.

John 1:44 – Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

We find Nathaniel, by this name, only in John's gospel. I say by this name because it has been traditionally believed that Nathaniel is Bartholomew in the synoptics and in Acts.

Can anything good come from Nazareth? Consider the town of Nazareth in those days – it was small, probably several hundred people. It was also on the border of Samaria. As such, there was probably much commerce with the Samaritans, and probably Samaritans living in the town.

John 1:47 – When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Some scholars have said that this merely states that Nathaniel was a student of the Torah, for ancient proverbs of that time mention that under a fig tree is the proper place to study the Torah.

However, Nathaniel’s response seems to suggest something more, that Jesus knew of him in some divine fashion.

John 1:49 – Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe^[h] because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.”⁵¹ He then added, “Very truly I tell you,^[i] you^[j] will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’^[k] the Son of Man.”

Here again, Jesus is declared to be the Messiah – here the Son of God. Keep in mind that son of God was often used to merely indicate that someone was favored by God. The thought of God appearing in the flesh was, at that time, not a concept that any Jew would have entertained.

King of Israel – most likely a political statement, which Jesus answers in a way to indicate that his kingdom was not of the earth.

John 2:1 – On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

The third day, this would have been the third day after the call of Philip and Nathaniel. Jesus’ mother had been invited, but in John’s gospel is never mentioned by name.

As I've explained before, there are no wedding ceremonies in the Bible. This was a marriage feast, or banquet, and would last up to seven days, with new guests arriving each day. Wine would flow freely, and I said they lasted up to seven days – they would end when the wine ran out.

It was understood that Jesus and his followers arrived towards the latter part of the celebration.

John 2:3 – When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman,^[a] why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The Greek word we translate as woman would have shown no disrespect. In fact, it could be used a term of endearment.

"Why do you involve me – probably better understood as – How does that involve me?"

One thing this interaction shows us, is that Mary knew of Jesus' divine nature. When we read the synoptics, we know she should have known due to the angels' announcements, and the fact that she did not conceive Jesus with a man.

It also may indicate that she had already witnessed Jesus' ability to perform miracles. There are stories from ancient writings, not in the Bible, that tell of miracles that Jesus performed even as a child. We can't say for sure, but this story would indicate that Mary knew of his abilities.

John 2:6 – Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.^[b]

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside¹⁰ and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

So, this was the first of many signs that Jesus would give, and his disciples believed in him – although they obviously already sensed something great about him, having declared him the Messiah and the king of Israel.

Now of course there are skeptics who say all that happened was that Jesus diluted the left over wine, and his radiant presence made everyone happy and they thought it was new wine.

Not what John was trying to convey!

Verse 12 says they then went to Capernaum. In the synoptics, Capernaum was where Jesus based his ministry out of. In John’s gospel it appears as if Mary seems to live there at this time.

In the synoptic gospels, there is a greater focus on Jesus’ Galilean ministry, and his ministry to people in pagan lands. It’s only after all of that that he then heads to Jerusalem for his one and only visit as told in the gospels.

Here in John, he travels to Jerusalem seemingly every year, and the first trip is recorded early in the gospel. There are four trips to Jerusalem recorded in John’s gospel.

John 2:13 – When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Many of John's original readers were pagan converts, so he uses care to explain things like Passover. Instead of just Passover, it's the Jewish Passover.

John 2:14 – In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

Newer translations, like what I am reading, have temple courts and not temple. This is just to clarify the word used, which did not refer to the temple proper, but rather the outside area of the temple. Gentiles were allowed in the temple courts, and as we covered during the study of the synoptic gospels, the practice of changing money for travelers, and the practice of selling animals for sacrifice, was commonplace, and had been done for years, if not centuries.

According to the Mark's gospel, it was clearer to understand that the merchants were taking shortcuts to set up, actually traveling across more sacred areas of the temple.

Here in John the emphasis seems to be more in the irreverence of their activities.

John 2:15 – So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Verse 17 is a quote from Psalm 69.

John 2:18 – The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

It would appear to many that John does have an axe to grind with ‘the Jews.’ Keep in mind that by the time this gospel was written, the split between Christianity and Judaism was pretty much complete.

There were some political reasons to distance themselves from the Jews, as well. Jerusalem had rebelled against Rome in the late 60’s, and Rome pretty much destroyed Jerusalem in 70. The Jews were persecuted after that time.

Yes, Christian persecution was becoming more widespread about the time this gospel was written, but for other reasons than being connected to the Jews. (Basically, for their refusal to bow to Caesar as a god).

So, in verse 18 when John says – The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” – he’s talking about the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem, those of the high priests party. They would have been Sadducees.

Consider verse 19 – “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” We know from our study of the synoptics that one of the main accusations against Jesus at his trial is that he threatened to destroy the temple.

In the synoptics, Jesus spoke of raising the temple in a different context, not the cleansing of the temple courts.

The interesting thing about verse 19 is that in the Greek it is in the imperative tense, which could be translated as – **You** will destroy this temple and **I** will raise it again in three days.

John 2:20 – They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Historically speaking, this would indicate that this took place in the year 27-28. For the Temple construction known as Herod's temple began in 20-19 BC.

In verses 21-22, we have commentary given by John, and he does so throughout his gospel.

John 2:23 – Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.^[d] ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

This is an interesting short passage. First, the verb tense of signs in the Greek indicates that this was an ongoing thing – of which we don't have any written record of by John.

It says that they believed in him, probably better translated as they believed in his name. That would give the impression that they believed in his name as a Messiah.

However, Jesus knew all people – and he knew their faith was shallow and more or less transitory – oh he did this for me so I believe.

Chapter 3

John 3:1 – Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Nicodemus is only mentioned by name in John's gospel, and makes three separate appearances. He appears to have been somewhat of a follower of Jesus, as he brings the spices to anoint the body of Jesus after his crucifixion.

He is identified as a member of the Sanhedrin, but in the minority party of the Pharisees.

Here, in his first encounter with Jesus, he addresses him as a rabbi. This would indicate that he has witnessed at least one miracle that Jesus has performed. An ancient teaching observed at that time states: “If a prophet who begins to prophesy gives a sign and miracle, he is to be listened to, otherwise he is not to be heeded.”

Throughout the gospel of John we encounter dialogue between Jesus and others that basically goes like this:

Jesus gives a teaching that can be interpreted literally or spiritually.

It is misunderstood.

Jesus expounds on the spiritual application.

The conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus is the first example of this.

John 3:3 – Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]”

⁴“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

So, Jesus has given a teaching that could be interpreted literally or spiritually. Nicodemus misunderstands it. In the following verses Jesus will explain the teaching.

The term ‘born again’ can be interpreted as born from above, and I think this might be a better translation. Whichever you choose, this is an example of the regeneration

Remember from chapter 1 –

John 1:12 – Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 3:5 – Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit.

First, the Kingdom of God has the same meaning as it did in the synoptic gospels. Not necessarily or only a future event, but a quality of life that can be experienced right now.

Interestingly, the term Kingdom of God is only used twice in John’s gospel, and both in this passage. The term John usually uses is – eternal life.

About the term – born of water and the Spirit. What does being born of water mean? There are those who believe that it refers to baptism, as in John’s baptism of repentance. Baptisms were a large part of the Jewish world, and they would receive multiple baptisms.

[Ezekiel 36:25](#) says, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities”

And there are those who believe that it refers to our natural birth, as unborn babies live in the amniotic fluids of its mother.

1 Peter 1:23 – For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

I’m going with the second theory – natural birth. After all, Jesus added the flesh being born of the flesh right after as a qualifier.

3:5 – “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit

Remember **John 1:12** – Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

There is a physical birth, but children of God must partake of a spiritual birth.

John 3:7 – ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’^[d]

In the ancient world the word for spirit and wind are the same word. In the OT the word wind often signified the Holy Spirit. In Ezekiel 37 – the story of the valley of the dry bones – the wind / spirit blows across the bones and they have life again.

So it is with us – God’s spirit gives us life again – born again.

John 3:9 – “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?”

In the Greek it reads more like – You are *that* teacher of Israel?

3:11 – Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.’^[g]

Everyone knows John 3:16 – but John 3:14-15 is every bit as powerful!

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake/serpent in the wilderness.” In that story, (Numbers 21), the people were being bitten by venomous snakes and the only cure was to look upon the bronze snake.

Now think about this – people were dying so they were desperate to look upon the bronze snake. Family and friends would do anything they could to get their loved ones to look upon the bronze snake.

When Moses lifted the bronze serpent, it brought life to the people.

So it is and so it should be with Jesus. We should be desperate for Jesus, for life. We should be desperate for others to see Jesus, to have life.

So, like Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness in order to bring life, so Jesus must be lifted up to bring life. This is what sets up the famous passage we have next.

While John 3:16 is famous – Martin Luther called it the gospel in miniature – as we read it note the full passage. Yes, eternal life comes through Jesus, but so does a life lived for truth, God’s truth, God’s light.

New birth, spiritual regeneration, is marked by living life differently than those who have not been born anew.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Spiritual birth will make us love and seek the light.

Note verse 18 – *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned* – we are already under the curse / condemnation of sin.

Jesus didn’t come into the world to condemn, that’s already the case for us. His purpose is to save.

John 3:22 – After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. ²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.)

Many people don't know that Jesus baptized others, but there it is. Jewish baptism was different than Christian baptism. The Jews would be baptized often. It was a ritual, almost like our observance of communion.

In this passage, they are not in the Jordan river, and for some reason many think all of John the Baptists baptism were in the Jordan, not so.

Here we are in the Judean countryside. John wasn't far away also baptizing. John was near Aenon near Salim. Scholars believe that this was Wadi Selam (Selam springs), which was about a two hour walk northeast from Jerusalem.

3:25 – An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

It's debatable why verse 25 has John's disciples and a certain Jew / or the Jews. They were all Jews. It most likely was referring to a disciple of Jesus. John's disciples and a or more than one disciple of Jesus were having an argument about baptizing. Followers of Jesus are still arguing about baptism 2,000 years later!

Verse 26 leads some to believe that this was on the Jordan, but the person speaking to John is referring to a different time and place.

3:27 – To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.

This can be understood as – We must be happy with what God gives. Or, be happy with the role they were playing.

3:28 – You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less.”

The friend who attends the bridegroom plays an important role, but his role is not as important as the bridegroom. John was happy with the role he was playing.

Remember, the gospel writer emphasizes John humility because by the time this gospel was written there were a great many followers of John the Baptist, claiming that he was superior to Jesus.

John 3:31 – The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

No one accepts his testimony. Obviously many people accepted Jesus’ testimony to God’s truth. This verse is more or less a generalization to the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people as a whole.

Remember **John 1:11** – He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

3:33 – Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

Note verse 36 – *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life* – It doesn't say they will have eternal life, but that they have it. Eternal life, like kingdom life, doesn't begin in the sweet bye and bye, it is a quality of life that can begin now.

It begins when we live under the Lordship of Jesus.

Chapter 4

V. 1 – Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

So maybe Jesus didn't baptize anyone. However, What did he leave for? He didn't want any trouble with the religious leaders, not at that time, anyway.

John the Baptist was very popular among the Pharisee's, and Jesus didn't need the trouble. So he takes off for Galilee.

V. 4 – Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

I like verse 4 – he had to go through Samaria. No, he didn't have to go through Samaria just to get to Galilee. Even though it was the shortest route, many Jews would not go through Samaria. But, Jesus had a purpose in Samaria.

We modern readers don't pay much attention to the fact that this story takes place at noon. It is significant. Women would go to the well early in the morning, or late in the evening, when it was cooler.

V. 7 – When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

That was very true. Jewish men would cross the road and walk on the other side so they wouldn't have to pass a Samaritan, much less a Samaritan woman.

The Jews had a saying – He that eats with a Samaritan (or drink) is like one that eats the flesh of swine.

Jesus is breaking all sorts of rules here. Alone with a woman, a Samaritan woman, and a Samaritan woman with a bad reputation. How do we know she had a bad reputation? She's not welcome at the well with the other women.

Remember throughout John's gospel we have Jesus making a statement, the person hearing Jesus doesn't understand the statement, or misinterprets it. Then Jesus explaining the point. Same here at the well.

V. 10 – Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Living water was a term the ancients used for running water. Not the kind out of a faucet, but a stream or river that never dried up.

V. 13 – Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Hear and feel the drama in this woman's plea. Now, keep in mind that she's probably the type of woman you might be uncomfortable sitting beside in church, but Jesus sought her out. She probably feels shame and guilt having to fetch water in the noonday sun, and she pleads for Jesus to do what he can so she doesn't have to take her walk of shame any more.

But again, what Jesus says is not understood. He was talking spiritually, she was hearing physically. Typical pattern in John's gospel.

V. 16 – He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

¹⁷“I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

The difference between the Jews and Samaritans was not exactly as wide as many people think. Remember, most Samaritans were Jews of the northern kingdom who after the split between the two kingdoms worshipped in the temple of Mount Gerizim, which was in the northern kingdom.

They were called Samaritans because their capital was Samira. For the most part they weren't foreigners as we would think of a foreigner, but as we know, there is no division like a church division.

This, plus his knowledge of her life is referenced in the next passage.

V. 19 – “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

²¹“Woman (remember, not a derogatory term),” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You

Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

There are three main characteristics of God that John emphasizes throughout his writings (the gospel of John, 1, 2, & 3 John). They are: God is Spirit; God is light; God is love.

Here, Jesus emphasizes the spiritual aspect of God, which really wasn't anything new for the Jews.

Psalms 51:11 – Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Jesus' point here is that it's not where we worship, it's what we worship and how we worship.

John 4:25 – The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Her response acknowledges that the Messiah will welcome the Samaritans – explain everything to us.

V. 26 – Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

In the synoptics there seemed to be a secrecy about Jesus' true nature, true role. In John it's no secret, and it is first revealed publicly by Jesus to the Samaritans.

V. 27 – Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

The surprise wasn't just the fact that she was a Samaritan. It was improper in those days for a rabbi to talk to a woman on the street. Here, Jesus talks to a Samaritan woman with a bad reputation.

V. 28 – Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” ³⁰They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

This story is masterfully told! She leaves her water jar. She really has discovered living water!

V. 31 – Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

³² But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

³³ Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

Remember, typical gospel of John fashion. Jesus says something on a spiritual level that is taken on a literal or physical level. They respond, he explains.

V. 34 – “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Don't you have a saying, ‘It's still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

The wheat was sowed four months after planting, usually in May for the first crop. But no need to wait four months for the spiritual harvest because the harvest for a crop for eternal life is ready.

One sows, one reaps, and we can be glad together.

Paul uses this analogy in ...

1 Corinthians 3:6 – I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

John 4:39 – Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴² They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

I would love to be able to have seen this – just think of the kind of people she brought back to Jesus? Have you ever considered that? And, the first group of people to believe, other than his disciples, were Samaritans!

Plus, the very first Christian evangelist was a Samaritan woman of ill repute!

Her evangelistic style was perfect – so that they came to believe not because of what they said, but what they experienced themselves.

Before we continue in chapter four, let's recap chapter 4 –

V. 1 – Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria.

John 4:43 – After the two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) ⁴⁵ When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

Verse 44 seems to be out of context. In the synoptic gospels the verse was Jesus' comment upon hearing his unbelieving townspeople. However, here they are spoken right before the statement that the Galileans welcomed him.

Perhaps it was implying that Jesus traveled through Nazareth (since it was a border town of Samaria) on his way to the Sea of Galilee.

Many believe that the next story – the story of the healing of official's son – is a variant of the healing of the centurion's servant as told in Matthew and Luke. It's difficult to say, as there are differences even between Matthew & Luke.

John 4:46 – Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

⁴⁸ “Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

⁴⁹ The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

⁵⁰ “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. ⁵¹ While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵² When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.”

⁵³ Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.

⁵⁴ This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

In verse 50 the man takes Jesus at his word, and then in verse 53 we are told that the man and his whole household believed. That seems a bit confusing, but the man believed – took Jesus at his word – when Jesus spoke to him.

The man – and additionally his whole family – then believed when the whole story came to light.

Belief – faith – it comes differently for different people. Some take a long time to come to faith, others seem to have a gift for faith.

Chapter 5

Doesn't it seem that we just got back from Jerusalem? Well, in chapter 5 Jesus heads back.

V. 1 – Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals.

While we can't say with certainty which festival this is – a careful study of the gospels leads scholars to believe that this was the feast of Tabernacles, or more likely Pentecost.

Tabernacles is in the fall. Pentecost in the spring.

VV. 2 – Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda^[a] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ^[4] ^[b] ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

Modern translation do not have verse 4, as recorded in older translation. Why? As always – because the oldest manuscripts that we have simply do not have those words, they seem to be a later insertion.

Those words – *and they waited for the moving of the waters.* ⁴ *From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.*

There are springs that are intermittent. They bubble up sometimes. Then they stop, then they bubble up again at different intervals. This would have been the case with this spring.

Scholars believe that what we know as verse 4 was inserted to explain the man's answer in verse 7.

V. 6 – When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷ “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ”

¹² So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

¹³ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Do you think that the question in verse six was a strange question?
Do we ever get to a point where we don't want to change?
Do you want to get well – it is a question God asks of each of us.

Some people have difficulty with verse 14 – stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. Worse than being paralyzed for 38 years?

Yes! Remember Jesus speaks spiritually and people heard him literally?
Separation from God is the worst thing that can happen.

In the following verses we have Sabbath disputes, much like we did in the other gospels. Jewish leaders did allow acts of mercy on the Sabbath, but for various reasons the Jewish leaders sought every excuse to confront Jesus.

V. 16 – So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷ In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” ¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Is God our example? Didn't God rest on the seventh day?

Genesis 2:2 – By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

Yes, but by this time, it was generally understood that God – in control of all things – always watched – always listened – always was God.

Had not the Jews often called God father?

Isaiah 63:16 – you are our Father,
though Abraham does not know us
or Israel acknowledge us;
you, LORD, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Yes, and in many other places, as well. But Jesus' statement implied that he was somehow as important as God – “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”

Well, the charge of making himself equal with God implied that Jesus was independent from God, and Jesus answers that charge. His words clearly state the unity between God and Jesus.

Remember John's emphasis – fully God, fully human.

John 5:19 – Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. ²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

²⁴ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

As I have said numerous times – eternal life doesn't begin in the sweet bye and bye – it begins now. Jesus makes this clear when he says, “but has crossed over from death to life.”

We find this thought in Paul's letters, as well.

Romans 6:13 – Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

In the following verses – a realized and future eschatology (death, judgment, and the final destiny) are mixed together.

John 5:25 – Very truly I tell you, *a time is coming and has now come* when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

The dead will hear.

The spiritually dead will hear and will live. This speaks to all who respond to Jesus – That’s realized. All who will respond – that’s future.

It also speaks of a time after the death of Jesus when he spoke to the imprisoned souls. (1 Peter 3:19).

The rest of this passage is again – a present and future eschatology.

V. 26 – For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

Most Bible have verse 30 along with what has just been said. It would be better placed as the first line of the next section.

John 5:30 – By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true.³² There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is true.

³³ “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.³⁴ Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. ³⁵ John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

It appears as if John the Baptist (never mentioned as the Baptist in this gospel) is no longer on the scene, perhaps already having been arrested. But, again an example of John’s emphasis of John merely pointing towards Jesus, and not superior to Jesus.

V. 36 – “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.³⁹ You study^[c] the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Those last two verses are mighty! Some people can quote chapter and verse all day long, but their lives do not reflect that they actually know Jesus. Knowing the Scriptures is important – I stress it – but knowing Jesus is the most important thing.

In the following verses, the word glory (or honor) replaces witness. Keep in mind to whom it is that Jesus is speaking. Don’t take words out of their context. Jesus is speaking to those who questioned his authority, since he had been healing on the Sabbath.

V. 41 – “I do not accept glory from human beings,⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

Ouch! Now remember, he was talking to men who could quote scripture all day long – yet they didn’t have the love of God in their hearts.

V. 43 – I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God^[d]?⁴⁵ “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.

Consider verse 44 – Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. What does that mean?

They were putting their trust in the security which was guaranteed to those who kept the law of Moses.

Paul wrote about how futile this was in ...

Romans 7:21 – Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

V. 46 – If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Many have asked about this over the years – where did Moses write about Jesus?

- Jesus is, indeed, the Passover Lamb, as those who put their faith in His death and the blood He shed are rescued from the judgment that is to come. (John 3:16-18)
- Like the manna in the desert, Jesus is the Bread from Heaven (John 6:51) that satisfies our spiritual hunger and gives us life.
- Like the water that sprung from the rock, Jesus is the living water (John 7:37) that satisfies our spiritual thirst.
- Like the snake in the desert that was lifted up that those who were bitten by deadly snakes could look upon and be saved, Jesus was lifted up so that we who have been bitten by Satan in our sin can look upon Jesus and be saved from spiritual death. (John 3:14-15)
- Jesus is the offspring of the woman spoken of in Genesis 3 that would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15)

- Jesus is the fulfillment of the life of Joseph, which foreshadows Him being the beloved Son, being envied by His own, being rejected by His own, cast down into the pit, resurrected, sent to a distant country where He became lord of all, and who then provided salvation for His own.
- Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah: cf. Genesis 49:8ff as interpreted by Revelation 5:5
- Moses also said that God would raise up "a prophet like me" (Deuteronomy 18:15), and this is probably the clearest reference to the coming Messiah.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 begins with Jesus feeding the multitudes. With a few variations, it follows the feeding of the 5,000 in Mark, and the feeding stories in Matthew and Luke.

Something you may have noticed about John's gospel, it is clear that we are getting more detail on certain events, but only certain events. For example, at the end of chapter 5, Jesus was in Jerusalem. Here at the beginning of chapter 6, he is on the far shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Obviously, we are not getting the travel details that we got in the synoptics, especially Matthew & Luke.

John 6:1 – Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Remember, this was a boys lunch. These aren’t two large fish – think smoked or dried bluegill. And, these aren’t five loaves of wonder bread, they are more like biscuits. A lunch.

Andrew is to be commended for bringing to Jesus what he had, even if he did question how Jesus might use it,

John 6:10 – Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks (*Eucharist*), and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Like the feeding stories in the synoptics, don’t try to read too much into 12 baskets of leftovers. Twelve tribes of Israel? Perhaps, but maybe just twelve baskets full.

John emphasizes what I taught in the synoptics – the people wanted a political king. That is why in the synoptics, and especially Mark, Jesus often tells people not to tell of healings and such.

The Jews had long told stories of how their Messiah king (political) would feed and heal people.

John 6:16 – When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake,¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.¹⁸ A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles,^[b] they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened.²⁰ But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.”²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

There may be some confusion about verse 17 – *they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.*

The syntax of the ancient Greek can be confusing, and most likely this should read – By now it was dark and Jesus had not yet joined them. They got into the boat and set off across the lake.

Don’t ask questions like – why didn’t they wait for Jesus? Perhaps, Jesus had told them to go on and he’d meet them there – we don’t know. Not the point of the story.

Some critics note that the Greek phrase which read – walking on the sea – could be translated as walking by the sea.

True, the context clearly shows that Jesus was walking on the water – as they were three or four miles out.

John 6:22 – The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore (*where the disciples had departed from the night before*) of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone.²³ Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks (*Eucharist*).²⁴ Once the crowd realized

that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

The remnant of the folks that Jesus had fed seek him out. There is truth there – not all who Jesus helps continue to seek him.

John 6:25 – When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

There is truth here, as well. Not all who seek Jesus are seeking light, some are merely seeking what Jesus can do for us here and now.

Essentially Jesus is saying – feed the hunger within your souls. Now, put that into context – those peasants worked long hours and made just enough to stay alive. Yet even to them Jesus says there is something more important.

There is something more important than our food – our medicine – our homes – our physical survival and certainly our comfort.

John 6:28 – Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

³⁰ So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’^[c]”

More truth about humanity – they had witnessed feed a multitude with next to nothing the day before, and here they ask for a sign. How long do we stayed satisfied with what Jesus has done in our lives?

Verse 29 – what we must do is to believe in the one that God has sent – What does this mean? Believe Jesus existed? Believe that he rose from the dead? Does it go further – believe in seeking the light? Believe in living for the light?

They asked about the manna. There was a belief that the messiah would supply manna from heaven as it happened in the days of Moses. Jesus corrects them – Moses gave them nothing – it was God.

John 6:32 – Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

Like the woman at the well who said – Sir give me this water that I may not thirst again and not have to come to this well – they ask “Sir always give us this bread.” But like the woman at the well – they were still hearing literally and not spiritually.

So, Jesus explains.

John 6:35 – Then Jesus declared, “**I am** the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

Verse 35 is the first of the great “I am” sayings of this gospel. Verse 35 also recalls the answer to the woman at the well – never go hungry and **never be thirsty**.

The last sentence – I will raise them up on the last day – this has troubled many. Does it refer to soul sleep? That would seem inconsistent with the bulk of this gospel. But remember, John’s gospel is both a realized and future eschatology. The now and the future are related.

Besides – the last day – is my last day the last day? Is your last day the last day? This saying does not necessarily point to one last day for all.

John 6:41 – At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”⁴² They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

Joseph – but Mary is not mentioned by name, as is the custom in John’s gospel. While the doctrine of the virgin birth is not refuted in John, it is not supported, either.

John 6:43 – “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered.⁴⁴ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.”⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ (Isaiah 54:13)^[1] Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me.⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.⁴⁷ Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life.

By now we have no more mention of the kingdom of God in John’s gospel. It is always eternal life. Eternal life begins with believing in Jesus – believing in the light – living for the light.

This eternal life is a spiritual life. We are called to be not only spiritual people, but people of God's spirit – the Holy Spirit.

John 6:48 – I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. ⁵⁰ But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” ⁵² Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Living Bread is spiritual. It is that which nourishes our soul, and brings us into the kingdom of God – eternal life.

How can Jesus give us his flesh to eat? Again, a spiritual saying that is taken literally by those that hear him. Jesus' words that follow are more closely associated with Holy Communion and the Last Supper in the other gospels and in 1 Corinthians 11.

John 6:53 – Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” ⁵⁹ He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

To hear this in any way but spiritual would have been revolting to them. What this passage, and others we will encounter in John, truly tells us is that there must be a very real spiritual connection between us and Jesus. It's not mere confessing that Jesus lived or rose from the dead – it is abiding in Jesus spiritually. It is taking on his flesh and his blood.

John 6:60 – On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

⁶¹ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! ⁶³ The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit^[e] and life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.”

It was “the Jews” who questioned and complained, now Jesus turns to his disciples – who were also Jews.

Verse 63 makes it clear that Jesus is not speaking of the material world known by our senses. *The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit^[e] and life.*

We read – full of the spirit. The Greek is simply they are spirit and life. God’s Holy Spirit is life. It is kingdom life. It is eternal life.

Verse 63 also makes it clear that there is only 1 thing that can offer us life – abundant life – eternal life – kingdom life – *The Spirit gives life.*

John 6:66 – From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

Disciples meaning people who had been following him for some time – at least many of whom he fed the day before. How quickly one can turn from Jesus.

John 6:67 – “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

This is the first time in John’s gospel that twelve disciples are mentioned.

In the Greek, verse 68 has no definite article before words of eternal life. It should read – *you have words of eternal life*. I think that translation makes it clear that all of Jesus’ words bring life.

Verse 69 – Peter says that Jesus is the holy One of God. That was a common messianic title. Again, what kind of Messiah they believed him to be at that time is unclear. I’d say they were still pretty much worldly thinkers.

Chapter 7

John 7:1 – After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want^[a] to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.

Judea was the region of Jerusalem.

Again, my translation says the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him. Older translations say the Jews wanted to kill him – and that’s what the Greek does say, but it was implied that it was the leaders.

V. 2 – But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus’ brothers said to him, “Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

The feast of tabernacles – known as Sukkot (sue coat) historically marked the end of the harvest season, and was an important festival. It is in October, and during the time of Jesus lasted eight days.

The Roman Catholic church maintains that the use of brothers referred to relatives such as cousins. This is stated to bolster their claim that Mary the mother of Jesus remained a virgin her entire life.

The word is brother, and protestants read this as brothers. The fact that Mary went on to have other children does not make her less righteous before God.

In this passage it appears that the brothers of Jesus did not know what kind of Messiah Jesus was to be. Go show yourself they said. So, like Mary at the wedding feast in Cana, they obviously knew of his special abilities. They would also have been familiar with the belief that the political Messiah would have special abilities.

Jesus' answer to them was similar to the answer he gave his mother.

John 7:6 – Therefore Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. ⁸ You go to the festival. I am not^[b] going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” ⁹ After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.

Verse 6 – *for you any time will do* – We have difficulty accepting God's timing. We are not patient, and we want God to act right now.

So, did Jesus lie?

V. 10 – However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. ¹¹ Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, “Where is he?”

Did Jesus lie? Or are there things of God that God chooses not to reveal to us for our own good?

V. 12 – Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, “He is a good man.”

Others replied, “No, he deceives the people.”¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the (Jewish) *leaders*.

We all know Palm Sunday, and Jesus’ great entry into Jerusalem. This is what Jesus wanted to avoid at that time. His time had not yet come.

John 7:14 – Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach.¹⁵ The Jews there were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having been taught?”

Again – Jews means Jewish leaders. Verse 15 actually shows admiration from some of the Jewish leaders, not disdain.

V. 16 – Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me.¹⁷ Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

What Jesus seems to be saying here is that if we pray about it – don’t just accept Jesus because someone told you to do so – but if we pray about it, and if we seek God’s will, God will reveal to us that Jesus is the Christ.

V. 18 – Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

Great verse! Think of preachers who preach for their own glory versus those that seek God's glory. Unfortunately, there are many people who don't pray about it and seek those who preach for their personal glory.

V. 19 – Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

The part about Moses in this verse is said by some scholars to be out of place. Perhaps. It seems to be saying that we all stand accused according to the OT Laws. And we do!

V. 20 – "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"²¹ Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed.²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath.²³ Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath?²⁴ Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

Again, this whole argument is said to be out of place by some scholars, and that it is connected to the healing on the Sabbath back in chapter 5. If so, then this was not a separate trip to Jerusalem.

However, Jesus' comment about circumcision and the Sabbath was this – Jewish law stated that boys had to be circumcised on the 8th day. If their 8th day fell on the Sabbath, they could perform the circumcision without officially breaking the Sabbath. Yet Jesus was attacked for healing on the Sabbath.

John 7:25 – At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah?²⁷ But we

know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”

This was merely legends about the coming Messiah, and there were plenty. The belief that no one would know where the Messiah came from probably stemmed from Malachi 3:1 – “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple.”

Everyone had their opinion – much like people today. Basically, here some were rejecting him because they knew of his humble origins.

V. 28 – Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him,²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

Even now, Christians have differing opinions about the Bible, about the Church, and about Jesus. Do we know God? Do we know the one who sent Jesus? Do we know the one from whom Jesus came?

If we did, we’d know Jesus.

V. 30 – At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.³¹ Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?”

Verse 30 suggests something divine in Jesus’ ability not to be taken by the crowd.

V. 32 – The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

Chief Priests and Pharisees is the Sanhedrin – or the Council – that we encountered towards the end of the synoptic gospels. The chief priests would have been mostly Sadducees.

V. 33 – Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

³⁵ The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, ‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come’?”

These words from Jesus aren’t much different than the words he will say to his disciples at the Last Supper. There they would be words of comfort, here they are words of doom.

Verse 35 says – Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks – That is exactly how the gospel spread after the resurrection. Not Jesus going, but Paul and other missionaries.

V. 37 – On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”^[e] ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Where does the OT Scripture speak of rivers of living water?
Well, they do just not by that term.

Isaiah 12:3 – With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 44:3 – For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.

Isaiah 55:1 – “Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters.”

While we certainly encounter the Holy Spirit with certain individuals in the OT, it is generally believed that following the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a gift granted to all who seek it.

V. 40 – On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.”

⁴¹ Others said, “He is the Messiah.”

Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Surely this man is the Prophet – again referring to Deut 17 and Moses’ saying that God would send the prophet.

Descendant of David comes from **Isaiah 11:1** – A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Comes from Bethlehem comes from **Micah 5:2** – “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans^[b] of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

John 7:45 – Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

⁴⁶ “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

⁴⁷ “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law— there is a curse on them.”

Verse 47 says ‘this crowd’, or ‘this mob’. The term that was used was a derogatory term which could mean simple people, or we might say country bumpkin. The term was also used to refer to people who weren’t pure Jews, a mixed heritage.

So, the rulers were looking down their noses at the people who would follow Jesus.

Remember Nicodemus from John 3, he makes a return.

John 7:50 – Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”

⁵² They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

Remember the Galilean area was the backwater of Israel. It had been in the northern kingdom at the time the northern kingdom fell. Upon the return of the southern kingdom exiles, it had been once again included in the Jewish territory, but the land between Judea and Galilee had not – it remained as Samaria.

Galilee was more ethnically mixed than Judea.

Judean looked down on Galileans as their country bumpkin cousins.

Remember when we look at the synoptic gospels, and we considered the ending of the gospel of Mark? The last verses of Mark were added at a later time than when Mark actually wrote it.

Well, we have something like that again. Here, in John's gospel, the verses of John 7:53 – John 8:11, are not found in the oldest manuscripts. In fact, it is not found in any gospel before the year 400.

Any gospel? Yes, this story is found in Luke's gospel in some ancient manuscripts.

The common belief is that it was a standalone story that sort of needed a home, and found it in John's gospel. It is believed that it was placed where it was in John's gospel because it showed Jesus writing. The claim in John 7 was that Galileans were sort of an illiterate bunch of country bumpkins, and since this story included Jesus writing, then it would be a good place for it.

Regardless, it is a very important story, and is considered to be canonical – an actual happening in the life of Jesus.

Jesus and the adulterous woman.

John 7:53 – *Then they all went home,*

John 8:1 – *but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

² *At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.* ³ *The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group* ⁴ *and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.* ⁵ *In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"* ⁶ *They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

According to Leviticus 20:10 & Deut 22:22 – both guilty parties in the case of adultery were to be put to death by stoning.

In the days of Jesus, this was rarely every done, and certainly not in Jerusalem which was under a close watch by the Romans.

So, the trap for Jesus was whether he would reject the law of Moses in fear of the Romans, or would he stand up for it.

John 8:6b – *But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

Jesus did not reject the law of Moses, as they had hoped that he would.

What did Jesus write? We don't know. Several theories.

Maybe he was writing the general sins of the accusers.

Maybe he was writing the names of the men who had committed adultery, perhaps even with that particular woman.

John 8:9 – *At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”*

¹¹ *“No one, sir,” she said.*

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Jesus did not condemn her, but did acknowledge her sin and commanded her to give up her sinful life.

Recognizing that the story of the adulterous woman was an insertion, verse 12 picks up after the unbelief of the Jewish leaders in chapter 7.

John 8:12 – When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 1:4 – In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

1 John 1:5 – This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all^[b] sin.

A characteristic of John’s gospel is the ‘I Am’ sayings, and of course John 8:12 is one.

John 8:13 – The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

Jesus said earlier in the gospel that he wouldn’t testify for himself – and Jewish law required two or more people to testify for someone. So, the Pharisee would be correct if Jesus did not have someone else to testify.

He would have someone else ...

John 8:14 – Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.” ¹⁹ Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

No one seized him. The implied thought was that they could not somehow seize him.

John 8:21 – Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

Ezekiel 3 & 33 speak of the watchman giving warning, and those who do not listen to the warning end up dying in their sins. The religious leaders would have known the reference that Jesus was quoting from here.

8:22 – This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

²³ But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; **I am** not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that **I am he**, you will indeed die in your sins.”

From above and from below are characteristic of John’s gospel. Remember back in chapter 3 John the Baptist said 3:31 – *The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.*

8:25 – “Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied. ²⁶ “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

²⁷ They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up (exalt) the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. ²⁹ The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

If your Bible has the chapters divided into section, verse 30 should be with the next section. There appears to be some translation difficulties in the following verses. Jesus has believers – he had believers – he has believers and they stop believing and turn from him. It’s a tad confusing, but there is much to learn.

John 8:30 – Even as he spoke, many believed in him. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

To know truth – we must be people who hold onto the teachings of Jesus. The word in verse 31 – hold on to – the word is the word used in John 15 where Jesus speaks of the vine and the branched and says if you abide in me.

The Greek word is meno – and it means to remain unmovable. To know God’s truth we must do more than attend a service when it’s convenient – more than read our Bible. The Word of God must remain in us, live it, walk it, talk it.

8:33 – They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

³⁴ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

This idea of slavery to sin is common in the New Testament.

2 Peter 2:19 – “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”

Romans 6:16 – Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

John 8:37 – I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father. ^[b]"
³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would ^[c] do what Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the works of your own father."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

1 John 3:7 – Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

John 8:45 – Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

If we do not hear from God – perhaps we have drifted away and no longer belong to God.

John 8:48 – The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”

Why the accusation about being a Samaritan? Because Jesus was from Galilee, and from the border of Samaria. The people of Judea, especially the religious leaders, prided themselves on their lineage. They looked down at the people from Galilee as impure.

Some scholars believe this accusation of being a Samaritan might be related to a man called Dositheus, a Samaritan magician who claimed to be the Messiah. So, perhaps they were asking if he was like that man.

8:49 – “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”

⁵² At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

Abraham rejoiced. Most people familiar with the Bible are familiar with Abraham laughing when God told him that Sarah would have a son. Amongst the Jews they did not read it as Abraham laughed – but rather as Abraham rejoiced.

So – Abraham rejoiced – was a common saying among the Jews of that time, and Jesus uses it.

8:57 – “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, **I am!**”⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Another ‘I am’ statement. He didn’t say before Abraham was born I was. It’s I am. Jesus is God and always has been in existence.

Verse 59 again shows that somehow – divinely – Jesus escapes from the mob.

Chapter 9

Remember that John doesn’t give much travel detail, but gives much greater detail for certain stories. Chapter 9 is the story of the healing of a man born blind. It is a lengthy story that illustrates the theme of Jesus being the light of the world.

We are still in Jerusalem, and still during the feast of the Tabernacles.

John 9:1 – As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

This question was often a point of debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sadducees laid the blame of physical ailments solely on the individual – sin. The Pharisee taught that physical problems were the will of God only – sort of like predestination.

There are plenty of Christians today who still believe in a relation between sin and disease. Certainly this has some truth to it. We know that the failure to care for our bodies can lead to disease, but the question being addressed here is more than you ate wrong and now you have type two diabetes.

Here it was more like you never repented of a particular sin and now you are disabled. This belief is still alive in many today.

V. 3 – “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.⁵ While I am in the world, **I am** the light of the world.”

As long as it is day – an ancient saying meant while we can.
For you and I – we must do the works of the one who sent Jesus while we can.

Ephesians 2:1 – We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

John 9:6 – After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ⁷ “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

In the synoptic gospels we had a few occasions of Jesus healing with spittle. Usually in pagan lands. Here it is in Jerusalem. Many ancient people believed in the healing powers of spittle, and even today it is held by many.

What others believe is that Jesus is symbolizing the creative act of **Genesis 2:7** – Then the LORD God formed a man^[c] from the dust of the ground ...

V. 8 – His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”⁹ Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

¹⁰ “How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.

¹¹ He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

¹² “Where is this man?” they asked him.

“I don’t know,” he said.

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs? “So they were divided.

¹⁷ Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

The Pharisees were divided. While we aren’t told, we can speculate that Nicodemus is one of those Pharisees who asked how could a sinner perform such signs.

A careful read of Matthew, Mark & Luke show that Jesus clearly had friends who were Pharisees. It takes an even more careful read of John to see this fact, but it is there. Not all Jewish leaders were against Jesus.

That was not to say all of those not against him believed him to be the messiah, but they did believe him to be gifted by God.

John 9:18 – They (*It says the Jews – or at least the ones who opposed Jesus*) still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s

parents. ¹⁹“Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

²⁰“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. ²¹But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

Verse 22 – “they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.”

This is often cited as evidence that John’s gospel was written after the final break between Judaism and Christianity. For that is what finally happened, those who claimed Jesus as Messiah were no longer allowed in the Jewish synagogues.

After that time – when Jewish Christians were no longer allowed in the synagogues – most converts were from the pagan populations.

John 9:24 – A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”

Scholars believe that the mention of a second summons indicates some type of formal investigation.

V. 25 – He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

²⁶ Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

²⁷ He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”

I hope you didn't miss what the Jewish leaders just said. They are so frustrated in their attempts to trap Jesus that they just contradicted themselves. They just said in verse 29 – “but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.”

Yet they had previously said –

John 7:27 – “But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”

John 9:30 – The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

³⁴ To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

So these were religious leaders who believed that disabilities were the result of sin. Yet these religious men were the true blind ones.

V. 35 – Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

³⁷ Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

³⁸ Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

When the man spoke of Jesus to the religious leaders he called him a prophet. Now he realizes that he was divine. He believed and then worshipped.

Faith should move us to worship. No guilt. Not obedience. Faith.

V. 39 – Jesus said,^[a] “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

⁴¹ Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Some are confused by Jesus’ answer in verse 41. Jesus is saying if they were blind then they would not be guilty. They could see, but refused to acknowledge what they saw.

Chapter 10

The Good Shepherd

V. 1 – “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”⁶ Jesus used this *figure of speech*, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

In this passage we have Sheep pen / Sheep fold – gate / door – gatekeeper. In their culture, shepherds would bring their flocks into one central sheepfold every evening. There might be six or seven flocks guarded by a gatekeeper. In the morning the shepherds would return and call for their sheep.

Although the flocks had been mingled together, each flock knew its shepherds voice, and they would follow their own shepherd and no other.

Put this into its context. We think Chapter 10 is stand alone, no, it's a continuation of chapter 9. There Jesus just healed a blind man. Jesus is accusing the Pharisees of being the false shepherds.

The door – or the proper way for the shepherd to enter – was foretold through the scriptures. Jesus fulfills those scriptures, not the Pharisees. So Jesus is the door, or the gate, as he will tell us in the next verse.

The gatekeeper would be John the Baptist, He announced Jesus to the world.

The sheep pen would be Israel at that time – and not all in the sheep pen would recognize his voice. Some would, and they would respond.

John 10:7 – Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

Psalm 118:20 – This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.

V. 8 – All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.

Those that came before may refer to false messiahs and false prophets, but certainly would refer to those – the Jewish religious leaders – who steered people away from Jesus.

V. 9 – I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

This full life begins now. The religious leaders of that time put so many burdens on the common person that they either a) lived in constant fear of messing up, or b) quit caring because the burden was too great.

John 10:11 – “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Other sheep of this pen. The most obvious answer as to who those sheep are – the gentiles. The pagan converts that were filling the churches in Ephesus, where John wrote this gospel.

Now, some have come up with other theories. Other faith's? Don't see that here. Aliens? Who knows, not our concern.

V. 19 – The Jews who heard these words were again divided.²⁰ Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”

²¹ But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Again we have the term – the Jews – but read into that the religious leaders. Sure some of the common folk were divided, but the controversies that we have here are with the religious leaders. Among them they were divided.

Verse 21 refers to opening the eyes of the blind. Remember, this happened in Jerusalem after he healed the blind man.

The next verse moves on to a different time.

V. 22 – Then came the Festival of Dedication^[b] at Jerusalem.

So some time has passed, and Jesus is back in Jerusalem. Remember, John doesn't give us travel details, and much of his gospel stories happens in Jerusalem, unlike the other gospels.

Here we are at the Festival of Dedication, which we don't read about in the Old Testament because it was a relatively new festival. It commemorated the purification of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus during the winter of 165 BC. In the Catholic Bible there are additional books, and some of your study Bibles have those books.

The events that were celebrated during this festival are found in 1 Maccabees.

V. 22b – It was winter,²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade.²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe.

Jesus is referring to his previous visit to Jerusalem where he called himself the good shepherd.

V. 25b – The works I do in my Father's name testify about me,²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^[c]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.³⁰ I and the Father are one."

I and the Father are one. Remember how this gospel began?

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now those words come from Jesus himself, and not the gospel writer. The problem was, however, is that their understanding of a messiah was not God in the flesh, but a political ruler.

John 10:31 – Again his Jewish opponents (the Jews) picked up stones to stone him,³² but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

Why were they going to stone him? Because they understood what he just said. He just claimed to be God, or at the very least, equal with God. They understood it as blasphemy.

V. 33 – “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’^[d]? ³⁵ If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside— ³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”

Jesus quoted from Psalm 82:6. His point – if their scripture allowed such a title to be held by them, how much more can the one who came from the Father claim the title.

His second defense is to simply look at his works.

V. 37 – Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father.³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” ³⁹ Again they tried to seize him, *but he escaped their grasp.*

⁴⁰ Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, ⁴¹ and many people came to him. They said, “Though

John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.”⁴² And in that place many believed in Jesus.

John had been a prophet, not a worker of miracles. They respected John for he spoke the truth. Those followers of John became followers of Jesus. Don't forget, this is emphasized here because at the time of the writing of John's gospel, there were many who claimed John the Baptist to be their Messiah.