

# **Four Journeys to Jerusalem**

*A Series of Seminars on the Gospel of John*

*David Gooding*

A Myrtlefield House Transcript



**MYRTLEFIELD**  
HOUSE  
[www.myrtlefieldhouse.com](http://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com)

David Gooding has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

Copyright © The Myrtlefield Trust, 2018

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. You may not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

[www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ Quotations marked KJV are from The Authorized (King James) Version. Rights in the Authorized Version in the United Kingdom are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown’s patentee, Cambridge University Press. Scripture quotations marked rv are from the English Revised Version of the Holy Bible (1885). Dr Gooding occasionally uses his own translations or paraphrases.

This text has been edited from a transcript of twelve talks given by David Gooding at Castlereagh Gospel Hall, Belfast (N. Ireland) in June 2009.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce this document in its entirety, or in unaltered excerpts, for personal and church use only as long as you do not charge a fee. You must not reproduce it on any Internet site. Permission must be obtained if you wish to reproduce it in any other context, translate it, or publish it in any format.

Published by The Myrtlefield Trust

PO Box 2216

Belfast, N Ireland

BT1 9YR

w: [www.myrtlefieldhouse.com](http://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com)

e: [info@myrtlefieldhouse.com](mailto:info@myrtlefieldhouse.com)

Myrtlefield catalogue no: jhn.007/.020/jf

# Contents

1	<a href="#">The Structure of John's Gospel</a>	5
2	<a href="#">The First Journey: An Overview</a>	15
3	<a href="#">The First Journey: The Final Story: The Healing of the Court Official's Son</a>	26
4	<a href="#">Questions About the Overview and the First Journey</a>	35
5	<a href="#">The Second Journey: Christ the Source of Life—Part 1</a>	46
6	<a href="#">The Second Journey: Christ the Source of Life—Part 2</a>	56
7	<a href="#">The Second Journey: Christ the Means of Life—Part 1</a>	69
8	<a href="#">The Second Journey: Christ the Means of Life—Part 2</a>	80
9	<a href="#">Questions About the Second Journey</a>	86
10	<a href="#">The Third Journey: Part 1—God's Publicity Problem</a>	89
11	<a href="#">The Third Journey: Part 2—John 7</a>	100
12	<a href="#">The Third Journey: Part 3—John 8</a>	111
13	<a href="#">The Third Journey: Part 4—John 9-10</a>	124
14	<a href="#">Questions About the Third Journey</a>	136
15	<a href="#">The Fourth Journey: Part 1—Coming to Raise Lazarus from the dead</a>	139
16	<a href="#">The Fourth Journey: Part 2—The Crucifixion of the King</a>	148
17	<a href="#">The Fourth Journey: Part 3—The Second Interview</a>	159
18	<a href="#">The Fourth Journey: Part 4—His Commandment is Eternal Life</a>	170
19	<a href="#">Questions About the Fourth Journey</a>	178
	<a href="#">Appendixes: Handouts</a>	190
	<a href="#">About the Author</a>	205

## Appendixes

1	<a href="#"><u>Prologue and Introduction (1:1–2:11)</u></a>	190
2	<a href="#"><u>Structure and Storyline (2:13–4:54)</u></a>	191
3	<a href="#"><u>The Source and Means of Life (5:1–6:71)</u></a>	192
4	<a href="#"><u>The Divine Method of Self-disclosure (7–10)</u></a>	194
5	<a href="#"><u>Outline of John 7–10</u></a>	195
6	<a href="#"><u>Major Elements in the Gospel of John 11–21</u></a>	199
7	<a href="#"><u>Some Leading Ideas (11:1–12:43)</u></a>	200
8	<a href="#"><u>Some Leading Ideas (17:1–21:25)</u></a>	202
9	<a href="#"><u>The Women Mentioned in John’s Gospel</u></a>	204

## [The Structure of John's Gospel](#)

The Gospel of John is perhaps the best known and the best loved of the four Gospels, if not the best loved of the books of the New Testament. So I shall be presuming a great deal of knowledge on your part, as to the detail of the book. I shall begin by looking at the book's basic structure, so that we may see what message it is that John, in general, designs his Gospel to present. And when we have looked at the structure as a whole we can begin to study in more detail the first major section of the book. For practical purposes then, I shall not begin by studying what is called the prologue and then the prelude to the book. They both constitute an exceedingly profound passage of doctrine, and we shall come back to them, God willing, in a later session.

### **Four journeys to Jerusalem and back to Galilee**

#### **The First Journey (2:13–4:54)**

I want now to trace the major structure, not that I impose upon the text, but which John himself has written down. Sometimes people say to me: 'We could never have seen what you see in the New Testament.' Today I wish to make sure that you see it, and that you see it for yourselves. Therefore I shall be asking you to turn to, and trace, the references that I now give. So let's begin at 2:12:

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

This remark comes at the end of the description of the miracle performed at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, but it is a device that ancient authors use to close one section of their book and then to introduce another. You will notice that in verse 12 we are told that he went down to Capernaum, who accompanied him and that he didn't stay there many days. We are not told what he did, what he said, whom he visited or what happened. This is just a general remark, important geographically no doubt, but it signs off the prologue and the prelude, and thus divides that from what is now going to be the main topic of the book. So we begin in verse 13:

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Having made that remark, John now tells us that at Jerusalem 'in the temple he found those who were selling . . .' (v. 14), and we shall remember at once that the temple was in

Jerusalem. You won't forget that he has gone down to Jerusalem. And after all the hustle and bustle of the cleansing of the temple is over, John tells us again, 'Now when he was in Jerusalem . . .' (v. 23). This is John pointing out, and not wanting us to forget, that Jesus was in Jerusalem, and also that these things happened while he was there at the time of the Passover Feast.

We should have noticed as we started that his reason for going down to Jerusalem was to attend the Feast of the Passover (v. 13). And now verse 23 repeats that he'd gone down to Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast. It goes on to say that many believed on his name, but he did not commit himself to them, for the reasons given (vv. 23–25). But 'there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews' (3:1).

For the sake of accuracy we should notice that, very frequently (though not always) the term *Jews* in the Gospel of John doesn't apply to the whole nation of Israel. It means the people who lived in *Judaea*. So when we get to it, we shall read in chapter 7 that our Lord walked in Galilee. He didn't walk in Judaea, 'because *the Jews* were seeking to kill him' (v. 1). That is, the people who lived in Judaea sought to kill him. It is not saying that the people who lived in Galilee sought to kill him. That is a thing to be remembered. He spent most of his time in Galilee. It was the Jews in Judaea, and their rulers in particular, who sought to kill our Lord.

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, and we know well the conversation that proceeded between them. We have often read the comments that (it would appear) John, the Gospel writer, added to that story. The conversation and John's comments go down to verse 21.

Then notice what follows:

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing . . . (vv. 22–23).

What is happening now geographically is that our Lord leaves the city and goes down to what, in our terms, we would call the county of Judaea, that is, the region of Judaea. John was also there in Aenon, near to Salim, baptizing. We are told of a conversation that then took place between John and some of his disciples, and that lasts to virtually the end of chapter 3. Then we come to chapter 4:

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee (vv. 1–3).

Notice that last remark. He had come down from Galilee to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover to celebrate the Feast of Passover. He had gone out of Jerusalem to the surrounding countryside—Judaea; now he begins his journey back to Galilee. He is on his way back and 'must needs go through Samaria' (v. 4 KJV), 'for reasons that began in eternity', as one preacher put it.

So he has this long conversation with a Samaritan woman. Eventually the woman left her water pot and went into the city and said to the men, 'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?' (v. 29). So they went out of their city and were in process of coming to him. But before they got to him, 'meanwhile', says verse 31, our Lord has a

conversation with his disciples about various things (vv. 31–38). Then the Samaritans came to him, and they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ‘After the two days he departed for Galilee’ (v. 43).

He has been down to Jerusalem, into the countryside of Judaea. Now, beginning his return, he goes up through Samaria, stays a couple of days in Samaria, and then goes back into Galilee: ‘So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him . . .’ Oh, but notice what follows: ‘having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast’ (v. 45). You won’t forget, will you, that he’s been down to Jerusalem at a feast? ‘So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine’ (v. 46).

The story is then told of a palace official whose son was ill. He came to our Lord, and our Lord healed his son. Then we are told, ‘This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judaea to Galilee’ (v. 54). You couldn’t miss seeing it (unless you were to read it with darkened spectacles)! How could you not see it? John is telling us that our Lord went down to Jerusalem on the occasion of a feast, and then eventually came back north. John was interested in the journey.

### **The Second Journey (5:1–6:71)**

With that journey now over, chapter 5 begins. What would you suppose chapter 5 is going to be about?

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem (v. 1).

Perhaps you will protest to the inspired apostle and say, ‘Look here, John, you told us about that last time. Please say something new!’ But, no, the first journey to Jerusalem and back being completed, the very next verse tells you of another feast, and once again he went up to Jerusalem. Out of his kindness John explains in verse 2: ‘Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.’ This is in case you haven’t been there to see it for yourself; the Gospel wasn’t being written for Jerusalemites primarily, but for people who had likely never been in Jerusalem. Therefore it is an interesting phrase: ‘Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool . . .’. And we are told about the miracle that our Lord did there and all the conversations that passed between him and the authorities as a result of that miracle. That occupies chapter 5.

In 6:1 we read:

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

Chapter 5 records his second visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of a feast and then back north. Chapter 6 is devoted to what happened up north—to the long sermon our Lord preached and to the two miracles: the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water. This second journey comes to its end at the end of chapter 6. It is the story of the second visit to Jerusalem then back up north again to Galilee, and what happened when he got there.

### **The Third Journey (7:1–10:42)**

That being concluded, do mark carefully how chapter 7 begins. See it with your own eyes lest you think that I have imposed it on the text:

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews' Feast of Booths<sup>1</sup> was at hand. So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.' After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. (7:1–10)

Chapter 7 is resuming the major topic of the book: our Lord's visits to Jerusalem on the occasion of the feasts. The rest of chapter 7 tells us what our Lord said and did on that occasion; so does chapter 8, continuing the story; and so does chapter 9. In chapters 7 and 8 he is in the temple. In chapter 9, as he passed by the temple again, he sees the blind man and gives him sight.

In chapter 10 he is still at Jerusalem. It tells us an interesting thing: 'At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter' (v. 22). The Feast of Tabernacles to which he had gone in chapter 7 happened at the end of the grape harvest—the bringing in of the fruits: the figs, the pomegranates and the grapes. The Feast of Dedication is held later on in the wintertime, in our December. It is not a biblical feast; it is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is another feast that was added to celebrate the rededication of the temple and the altar after its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes. Now, whether the Lord left Jerusalem after the Feast of Booths and came back for the Dedication or whether he stayed on in Jerusalem so as to also take in the Feast of Dedication, we are not told. In chapter 10 John observes that he was in Jerusalem at the time of the Dedication. But when that was over: 'He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained' (v. 40). That was fairly far north, probably at a place called Batanea.

Our Lord has gone down to Jerusalem; now he returns north. So, what will the rest of the Gospel be about? It will be about the fourth visit to Jerusalem! This time it is very deliberately different.

### **The Fourth Journey (11:1–21:25)**

We were told in chapter 7 that our Lord stayed up in Galilee most of the time, because the people in Judaea, that is, the authorities, were seeking to kill him. So chapter 7 tells us that when he went up to Jerusalem on that occasion he went up, as it were, in secret, and not with the crowd of the pilgrims. He did not go up openly because the authorities were waiting to

---

<sup>1</sup> RV—'Tabernacles'.



arrest him. He taught the people in the temple and elsewhere before the authorities were able to catch up with him.

This time, the fourth and the last visit to Jerusalem, instead of going up secretly, he stages the maximum possible publicity. He did it by allowing Lazarus his friend to get ill and to die. Although the sisters had sent him a note from where they lived down south at Bethany (not all that far from Jerusalem) presumably up north to where he was, he didn't go to them until Lazarus was dead and buried. There he raised the dead, and it became known of course, and the people went and told the Pharisees. We are told at the end of chapter 11 that the Sanhedrin had a meeting. The high priest, Caiaphas, advised his fellow councillors and told them that they didn't know anything about how to handle matters, and that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation perish. Therefore, they should get rid of Christ as soon as they could get their hands on him (vv. 46–57). So, it says:

Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. (v. 54)

He stayed there because of the publicity and the commotion and the machinations that had been caused by his raising of Lazarus from the dead at Bethany, near to Jerusalem. The effect was this:

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?' Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany . . . (11:55–12:1)

They made him a supper, and of course the city was agog:

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. (12:9)<sup>2</sup>

Many of the pilgrims would have come down through the hills to the east, many of them through Bethany, and they would have heard about the resurrection of Lazarus. 'Will Jesus come?' 'We would like to see Lazarus!' The publicity was deliberate on Christ's part. Added to the miracle of raising the dead near to Jerusalem was what he did next. When he came he borrowed a donkey and rode into the city, deliberately staging the fulfilment of Zechariah: 'Behold, your king is coming to you' (9:9).

It was his last visit to Jerusalem, of course. We are told all about what he said in the Upper Room (chs. 13–17); then the trial, the crucifixion and burial (chs. 18–19); the resurrection; his appearances to Mary and John, Peter and others, and to the disciples in the upper room (ch. 20). When that visit to Jerusalem was finished, what would you think John might have recorded? Chapter 21 tells us that, after this fourth visit to Jerusalem, he went back up north

---

<sup>2</sup> The RV renders the start of this verse: 'The common people therefore of the Jews learned that he was there . . .'

to Galilee. He appeared to his disciples after their night's fishing in the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee!

The Gospel of John, as to its structure, is the record of four visits made by our Lord to Jerusalem on the occasion of the feasts, and then what happened when he went back north.

Now, why is that important, and why do we need to know it, and what use is there in knowing it?

## **The significance of the structure**

### **A matter of history**

The first point to be made is that these events are historical. Among the Gospel writers it is only John who tells us of these visits to Jerusalem. The other Gospel writers have the last and final visit, of course; but they record our Lord's ministry in Galilee (up north) with one last, long final visit to Jerusalem at the end. They don't tell us of his visits to Jerusalem on the occasion of these first three feasts. So now we know something that the other three Gospels don't tell us. It is not that John disagrees with them: he was guided by the Spirit of God as to what he should and should not include in his particular narrative.

### **Obedience to the law**

Secondly, we should notice that our Lord went to these feasts because there is a Scripture that says that all males otherwise competent must go to Jerusalem at least three times in the course of the year. Look at Exodus 23:

Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread . . . You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labour, of what you sow in the field. (vv. 14–16)

The Feast of Harvest is the Feast of Pentecost, as we call it: *Shavuot*, in Hebrew. It is the Feast of Weeks: fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits.

You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour. Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD. (vv. 16–17)

That is the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*, in Hebrew).

John's Gospel tells us that our Lord, being a godly man, fulfilled the command. We are not told of his visit on the occasion of the Feast of Weeks; though we again are not told the name of the feast to which he went in chapter 5. It simply tells us that 'there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem' (v. 1). But it is important to see that our Lord kept the law, which demanded that all able-bodied men went up to keep the feasts.

### **The occasion of each visit**

The third reason why we should know our Lord made these journeys is because all these visits were on the occasion of a feast. When we think of a feast we think of eating rather a lot (perhaps more than we should), but that's not the idea in the Old Testament. These were celebrations, in the first place, of what God had done for the nation in the past. There was the Passover, with its Feast of Unleavened Bread and the implications of that Passover. There was the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year, when Israel had to make booths. They took leaves and branches of trees and made booths on the top of their flat-roofed houses, or in their gardens, and for a week they had to live in these booths to remember that when their forefathers came out of Egypt, God made them dwell in booths. They had to remember the way that the Lord God had led their nation through the desert, and what he had done and where they hoped to be going. Now that they had arrived in the promised land they had to look back and think about how they had got there, along with other things that the prophets had taught on the basis of that historical experience.

#### *Coming as the fulfilment*

If we remember that our Lord is on a journey to the feasts, it is a profitable thing to try to remember some of the ceremonies that would have happened at those feasts, and what those feasts stood for. An obvious one is the Feast of Tabernacles, recorded in chapters 7 and 8. They were remembering what God did for their nation in the wilderness. Therefore by the time of Christ, so we are told, the rabbis had instituted a practice: day by day they would go down to the Pool of Siloam with a golden jug. They would fill it with water, bring it up, and pour it at the base of the altar in memory of how God had provided them with water out of the rock on their way through the wilderness, which made possible their journey towards the promised land.

It was on the last day of that feast, when they had poured the water at the base of the altar each day, that our Lord stood in the temple and suddenly cried (and the Greek indicates a very loud voice):

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive . . . (7:37–39)

That is, they were about to receive the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, after our Lord was glorified. He is manifestly fulfilling what the Israelite prophets had seen, not only through the historical event (the providing of water) but its typology, of what God would do one day. So it is very important to notice that these were not tourist journeys: he was going down to celebrate the feasts at Jerusalem. We might rephrase it: he was inspecting the worship and service of his people.

#### *Inspecting his people's worship and service*

As in your mind's eye you see this Jesus of Nazareth going, sometimes with the pilgrims, sometimes alone (as in chapter 7) and coming to the temple and talking to the people, John nudges you in the ribs and says, 'Do you know who that is? That is God incarnate!'

He stood in the temple and made his comments on their worship and service. They didn't always like what he said. In the end they decided that they had had enough of him, and they took him outside the city and had the Romans crucify him. Then they went back into their temple and worshipped—God? The very history, the background is significant.

We should remember that it is John who writes the book of the Revelation, and in the first three chapters we are given the vision of the all-glorious Lord standing, clothed as a judge, among his assemblies. What is he doing as he walks in the middle of the lampstands? He is evaluating the worship and service and the lives of his people. He is doing now for the church what he did, according to the Gospel, for Judaism and its religious feasts in the temple at Jerusalem.

So that is what I am going to suggest to you in our studies is the basic structure of the book. Then of course we must look at each of the journeys and make a map of their contents and ask our questions about those contents.

### **A preview of the first journey**

Let me just tell you about the kind of people you are likely to meet on the first journey. Do you have good imaginations? You are on your way down to Jerusalem, and it will take you two or three days. Somebody has, if not a guitar, then the best they could get in those far off days, even if it only had one wire instead of half a dozen, and there would be the campfires and the hostelries at night. It would have been a marvellous time! Think of the anticipation of meeting up again with family members who had emigrated and catching up on how many children they had now, and what cities they now lived in. But think of all the different sorts of people you would have met on such a journey, especially in Jerusalem!

### **The temple authorities**

First of all, there was the temple. There you would come across the temple authorities. The one in charge was the high priest, of course. By the time of our Lord, it was the Romans who decided who should be high priest and who shouldn't be. They didn't wait for the current one to die. If they didn't like him, they'd appoint somebody else. And the Romans kept the high priest's robe in the Roman castle in Jerusalem and gave it out to the one they approved of, on the occasion of public ceremonies.

Then in addition there were the chief priests, not to be confused with the high priest. For instance, there was a man who was over the temple guard, which was formed of Levites. They were virtually police, if not soldiers. They had to protect the temple, seeing as the temple had a treasury worth millions. And there was the matter of the sacrifices and good order in the temple and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims! The temple 'police' were very important. So the captain of the temple guard was a very important dignitary. We shall meet him and his men as they come to Christ and say, 'What authority do you have for doing what you've just done?'

## The scholar

Then there is Nicodemus; he is not a priest. The modern day equivalent would be a biblical scholar. Priests weren't always so interested in the Bible (they are still not sometimes). But in that time there were scholars, including those who attained the distinction of *rabbi*. Nicodemus then was *the* *rabbi*, *the* biblical scholar. We shall meet him in Jerusalem as well.

## The prophet

When you go out into the country you will meet John the Baptist. Who was he? Well, he wasn't a priest, and he wasn't a biblical scholar. He was a prophet, and a mighty successful prophet too. He was very popular: thousands went out to hear his preaching.

## The Samaritans

Then you come up north and meet Samaritans. We shall have to think more about them later. But they had once had a temple, and their history was this. When the Assyrians had taken away the ten tribes in exile, the Assyrians (being rather like Stalin) transported a lot of their own people, who had no choice in the matter, back to Samaria. So they populated Samaria with a lot of people from Assyria. They left some of the ordinary folks—farm labourers and so forth—in Israel, but they now lived alongside this great company of foreigners who carried on with their own religion. Then the lions came out of the forest and ate one or two of them, which the people found disagreeable and thought it was because the people didn't know how to worship the god of the land! So the Assyrians sent some priests that they had taken from Israel back to train the people. The comment in the book of Kings is that 'they feared the LORD but also served their own gods' (2 Kgs 17:33). It was quite a horrible mix-up!

But there was some worship of Jehovah, and the people would have claimed to have worshipped him, and they would have had their temple. They had the Old Testament, and they still have to this day.<sup>3</sup> However, they disagreed heartily with the Jews in Jerusalem. They would not accept that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship, or that Jerusalem had been chosen by God as the place for the temple. They had their own temple on Mount Gerizim, and at one stage the Maccabees had gone up to their temple and destroyed it. So by the time our Lord was speaking to the Samaritan woman, she says (and notice how exactly she speaks), 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain' (4:20). Why the past tense? Because there was no temple there any longer: the Jews had destroyed it.

The Samaritans didn't like the Jews for that reason. Some of the Samaritans went down to Jerusalem with a sack full of dead men's bones and scattered them in the temple. You couldn't have thought of a greater dishonour to the temple! Just read Numbers 19 on that point. So the Jews and the Samaritans didn't get on well.

The Samaritans did have the Bible, so we may say that in Jerusalem was the *orthodox* temple and worship of God, and in Samaria the *unorthodox* temple and worship.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are still Samaritans on the top of Mount Gerizim, and some in America, for they haven't died out yet. They will show you a copy of the law of Moses and tell you that he wrote it. It is the first five books of the Bible that they hold to.

**The court official**

Then we get back to Galilee and there is a court official (4:46). There was a palace up in that area belonging to one of the minor kings. And it could have been that Joseph, the legal father of our Lord, being a *builder* and not just a carpenter (in Greek, a *tektion*) might well have worked on that palace. But this man we meet in the area was a royal official.

They are an interesting group of people, aren't they? They are to be distinguished in our thinking as to what our Lord would say to each one.

## The First Journey

### *An Overview*

Our task now is to look at the first journey that our Lord made to Jerusalem on the occasion of the feast and his return up north; what happened on the way as he returned, and what happened when he actually got back to Galilee. As I read them, in this journey there are six major elements or stories. Let me point them out to you. Of course it is open to you to disagree.

### **The six stories in the first journey**

#### **Story One (2:13–22)**

This is the first major element. It relates that our Lord went to Jerusalem and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. It is the famous cleansing of the temple.

It is to be noticed in passing that John has this cleansing of the temple on our Lord's *first* visit to Jerusalem. The other Gospels tell us that he cleansed the temple on his *last* visit to Jerusalem. Hence there has been much dispute amongst the scholars as to why John has it at the beginning and the others have it at the end. The simplest way of accounting for it is to say that he did it twice. If you want to read up the arguments on both sides, there is a book by Craig Blomberg that discusses it.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Story Two (2:23–3:21)**

The second major element, according to my reading, is the conversation with Nicodemus. Let us notice that in 2:23 we are told: 'Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the *signs* that he was doing.' It raises the questions of the signs that our Lord did. We are not told any of them at the moment, but he did do these signs apparently. They believed when they saw the signs; presumably they had no option: the miracles were done under their very noses, and they couldn't deny they were miracles. What the value of their so-called belief was is another thing. Our Lord did not commit himself to them (v. 24).

Then there came this Nicodemus in chapter 3. You notice his gambit: 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these *signs* that you do unless God is with

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, Nottingham: Apollos, 2007.

him' (v. 2). He is still talking about the signs that were mentioned in 2:24. And so I hold that this second major incident (2:23–3:21) forms the next major element in the story of the journey.

Now, again, the scholars will say, 'But the verses at the end of that passage, from verse 16 or 17 onwards, are John's own comment on what the Lord said to Nicodemus.' I shall not discuss it now. As the passage reads, it is all of a continuum with our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus.

### **Story Three (3:23–36)**

The third major element concerns John the Baptist and his disciples:

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.' (3:25–26)

Apparently John's converts, jealous for his reputation, were put out because this young man called Jesus, to whom John had given a little space on his platform one afternoon and had talked about him, was now getting more converts than John. And then we have John's reply. Once more, scholars will say that some of the verses that follow, particularly from verse 31 to the end, are the comments of John the Evangelist. I shall not discuss it; it is all of a piece with the remarks of John the Baptist to his disciples.

### **Stories Four and Five (4:1–42)**

Then in chapter 4 we have the famous conversation with the Samaritan woman. She eventually left her water pot and gave her witness to the men of the city (vv. 1–26). While they were coming up you have a conversation of Christ with his disciples, and then with his converts in the city of Samaria (vv. 27–42).

### **Story Six (4:43–54)**

Finally in chapter 4 you have the story of the nobleman's son, the court official's son.

You may want to be more precise about those observations. My point at the moment is that these are the major stories, or elements, in the first journey. You may now care to look at them laid out in order in the handout.<sup>5</sup>

## **How the stories in the first journey are related**

I guarantee that if you were forced to, you could take at least a verse out of this passage of Scripture and preach a gospel sermon on it, and the Lord would honour you. Who knows how many might be converted? So you could preach John 3:16, even if you didn't know what John 2:16 was about. It is the word of God; it is inspired, and it will produce the effect the Holy Spirit intended. You don't have to know a whole lot of stuff before you may preach a verse of the Bible, because it all is inspired of God, and it is profitable (2 Tim 3:16). But our task right

---

<sup>5</sup> See the handout entitled 'Structure and Storyline'.



now is not so much to preach to each other but to ask some questions about these six major elements in the first journey. Are they simply things that happened; and because they happened John has put them down? Or are they related? Has the Holy Spirit chosen these, selected them and arranged them because they are related one to another, such that the comparison between them will help to bring out their significance?

We could notice certain connections even from the list of the six elements. There is the conversation with Nicodemus, followed by John the Baptist and his discussion with his disciples about the service of God. Then there is our Lord's conversation with the Samaritan, again at great length, followed by Christ and a discussion with his disciples and then with his converts in Samaria. That might give you an inkling that perhaps these stories are not altogether unrelated. So let me point out one particular feature of them that suggests that they are a very deliberate selection.

### **A critique of worship**

The travelogue begins with our Lord's cleansing of the temple at Jerusalem. This is Story One, and it is followed by two other stories.

In Story Four we have the conversation with the Samaritan woman. You will notice what the discussion was about. Yes, it was about the 'living water', but when the woman perceived that our Lord was a prophet, she did what I suspect many people have done to you. If you are thought of as a Protestant and you are working in a predominantly Catholic area you might well have heard words to the effect: 'This is what my family has been for generations, and I am not going to change my religion because of you!' So too the age-old enmity between Samaritans and Jews briefly flares up here. The woman said, 'I perceive you are a prophet, but our fathers worshipped on this mountain. You Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where you ought to worship' (see 4:19–20).

This leads on to a discussion of the nature of true worship. What was the temple of Jerusalem for, if it was not for the worship of God? But you will notice at once the balance of this historical record. It began with our Lord's critique of the *orthodox* worship in Jerusalem city (2:12–22), and then critiques the highly *unorthodox* worship of the Samaritans up in Mount Gerizim. This is not only John being fair; it is the Holy Spirit himself. He is not just criticizing the Samaritans on the topic of worship; he begins by criticizing the Jews on the same topic.

Now, what was our Lord's major critique of the worship in Jerusalem? It was that it had become a business. Our Lord said that they had made his Father's house 'a house of merchandise' (2:16 RV). And as the other Gospels relate it, at the end of his life he accused them of it again. But what was wrong with merchandise, with buying and selling? You have to keep the place up, don't you? I mean a temple that was there for the good of the nation, and the Jews of the Dispersion, well, it cost money to run, and you have got to get the money somewhere! And anyway the Bible itself required the people to buy bullocks and sheep and other things and offer them on the altar. So it was a convenience to have the bullocks near at hand. So what was wrong with it? Don't you have collections in your church, or put a box out on a table?

Why would hearing: 'Good bargains to be had, come and buy!' be contrary to the gospel? It is because it would be disastrous to do anything that would give the impression that you

had to buy salvation. So he told them not to make his Father's house a house of buying and selling.

Now consider Story Two. This is the very famous story that includes John 3:16, which says, 'For God so loved the world, that he . . .' what did he do? Yes, he *gave*. And what did he say to the woman in chapter 4? 'If you knew the *gift* of God . . .' (v. 10). That was his gambit. He asked her for a drink of water, and she demurred because he was a Jew. How he, as a Jew, could ask for something from her or even talk to her was more than she could understand. And he said, 'Woman, if you knew the *gift* . . .'

That is what had incensed him about what they were doing in the temple. Giving the impression that salvation had to be bought was an absolute slander on the name of God. That is what he had objected to being done in his Father's house. It was a fearful misrepresentation of God. It is very hard to trust a person for salvation when it is obvious he is making money out of you.

### **The gift is not the same in each case**

When our Lord talked to Nicodemus about the gift of God, what was the gift? It was 'his only begotten Son' (3:16 κϳν). And when he talked to the woman, what was the gift of God? The text does not specifically say 'eternal life', though we know from other Scriptures that eternal life is the gift of God. Our job is to expound Scripture and what it actually says:

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you *living water*. (v. 10)

And what is this 'living water'? You will notice that while the conversation with Nicodemus and the conversation with the woman both emphasize the 'gift' of God, it is not just 'ditto repeato'. It is all right to say, 'Well, Christ offered Nicodemus salvation; God so loved the world that he made salvation possible. And he also told the woman that God loved her enough to make salvation possible.' But now we are talking in exactitudes. This is inspired Scripture. Do notice that in chapter 3, the giver is the Father and the gift is the Son. In chapter 4, the giver is the Son! 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink" you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The Spirit is the gift of the Son!<sup>6</sup>

On the Day of Pentecost, according to Peter, it wasn't simply that the Holy Spirit came after Christ was ascended. It was that 'Jesus of Nazareth whom you crucified, and who is now ascended, has poured out the Holy Spirit' (see Acts 2:22–24). Who, therefore, is Jesus of Nazareth?

The language in each story is precise because Christ is dealing with individuals, and he is meeting their particular needs as individuals. It would be good to study that, to study our Lord's different ways of talking to Nicodemus and the woman.

---

<sup>6</sup> See the great declaration Christ makes in 7:37–39 about himself as the giver of the Spirit, in which 'living water' and the Spirit are equated.

### **The old and the new in the temple at Jerusalem (Story One)**

Now let's go back to the cleansing of the temple and notice another thing. The lesson that he taught there was that you mustn't represent God's house as a place where people have to buy salvation. Is that all, or was there anything more to the story? John carefully records it, and there are two halves to the story.

First of all, it was the old system of worship that our Lord cleansed—the old temple. He said to those that sold doves, 'Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade' (2:16). Then comes a comment about the disciples: 'His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me"' (v. 17). That is a comment on that first half of the story—the cleansing of the temple.

Now comes the second half of the story:

So the Jews said to him, 'What sign do you show us for doing these things?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking about the temple of his body. (vv. 18–21)

Now notice what the next verse adds:

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (v. 22)

This is an important remark, as D. A. Carson will point out.<sup>7</sup> This is John admitting that even the disciples didn't understand what he was talking about at the time. But when he was raised from the dead, then they remembered what he said on that occasion, and of course it made a tremendous amount of sense to them.

So what you have in the first half of that story, ending with the disciples' comment, is Christ's critique of the old system. But, not content with that, he announces the new system of worship—the temple of his body.

And what about your bodies, if I may ask? What does 1 Corinthians 3 say?

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (vv. 16–17)

And we read in 1 Corinthians 6: 'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?' (v. 15). The temple is not any longer the building you meet in. Some people even call it 'the sanctuary'. Yes, well, anyway the actual temple of God is not a literal building now; it is the bodies of the believers. This is the new system.

So we would be missing an important part of the story as a whole if we didn't see that it is in two parts. John has carefully underlined it by citing the comments of the disciples: Part One—the critique of the old system, and Part Two—the announcement of the new system.

---

<sup>7</sup> *The Gospel According to John*, Leicester: IVP, 1991.

### **The old Samaritan system and the new reality God is seeking (Story Four)**

When our Lord talked to the woman of Samaria and the topic of worship came up, did he have anything to say to the woman about the old Samaritan worship? Or was he so polite that he didn't even mention it? He was quite blunt, actually: 'You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews' (v. 22). Fancy saying that to a woman of Samaria! Yes, but you see how tactfully it was done. What a marvellous story that is.

He went and sat on the well, and this woman came. And he needed her! What a gesture that was when he said, 'Give me a drink.' He is going to tell her of the Father who seeks worshippers. He, the very Son of God, had come to seek the worship of that woman's heart for the Father, Samaritan though she was. He started by showing her his need and asking her for a drink. She nearly fell down the well, because he was obviously a Jew. And that he would talk with a woman! The rabbis didn't talk with women generally; they didn't think it was worth their time, but to talk to a Samaritan woman? And then to ask for a drink, when she would have to give him a cup! The rabbis held that anywhere a Samaritan woman went she spread defilement. No Orthodox Jew would ever use a vessel out of a Samaritan woman's house. That our Lord should overstep all those bounds was a magnificent gesture.

When she demurred he said, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water' (v.10). And he went on to say 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again' (v. 13). Now he has the woman's interest; he has something to give. She said, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water' (v. 15). She hadn't understood that it was spiritual water.

Our Lord then said, 'Go, call your husband, and come here' (v. 16). Now he is going to mention her sin, but where he gets round to mentioning sin is very instructive. (We will come back in a moment to think about where he got round to mentioning sin with Nicodemus.)

The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.' (vv. 17-18).

He didn't say, 'Don't tell lies, woman!' No, no. He said, 'You have put that very exactly. You have had five husbands, haven't you?' That doesn't mean she had lived with all five at once. Divorce was very easy in those days, and death came early to many.

Here were five relationships broken. It is a sad and unsatisfactory world, isn't it? Here is a woman who is desperately in need of some satisfaction; hence the offer of living water and never thirsting. 'So, you have had five husbands; and the one you now have is not your husband. You have said that very well.' She had meant to tell half a truth, rather than the whole truth, but he had exposed it, hadn't he? Yet how marvellously tactful he was in doing so. So she said to him:

Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. (vv. 19-20)

She raised the question, didn't she? He replied:

Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know . . . (vv. 21–22)

How can worship be satisfying to anybody, if you are worshipping something you don't know? 'We know what we worship . . .' he says. And now comes his faithfulness, the critique of the old system: 'salvation is from the Jews' (v. 22). It was wrong of the Samaritans, for all those centuries, to have rejected the witness of Scripture that God had chosen Jerusalem. The Samaritans had the Bible too, but they preferred to concentrate on those parts that don't mention Jerusalem.

But then of course he didn't leave it there, did he? He not only critiqued the old, but now he announces the new: 'believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . .' (v. 21). Both are superseded by the new thing! It can be like that for you if you are talking with Roman Catholics and they get offended. You can say, 'But you can be a Protestant and not know the Saviour. It doesn't matter what religion you are if you don't know the Saviour!'

The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (vv. 23–24)

That is an important thing in our worship: it must be according to truth.

#### *Worship according to truth*

If you should go on a flight to Paris one of these days and are minded to go into the Louvre, and you find me standing in front of a picture on the wall saying, 'I think that is the most marvellous depiction of the female countenance that I have ever seen', you might wonder what picture it is. And when you look, it's not a picture of a woman at all but a picture of a cow! What would you say to me? You would ask if I was feeling quite all right! I could be going into all sorts of ecstasies, but it isn't according to the real facts of the case. It is not a question of my emotions being stirred but a case of what my emotions are being stirred by. It must be not only 'in spirit' but also 'according to truth'. That ultimately means the very nature of God himself: 'God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth' (v. 24).

So John is being very precise in his record. He is not telling us everything that Christ did and said on this journey, but deliberately choosing elements that we shall sit down and think about and then compare one with the other. Here it is 'Christ's critique of his people's worship and service'. It is not just repetitious.

## Two conversations followed by discussions with disciples (Story Two and Story Three)

### *The conversation with Nicodemus (Story Two)*

Now let us look further, because there are other stories. The conversation with Nicodemus is followed by an account of the discussion that went on between John the Baptist and his disciples. The conversation with the woman of Samaria is followed by Christ's discussion with his disciples. The discussion between John the Baptist and his disciples was a discussion of principles of service; and the discussion between Christ and his disciples after the talk with the Samaritan woman is about that same matter: principles of service.

So we notice our Lord's teaching to Nicodemus: 'You must be born again' (see 3:3). This is the normal English translation. It can rightly be translated as 'again', but the Greek word is *anōthen*; and it means 'from the top'—from above. It can be used of something that you go over again, right from the very start, and repeat it. Or it can mean literally 'from above'. And what it means in this discourse with Nicodemus becomes clear by our Lord's own comment: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh' (3:6). Obviously it would make no sense just repeating that process. It is not being born again of the flesh. It is being 'born from above', from a different order. You must be born 'from above'. However well you treat a cabbage and tend to it, you will never turn it into a dog. This is what our Lord is saying, 'what is born of the flesh will be flesh.' Do what you will with it. Make it very religious if you can, or philosophical; it will still be flesh. You must be born 'from above'.

'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (v. 6). You will notice that theme repeats itself in the conversation with the Samaritan woman: 'They that worship God must worship him in spirit.' The two stories have a great deal in common.

But now notice, when it comes to John's discussion with his disciples, this word 'from above' occurs again. Let's read the passage:

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been put in prison). Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.' John answered, 'A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him." The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.' He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. (vv. 22–32)

You will notice the repetition of the word *anōthen*. When our Lord was talking to Nicodemus, and Nicodemus said 'How can these things be?' our Lord replied, 'No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in

heaven' (v. 13 κϒν). What has that got to do with anything? Well, Nicodemus was *the* biblical scholar. And now here is this prophet from Galilee — all right, he had done signs and wonders, but who was he to lay down the rules and the regulations and say what was absolutely necessary? Our Lord is now telling him: 'You want to know how these things can be and how you can believe it? It isn't a question of you understanding it, Nicodemus. It's a question of whether you are prepared to believe it. And now I'm telling you that no one has ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven. If you believe it, you will believe it because I said so! I am telling you as the one that has come down from heaven.' This is our Lord's claim to the great theologian: that he is 'from above'. So that was what our Lord was preaching to Nicodemus.

*John the Baptist's discussion with his disciples (Story Three)*

Now, John is instructing his disciples, and they are on edge because this Jesus was making more converts than John, and it was John who had spoken up for him at the start and introduced him. John is replying, 'he who comes from above is above all' (v. 31).

As servants, our attitude to service, to the authority of Christ and his position in our lives, must be consistent with the gospel we preach. If we preach our Lord as the absolute authority, the one who came from above and therefore insists that we are 'born from above'; then in our service we must recognize Christ as supreme. It is not a question of 'How many converts do I get?'

To enhance that, John gives us the analogy:

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. (v. 29)

So the friend of the bridegroom introduces the bride to the bridegroom, but he doesn't then say to her: 'Now, look here. You have fallen in love with this man, but in all your negotiations with him you must come through me!' It would a funny sort of courtship wouldn't it? 'No,' says John, 'I introduced you to Christ; now I stand aside. It's Christ the bridegroom who has the bride. I don't come between Christ and his people.' There is none of this business of having to come through the priest — that won't do. You come direct to Christ, because of who Christ is.

My point is simply now to point to the similarities between the terms used in the conversation with Christ and Nicodemus, and in John's discussion with his disciples. I want to make the same point, when it comes to the discussion between Christ and his apostles after the woman had gone.

*Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman (Story Four)*

He had talked to the woman in terms of satisfaction. She had come to draw water from the well; she discovered a living water. When she went back to her city, she left her water pot (a nice little touch). She had found a better supply of water.

You must admire her tact as a witness for Christ. She didn't go to the city and say, 'You know, gentlemen, I've had a marvellous experience, and you could have a marvellous experience too. I've met this man, and I feel marvellous!'

They would have said, 'Yes, well, you've had several men.'

No, what she said was, 'Come, see a man. He told me everything I have ever done.' The men of the city knew about her, didn't they?

Then, at least so the Greek has it, she had a nice feminine touch. She didn't say, 'This is the Christ, and I'm telling you so! No, she had much more tact than that. After saying, 'Come meet this man who told me everything I have ever done' (if she admitted that, then what she was telling them would ring true); she then added, 'this couldn't be the Christ could it?' That was a magnificently effective use of tact. She would let the men decide and tell her, after they had met him. And they came out to see for themselves.

So our Lord had talked to her about satisfaction. In the interval, and before the men of the city came out, Christ's disciples came back.

#### *Christ's discussion with his disciples (Story Five)*

The disciples came, saying, 'Master, eat.' He hadn't eaten anything since early morning. He said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.'

They asked, 'Has anyone brought him lunch or something?'

'No,' he said, 'my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. I live on it! Not that I get money for it, but it is my spiritual food to serve God and to do his work' (see 4:31-34).

Notice how it balances what is the main theme of the story with the Samaritan woman: the question of satisfaction. If I preach to the world, and then sing: 'Now none but Christ can satisfy | None other name for me!'<sup>8</sup> And then somebody comes up and says, 'Could you take a Sunday School class?' And I say, 'Oh, do I have to?' It isn't quite consistent, is it?

Do we find the Lord's service our very food, so that we live on it? Not that we make money out of it, but that it is life to us? That is the standard our Lord exhibited. He travelled all that way to Samaria. Tired, worn out, weary: he sat on the well, and he needed a glass of water. But it was food to him to join with the Father in seeking worshippers to worship the Lord. He lived on it. We should be consistent with the gospel we preach. If it satisfies the sinner and brings him to God to worship him, then that same sense of satisfaction in the service of God should mark us.

Then he talked to them about reward. 'Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest' (v. 35). Each person has his own reward, so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together. There is reward in the harvest home; but the reward of the sower shall come alongside the reward of the reaper. It is all different parts of the same movement.

As far as testimony goes, when he got to Samaria, multitudes believed on him in the city. But then the men, feeling their macho dignity, told the woman: 'We're believing now, but not because of what you said. We've heard him ourselves, and you didn't teach us' (see v. 42). Well, their machismo is one thing, but nevertheless what they say highlights an important

---

<sup>8</sup> Emma F. Bevan (1827-1909), 'None but Christ.'



principle. Our aim in preaching the gospel and in teaching the word should be that people come to faith, but not because we said so; our aim is to bring them to Christ and, in that sense, to let them hear him *for themselves*.

## **Conclusion**

Here is our Lord evaluating the worship and service of his people. You will forgive my rough exposition, but what I am arguing now is that the conversation with Nicodemus, with Christ's emphasis on the need to be born 'from above', is matched in the discussion between John and his disciples on the principles of service. We have to remember, as servants, that our Lord that is 'from above' is 'above all'. If we preach the satisfaction of salvation to our modern 'women of Samaria', it has to be balanced. As Christ taught his disciples, we find satisfaction in the work of God and in doing his will.

Nothing that I have said detracts from taking one verse, or two or three verses, understanding them, and preaching them. You don't have to understand every phrase in the first four chapters before you can preach any of it. That would be a silly notion. What I am saying is that this is the inspired word of God, and it is most carefully written. Therefore we should attend to it, and the relationships of the different incidents. They are not just casually put down, as if someone were recording what they'd done on a trip: 'When we were in Jerusalem we went to the zoo to see the animals on our half-day off. And then there was this good contact made, and we met a woman of Samaria.' It's not that kind of thing! This is very carefully selected and written. It is to make us exact in our thinking, even about salvation.

## The First Journey

### *The Final Story: The Healing of the Court Official's Son*

In the record of our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem and back again there remains one story that we have not considered so far. That is of course the last story, which is the healing of the court official's (or nobleman's) son. I find that it is not often preached upon. Our task is to understand the story in itself. What is the point of it? And, secondly, we want to see if it is related in any way to the other stories that we have considered already.

#### **The relation of signs to faith**

Let's notice then, first of all, the way Scripture describes the story and take our first clue from what Scripture actually says:

So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe' (John 4:46-48).

We ought to ponder that now for a moment. This is our Lord's reaction, his statement, as the nobleman comes to him. Whatever else it is, because it is the Lord's statement we must consider it and its implications. When he says, 'Unless you see signs' the 'you' is plural. He is not saying just to the man himself 'unless you personally see signs and wonders, you personally will not believe.' It is plural: 'Unless you people in general see signs and wonders, you people will not believe.' It raises the question of the relation of signs and wonders to faith. Is that topic talked about anywhere else in that first journey? We find it discussed in Jerusalem at the start:

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man (2:23-25).

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.' (3:2)

So the relation of signs to faith is going to be an important topic in this whole first journey. But it is important in general as well. We have to put it alongside what the Gospel itself tells us in its often quoted words in chapter 20:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (vv. 30–31)

It seems to me that we have to be careful that we do not disparage signs and wonders. Some commentators will say that John didn't think very much of signs because faith built on signs is not always very good. And they base their remarks on those verses at the end of chapter 2: 'when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man' (vv. 23–25). So obviously our Lord thought that their faith, responding to those signs, was inadequate. Why it was inadequate is a matter to be pondered.

At the other extreme we are told in the verses that we read from chapter 20 that the Gospel deliberately records certain signs that Jesus did 'so that you may believe'. This also raises the whole matter of signs in relation to faith.

Some people hold that when we first come to Christ our faith is a leap in the dark. That cannot be true. I quote again the words of 20:31: 'these [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' To start with, it is a question of believing 'that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God'. That is a *proposition*, philosophically speaking. The signs are *evidence*.

I remember being in one of the Iron Curtain countries at a conference weekend in the bad old days. The final meeting was for young people, and I preached on the water turned into wine. Afterwards, over supper in the hotel, I asked my interpreter, who was a very gifted young man, 'Do you sometimes preach on the signs to give people the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God?'

'No, I don't,' he said.

'So, what evidence do you give them?'

'I don't give them any,' he said.

'You don't give them any evidence that Jesus is the Son of God? You just say that he is, and expect them to believe? What then would be the difference between believing Christ and believing the devil?'

He said, 'None, to start with!'

If faith is a leap in the dark without any evidence, what *would* be the difference between believing the devil and believing Christ? But that isn't true, as we read here: 'these signs are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God'. That is believing a proposition, and 'believing you may have life in his name.' That is the next side of believing.

It is all too possible, however, as we see from chapter 2, for people who witness a miracle and, not being able to deny it is a miracle, to believe. But what they believe is the question. You will notice that in chapter 2 it is not said what they believe. They 'believed in his name'; they believed that he was Jesus of Nazareth, so now he was acceptable to them. But our Lord

didn't commit himself to them; he knew what was in them. There are multitudes of people who believe that Jesus is the Son of God who are not yet born again. I expect you have met many of them.

So, this matter of the relation of signs to faith is an important one. It is introduced here right at the beginning. You will notice that, when the Jews came to Christ in the first story, they say 'What sign do you show us for doing these things?' (2:18). They are asking for a sign. So when we come to the final story we ought to pick up what our Lord comments, which is going to raise the question of the relation of signs to faith: 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe' (4:48).

### **The formal structure of the stories**

So, what does that mean? It is simple enough to see what the story actually says, but so what? If you preached this story, how would you apply it to anybody? What is its lesson? In order to help us to get the facts into our heads, let's notice another thing about the story. It is always good to get *all* of the facts into one's head before you expound it, to make sure that you are expounding the story and not making up a few things of your own!

#### **The two parts of Story One**

Notice what we might call the formal structure of the story, and its similarity of structure to the first story in the First Journey. We noticed in passing that there are two parts to the first story, and John marks them out. The first part is a comment about the apostles: 'His disciples remembered that it was written' (2:17). Then in part two, when the authorities asked Christ for a sign to show his authority to cleanse the temple, Christ gives them a sign (vv. 19–21), and that second part ends with another comment about the disciples. This is not me telling you arbitrarily that this story is in two parts; it is how John has written it.

We saw the importance of seeing that there are two parts to that story. In the first part, our Lord reforms the old system. He thought it worth his while to reform the old temple, the old system of worship, and to turn out the moneychangers and all the rest of it. He said, 'Don't make my Father's house a house of merchandise.' He called the old temple (the old system) his Father's house and thought it worth his while reforming it. But he didn't simply reform it. The second half of the story says how Christ was going to replace the old system with a new kind of temple, and that likewise is followed by a comment about the disciples (v. 22). So this is not making it up or using the imagination; it is watching how the story is written. It has two parts, and the two parts are saying two distinct things about the temple.

#### **Delayed evidence in Story One**

We ought to notice what we didn't have time to notice earlier. In the second part of Story One, the authorities come and ask him, 'What sign do you do to validate your cleansing of the temple like this?' (see 2:18). Notice the sign that he gives. This is on his First Journey to Jerusalem, and as a sign he mentions something that wasn't going to happen immediately. They ask, 'What sign do you give? What evidence? What is your authority?' He gives them the sign of his resurrection, but that wasn't going to happen for the next three years! That's

interesting, isn't it? They ask for evidence, and he gives it to them, but it is *delayed* evidence. They won't get the evidence until three years later, when they have crucified him: 'Destroy this temple . . .' he said. And they would. Those very temple authorities would do it; they would have him crucified. 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (v. 19). He is talking about his resurrection.

How was it valid? What sense does it make to us? I am not questioning our Lord's wisdom; but I am asking us to see what the sense is. What sense did it make for him, at the beginning of this First Journey, to cite as evidence of his authority something that wasn't going to happen for three years?

As Christians you won't find the answer difficult. You will say the final validation of our Lord was his resurrection from the dead. Of course it couldn't happen for three years, but that was going to be the final validation of his message, and indeed of himself. Romans 1 outlines the very basis of the gospel:

concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness *by his resurrection* from the dead. (vv. 3–4).

So from the point of view of the authorities standing there, the evidence that he now cites is delayed evidence that they won't have until the resurrection takes place. It was an historical delay of course, and we understand why. They didn't understand it, of course, and there's no record that he explained it. They said he was mad. That particular temple took forty-three years to build (and it wasn't quite finished even in the days of Christ); how could he destroy it and raise it again in three days? Well, they didn't understand; neither did the apostles, not at the time. It was only after he rose from the dead, John explains, that they remembered that he had said this (v. 22). In that sense, therefore, it was *delayed evidence*.

Now we shall find that Story Two deals with that same principle: the question of delayed evidence and the relation to faith.

### **Delayed evidence in Story Two**

Notice that this Story Two is in two parts just like the first story was. It is divided into two parts by the comment that the court official believed.

So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' The official said to him, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.' (4:46–50)

That is the first part of the story, ending with the statement that the man believed. Now the second part of the story:

As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, 'Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.' The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' And he himself believed, and all his household. (vv. 51–53)

We notice that you are allowed to believe more than once! And this is a story in two parts; each part ends with the statement that the man believed. Let us now try to think it through.

*The first part of the story*

This is a court official up in Galilee, and his son is desperately sick. He obviously believed that the Lord could heal him because when the Lord came back to Galilee he went and asked him to heal his son. So we perceive that the man believed that much about Christ. He believed that he could heal the sick. But when the boy got ill our Lord was down in Jerusalem. That was a long way off, and the man had no means of contacting him. Then he heard that Jesus had come back and was in Cana of Galilee! Well, that was hopeful, because while it was still some distance from Cana to Capernaum, it was worth trying.<sup>9</sup> So with his son in that critical situation and having tried, I suspect, everything he knew to heal his son, he sets forth to find Jesus, because this was his only hope.

So he comes to Jesus. And if you notice the exact phrase, he doesn't just ask him to come and heal his son but to 'come down' and heal his son. What he was asking the Lord to do was to leave Cana and come to Capernaum and lay his hands on his son, or something like it, and heal his son.

Our Lord's reply was, 'The trouble with you people around here is that unless you see signs and wonders you won't believe.' As we recall, 'you' is in the plural here. The man replied, 'Please, sir, let's not talk theology. My boy is desperately ill; come and heal him, and then we can talk about the theology!'

And our Lord said, 'You have mistaken me, my good man. Your son lives.'

'What do you mean, he lives?'

'You asked me to heal your son, didn't you? Well, I've healed him! What I was saying is that the trouble with you people around here is that unless you see signs and wonders you are not prepared to believe. And if you, sir, are not prepared to believe without seeing signs and wonders you are going to have a hard time over the next twenty-four hours, for I am telling you that your son is well!'

That put the man on the spot, because he couldn't see that his son was well! What was he going to do now?

It shows to us an interesting thing about our Lord. He is the Lord of space and time, and because of that he is able to heal at a distance. And he was able to heal at a distance here on earth. You had better say 'Hallelujah' to that and thank the Lord, if you're hoping to go to heaven! But you haven't seen heaven for yourselves, so how do you know that it is there? All you have to go on is the word of Christ.

---

<sup>9</sup> There is some disagreement about which 'Cana' is meant, but there was some distance between it and Capernaum in any case.

So that was the situation: the boy was healed, but the man couldn't see it. Nor could he have the evidence that it was so since the technology wasn't around in those days for him to get word from home. He just couldn't see it. It meant that he had to go on *blindly* believing the word of Christ.

Now you will see that there is a balance. If you are confronted with the question: 'Is Jesus, or is he not, the Son of God?' Scripture will give you evidence, and evidence in the forms of signs and wonders: 'these signs are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' Scripture will give you evidence! But Christ promises that those who believe have eternal life. You say that you have eternal life, but how do you know? On what ground would you say that you know you have eternal life?

That is the point at issue now, for the man was far from home, and the Lord was saying that his son was healed and living. It is all credit to the man that he believed, and he went his way (v. 50). I think I would have stayed there and said, 'If you really knew how much danger my boy is in, you would come down and heal him!'

'No, but I have healed him!'

'Yes, but just to make sure!'

But, no, the man believed on the naked word of Christ, without seeing signs and wonders. He just believed. He didn't get home until the next day, as you'll notice. I don't know where he stayed the night, or whether on the way home he had doubts and difficulties: 'Was the boy really well? But then Christ has said so.' All he had to go on was the word of Christ.

When it comes to the fact that you have eternal life, and there is a home prepared for you in heaven, you journey through life on those same terms: the naked word of Christ.

Some might reply to the question of how you know you have eternal life by saying, 'I get such marvellous feelings and sentiments of heaven!' Well you should thank God for that. But when you are down in the dumps, and you don't feel anything, how do you know that you have eternal life? Because he said so! And we journey, like the nobleman, on the naked word of Christ.

### *The second part of the story*

But there is a second part to the story. When he got home his servants met him and said, 'Your son is well!' But that wasn't enough for the father. He wanted to know at what exact hour his boy began to mend, and he asked the servants. They said 'That was yesterday, about the seventh hour.' And he counted it up on his fingers, or however he calculated it, and he came to the conclusion that, yes, it was at the very hour *when he believed!* Was that it? Was the boy healed when he believed? Is that what the text says? No, indeed not! When exactly was the boy healed, according to the text? It was the very hour *when Jesus said it!* That was when the boy was healed.

There is an exceedingly important principle at stake here, so let's review the story. The man came to the Lord and asked him to come and heal his son. The Lord said, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you won't believe.' The man implored him again to come down. But our Lord said, 'Your son lives.'

Now what happened? Did it happen in this way: the man came to Christ and asked him to come and heal his son. Then our Lord said to himself, 'Now I shall have to be very careful,

because if I say, "Your son lives" and the man doesn't believe, well then I can't heal his son. So I'll say, "Your son lives", but then I won't cure him. I'll just say it, and if the man believes then I'll go on to cure the boy. But if when I say, "Your son lives," the man doesn't believe, then I won't cure his son!" Is that how it went? Or does it mean exactly what it says, the son was healed when the Lord *said*, 'Your son lives'? It is the latter of course.

Why am I making such a fuss? Well, I am anxious to know the relation to faith. Where did the man's faith come in? The text says that when the Lord said that his son was healed, the man believed. It was not that the man believed, and then his son was healed.

I am stressing the point because, in my long experience, there are many believers in middle life, and a lot in later life, who have heard, ever since they knew anything, that salvation is by faith. They trusted the Lord, and then as time goes on and the body weakens and the nervous system and all the rest of it, they begin to wonder: 'Was I really saved then? It depended on faith, and I believed! But was it the right kind of faith?'

You may smile at that, but I've come across various versions of this. I can remember one person who became unsure that he had believed the right way round to start with. He was so determined to believe the right way that he wrote it out on a piece of paper. And he would say, 'Now these are the words, and I'll pray them exactly so that I can be absolutely sure I've believed the right way. I mean, the devils believe, and they don't believe the right way!' Then he thought that if he hadn't believed the right way all those years ago he would have to go to the elders of the church and confess that he hadn't been a believer all these years. And now that he had believed he thought he should have to be baptized all over again. So he got down on his knees to believe the Lord the right way. It worked for the first half a day or so. Then he began to wonder: 'Was I really concentrating on it, or was I just saying words and didn't actually mean it with my whole heart?'

Perhaps you haven't encountered it, and may you never come into that situation. But if you preach on this story, you may find some senior Christian women who will grip your hand going out and say, 'Oh, thank you for that!' You might find some younger ones as well. What is the relation of faith and evidence? *When* was the boy healed? The passage only mentions the man's faith after the Lord said 'Your son is well,' and the man believed. What if I ask you, when did that man first believe; and when did he first repent, for that matter? I'm going to put it to you that he had come to the end of all his possibilities—doctors and everything else. His son was dying, and he had heard of Jesus. Jesus was down in Jerusalem, unobtainable. But when the man heard he'd come back, this was his only hope; and he left the dying boy, which was difficult enough to do, but he did it because this was his only hope! That is repentance. And he came to Christ, and he called on the Lord: 'Heal my boy!' And Scripture says, 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom 10:13 RV). He called, and the Lord responded by saying, 'Your son lives.'

It is still true. It is still true in a believer's life. You will remember the story of Peter in the boat. According to Matthew, when Peter saw the Lord walking on the water, the Lord said, 'It is I, you needn't be afraid.' Peter did a few jumps of logic and said, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' Now what the logic of that statement is I don't know, but anyway the Lord said, 'Come.' Peter was responding to the invitation of the Lord; he had the Lord's word for what he did. It wasn't silly nonsense, just bravery or something.



He had the Lord's word, and he got out of the boat. Then he looked round and saw the winds and the waves, and he began to sink. What happened next? He cried 'Lord, save me!' The Lord didn't say, 'You silly ditherer.' No, he grabbed him, stood him up and then said, 'O you of little faith, why did you dither?' (see 14:22–32). 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

When the man asked the Lord to heal his son, the Lord healed his son. The question was the relation of faith to evidence. The son was well, but the man couldn't see it. He had the sense there and then to believe on the basis of the naked word of Christ, and he journeyed home on nothing more than that. Of course when he got home there was evidence. The servants met him and told him his son was alive, and he went in and saw the boy. That was a tremendous moment! It *was* real then! And he believed all over again. There's no harm in believing five or six times if you want to, but there should be evidence as we go on in life, that Christ's word is true and we do have eternal life, and the Holy Spirit is our witness to the fact. There is evidence, but it is that way round.

Sometimes the evidence is delayed in life, isn't it? There will be elements in our Christian walk, right to the end of this life on earth, that we have to believe just because Christ says so, without any further evidence.

### **How the final story fits in the First Journey**

Why does it come in here? It is because there are two sides to this matter of delayed evidence. This section is discussing the relation between signs and wonders and faith. It was raised in the second paragraph: some people believed in the signs and wonders and believed in his name, but he didn't commit himself to them. There was no repentance of sin. There was no genuine faith in him. It was simply that he did signs and wonders; so they said, 'Okay!' It was different with Nicodemus. He came because he was impressed by the signs and wonders.

So I am not inventing it when I say that this First Journey will raise the matter of signs and wonders and evidence. 'What evidence do you show for cleansing the temple?' The evidence was delayed, for this was an historic matter. Christ couldn't give the evidence of his resurrection until his death, which was three years off. But the evidence of the resurrection becomes the absolute foundation of Christian faith. It is the basis of the gospel. It is historical evidence. It is a fact. It happened! This is the evidence of history.

Then the last story gives the evidence of experience. We start by taking the straight word of Christ: if you call on the name of the Lord, you are guaranteed you shall be saved. But now comes the evidence that you have been. You start by plainly believing his word. And as you travel you will normally find the evidence, but there are some things that you will not find the evidence for until you get home to glory.

If that is the message of the story, is it preachable, and is it worth preaching? We are not just playing literary puzzles with the word of God. This is right down to the heart of things.

### **He can heal at a distance, but does he always?**

Now, let's consider another story just to make the point that when you study a Gospel like this over the years, eventually you get into the habit of comparing one story with another and

seeing things in their context. There is going to be another miracle, which is the raising of Lazarus. When you first start to read chapter 11, it will upset you a little bit if you have got it into your head that Christ can heal at a distance.

He was up north somewhere, and there came a message from Martha and Mary: 'Lord, he whom you love is ill' (11:3). It was an unspoken invitation for him to come and heal Lazarus. And when he heard that, he stayed for two days in the same place where he was. You might say, 'It doesn't matter; we've learned he can heal at a distance. So he will just speak the word. He doesn't need to go to Bethany.' But two days later he told the disciples, 'Lazarus has died,' and then added, 'I am glad that I was not there' (v. 15).

What has that got to do with it? He could have healed at a distance! But that's all right; he'll raise him at a distance!

No, he didn't. And when he got there, Lazarus had been dead for four days and in the grave. Martha went out to meet him, and she said those tremendously poignant words, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died' (v. 21). 'You didn't come! We sent you a note. Did you get the note?'

'I'm glad I wasn't there.' What is he saying?

So then he came to the grave and said, 'Take away the stone.'

'No,' said Martha, 'don't take away that stone! It would have been all right if you had been here; but he's been four days in the grave, and he stinks.'

What is this story saying?

The story of the official's son is telling us about the relation of faith to experience: how do I know I have new life? The story of the raising of Lazarus is a miracle, of course, but it is also a prototype and a parable of the physical resurrection of the dead. It is not a story about how Lazarus received eternal life. It is how Lazarus was raised physically from the dead.

Christ is the resurrection and the life, but before he left his people he was determined to lay down a pattern for them that would be followed all down the years and centuries. When his people's relatives have got sick, they have prayed and told the Lord, 'Please, Lord, heal them.' Sometimes he does, but sometimes he doesn't. When they die, is that a disaster? No, according to the story it is in the plan of the Lord.

You will notice that he didn't raise Lazarus at a distance. The whole point of the story is that to raise Lazarus he had to come! He *came* to Bethany. He did not heal him at a distance, the way he had the official's son. Why? He is laying down the pattern of what it is going to be at the resurrection of the dead. The Lord has gone away. Our loved ones get sick. We ask the Lord to heal them. He may do so, but in the end, eventually, they die. Nor will they be raised until the Lord himself shall come. He 'shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God' (see 1 Thess 4:13-16 RV).

Here are two stories then. One puts the one side, and one puts the other. It is helpful to compare and contrast them; doing so brings out their meaning.

## Questions About the Overview and the First Journey

### Question one

*Many commentators focus on the seven 'I AM' sayings and the seven signs as the things that structure John's Gospel. How can something as momentous as the first sign fall outside of the way you see the structure (the journeys to Jerusalem and back again)? Why do you say the first story in the First Journey is the cleansing of the temple, rather than this first sign (John 2:1–11)?*

DWG: The difference I see is between a book's structure and its dominant themes and patterns. Permit me for just a little while to talk in technicalities. Let's take the idea that the seven signs are the structure of John's Gospel. I would call that a *dominant theme*.

#### **A dominant theme: the signs in John's Gospel**

These signs 'are written so that you may believe . . . and that by believing you may have life in his name . . .' (20:31). There are seven such signs, and the first of them is the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the turning of water into wine. I would call it a dominant theme rather than the structure of the book for the simple reason that if you were to chart those seven signs on a table of contents for John's Gospel, you would find that there is one of these signs in chapter 2 at the beginning; then there isn't another until chapter 4 (the healing of the official's son). In chapters 5 and 6 there are three signs, just in those two chapters (the healing of the paralytic, the feeding of the five thousand, and the walking on the water). Three of them are all grouped. There is nothing in chapter 7 and nothing in chapter 8. There is the miracle of giving sight to the man born blind in chapter 9. There is no sign in chapter 10. In chapter 11 there is the raising of Lazarus. Then in chapters 12–18 there are no signs at all. So, as far as being the structure of the book, if you are using that term in a technical sense, I would say that it doesn't account for the whole book. No end of chapters leave that out completely.

Instead, I would say that it is one of the dominant themes, a very important dominant theme. And, what is more, if you look at those miracles—evidence of the power of Christ and the fact that he is the Son of God—they are not only a dominant theme, but they form a *pattern*.

What do I mean by that? Well, take the miracle in chapter 5. Here is a man who for thirty-eight years had been trying to get into this pool when the waters were stirred up ('troubled' κλυ). The Lord came along and said, 'Would you like to be made well?' The man didn't say, like a sensible man, 'Yes, of course I would.' He said, 'I have no one to help me into the pool.' He couldn't think of any other way of getting better than to get into this pool. He had the notion perhaps that Christ had come to give him a helping hand to get into the pool. But the

Lord replied in effect, 'I don't need any pool. Get up!' And the man was healed forthwith. Christ didn't use the pool (see 5:1–17).

So you say, 'Yes, the Lord doesn't need any pools. He never uses any pool.'

But half a minute! There's a story in chapter 9 about a blind man. He had never been able to see. He wasn't thinking of going to any pool in particular. The Lord spat on the ground, made clay, put it on his eyes, and said 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (see 9:1–7).

How will you account for this?

We have seen another example of this: the miracle of the nobleman's son. Our Lord heals at a distance. But what happens when it comes to Lazarus? He could have healed him at a distance, but he didn't. Why didn't he?

If you put them out they form a set. The only correction is that there are eight miracles in John, instead of seven. It is perfectly true that the first seven are referred to in chapter 20:

These [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (v. 31).

All the first seven have that same purpose. The eighth was another miracle, but it didn't have that purpose. It wasn't to encourage non-believers to believe; it was for the encouragement of Christian workers about the Lord's guidance. It is the miraculous draught of fishes (21:1–14). You will see the difference in emphasis if you attend to the actual words. In the first miracle—turning water to wine—the comment is made at the end, '[the Lord] manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him' (2:11). When it comes to the miracle in chapter 21: 'Jesus manifested . . .', not his glory, 'Jesus manifested *himself*' (v. 1 RV). That is very deliberate language, because at this time our Lord was dead, buried, risen and on the other side of death: now in risen life.

How did he come and stand on the shore so that they could see him? And where did he get the fish from, and the coals of fire, so that when they brought the fish to land he already had the breakfast cooked? When he said, 'Come and have breakfast' he had some fish on a fire already, but where did he get all that from? He was risen from the dead! And he manifested *himself*, as he had promised to do before he left them (e.g. 14:18).

So, yes, there are seven 'signs', or eight miracles. If you chart the eight miracles you will find that they form a pattern, as I've indicated. In the second one, he heals at a distance. In the second to last one, he deliberately doesn't heal at a distance. In the third one he refuses to use a pool. In the third to last one, he uses the pool. So, yes, the signs are certainly an important dominant theme in the Gospel of John, a pattern, but there is another dominant theme.

### **A dominant theme: the women in John's Gospel**

John has a number of stories in which women are very prominent. Those are stories that no other Gospel writer has, or, if they do, it is to nowhere near the same extent. There are six such stories. They also are a dominant theme.

The first one is the same story we've just discussed: the turning of the water to wine at Cana. That happens to be the first recorded miracle, the first sign. But, from another point of view, it is the first in a series that becomes a dominant theme. In the course of that miracle,

Mary comes to Jesus and says, 'They have no wine.' And he says to her, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' (2:4 Rv) No one else tells you that story (see 2:1–11).

Then there is the woman in chapter 4. Here is a very prominent story: the Samaritan woman. Nobody else has the story at all. What was wrong with that woman? What marked her out? She had had no satisfaction in her relationships. She had had five husbands and the man she was living with now was not her husband.

Chapter 8 is a famous story, and people say that it shouldn't be in the Gospel of John. They say it is a later edition, an authentic story, but John didn't include it. Well, if so, thank the Lord for the man who did include it later on, because that is a story of a woman as well. What was wrong with her? She was caught in the act of adultery.

Then there is the story of Martha and Mary at the death of their brother. No one else has that story.

At the cross, there is a detail that only John has. Our Lord sees his mother:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (19:26–27)

And there is a final story of Mary in the garden on the morning of the resurrection. Other Gospels mention that she was present; but only John tells us what happened and what our Lord said to her. When she looked round and thought he was the gardener, she said, 'If you have taken him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will remove him.' But it was our Lord, and he said 'Mary', and she recognized him (see 20:11–18).

Here are six stories in which women are prominent, and they are peculiar to John. You mustn't get upset if the first story is one in the other series of the signs. (There is no law against them being in both dominant themes.)

If you notice, all six of these stories have a common theme. It is sparked off by our Lord's word to Mary at Cana of Galilee: 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' It is a question of relationship. What are weddings about anyway? Weddings are about a relationship! It is a public celebration of a new relationship. It is an extraordinary story of a wedding: do you know, the bride isn't mentioned nor what she was wearing! How can that be? Nothing is said about her. What *is* said is that Jesus was invited to a wedding, and the mother of Jesus was there. That is significant. That is his closest human relative. She came and said, 'They have no wine.' He said, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' It is a question of relationship.

Then between the woman in chapter 4 and the man she was living with there was no true relationship. The woman in chapter 8? She had been unfaithful to a relationship. There is Martha and Mary. Notice how Martha talks to the Lord. She doesn't say, 'If you had been here Lazarus would not have died.' She said, '*my* brother would not have died'. And our Lord replied, '*Your* brother shall rise again', not 'Lazarus shall rise again.' This is about what ordinary physical death does to human relationships.

Then there is Mary at the death of her son. This is what the *cross* does to relationships. It is not just physical death, but the world's enmity, taking this son from his mother. But then it shows the compensation of being fellow-believers in a new family. He said to Mary: 'Behold your son'; and to John, 'Behold your mother.' It is a new family relationship. And the Lord

said to Mary in the garden: 'Go and tell my brothers . . . I ascend to my father and your father; my God and your God.' It is relationships once again. He was already the other side of the grave and death, now mentioning and making real to Mary the reality of this new relationship that goes across death: 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (see 20:11–18). This accounts for the fact that the women never turned the grave of Christ into a shrine. You needn't argue over which is the correct place for the burial of Christ in Jerusalem. You don't need to ask about that really. The early Christians forgot, so for centuries it wasn't known where he was buried for the simple reason that you don't make a shrine to somebody who is alive. The reality of that new relationship between Christ and his people stopped the Christian women from making any shrine of the tomb of Christ.

Do you see then how it is not an either/or question, whether it is the signs that are the main thing or the journeys? Both are important, but each should be seen for what it is actually doing in John's Gospel.

## Question two

*How do the miracles, the signs, in John's Gospel help us to believe? And how does comparing them with one another help in the actual preaching of the word of God?*

DWG: Yes, why should we bother to do all this comparing of the series of signs in John's Gospel? And, if you are going to preach the signs, the question to ask certainly is: 'How do they help people to believe?' The first seven are intended to do just that, as we have seen.

These [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (v. 31).

But how do they help people to believe? Perhaps you have given away the Gospel of John to people on the street and hoped that God will use it to bring them to faith. Someone might open it and say, 'Wow! This Jesus can give us gallons of wine!' Is that what it is teaching, simply that he did a miracle that produced gallons of wine, and that is why people should believe Christ? We want to know a little more about the signs, don't we? We need to know what they meant, and what they mean, and how they lead to faith.

The signs were not only miracles of power; they were parables, as you see from the feeding of the five thousand. Having multiplied the loaves and the fish for people who were physically hungry, he uses that as the basis for teaching them that he is the bread of life to satisfy their spiritual hunger. That is what you are getting at if you are giving the Gospel of John to unconverted people, so that they should come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you are preaching it, this is what you should be aiming at: producing faith in the Lord Jesus—belief that he is the Son of God.

We are not playing crossword puzzles or Sudoku with the word of God. We are studying how the signs compare with each other so that we may get a firmer and detailed grasp on what they mean. You don't have to preach 'structure' to unconverted people, nor to believers, unless you want to; but if structure helps you to see the point of each one and how they differ, it will make your preaching all the more exact.

## The first sign

Take the first sign: the turning of water into wine. Your worldly-wise chap will say: 'That's only a story, and it's nonsense. You're asking me to believe that, and I don't believe it!'

You say to him, 'It's in the Bible.'

'Well, I don't believe the Bible either. And I wasn't there when this was supposed to have happened. What's the good of you telling me the record of a story written in the Bible two thousand years ago when I don't believe the Bible anyway?'

You might say, 'Well, it's no use preaching him the story then; I'll just give up.'

So what would I say to you now? Well, remember that the story is not only a miracle, but also a parable. You could tell him the story and say, 'It's a very interesting story. It was a wedding, and they had wine there to promote the joy of the party. And the wine? It ran out. Is that true still? Is it true that sometimes, even at weddings, the wine runs out?'

You don't need an inspired book to tell you this. The newspapers will tell you that bit. The wine runs out! And not only out of marriage relationships but all sorts of human relationships: the wine runs out. Teenagers come to loathe their parents, and parents to despair of their children. Can our Lord give *better* wine?

Well, *how* did he do it? That's a point to focus on, isn't it?

### *The specific water he turned into wine*

Did he say, 'Abracadabra!' and the wine came floating down from the sky and filled their glasses? No, he didn't. Look at what the text says: 'Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons' (2:6).

The Jews had strict regulations about purification as part of their religion; they still do. So does Islam for that matter. Adherents of Islam are required to wash their hands and feet before getting down on the mat to pray five times a day. It is has to do with a sense of cleanliness. In Britain it used to be that weddings were a time when people thought of cleanliness, and the bride wore white to signify that she was a virgin. It doesn't necessarily signify that nowadays. Have we lost that sense of purity at weddings?

It says that these water jars were there 'for the Jewish rites of purification'. So it was cleansing by water, according to Jewish custom. It stood for a good principle, but our Lord himself commented on the practice. The Pharisees were very keen on this kind of cleansing. They wouldn't touch food unless they had first washed carefully. Our Lord made the point that the trouble with water is that it only cleanses the outside, the skin. And that is not what upsets marriages and other relationships. It not because the husband hasn't had a bath for six months, or something like that. It is that 'out of the heart come . . .' all these ugly things, 'these are what defile' (Matt 15:19–20). Mere religious, external ceremonies can't reach the trouble.

It was *that* water of the Jews' old system of purification that he turned into wine — into joy! It was 'the best wine' that had been 'kept until now' (see v. 10).

Witness what the Epistles say. And many a Christian will tell you of the joy that comes with forgiveness, of 'the blessedness of the one whose sins are forgiven, whose sins are covered, to whom the Lord will not impute unrighteousness' (see Rom 4:7–8). And we could think of other such passages. As for God being against pleasure, well, where did you get that

idea? One of the metaphors that God uses for the eternal state is the ‘marriage supper of the Lamb’!

He said to Mary, ‘Woman, what have I to do with you?’ (v. 4 KJV). Up to this point, he had been her obedient son, but he was now about to launch his public ministry. He couldn’t do it at Mary’s direction. She was his mother on the human side, but she could never direct his mission. He was God’s incarnate Son. Now the time had come for him to begin his public ministry and to come forth.

If we are guided by the Epistles, we will see what Christ was at in his public ministry. He was seeking a wife! He loved the church, and gave himself for her, that he might cleanse her by the washing of water by the word, that, ultimately, he might present the church to himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (see Eph 5:26–28).

In other words, the miracles are not just works of power. They are that, but they are also simultaneously parables; and the significance of the parable is to be preached. And if that is true of one, it is true of the lot. That is why it is important to see that they differ among themselves. This is not just arbitrary, remote literary study. It is trying to see the point of the word of God.

You will notice that those miracles are all different, and how they are different is important. Then you will see that some of them are ‘balanced’ by one of the others. Take, for instance, the second one—the son healed at a distance. We have thought what the point was of the healing at a distance and what that raised about questions of faith, and so forth. Then in the second to last sign, Lazarus was neither healed nor raised at a distance. And that is not an arbitrary comment. It is what Martha said: ‘Why weren’t you here, Lord . . . if only you had come . . . Why did you remain at a distance?’ It is vastly important from a practical point of view, as we have seen.

You don’t have to see them completely right away, and I am far from seeing everything about them, but preach them as you understand them. They are worth studying in detail, so that we may not just preach a sermon about them but preach *them* and their detail!

### *The first and the last signs*

You might ask what the first sign has got to do with the last one. In the first one it says that he ‘manifested his *glory*’ (2:11). At the beginning of the last one he ‘manifested *himself*’ (21:1) because he was the other side of the grave. He had promised his disciples: ‘I will not leave you orphans; I will manifest myself to you’ (14:18, own trans.). He manifested himself to them in their work for him.

So in the first miracle Mary says, ‘They have no wine.’ He dealt with that. In the last miracle, standing on the shore, he called across the sea to the fisherman after they had toiled all night and caught nothing. He said, ‘Have you anything to eat?’ He didn’t say, ‘Have you caught any fish?’ but ‘Have you anything to eat?’ (21:5 RV).

I will tell you straight now, you won’t live spiritually on the work that you do for the Lord—that could well exhaust you. Yes, it is food, as we heard earlier from John 4; but we will need more than just work. So when they came to the shore they were very hungry. They had toiled all night and caught nothing (before his intervention). He had breakfast for them, and then they were allowed to bring some of the fish that they had caught and enjoy that as well!



We are meant to enjoy the fruits of our work for the Lord, and find in it a food and satisfaction. But above the satisfaction in the work that we do for the Lord, there is that satisfaction that only a personal relationship with him can give. ‘Have you anything to eat?’ he asked them.

But I needn’t go on with that point. All I’m trying to say now is why we should study Scripture in this kind of fashion and how it can help.

### Question three

*What do you mean when you talk about the ‘structure’ of John’s Gospel?*

DWG: What I mean by *structure* when talking about John’s Gospel are the journeys to Jerusalem and back that we saw lying as the framework of the book. I would call the signs in John’s Gospel a ‘dominant theme’. And then, because of their inner relationship, I would call them a ‘pattern’, but they are a dominant theme. The stories about women in John’s Gospel are another dominant theme. And the one at the wedding in Cana of Galilee coincides with the first miracle, the first sign. That doesn’t matter in one sense. The two dominant themes don’t destroy each other.

The women in the Gospel are a dominant theme; it is not just that they are all women. Look at the content: it concerns questions of relationship.

AUDIENCE: He sounds very abrupt to his mother.

DWG: He does, doesn’t he? It is not so abrupt in Greek as it sounds in English. In English, we wouldn’t think of saying, ‘Woman’, to the Queen; but you would in Greek. It is not disrespectful, and it is certainly not slang. You *could* say it to a queen. Indeed, the Greek *gynai*, which is here in the text, is the Indo-European equivalent of our word ‘queen’. It is where our word comes from. It is a term you would use of a very stately lady.

On the other hand, it is very formal. He was putting a distance between her and himself because this was the first act of his public ministry: ‘This, the first of his signs’ (2:11). The point had to be made, and some of you will see why that is important more constantly than I do, because of where you are labouring. We don’t come through Mary and rely upon praying to her.

There is an old story in some cultures that the father is a very distant figure, and the children find it easier to come to the father through the mother; and so Christ is a very distant figure and so is God, and so isn’t it nice that we can come through Mary? That is a slander on the person of Christ. He stands and says, ‘Come to me . . . I am gentle and lowly in heart’ (Matt 11:28–29).

So each one of those stories is different. If you had six sessions for expounding the word, and you had six sessions about these women, you wouldn’t be just repeating the same thing every night—not if you see what the differences are.

Mary and Martha at the death of their brother: it is the breaking of their relationship through physical death.

Mary and the death of her son: that is what the world does. It is the meaning of the cross. ‘Take up your cross’, even if it means going against your family. But there is a compensation. We may lose our families, as many Muslim converts do in some countries, if they escape with

their lives, but there is a compensating factor in the new family of God. Our Lord commented on it:

there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first. (Mark 10:29–31)

I have hundreds of them all over this earth—personally, now, already—fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters!

### **Homework for next time**

I want now to set a little homework, just in case it might be possible for you to do some thinking about these matters before our next session. It relates to the Second Journey, comprising chapters 5 and 6.

Let me simply sketch in what I think these chapters are about, and if you get the time and care to think about it you may come up with different suggestions, and we would be very pleased to hear them. We are not in competition here with anybody!

I am going to suggest that in chapter 5 our Lord is presented to us as the *source* of life. In chapter 6 he is presented as the *means* of life.

Perhaps I ought to explain my terms, which I can do very simply. If I were to say to you, ‘How did you get your physical life in the first place? Did you get it by eating bread and butter?’

You would say, ‘Don’t be silly. Of course I didn’t!’

How did you get your life? Well, of course, you got your life from your parents, and they from God. You got it as a gift from a *source*.

You didn’t get your life by eating bread and butter, so now that you are grown up, you don’t need bread and butter? No, you do need the bread and butter! You can’t say, ‘Well, I’ve got life, so I don’t need bread and butter afterwards.’ You get life from the source, but to maintain life you need the *means* of life, what the Germans call *lebensmittel*: bread and butter and cabbage and carrots and potatoes and other such things. In physical life you need both sides, don’t you? And what is more, you need them in that order. First of all: the source of life. You get it as a baby from your parents, and ultimately from God. The source of life comes first, and then the means of life thereafter.

Now I’m going to suggest in our next sessions that this is the main theme of these two chapters. In chapter 5, Christ is the source of life. In chapter 6, Christ is the means of life.

### **Christ is the source of life—John 5**

So let me point to the verses in chapter 5 that suggest that Christ is the source of life:

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.  
(v. 21)

Look at verse 26, which makes the point even more clearly:

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

What does that mean? It doesn't just mean that the Father is alive—of course he is alive. He has life *in himself*. He doesn't get life from anywhere else; he is not dependent on anything else. He didn't get his life from anywhere else, and he doesn't depend on anything else to maintain him in life. 'The Father has life *in himself*.' We human beings don't. We are alive, and in that sense we have life, but we are not *sources* of life. God is. And it says here that the Son is: 'as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.' Christ is 'source of life', just as the Father is. That is a colossal, great claim!

Look back at verse 25:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead [the spiritually dead, that is] will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

They hear his voice, and he gives them *life*. Hitherto they were dead, and he gives them life. It is an instantaneous gift. In fact, 'an hour is coming', says verse 28 (it isn't yet come, but it will come in the future) 'when all who are in the tombs [that is, the physically dead] will hear his voice and come out' (vv. 28–29). So, Christ is the *source* of life.

### **Christ is the means of life—John 6**

Now look at chapter 6:

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (v. 57)

Here Christ talks of himself as the *means* of life: 'so he that feeds on me, he also shall live because of me'. And look at verse 53:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

That remains true of us, even though we may have reached an advanced stage in our spirituality. We don't have any spiritual life apart from Christ. Not even when you get to heaven will you be able to say to Christ, 'Well, thank you for bringing me here, Lord; it's marvellous! And I have eternal life because of course you gave me eternal life when I was a boy of fifteen. And now, Lord, if you'll excuse me, I have some other interests, and since I have eternal life I shall not need you as much as I did on earth, and I want to explore this new universe. I shall come and see you from time to time, but I don't really need you because, well, I have eternal life!'

No, you don't, not apart from him! Colossians will tell you: 'Christ . . . is your life' (3:4). You don't have any life without Christ. He is our source of life. He is the means of life. That is what I shall be advancing about these two chapters.

I shall be suggesting that the order is very definite. As in physical life, so here: first the source, then the means. People tend to get it wrong, don't they? You will find folks who are seeking to enjoy Christ, to feed on Christ, but they have never come to Christ to receive eternal life, and if you were to ask them how to get eternal life, they wouldn't know. So you have to come to the source first, and let him instantaneously give you eternal life. Then you can feed on him. Some go to the other extreme: they came to Christ, received from him the gift of eternal life, and now they don't think it matters if they wander far from him, because they have eternal life. But wait a minute! They need him as the means of life, because apart from him they don't have any life anyway! Christ is their life.

### **The miracle on each occasion**

So then if my contention is correct that this is the major theme of this section, that may account for the way he performed the miracle on each occasion.

#### *The miracle in chapter 5*

When he came to the Pool of Bethesda there were many people there. When the water was troubled (who knows what did the troubling), the people that got in first got the benefit of the minerals, or whatever it was, but it faded of course.

God has put into nature various ways of healing you. Watch the way dogs know what grass to eat sometimes when they don't feel well. And God has put into nature such things as rhubarb and other such useful things, and chemists have developed all sorts of drugs out of the natural world. God has given us means of healing, and he wants us to use them. It is part of our creaturely status to use the means of healing that God has given. It is not marvellous spirituality to neglect them.

But now Christ comes, and this man has been trying to get into the pool, to use this means of healing, but, no, others stepped down before him and the healing power of the water is gone, and for thirty-eight years he has not got in! So when Christ comes and says, 'Would you like to be made well?' he doesn't say, 'Yes.' He says 'I have no man to put me into the pool.' Christ says, 'My dear good man, I don't need a pool!' He is the very source of life! 'Get up!' he says, and imparts to the man the strength to get up and be healed and carry his bed. That was instantaneous (see 5:2-9). And of course the gift of eternal life is, in that sense, instantaneous. Christ is able to do it, and because he is the final judge he is able to give you the verdict now: 'whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement' (v. 24). He is the final judge; there is no appeal from him. He is the final judge because he is the Son of Man, and at the final judgment, he shall speak the word, and those that are in the graves shall come forth! But even now those who are spiritually dead hear his voice and, hearing, they live.

He is the source of life then.

#### *The miracle in chapter 6*

In chapter 6 he is the means of life. So chapter 6 tells us that after he had preached all these crowds were around, and he said to the apostles, 'How shall we feed these people?' Well, he knew what he was going to do himself, but he first asked them for their suggestions. What

means would they use? They thought in business-like fashion: 'two hundred day's wages would not be enough!' One said, perhaps to add a bit of humour, 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fishes. But what are they?' It was meant as a ridiculous suggestion. But by what means? You might say, 'Well, he doesn't need to use any means: he is the source of life! He can make bread come down from heaven if need be, like manna; he doesn't need any means!'

But wait a minute. He says, 'What did you say about loaves and fishes? Thank you very much; that would do very well.' And he took the boy's lunch and used the means! That was extraordinary, wasn't it? I am tempted to add that Christ can give eternal life instantaneously to anybody; but sometimes he will use your means and take what you have learned of his word, and your activity and your labour and your personal reasoning with folks. He will deign to use that and somehow maintain the faith and life of others! Why he should ever bother to use us is another thing, being who he is. But that day he used the means of life that the little boy had in order to preach the parable that he himself is the means of life to sustain us.

Of course there was a lot of argument in chapter 5 when he presented himself as the source of life. We shall have to consider that argument in our next sessions. And there was even more argument in chapter 6 when he pointed out that he was the bread of life, the means of life. We shall have to consider that too. And what the third miracle is about—walking on the water—and what it has got to do with anything. Well, perhaps you will tell me on the next occasion.

## The Second Journey

### *Christ the Source of Life – Part 1*

#### **Our studies so far**

In our previous studies we have seen that the bulk of the Gospel of John is the record of four journeys that our Lord made to Jerusalem, and then back again north to Galilee. In that respect John is different from the Synoptic Gospels, for in their record of our Lord's ministry they concentrate on his ministry up north in Galilee and then have him come on one great journey at the end down to Jerusalem. John tells us of things that our Lord did in Galilee, but his peculiarity is that he concentrates on these four journeys to Jerusalem and back to Galilee.

Historically this is important, because these journeys to Jerusalem were made on the occasion of the religious feasts: Passover, Feast of Booths, and so forth. As a godly Jew he was of course required by the Old Testament to go at least three times a year down to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts of the Lord. John's record shows him doing precisely that.

We have spent time thinking about the First Journey to Jerusalem and back again to Galilee and found it could be summed up (if we wished to sum it up) as 'Our Lord's Evaluation and Critique of His Nation's Worship and Service'. Now we come to the second of the journeys. Chapters 5 and 6 record him first going down to Jerusalem and then what happened back up north again. I submit to you that these two chapters present Christ to us, in the first place as the source of life (chapter 5) and then as the means of life (chapter 6).

#### **The Second Journey: Christ the source and means of life**

The Gospel as a whole, we remember, records certain signs that our Lord did. Of course he did many more than are here written in John, but it explicitly tells us that these signs are recorded 'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God' (20:31). That raises the question of what you mean by the terms 'the Christ' and 'the Son of God'. If you should happen to give a Gospel of John away to one of your unconverted friends in the hope that it should persuade him that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and he should ask you: 'What do those terms mean?' it would be helpful if you could begin to explain what John tells us they mean!

So, in these two chapters, John will tell us in part what the terms 'the Christ,' and 'the Son of God' mean. We can sum them up in this way. In chapter 5 John presents Christ as the source of life, just like God is the source of all life. Then in chapter 6 he presents Christ as the means of life.

## Understanding the terms

Previously I used the analogy of physical life to bring home what ‘the source of life’ and ‘the means of life’ mean. To get physical life we don’t first start by eating bread and butter. We get physical life as a gift at conception and then birth. It is a gift from a *source*. The immediate source is our parents; the ultimate source is God our Creator. But physical life received as a gift from a source has to be maintained constantly by bread and butter and other such things (according to your taste). It is not enough to have life from the source. You will need that life to be maintained by the *means* of life. And in chapter 6 John presents us with Christ as the ‘bread of life’ — the means of life.

Just to show that I am not arbitrarily imposing these labels on the two chapters, let’s look at chapter 5: ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself’ (v. 26). Those simple terms are profound. What does it mean to ‘have life in himself’?

It doesn’t mean: ‘as God is alive so Jesus is alive’. God has life in himself in the sense that he didn’t have to get life from any other source. He has life in *himself*. In that sense, we don’t have life in ourselves. We have to get our physical life from a source somewhere outside of ourselves. God doesn’t have to get his life from anywhere else; God has life in himself. So also here our Lord tells us he gave to ‘the Son also to have life in himself’. Christ is the source of life. The first chapter of John’s Gospel tells us the very same thing. In its introductory words it says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life . . . (1:1–4)

That is to say, he was the source of all life. And though there are multitudinous different forms of life in this universe, the claim is that he is its *source*. We shall see the implication of that for the gospel message as presently we come to study chapter 5, which emphasizes that Christ is the source of life.

In chapter 6 Christ presents himself as the means of life: ‘As the living Father . . .’ Now, notice the adjective. This is not John making it sound good by adding an odd adjective here and there or to show that he knew how to use them; it is significant: ‘As the *living* Father sent me, and I live [by reason of] the Father . . .’ (v. 57). The Father is the source of life. You notice how carefully he phrased himself in chapter 5. He didn’t just say, ‘I am the source of life’, but ‘the Father has given the Son to have life in himself.’ So now he declares that he lives by the Father, because of the Father, and draws the analogy that we who trust him and ‘feed on him’ (to use his phrase) shall live: ‘so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me’ (v. 57). We owe our ongoing Christian life to Christ. As he was in daily and eternal fellowship with the Father—he lived because of the Father—so we live because of him.

Now, lest you should think I am saying something very strange and doubtful, let me remind you of what Colossians says:

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is your life* appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (3:2–4)

In practical terms you can see how significant that is. It is not enough to come to Christ and receive life from him, and then say, ‘Thank you very much, Lord. You have given me eternal life. Now I shall not need you for the next sixty or seventy years that I live down here. I have got eternal life, and now I have other things to think about and to do. After all, I’ve got to make use of my years on earth and can’t always be praying. So, thank you for the gift, and I’ll meet you in Glory, Lord!’

That is a false concept. We don’t have any life apart from Christ. Christ *is* our life! Our Lord tells us straight in chapter 6: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you’ (v. 53). We have no independent source of life, for Christ is our life.

So that is the main lesson we shall draw from this section of John’s Gospel: Christ the source of life in chapter 5, and Christ the means of life in chapter 6.

### **The order in which the lessons are given is important**

It is an interesting thing to notice the order in which these two lessons are given to us. One of the first modern translations, which is now positively antique—somewhere about the 1920s or 30s it came about, was James Moffatt’s translation. It was an effort to put the Greek into modern language. Moffatt held, according to source theories current in his day, that in John’s Gospel, chapters 5 and 6 had somehow got muddled up, and they made no sense chronologically as they stand, and really, in the original, the contents of chapter 6 came first and those of chapter 5 came second. What a lot of nonsense that was! Shall I put it to you on physical terms again? Which came first, your conception and birth, or your eating bread and butter? John will have put these things in the order in which we find them.

This is important spiritually, because there are two grave mistakes made over this matter of Christ being our life. There are dear folks who want to please God. They think the way of salvation is to follow Thomas à Kempis, and meditate on Christ and love Christ and feed on Christ.<sup>10</sup> That sounds marvellous. If you ask them, ‘Are you saved? Do you have eternal life?’ No, they wouldn’t be sure. They are thinking that the way of salvation is to think about Christ and to try to be like Christ and have fellowship with Christ, in the hope that Christ will so improve them that eventually they might be accepted into God’s heaven. They are trying to fulfil John chapter 6 without having been through John chapter 5. You can’t feed on Christ until you have let Christ give you life.

Then there are those at the other extreme. They are so sure that once you have received Christ you can never be lost, that they think it is enough to come to Christ once and receive him, and whether you daily live with Christ or not in the end doesn’t matter since now you’re born again and on your way to heaven. It doesn’t matter, they say, because ‘On such and such a date and time I kneeled by my bed and received the Saviour, so what I have done since then

---

<sup>10</sup> Thomas à Kempis is known for his book, *The Imitation of Christ*.



doesn't really matter, because "once saved, always saved"! Such people need to see that chapter 5 had to be followed by chapter 6. Christ: the source of life; Christ: the means and maintainer of life.

We notice that chapter 5 begins with a miracle and chapter 6 begins with two miracles. We shall have to ask on each occasion: what do the miracles have to say, and what is the connection with the discussions that follow?

## **Christ the source of life**

Let us begin by looking at chapter 5 and the miracle recorded there.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. (vv. 2–5)

John is writing for people who perhaps had never been to Jerusalem, and therefore he needs to tell them what is in Jerusalem. Some translations say the people at the pool were 'sick'. That is true in the sense that 'sick' means 'ill'; but the Greek word literally means: 'to be weak, to be without strength'. It is the word that medics will know from such compound words as neurasthenia (a weakness of the neurones, or the nerves). You will notice that the particular illnesses that are mentioned here are disabilities: blind, lame and withered. These were weak people.

### **The troubling of the waters**

Some manuscripts of the New Testament insert at this point an explanation of what it was that troubled the water, and it explains that when the water was troubled those that got down first into the pool were healed. So when Christ asked the sick man if he wanted to be made whole, he answered him: 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me' (v. 7). Those manuscripts generally have that 'it was an angel that came down and troubled the waters'. But that explanation of what troubled the waters is, from a textual point of view, very doubtful, and most translations omit it, even John Nelson Darby's.<sup>11</sup>

We needn't discuss what it was that troubled the water. There have been those who have suggested that into this pool of Bethesda there was an inlet of water from another source that would have been highly charged mineral water. When it came, the water in the pool was troubled by this inlet, but the strength of whatever value there was in the chemicals would eventually dissipate. But again, that is speculation. Let's content ourselves with what we are

---

<sup>11</sup> Though better known for other reasons, Darby was, for his day, a very knowledgeable textual critic. He knew and could cite his manuscripts very well. In the larger edition of his English Translation he has footnotes in which he will tell you where he put certain things in because they were to be found in such manuscripts, and where he left other things out because they were not to be found in the better manuscripts; and so give you honestly the translation of the text. So if you wish to hold a different view from him he will offer you the manuscript evidence for you to make up your own mind. Since Darby's day, papyri galore have been discovered, and some of them are very early. It is a good and godly thing, if we reverence the word of God, to spend some time thinking about the manuscripts from which we get our printed Bibles, and their comparative worth.

told. The man had been there for thirty-eight years, trying to get in when the water was 'troubled'. He was too *weak* to use this means of healing.

Now, it is a fact that the Lord has in his mercy put into nature all sorts of means of healing. Amongst other things, there is a spa near Ballynahinch, Northern Ireland, and those who were ill would go on a pilgrimage to this spa and take the waters. There is another such thing in Bath, in England, where the Romans built a pool to contain the waters, and another in Harrogate. There are all sorts of such things in life, aren't there? You will see that dogs will eat certain grasses when they don't feel so good. There are all sorts of medicines, and indeed most of our medicines come from herbs and things that have their essence extracted and applied in pill form. It is the mercy of God.

Incidentally, it is not a mark of high spirituality that we neglect the means of healing. There have been times in the history of the Christian church that people have felt that if they were really spiritual they wouldn't go to a doctor, but just rely upon faith. But this has nothing to do with spirituality, any more than you may expect God to send down food from heaven and you just sit at the table and open your mouth, and it will fall through the ceiling! You have to go and get the stuff and cook it and eat it. So when it comes to the healing properties that are in our world, it is not spirituality to neglect them. Though I am not denying that God may be pleased sometimes to heal supernaturally.

So in the mercy of God there was this pool there and, according to the text, some people found benefit from it and were healed. The man's plight was such, however, that he couldn't use the means of healing. He was too weak.

### **The weakness that prevents us all**

So far then the literal miracle, but it seems to me justifiable to use it as a parable, because the very same word is used of us. It is one of the forms that sin takes, according to Romans 5. Sin takes many different forms: ungodliness, enmity with God and so forth, but one of them is weakness: 'while we were still weak . . . Christ died for the ungodly' (v. 6). Similarly Romans 8 says, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was *weak* through the flesh . . .' (v. 3 RV). That is precisely the word that is used here of these people. They were weak: blind, lame, withered.

Galatians tells us that if the law (that is, the Old Testament law of Moses) could have given life, then righteousness would have been by the law (3:21). But the law can't give you life. It is true that God's law is healthy, good and spiritual. If you follow its precepts it will guide you into healthy forms of living. But the law could never give you life in the sense of spiritual life, eternal life. Why not? Because we are too weak: 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh . . .'. It never could save us, therefore. We were too weak to use the means!

It is a dramatic and very true to life description here, isn't it? For when our Lord went to that man and knew that he had been there for thirty-eight years, trying to use this means of healing but never succeeding, he said to him, 'Would you like to be made whole?' (i.e. made well, complete), the man replied, 'I have no one to put me into the pool' (see 5:6-7). This is a vivid illustration of what many religiously minded people imagine Christ has come to do. They will agree with you that salvation is through Christ. When you examine what they mean, they are thinking what Christ has come to do is to help them keep the law as they should, so

that when it comes to the final judgment they might have a chance of passing it. And of course, so their thinking goes, you can't pronounce the result until the final judgment.

It is true in some sense of undergraduates. They have the very best of professional teachers to help them, as we know! And I can tell you from my experience that most of those teachers are keen on seeing these young and upcoming students get through their final exams. But you couldn't be absolutely certain. The tutors were there to help, but if the students didn't do the work they didn't get through!

People imagine Christ has come to do that, to give them a helping hand to get into the 'pool', to give them a helping hand to keep the law, and by so doing they will gradually improve. And though they will confess that at the moment they have not improved enough, they hope life will last long enough so that Christ will eventually be able to help them enough to get through the final judgment.

That is a fundamental misconception of what Christ has come to do! To put it in the terms of this incident, he hasn't come to give sinners a helping hand to get into the pool—to keep the law—and thus be saved. He is the source of life! And when the man said, 'I have no one to put me into the pool,' our Lord didn't reply, 'Well, I will, because I'm the strong Son of God, and I will give you immense help!' He said, in effect, 'Pool? I don't need any pool! Get up!' And the man got up and walked. It was instantaneous salvation, because Christ is the source of life.

*Christ's salvation does not imply antinomianism*

Now that day was the Sabbath day, John explains, when our Lord told the man to take up his bed and walk, and the Jews reacted to this. Now do notice once more that so often in the Gospel of John, the term 'the Jews' very often means the people who lived in Judaea, as distinct from Israelites who lived in Samaria or up in Galilee. These were those Jews then.

Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.' But he answered them, 'The man who healed me, that man said to me, "Take up your bed, and walk."' They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Take up your bed and walk"?' Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterwards Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.' (5:9–14)

Notice that little remark that John has recorded. Instantaneous salvation by Christ does not imply antinomianism. Antinomianism, as you know, is saying that the law doesn't matter, and you can break the law and it doesn't matter. There are many people who imagine that if you can be absolutely sure that you have received salvation from Christ and have eternal life, this would mean that sin doesn't really matter thereafter, and it doesn't matter how you behave. That is false, as the Epistles show, and so does our Lord's remark to this man: the fact that he had been cured didn't mean he was free now to go and sin again as much as he liked, which seems to imply that his physical paralysis had been the result of some physical sin. The man knew that it was Jesus. Notice on what ground it was he noted that, and he went and told the Jews (v. 15).

### Why Christ healed this man on the Sabbath

This matter will come up again when we read of our Lord giving sight to the blind man in chapter 9. He did it on the Sabbath. Why did he deliberately rub the Jews up the wrong way, when he could easily have done it on a Sunday or a Monday? The man had been there for thirty-eight years. In that sense, he wasn't what you would call a critical case. What would it have mattered if he had left him for another day? Why do it on the Sabbath instead of being 'user-friendly' and not offending anybody? He gives the reasons himself.

We have come from the account of the miracle, having first tried to understand it literally and then as a parable as well. Now we come to our Lord's explanation of why he did it on the Sabbath.

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working.' This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (5:15–18)

We notice the words: 'my Father is working until now' (v. 17). The Jews will take him up on that: 'He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God' (v. 18). I suspect that the Greek would be better translated by saying, 'my Father has been working and is still working now.'

If you are dating a young lady, and she agrees to meet you at 7:00 but then you don't turn up until 8:15, well, if she is French she will say to you, 'I am here since a long time!' — '*Je suis ici depuis longtemps!*' (I am here . . .). In English we wouldn't say that. An English lady would say, 'I have been here for a long time, and still am.' I think this is the same idiom in Greek, which is also in French. 'My father is working and has been working, has never ceased working right up to this point.'

But you may say, 'Doesn't Genesis 2 tell us that on the seventh day God rested from all his work that he had created?'

Yes, it does, and that is true. God ceased from all his work of special creation, but thank God he didn't stop the work of *maintaining* the creation that he had made!

You might say, 'Oh, that's automatic.'

No, it isn't. Hebrews says that our blessed Lord 'upholds the universe by the word of his power' (1:3). That doesn't mean that he upholds it because he shouts a command every now and again in a loud voice. He upholds things by 'the word of his power', by his powerful word—by his input of energy! 'In him all things hold together' (Col 1:17). He upholds all things, leading them to their designed conclusion. That word in Hebrews, 'upholds', is the Greek word for *carry*, our English word *bear*; but it often has the connotation that you carry something to its destination. Even so our Lord upholds the universe. From the very start God has been upholding the universe he has made. And thank God, having made the universe, he still upholds it, and from time to time redeems part of it.

And the work of redemption has to go on. Our Lord brought this point home to the Pharisees and said to them on another occasion when they were objecting to his having done

something on the Sabbath, 'Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?' (Luke 14:5). Of course that's what you would do, for these states of emergency, when human life is in danger, even the Jews would have agreed that you could break the Sabbath. So our Lord is now explaining why he did this on the Sabbath. His Father has been doing it all along. So if it comes to a miraculous healing to save your loved one, would God say, 'I would heal him, but this is the Sabbath so I must wait!' No, I think not: 'My father works, and I work.'

What the Jews picked up from it was not only that he had, according to them, broken the Sabbath; but he had called God his father, making himself equal with God. Our Lord doesn't deny the deduction, and now will state his equality with the Father in the next big paragraph. Then at the end of the chapter he will give the evidence that his claim is true. But let's stay for a moment with this notion of Sabbath.

### *The Sabbath*

What was the Sabbath *for*? Two accounts of the Sabbath are given: Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Exodus says that you shall keep the Sabbath 'unto the Lord'. It wasn't then simply that on the day of Sabbath they could rest, though rest was one of its purposes. It was that they kept the Sabbath unto the Lord. Whereas they worked six days of the week intent on their own work, on the Sabbath they ceased their own work so that they could concentrate their thoughts and thinking on the Lord.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exod 20:8-11)

God was providing a pattern of work and rest. That is a vastly healthy thing to remember. I have to remind myself of it now and again, to sit back and stop working; and then come to the awareness: 'Did you know that if I were to die today the world would carry on?' It's a shocking thought, isn't it? Absolutely shocking! The fact is that I didn't make the place. I didn't create the show! Even my work depends on God having made the universe, and me as well. What a burden lifts off our shoulders when we rest and take a Sabbath 'unto the Lord'. It was he that made it; he is ultimately responsible. He is ultimately responsible for me.

It is important to discover God as Creator. As I was growing up, my family and my assembly rightly emphasized to me God as *Redeemer*. That was wonderful. But as the years have gone by I have had to supplement it by coming to recognize God as my *Creator*. Therein is the basic gospel. The Sabbath was meant to be kept 'unto the Lord'.

Then of course Deuteronomy gives the other reason for keeping the Sabbath.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.  
(5:6)

You once were slaves in Egypt, he says, and God has redeemed you! And it is very important to sit back from all our work, even our spiritual work (our 'work for the Lord', as we call it) and remember that it all stems from God as our Redeemer. There wouldn't be any work for us to do at the spiritual level if God hadn't started it all by his redemption.

So we need to make time in life for God to 'loom large', and for us to come to rely upon him and consider his glory and his majesty and his strength. For 'God shows his love for us in that while we were still weak, Christ died for the ungodly' (see Rom 5:6, 8).

In healing this man on the Sabbath, Christ wasn't giving an example merely of the good works that you should do. He was demonstrating himself to be 'Son of the Father'. He is about to explain to them, 'as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself' (John 5:26). He is the source of the universe, as much as God the Father is the source of the universe, and he has come now to save us.

### **Equal with the Father**

So far, then, we have had the miracle and thought of it literally and then of its implications as an enacted parable. Secondly, we considered our Lord's explanation for doing it on the Sabbath. Now we are going to think about the great and profound statement from the lips of our Lord of his equality with the Father: 'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (5:17). The Jews had already been persecuting him, indeed were trying to kill him, but this statement increased the intensity, because 'he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God' (v. 18).

Instead of retracting that, or saying, 'You've got the wrong idea, I am not claiming to be equal with God', there now follows a paragraph in which our Lord states and restates his equality with the Father. So let us take up at least the beginning of what he says, and then we can consider the rest in our next session:

the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. (v. 19)

This is statement one, but now look at statement two:

For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise [or, in like manner]. (v. 19)

Now, that is a very balanced statement, taken as a whole. First, he says: 'The Son can do nothing of himself', or 'of his own accord'. Within the Godhead it is not the Son who is the initiator: it is the Father who initiates. But you must balance that by the next statement: 'For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.' And he does not do these things as a sort of pale reflection, as when your five year old sees you with the bonnet of your car up to repair the engine, and so he lifts the bonnet of his toy car, and he's mending his car too! You can see the analogy, but he is not repairing it in the same way as you are repairing your car, is he? But, whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise—'in like manner'. If God makes the sun to rise, so the Son makes the sun to rise. And how is that? The words of the next verse would save us from mere philosophical analysis of the Trinity. There is no jealousy within the Trinity, each eyeing the other in case one should get out of place: 'the Father loves

the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing' (v. 20). The Father has no secrets from the Son. 'And greater works than these . . .' (greater than curing a lame man at the pool) 'will he show him . . .' (notice the ongoing 'showing' by the Father to the Son), 'so that you may marvel'.

As we study Scripture today and in the days to come, do get ready to be surprised—to be marvelling! I know there is a lot of tough work to be done in the study of Scripture, but don't count it beneath your dignity to let other folks see that you *marvel* at the wonders of Scripture, that you *marvel* at the person of Christ. There is surprise upon surprise! And how do you suppose you are going to endure eternity, when a surprise will meet you round every corner of every street as to the person of Christ, and who Jesus is. 'Greater works than these will he show him, *so that you may marvel.*'

So there is the general statement of his equality with the Father. Christ will now proceed to expand that and draw attention to two particular areas that are relevant to this particular situation.

## The Second Journey

### *Christ the Source of Life – Part 2*

#### **Our studies so far**

Before we proceed, let me just say a word about the notes you have which list certain features of John 5 and 6.<sup>12</sup> This is not meant to be an analysis of the contents of those two chapters. It is simply a way of indicating to you that these two chapters have a lot of ideas in common. Yet, at the same time, though they have ideas in common, the ideas generally put across two different points of view. For that reason I have listed some of those details on that page.

Look at each list. In chapter 5 Christ declines to use the means of healing, namely the pool, and cures the man simply by his word. Yet, in the first miracle in chapter 6, Christ goes out of his way to use the means of feeding the crowd. First of all, he asks the apostles how they are going to get enough food for this company. Though he himself knew what he was going to do, he first asked them to suggest a solution. When it was clear that the need exceeded the means they had, someone, probably jokingly, observed that there was a little boy there with the five loaves and two fishes and added 'but what are they for so many?' (v. 9). And to their surprise, our Lord took that altogether inadequate means, but he used that means.

So you will see a deliberate contrast in the two miracles. In one he doesn't use the means. That is not just a detail: it emphasizes the point that chapter 5 is making. Christ is the source of life: he doesn't need to use means. But in chapter 6 he is the means of life, and he uses the means of the five loaves and two fish, even though as Son of God he multiplies those means beyond all expectation.

In other words, I am trying to persuade you that now and again you should look at Scripture not just as a succession of details (though there's no harm in doing that) but to read it coherently. Because, yes, these two chapters present to us our Lord, but a very balanced view of our Lord, as being both the source of life—not needing to use any means; and the means of life who does use means. And that is not a contradiction but a part of the wonders of our Lord.

### **Christ's great statement of equality with God**

So now in chapter 5 we have had the initial miracle, and we have thought about it literally, and then we have seen its spiritual application. We considered the fact that our Lord did it

---

<sup>12</sup> See the notes on the Second Journey in the Appendix.



deliberately on the Sabbath and how he then explained why he did it on the Sabbath and that what he was doing was not wrong. Now we come to the great statement.

The Jews had accused him of calling God his Father, making himself equal with God. Far from saying, 'No, you are mistaken, I didn't mean that,' our Lord proceeds to make statements that emphasize (more than perhaps any others you will find anywhere in the surrounding context) his absolute equality with the Father. He is answering the Jews that were standing before him, of course. So in 5:19–29 we have the Lord's statement of his equality with the Father. In 5:30–47 we have the evidence for his claim—the witness that his claim was true.

We have already considered 5:19–20 and the tremendous statement that, on the one hand, the Son can do nothing of himself; it is the Father who initiates. Nonetheless, on the other hand, whatever it is he sees the Father doing, these things the Son also does in like manner. The relationship is one of love between the Father and the Son. From the point of view of the Father: he will show Christ greater works than he had done until that time. Speaking in the context of chapter 5, Christ says, this is 'so that you may marvel'.

### **Life and judgment**

Now we come to specify two areas in particular in the following verses. These two areas are stated twice over. They are the areas of *life* (or, life-giving) and *judgment*. You will see those two topics raised in verses 21 and 22, on the basic theme of equality of the Son with the Father:

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.  
(v. 21)

Notice the final phrase. The Son gives life 'to whom he will'. The mystery of the Godhead goes beyond us, therefore we always have to be careful what we say in this area. But while the Son can do nothing 'of himself' (v. 19), yet when it comes to giving life it says here that 'he gives life to whom he will.' He is sovereign in his action. So then in the area of life, the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so, and in the same way, the Son also gives life to whom he will.

This is followed by the question of judgment:

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. (vv. 22–23)

It is obvious how our Lord is responding to the criticism of the Jews who said that he was making himself equal with God. 'Precisely so,' says Christ. 'I am equal with the Father, by the Father's own desire and purpose and loving gift!'

So then, he speaks of equality with the Father in these two areas, and we ought perhaps to ponder a question for just a moment. Why put those two areas of life and judgment together?

*The combination of the two areas*

Ultimately, as the book of Revelation tells us, there will be a final judgment. There will be those whose names are written in the Book of Life and those whose names are not written in the Book of Life. Christ will be the judge. It will be the difference between eternal life and eternal death, not eternal extinction or eternal annihilation but *death*—perishing. This is the area of the final judgment. Ponder it therefore, because Christ is the source of *life*.

Now notice the motivation for giving judgment to the Son:

The Father . . . has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. (vv. 22–23)

And to enforce it he puts it the other way round:

Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. (v. 23)

It is in the context of our Lord's statement of his equality with God. We thought earlier of the purpose of the Father: 'that you may marvel'. Now it is a question of 'honouring'. It is a perilous thing indeed to deny the deity of the Lord Jesus. And of all the many people who need to be reminded of that, it is the academic theologians in particular who need to be. If you don't honour the Son, in the context of this chapter, you don't honour the Father. It is a question of honouring the Son '*even as they honour the Father*'. God is not offended when we honour his dear Son in the same terms as we honour the Father; it is the purpose of God that we should.

**Enlarging on the two areas of equality with the Father**

So now we have had our Lord's equality with the Father stated in the two realms of life-giving and of judgment. Now our Lord enlarges upon those two areas, and in the same order.

*A further statement about life*

First of all, it is the question of life, of life-giving:

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (vv. 24–26)

So here we see at once that the phrase 'the dead' is to be understood as 'spiritually dead': 'The hour comes, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' And, as many gospel preachers have said, the hour for getting eternal life is now: 'The hour comes, and now is' when *the spiritually dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.

He specifies three things about that living. 'Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me':

1. 'has eternal life';

2. 'does not come into judgement' (presumably in the sense of condemnation); and
3. 'has passed out of death to life' (as though they were two domains—the area of the dead, and the area of the living).

This is a magnificent thing! You might ask how our Lord can say this. Then we see the twin themes:

1. the Father has given to him to give life (v. 21);
2. the Father has made him judge (v. 22).

The wonder of our gospel is that Jesus is the final judge! Come to him today, believe on him, in the sense of these verses, and he can tell you that you have eternal life; you have passed out of death into life; you will never come into condemnation. How has he any right to say it? Well, he is the final judge! From him there is no appeal. You can't go behind Christ and appeal to God. What a magnificent gospel it is! Jesus is the one to whom judgment is given, the final judgment will be in his hands, and he can give you his verdict now. It is amazing, is it not? It does away with that popular notion that you can't know the verdict until the final judgment. Nonsense! We can know it now.

Notice, then, the order of events:

Truly, Truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (v. 25)

There may well come occasions in your life when you are thinking about diverse doctrines of Christianity. It is good that we use our minds and think them through. There is a version of Christianity that says that the unregenerate man is so absolutely dead he couldn't hear anything. And so Christ first has to give him life, and then the man can begin to hear. That isn't the order of this verse, is it? It is: 'when the dead will hear' first, and then 'those who hear will live'. I am personally gratified to know that our Lord put it that way, and not the other way, round. He didn't say, 'those that receive life shall hear the voice of the Son of God.' He said: 'The hour is coming . . . when the dead will . . .

1. 'hear the voice of the Son of God'; and
2. 'those who hear shall live'.

It is not that the dead shall receive life from Christ, and those that live shall hear. It is the other way round. So, how can our Lord say this? It is because of what he says in verse 26: 'For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.' It is because Christ is a source of life, as is the Father.

#### *A further statement on judgment*

And he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement. (vv. 27–29)

Those who are dead will one day hear his voice because he is the judge at the final judgment. He does not now say, 'Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming *and is already* when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice'. No, he is talking now about the physically dead and the final judgment when the graves will give up the dead in them, and the seas shall give up the dead that are in them (Rev 20:12–13). *They* shall hear his voice and come forth.

That, then, is the statement of our Lord's equality with the Father, and the two major respects in which he has equality with the Father. That is not to say there are no other areas, but here are two major areas in which he has equality with the Father. The question that naturally arises, and which our Lord now faces, is what evidence has he to show that what he says is true? Has he any witness to him, or do we have to accept it just because he says so?

### **Christ's evidence for the truth of his great statement**

Notice what Christ says next: 'I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge . . .'. Though the Father has given him all authority to execute judgment, once more, as with the miracles, he cannot do anything 'of himself'. So he doesn't do miracles of himself, and he doesn't judge of himself: 'as I hear, I judge', he says, and he continues, 'and my judgement is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me' (5:30). So there is oneness with the Father, and it is the Father who takes the initiative.

What do I mean by that? Well, in verse 26 it says 'as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.' It wouldn't do to put it the other way round: 'as the Son has life in himself, so he has granted the Father to have life in himself.' No, of course not. Within the Godhead, the Father takes the initiative. The Son is the perfect expression of the Father. So it is in the case of judgment, 'My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.' He is no arbitrary, self-appointed dictator; he is seeking the Father's will in all that he judges and is subject to the Father's will. And so it is also when it comes to evidence: 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true' (v. 31 RV).

### **What Christ says about himself**

We are talking here about evidence—witness—as in a court case. The judge will call upon witnesses to give their testimony as to the truth or falsehood of the charges brought against the prisoner in the dock. This is the way in which our Lord is using the word *witness* or *testimony* (or *evidence*, if you like) when he says: 'If I bear witness of myself, my testimony is not *valid*' (v. 31, own trans.).

#### *Truth as accuracy and truth as validity*

The Greek word for 'true' and more particularly the Hebrew word for 'truth' carry many connotations. According to the Old Testament law, when it comes to the question of witness in a court of law, a man's own witness is not valid by itself. He may well be speaking the truth, but you must not, for instance, put anyone to death on the witness of one person, according to the Old Testament (Deut 17:6). And the general principle is:

A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. (Deut 19:15)

There must be plurality of witness. And here our Lord says what he repeats in the discussion in John 8: 'If I bear witness about myself, my witness is not valid'. It would be perfectly true and correct; it would not be false, but it would not be *valid*. 'It is another that bears witness of me; and I know that the [testimony] which he witnesses of me is true' (v. 32 RV). And that other, of course, is God. For time's sake I merely refer you to the discussion in chapter 8:

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' So the Pharisees said to him, 'You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true [meaning: 'valid']'. Jesus answered, 'Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true [in the sense of being not false—accurate], for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true [valid]. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.' (vv. 12–18)

There are two witnesses, therefore. But notice the different connotations of the word 'true'. In the first sense of the word, he says, 'If I bear witness of myself my witness is not valid', that is, not legally valid. It doesn't mean it is false. In chapter 8, he puts the other side: 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is *accurate*; it is true to the fact'. It may not be valid in a law court, but it is actually true to the fact, 'for I know where I came from and where I am going.'

I illustrate this to my own mind by thinking of people living in Europe in the year 1400 who would have been oblivious of the fact that Australia and New Zealand existed. In Ipswich where I was born, we have a rather ancient house (called the Ancient House), and in the second floor it has bay windows. Underneath the glass, the plaster is beautifully sculpted into forms and figures, and the four big bays of this building represent the *four* continents of the earth. It was built before they discovered the others!

Suppose, then, you are someone living in Britain in the 1400s. A stranger comes along and the English inform him that if you stand looking at the sun at midday you can be sure the sun had come up on your left and will go down on your right; it rises in the east, which is to your left, and sets in the west, which is to your right. And the stranger says, 'That isn't so in my country. In Australia, if you stand facing the sun at midday, then you can be sure that the sun had come up on your right and will go down on your left.'

Would you have been right to believe him? He's the only one who says it. The answer is, of course, you would be right to believe him. And he would perhaps have given the same reply as our Lord did: 'It is true, for I know where I come from and where I am going.'

Our Lord's witness was *true* in the factual sense. It wasn't necessarily legally *valid*, if you are going to take the tight requirements of a court of law. And so with the Jews on the streets of Jerusalem our Lord is facing the facts as they are, but they are not going to accept it just

because he says it. They will want to know, 'What evidence, what witness do you have to support your claim?' And our Lord admits the actual situation, 'If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not valid'. It is not true *in that sense*. I'm sorry language is so complicated, but there you are! The word 'true' in Scripture can have different connotations.

### Witnesses to Christ

There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. (5:32)

That is the Father. Christ is going to come back to that later:

But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. (v. 36)

But meanwhile he quotes another witness:

You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. (vv. 33–35)

A very valuable witness he was. He was the voice in the wilderness, crying 'Prepare the way of the Lord' (Mark 1:3, cf. Isa 40:3). He was appointed by God to be the doorkeeper, so to speak, of the fold of Israel who would recognize and introduce the Messiah to the people of God (see John 10). He was God's appointed witness. It was very valuable for them to have someone other than the Lord Jesus to stand there and, in the name of God and as a prophet vindicated by God, to give his witness to Christ.

It is useful for your unconverted and atheist friends to quote yourself as a witness: 'I know Jesus is true.'

'How do you know?' they ask.

'Well I was a sinner involved in all kinds of sins that were ruining me, and I was in prison and so on, then I heard the gospel and Christ saved me. I know it's true!'

That kind of thing is a very powerful witness, isn't it? But if I were to push you and say, 'What do you deduce from that? And where does this power that changed you come from?'

You would say, 'From Jesus.'

'Oh, I see. And how do you know that Jesus is the Son of God?'

What am I saying? Well, look at what our Lord is saying here:

John . . . has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. (vv. 33–34)

You will want to ponder it. Ultimately, because Jesus is the Son of God, because he is God incarnate, he is his own evidence. The witness he receives ultimately is not from man. Let me illustrate what I think this means. One of these days, when you get home to heaven, amidst

all the glory of archangels attending to you and being a little bewildered by all the glory, you might say, 'I wonder which of all these is God.'

Well, you could ask Michael the archangel: 'Tell me, which one of these is God?'

But if you are dependent on Michael the archangel to tell you who God is you'd feel a little sorry for God, wouldn't you? And what authority would Michael have for telling you who is God and who isn't, anyway? He is a creature of God, so he is not independent of God. In that sense, there is no independent witness to God in the whole universe. By definition, there isn't. Because God is the Creator of everything there is nothing independent, in that sense, to give you a piece of independent witness and advice. God is his own evidence.

That doesn't mean that it's no good giving your testimony, or that you're not to cite the creation around you as evidence for God's existence, or that you dismiss John the Baptist as altogether unnecessary. But ultimately God is his own evidence. 'And so am I,' says Christ. He said of John,

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. (vv. 35–36)

So his witness is the witness of the Father, because the Father has given him works to do. God is the ultimate witness, and he has given the Saviour works to do, and the works bear witness that the Father has sent him. So the works bear witness.

And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. (v. 37)

Yes, he bore witness to him on notable occasions—at his baptism to start with; at the grave of Lazarus; and again, in chapter 12 of this very Gospel (vv. 27–33).

### **The charge against his audience**

Now comes the charge to the Jews that stood by him:

His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you. (v. 37)

Remember that John has been telling us that our Lord is in conversation with *Jews*, not with men of the world. They are highly religious Jews, and they are condemning him because he broke the Sabbath. And when our Lord talks about his Father working and he himself also working, they are outraged, because he appears to them to be claiming equality with the Father. Well he was equal with the Father! But to them that is blasphemous. So our Lord is now talking about the witness that he has—his works and the Father's voice. They have the works. Why can't they see the works and what the works imply as to who Jesus is?

He reminds them that they have not seen God's form at any time. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the Israelites that when God appeared to them at Sinai, 'You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice' (4:12). And they are warned not to attempt

to make any form of God, that is, any idol to resemble the form of God. At that time Israel heard the voice of God but they saw no form. Now our Lord is saying to these people that, not only have they not seen the form, they haven't heard his voice, not in that physical way that Israel heard it at Mount Sinai.

But he further says, 'You do not have his word abiding in you.' That is a charge to Jews, to religious Jews! He is not talking to atheists. The seriousness of the charge rests on the fact that it was Jews that he was talking to. They are accusing him of blasphemy for claiming equality with God. 'Gentlemen,' he says, 'the word of God doesn't abide in you. How can you stand there accusing me of blasphemy, when you haven't even God's word abiding in you?'

You might be tempted to think that of certain people whom you meet, who are highly religious and not converted, and are antagonistic to the gospel. For all their religiosity, they don't have the word of God abiding in them.

And our Lord gives them the evidence that they don't: 'You do not believe the one whom he has sent' (v. 38). If Jesus is the Son of the Father, equal with the Father, if he is God incarnate, and you don't believe him, then you don't believe God. How could it be that these folks don't believe God? They don't have his word abiding in them. For religious people this is a very serious charge.

### **An analysis of unbelief**

Jesus was claiming equality with the Father. So how could it have been that local, highly religious Jews didn't believe him? Here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You must remember that multitudes of our Lord's contemporaries, who actually saw him walking along the street and heard him preach, did not believe him to be true. You must therefore ask why they didn't believe him to be true. How can you in this 21<sup>st</sup> century say you have got it the right way round, when his contemporaries, for the most part, didn't believe him? Now our Lord turns to analyse and to state why, in spite of the witness that the Father had given him of the works to do, they didn't believe.

#### **The word of God was not in them**

Why didn't they believe? Because they did not have the word of God in them. He says,

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. (v. 39)

It is true that the Greek could be translated as an imperative: 'search the Scriptures', but I don't think it is an imperative; I think it is stating the fact. These religious Jews searched the Scriptures diligently! If you read the Talmud and other such Jewish literature, you will find various Jewish rabbis saying that if you study the Scriptures long enough you will have eternal life—by dint of studying Scripture. They thought their massive learning of Scripture and their interpretation of it was the means of eternal life: that you have eternal life by the sheer dint of studying Scripture.

You say, 'But wait a minute, we give away Gospels of John, and we tell people that if they want eternal life they should read and study this Gospel!'



Yes, but it isn't the study that merits the eternal life. The word of God presents the Lord Jesus and calls upon you to believe, but you don't get eternal life by just studying it and that's all. You have to take the next step and believe!

Listen to our Lord: 'You search the Scriptures because you think that *in them* you have eternal life.' And that is not true. Now don't misunderstand what I am saying. I am not denying that Scripture is the inspired word of God. 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life,' as we shall read in 6:63. But here, these Pharisees studied Scripture because they thought that in just studying the Scripture they got eternal life. That is not true! 'It is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life', says Christ (vv. 39–40).

When I first came to Northern Ireland there was a preacher, and a very entertaining preacher he was. He was a very theological preacher, perhaps more theological than many of the others who preached. He knew his doctrine, but he had a quaint manner of putting things. I learned from him the following analogy. If you should come to me by a roadside in the middle of the country and see me embracing a signpost that says on it: 'Belfast', you might stop and greet me: 'Lovely day, isn't it?'

'Oh, yes.'

'Are you quite well?'

'Yes.'

'What are you doing?'

'Well, I've got Belfast here, and I've been measuring it up. Belfast is a foot and a half long and is composed of these signs, these letters. And I've got Belfast. Isn't it beautiful?' I say as I hug the signpost.

Would you attempt to explain to a man who has got that far into mental decay that he doesn't have Belfast but a pointer to Belfast?

Our Lord is saying: 'You are studying Scripture as if in them they had eternal life.' Notice the term *in*. Christ is the source of life—*in him* is life. In that sense, it is not in Scripture. 'Scripture is what points to me!' Christ says. 'If you want eternal life you will have to come to *me* that you might have life! And you will not come to me.' Therein is the trouble.

We may not be in the selfsame danger, but sometimes we do have to remind ourselves that the important thing is our relationship to the God who is beyond Scripture. This is his inspired word, yes. We shall hear Christ in the very next chapter say, 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (6:63). But we must distinguish between treating Scripture as a book, the mere study of which is eternal life; and Scripture as the living word of God that points us to Christ so that we might form a union with him.

### **The love of God was not in them**

Look now at what he says next: 'I do not receive glory from people' (v. 41). What does that mean? Well, if I might put it into simple language, he was saying, 'I am not trying to win your vote, gentlemen. In talking as I am, I am not anxious to get you and the majority on my side. I am not canvassing your vote. My person, my honour and my reputation don't depend on you.'

Notice the second phrase, 'But I know that you do not have the love of God within you' (v. 42). It is not merely that they don't have the word of God in them, but they don't have the *love* of God in them! For if they had the love of God in them, then they would love the one whom the Father had sent. 'I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me' (v. 43). That is extraordinary. It shows that they did not have the love of the Father in them, because the Son is the perfect representation of the Father. He continues, 'If another comes in his own name, you will receive him' (v. 43). They will indeed; and one day they will do so in a very big way as 2 Thessalonians 2 indicates. Another shall come, parading himself above all that is called God and is worshipped, and apostate Israel will welcome him.

### **They did not seek God's glory**

'How can you believe . . .' he asks (v. 44). Again I must be careful, lest my prejudices lead me to extreme statements. I said before, let me say it again, the order of events in salvation is:

1. The dead hear the voice of the Son of God; and
2. hearing they live.

It is not that people are so dead in trespasses and sins that first of all Christ has to give them life, and they that live then manage to hear. It is the other way round: first the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear live. So here when it says, 'How can you believe', notice that the reason is not because God hasn't elected them, and therefore it is impossible for them to believe. Do notice the reason given:

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (v. 44)

That is what made belief impossible for them. They sought glory from men. It wasn't merely (what nonetheless was true to the fact) that in many of their rabbinical gatherings it became a contest for who was the best at explaining this detail and that detail. If, in the end, a young chap was able to outshine the rabbi who was the chief and acknowledged leader of the group and could puzzle him and stump him, and he himself had the answer, eventually that young man took his place as the leading rabbi. It was very much a question of competition in theological and biblical study. But in addition to that, there was the power of the established view—of the establishment. 'You receive glory from one another, but the glory that comes from the only God, that you don't seek.'

In theology there is a perpetual danger of people being afraid of the establishment view. If you dare say that you believe in the virgin birth, you are therefore marked down as being sub-standard intellectually, because there is an establishment view.

It happens in the realm of science. Many a scientist working in a very narrow field (as understandably scientists must do to start with in order to attempt to do something new or to make a discovery) does not therefore have to stand up and be counted as to whether he believes in the God-Creator or in theistic evolution. He keeps quiet because, in those circles, to come right out and say that you believe in a Creator would go straight against the establishment view. As it is in science, so also it is in theology.

‘How can you believe, when . . .’ These are the impediments to belief: things that make it impossible for some people to believe. It is not that they are not elect, but ‘the glory that comes from the only God’, that they don’t seek. It is more important that they should adhere to the establishment view and get the honour and respect that comes from it.

### **They did not believe the writings of Moses**

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. (v. 45)

I repeat it; these were religious Jews. Do please remember they were not atheists. They studied Moses day after day, night after night, and set their hope on Moses. Now our Lord says,

If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (vv. 46–47)

That comes echoing down in Christendom, even to the academic study of Scripture. ‘If you don’t believe Moses, how will you believe my words?’ Christ asks. In the realm of the academic study of Scripture there is unfortunately a lot of unbelief in Moses.

### **A summary of the first half of the Second Journey**

So what have we had in chapter 5? Christ is the source of life. A miracle to start with, and we saw its literal meaning. There was the means of healing God had given, but some people were too weak to take advantage of the means, and this man in particular. Christ comes to him, and the man thinks that Christ will perhaps give him a helping hand to get down into the pool. Christ says, ‘Nonsense, man. I don’t need any pool. I don’t need any means.’ He just speaks the word, because he is the source of life.

So he doesn’t use the means. And we noticed the application of it to the great fact of salvation. Christ is the source of life; he gives us eternal life by his word, not by any means that we use.

Then we thought about his explanation of why he did it on the Sabbath. It was no accident. He was the perfect representative of the Creator, and just as the Sabbath was there to remind people to cease from their own works and look to the Creator, so now he himself is doing the task. He does this miracle that he has been given to do by the Lord himself, that men should come to see who he was: equal with the Father. He says, ‘My Father has been working all these centuries, and I work.’ He is engaged in the work of maintaining and in the work of redeeming.

Then some great statements of his equality with the Father, and in particular in the two realms: life-giving, and judgment.

Finally, in this chapter we have had the evidence for his claim. There is the ‘subsidiary evidence’, as you might call it, of people like John the Baptist that God appointed to witness to Christ. It is very helpful and necessary and good but, in the end, God is his own evidence. Logically it must be so; there is nothing independent of God. And, seeing that Jesus is the Son

of God, then Christ is his own evidence. We need to grasp that. On the other hand, because he is one with the Father, the Father has given him works to do, and these works demonstrate him to be the Son of God.

Why couldn't people believe? I keep on repeating this because it is important: he is speaking to religious Jews and not to atheists. But for all their religion and study of the Old Testament they do not have the word of God in them, and they have no love of God in them.

You say, 'That wasn't true of every Jew, was it?'

Well, certainly not. This very Gospel is going to tell you that there were others: his 'own sheep' (see John 10). When he entered the fold, introduced by John the Baptist—the doorkeeper—and began to speak, his sheep heard his voice! There were sheep galore: the Marthas and Marys of this world, and the Andrews and the Nathanaels, and Peter and John and James—there were multitudes! They heard his voice and recognized the true shepherd. But there were a lot of religious people, such as the ones here, who didn't recognize his voice and considered him to be a blasphemer. Our Lord details to them the reasons behind their unbelief: they don't have the word of God in them; they don't have the love of God preeminent. They search Moses, but Moses is the one who points to Christ. If they had read their Moses the right way round and the right side up, they would have seen it: Moses spoke of him. You remember that was the subject of the conversation with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who were going home disillusioned. They thought of him as a political deliverer, and he had failed them. He had let himself be crucified. They were going home absolutely disappointed and disillusioned and our Lord said to them:

'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself . . . They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?' (Luke 24:25–27, 32)

If an old man may have a little word in your ear: don't neglect your Old Testament. And particularly rejoice and expound those parts that speak of the coming Messiah, because when believers see it they will see it is the word of God. Allow me a personal word in this regard. I have many times in the course of my life expounded the tabernacle, in simple fashion, even to atheists in Russia. It is a marvellous tool to use with atheists. It is a marvellous tool also to use with Roman Catholics, for various reasons. But what has interested me is when I have been expounding some part of the tabernacle before a Christian congregation and watched their faces (a preacher does occasionally look at the congregation, and he studies their faces). At times, when the Holy Spirit takes something from the Old Testament and it evidently speaks of Christ, you can see it come over their faces. It's not just that they gain some more truth. You can see the imprint of the Holy Spirit: 'That's the word of God!'

In doing that you have done a marvellous thing. You have helped a believer to see that this is the living word of God, and it points to Christ. And you have built into them a tremendous foundation for faith.

## The Second Journey

### *Christ the Means of Life – Part 1*

In two shorter sessions I aim to try to get across the major ideas of chapter 6 of the Gospel of John, though not all of the detail. We have already noticed from chapter 5 that our Lord is presented as the source of life, whereas in chapter 6 he is presented as the means of life. In chapter 5 the discussion is introduced by one miracle—the healing of the weak man at the Pool of Bethesda. Here in chapter 6, the discussion is introduced not simply by one miracle but by two. Since both miracles are significant for the understanding of the discussion, we would be wise to begin by considering their significance.

#### **The feeding of the five thousand and its significance**

The first miracle is what is often called the feeding of the five thousand. We have already noticed that in this miracle our Lord deliberately goes out of his way to use *means*. He could have said a prayer and the bread could have come down from heaven. But, no, he first of all asked his disciples for their opinion and what means would suffice. Then he took the absurdly small amount of five loaves and two small fish from the young boy and used it to feed the multitude. It is a thing to be observed in passing: how does it come that the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, our blessed Lord himself, whose work it is to regenerate and to save, should at times use us as his means of extending the bread of life to others?

#### **Against the backdrop of the Passover**

We should then notice that John tells us that ‘the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand’ (6:4). It is interesting, because in chapter 5 we are told that our Lord goes up to a feast, but we are not told what feast it was. Oceans of ink have been used by biblical scholars trying to ascertain what the feast was in chapter 5, to which the Lord went. My simple answer would be that if it were necessary for us to know, the Holy Spirit would have told us. But we *are* told in chapter 6 that the feast of the Jews, the Passover, was at hand. We are not told that Jesus went to it. And in chapter 6 we are told that we are back north in Galilee, not in Jerusalem. Why, then, does John tell us that the Passover was near at hand? He tells us that because the Passover will form a very helpful background to the discussion that is to follow.

At the Passover, Israel was delivered from the wrath of the destroying angel by the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on their doorposts and lintels. Then the people went out and were saved by the power of God at the Red Sea. Thereafter, as they went for the forty years through the wilderness, provision was made for them of daily food in the form of the manna

that came down from heaven. It came down six days of the week and on the seventh they did not get any, but on the Friday they had to collect twice as much so that there would be enough for the Sabbath day.

So we think of Passover in chapter 6, of the journey that Israel took across the wilderness, and how God gave them manna from heaven to eat. The Jews themselves remind our Lord of this:

So they said to him, 'Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."' (vv. 30–31)

Our Lord replies to them eventually by saying, 'But I am the true bread' (see v. 32). So he is not only the fulfilment of that prototype of the manna sent down from heaven; he is the actual bread itself. So then we perceive that the feeding of the five thousand with literal bread was a miraculous sign pointing to him as the bread of life. It is interesting to notice therefore the use of the word 'sign' here in chapter 6.

### **An enacted parable**

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. (vv. 1–2)

Having fed the multitude, he went up a mountain, and his disciples went into a boat to cross the sea. He eventually joined them. On the next day the crowd, wondering where he had gone, sought and found him (vv. 22–25). Our Lord replied to them:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. (v. 26)

Now notice that. That is a very nice and exact distinction. They had witnessed the miracle—a sign in that sense. They had seen him feed the multitude with such slender means as the five loaves and two fish, and they followed him. But, as our Lord pointed out, the reason they followed him was not because they had seen the *significance* of the sign. They followed him because their stomachs had been filled! And they were hoping for another stomach full.

Our Lord says, 'You sought me then, not because you saw the sign.' But what does he mean? Surely they had seen the sign. Well, no they hadn't. A sign of what? It stands almost to reason that if they had been near enough to our Lord to see him take the loaves and the fish, and somehow that they were multiplied in his hands, they would have come round to asking themselves the question: 'Whose hands are these? Who could this possibly be in whose hands five loaves and two fish are so multiplied as to feed five thousand?'

The physical miracle therefore, was a sign that pointed to *him*! If you didn't see it pointed to him, in order to raise the question: 'Who and what is he?' then you haven't seen the sign. That is, you haven't seen its significance. Miracles are there as *wonders* to call people's attention. The Greek uses the word *teras* for it: a wonder that calls people's attention to it.

'Sign' is used by John to show that the physical miracles were meant to be signs pointing to Jesus Christ.

That becomes important if an unbeliever mocks you by saying, 'You don't believe the story of Jesus feeding the multitude, do you? Well, if that is true, then why doesn't he keep on feeding the multitudes? There are millions of poor, starving people. Why doesn't he give himself to feeding the poor?'

Of course, we Christians have a duty to feed the poor where we can; and a lot of people would be content if the church did no more than to feed the poor and heal the sick.

'That is true Christianity,' they say, 'not all this preaching!'

But wait a minute. To see Jesus feeding the poor and the hungry and to miss the sign of whom it spoke—the giver of eternal life—is, in the end, to find that earth's food ends you in hopeless disaster.

This is a personal universe! It is God that gives us our daily bread. If we take the bread and miss the giver, it is disastrous. For our daily bread is but one of his love gifts that points us to him. So then it is easy to see that the sign of feeding the five thousand, though a miracle itself, was also a parable pointing to our Lord Jesus as the bread of life.

### **The framework of the chapter**

The Jews then ask him for a sign:

Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' (vv. 30–31)

Jesus replied to them that it wasn't Moses but his Father who had given them that bread:

Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. (vv. 32–33)

Then they said to him: 'Sir, give us this bread always' (v. 34) and he says to them: 'But I am the bread!'

I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (v. 35).

And then he points out the parallel. They said that the manna came from heaven: 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'

'Well,' he says, 'I have come down from heaven as the bread of life!' (see vv. 31, 35, 38).

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven' (v. 41).

They found that almost impossible to stomach! What did he mean? So they found fault with him. This was the first of their murmurings. When he had explained that, there came a second murmuring:

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.' (vv. 52–53)

He not only came down from heaven; he went to Calvary (you will notice the flesh and blood are apart). We notice also that 'Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum' (v. 59).

So, we have two objections and two explanations in discussion with the Jews. But then we read: 'When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"' (v. 60). You notice the distinction. This is not now just the Jews, but the disciples. That is, this is not now the Jews who were there (and who were religious) who came and questioned him as the crowd stood by; but those who had professed to be following him in some sense — his disciples. Whether they were all true believers is another thing, because these verses are going to distinguish between people who have professed to be disciples and proved not to be true believers, and people that professed to be disciples and were true believers. So, we read: 'when many of the disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"' (v. 60). Then we read: 'After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him' (v. 66). And he challenges the rest of them: 'So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"' (v. 67). Peter responded on behalf of them all: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' (v. 68).

So far then the framework of the chapter: first the miracles, and then their explanation. First the explanation of the feeding of the five thousand that points to Jesus as the bread of life. It points to two facts about his coming: his coming down from heaven to be the bread of life; and secondly, his offering us his flesh and his blood as the means of life.

### **The walking on the water and its significance**

But now there is going to be a third thing, which the manna itself won't teach us. For you will remember that when God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them on their journey and fed them throughout the wilderness until they had crossed the Jordan, that was the temporary journey. They were meant to arrive at their destination, and when they arrived in the promised land the manna ceased. So Christ represents himself here as the manna from heaven, the food from heaven, that came down, and he gave himself at Calvary for us. But that is not the end of the journey.

But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offence at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' (vv. 61–63)



This is the end of the journey. He came down from heaven. He went to Calvary. He has returned where he was before. You must have the whole picture! It is not just the manna to supply us with food on the journey. There is still the question of the end of the journey for our Lord has ascended where he was before. It seems to me therefore that the second miracle recorded in chapter 6 near the beginning (vv. 16–21), is there to make us begin to think about the final stages of the journey—Christ ascending where he was before.

### Getting the story right

This story of the disciples in the boat must be distinguished in our thinking from another story recorded in the Gospels about Jesus in the boat. The other Gospel writers tell of Christ entering into a boat with the disciples, and he fell asleep as they crossed the sea.<sup>13</sup> And there came a tempest and a storm, and the wind blew and the waves ran high. The disciples were afraid that they were about to sink, and they went and woke him up and said, ‘Master, do you not care that we are perishing?’ And he stood up and rebuked the wind and wave, and there was a great calm. Then he gently chided the disciples, ‘O you of little faith.’ They discovered Christ as the Master of the material forces of the universe: the wind and the wave. This is not that story.

On this occasion he didn’t start with them in the boat. They got into the boat, and he went up into the mountain. It is told very dramatically. They got into a boat (past tense), and it was now dark. The sea was rising. They rowed for three or four miles. It is told in the normal tense for recording a story, that is, in the past tense. And then in verse 19: ‘When they had rowed about three or four miles’, John dramatically turns to the ‘historic present’ as we call it, changing over from past tense to present tense (though recording a past event) for the drama of it! ‘When they had rowed about three or four miles, they *see* . . .’ It is in the present tense; and it is not just a glance either—their gaze was attracted and anchored! ‘They see Jesus walking on the [water]’ (v. 19 KJV). Don’t read the passage too quickly please; you need to take in each word and roll it around inside of you! Do get the impression of it! ‘When they had rowed . . . they see—Jesus—walking—on the water!’ Wow. That was news to them. And it says, of course, that they were afraid.

### What Christ was demonstrating

What was he demonstrating? Well, as we all know, people design and build boats to get across the water, whether lake or sea, and the apostles had a boat. But to this day it is mightily difficult for a normal human being to *walk* on the water (or even to crawl)! Gravity gets the better of you.

Now don’t say that you can’t believe in a miracle because it is unscientific. That’s nonsense. The power of gravity is real enough, but you and I at times can overcome the power of gravity temporarily. I can take a ball in my hand and throw it into the air, and the ball goes up—defying gravity. It doesn’t get all that far. Gravity wins in the end and brings it back again. At NASA they have devised means by which they can propel a man inside a rocket outside earth’s gravity (or mostly outside it). He goes out into space, and he is gravity free,

---

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–5:1; Luke 8:22–25.

but he needs this rocket contraption to do it, and it is a very big thing. Here in John's Gospel: 'They see Jesus walking on the water'! Had he the power to overcome gravity? Yes, he did indeed. Hence, using the very same word, he says in verse 62: 'Then what if you were to *see* the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?' It is the same Greek word: to 'see' or 'contemplate' the Son of Man ascending where he was before.

When Luke comes to write the story of our Lord's ascension in the first chapter of his Acts of the Apostles, you will have noticed how often he uses the verb 'to see'. That is a very important observation because the story of the ascension is not just a myth. It is not meant to be just a symbol. It was symbolic, but it was also literal. Luke helps us to see how literal it was. And this is his account:

And when he had said these things, as they were *looking* on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their *sight*. And while they were *gazing* into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand *looking* into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you *saw* him go into heaven.' (vv. 9–11)

#### *A literal ascension*

You don't have to take any notice of the absurd critics who are supposedly being scientific when they say, 'Do you suppose that heaven is up there, and if you go up far enough you will see a door marked "Heaven" with a bell on the side that you can ring?' That is nonsense. Luke doesn't attempt to tell us how our Lord crossed from our space and time into the Eternal. 'They saw him *going up*,' as he made the journey. But then a cloud received him out of their sight. They did not see, and they don't attempt to tell you, how he crossed over (whatever that means) and where heaven is, or anything like that.

You would have to be half asleep to miss the emphasis on 'seeing' and 'looking' and 'gazing' in Luke's account. How many more times would you want it said? As the old hymn puts it: 'We believe that mortal eyes | Beheld that journey to the skies.'<sup>14</sup> It was literal, physical, with all that it involves.

Jesus says to the disciples, 'Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?' (John 6:62). They did see it eventually. They saw him overcoming the power of gravity and ascending.

#### *A figurative ascension*

As well as being literal, the ascension is also symbolic. That is another thing to remind those critics who take a narrow view of the Gospel accounts: the marvellous truth is that a thing can be both literal and symbolic! If I said to you, 'It was in the year of our Lord 1953 that Elizabeth II ascended the throne,' what would you take me to mean by the phrase 'ascended the throne'? Would you say to me: 'Do you think that there was a big chair somewhere called a throne, and she climbed up and sat on it? Is that what you're talking about?'

Well, not in the first place. It is a metaphor: she became Queen.

'So, don't take it literally; there wasn't any such chair!'

---

<sup>14</sup> Anne R. Richter, 'We saw Thee not when Thou didst come' (1834).

There isn't any such chair? Oh yes there is! It's in Parliament, and there was a day when her majesty climbed up and sat on that literal chair. 'Ascending the throne' is literal and symbolic and metaphorical at the same time. So too was our Lord's ascension of course, because during the forty days after our Lord's resurrection he would appear to the apostles for a while and speak to them and be with them and even eat a meal, and then disappear. Where he went and how we went we are not told. Where was he in the times when he disappeared out of the upper room? He came on one Sunday evening, and then he would come back the next Sunday and disappear again. Where was he in between? We are not told. But we are told that there came the fortieth day, when he deliberately staged his final ascent and said that he wouldn't be coming to visit them as he had been until that point, visiting them in their homes or on their journeys on the roads or at their fishing boats. He would officially ascend, and that would bring to an end those appearances after the resurrection.

### **The full picture given by both miracles**

In John 6 we shall need both miracles, because we are talking about our Lord as the one given to us to feed us on the journey and to bring us to the goal of that journey, which is ascending to where he is. Note therefore the completeness of holy Scripture in having two miracles at the beginning of chapter 6. So we read now:

On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. (v. 22)

What is it talking about? I would ask you to think back to the previous evening when our Lord had told the apostles to go across the sea and he himself went up the mountain. There was just one boat there. The disciples went into it and rowed off and Jesus hadn't gone with them. The next day they came seeking Jesus. Where was he? They couldn't find him. He couldn't have crossed the sea: there was no other boat for him to use to cross the sea! Of course, it says, 'Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks' (v. 23). So other boats came the next morning, but that didn't solve the problem of where Jesus had gone when there was no boat for him after the disciples had gone off in the only boat.

So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi, when did you come here?' (vv. 24-25)

Notice, they didn't say 'how' but 'when'. 'When did you come here? How long have you been here?' It would be like arriving at a conference in San Francisco and finding a friend from Ireland already there. And you might say to him, 'We took the last plane, and you were there in Belfast when we left. When did you come here then?'

Jesus didn't answer them. He didn't say, 'Well, gentlemen, I walked across!' That might have been altogether too much for their understanding. He just said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal. (vv. 26–27)

That is, ‘on him God the Father has set his seal of approval’.

Notice here our Lord’s reference to ‘work’. As you will see from the comparison given in the notes, chapters 5 and 6 contain similar ideas. In chapter 5 they criticize our Lord for working on the Sabbath. Notice in chapter 6 how he criticizes their work: ‘Do not labour for the food that perishes.’ Now, we must understand this in its context. Our Lord doesn’t say that if you are truly spiritual and living by faith you don’t have to work, that you just give up work and live by faith. That is a misconception if ever there was one. If the Lord calls you to give up your physical or ‘worldly’ work, it is not so that you can live by faith and do nothing. It is because the spiritual work will take up your time and energy, so that you won’t have time for the other kind of work. That’s all. If you are true to you’re calling, you will work harder than you did before.

But this is telling us what our attitude should be, so that we get our proportions right. So in the Hebrew sense: ‘work not for this; work for that’, meaning: ‘work *primarily* for this’. And what are we to work for primarily? Well, not ‘for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life’.

It is hard work studying Scripture. We are to work for it! There is a vast need in the church worldwide for people to take God’s word, and all that goes with it in serving the Lord, as seriously as they take their physics and banking and whatever else. I repeat, I am not saying that you should give up your jobs; it is a question of proportions and the seriousness with which we take things. If we work for our daily food, we should be prepared to work for the eternal food. Christ will give it to us, but we have to work. At least that has been my experience. You don’t get very much out of Scripture without hard work.

Then they said to him, ‘What must we do, to be doing the works of God?’ Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’ So they said to him, ‘Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?’ (vv. 28–30)

Of all the idiotic remarks to make! What had they been doing the day before? Gorging themselves on bread and fish! And now they ask for a sign? They continue:

Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ (v. 31)

Our Lord makes the point that, actually, it wasn’t Moses that gave them the bread; God gave them the bread:

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us this bread always.’ (vv. 32–34)

Jesus said to them, 'But I am the bread of life!' He personally is the bread. It's not that he gives us something else; he *personally* is the bread:

whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (vv. 35–40)

Those verses contain a lot of theological implications. Let us take, to begin with at least, the superficial meaning.

We are on a journey, as Israel was on a journey. Our journey is through life. It is one thing to start the journey, but there were a lot of Israelites who started out and never got into the promised land. A whole generation of them perished in the wilderness. The question it must raise is: what about us?

Why did they perish in the wilderness? Well, because they sinned against God! Oh, but I sin. What will happen to me? Is it so that if I sin I might miss getting in at last?

This is such a fundamental point that John in his record comes round to telling us twice over. First in verse 49:

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. (vv. 49–50)

Then we read:

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever. (v. 58)

Oh, thank God that the actual guarantee is said twice over! It is not as their fathers ate the manna and then sinned and died and never got in. Here is our Lord's own authority: it isn't going to be like that: 'Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.' It's worth a 'Hallelujah' in anybody's estimation!

*Come down to do the Father's will*

But how can we be sure of eternal life? The tremendous truth is given in our Lord's statement here: 'I have come down from heaven.'

What for?

'To save the lost,' you say.

Well, that is perfectly true. He came 'to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10). But in this context he says:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me,

but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day' (vv. 38–40).

Hallelujah for that! For my eternal security rests on Christ doing the will of the Father. It is the Father's will that he should 'lose nothing'. He will lose nothing, and none of, those that the Father has given him.

I like to think of it with a childlike mind (not 'childish' I hope). Imagine the whole assembly of heaven being presented to the Father and counted in by name, so to speak. And when it gets to the end the Father says, 'Is that all?'

'Yes.'

'Well, what about that Gooding chap? Is he here?'

The Son says, 'Oh, he was a bit of an oddity, and he lost his way, and he's not here.'

And the Father says, 'But I thought you went to do my will; and my will was that you should lose nothing!'

So if Christ loses a genuine believer, he then has failed to do the will of God. That is unthinkable! He *will* bring home to the Father all who have trusted him.

#### *Raised up on the last day*

The phrase 'raise him up at the last day' is twice spoken for emphasis' sake. Notice the variation of phraseology connected to the two instances:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (vv. 39–40).

In the first instance, the phrase is preceded by: 'I should lose nothing of all that he has given me'. In the second instance, it is preceded by: 'everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.'

We should perhaps pause at this stage to think about the meaning of the term, 'that which the Father has *given* me.' It is not the last time we shall meet that phrase in the Gospel of John, and it is worth pondering in what sense the Father has given people to the Son.

Now, I submit to you that our Lord speaks not only as Son of God, but as truly man. He is Jesus of Nazareth. He is standing before Jews. Notice it is the Jews who are arguing with him at this point, not the disciples. For him to talk about people believing in him as they believe in God, was absolutely blasphemous to them! And as for him raising up the dead at the last day, that too would sound blasphemous. You should believe only in God! And our Lord said subsequently to the disciples: 'You believe in God, believe also in me!' (see 14:1). Just imagine a preacher coming to your establishment and saying to the congregation, 'You believe in God, well, believe in me as well!' But Christ does say so.

How could it be that he could talk about people believing in him, and about him raising them? He is not trying to take people away from the Father. It is the Father who has given him the works to do. It is the Father who has sanctified him and sealed him as the bread of life! If

he invites people to believe in him, it is because the Father has given him that glorious position and function. He is not stealing anybody away from the Father. It is the Father's gift that he can invite people to believe in him, as they believe in God. So he can speak of 'all those the Father has given me'. They were given to him by the Father in that sense: they have put their trust in the Saviour and believed in him as they believe in God. Christ will do his Father's will, which is that he should lose none but raise them up at the last day.

When I was a boy I listened to preachers and began to take interest in spiritual things. One man came and spent an evening expounding the word and exhorting me that I should 'feed on Christ'. I thought that would be a good thing to do if I could get started. Then the next week another man came and said I should 'feed on Christ'. Much as I admitted it would be a good thing to do, I began to wonder: 'Well, what is the food?' If you invited me to dinner and kept on saying, 'Do eat up,' I would say, 'What? Where is it?'

What is the food? Here you have an example. It is not just the manna that got them through the wilderness:

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. (vv. 48-51)

It is not just like the manna that got them through the wilderness. If you accept Christ, he will last you eternally. He is the bread. Linked to him, and he having become part of you, you will last eternally. Listen to what he says. It is not merely, 'I give you food,' but, 'I am the food!'

So he will raise us up at the last day. That is why he came down from heaven: to rescue us, and he will raise us up on the last day. He did more than that; he has died for us that he might be in us.

But we will pause here and then launch on the second half of the chapter in our next session.

## [The Second Journey](#)

### *Christ the Means of Life – Part 2*

In this session, I will only attempt to point out the major paragraphs in the rest of chapter 6, and what they are concerned with, not the detail in all the verses.

### **The Jews' misunderstandings about Christ**

Shall we first notice verse 41:

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?'

The incarnation was a mystery to them. Secondly, we read the reply to what our Lord said about giving his flesh:

'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' (vv. 51–52)

Two 'murmurings' therefore of the Jews, to what our Lord is saying, to be followed by two criticisms by the disciples: a narrower group.

### **Come down from heaven?**

The Jews first murmured concerning him about his incarnation. Our Lord replied,

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (v. 44)

Now, these are famous words, and they have been variously interpreted by serious-minded theologians. Let me not speak with any contempt for my brothers in Christ who understand these words to mean that there are some whom the Father draws because he has so chosen to draw them; and there are multitudes of other people that God never did intend to draw, and therefore he doesn't draw them, and that is why they don't get saved. Because they are not elect, God has decided not to draw them; whereas others who are the elect: God himself draws them. That seems to me, I must say, to go beyond what Scripture is saying.



Our Lord is talking to highly religious Jews, and they can't imagine what our Lord means by saying, 'I have come down from heaven.' Not even Moses claimed any such thing, nor Elijah, nor Isaiah nor Jeremiah, let alone Ezekiel. And what he now says about coming down from heaven is a great mystery to them. It is indeed a mystery! And our Lord's reply is not by way of discouragement, but he is owning the mystery: 'No one can come to me,' he says, 'unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.' It *does* take divine initiative! When Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, our Lord replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt 16:17). It does take divine initiative, divine revelation, divine drawing. Because that is the very necessary condition, it does not by itself imply that he draws some, and some he doesn't draw. It is a necessary condition that the Father draws: we shall not understand the deity of Christ without God revealing it to us, in that sense. That is not to say that God is not prepared to reveal it to a large number of people, and he just passes them by. It is saying what is necessary for anyone to come and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Indeed, 'It is written in the Prophets, "And they will all be taught by God"' (John 6:45). There will come a time when all Israel is saved; all Israel shall be taught of God.<sup>15</sup> 'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me' (v. 45). The Lord, I repeat, is speaking to Jews. There were multitudes of Jews, even in our Lord's time (the Marthas, the Marys, the Andrews, the Nathanaels, and Peter, James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew) who were taught by God, just as there had always been people 'taught of the Father' in the Old Testament, even before Abraham. And think of Moses, Samuel and Hannah, David, Jeremiah and Isaiah, and Isaiah's disciples—genuine people of God, under Judaism, taught of God! And everybody who was taught of God, when Christ came, they came to Christ! Some of them took a bit longer to come than others, but even among those who first shouted: 'Away with him' at the cross, on the day of Pentecost three thousand of them got converted and came to the Son. That is the work of the Father, who teaches and draws people to Christ. And Christ is talking this way though equal with the Father. He is not trying to take the place of the Father, but is acknowledging his dependence on the Father for what he preaches, and for the Father to authenticate his message and explain it to the people so that they may be drawn to Christ.

#### *Christ the bread pictured in the Old Testament*

He is the bread that is the fulfilment of the prototypes of the Old Testament. He says to them, 'Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died' (v. 49). Christ is the fulfilment in the sense that he is *the* bread to which that manna pointed in its day. Just like Israel were redeemed out of Egypt and protected by the blood of the Passover Lamb, there came the time when our Lord fulfilled the Passover by being *the* Lamb of God. And people who had been instructed as to what the Passover meant would come to see how it pointed to Christ. 'Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness.' Yes, but it was but a pointer, a pro tem thing, a prototype. It was real in its day, yet it pointed onward to the bread of which a man may eat

---

<sup>15</sup> See also Isa 54:13 and Rom 11.

and shall never die. Our Lord is the *fulfilment*, in that strict sense of the word fulfilment, of the manna:

This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. (vv. 50–51)

### **Eating his flesh?**

Now there comes another objection, but not this time about him saying that he came down from heaven:

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' (v. 52)

You might have thought that they could have seen at once that it was a metaphor. He wasn't advocating cannibalism to be practised upon himself; it was his flesh, to be given for the life of the world. Then he expounds what he means by his flesh and his blood:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever. (vv. 53–58)

In other words: 'Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood . . .' is a vivid expression for saying that Christ came from heaven not merely to save us, but he comes to be within us—in us. Like our food goes into us, so Christ comes into the believer:

Christ *in you*, the hope of glory. (Col 1:27)

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives *in me*. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

Therefore, let us think both about the parable in the miracle we have just read about and then apply it even at this level, at this point in the discussion: 'This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die' (v. 50).

#### *The bread that has come down*

Consider what the bread is. It is not only 'the bread of life' it is 'the *living* bread'. The manna came down from heaven, but it wasn't alive itself! Our Lord is the living bread. This bread is alive. When the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand took place, we are told that, after the crowds had eaten and were filled, our Lord instructed the apostles to go around and gather up the broken pieces of the bread that remained so 'that nothing may be lost' (v. 12). That is an interesting remark. We might say, 'But if our Lord had the power to multiply loaves

and fishes to feed five thousand, what does it matter if a few broken pieces were left lying around and left to rot? He could easily make some more, couldn't he?' But he gave them instructions, and they had to gather up the broken pieces that remained so that nothing of that bread would be lost.

How much more the people he has saved. You claim that Christ saved you and is your bread of life, and he is in you? Well, I can tell you now that that bread shall *never* be lost. 'Christ in you' – the living bread. It is a magnificent concept, but an even more magnificent reality: Christ has come to live *in* us!

#### DISTINGUISHING OUR TERMS

These phrases are taken by the sacramentalist church to apply to the Lord's Supper, or 'the Mass' as they call it. But it is important to notice the different terminology. When our Lord took the bread at the Last Supper he did not say, 'This bread is my flesh which is given for you.' He said, 'This is my body, which is given for you' (Luke 22:19). The distinction is important. It would be worthwhile studying where in Scripture 'flesh' is used and where 'body' is used. 'Flesh and blood' is the normal term for humanity, not normally 'body and blood.' This is 'flesh and blood,' which are constituent parts of our Lord's humanity. It is he that comes to live within us. This is not talking here about the Lord's Supper but about Christ being 'in us'. Therefore no believer shall be lost, for this is why we live:

As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. (v. 57)

### **The disciples' misunderstandings about Christ**

Let us come to the final objections, this time from the disciples: the closer group. But they were not all believers either; though they professed to be his disciples. They said,

'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?' But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, 'Do you take offence at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' (vv. 60–63)

#### **His word makes alive**

We have to be prepared for life in a spirit world. Our Lord's resurrection body is said to be a 'spiritual body'. That doesn't mean, as some people say, that our resurrection body is made of spirit and is not genuinely material, any more than if I told you that this man's car has a petrol engine you would imagine that the engine is made of petrol. Petrol is the stuff that makes it go as distinct from a diesel engine or an electrical motor.

So too with the resurrection body of Christ. He said, 'Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have' (Luke 24:39). It was a real and, in our sense, a physical body, but of a different order. It is a *spiritual body*. If you are Christ's, you have within you that very power that shall raise you at the resurrection when the Lord comes (if you have to be raised), or shall transform you when you meet the Lord in the air:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

That is amazing. 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit . . .' says Christ (v. 63). By listening to his words and putting our faith in Christ we are born again of God's Spirit. There is a something born in a believer that wasn't there before! It is the Spirit of God, imparted by our Lord through his word, and putting in us the potential that, when the Lord comes, our very bodies shall be 'quickened' —made alive, and made like his glorious body. We shall be 'caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air' (1 Thess 4:17). The journey will be complete.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to listen as best we can to the words of Christ. They are spirit, and they are life. They create what his word is talking about.

### **His word divides opinion**

Then our Lord had to add, 'Do you take offence at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?' (vv. 61–62). That would be the end of the journey for him who came down from heaven. Now he speaks of ascending back to heaven. He will take us there one day. But some of them were not believers, and he knew it, and he told them so:

This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. (v. 65)

It takes a work of the Father in the heart of an individual to bring them to Christ. It is not just intellectual conviction.

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (v. 66)

Were these believers? Hardly!

So Jesus said to the Twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.' Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.' He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him. (vv. 67–71)

Not all who profess to be disciples are genuine believers. It is not elitism to say that. The Father is prepared to draw anyone. The true light 'enlightens everyone' (1:9), but the God who made the light and gave us eyes to see the light with, has given us eyelids; and we can choose to shut them if we decide to do so.

### **Conclusion**

So he gives us life. That is chapter 5. In chapter 6 he maintains us along the journey, not merely as the manna come down from heaven, but by his word that is spirit: creating within us the

life of the Spirit, preparing us to follow him, ascending where he was before. We are being trained, you know, to walk on the sea.

And so, Father, we bow in grateful worship before thee, for thy revelation of thy very heart in the sending of thy dear Son. And we gladly bow before him, as Thomas did, and say 'My Lord and my God.'

We acknowledge that this is thy work within our hearts, that we are not responsible ultimately for maintaining our faith; but thou, who didst bring us to Christ and give us the Saviour, we bless thee thou hast given us one who guarantees that he will see us through the journey and on into that glorious world whither he has gone.

Use thy word today, Father; give us increasing understanding of it, we pray. Help us while we have the energy so to do, to work hard in thy word, in the knowledge and belief that the words our Lord speaks to us, they are spirit and they are life, and are preparing us for the goal of the journey: that is the day when we shall have spiritual bodies and be likened to the Lord in the glorious eternity to which he leads us.

So bless thy word to us, we pray. Grant that it may mature in our hearts and minds. So show us its significance, we ask, that we with a greater confidence may tell it and preach it to our fellow men and women. By thy grace make it effective we pray, even through us, in our day and generation.

We ask it as we give thee our thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Questions About the Second Journey

### Question One

*In these chapters there is a big emphasis on the Lord Jesus being 'sent' — 'that you would believe that he has sent me', etc. Could you elaborate on that?*

DWG: It is almost one of the titles of Christ throughout the Gospel of John: he is 'sent' by the Father. And when he gave the man sight in chapter 9 he put clay on his eyes and sent him to the pool of Siloam and told him to wash there, and the man came seeing. But John, the Gospel writer, troubles to translate the name of the pool. The pool, in Greek is *Siloam*; in Hebrew: *siloah*, and means 'sent'. Christ is the 'sent one' of God.

Of course, that is a term going back to the Old Testament. Moses comes before God, and God sends him. You'll remember the conversation between Moses and God about God sending him to Israel, sending him to Pharaoh, and so on, and the people had to come to believe that he was sent by God (Exod 3–4). It was crucial for the Israelites in Egypt. If ever they were going to get out of Egypt they would first have to believe that Moses was sent by God! Otherwise the situation was hopeless, and they never would have dared to rise up against Pharaoh and his army. And even so they took a lot of persuading!

Moses said, 'Suppose they ask me who this God is who has sent me to them; what am I to say?' God told him to say, 'I AM has sent me. And here are some signs that you can do as evidence that you have been sent by God.' This is just one of the many ideas from Exodus that are now fulfilled in the Gospel of John. If we are to believe and get free of the thralldom, the slavery to the god of this world (and in that sense, free of this world), we have to believe that Jesus Christ is not just a religious adviser. He is the one 'sent of the Father', and the signs that he did are the witness that he has been sent of the Father, but now in a sense far bigger than ever Moses was.

### Question two

*In chapter 5 we were discussing the Godhead, and the fact that Christ said he could do nothing of himself but only what he has been told to do by the Father. And then it says he does what he hears, and he makes his judgment based on what he has heard. Does that relate only within the Godhead, or could you say that if Christ sees the Father do something or set a precept or a principle, from then on he acts, following what the Father has set out?*

DWG: Do you mean is this merely related to what happened in the Godhead before our Lord became incarnate, or does it also apply to his work of ministry and preaching when he became incarnate?

AUDIENCE: Yes, and now as well.

DWG: Yes, and right here and now. Well, the Godhead is the same as it always was: it is the three persons. It is altered in this sense, that the one whom we call 'the second person of the Trinity' became human. And the astonishing thing is that he remains human, even though a member of the Trinity. That is an astonishing thing! We shouldn't forget, however, that when Christ became human, he became so without ceasing to be God. As John phrases it in his Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . (1:1-2, 14)

Now that is an extraordinary thing, for our Lord did not cease to be the Word; and the Word was and is God. But in Christ God was doing . . . well, how should I put it without giving the wrong idea?

The Greeks had the notion that God was absolute perfection, and because he was absolute perfection he could not change. And the church fathers took up that idea and talked about God being unable to change, and therefore is completely *impassive*: he can't feel anything like sorrow or anything like that, they said. It is absolute nonsense, of course! God's character doesn't change, but God is forever doing *new* things.

This universe didn't exist at one stage; and God who loves to do new things and is so big that he can always do new things, made a universe and became Creator! Extraordinary! And then there came the time when he did another extraordinary thing: he made humankind upon the earth, but he made them in such a way that God himself, without ceasing to be God, could become human, and learn by experience what it means to be human!

We mustn't say that 'God died for us at Calvary'. The Bible doesn't say that. It remains true that if the one who died for us at Calvary was not God, we are not saved. God learning what it was to die—it goes beyond our understanding. It affects our idea of the atonement of course, of what was happening at the atonement. It is a matter within the Godhead.

Jesus is the Son of God; the Father is always shown to us as the one who initiates everything. The Son is the expression of the Father: 'He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature' (Heb 1:3). You mustn't put it the other way round. The Father is not the expression of the Son. In that sense, the Son never has and never will do anything of himself. It is the Father who takes the initiative within the Godhead. But the Son does equally as the Father does; that is the other side of it. He does what he sees the Father doing, or what the Father tells him.

It is magnificent! Would that we sang Condor's hymn more often:

Thou art the everlasting Word,  
The Father's only Son;

God manifestly seen and heard,  
And Heav'n's belovèd one:<sup>16</sup>

And we should remember that our Lord himself said, 'no one knows the Son except the Father' (Matt 11:27). And in Conder's hymn that is quoted about the Lord Jesus:

The Father only—glorious claim!—  
The Son can comprehend.

That relationship goes beyond us. We are to think all that the Bible gives us to think, but there comes a point when it goes quite beyond us:

no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt 11:27)

But as to his being the 'sent one', this is exceedingly important, and especially for us, living in our generation of virtual materialism (I mean that in the philosophical sense). When our Lord summed up his ministry to the apostles he asked them if they had got a hold of this: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father' (John 16:28 KJV).

Have you got hold of that? That is absolutely basic: 'I came out from the Father and have come into the world'—so there is another world! Is there really? Yes, another world from which he came into our world. 'Again: I leave the world, and I go to the Father.' That is absolutely fundamental to our Christian gospel! It is not that Jesus is another Moses who has just come to teach us; he is greater than Moses who was a pointer forwards to him.

The only way you will ultimately cure *worldliness*—people living as though this world is everything—is to get them to see and believe that there is another world, and Christ came down out of that other world! He came into our world, and he has left this world and gone to the Father.

To believe that is enormously important. It is illustrated by the issue at stake in Moses' day. Moses, standing in the desert by a bush, is told to go back into the civilization that was Egypt and deliver the Israelites. The question will arise when he comes into Egypt: Has Moses been sent by God into Egypt, and is he able to lead Israel out of Egypt into their promised land? So it is with our Lord in the Gospel of John.

---

<sup>16</sup> Josiah Conder (1789-1855), 'The Everlasting Word' (1836).



## The Third Journey

### *Part 1—God's Publicity Problem*

Our study in this and the following three sessions will concern itself with the record of our Lord's Third Journey to Jerusalem and back up north again. The record of that third journey is to be found in John's Gospel chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10. In chapter 7 we have it recorded how our Lord eventually went to Jerusalem on the occasion of a Jewish feast, which was the Feast of Tabernacles (or the Feast of Booths as you may prefer to call it). He stayed in Jerusalem until the end of the feast, and we know this because of what we are told in chapter 7:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out . . . (v. 37)

But it would seem he stayed on in Jerusalem because chapter 10 tells us that he was there on the Feast of Dedication:

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. (vv. 22–23)

Whether he went away during the interval and came back again to the Feast of Dedication we are not told. So for our purposes this Third Journey comprises the two feasts: the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication.

### **Four great declarations of Christ's salvation**

Each of these four chapters contains a notable expression, a notable declaration, of the great salvation that Christ is able to bestow upon us. So it might be a good idea to begin our study by looking at those four great statements, recalling to our minds the salvation that they proclaim, and thanking God for them.

#### **Statement 1—Satisfaction**

The first great statement of salvation is to be found in chapter 7:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (vv. 37–39)

In this first major statement of the salvation Christ gives, he proclaims himself as the giver of the Holy Spirit. Here he describes the Holy Spirit in metaphorical terms, as ‘rivers of living water’ —the thirst-quenching gift of the Holy Spirit. And John, in his comment upon it, reminds us that our Lord did not there and then immediately bestow the Holy Spirit on those who believed. He was to bestow the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost after he had been glorified.

The first great statement of salvation concerns the satisfaction of the Holy Spirit, given and bestowed by Christ. It is worth ten sermons!

### **Statement 2—Sonship**

The second great statement of salvation is to be found in chapter 8.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ They answered him, ‘We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, “You will become free”?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house for ever; the son remains for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’ (vv. 31–36)

The first statement of salvation offers satisfaction. The second great statement of salvation bestows sonship. Christ is able to give us both the state and the status. Or should I put it the other way round? Christ is able to give us both the status and the state of being freeborn sons and daughters of the Father, who by right of birth stay and remain in the house forever.

### **Statement 3—Sight**

In chapter 9, the great statement of salvation is preceded by a miracle that illustrates it. The miracle was the gift of physical sight to a man who had been born blind. But when our Lord eventually comes to him the second time, he had come to see something else as well.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe’, and he worshipped him. (vv. 35–38)

So far then: satisfaction, sonship and now sight and, supremely, spiritual sight that comes to see who Jesus is, that he is indeed ‘the Son of Man’.

Your translation may have it ‘Son of God’. The manuscripts differ at this point, and some have ‘Son of God’ and some have ‘Son of Man’. On textual grounds it is more likely that the original was ‘Son of Man’. But lest you think that is letting the side down and not strong enough, you should remember what our Lord means by the term ‘Son of Man’. This is the claim that he repeated before his judges, and it cost him his life:

And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ (Mark 14:62)

The Son of Man is not simply a human being, nor even an ideal human being, though he was that. ‘The Son of Man’ is *the* ‘Son of Man’ referred to in the vision of Daniel 7, ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’, which is the emblem of deity of course.

But our purpose at the moment is to look at the great statements of salvation in these four chapters: satisfaction, sonship and now sight—spiritual sight to see that Jesus is indeed Son of Man, Son of God, Son of the Father.

#### **Statement 4—Security**

Finally, the fourth great statement of the salvation that Christ can give is to be found in chapter 10.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one. (vv. 27–30)

So there is security. I am not given to alliteration, but I don’t know other English words to use; so I apologize for my alliteration lest I should bore you stiff with it! But, never mind; some folks find it helpful. We have here four great statements of salvation: satisfaction, sonship, sight and security. Our job now is to see each of those things in its context, and so we turn back to chapter 7 for the beginnings of the journey.

### **A problem of adequate publicity**

We start with the criticisms of Christ’s brothers—the other sons of Mary.

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’ For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.’ After saying this, he remained in Galilee. (7:1–9)

Let me remind you that, very frequently in the Gospel of John, when John uses the term *Jews* he does not mean all Israelites, but the Israelites who lived in Jerusalem and Judaea. So it is ‘Jews as distinct from Galileans’. Ethnically, they were all Jews and sometimes John uses the term ‘Jews’ in the general sense of Jews wherever they might be in the world, like we do today. But to make precise sense of many passages in John we shall have to observe that John uses the term also in this restricted sense: the Israelites who lived in Jerusalem and in Judaea. (That is where the term ‘Jews’ comes from in English—‘*Judaeans*’.) Therefore it makes sense that he: ‘went about in Galilee . . . because the Jews were seeking to kill him’ (7:1). In Galilee,

the Jews (let's call them 'Israelites') who lived in Galilee were not at this time seeking to kill him, but the Jews in Jerusalem were.

On the previous journey, recorded in chapter 5, when, in order to justify his healing of a man on the Sabbath, our Lord said, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (v. 17) and the Jewish religious authorities determined to kill him. It was not only because he had, in their estimation, broken the Sabbath, but because now he was making himself equal with God—calling God his Father, personally. They sought to kill him, and hence our Lord had been staying in Galilee and not going down to Judaea lest the Jews should prematurely attack him. We shall see that come out in chapters 7 and 8 and following. But the feast of the Jews would be celebrated of course down in the south, with services in the temple.

Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, 'Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.' For not even his brothers believed in him. (vv. 2-5)

We should not perhaps be surprised that his brothers did not believe on him. We might be tempted to regard these first verses as sort of circumstantial detail to be noticed and then forgotten fairly soon. We would be wiser to take them seriously.

### **The reality of the problem**

The brothers had a problem with Jesus. Perhaps the implications of some of the claims he made had begun to exercise their minds. They didn't believe, of course: they were men of the world. If their brother was going to lead a new religious movement, all right, but he was going the wrong way about it, they felt. It's no good, if you are going to start a new religion, to live on Achill Island and never come off you know!<sup>17</sup> No, you want to get out in public and get the maximum publicity. Then why did their brother stay up in Galilee? That was bad enough, but little old Nazareth? Nobody had ever heard of it!

'No,' they said, 'if you want to start a new religious movement, you need to get down to Jerusalem where the people are!' And they pointed out to him, in their wisdom, trying to be helpful, I suppose, (if a bit cynical): 'You want to get down to Jerusalem. There's going to be the Feast of Tabernacles! There will be hundreds of thousands there—people from all over the Roman Empire and elsewhere—Jews and their families. It will be tremendous fun, with everyone living in booths. People will mix and get to know each other. It will be a marvellous social occasion! Of course there's a bit of religion in it, but it's a marvellous social occasion!' It would be almost like what they have in some countries where they have a special day set apart to give thanks, but it is also a marvellous social occasion! And so this would be.

'And with the multitudes there from all over the world, it would be a marvellous opportunity for advertising yourself,' they said. 'And what is more, you could do one of your spectacular miracles, or a few of them, while you're down! That would bring the crowds around and make a contribution to the funds! Why stay up here?'

---

<sup>17</sup> Achill Island sits off the west coast of the Republic of Ireland and is part of County Mayo.

We can dismiss their criticisms as being impertinent, but John records them. And there is a problem.

I understand that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that when God sent his Son into the world he wanted everybody to know. Isn't that so? Then can you justify the way God had gone about it? He wanted everybody to know? So he sent his Son here to earth for thirty-three years. That wasn't very long when all is said and done. Why not longer?

Of those thirty-three years, thirty were spent in comparative privacy and seclusion in a little place called Nazareth. God wanted the world to know? Then he embarked upon his public ministry. But for just three and a half years? And so much of that time was spent in Galilee, of all places on earth. Did God really want people to know?

So our Lord eventually went down to Jerusalem but, contrary to the advice of his brothers, we are told that, 'after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, *not publicly* but in private' (v. 10). I thought God wanted people to know!

Well, he did go into the temple; and he taught. What he taught was indeed, as you might expect, exceedingly significant and thought provoking. It had the crowd beginning to dispute amongst themselves who this was. Could this possibly be the Christ? Some said 'Yes', and some said, 'No', and they had their reasons for it. But then the authorities heard them mumbling these things and debating whether he could be the Messiah or not.

The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. (v. 32)

They were afraid lest, with the thousands present in Jerusalem for this feast, if the crowd got it into their heads that this was Messiah, there could be profound commotions in Jerusalem, and the Romans would get upset. So they sent officers to take him. And Jesus said, in effect, 'I shouldn't trouble, gentlemen. I'm going away anyway.'

Jesus then said, 'I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.' The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, "You will seek me and you will not find me", and, "Where I am you cannot come"?' (vv. 33–36)

Now, think me not a heretic, not even an incipient heretic, for asking this. Would you have done it this way if you were God? Going away? Why didn't he stay? Why didn't he go, not only to Jerusalem, but stay on and go to the other capitals of the then-known world: Athens, Alexandria, Rome itself? If he had stayed for four hundred years people would have had no option but to believe in him: 'Look at his age! Obviously he is the Son of God!'

No, I can see that you don't believe that would have been better, and you are content with the history as it is. But you shall have to account for it! If you believe Jesus is the Son of God, you had better have some reasons why you believe that this publicity campaign was the very best that God Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, could devise.

Do you see the point?

Suppose I were an atheist, and I said to you, 'The trouble with you Christians is that you expect me to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Son of the maker of the universe. And on the grounds of, what, three years?' As one so-called Professor of Theology in Bristol University said some twenty years ago, the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, if all put together, wouldn't fill three weeks! So our atheist friend might say, 'And you expect me to believe on that basis that he is the Son of God?'

If that is the problem, John doesn't record it without then giving us the answers.

## **The way John answers the problem**

Let me call your attention to the fact that the four chapters that now follow are very carefully written. Though they might at first sight appear to contain much repetition, actually there is no vain repetition. Craftily (like Paul was said to be crafty in 2 Cor 12:16), I pointed you to the four great statements of salvation, each of them different in its own chapter. Now let us look at the way John has structured his material.

### **The literary structure of the Third Journey**

#### *The way chapter 7 begins and ends*

Chapter 7 begins with the announcement:

Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him. (v. 1)

His brothers were finding fault and criticizing him for this and were telling him he ought to go down to Judaea. He was in Galilee, therefore. Chapter 7 ends in this way:

Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them [that is, one of the Sanhedrin], said to them, 'Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?' They replied, 'Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.' (vv. 50-52)

According to the Sanhedrin, the fact that he came from Galilee, and spent most of his time in Galilee, was evidence to them that he couldn't possibly be a prophet, let alone the Messiah. So we see chapter 7 beginning with Galilee and ending with Galilee.

#### *The way chapter 8 begins and ends*

In our present text, chapter 8 begins with the story of the woman taken in adultery. That at least is how it is generally referred to. As you know, the manuscript evidence for this story (in the sense that it was originally a part of the Gospel of John) is very slight and has many things against it. So that many commentators who believe that Scripture is the word of God (like I do) hold that this is a genuine record of something our Lord said and did while he was here on earth; but that it was not originally part of John's Gospel. It is found, in those manuscripts that have it (and many don't), at the end of Luke, and sundry other places. In the later

manuscripts it is found here at the beginning of chapter 8. The theory therefore is that, somehow or other, someone must have put it eventually in this position.

I am not going to discuss this with you in our brief time today. If you had come a bit earlier I might have treated you to the textual criticism (so you may well be glad you didn't!). But I am just going to take it that someone put it there. If that is so, what a marvellous thing it was that they put it there! For I shall invite you to consider how very well placed it is in this context—magnificently so! More of that shortly.

But notice what they say to our Lord when they begin to speak:

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?' This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. (vv. 3–9)

So they tell him what Moses commanded in the law: that such a woman should be stoned. The whole incident concerns stoning. Look at the end of the chapter:

So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. (v. 59)

#### *The way chapter 9 begins and ends*

In chapter 9 our Lord meets a blind man.

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.' (vv. 1–3)

The disciples raised the question of the relation of sin to blindness. Why was he born blind? Was it his fault that he was born blind, or was it his parent's fault? The issue is the relation of sin to blindness. Mark how the chapter ends:

Those of the Pharisees which were with him heard these things, and they said unto him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said unto them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin: but now you say, "We see": [therefore] your sin remains.' (vv. 40–41 RV)

As the chapter begins with the relation of sin to blindness; so the chapter ends with the relation of sin to blindness.

#### *The way chapter 10 begins and ends*

We look now at the fourth and final chapter in this journey.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (vv. 1–2)

Only the true shepherd would be allowed by the doorkeeper to enter the fold. If you should see a shadowy figure climbing up the back of the fold you would immediately know, by his very approach, that he is not a true shepherd, because a true shepherd wouldn't climb up surreptitiously over the back fence to try and get in when nobody was looking. The true shepherd would come to the door and present his credentials to the doorkeeper who was left in charge of the fold while the various shepherds that had put their flocks into the fold had gone off for the weekend on the town. The true shepherd comes to the door and presents his true credentials. And he doesn't open the door: the doorkeeper opens the door, and then he goes in.

People will ask, of course: 'Is this a parable, and what kind of parable is it? And do all its details make sense? And, if they do, who is the doorkeeper? If Christ is the true shepherd that came to the fold of Israel, who was the doorkeeper to whom he came presenting his credentials, who then opened the door?'

Look at the end of the chapter:

He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to him. And they said, 'John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.' (vv. 40–41)

There was the doorkeeper whose official post it was to introduce the Messiah and identify him to the nation. And all that John said of him, and he said many things of him ('he shall baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire', and so forth), were true.

### **Some of the emphases in these four chapters**

I have troubled you with those literary observations to try to demonstrate that these four chapters are written exceedingly carefully. Each of them is coherent from the beginning to its end, as you see by the similarity of the beginning to the end. Each of them is a different chapter. Each of them is intended to make its contribution to answering the problem with which chapter 7 begins, what I have called 'God's Publicity Problem', God's ways of making himself known through Christ. The chapters answer the question: 'Why did God do it this way?' Four chapters therefore, and each has its own message, but they are four chapters that are related, of course. How could they not be?

#### *The emphasis of chapters 7 and 10*

So let us come back to chapter 7 to notice a few more details from a literary point of view. His brothers come to him and urge him to go up to the feast. He says to them,

My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You *go up* to the feast. (vv. 6–8)



Notice the verb: 'go up'.

I am not *going up* to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come. (v. 8)

The verb is repeated.

After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had *gone up* to the feast, then he also *went up*, not publicly but in private. (vv. 9–10)

The verb is used a third and fourth time.

About the middle of the feast Jesus *went up* into the temple and began teaching. (v. 14)

The word in Greek is *anabainō*. It is repeated five times over. You say, 'There's nothing in that. Some preachers do repeat themselves endlessly because they're limited in their vocabulary, and so they have to keep using the same word rather frequently.'

Well, all right, but let's suppose this is inspired, shall we? With these repeated uses of *anabainō*, the text is talking about Christ's approach to the feast at Jerusalem. To speak of 'going up to the feast' was common because, to Jews living in various parts, if you talk about travelling to Jerusalem the word you use is 'go up' to Jerusalem. You went 'down' to Jericho, (very literally) but it was 'up' to Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>

Now the way the English race use the English language is peculiar: you 'go up' to London, but you 'go down' to 'the city'! You go 'down to' a city, you 'go downtown'.

But you 'go up' to Jerusalem. It was the capital anyway. And then in Jerusalem the temple was high up on its rock, so you if you were going to the temple, you would 'go up'. And here John is recording in the passage the discussion between Christ and his brothers about his 'going up', that is to say, his approach to the city. 'Then went he also up . . . not openly, but as it were in secret' (v. 10 KJV).

We come to chapter 10 again for a moment.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door of the sheep, but *goes up* . . . (v. 1, own trans.)

There is the word *anabainō* once more. His approach to the fold shows you who he is; he is a thief and a robber. Whereas the true Shepherd's approach to the fold is to come to the doorkeeper and present his credentials. Chapters 7 and 10 therefore will be talking to us about Christ's approach to the feast and Christ's approach to the fold of Judaism.

### *The emphasis of chapters 8 and 9*

Chapter 8 records our Lord saying:

---

<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting the altitude of these different places. The city of Jericho sits at 258 metres (846 feet) below sea level, while Jerusalem sits at 754 metres (2,474 feet) above sea level. The Sea of Galilee sits at 212 metres (696 feet) below sea level.

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (v. 12)

Chapter 9 records him saying:

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (v. 4)

In both chapters therefore, our Lord declares himself to be the light of the world. The question arises: Is this simply repetition? Repetition can be a very good thing; it hammers the nail in. If the first strike of the hammer doesn't suffice to strike the nail in then you strike it a second time. And some people's heads have to be struck many times to get the point home! Repetition is not all that bad. But in Scripture, where space is at a premium, we have to ask: Is it *mere* repetition?

No, indeed it isn't. In chapter 8 our Lord says, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness . . .' Because Christ is the light, he sheds light on the pathway, and people see it so they don't walk in darkness. They know where they are going and 'have the light of life'.

Yes, that is very good: Christ is the light by which we *see* things. But suppose we were blind. What good would the light do then? So our Lord is not merely the light by which we see things (thank God he is that); he is the light who can give us the sight to see *with!*

That is a very important epistemological point. Say somebody has deposited a pen on my table. If you are going to see this pen, certain conditions have to be fulfilled. If you are going to see this pen, the pen has got to be there for you to see. If it isn't there, you will never see it. Our Lord says in John 15: 'If I had not come and . . . done among them the works which no one else had ever done, they would not *have sin*' (vv. 22–24, own trans.). That doesn't mean they would be sinlessly perfect, but you couldn't blame them for not seeing it. He is saying: 'If I had not come and done among them works that no one else had done, they could not be *blamed* for not seeing and not believing something that had never been there to be seen.' But he goes on to say, 'The fact is, I have come, and I have done these works, and now they have seen and hated both me and my Father' (see v. 24). They have seen, because he came, and they saw; therefore their sin remains.

If you are going to see this pen, the pen must be there for you to see it. But the pen could be there, and you never would see it if the place were pitch dark and there was no light. Even if the pen were there you would never see it, would you? So, it's got to be there; and then there has got to be light for you to see it. Suppose both of those conditions are met: the pen is there, and there is light for you to see it, but you are blind. Even if the pen is there and the light is shining on it, you won't see it. You would need sight to see it with.

God has thought of everything, actually. So, we read in chapter 8 that Christ is the light of the world: 'Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (8:12). He shines his light on our way and, incidentally, he shines his light on us too! And then we begin to see things that we would rather not see.

But to see that Jesus is the Son of God, you will need to be given eyes to see that with, as our Lord commented when Peter said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Christ answered him:

Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. (Matt 16:16-17)

### **Conclusion so far**

What have I been arguing? I first of all suggested to you that the way chapter 7 opens sets the major problem that these four chapters are going to deal with. God sent his Son. He wants the world to know, for he 'so loved the world, that he gave his only Son' (3:16). The question is the way that God has gone about it. He sent him for thirty-three years, thirty of them spent in complete obscurity. Only three and a half years of public ministry, which is exceedingly short. And then he went away. How was that the best way of doing it?

Now you know what the answer is before John tells you, let alone before I tell you. You will say, 'You're making a problem where there isn't one. The answer is that he came to die at Calvary, and he ascended to glory, and the Holy Spirit came.'

How wonderfully perceptive you are! That is the answer, yes, of course it is! But even the apostles didn't know it when he first came, did they? And if that is why he came, why did he wait thirty-three years before it happened? What were those thirty-three years about?

And so, in considering these chapters, we shall have to control our speed, so to speak. We are so inclined to think that we must take these verses and apply them to ourselves that we could get a little bit impatient with the history of our faith. What about those years that John is now recording, when the disciples didn't even know that he was going to be crucified, and couldn't take it in? When the Holy Spirit had not yet come—what about those years? What were they for? How did they expedite God's self-revelation through his dear Son?

That then is our task as we consider these four chapters. How do they combine to tell us the way God has solved his publicity problem (if indeed there is a problem)? How are these great things: the incarnation, life, and then the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, necessary, and every part of them necessary, for God's self-revelation in his Son?

## The Third Journey

### *Part 2 — John 7*

In the previous session I was trying to point out the major problem that John records, which introduces us to our Lord's Third Journey to Jerusalem and back again, this time on the occasion of a Feast of Tabernacles and then the Feast of Dedication (John 7–10). We began to see that these four chapters are concerned with God's strategy for making himself known through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I just want to say one more thing relative to this matter of God's strategy of making himself known through Christ: in each of these four chapters there is what we may call a 'going away' section.

### **Four discussions about going away**

#### **Going away in chapter 7**

Let us look at the first in chapter 7. When the Pharisees sent officers to take him, several verses are devoted to this announcement by Christ.

Jesus then said, 'I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.' The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, "You will seek me and you will not find me", and, "Where I am you cannot come"?' (vv. 33–36)

So we have this in the middle of chapter 7, and it is referring to Christ's 'going away'. When we look at what follows that remark about going away we can see at once what the 'going away' really meant. When they heard it, the Jews couldn't make head nor tail of it, and wondered if he was going on a lecture tour among the Jews of the Dispersion, the Hellenistic Jews, to teach the Greeks or something. And they certainly couldn't understand what he meant when he said, 'You will seek me, and you will not find me.' They were puzzled.

We of course knew, even before we read John 7, what his going away would involve: his death, burial, resurrection and ascension. And so you will notice that what he announces in verse 37 follows upon this announcement of his going away. Though he was for the time being still with them in Palestine, now on the last day, the great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried:

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive . . . (vv. 38–39)

Their actual receiving of the Holy Spirit had to wait until he had *gone away* and was glorified through the cross and the resurrection and the ascension to God's right hand. And then he poured out the Holy Spirit. It is good to get hold of the historical sequence of the events, and the fact that God's self-revelation through Christ was a historical process.

### Going away in chapter 8

Let us look now at chapter 8 for a moment:

So he said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.' So the Jews said, 'Will he kill himself, since he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' (vv. 21–22)

Once more, and to some extent repeating the very words of chapter 7, here our Lord announces again that he is 'going away'. This time the paragraph in which he says he is going away is more extensive than that in chapter 7 and deals with additional matters. As expositors and exegetes we shall have to account for the difference, not as though it were some unpleasant duty but because it will be a pleasure to do so!

We have two chapters in the middle of which Christ announces he is 'going away.'

### Going away in chapter 9

It is not an accident that in chapter 9 he first accosts the man blind from birth, makes clay out of the spittle, puts it on his eyes and tells him to go and wash in the pool that is called Siloam. Then we read:

The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'It is he.' Others said, 'No, but he is like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' So they said to him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." So I went and washed and received my sight.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.' (vv. 8–12)

So Jesus had *gone away* then? It is an interesting part of the miracle, which is also a parable. There followed a fierce debate between the ex-blind man and the Pharisees, and it fills a lot of verses, but the whole debate is in the *absence* of Christ. The man is left by himself to argue with the Pharisees, and eventually they cast him out of the synagogue. Then Christ comes to him (v. 35). So, even chapter 9 has its equivalent of the 'going away'.

## Going away in chapter 10

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. (vv. 11–18)

It is a virtually explicit reference to the cross: the ‘going away’. We shall have to consider why all four chapters have their equivalent of the ‘going away’ and what is the significance of it in the development of the argument.

## Facing the problem of human evil

Now let us come back to chapter 7: not merely to the criticism and suggestions of our Lord’s brothers, but now to what was the initial problem in God’s self-revelation through his Son.

Jesus said to them, ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.’ After saying this, he remained in Galilee. (vv. 6–9)

Here we have from our Lord’s own mouth, his statement of the problem that confronted him and confronted his Father. How would our Lord reveal himself to them, if when he revealed himself he had to testify that their works were evil? The brothers hadn’t got that bit. They were thinking in terms of film star publicity and how to really get yourself known. It was the equivalent of saying: ‘Don’t be content to play this music in your garden shed, get down to the Waterfront Auditorium, and get the publicity! And we’ll see to it that the BBC are there, and then you’ll get a programme maybe, because the people will like it when they hear you.’

But if God’s self-revelation through Christ meant exposing people’s sin, they were not going to like it. It remains true to this day. Suppose I came along after perhaps a week or a fortnight of acquaintance with you. And then I delivered my verdict on you: ‘You are the most despicable, hypocritical deceiving sinner that ever was, worthy of hell itself.’

You would say, ‘I don’t like that.’

And if I said, ‘Well, you’d better, because I’m the Son of God saying it to you!’

You would say, ‘No, you are not!’

You see, if I were merely saying that I am your fellow-citizen, you would say, ‘Well you are entitled to your point of view; and I have mine, and I disagree with you.’

But if, having delivered my verdict, I say that I am the Son of God, you will fight hard to show I am not! How much of that lies behind the Richard Dawkinses of this world, and other atheists? Because, if Jesus is the Son of God risen from the dead, all of us are sinners and helpless to save ourselves from eternal perdition.

### **Christ justifies his teaching**

How will God face the problem and overcome it? Well, I'll tell you what Christ did about it on this occasion. That is easy enough, because it tells us here.

#### *Christ went up in secret*

His brothers had gone up to the feast, telling him to do a spectacular miracle so that his disciples would believe on him. But such was the hatred that when our Lord did miracles (according to Matthew and according to John 8) they said he did them by the power of the devil himself. So ingrained is sin. But when his brothers had gone up, he also went up, not publicly but, as it were, *in secret* (v. 10). Notice that. Chapter 8 ends:

So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus *hid himself* and went out of the temple. (v. 59)

That is the related verb. In chapter 7 he went up 'in secret', 'in hiding', or as we might say 'incognito'. And at the end, when they took up stones to stone him, he 'hid himself'. Why? Why does he hide himself, and why did he go up, not openly but in secret? I suggest to you that, had he gone up with the pilgrims from Nazareth and from Galilee where he was known, he would have been received in a very particular way.

Of course, there would be great excitement in the city about whether he would come. In fact, chapter 7 mentions that:

But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, 'Where is he?' (vv. 10–11)

Some of them had known what he had done the first time in Jerusalem, and how the authorities were seeking to kill him (chapter 5). The local pilgrims at least, walking in the streets of Jerusalem were wondering whether he would come to this feast. Where is he?

And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, 'He is a good man', others said, 'No, he is leading the people astray.' Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. (vv. 12–13)

Notice that use of 'the Jews'. The ordinary crowd came from all over the place; but they were afraid of the locals: the Jews—the strict Judaeans and particularly the Judaeans authorities. To start talking about someone 'being Messiah' when many people would interpret that phrase as political messianism (one come to raise the crowd against the Romans) was very dangerous stuff. The authorities were nervous about it, so when people discussed whether he was a good man or whether he led the people astray, they said it under their breath. They weren't going to let the authorities hear about it. It was like it was in Russia in

the bad old days. You didn't always talk openly about the gospel in case the authorities heard what you were saying, or some informer heard.

### *Christ taught openly*

About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. (v. 14)

Why did he go in secret? Well, if he had gone with the pilgrims everybody would have known him, and people would have been agog and said 'This is Jesus!' The excitement of it all would mean the crowd would get to know. So he waited until they had gone, and as far as they knew he wasn't coming. Then he went up completely incognito, and the vast multitude of people wouldn't have known who he was. There were no mobile phones or photographs on phones in those days, so they wouldn't have recognized him. And he went up into the temple, and he taught. It was not until when subsequently he began to say certain things that they realized who he was, such as when he said to them:

'Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?'

The crowd answered, 'You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?' (v. 19)

They didn't know who he was. They didn't recognize him, facially. And so he quoted to them what happened the last time, when he had healed a man on the Sabbath. Then the penny dropped.

Some of the people of *Jerusalem* therefore said, 'Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?' (v. 25)

That is, those who were Jerusalemites, and therefore remembered the earlier occasion when the authorities wanted to kill him, now began to recognize him.

First of all then, he went up deliberately incognito. They wouldn't know that this was Jesus. They wouldn't know that this was the man who claimed to be the Messiah; and he went up and he taught.

Notice that his tactic was, first, to teach. You might ask, 'What did he teach?' We are not told, but only that he went up into the temple and taught. What he taught on those occasions we are not told here.

The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?' So Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.' (vv. 15-18)

He first taught, and now he appeals to the motivation behind his teaching.



*The primacy of teaching in the tactics of God*

Let's pause there and think about tactics. If we are concerned with witnessing to a hostile world, what is the first thing you would say about Jesus? How do you get behind your friend's atheism and his prejudice and hostility? Well, here our Lord, himself incognito, deliberately teaches. The people are impressed with his teaching. He had not been to the rabbinical schools. You could tell if someone had been to a rabbinical school (as you can sometimes tell which Bible college someone has been to, by the phraseology they use), but this man hadn't even been on a course with the rabbis. Oh, but what teaching! Even if it were simply teaching, and if he were not the Son of God! What a brilliant teacher he was!

Now, I'll fill you in on what kinds of things he taught while he was in Jerusalem, in case you're wondering. I'll have to have Luke's help. Think of that story about the Prodigal Son (should it be called 'The Prodigal Father?'). What a brilliant thing it is! Once you have heard it, it is unforgettable. Or think of that story of the Good Samaritan! Their brilliance is such that the literary critic C. S. Lewis says that if the apostles invented the character of Jesus Christ, we had better fall down and worship the apostles, because they were absolute geniuses!

We haven't the time now to talk in great length about the teaching of Christ, but I would like to emphasize, as we pass by, the glory and the wonder of them. But notice what he says when the people remark upon the brilliance of his teaching, and ask how he knew letters, never having learned; that is, never having formally studied with the rabbis (v. 15). Where did he get this teaching from then? He immediately says, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me' (v. 16). In other words, at the moment, he disclaims that he is the source of the teaching; he ascribes it to the one that sent him. It was mysterious language to the crowd, as we shall find. But he then utters a guarantee:

If any man wills to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself. (v. 17 RV)

It is a test that we can apply, even to our unconverted friends. Here is Christ's guarantee. If you want to know that this teaching is of God, there is one condition: that you are willing to do God's will when you know it. If a man is sincere and says to God: 'Now, if you exist and if Jesus is your Son, show me if this is true that he is the Son of God, whatever that means, and if you show me I am prepared to do your will and all that that may mean', then here is the guarantee that God will show that to the person concerned. But if you come to God and say, 'God, I would be interested, actually, to know whether Jesus Christ is your Son, as these Christians say. Of course, I want to make it clear from the start that, even if you say he is, I am not necessarily prepared to follow him', then you will not get very far with God. So there is both a condition and a guarantee.

Then we see his own motivation:

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. (v. 18)

You can see, perhaps, why he stresses this in the context. When he had earlier claimed: 'My Father is working until now, and I am working' (5:17), they had become indignant that

he made himself equal with God, and they were about to destroy him. He is now telling them, 'You admire my teaching and find it brilliant and convincing. It's not mine; it's his who sent me.' He doesn't claim the glory for it. And to a religiously minded populace, his steadfast, deliberate purpose to give God the glory for his teaching, and not attract glory to himself, is a sign of his truthfulness.

He that seeks the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.  
(7:18 RV)

Therefore, the first answer to those who wanted to kill him was his teaching—its quality, its brilliance, its source, and his motivation.

### **Christ justifies his miracle**

Now he will face them; he's not running away from the problem.

'Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?' The crowd answered, 'You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?' Jesus answered them, 'I did one work, and you all marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement.' (vv. 19–24)

I don't know whether you have ever used this argument with anybody. Perhaps you regard it as irrelevant to your personal testimony to your unconverted friends. But what is the point of it? He has first of all justified his teaching: its moral quality and its truth, and that it comes from God; he's not seeking the glory from it. Now he proceeds to justify his miracle, and he calls upon the people to use their moral judgment on the quality of his miracle.

#### *Calling on people to use their moral judgment*

That is a very interesting thing. You might ask, 'Can you call upon an unregenerate person to use his moral judgment on Christ's miracles?' Yes, you can indeed. He does. He calls upon them to use their moral judgment to assess the moral quality of his miracle.

Now, in general it is a point worth making about Jesus' miracles that are recorded in the Gospels, and to contrast them with the silly stories that you will find in the church fathers and in the apocryphal New Testament literature. The apocryphal literature has all sorts of miracles, such as the one that relates how, when Jesus was a child, he played with the other boys in the street. They were making models of animals from the mud they had scooped together after it had rained. Jesus made a model like the rest of the boys, a model of a bird, and presently the bird flew up into heaven and flew away!

That is given as a supposed miracle that Jesus did; but I wonder whom it would convince. Was it that Jesus did miracles as a toy? No, no! The miracles that he did—notice their quality in the Gospels—they are not just toys! Some of them are to call attention of course: they are 'wonders'; but then a lot of the miracles have a message. His multiplying of the loaves and

the fishes was a miracle to call attention to a deeper truth: that he himself is the bread of life. His giving sight to the blind man who never had sight before is a miracle, of course, and it calls our attention to Christ. But as the subsequent discussion shows, it raises the question again of Christ's ability to give spiritual sight. And we could think of other examples.

So here the particular miracle that he has to justify is the miracle he performed on a man on a previous visit to Jerusalem (John 5). He healed the man on the Sabbath day and told him to take up his bed and walk. Now our Lord goes to the trouble to justify the miracle. He said to them, 'For this cause Moses gave you circumcision' (see 7:22). Why did Moses give them circumcision? Actually, circumcision preceded Moses. Witness the story in Genesis of God asking Abraham and his son Ishmael and all the males to be circumcised. That was long before Moses. It wasn't that Moses first instituted circumcision for the Jewish race. That had long since been commanded by God.

Then why mention that Moses actually recorded it in the law? Because Moses, when he wrote the law, said that it should be eight days after a male child's birth that he should be circumcised (Lev 12:3). What happened if the child should be eight days old, and that eighth day was a Sabbath day? What is to be done then? They had to keep the Sabbath, but how would they keep the Sabbath if they had to circumcise the boy? We should understand that, among the Pharisees, circumcision was regarded as a work that made a man complete. Well, the implication from Moses is very clear: keep the Sabbath, yes, but circumcision takes precedence. And if the eighth day, when a child is to be circumcised, is the Sabbath day, go ahead and do the circumcising, Sabbath or no Sabbath! Circumcision takes precedence, and Moses himself lays it down that it must happen on the eighth day, no matter what day that might fall on.

Now watch our Lord argue case law.

If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? (v. 23)

The idea is of making a man 'completely whole', a 'whole man completely whole'. The Pharisees held that a man had to be circumcised, and that completed the man, so to speak: it made him a full man and a full citizen of Israel. He is saying to them now, 'If that can be done on the Sabbath, and Moses' law not be infringed but rather kept, how can you say I am wrong if I made, not one little part of a man whole, according to the law, but if I make a complete man perfectly whole on the Sabbath?' He appeals to the people therefore, to use their judgment on his miracle and its moral implications, and on what the miracle involved: making a complete man perfectly whole on the Sabbath. So here is Christ arguing first the quality and source of his teaching, and now the moral quality of his miracles.

#### *Christ's arguments about the Sabbath in Matthew's Gospel*

You may think I am emphasizing things that are irrelevant in order to justify my views; but let me remind you of what Matthew records for us in chapter 12 of his Gospel. The Pharisees had twice accused our Lord of working on the Sabbath, of healing people on the Sabbath. The first occasion was when his disciples picked and ate ears of grain and ate them (vv. 1-8). On the second occasion, there was a man who had a withered hand, and the Pharisees were there,

and they watched if he would heal him on the Sabbath (vv. 9–14). Then, they watched as he healed a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute; and when he healed him, they said, ‘He heals by Beelzebub!’ (vv. 22–24). They couldn’t deny that it was a supernatural act of power. Not being able to deny it, the only way they could refuse to believe that therefore he was the Messiah, was to attribute the work of power to Satan himself. And what did our Lord do when they attributed his miracle to Satan—Beelzebub—the prince of demons? He didn’t do what I would have been tempted to do. I would have said, ‘Gentlemen, you are so perverse; it’s not worth my while talking to you!’ and walked off. He didn’t. He stood and argued with them, according to Matthew.

*Argument 1:* ‘I’m doing it by the power of the devil, am I, gentlemen? Now let’s work out the logic of that. So the devil has turned against himself, has he? That’s a very interesting thing, for if the devil has now joined in warfare against demons he will destroy his own kingdom, won’t he?’ (see vv. 25–27). That is the first argument. Someone might say you shouldn’t argue. Well, he does, anyway!

*Argument 2:* If a robber baron has a big castle and has a lot of prisoners who are refugees working for nothing in his gardens, and you’re going to deliver them, you had better think twice! First you had better bind the strong man in the castle before you try to liberate his prisoners. ‘And I am liberating people from Beelzebub, am I?’ said Christ. ‘What does that show? That Beelzebub is on my side, or that I am on his side? Only if I have overcome him, can I deliver his goods’ (see v. 29).

*Argument 3:* ‘Your sons cast out demons, don’t they? Well, when they cast out demons, why don’t you say that they do it by the power of Beelzebub? You would say that they do it by the power of God. Why is it that, when I do it, you say that I am doing it in the power of the devil?’

Well, it was for one obvious reason: when their sons cast out demons in the name of God, their sons didn’t claim to be the Messiah. When Jesus cast out the demons, he did claim to be the Messiah. The only way they could escape the logic of the situation—the implications of the great work he had done against Satan—and deny that he was the Messiah, was to say that he did it in the power of Beelzebub. They were prepared to call that ‘black’ which in every other circumstance they would have called ‘white’. So determined were they to reject him (see vv. 27–28).

Why did he bother to argue with them? In that context in Matthew he is talking about the final judgment. When lost souls stand before Christ at the final judgment, and he has to pronounce eternal perdition on them, he will first expose the irrationality and the deliberate illogic of their refusal to believe! No one who is cast into hell will ever be able to say, ‘I don’t know why I am being thus condemned.’

### *The people recognize Jesus*

Here in John 7 we see Christ arguing, and here he argues the quality of his teaching and its source and what it points to, and how people can know it is of God if they want to: there is a test that they can apply to it. And he is then arguing the quality of his miracles.

For some of the people in Jerusalem, the penny dropped: Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?' (They are referring of course to the rulers.) 'It can't be, can it?' (so the Greek implies).

Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, 'Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.' (vv. 25–27)

It is a little uncertain where they got that notion from: it's not in the Old Testament. Perhaps it was from the notion that 'God's Messenger shall come suddenly to his temple' (see Mal 3:1), from where, no one ever knew. 'We know this man,' they said. 'He comes from Nazareth. We know where he comes from, so he can't be the Messiah.'

It is a kind of popular superstition that people hang on to, and our Lord answers it: 'Well, yes, of course you know where I come from, namely Nazareth. But that's only a small matter; the other is that you don't know where I come from! For where I come from is not now a question of what geographical city I come from; but where does my teaching come from? Where do I come from?'

In other words, he came from God. Yes, he is human, but he comes from God. And so already he is asking them to face the fact that, even according to his teaching, he is from God. And others said, 'When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?' (v. 31). And there was a division because of him.

### **Christ speaks of going away**

So we have had the evidence so far of his teaching, and the evidence of his miracles and their quality. But that isn't the final story, for now he talks about his 'going away'.

Christ is the last word from God, so Hebrews 1 has it. But Christ isn't the last witness. He was going away, and after he went away those that believed on him would receive the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the strategies of God, Christ: came, gave his teaching, did his miracles, gave his testimony and witness before Pontius Pilate. But that is not the whole message, is it? The last word, not the last witness. It was to be the Holy Spirit that should be the last witness, and that living water that should satisfy the heart.

This was the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles. We are told by those who are authorities on these matters that the people were to leave their homes and make booths and live in them for a week in memory of the time when they came out of Egypt, that is, when their fathers came out of Egypt. They had lived in tents, and God caused them to live in tents, for all those long years when they went across the wilderness, until they came to their promised land. So the people now sitting in their tents were to remember that.

Now they had arrived, and this was the harvest of the year—not the barley harvest at spring, but the harvest of figs and grapes and pomegranates and other things at the end of the summer. Now they were reaping the full benefits of the great land that God had given them. And they were to look back as they sat now in their booths and ask, 'How did we get here

when our fathers were once slaves in Egypt?’ They had to remember all the way that the Lord had led them. They had now arrived, but they were to recall how they got there.

Among the many things they were to remember was that, when they were travelling across the wilderness and they lacked water, God did a miracle and gave them water out of the rock! He did it twice, in fact (Exod 17; Num 20). And so to help the people remember it, even in the time of our Lord, while he was at that feast, the priest would send someone down to the pool, to the water supply, and he would fill a golden pitcher with the water. He would have brought it up and poured it at the base of the altar to recall how the Lord had satisfied the people in their thirst in the wilderness. Oh, but there was more to it than that, wasn’t there? Because if you read the Prophets, long after Israel had come into the land, God had spoken through prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah of how one day God would pour out his Spirit on those that were thirsty, and floods on the dry ground!<sup>19</sup> So the Feast of Tabernacles was not merely a remembrance of the past; it was a prophecy of the future.

As they poured the water at the base of the altar the people cried, ‘Save Lord now, we beseech you!’ And there on that day, when God incarnate stood among them, when they had for the last time poured the water at the base of the altar, he lifted up his voice above the throng and he cried,

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ (vv. 37–38)

‘As the Scripture has said,’ and it has many times said that God would pour out water on those that were thirsty. Here is the prophecy about to be fulfilled; not there and then at once in those next five minutes, but when Jesus was glorified (v. 39). When he had been crucified, buried, was risen and ascended, he would pour out the Holy Spirit on them, as the prophets themselves had promised.

Here is the satisfaction of receiving the Holy Spirit, and thus knowing God and, with him, knowing God’s plan because you know God’s Christ, not only what he has done in the past, but God’s plan for the ultimate future.

## Conclusion

Does that now begin to make some sense? I hope that it begins to make sense of God’s strategies for making himself known through the incarnation of his Son, for his public ministry of teaching and his public ministry of works. And when, in spite of it, they rejected him and put him to a cross, we are to know that his ‘going away’ had been already planned, and was a deliberate step in the direction of the coming of the Holy Spirit to satisfy the human heart and mind.

At least this is the beginnings of the first part of our story.

---

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Isaiah 44 and Zechariah 12.

## The Third Journey

### *Part 3—John 8*

#### **Our studies so far**

We are currently studying chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the Gospel of John, which is the record of our Lord's visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles and then the Feast of Dedication. In our earlier studies we noticed that these chapters deal with God's strategy for making himself known through Jesus Christ our Lord: through his birth in Bethlehem of the Virgin; through his public ministry; and then through his 'going away' by the cross, burial, resurrection and ascension to God's right hand, and his pouring out of the Spirit of God on those that should believe on him.

We then looked in some detail at chapter 7. There are in fact five major portions to chapter 7. The first sets out the problem as it was seen by the brothers of the Lord Jesus. Why would he persist in remaining in Galilee when he ought to go down to Jerusalem to gain publicity and popularity? Our Lord mentioned to them the basic problem facing himself and the Father: that he must inevitably bear witness of the world that its works are evil, and therefore there would be resistance to the message that he had to proclaim. How God would overcome this resistance, and by what methods and techniques, is the story of John chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10.

In chapter 7 our Lord eventually goes to the feast, but does so deliberately incognito so that, when he went up halfway through the feast and slipped into Jerusalem with scarce anybody noticing, and went into the temple to teach, the people who were listening did not immediately recognize who he was. And our Lord had done it deliberately that way so that he might concentrate their attention, first on his *teaching*, and then on his *miracles*, and invite them to use their moral judgment on his teaching and on his miracles. They were part of God's self-revelation through his Son. To this very present day his teaching and his miracles remain important elements in the witness of the Holy Spirit to us, and through us to the world at large, if we would advocate the person of our Lord Jesus.

To witness to the quality of his teaching, seeing in many respects it is unique, raises the question 'What is its source?' And it is not only the quality of his teaching, but his motivation in teaching it: he did not seek his own glory. It is a thing to be noticed about our Lord that, though he claimed deity, he was not a power-crazed, self-propagating, religious machine. He did not seek his own glory! He could say in one and the same breath: 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth . . . you have given all things to your Son' and 'I am gentle and lowly in heart' (see Luke 10:21–22 and Matt 11:29). That balance of character is a very potent part of our witness to our blessed Lord Jesus.

These chapters bear witness, therefore, to his teaching: its moral qualities and to his motivation in teaching it; and the open invitation to people that there is an experiment that they can do to find out whether his teaching is of God or not. If they are willing to do God's will when they know it, Christ guarantees that God will show them that the teaching of Christ is of God (John 7:16–17).

And next we considered, not only the witness of his teaching, but also the moral quality of his miracles. When he performed miracles he did not (as the Jews accused him of doing) break the word of God as given us in the Old Testament in general, and the law of Moses in particular. And when he had argued the moral quality of his miracle, he appealed to the crowd once more to use their moral judgment on him. That is a perfectly good thing to do. It has been done by many preachers in modern times, such as C. S. Lewis and John Stott and others, who have pointed out that you have to make up your mind whether Jesus is a lunatic or whether he is true and his word is true that he is God incarnate.

The result of his teaching in the temple therefore caused a dispute among the crowd. They raised a question about his origin because, according to them, when the Messiah came no one would know where he came from. That was a bit of superstition, I think. But our Lord now urges upon them that there are two senses in which you can ask where he came from. If you mean, where was his home on earth, well, he came from Nazareth; and that they all knew. The more important question is not whether he is Jesus of Nazareth but rather, did he come from heaven? Is God his Father?

When the dispute disturbed the Pharisees they sent officers to take him. Notice please that this wasn't an accident that unfortunately cut short his ministry. He said to the officers, 'But I'm *going away* anyway, so you needn't trouble, gentlemen.' For the 'going away' was a deliberate part in making God known. It was not an unfortunate cutting short of his ministry. But he was going where they would not find him. That cryptic language got them thinking, though they couldn't solve the conundrum to start with. He was not going on a lecture tour; he was going back to where he came from — to heaven.

In the fourth place, John records what our Lord did on the last day of the feast when the water had been poured down for the last time at the side of the altar. It reminded them of the water that God gave to Israel in the wilderness out from the rock, but it was also provoking their minds to the promises in the Old Testament through Isaiah, Joel, and many a prophet, that the days would come when God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh. And one of the evidences here for his claims is that he said,

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (vv. 37–39)

He was already appealing to the people that would believe on him. Anybody that believed on the Lord Jesus there and then, before he went away, would find their faith confirmed that he was the Messiah, because he would pour out God's Holy Spirit upon them. So it was with the apostles and the crowd in Jerusalem. Witness what is recorded in Acts 2. Facing the crowd that had actually heard Christ and, in spite of it, had crucified him, Peter says that Christ has



now risen, and here is the evidence: he has poured forth his Holy Spirit, as prophesied in the Old Testament (v. 33). Of course, it is for us likewise, that the Holy Spirit confirms and vindicates our faith in Christ.

So our Lord announced this great element of salvation: satisfaction. In the context, it is the satisfaction that God gives. Amongst other things, it is the satisfaction that Jesus is in fact the promised Messiah and the satisfaction of the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, so that all the prophets and their promises shall be fulfilled. It led to a further discussion and debate in the crowd:

When they heard these words, some of the people said, 'This really is the Prophet.' (v. 40)

By this they were referring to what Moses had said, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me . . .' (Deut 18:15). Some said, 'No, it isn't that exactly, but this is the Christ.' And others said, 'But that can't be, because he comes out of Galilee' (see v. 41).

So once more you have the debate among the crowd that you get in part two of the five portions in chapter 7. Here it comes as a result of his ministry in the temple when the crowd debated where he comes from. And they said, somewhat superstitiously, 'We know where this man comes from; and when the Christ comes we won't know where he comes from.' And our Lord said, 'Well, in a sense you do know where I come from, that is, from Nazareth; but in another sense you don't know where I come from. You don't know the God I come from: he sent me. The question is not merely the place I come from; it's from whom do I come?' (see vv. 27-29).

So now again, after his announcement of the coming of the Holy Spirit to those that believe on him and the satisfaction it would bring, some think he is the Messiah, some the Prophet prophesied by Moses. But, faced with the claim that this is the Messiah, some said 'But that can't be, because he comes out of Galilee, and *Scripture has said* that he comes from Bethlehem. He is of the seed of David. He comes from the village where David was (see vv. 40-43). That seemed to them a very good argument. It was scripturally based. They are not now basing this on current superstition. But notice in the last section as chapter seven comes to its end, what has been happening. For even as far as his birth was concerned, he didn't come from Nazareth, and he didn't come from Galilee. He came from Bethlehem. He *was* born in Bethlehem of Judaea. He *was* of the seed of David! Why didn't they grasp it? Well, listen to the Pharisees, when the officers come back empty handed. They haven't arrested Christ nor brought him to the Sanhedrin, and the Pharisees ask, 'Why have you not brought him?' They said, 'But no one ever spoke like this man.' They couldn't make head nor tail of him. He had told them: 'Don't bother because I'm going away anyway!' The Pharisees thereupon denounced these officers:

The Pharisees answered them, 'Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.' (vv. 47-48)

They said, 'Are you also led astray? Have any of the leaders believed on him, or the Pharisees? No, of course they haven't! And who are you? You don't know the Scriptures like

we do. You are under a curse, and in your ignorance you ought to be asking if any of the rulers have believed in him and follow their example. We haven't believed!

They were in front of Nicodemus, and he said, in effect, 'But, gentlemen, does our law condemn anybody before it first hears him? Why didn't you invite him to come himself and tell us about himself?'

To which their response was, 'Are you also from Galilee? Arise and look and see' (that is, in Scripture) 'no prophet comes from Galilee!' Well, perhaps, if that is the correct reading of some of the manuscripts, they were in their haste overlooking things. Certain prophets had come from Galilee, Jonah among them. But perhaps it should read, 'Arise and look and see that *the* Prophet doesn't come from Galilee', meaning the Messiah (see vv. 50–52).

But Jesus hadn't come from Galilee originally. Yes, but they knew he had been walking in Galilee! Now, isn't that curious? If the Pharisees had asked him, politely, to come, so that they could interview him, they would have found out that he was born in Bethlehem. The fact that he was in Galilee most of the time made them think: 'Well, here is evidence enough—he's not the Messiah!' Why was he in Galilee? Because these same Pharisees would have killed him if he had come down to Judaea! It was their own hatred that had kept him in Galilee!

Notice the principle involved. So very often men manufacture, by their own rejection of Christ, the very grounds upon which they reject him. It was their own hostility that kept him in Galilee, as the beginning of chapter 7 has shown us.

### **The light of the world**

We must move on quickly now and consider chapter 8. I am going to suggest to you without much proof and evidence, for time's sake, that there are five major parts to this chapter. Christ will announce himself as the light of the world:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (v. 12)

Let us ponder that statement a moment, and its implications: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me . . .' Oh, do notice it! Not now just 'whoever believes in me.' He is the light of the world that sheds light on our path. He is on the move, and we must be on the move as well. This was the Feast of Tabernacles when they looked backwards to what their fathers had experienced in the wilderness when they came out of Egypt and were on their way to the promised land. God had provided them with water out of the rock. He had done it twice. But more than that. So that they might find their way across the wilderness, God not only gave them a tabernacle, but his presence in it was a cloud of glory by day and a fire by night. The *light* went with them to mark out the way.

## First conversation (8:12–20)

### *The validity of his single testimony*

So now our Lord is claiming, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness'. The light is there not to be merely surveyed; it is a light that guides us by shining light on our path. That raises the question: Where is the path going to?

Notice that in this passage the Pharisees said to him:

'You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.' Jesus answered, 'Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.' (vv. 13–14)

So what is all that about? Well, when he said, 'I am the light of the world', they said, 'But, listen, that's just you saying that. Your witness is not . . .' And here we shall have to slightly adjust the English translation: 'Your witness is not *valid*.' Anybody can get up and say, 'I am the light of the world.' That doesn't make his claim valid. And they said to our Lord, 'You stand there and say, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life", but your witness is not valid; you're just the one that says it!'

Our Lord's reply was twofold. We must attempt to see the point of the first argument he uses:

Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is [valid] . . .

Why?

for I know where I came from and where I am going. (v. 14)

What is the logic of that? Normally, in human affairs, you would want what somebody says as a witness to be corroborated by what another witness says. There are occasions when it is perfectly sensible to believe the witness of one solitary man. We thought earlier about an analogy that I made up to help myself grasp it. In medieval times people did not know about Australia. In the part of the world where I come from, Ipswich, there is a very big house in the middle of the town that has four big bay windows. It was built in the 1400s. Beneath each bay window is plasterwork full of symbols, and on these four bays are represented the *four* continents of the world. The dear souls were very good artists, but they only knew of four continents. Australia and the rest hadn't yet been discovered of course.

Now consider the following situation. In those far-off days you could confidently assert that, if you stood facing the sun at midday, you could be absolutely certain, as a law of nature, the sun would have gone up on your left hand and would eventually go down on your right hand. But suppose that, in those medieval times, a gentleman had appeared, who knows from where, and he said, 'Oh, but gentlemen, in the land I come from, if you stand facing the sun at mid-day you can be absolutely sure that the sun had gone up on your right hand and will go down on your left.' This would have been absolutely contrary to what the people of

Ipswich believed, and thought they knew from experience. Of course, the man came from Australia or New Zealand.

Now the question arises, would the people of Ipswich have been right to believe him, even though he was the only one who could witness to this? Of course, if they disputed with him and said, 'You are the only one who says this and it sounds absurd to us. It goes against all our experience, and it can't be true. And we are not going to believe you, because you are the only one we have ever met who has ever said it,' he could reply, 'But, gentlemen, I know where I come from and where I am going back to.'

How marvellous to hear the words of our Lord, 'I am the light of life. You follow me, and I will light your path!'

'Lord, where are you going to?'

'I am going to heaven,' says he, 'and to the Father.'

'But how do I know there is a heaven to go to? You are the only one that says so.'

And Christ would say, 'But I know where I come from, and where I am going.'

Yes, we are on the move. He is the light of life. We have to follow him. How do we know there is a heaven to go to?

So he goes on to discuss in more detail that, in one sense, he is the only one who bears witness and, in another sense, he is not alone: he bears witness, and the Father bears witness. And we can come back to that in a moment.

## **Second conversation (8:21–30)**

### *His going away*

We notice in chapter 8 the 'going away' section. In many of its details it is similar to the section we had in chapter 7. But now you will notice that in chapter 8 the 'going away' paragraph contains more information than its counterpart in chapter 7.

So he said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.' So the Jews said, 'Will he kill himself, since he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' He said to them, 'You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.' (vv. 21–24)

We notice now, therefore, not only his 'going away' but the two different orders: 'You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.' So now we need not only to be sure that there is a heaven to go to and he lights our way through life, but something else in addition. How do you make the transition from this world to that world, if we are of this world and he is not of this world, and we are from beneath, and he is from above? He is going away to that other world: 'You shall seek me,' he said to his contemporaries, 'and you shall not find me. And moreover, where I am you cannot come. You shall die in your sins.'

What is the transition? How do you get from this world to that world—from this temporary to that eternal? You might say, 'You take off from earth, and "There's a home for

little children | Above the bright blue sky . . ."<sup>20</sup> and if you go up far enough you will come to it.' Well, it's not blue out there; it's darkest night anyway!

How far up do you have to go to get to heaven? It isn't just a question of getting out of this world of space to some other space, is it? Notice the condition: 'Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins' (v. 24). That is a very profound claim. We must grasp what it means that 'I am'.

'I am? I am what?

No, not 'I am what?' It is, 'I am'. Most scholars nowadays think this is a translation of phrases that you find in Isaiah the prophet, where God says, 'I am.'<sup>21</sup> He says here, 'I am . . .' and our versions have 'I am *he*.' The Hebrew is (*ʾāni hū'*): 'I, He'. When the Jews translated that into Greek in Alexandria or elsewhere, and came across this phrase, *ʾāni hū'*—'I, He', (Hebrew idiom, of course) they translated it in Greek *ego eimi*, I AM. It is a title of God. There is none beside him, he is the Eternal, 'from everlasting to everlasting' (Ps 90:2). He is the eternal God, and Jesus Christ is saying to his contemporaries here on earth, I AM the light of this world; follow me. I know where I came from, the Father bears witness to me, and I am leading you to where I came from. The way across is the belief that I, Jesus, I AM.'

He is the Eternal. And the transition is made as we believe in him: that he is indeed not merely a good teacher; he is *the* I AM incarnate. 'This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17:3). 'Fail to believe that I am,' says Christ, 'and you shall die in your sins, and where I am you never can come.'

That is the transition. It was difficult for a Jew to take, wasn't it? Jesus was claiming deity. When they continued to question him, Jesus told them that it was just as he had been telling them. They were to take him literally when he said that 'I am'.

So they said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.' They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.' (vv. 25–29)

So, where on earth can we come to know that Jesus is the I AM? Well there is a place on earth where God solves the problem that we began with in chapter 7: 'the world . . . hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil' (v. 7). But if, because you reject that testimony that your works are evil, you reject him, you will die in your sins, and where he goes you never can go. He is going back to heaven. How can I be brought to see and to believe that his claim is true that the Father is with him and in him? There is a place on earth where you can meet God, as a sinner, and be unafraid and know that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that, of course, is Calvary with its consequences: 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you

<sup>20</sup> Albert Midlane (1825-1909), 'There's a friend for little children' (1859).

<sup>21</sup> For instance, "'You are my witnesses,'" declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he"' (Isa 43:10).

will know'. It is in that lifting up with all its tremendous meaning of his sacrifice for sin, but also with all its subsequent happenings: the burial, the resurrection and the ascension. Then shall you know! This is how the transition is made.

## Professed believers

### *Christ's claim*

But there's more than that, isn't there?

As he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, "You will become free"?' (vv. 30–33)

Christ says in response to their objection: 'I was speaking of the practice of sin, gentlemen. For whoever commits sin—practises sin constantly—is a slave of sin. And the slave doesn't abide in the house forever; the son abides forever' (see vv. 34–35).

Now that could be true of a Roman household, for instance. The slaves moved around the house. They served their masters, but they didn't necessarily stay in the house forever. When it pleased the master, he sold them to somebody else. The freeborn son abode in the house.

There is a story in Genesis like that, isn't there? Abraham had two sons, one from the slave woman, and he was a slave boy. His name was Ishmael. He stayed in Abraham's home here on earth a while, but he wasn't allowed to continue, and in the end he was sent out. The true freeborn son of Abraham stayed in the house and inherited all that was his father's.<sup>22</sup>

And here is Christ saying these marvellous words. You start the journey as you begin to follow the light down life's pathway. How do you know there is a heaven at the end of the road? Christ says, 'I know where I came from, and I know where I am going to.' Then how do I make the transition? 'You make the transition when you, temporary creatures of the dust, believe that I am—the eternal I AM that I AM,' says Christ. And believing and receiving him, yes, you will make the transition to eternity. In fact, in one sense you have already made it! And what will life be like there? 'Well, you are in training,' says Christ. 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free . . . So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed' (vv. 31–32, 36). You will be freeborn sons of God in the Father's house eternally.

### *False disciples' true paternity exposed*

There follows a long argument, and let us skip over it for the moment. The Jews are offended by his statement. They claim to be Abraham's seed:

'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father

---

<sup>22</sup> See Genesis 16–21 and Galatians 4.

did.' They said to him, 'We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.' (vv. 39–41)

They were speaking like true Jews, because in Hosea God talks about Mother Israel having had children by her lovers, the false gods: children of prostitution. 'We weren't born of fornication,' they say. 'We have one Father, even God.'

'That is very odd,' says Christ, 'for if God were your Father you would love me, for I came forth from God' (see v. 42).

So they got angry as he told them straight:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (v. 44)

When God said that if they took the fruit they would surely die, Satan came along and said, 'No, that's a lie. That's not true; you will not surely die.' Believing his lie led to their spiritual death, and it wasn't one generation more before it led to the first murder (see Gen 3–4).

So the question of parentage is to the fore. Having been exposed by him, they turned on him, and they said to him, 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?' (v. 48). Now if you accused somebody in that time of being a Samaritan you were, among other things, casting doubt on his parentage. Was he a full, trueborn Jew, or was he of doubtful parentage by having been mixed up with Gentiles, like the Samaritans were? They were accusing him of being of uncertain parentage, not a genuine Jew, and of having a demon. Our Lord answered them in great detail. But let us notice here his final claim:

Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' (v. 58)

Not 'before Abraham was I was' but 'before Abraham was *I am*.' And because he is that, he can say, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death' (v. 51). He is the eternal. Before Abraham was, he was. 'In the beginning was the Word' (1:1). He is the great I AM that I AM of eternity.

Now, when he says you will never see death, he doesn't say you won't see dying. The majority of the Lord's people will see the process of dying. It could be sudden, or it could be long and drawn out: virtually painless or painful. But what a believer will never see is *death* and what 'death' means. It is not just the cessation of life on this earth; it is what lies beyond it. That is death; it is called in Scripture *the second death* (e.g. Rev 2:11; 20:6). No believer shall ever see it, not to all eternity, but will pass into the presence of the eternal. This is not to pass into some vague impersonal atmosphere ('Brahman', as the Hindus say) but to a personal God, forever personal, in the person of Jesus Christ his Son.

And so you may care to put the two claims side by side. They stand in history side by side, and we have to make up our minds which to believe. Said the serpent, the devil, to Eve: 'Did God say that if you eat you shall surely die? Fancy that. I may tell you, you will not die! Eat it! You won't die!'

Well, that's what he says. And here stands our Lord, saying: 'He that keeps my word shall not see death.'

One of them is telling a lie, isn't he? And you will have to make up your mind, which is which.

'Eat the fruit; be independent of God. Don't be bothered by what he says. And you shall not die.' Oh what a story has followed that lie!

Here stands the Eternal: lifted up, crucified, dead and buried, risen again and ascended into heaven. He says, 'He that keeps my word shall not see death.'

He is the light of life, therefore. He is the light of the world. We that follow him shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.

### **The first story in the chapter: the adulteress**

If you want to start that journey, where would you begin? You want to be sure that you are starting in the right place, so to speak. Well, textual critics or no textual critics, let me tell you a story. The scribes and the Pharisees brought into the temple a woman taken in adultery, and said,

Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say? (8:-5)

Now this story, because of its contents, has been frequently named 'the story about the woman taken in adultery'. That is a side issue. The real purpose of the story (or at least the occasion of the story) is what we are told here: 'This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him' (v. 6). The woman taken in adultery and her case were merely a thing that they were citing as a possible means of finding some ground for accusing him. And the story comes to its tremendous climax when his would-be accusers turn round and file out. It is the story of how Christ overcame and exposed the sinfulness of his would-be accusers. That is what the story is about. That they took a woman in adultery and posed this question was only a means to their end. They were hoping to have some ground for accusing him.

How would they accuse him? If he said, 'Yes, do that. Moses commanded it in the law, therefore stone the woman,' they would have run off to Pilate and said, 'This Jesus is encouraging people to take the law into their hands and execute people.' Whereas the Romans gave the Jews many freedoms but withdrew from them the right to take life. They would have had to get Pilate to do it. So if Jesus was encouraging the people to execute this woman, or anybody else, he would be breaking Roman law and be in trouble. So that way round, they would have accused him.

If he said, 'No, don't stone her,' they would have gone to the people and said, 'Well, there you are. He makes out he keeps Moses' law, but he doesn't, does he? Moses said she should be stoned and, faced with this case, he says, "No, you don't have to stone her." So he's a fraud. He isn't the Messiah.' They thought they had him both ways.

What would he do then about the guilt of sin? Notice, they are not asking him whether he thinks adultery is right or wrong, or whether they were being too harsh, and should have



regarded it as a very small thing, like the moderns do. No, they are not asking about that. They are asking: 'Should the sentence of the law of Moses be carried out? What will he say regarding Moses and his law?'

When they put the question to him, we are told that he bowed down and wrote with his finger on the ground. Now I am going to be very fanciful. We are not told what he wrote on the ground, and many have been the theories; and people have felt in their hearts absolutely convinced that their theory was right and they could tell you what he wrote. 'But, that's all fanciful,' you say. Well, if other people have been fanciful, I don't see why I shouldn't be for a moment! Only, what I am going to say, I didn't think it up and, in fact, it isn't fanciful. I am simply going to quote you the Old Testament.

We are thinking about Moses and the law, are we not? Where did he get the law from? He got it when God appeared on Mount Sinai and told Moses to bring up two tablets of stone. God enunciated his law and gave the tablets to Moses, 'written with the finger of God' (Exod 31:18). And Christ stooped down and 'wrote with his finger on the ground' (John 8:6).

Moses had scarce got hold of the tablets when they heard a noise in the camp. God told Moses to get back down quickly because the people had corrupted their way upon the earth. And to their horror, when Moses got down, they had made a golden calf, and broken the very first commandment in the law, and the whole basis of the law: 'You shall have no other gods before me' (20:3). They made a golden calf, and they were worshipping what they said was Jehovah, under an idolatrous form. God said to Moses, 'Stand out of the way, and I will destroy the lot of them and make of you another nation.'

'No, God,' says Moses. 'If you destroy them you must destroy me too. I refuse to be distinguished from them' (see Exod 32:9-14). So he went down the mountain, and he ground the golden calf to bits and spread it on water and made them drink the stuff, and discipline there was! But then through Moses' many intercessions (you know the long story) God had mercy on the people. He called Moses up the mountain the second time: 'The LORD said to Moses, "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets"' (Exod 34:1). In giving the law the second time on the tablets, God pronounced the name of the Lord:

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.' (vv. 6-7)

The tables of the law written twice: once by the finger of God, and broken by Israel in that they had made false gods. Are you aware what Hosea and company would call that kind of thing, when Israel departed from the true and living God and started into idolatry? Do you know how the prophets regarded it? They regarded it as sheer *adultery*—spiritual adultery. Read Hosea if you need further proof. But, faced with the nation's adultery and the breaking of the law, God had mercy on them through Moses' intercession. He forgave them, wrote the tablets again, and condescended to come and dwell with them when they made the tabernacle, and led them to their promised land.

‘Moses in the law commanded that women like this should be stoned. What do you say?’ And Christ bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. This was writing the first time. And when he lifted himself up the second time they were all gone, beginning from the oldest to the youngest. I feel like calling after them: ‘Don’t be daft! If you go now you are admitting that you are sinners, aren’t you? Come back! Face up to it with him!’ But they dared not. They were standing in front of him who is the light of the world. They were standing in front of him who is the lawgiver incarnate. ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her’ (v. 7). They slunk out. They daren’t face him, for he would have exposed them.

So after the first time he wrote on the ground, he stood up and said, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Then he stooped down and wrote again. And they went out. When he had written the second time he stood up and said to her:

‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ [that is, condemned you to death] She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’ (vv. 10–11)

He is not saying that adultery is right. He is saying, ‘I don’t condemn you to suffer the penalty of death.’ How could he say it when he was the lawgiver incarnate? Well, how did he forgive Israel and write the tablets again? He could say it because in a year or two’s time, he was to be ‘lifted up’, as this very chapter says, and pay the penalty of that woman’s sin himself.

That is where we begin: when we begin to follow the light, and stand long enough to let the light expose us; and in repentance and faith we cast ourselves on the mercies of Christ. He is God incarnate, the lawgiver incarnate, a God of all mercy who died that we might be forgiven. Then we begin the journey, following the light of this world. He casts light on our journey. We are sure there is a heaven to go to because he tells us where he comes from and where he is going; and we find the transition from this life to the next because he is the I AM. Meanwhile, we are prepared to remain in his word that it might progressively set us free from the practice of sin. And we are assured that if we have come to believe in him and follow him thus, we shall not see death but shall abide in the Father’s house—freeborn children of God for all eternity.

## Conclusion

That is chapters 7 and 8 very roughly said, but I hope enough has been said to show you that both of these chapters are answers to the problem of God’s strategy in sending his Son into the world to be our Saviour. And in both those chapters there is the ‘going away’. It is not merely what he said and taught, important though that was, but right from the very beginning there was the announcement that he would be going away, and what that going away was about. It was to make it possible that the Holy Spirit should come; for later in this Gospel the Lord Jesus said, ‘If I don’t go away the Holy Spirit will not come’ (see 16:7). So the ‘going away’ was not an accident. It was not a question of trying to make the best of it now that the Jews had crucified him. He was always going away! His going away would make it possible for the Spirit to come. Christ is God’s last *word*; he isn’t God’s last *testimony*. The last and final

testimony is the Holy Spirit, of course, bringing satisfaction to those that believe on the Lord Jesus.

Then there is the 'going away' in chapter 8. As we follow the light of this world on our pathway, we have the assurance, to begin with, that to those that are in Christ Jesus 'there is therefore now no condemnation' (Rom 8:1). We have met the I AM at the burning bush of Calvary and have known his forgiveness. He has written the law twice: first, writing it on tablets of stone; and then, as Christians would say, writing the new covenant on tablets of the heart (Heb 10:16). He is leading us home to glory, giving us the status of sons and daughters, and educating us, as we continue in his word, to become, in behaviour, true, practical children of God. And he is coming one day to take us to the Father's house.

That is how I conceive of chapters 7 and 8. You say, 'But what do chapters 9 and 10 have to say about the topic?' Well, I am to be given more time in our next sessions to think about those chapters.

## The Third Journey

### *Part 4—John 9 and 10*

#### **Our studies so far**

In our last sessions I pointed out that in chapter 7 it is said of our Lord that eventually, when he went up to Jerusalem to the feast and to the temple, he did not go up publicly but, as it were, in secret. At the end of chapter 8 it is said of him that, when they took up stones to cast at him, Jesus hid himself. The point to be noticed is that what is said in chapter 7, 'he went up in secret' (see v. 10 KJV) is, in Greek, related to the verb at the end of chapter 8, 'he hid himself' (v. 59). Therefore we might suppose that chapters 7 and 8 are closely linked together. They are indeed. They are linked in their subject matter.

In chapter 7 our Lord appeals to his hearers to use their moral judgment on him — on his teaching and on his miracles and on his motivation. They were unregenerate people. Notice that Christ does not hesitate to invite, indeed to command, unregenerate people to use their moral judgment on his teaching, on his miracles and on his motivation. In chapter 8, declaring himself to be the light of the world, he shines on his opponents. And now they see themselves and are invited to use their moral judgment on themselves, as in his light they see themselves for what they truly are.

But I pointed likewise to some evidence that shows us that, while chapters 7 and 8 are closely related, chapters 9 and 10 are not beginning something completely new. They too are related in major theme to chapters 7 and 8. We notice that at the beginning of chapter 7 it is a question of our Lord's 'going up' to the feast—his approach to the feast, and to Jerusalem and to the temple and to the people. In chapter 10 the very same word is used of the approach to the fold by some thief or robber as he climbs up, he goes up, trying to climb the wall at the back secretly. That very approach to the fold betrays him as a thief and a robber, because the true shepherd would not climb up some other way but would come to the doorkeeper and show his credentials, and the doorkeeper would open the way.

So chapter 7 and chapter 10 are related. One describes our Lord's approach, his 'going up' to the feast in Jerusalem, and the way he did it. A great point is made of the way he did it, and that he went up in secret and not openly and so forth. Chapter 10 discusses the approach of the robber to the fold and the way he approaches it, which shows that he is a false shepherd, in contrast to the true shepherd to whom the gatekeeper opens the door.

When we come to chapter 9 we find that in a very real sense it is related to chapter 8. In chapter 8 our Lord declares himself to be the light of the world:

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (v. 12)

And in chapter 9 he again declares himself to be the light of the world, though the context is now a little different: 'While I am in the world, I am the light of the world' (v. 5 NIV). He was soon to leave the world, and the light of his actual bodily presence in the world would not last forever; for our Lord still is the light of the world, but he is not bodily here.

So then, is chapter 9 perhaps related to chapter 8? In both chapters he declares himself to be the light of the world. Can we not think of chapter 9, containing the miracle of giving the blind man sight, to be an example of Jesus' operations as the light of the world? There is, of course, this substantial difference. In chapter 8 he is the light of the world in the sense that he gives us the *light* to see with, so we will 'have the light of life' shining on our path (v. 12). But in chapter 9 he is the light of the world in the sense that he gives the man *eyes* to see with. For what use is light to anybody who has not got eyes to see it?

So chapter 9 is not just repeating chapter 8; it is showing the related topic. Jesus is the light of the world in chapter 8: the light in which we see other things. Jesus is the light of the world in chapter 9: he gives us eyes to see the light and to see who he is. Therefore it is related to God's strategy for making himself known through Jesus Christ our Lord. And these are the wonderful things that he does for us and in us, so that we may take benefit from the light.

## Chapter 9—Jesus gives sight to a man born blind

### A miracle and a parable

Now in chapter 9 there is a physical miracle, and it is concerned with physical sight. And yet it is like the miracle that we read of in chapter 6 where our Lord miraculously feeds the multitude with bread and fish. That was a literal miracle, but it is followed by his teaching that uses the miracle of the feeding with bread and fish as a sign pointing to himself who is the bread of life, in the spiritual sense. It becomes a parable though it is a miracle. So this miracle of giving physical sight to the blind man also becomes for us a parable, but no less a miracle for that reason. It becomes a parable of the sight that Christ gives us to recognize who he is.

Jesus found the blind man and asked him,

'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?' (vv. 35–36)

In that sense, he had not yet believed; he had not yet discovered who Jesus was. He had come to the conclusion that he was a prophet, and he had been thrown out of the synagogue for confessing it (vv. 17–34). But he still didn't know who Jesus was until Jesus came and revealed himself to him. In answer to the Lord's question he said: 'And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?' Jesus, phrasing himself very carefully says, 'You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you' (v. 37). It was just as he had phrased himself very carefully when replying to the Samaritan woman. She said eventually, "I know that Messiah is coming (he

who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he" (4:25–26). And in that very phraseology, he recalled to her astonished heart the fact that he, a Jew, had spoken to a woman—and a woman of Samaria. That he had spoken to her at all nearly made her fall down the well in surprise! And now in his grace he reminds her: 'I who *speak to you* am he.' So now to the blind man: 'You have *seen him*, and it is he who is speaking to you.'

The physical sight then is a parable of the spiritual sight. He comes to recognize who Jesus is: Son of Man—Son of God. As we read the actual miracle, we may have a difficulty in always discerning and keeping separate in our thinking the literal and the physical from the spiritual of which it is a parable.

### **Sight, blindness and sin**

Notice now the connection in people's thinking, and in Jesus' final statement, between sin and blindness:

And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (9:2)

The Pharisees thought that it was possible for a child in the womb to sin. So whose fault, whose sin, was it? Was it his, or his parents? But our Lord said, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents' (v. 3).

#### *Spiritual blindness and personal responsibility*

If you confess to having been born *spiritually* blind, may I ask you whose fault that was? Will God ever hold you responsible for being blind and say it was your fault? Indeed not. We have our Lord's own words on it, to the Pharisees at the end of this chapter: 'If you were blind, you would have no sin' (v. 41 RV). That is, not that you would be sinlessly perfect; but you would never be blamed for not seeing when it was impossible for you to see anyway, because you were blind. 'If you were blind you would not have sin; but now you say, "We see." Ah, but that alters the situation completely' (see v. 41). If, like those Pharisees, you claim to see and to see everything that is and to have such good sight that you consider that Jesus is a liar and an impostor, if you claim to see in that sense, then you will be blamed. Your sin remains.

Is there anything you could do, if you were born blind, in order to get sight? Somebody will say, 'No of course there isn't; you just sit there until the Lord gives you sight, that's all.'

Oh no you don't! Not in this story! This story is not to be confused with the story in chapter 5, when a man who for thirty-eight years had been trying to get into a pool imagined that Jesus Christ had come to lend him a hand to get into the pool. And our Lord said, 'I don't need a pool! Get up and walk!'

This man in chapter 9 is sitting beside the roadside begging. He had no notion of going into any pool. Why did our Lord make him go to the pool? There was something he could do, wasn't there?

I don't know if you have ever explained to a blind man who has never been able to see what sight is. It is mightily difficult.

'Sight? Well, it's how you can see colour.'

‘What is colour?’ he would say.

He was born blind, and yet, when our Lord met him he made clay, put it on the man’s eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. And the man had to make up his mind whether he would or not. He had to make up his mind about this Jesus. Was he an absolute crank? Was it even worth trying the experiment that Christ proposed and going to wash in the pool of Siloam? He might have heard what the apostles said about how Christ had healed other blind men and given them sight and other things about Jesus. He had to make up his mind, and he had to do what he was told. That also is part of the miracle and part of the parable.

The fact that washing in the pool of Siloam is in itself significant is shown to us by John, because he bothers to translate the term *Siloam*. It is the Greek for the Hebrew word *Shilôach*. Isaiah the prophet speaks of, ‘the waters of Shiloah that flow gently’ (8:6). *Shilôach* means ‘sent one’. Christ sent him to wash in ‘the pool of the Sent One’, with all the prophecies that had clustered round that term from Isaiah’s time onward. (That is a very good exercise: soaking oneself in the prophecies of the Old Testament, to see whether God would indeed fulfil them.)

So our Lord spat on the ground and made clay. It is an interesting thing that, in chapter 8, in the story of the woman, our Lord ‘wrote with his finger on the ground’, reminiscent of God with his finger writing the law of Moses on the tables of stone (and writing them twice), for Christ was the lawgiver incarnate. Now he spat on the ground and moulded it into clay and put it on a man’s eyes. Yes, but Genesis 2 tells us how God made man of pre-existent material: the dust of the ground. He moulded him and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Here is the Creator incarnate, not healing a man, for the man never did have sight, but creating sight that the man had never had before. Chapter 9 balances chapter 8.

#### *Questions of identity and reliability*

How would you account for the miracle? First of all there was the question of identity. The neighbours found him and wanted to make sure that they hadn’t mistaken the man’s identity: ‘Is this really the beggar that was blind?’ And, in the end, in spite of their diverse opinion, the man’s testimony prevailed: ‘He kept saying, “I am the man”’ (9:9).

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, ‘He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’ Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others said, ‘How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?’ And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, ‘What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?’ He said, ‘He is a prophet.’ (vv. 13–17)

But the stricter Pharisees were not going to have that, because if he were a prophet, he was from God of course! So they went around trying to get the evidence that somehow this was not a true miracle. So it’s not now a question of mistaken identity, as it had been with the neighbours (‘Is this the same man who used to beg?’). Here it is the question of whether he was ever blind to start with, and this idea of a healing was all a mistake.

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' (vv. 18–21)

And the word they used (at least in John's Greek) is the Greek verb *oida*, which in this context carries a special meaning. It means: 'direct, basic knowledge'.

They asked the parents, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?'

They carefully replied, 'We *know* that this is our son.'

How did they know that? By direct knowledge, what the philosophers call 'basic knowledge'. They didn't have to have it proved by some logical deduction from a premise; they knew it. They were his parents, weren't they? They knew he was their son, and: 'We know he was born blind.' Well, yes, I would think they did. That was basic knowledge too, not hearsay. Imagine their disappointment as parents, when they realized that the little child was blind. They knew that by direct, basic knowledge.

But then they add, 'But how he now sees we do not *know*, nor do we *know* who opened his eyes', using the same verb. And, if you like, you can justify them, because how his eyes were opened and who opened them, they didn't know that directly. They only knew that indirectly through their son's report. They could have known it, if they wanted to. They had it from their son, but they weren't prepared to say it lest they be put out of the synagogue (v. 22). So they said, 'You'll have to ask him.' And the Pharisees proceeded to ask him.

They said, 'You might as well admit it; give glory to God' (that is, confess the facts and your sinfulness). 'We *know* . . .' Oh, now they use the same word again, meaning 'direct knowledge'.

'We *know* that this man is a sinner' (v. 24). How could they possibly *know* that? The man said, 'Whether he is a sinner I do not *know*' (direct knowledge again). 'One thing I do *know*, that though I was blind, now I see' (v. 25). This is direct experience talking: 'I know that I was blind. I know that I can now see!'

'They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"' (v. 26). Presumably they are trying to find out some detail of the operation so that they could prove it wasn't genuine. He is too much for them.

He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' And they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We *know* that God has spoken to Moses . . .' (vv. 27–29)

How did they know that? Isn't it interesting how people will say what they know and what they don't know? Well, how did they know this, then, that God had spoken to Moses? Was it just through reading the story in Exodus about the flames and thunder on Mount Sinai? Or was it deeper still: they knew it out of divine conviction or something? How did they *know*



it? They go on to say about Jesus, 'but as for this man, we do not *know*. We are agnostic' (see v. 29).

Now, it can be a reasonable claim, I suppose, to claim to be agnostic; but really it's an impossible position. There are two kinds of agnostics. There are those who say, 'I don't know, and nobody else can know anyway.' That is to claim a lot, isn't it? You don't know, and nobody can know that Jesus is the Christ? Well, Christ says you can know. If you say you can't know, you are making him a liar. And to know he is a liar is to know a lot of things! There is the milder form of agnostic: 'I don't know. Other people may know, but I don't.' But that is a very weak position; because the answer is that you could know! For Christ claims he could give you the knowledge. Why don't you accept it? So agnosticism is a very weak position.

The Pharisees continue:

'We *know* that God has spoken to Moses but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.' (vv. 29–30)

He says, in effect, 'This is a marvellous thing in all this situation. This is astonishing, gentlemen, that you do not know where he is from, and yet he has opened my eyes? 'We *know* . . .' (Basic knowledge this is; it was absolutely fundamental to Judaism.) 'We know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God hears him' (see v. 31). That is absolutely basic to Judaism. It is *basic* knowledge. He continues, 'It is marvellous therefore that you can tell me you don't know where he is from, when all the while he has opened my eyes! And consider what a unique miracle it is anyway. Since the world began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing' (see vv. 32–33).

Here is the whole question of basic knowledge and how you come to knowledge. I am tempted to say more, but the clock tells me I mustn't.

They put the man out. Then Jesus found him, which makes us aware that all this discussion between the formerly blind man and the Pharisees had been going on in the absence of Christ. That is also part of the parable, isn't it? You too have never seen the Lord, and yet you stand up for him?

But Christ now finds him; and from the miracle that is a parable, now we come back to the plain fact. Jesus found him and did the final and wonderful thing. He opened his spiritual eyes to see that Jesus is the Son of Man, the Son of God.

So Christ is the light in which we see other things, ourselves included. But Christ is the light of the world, in the sense that he can give us the sight to see with.

## Chapter 10—The sheep and the shepherd

The final chapter in this series is chapter 10, and the parable this time is the parable of sheep. Now, sheep may not be able to speak much, but they have this quality about them: that they can get to know a shepherd.

I go up in the mountains sometimes and come across sheep, and they are quite civilized. They will come near to you anyway! And so I will say to the sheep: 'What do you think about

Tony Blair?<sup>23</sup> And do you know, apparently, they don't think much of him at all. They never reply at any rate. They never tell me what they think! And they look at me with grave suspicion. But it is true of sheep that they can *get to know* a shepherd. How do sheep come to know a shepherd? This, the final of the four chapters, talks about how.

### **The true shepherd and his voice**

First we have the little parable at the start of chapter 10.

'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.' This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (vv. 1-6)

Christ came to the fold of Israel by the door; he came to the doorkeeper. The parable is of a big fold in the centre of town where various shepherds may have come and put their flocks. They pay the doorkeeper, and then go off on the town for the weekend. And after the weekend they come, and they must show their credentials to the doorkeeper, and he will let them in.

And Christ came by the doorkeeper. Listen to John 1:

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (v. 29)

And when the Pharisees asked John the Baptist, 'Who are you?' he said:

I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord', as the prophet Isaiah said. (v. 23)

And John bore witness: 'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water [namely, God the Father] said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.' (vv. 32-34)

This is John's testimony to the redeeming Lamb of God and to the sender of the Holy Spirit. John was the doorkeeper, and Christ came to be baptized by him. He let himself be baptized by John for John was the divinely appointed doorkeeper, forerunner and precursor of Christ, to introduce him to the nation. And John opened the door. But now notice what happened:

---

<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997-2007.

To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (10:3)

It is not the doorkeeper who goes into the fold and says, 'Now, sheep, all you who belong to Tom Smith come out!' No, no. The sheep wouldn't come out. When the doorkeeper opens the door the shepherd goes in. And among the many sheep that are there, he calls his own sheep (not the whole lot) by name, and the sheep 'hear his voice'. That is one of the ways that sheep know the shepherd: voice recognition.

You say, 'What do you mean by that, that they hear his voice and recognize it?'

Well, Paul was subsequently preaching in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, and in the course of his preaching, speaking to Jews far from Jerusalem, he said:

For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. (Acts 13:27 RV)

The Jews that crucified Christ, says Paul, did not know the voice of the prophets, for had they known the voice, they would have recognized in Christ the very spirit of prophecy. There were other Jews, such as Martha and Mary: they heard the Lord speak, and they pricked up their ears. They knew the voice! And the sheep hear his voice:

'When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.' This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. (10:4-6)

This is Christ coming, therefore, to the fold of Judaism. He is recognized by his own sheep; they recognize the voice. They follow him, and he puts them out of the fold. It is not 'put out' like the Pharisees had thrown the blind man out. Christ leads his own out of the fold of Judaism and goes in front of them. He did indeed — first to Calvary, and then by his ascension.

### **The door of the sheep**

The next little parable describes a shepherd who takes the sheep out of the fold and up into the mountains to find pasture. They can't stay in that crowded fold in the middle of the city. It would become horrible and dirty, and there would be no grass eventually. He must lead them out, up the mountains to the green pastures. But there would be certain dangers up there, with wild animals and other things. They were safe in the fold in town, but not up the mountain. So he says,

I am the door of the sheep. . . If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (vv. 7-10)

He is not saying they will go in and out of salvation! He is talking here in parable form about what happens when a shepherd takes the sheep up the mountain. He has a little fold

for them built of stone, and you can see them still in some parts of Judaea. At night he will call them back and put them into the fold for protection against wild animals. During the day, if it is safe and there are no lions or bears about, he will let them out. They will go in and out, and they will find pasture! He gives liberty and yet protection and security. It is a beautiful parable of the liberty that Christ gives to his people, of course, which is rather different from the situation in Judaism. And yet it is not wild, dangerous freedom but both freedom and security, so that we might go in and out and find pasture.

### **The Good Shepherd**

Then in the third part, our Lord contrasts himself not merely with thieves and robbers that come to destroy, but with an employee.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. (vv. 11–18)

A man need not be a robber or a thief. He could simply be shepherding the sheep for what he got out of it as an employee: so much money a week for looking after sheep. 'I am not one of those,' says Christ. 'I am not an employee. In fact, the sheep belong to me. They are my sheep.'

Now, the employee will look after them as well as he can, but if he sees the wolf or the lion coming, then he has to make up his mind: 'Is it worth trying to save the sheep from this wolf?' It wouldn't be worth it, if he lost his life, would it? What is your weekly wage worth if you lose your life on the job? So he runs off, for the sheep don't belong to him. He is merely an employee, and if they get destroyed, well, what does he care? He's not going to lay down his life for them! He's only doing it for the money he gets out of it, and that's all!

But Christ is not an employee; the sheep belong to him, and he lays down his life for the sheep. He does it voluntarily, not because he was overcome.

I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep . . . For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. (vv. 14, 17)

And in so saying, he points out that there comes an intimate reciprocal knowledge: the sheep know him, and he knows his own sheep. It sets up the kind of relationship of knowledge between his sheep and him that he enjoyed already, the one between him and the Father. That

is astounding! It is a relationship between him and us on the model of his relationship with the Father: he knows the Father, and the Father knows him.

### *The qualifications of the shepherd*

We are told at this time that it was the Feast of Dedication. Dedication recalled the time when the great, sinister Gentile ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, came and desecrated the temple at Jerusalem. He set up a pagan image, sacrificed a pig upon the altar, forbade circumcision and destroyed the Scriptures as best he could. The chief priests in Israel at the time agreed with him and went over to syncretism. They were willing to turn Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city under Hellenistic rulers and to agree with the heathen that Jehovah was merely one name, and Baal was another name, for the same thing! It wouldn't have mattered to them whether you called him Allah or Baal or Jehovah or Osiris or Zeus. 'It's all the same thing,' the high priest said, denying the very revelation of God to them, of course: 'Besides me, there is none else' (see, e.g. Isa 45:5). Then the Maccabees fought and gained independence for Israel.

But that reminds us what is meant in the Old Testament by a 'shepherd'. When our Lord says, 'I am the good shepherd,' we think simply of a shepherd with his sheep, but in Israel in the Old Testament, *shepherd* is also the description of the king. The true king is a shepherd. What about the false king, the false leaders and the high priests? And what about that sinister figure, Antiochus Epiphanes, who put the abomination of desolation in the Holy Place in Jerusalem? And what about this Jesus, claiming to be shepherd and king? Dare you trust him? What claim will he make? So the final part of John 10 is extraordinarily delightful.

I don't know if you have ever applied for a job with a lot of management responsibility. But if you have, you might be brought before an interview committee, and they might ask you how you would solve a particularly difficult problem. You would have to advertise your abilities in order to prove that you were a good applicant.

And here come the crowds around Jesus, and they say, 'Look here, why won't you tell us plainly and straightforwardly, are you the Christ, or aren't you?'

And Christ says, 'Well, I told you before, and you didn't believe, but if you now want to know whether I'm the Christ or not, let me . . .' (may I use the term?) ' . . . *advertise* myself as the true shepherd. Here are my qualities as a shepherd: I give to my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and my Father are one' (see vv. 24–30). Here are the marvellous qualifications of the shepherd, and the eternal security that he gives to all his sheep.

### *Becoming Christ's sheep*

Christ goes on to say,

You do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (vv. 26–27)

Some people have concluded from this that there are those whom God has elected to be Christ's sheep, and they will believe him. There are others, and God has not elected them, and so they are not Christ's sheep, and therefore they don't believe him. But that can scarcely be

maintained on the basis of this chapter. For, talking to these Pharisees, he says, 'You don't believe because you are not my sheep,' but that did not mean that they could never become his sheep. So finally he says to them:

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 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 am in the Father. (vv. 37–38)

He is saying, 'If you don't believe me, start by believing my works, so that you may know that the Father is with me and come to believe me!' Here is the tremendous humility and graciousness of the true shepherd. 'At the moment you don't believe me. You are not my sheep, you see. You could become my sheep.'

Christ wasn't taunting them, challenging them to do what he knew was impossible. He says, 'If you don't believe me, then believe my works.' When they had taken up stones to stone him, he said: 'I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these good works are you going to stone me?'

They said, 'We are not going to stone you for good works, but because you, being a man, make yourself equal with God.'

'Oh, is that your difficulty?' said Christ. 'Look, put down those stones for a moment. Your difficulty is that I claim to be God. I see. But that isn't an absolute difficulty, is it? Because in the Psalms it is written of some, who were ordinary men, that he called them gods in some sense. And you can't alter the Scriptures. And if he called them gods to whom the word of God came, how do you say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming", because I said, "I am the Son of God"? Gentlemen, if yours is a theological difficulty, I can put that right for you. You have misunderstood. This is not blasphemy.'

So the theological difficulty being dealt with by our Lord, he now issues the final challenge: 'You are not my sheep yet. You don't believe. But if you don't believe me, start somewhere! Didn't I hear you say just now that you are not stoning me for my good works? So some of my works have been good, have they? You admit that bit! Well, if you can't believe me, start believing my works that you might *come to know*, and therefore certainly go on to know, that the Father is with me. I don't do any of this by myself, but the Father abiding in me, he does the works' (see vv. 32–38).

As I say, I go up in the mountains sometimes and have a word with the sheep, and these Irish sheep come round and look with suspicion on this strange thing that is an Englishman standing there in front of them. So of course when I talk with them, they're not going to get very near. Of course, they don't know me; I'm not the shepherd. If I were, they would come running to me! But they're not going to trust me. But here is one thing you can do to try to get sheep to come near to you if you are in that situation. Get a nice bunch of juicy grass, and throw it out in front of you and then walk back. They will look at you. And look at the grass. Then they will run forward and get the grass and run back again! Then you throw another bit, but not quite so far this time. They look again. And they come and grab it! If you do it often enough, they will come and eat it out of your hand.

See the pathos! Here is God incarnate! They can't believe him, and they accuse him of blasphemy. And he says, 'If you can't believe me, let me stand back a bit. There are my works. Believe that. Make a start somewhere, so that you may know and come to know ever more fully that I am the true shepherd. The Father is with me, and the Father abiding in me does the work.' This is about sheep *coming to know* the Shepherd.

### **Conclusion**

So, here are four chapters that we have studied (or at least looked at superficially) about God's strategies for making himself known through the incarnation, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of his dear Son. It is a fourfold subject; it has four different sides to it. I hope I have given enough pointers to excite you, and to see that each chapter is worth studying in its own right, so that we can ask: 'What does each of these chapters contribute to this whole matter of how we come to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and, believing have life in his name?' For those who come to know the Shepherd, he will lead them to the Father's home on high. He will be our Shepherd to all eternity.

## Questions About the Third Journey

### Question one

*What does he mean when he says, 'All who came before me are thieves and robbers' (10:8)? Does this refer to those who previously claimed to be shepherds in Israel? Obviously people like Antiochus Epiphanes were thieves and robbers, but what about people like David? What is Christ referring to when he says 'all who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them'?*

DWG: Our difficulty is when he says, 'All who came before me are thieves and robbers', whereas there were many true shepherds in Israel. David was one, and the true prophets were others. It may mean therefore, 'all that came, claiming to be Messiahs, were thieves and robbers.' There had been some, even before Christ, who had risen up and claimed to be Messiah. And when you are thinking of shepherds, you are thinking also of political leaders. Some had tried to lead the Jews against the Romans, and it had led to massacre. So, 'All that came before me, claiming to be the Messiah, were thieves and robbers, but the true sheep didn't hear them.' A lot of the others did, but they were not his sheep, of course, and didn't follow them.

It may be that. Or it may be that this is a Semitic phrase. Their use of the term 'all' is not always the same as ours in English. There were false shepherds amongst the people of Israel. Ezekiel accuses many of the leaders of being false shepherds, and it may be that our Lord is referring to some of them. But strictly in the context, I think it must mean: 'they who came before me, claiming to be Messiahs.'

### Question two

*In what way do you think that the doorkeeper was necessary for the whole purpose of introducing Christ? Why did God decide to use John the Baptist to introduce Christ?*

DWG: That is a good question to ask, though I think it is easier to start the other way round and say, 'God did it,' and then ask why.

It was a sign to Israel, but it was a necessary preparation. Isaiah 40 says: 'Prepare the way of the Lord.' It wasn't simply that God sent his Son without any preparation, all of a sudden. God sent John the Baptist to 'prepare the way of the Lord,' or at least to call upon the nation to prepare the way of the Lord. It is like when an ancient king or emperor came to one of his provinces and the town people would go out and flatten the roads. Any boulders in the road would be pushed to the side, and the holes would be filled up and the road flattened out, so that the emperor would come riding in on his chariot along a smooth road into the city. So



Israel were called upon by John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord, to make it easy for the Lord to come.

A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.' (Isa 40:3–4)

And John the Baptist came to do that job, to call upon the nation to repent and confess their sin and get right with God, for the Messiah was coming! Such preparation therefore was necessary if the people were to be ready for the coming of Christ.

And then our Lord challenges the people subsequently about why they had rejected John.

Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John.' (Luke 7:24–28)

He put them over it: 'There are thousands of reeds in the wilderness, of course you didn't go out into the wilderness to see a reed! Did you go out to see men dressed in fine clothing? No you didn't! People like that are not in the wilderness but in king's palaces. But you did go into the wilderness, didn't you, by your hundreds? What was all that splashing about in the Jordan? There was something happening, wasn't there? You went out to see a prophet, and more than a prophet.'

Many thousands of them had been baptized by John, professing to repent, but they had no more repented than had the man in the moon! And now they were staying, 'Listen to this John the Baptist, warning us to flee from the wrath to come and all that. God wouldn't expect us to listen to that kind of fiery oratory!' So they rejected him. They said he had a demon and was mentally unbalanced. He came neither eating nor drinking and they said he had a demon. Now the Son of Man has come; and he came eating and drinking, with a lovely message of repentance and forgiveness. And did they all say, 'This is the kind of message we like'? No, they didn't; they didn't want that either. They neither wanted the wrath of God and repentance, nor the forgiveness of God. They wouldn't have either. They just wanted their nice, neat little religion (see vv. 29–35).

That they went back on their profession under John, I am afraid is true of hundreds and thousands of them. But some of them were genuine—the apostles, for instance, and these others who were baptized by John. And when John said, 'Behold the Lamb of God', they began to leave John, and they followed Christ.

Now then to answer your question, John was very necessary:

1. to get the people prepared for the coming of the Messiah; and
2. to identify the Messiah.

Though, of course, when the Messiah came he offered them evidence going far beyond what John could possibly give.

And now, I have a question: Is this still Saturday?

Shall we pray.

Our Father, with gratitude in our hearts we thank thee for the giving of thy dear Son, for the sending of him into our world, that he came where we were, and that he laid down his life for us his sheep. And we thank thee, Father, for this almost incredible story. When we think of the pains of Calvary that he endured for our sake, that he could say, 'Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep.'

And so we commit ourselves to thee now. We thank thee for thy holy word. We pray that thou wilt write it on our hearts, and as the days go by progressively, show us its ever deeper meaning. Help us now to walk closely to the Saviour, in his light, along life's pathway. Help us to submit and continue in his word that we might be progressively set free from the practice of sinning. Help us to understand thy word, and thy Son's witness, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, that we in turn may become able witnesses for the Lord Jesus to the unconverted world around.

Now bless us we pray, as we go from this place. Bless all those tasks that thou hast put into our hands and help us to accomplish them for the glory of thy name, as we look forward to the return of thy dear Son, for whom once more we thank thee through his holy name. Amen.

## The Fourth Journey

### *Part 1 – Coming to Raise Lazarus From the Dead*

I was asked to come on this occasion and ‘finish John’, but finishing John in one fell swoop would be a little difficult. So what I would propose today is to talk about chapters 11 and 12, and then go on to talk about the arrest, the crucifixion and the resurrection, and to make some suggestions as to how these things cohere in John’s record. We will be leaving the detail of the upper room ministry on this occasion.<sup>24</sup> So that is my proposal: to do chapters 11 and 12 now and then to start up again with chapter 18 and work towards the end. If we can do that today, then we shall have done something positive, shall we not?

When I was last with you, I put some emphasis on the journeys that John records, that our Lord made from the north down to the south, down to Jerusalem on the occasion of the feasts, and then back again north. And we studied three of those journeys that he made. The third of those journeys comes to its end at the end of chapter 10 (vv. 40–42):

He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. (v. 40)

And you notice the implication of the phrase, ‘the place where John had been baptizing at first’, is that John baptized at different places in the course of his career. And the place where he was baptizing at first is liable to have been Batanea, which is more to the north than the position he took eventually when he came down into Judaea, into the Jordan in that direction. So here is our Lord at the end of chapter 10 after his visit to Jerusalem that begins in chapter 7. Once more he has gone back up north.

### **The setting of the final journey**

The next and the final journey begins, in John’s record, in chapter 11:

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. (v. 55)

And now our Lord begins to come to Jerusalem for what is his final visit:

---

<sup>24</sup> For Dr Gooding’s full exposition of John 13–17, see his book *In the School of Christ*: Myrtlefield House, 2013.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. (12:1)

From Bethany he went to Jerusalem (12:12). But this final visit is different from the others in that, before he comes to Jerusalem at the feast, there is the story of the raising of Lazarus. We ought to notice therefore how that is integrated into the ongoing story and particularly the story of the actual visit to Jerusalem.

When you come to the end of the raising of Lazarus, you read:

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.' . . . So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. (11:45–50, 53)

Caiaphas advised them, with the special wisdom that he felt he had, that it was better that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish: 'It is more expedient for you', he said. He was the real high priest but also a real politician. Politicians, as you may be aware (or you soon will be) deal more often with expedience than they do with principle. So here is John recording the fact that already, as a result of the raising of Lazarus and the belief that it produced in numbers of people, the Jerusalem authorities were determined to have Jesus put to death. As a result of that:

Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. (v. 54)

It is in that context that the final visit begins. And you will notice the intense interest that was produced, because as the people came down along the pilgrim routes from the north they would have heard the story of the raising of Lazarus:

They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?' Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. (vv. 56–57)

So the timing of the raising of Lazarus by our Lord now appears to have been deliberate. Indeed, looking back to chapter 11:

This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. (v. 4)

Notice that the whole thing was, if you'll forgive the word, 'staged', or arranged, in the tactics and strategies of God, so that Lazarus would take sick, he should die, be buried and then our Lord would raise him from the dead, and just at this juncture, when it would cause a tremendous interest and flurry and concern in Jerusalem, our Lord eventually came to Jerusalem.

So you see that when our Lord eventually moved in on Jerusalem and 'came to Bethany, where Lazarus was' (12:1), we are told:

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. (12:9)

You see the tremendous interest that is now awakened by this event, and therefore:

the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. (vv. 10-11)

And John hasn't finished emphasizing the matter of this publicity caused by Lazarus's death and resurrection. At the end of the incident of our Lord riding on the donkey into Jerusalem, as Judaea's king, we are told:

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. (v. 17)

So these were the people that had actually seen the event of the raising of Lazarus, and now they were with Christ, and there was said to be quite a throng of people.

You will remember from chapter 11 that a lot of Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary, and therefore they were there, with their criticisms and then their astonishment, when our Lord raised him from the dead. So this first lot are witnessing to the populous in Jerusalem and to the large number of pilgrims that did not witness the raising of Lazarus.

The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. (v. 18)

All I am saying by these rather laboured remarks is that John is integrating the story of the raising of Lazarus with this final journey to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover. And it appears that our Lord had deliberately (and God certainly had deliberately) organized it as a preliminary to this fourth and final visit.

### **The raising of Lazarus**

So what then about chapter 11? What function does it have? It is the final sign of a series of seven signs that, according to chapter 20, were written 'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (v. 31). There is another miracle recorded in John, in chapter 21, and some people say that this was an addition that some later writer added in. That is not true, though it certainly wasn't one of the seven. The miracle in chapter 21 is not recorded 'so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God, and believing, have life in his name'; it is written for believers. It is an example of how our Lord, in his resurrection, guides us still in the work that he gives us to do for him. The raising of Lazarus, however, is the last of the series of seven. What function does it have?

I want to suggest to you that one of the functions it was deliberately intended to have was a very practical one. Our Lord was going away. On this final visit, he would be crucified, buried, then raised again and ascend into heaven. And you will see that the apostles even, let alone believers in general that had believed on him throughout the land, were not really expecting him to die.

When our Lord says to them in the Upper Room: 'I'm going away, and sorrow has filled your heart because I say it', they could scarcely believe it even then, and he had to tell them: 'It is expedient for you that I go away', and why it was expedient for them that he went away (see 16:5-7). So when one comes to it in chapters 13-17, the Upper Room ministry is explaining to the apostles why it was expedient for him to go away and what was achieved within that context in his going away. And the brief title you might put across it is: 'His Going Away was Essential for their Sanctification'. Their sanctification depended upon the Holy Spirit's coming, so the Upper Room ministry is given over, in all its five sections, to their sanctification. That is summed up by our Lord in his prayer in chapter 17, when he prays openly in front of his disciples to the Father: 'Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth' (v. 17). So it was necessary for their sanctification. We shall deal with that within the story of the Upper Room, if ever we get to it, but this sign in chapter 11 fills a similarly practical role.

He was going away. What would happen all down those years when he was away? What was the programme? The matter is touched on right from the very beginning of chapter 11. This family: Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany were a family very much attached to the Lord. It was the same Mary who eventually anointed the Lord's feet with ointment (11:2; 12:3). It was a family with whom Christ had stayed on occasions: witness Luke's record of it (10:38-42). And Lazarus grew sick, so they sent a letter to our Lord saying, 'he whom you love is ill' (v. 3). Notice the tact of the letter. It didn't say, 'Lazarus is sick. Please come as quick as you can and get here!' No, no, you don't talk to friends like that, do you? It just informed him that Lazarus, 'he whom you love', is sick, expecting of course that the love that our Lord had personally for them and Lazarus would be enough to move him to come. He didn't attempt to come. In fact, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed two days in the place where he was (v. 6).

### **The timing of this raising from the dead**

Now, if you have been attending to the record of the miracles in John's Gospel, you will find this a little bit disconcerting, because the second miracle that John records (at the end of chapter 4) is the story of the royal official's son. The royal official, or court official, worked in the palace, perhaps at Tiberius (or when later it was up in Baniyas). His son was sick and was at the point of death, and he had come to our Lord to ask him to heal his son. The man believed that Jesus could heal him, but Jesus had been down at the feast at Jerusalem, and there was no way of contacting him. Then the man heard that our Lord had come back, up to Galilee. Now there was a chance! He was in Cana of Galilee, so the royal official came from Capernaum down by the lake, and up over the hills to Cana and asked the Lord to *come* and

heal his son. And our Lord said to him, 'The trouble with you lot around here is that except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.'

And the man, if I may paraphrase him, said, 'Lord, look, my son is desperately sick; don't stop here and talk theology. We can talk theology later on after he's better, but he's desperately sick. Please, if you don't mind, come at once! Lay your hands on him!'

And our Lord said, 'My good man, you have misunderstood me. Your son is already better.'

'My son is already better?'

'Yes. You asked me to heal him, didn't you? I've healed him.'

That put the man on the spot, because he couldn't see that the boy was well! And now our Lord was demonstrating a thing that we hadn't been told before in John: that he could heal at a distance. And the man had to decide whether he would believe Christ or not. To his credit, he believed and got up and went home, though he didn't get home until the next day, apparently. I don't know where he stayed the night: perhaps in a hotel or under a bush, somewhere. It wasn't until he got home that he actually saw the evidence. Yes, the boy was well. And to satisfy his curiosity he said to the servants: 'But tell me now, just what hour did he begin to get better?'

And they said, 'Oh, it was yesterday about the seventh hour.'

He worked it out and counted. It was at the very moment when (and this becomes important), 'when he believed'? No, it doesn't say that. It was at the moment 'when Jesus had said to him "Your son will live"' (4:53).

It was a miracle that shows that our Lord could heal at a distance (4:46–54). And if you have given heed to that miracle, and tucked it under your belt (or wherever you tuck ideas) you will say, 'Well, it's obvious what he's going to do here.'

He gets a note from Bethany that Lazarus, whom he loves, is sick, desperately sick.

'Well, he doesn't need to go,' you'll say. 'He stays two days in the place where he was because he can heal at a distance! He'll just say the word, and Lazarus will be healed. Simple, isn't it?'

Two days later, or another day later, he said to the apostles, 'Lazarus has fallen asleep.'

And they said, 'Oh, Lord, he'll do well if he's fallen asleep, you see, because he'll recover.'

'No,' he said, 'what I mean is he's dead.' And then he added, 'I'm glad I wasn't there.' What on earth is he saying? If he could heal at a distance, well, he needn't go, but he could have healed him!

And you say to yourself perhaps, 'Oh, well, he didn't heal him, but now he'll speak a word and raise him from the dead at a distance.'

He didn't do that, either. But he said, 'Well, let's go to Judaea.' And when he got to Bethany in Judaea, Martha came out to meet him. Her first words? 'Lord, *if you had been here*, my brother would not have died' (11:21).

Our Lord said, 'Your brother shall rise again.'

'I know that,' says Martha. She was a good Pharisee: she believed in the resurrection. 'I know he shall rise at the last day. Lord, that's a bit irrelevant. If you had been here, he wouldn't have died to start with.' With the implied: 'Why didn't you come?' Her faith, good

old Martha, remained triumphant: 'Lord, even now I believe that whatever you ask of God he will give it to you.'

When she was done talking to Christ, Mary came out. She wasn't the theologian that Martha was. All she could manage as she collapsed at his feet was to get out the words: 'Lord, *if you had been here*, my brother would not have died.' And our Lord was moved when the crowd said, 'He could heal a blind man. Why couldn't he have healed this man and stopped him from dying? He was supposed to love him, wasn't he?' And our Lord groaned in spirit because now it raised the question of whether he did really love Lazarus.

Well, he raised him from the dead, as we know. But of course that miracle of reviving Lazarus was, like the other miracles, a *sign*. The multiplying of the loaves and fish, for instance, was a sign that Jesus is the bread of life. This miracle of raising Lazarus was a sign. What do you suppose it was a sign of? It is a sign of the resurrection of the life.

### **The timing of the resurrection**

When will the resurrection happen? Is it going to happen every other day, or every other century? When is the resurrection going to take place? Yes, when he comes back! He is not going to stage it in his absence. The New Testament is insistent. The resurrection will take place at 'the coming of the Lord'.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thess 4:16–17 RV)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Cor 15:22–23)

The resurrection of the believer will not take place in our Lord's absence. He will not sit on the throne of heaven and suddenly speak the word, and then all the dead will rise. So the raising of Lazarus is a sign of the great reality of the resurrection and the reuniting of the living and the dead when the Lord comes. And therefore we have the demonstration that Martha and Mary sent the letter to him: 'He whom you love is sick'. It was a prayer for Lazarus's recovery, for healing from his sickness. And our Lord stayed away and let Lazarus die. And then raised him when he came!

What a simple parable that is. It is a miracle, but it is also a parable, of course. It is put here to prepare the Lord's people for our Lord's going away. He was crucified, is risen, has ascended back to heaven. What happens now when our loved ones get sick? Well, of course, we send a message to the Lord, don't we? 'Lord, dear brother so-and-so has been taken into hospital with a heart attack.' And, if it pleases the Lord, he will give him recovery, and often he does. But ultimately he doesn't, does he? Am I not right in saying that, since the Lord ascended to heaven, most believers have died? I'm not denying that sometimes the Lord answers our prayer and heals our loved ones when they are sick; he does that. But, ultimately, until the Lord comes, we shall all die. There's no need to get upset about it. Look at the pattern. The dead will be raised and reunited with the living when the Lord *comes*.



So this sign for Martha and Mary and Lazarus was also a parable for us, so that we should not be disturbed when our Lord, in his absence, allows our loved ones to die. It holds out the promise of his second coming. He will come again! And as far as that is concerned, it is delightful to see that he came as he did, as it is described at the start of chapter 12:

Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead. So they made him a supper there . . . (vv. 1–2 RV)

Allow your imagination to dwell upon that brief moment in history. Here were Martha and Mary, plus the disciples, plus the Lord, and Lazarus — now raised from the dead, and they made him a supper! There shall come another supper, shall there not? It is the Lamb's bridal supper. The dead raised, the living changed, and with a host of the disciples of all the ages: there shall be a supper. From that supper the next day, he came as King to Jerusalem. And the Pharisees were driven to exclaim: 'The whole world has gone after him!' (see 12:19).

Scripture is like a many-coloured, many-threaded tapestry. It has meaning at different levels. I'm suggesting, therefore, the simple fact that the sign in chapter 11 is meant to stand for the comfort and encouragement of all of us believers all down that age when our Lord is absent and does not yet come. One day the Lord will come, and it is our Lord setting the programme, by his parable, by his miracle, so that we shall not be upset down through the years.

### **The theology of the resurrection**

Now, as to the theology of it, let me quote you the words that our Lord spoke to Martha. This is the conversation:

Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' (11:21–25)

Now come very important words:

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? (vv. 25–26)

Those words, as you know, are subject to much dispute among the commentators. And the view that I myself hold is thought to be highly incorrect by the majority of commentators, so my package carries a health warning. The common understanding of it is that our Lord was saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes on me, even though he were spiritually dead . . .' And the good Authorised Version has it that way: 'Though he *were* dead, yet shall he live.' And many follow that idea, even if they've got a modern translation, and take it to mean: 'Even though he were dead in spirit' (so spiritual death, and being dead in trespasses and in sins) 'but the one who believes, he receives new life.'

Well, that is perfectly true, isn't it? I mean, Ephesians says it. We were 'dead in trespasses and sins, and God made us alive in Christ' (see 2:1-5). So multitudes take that verse to mean that. Then there's the next bit: 'everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die', and this is taken to mean the eternal security of the believer. He that lives and has been saved, born again, and therefore now he lives (and carries on believing, of course, and thus shows he's a genuine believer), he shall never die; he has eternal security.

If you decide that is what the verses mean, you have the weight of generations of expositors on your side. There is the little matter that the Greek doesn't actually say that, but never mind.

Allow me to do my honest best to point out what the Greek says in 11:25.

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes on me, even if he die . . .'

It is not: 'Even though he *were* dead.' This is a Greek aorist subjunctive in the normal way of Greek, with *kan* introducing it, referring to the future.<sup>25</sup> 'He that believes on me, *even if* he die . . .'

Notice that. What do you mean, 'if he die?' Well, not all believers will. Some will; the majority will, but not all will. We shall not all die, and I have good Scripture support for that: 'We shall not all [die], but we shall all be changed' (1 Cor 15:51). Here in John, it is: 'he that believes on me, even if he die, yet shall he live.'

What do you mean *live*? Well, in Greek, it can mean 'live again'. How do I know that? Well, let me cite you an example of it, also in the words of John:

And I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they *lived* . . . (Rev 20:4 RV)

There is no doubt what it means, because they've just been beheaded, or previously had been beheaded. In spite of that, they *lived*, meaning they were raised, of course. How can we confirm that?

they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead *lived not until* the thousand years should be finished. (vv. 4-5 RV)

The rest of the dead *lived not until*, that is, would not be raised until the thousand years were finished.

This is what I'm suggesting to you. Our Lord said, 'He that believes on me even if he die . . .'

Do notice that *even*: 'even if he die'.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Note: Gk.: *kan apothanē zesetai* = 'even if he die he will live'. *Kan* is a particle that is a combination of the Greek words *kai* ('and' or 'even') with *ean* ('a point of time which is somewhat conditional and simultaneous with another point of time "when, when and if"'). It marks 'the possibility of any number of occurrences of some event [e.g.] wherever, whatever, whoever, however'. It is 'an emphatic marker of concession—"even if, even though"'. Turner translates it as 'even if' or 'and if' (*kai ean*) in his discussion of concessive clauses. Louw-Nida translate the whole phrase as 'whoever believes in me will live even though he dies.' (Louw-Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 67.32, 71.8 & 89.73; James Hope Moulton and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, III: 100, 321.)

Why put it that way?

Because not all believers will die.

'He that believes on me, even if he die, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives . . .', that is, carries on living.

What do you mean?

Well, Paul put it very well:

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1 Thess 4:15)

So this is talking about he that 'lives', and we're talking about believers, of course. There will be a lot of folks alive when the Lord comes for his people. They won't be taken, nor changed. It is 'whosoever lives and believes on me shall never die.'

Why not?

Well, because the Lord will come, and the living will be caught up with the dead that have been raised. That, at least, is what I think the verses mean. Don't agree with me very quickly, because it is much disputed. And it is said that our Lord could never have said that in his life. I mean, that wasn't revealed until it came to the Apostle Paul! Well, if you're convinced by that argument, you will be convinced of course. But if our Lord was the Son of God incarnate, he didn't have to wait for a revelation to be made to St Paul before he expressed it.

This is the pattern that our Lord is laying down by this final sign to prepare his people for his going away and his absence until he come! A lot happens, therefore, in between time when believers get ill, and they die.

That is my first thesis, so to speak. Chapter 11, and the sign therein, is preparing the people—Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus and all that should follow—for our Lord's going away and his eventual coming again.

Have I made myself clear as to what I think, or at least moderately clear? If you don't agree with the interpretation of 11:25–26, it still doesn't affect the fact that the raising of Lazarus was a sign like all the other signs were signs. The sign of the feeding of the five thousand with loaves and fishes was a sign of something bigger. The sign of the raising of Lazarus was a sign of something bigger, as you see, because Lazarus eventually died! His raising was a sign of the bigger thing that shall happen when the Lord comes.

## The Fourth Journey

### *Part 2 – The Crucifixion of the King*

What I aim to do in this session is, not to expound verse by verse, but to chase one or two of the major ideas that seem to me to connect chapter 12 to the end of the book. And I particularly refer to our Lord as *King*.

### **The King in John's account**

Now, traditionally, it has been held that Matthew is the Gospel of the King, that Mark is the Gospel of the Servant, that Luke is the Gospel of the Son of Man and that John is the Gospel of the Son of God. That description is, generally speaking, very helpful, but there are, of course, variations. If you read the account of the crucifixion in Matthew, when the priests pass by the cross and deride our Lord, it is the question of his claim to deity that they mock: 'he said, "I am the Son of God"' (27:43). On the other hand, when we come to John, and the arrest and crucifixion, it is our Lord's kingship that comes to the fore. Shall we just notice the beginnings of this:

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!' (12:12–13)

And they, of course, were reciting Zechariah: 'your king is coming to you . . . humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey' (9:9). So then in chapter 12 as our Lord comes into the city the crowd greets him as the 'King' (v. 13). True, this is just as it is in other Gospels, but notice it is true here. Then comes the quotation, 'your king is coming' (v. 15). John then adds:

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. (v. 16)

As Don Carson emphasizes very helpfully in his commentary on John, that is John telling you, among other things, that John will make a distinction between what actually happened, and what was actually said when Christ was with his disciples here on earth, and what they came to understand later on. In other words, when they are recording the Gospels, they are recording what actually happened. This is not the church making up what happened in the light of their subsequent knowledge; they are recording (and so you see it here in John) what

happened and telling you: 'We didn't understand it at the time. Later on, we came to understand that this was what was written of him', and so forth and so on. But notice the speaking of him as the King, and the passage from Zechariah.

Now you come to the point in chapter 12 when our Lord is telling the apostles that he must die, be buried and rise again. And it comes at a critical time. Certain Greeks, which presumably were ethnic Greeks not Hellenistic Jews, came up to the feast as Gentiles did from time to time. They come and request an interview with Jesus, which provokes our Lord into making the statement that, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (v. 23). If he is going to gather believers from all the nations, as well as the Jews, the hour is coming when it is now going to be put into effect: he must himself die and go away.

So here we have a statement of strategy again. His death is not an unfortunate accident that, in the end, Christianity got over; it is the divine tactics and strategy. Let me explain a little bit further what I mean by that.

### **The King speaks of the prince of this world**

Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die. (vv. 31–33 RV)

His death is going to be a victory. It is his 'lifting up' that will be the means of his drawing all people—people of all sizes and shapes and ethnic groups and everything else—unto him. It is to be the victory over the prince of this world. In fact, it will constitute, in a certain sense, the judgment of the prince of this world.

We can come back to that later on, if you so please, but now I want to point out and emphasize this conquest, this battle, with what here is described as the prince, (in Greek: the *archōn*) of this world. It is John that talks to us about the prince of this world. In the context he has just described Christ coming as *King* to Jerusalem. Therefore it is the contest of the two kings, the two princes: 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.'

When you come to the Upper Room ministry, you will find it again:

I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world comes: and he has nothing in me. (14:30 RV)

And then again in chapter 16 where our Lord is expounding to them the necessity of his going away so that the Holy Spirit, the comforter, will come:

And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world has been judged. (vv. 8–11 RV)

Now, those references in these chapters to 'the prince of this world' raise a question in our minds immediately, do they not? What do you mean by *prince*? And what do you mean by

the term *world*? In what sense is he the *prince* of this *world*? So then let's come to the crucifixion and the issues at stake.

### **The King, the cross and the prince of this world**

When Caiaphas and the other priests bring Jesus to Pilate, they make the accusation, and Pilate therefore responds.

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?' (18:33–34)

In other words, 'Did somebody put this question into your mind? Or is this something that you are thinking about yourself?'

Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?' (v. 35)

Well, so far, it is the same as the other Gospels, but now look at the explanation that follows that is only in John:

Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.' Then Pilate said to him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate said to him, 'What is truth?' (vv. 36–38)

It is the definition of his kingdom, and what his kingdom is about.

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again, and said to them, 'See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.' So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold the man!' (19:1–5)

### **If my kingdom were of this world**

So we'd better pause there for a moment to see what has been going on. When they brought him before Pilate, they had accused him of trying to put himself forward as king of the Jews— as a political messiah. And Pilate would have been very concerned about that, because political messiahs were a dangerous thing in Judaea at the time. There had been earlier rebellions, and there would be later rebellions where Zionist Jews of the extreme kind would put forward a leader and try to unseat the Roman authorities and drive out Rome and establish themselves as kings like the Maccabees did. Therefore when the high priest and

company accused Christ before Pilate of claiming to be king that would make Pilate very nervous. With it being Passover time, and thousands and thousands of people being in Jerusalem, it was like a tinderbox: it could easily explode. And Pilate, if he allowed a rebellion to happen, would be accountable to Caesar.

So, naturally, he brings Christ for the first time in front of him, privately, and asks him about this business of being a king. And our Lord says, 'Now, is this your idea, or is it that you were put up to this by the priests?'

And he says, in effect, 'Well, that is what the priests told me.'

So Christ says, 'Well, actually, yes. My kingdom is not of this world . . .'

Now, excuse me, but I shall have to say something again at this point. Verse 36 is better translated: 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants *would have been* fighting.' It is not: 'would fight in the future'. Our Lord is talking about what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. So let me remind you of what happened in the garden.

Judas got a squad of soldiers from the Romans.

So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. (18:3)

He got a band of soldiers. They were under a *chiliarch*. That is a ruler of a thousand. That didn't mean that he brought all the thousand troops into the garden, but it was a commander: a *chiliarch*, who brought a squad of soldiers with him. Why? Because Judas and the priests had made it out to Pilate that they could expect opposition in the garden, because this was a dangerous political party out to promote Jesus as king, and if they came to arrest him, they would fight back! And please could they have a Roman band, a *speira*, that's the equivalent Greek word for cohort, actually. Could they have a cohort of soldiers to deal with the violence?

Actually, what happened, as you know, was that Peter, in his hastiness, drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Our Lord immediately forbade it (vv. 10–11). That action by Peter was a bit of the devil's cunning. It could have ruined the whole thing. And a *chiliarch* would have gone back to Pilate and said, 'Yes, of course, they are a rebellious group fostering military action.' What happened was that Christ forbade the use of the sword and said, 'If it's me you seek, let these go their way,' and surrendered himself. And the *chiliarch* would have gone back to Pilate and reported it.

When therefore our Lord said to Pilate, 'If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews . . .'

Pilate would have known it was actually true; the *chiliarch* would have reported it. When our Lord surrendered, then the priests took him, with the permission of the *chiliarch*. He voluntarily surrendered to them, and Pilate would have known it was the truth when Christ said:

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from the world. (18:36)

He is claiming to be King, claiming to establish a kingdom. He is telling Pilate the reason for it, and the type of kingdom it was.

### The three times Pilate found him not guilty

So then we read:

[Pilate] . . . went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, 'I find no *crime* in him'. (18:38 RV)

Now, sometimes preachers, in loyalty to the Lord, cite Pilate as saying, 'I find no fault in him', and will take it to mean Pilate declared him absolutely faultless and sinless. Well, he was faultless and sinless, but that wasn't quite what Pilate was saying. They had brought our Lord to Pilate on a charge. They charged him with insurrection against the emperor. Pilate's verdict is: 'That's nonsense. I find no criminal, political offence in him. He's not that kind of a king. He's not campaigning to get the Jews to rise against Tiberius Caesar. I find no *criminal fault* in him.'

Then John comes with his very powerful observation. Pilate said to them, 'He's not guilty of political insurrection, but you have a custom that I should release unto you one person at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release unto you the King of the Jews?'

They cried out therefore again, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' (see vv. 38–40).

And John adds, 'now Barabbas was an insurrectionist' (v. 40, own trans.). You should know that. Please remember it. Often it is translated, 'Now, Barabbas was a thief', or 'a robber', but the Greek *leistai* is the word that Josephus uses of political insurrectionists. And when the priests are provoked into making their choice, they choose a political insurrectionist. It immediately shows what hypocrites they were.

The next description of what Pilate did should cause us some thought: 'Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him' (19:1 RV).

You say, 'But that's curious. If he found no grounds of criminal offence in him, why should he scourge him?'

Oh, but the Roman law was not like the law we have here in our day. If you were brought before a magistrate on a charge, he'd probably scourge you to start with just to put you in the right frame of mind, so that thereafter you were induced to tell the truth. That was thought to be okay. You mustn't do it to a Roman citizen, but it was standard custom with others. Quite apart from the conclusion the trial might come to, and the penalty that would then be exacted, you scourged them to put them in the right frame of mind.

Then Pilate let his soldiers mock him: "'Hail, King of the Jews!" and [they] struck him with their hands' (v. 3). Pilate then went out again and said, 'Behold, I bring him out to you that you may know that I find . . .' (here it comes again) 'no political crime. He's not an insurrectionist, and it is I, Pilate, telling you this' (see v. 4). Jesus, therefore, came out wearing the crown of thorns—the mocking crown, and the purple garment the soldiers had used to mock his kingship. And Pilate said unto them, 'Behold the man!' (see v. 5).

That has been the subject of famous pictures, the famous 'Ecce Homo'.<sup>26</sup> The title is the Latin for, *Ecce*: 'behold', *homo*: 'the man'. Well, it may mean that, though I doubt whether Pilate was saying what a marvellous man this was. What, when Pilate had just allowed him to be mocked, and a crown of thorns put on his head and a mocking purple robe, and had him scourged? I doubt whether Pilate was saying, 'See what a remarkable, wonderful man he is!'

---

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, 'Ecce Homo' by Antonio Ciseri (1821-1891).



The Greek could be translated: 'Look at the fellow!' The Greek word *anthropos* can, in certain senses be used despisingly: 'Look at the fellow! Are you going to say to me that he is a leader of an insurrection like Che Guevara or somebody? He's a poor, weak fellow. It's nonsense to say he is a political insurrectionist. Look at the fellow.' And then we read:

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no . . .'

And now for the third time: 'I find no fault in him,' (meaning: 'no capital charge proved'). 'He's not guilty as you say, and I, as Pilate, am not going to use my Roman authority to execute him on a false charge! You take him then, and crucify him' (see v. 6).<sup>27</sup>

They said, 'Well, we have a law, and by that law he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God.' And when Pilate heard that, he was even more afraid (see v. 6–8).

We'll leave that for the moment, along with what happened in the next interview, and we shall have to come back to consider what its significance is.

### **Political blackmail to force the verdict**

Now notice what happened after this second interview.

From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.' (v. 12)

That was blackmail, of course, and that was no idle threat. You should understand (or remember what you know already) that the high priest and the priestly class in Judaea were the blue-blooded lot. They moved in very high circles. They had audience with the emperor at Rome. This wasn't just a rabbi or two round the corner who happened to make shoes for a living. These were priests; they were very wealthy men; they were the Jewish aristocracy. They governed Israel on all sorts of daily things, including trade and commerce. They laid down the rules, under Rome. And now they are threatening Pilate: 'You know, Pilate, we've delivered you this man on an accusation that he is a political insurrectionist. If you let him go, well, it would be very awkward for you if Tiberius Caesar were to hear that we—the high priest, along other priests—had delivered a man to you as a political insurrectionist, and you had let him go.'

It was sheer blackmail: 'Everyone that makes himself a king opposes Caesar.'

So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgement seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' (vv. 13–14)

You couldn't possibly miss it, even if you were determined to! John, in his record, is emphasizing the question of our Lord's *kingship*: 'Behold your King!'

---

<sup>27</sup> The three times Pilate says it, are recorded in 18:38; 19:4 and 19:6.

They cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.' (v. 15)

At the Passover ceremony they would have lifted their holy hands to heaven and praised God saying, 'Beside thee, we have no King, Redeemer and Saviour.'<sup>28</sup> For them to put it just like they did and say they had no king but Caesar? Well, perhaps you would say they were merely saying, 'We don't have any king. We're not fostering a king in the political sense, except Caesar.' Okay, but to put it in those absolute terms: 'We have no king at all but Caesar'?

### **Echoes of the Passover**

It was the preparation of the Passover, and when it comes to the description of the crucifixion John will remind us that 'no bone of him was broken' (see 19:36). The priests asked that, because it was the preparation, the bodies should be taken away. Therefore they asked that the soldiers should be ordered to break the legs of the three crucified, and have them buried, to get them out of the way because the next day was a very high day, religiously speaking. And the soldiers came with a great mallet, and they broke the legs of the first one, and they broke the legs of the second one. When they came to Jesus, they changed their mind, and they didn't break his legs, because of what the Scripture said. They didn't know the Scripture, but this was God, having seen that the Scripture should be fulfilled that no bone of him should be broken (see vv. 31–36). And that command, you will remember, is part of the rules for the celebration of Passover, that no bone of the Passover lamb should be broken (Exod 12:46).

John is asking us to remember that all this is going on in the context of the Passover. Therefore we ought to remember what the Passover was about. Israel had come into Egypt, but over the centuries there rose other Pharaohs that 'did not know Joseph' (Exod 1:8). The Pharaoh became an absolute tyrant of the Jews, and he set them to making brick. When Moses came in the name of God and demanded that Pharaoh let the people go, Pharaoh, instead of letting them go, made the work ten times harder. They were under this Egyptian *prince*. How were they delivered from that prince?

You will say, 'By the Passover.'

Yes, well, and how did it work?

Now at that point was the judgment on Egypt, and because it was the judgment on Egypt, and God is impartial, the firstborn in Israel likewise would have been killed had it not been for the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the signposts and the lintel of the doors of their houses. So that when the destroying angel came in, God says, 'I will stretch myself over the door when I see the blood, and the destroying angel shall not come into you to destroy your firstborn' (see 12:23). But the firstborn, from Pharaoh on the throne downwards, was destroyed on Passover night. And Israel was delivered from that tyrant prince. They began their journey out that very night and eventually Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea (Exod 13–14).

---

<sup>28</sup> The words echo those of Isaiah 44:6.

Do you see the point? Passover is now coming to revive in your minds the idea of the tyrant Pharaoh and God's way of delivering Israel from the tyrant prince. It came about through this, the death of the Passover lamb.

### **Summarizing John's emphasis on kingship**

All I'm suggesting is something very obvious: the end of John's Gospel is concerned with our Lord's kingship. You pick up the emphasis as he comes into Jerusalem, like the other Gospels say, riding on a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy: 'Rejoice O Zion! Your king is coming to you' (see 9:9). In crucifying him, they were crucifying their king.

But in the second part of John 12, our Lord informs you that this is his tactics. He must die, for: 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (v. 24). Deliberately, therefore, he will be 'lifted up'. His being lifted up isn't simply a matter of shame after which he recovers and is glorified. His being lifted up is part of the glory! 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (v. 23). His being lifted up on the cross is the initial stages of his being glorified: 'And, I, if I be lifted up, by that very method, will draw people of all nations to me' (see v. 32). 'Now is the judgement of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (see v. 31). Satan's grip is broken by this very method.

Therefore, we have John's account of the trial before Pilate, emphasizing the kingship of Christ and the nature of that kingship, one not enforced by arms. It is a kingship that is concerned with the truth and of course you can't convince anybody of the truth by threatening them with the sword: 'You are to believe what I say, and it is the truth, and if you don't, I'll have your head off!' You can't do it. Christ is a King, but his conquest depends on the truth.

Then there is that sad incident when the Jews, the leaders of the nation, stand before Pilate who asks them: 'Shall I crucify your King?' And they reply: 'We have no king but Caesar.' Talk about people hugging their chains! By getting rid of Christ they were opening themselves, not merely to the continued reign of the Romans (which they weren't going to be delivered from anyway, for Christ was not going to fight the Romans), but to their continuing bondage to the prince of this world.

So, all that I'm suggesting is the obvious point: this connection of the thought through the end of chapter 12 and (skipping for the moment the Upper Room ministry) the story of the arrest, the trial and the crucifixion, is Christ's winning of the battle by the deliberate use of the tactics of his death—his being 'lifted up'.

Does that make any sense to you? Does it begin to at least make a start in your thinking and help you to see how the ideas are connected up between the end of chapter 12 and the later scenes involving the arrest and crucifixion? I have tried to string these ideas together so that they form a kind of a framework that holds these chapters together, though it's not the only framework. It is a developing theme, one of the dominant themes at the end of John.

## Further facets to consider

### David's greater son

Now, there is one tiny little thing that fits in with this. Look at chapter 18, if you will, and the very first words: 'When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron' (v. 1). That should cause us to think and get our memories going. Do you remember where another figure in the Old Testament went forth over the brook Kidron? Yes, in 2 Samuel. And who was it that went, and when did he go? It was King David, fleeing from Absalom. He left Jerusalem and his throne and his harem, actually, and went with a few loyal servants. We are told that, eventually, David went out into exile across the brook Kidron (ch. 15). It is a prototype of this greater king, of course, going across the brook Kidron.

### Killing the resurrection and the life

One other thing we should notice. In our first session this morning we talked about the raising of Lazarus and about Christ doing it deliberately as a preliminary to his coming to Jerusalem on the last occasion. So the pilgrims coming down into the city, particularly those from the north, would hear the story as they came. All the buzz in Jerusalem was about this Jesus that raised a man from the dead. And the Pharisees and other authorities took it seriously because many people went and believed on Jesus on account of Lazarus. And when Jesus came to Bethany and they made him a supper, all the people tried to get in to see this Lazarus. As a result of which the Sanhedrin and others decided, not only to kill Jesus, but to kill Lazarus as well (12:9–11).

Now, ponder this. Death is the last enemy, is it not? To be free of Jesus (as they think) they are going to kill 'the resurrection and the life'. Our Lord had told the Jews in chapter 8 that the devil was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. And the crime of executing Jesus was among other things the absurdity of killing a man who had the power to raise people from the dead. If you want a good sermon to atheists, and the New Atheism, just point out to the crowd what the New Atheists are doing, and what the gospel is that they are preaching. This new effort, the 'New Atheism' as it is called, aiming to attack all religion and Christianity in particular, will tell you: 'Of course there's no God out there. We are just the product of DNA, and in a world that's run by DNA, some people are going to get lucky, and some people are going to get hurt, and there is no rhyme or reason in it. DNA just is. It doesn't care! This life is all there is.'

It means that multitudes that have died now will never get justice.

Old Marx was a fraud, wasn't he? He taught that you must get rid of God in order to get freedom. He also taught that the rules of history were such that the glorious age of golden peace and everything else was bound to come by dialectical materialism. And so he encouraged millions to rise up and struggle. And they died. Well, by definition the golden age was not to come within their lifetime. Now it is apparent it isn't going to come at all, not according to Marx's principles anyway. There is nothing but death staring you in the face.

What is more, if there is no God out there, and there is no resurrection of the dead, then multitudes living at present on earth are never going to have justice done anyway, are they?

Don't go around prating about justice, if there's no resurrection of the dead! Justice then is a rope of sand for multi-millions. And it is good to be reminded of what the issue at stake is.

### *Motivation and tactics*

I must remind you that the high priests were Sadducees, not Pharisees. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, nor in angel or spirit. We are told that in the Acts of the Apostles (23:8). So we have this incident in the Gospel by John, who talks to us throughout his Gospel of eternal life, with this emphasis on the kingship of Christ and the Passover, and tells us of the resurrection of Lazarus, and how for that very reason the high priests were all the more determined to destroy Jesus. And if it came to that, they'd destroy Lazarus as well, so that the evidence would be obliterated. Therefore, in the Gospel of John, the motivation for the crucifixion of Christ is exposed.

But Christ standing there, says, 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (12:24). Now we see our Lord's tactics (God's tactics) of dying to win the victory, the victory against the prince of this world: 'Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (v. 31 RV). It is the death of Christ winning the victory.

I don't know why you believe in Jesus. What made you believe in Jesus? Why do you find him attractive and dare to state your faith in him? How did he conquer you? Why do you accept him as King? Well, I think it is for this reason amongst others: Christ did for you what Satan would never dream of doing—he died for you. That never came into Satan's mind. It didn't come into Hitler's either, nor Marx's, nor Napoleon's.

### **Echoes of the book of Exodus in the Gospel of John**

Let me just remind you, in regard to this question of the prince of this world, that John is the Gospel that talks about 'the world'. 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (16:33 RV). What does John mean by the *world*? Yes, it is 'cosmos', the world: 'For God so loved the world', the cosmos (3:16). But what does John mean by the world? You will find it in his Gospel together with 'the prince of this world'. 'I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you' (15:19) and, 'I have overcome the world' (16:33), and, 'The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me' (14:30 KJV). And then we read our Lord's prayer, talking about the world: 'The people whom you gave me out of the world' (17:6), and so forth and so on. And when he's in his Epistles, John says a lot about 'the world'.

Do you who are preachers find yourselves warning people about the world? Does anybody here admit to having preached anything about the world? Perhaps you think that's too old-fashioned. To define what we mean by *world* would be a very important thing, wouldn't it?

John, in his Gospel and in his Epistles, is one of the persons who talks about worldliness, which prompts me again to say that throughout the Gospel of John there are many echoes of the Exodus, aren't there?

When God sent Moses and commissioned him at the burning bush to go and deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses said to God, 'That's all right for you, God, but if I go and tell them, "The

God of your fathers has appeared to me," they'll say, "Well, what is his name, anyway?" So what am I to say?'

And God says, 'You will say, "I AM THAT I AM. That is my name." You are to say, "I AM has sent me"' (see Exod 3:13–15). So Moses went and declared the *name* of God.

What had that got to do with delivering people from Egypt? How did that help? But then our Lord is on record at the end of chapter 17, saying to his Father, 'I have declared your name unto my brethren that you have given me out of the world, and I will declare it' (see v. 26 KJV). What has declaring the name of God got to do with delivering people, either from Egypt under Moses, or now under Christ? What has declaring the name of God got to do with delivering people from the world?

So I put it to you, that if you came across a church where you suspected people were getting worldly, what would you do? How would you preach? You would, I think, say, 'What I need to do here is declare the name of God.' That is what our Lord did. But how on earth does that help to deliver people from worldliness?

Then Moses said, 'Well, look, God, that's all right for you to say that, but now perhaps they won't believe me.'

So God says, 'Well, I'll give you some *signs* to do, Moses.' (John's gospel takes up the terms, doesn't it, and tells about the signs that our Lord did.)

The deliverance from Egypt was by the Passover lamb. Well, listen to John tell us about Christ the Passover lamb.

And of course in Exodus we read of the tabernacle, with its lampstand (25:31–40). In John's Gospel, we read: 'I am the light of the world' (8:12). We read of the table in the tabernacle (25:23–30). In John, Christ says, 'I am the bread of life' (6:35). And therefore we have the mention of Moses giving them the manna from heaven (6:32). There are several other things besides.

In understanding John, therefore, and what he means by *world*, it is a useful thing to go back and look at Exodus and how Israel was delivered from the prince of Egypt. Among the other things that come to light, is that when Moses went into Pharaoh he said, 'I come to you in the name of God. Let these people go' (see Exod 8).

'God?' says Pharaoh. 'What God?'

'Well, "I AM THAT I AM"; Jehovah!'

'I'm sorry, I don't recognize your God,' says Pharaoh. 'I don't recognize him, you see, and as for your story, Moses, about a God who promised your fathers long before they came into Egypt, that he was going to bring them here and take you all out the other end and give you a great inheritance, that's a lot of fairy-tale bunkum, Moses! Don't you go and fill the people's heads with that kind of nonsense! Egypt is all there is for them. That is all there is! It is eating and drinking and marrying, and a game of football now and again; that's all there is. All that talk about: "You've had a past, designed by God, and there is a future inheritance out there waiting for you beyond Egypt," that's all nonsense, Moses!'

And you see the prince of this world doing the same thing, don't you? 'There is no God. There is no past. There are no eternal plans. There is no future inheritance; this is all there is.' That is worldliness, of one sort. The old line that you can 'be so heavenly as to be no earthly good', well, we know what it means, but the opposite is true. If there is no heaven beyond, then this life is hopeless.

## **The Fourth Journey**

### *Part 3—The Second Interview*

When we broke off, we were talking about the trial of our Lord before Pilate, and I talked about the first interview where Pilate took our Lord aside into his apartments, and questioned him (18:33–38). That conversation was about whether our Lord was claiming to be a king or not. And our Lord explained to him, yes, he was a king, but the King that was born into this world and came into this world for the purpose of witnessing to the truth.

### **Pilate's second interview with Jesus**

The second interview, which occurs in chapter 19, was provoked by the statement of the Jews:

The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.' (19:7)

The first charge that they brought against Christ was that he was a political figure aiming at becoming King of the Jews in a political sense, and therefore raising an army to attack the Romans and to drive the Romans out. And Pilate, having examined him, saw that the charge was quite empty and three times over made the point, 'I find the charge not proven.' When he says, 'I find no crime in him,' he means he found the charge 'not proven'. He was not guilty, therefore, of leading a political movement to attack the Romans.

Therefore, Pilate said to them, 'You take him and crucify him yourself. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to use my Roman authority to execute a man on a charge that is false. You take him and crucify him if you want to' (see v. 6). Pilate was an unprincipled creature and a very weak-willed man on most things. He was giving the Jews permission now to go and kill him if they wanted to, and he would not make trouble for them, because they were not supposed to execute anybody; they had to get permission, though they didn't always seek permission. When Stephen was executed, for instance, they just hustled him out of the court and stoned him to death (Acts 7:54–60). They didn't ask permission, but they should have; they did not have the right of capital punishment under the Romans. But Pilate is here telling them, 'You go ahead and execute him if you want to. I shall not do it.' But when the Jews answered him you will notice they changed the charge.

### **The second charge against Jesus**

Now they brought another completely different charge:

'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.' When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. (vv. 7–8).

Now, that might strike us moderns as being very odd that Pilate should be afraid of that, but Pilate was an old pagan, and not a very knowledgeable one, either, perhaps. The pagans did believe that sometimes there appeared on earth a superhuman human. They called such people *theios anēr*: a god-like human. And you had to be very careful how you treated people like that, because they could bring you unpleasant consequences. You will remember his superstition comes out in Matthew's Gospel. His wife sent him a note as he sat on the judgment seat: 'Be careful what you do with this righteous man. I've suffered many things this night because of him in a dream,' and Pilate then determined to release him, but was overwhelmed by the priests and the crowd (see 27:19–20). So here, Pilate was even more afraid: 'Is this after all a *theios anēr*?' So, you notice that when he took Christ aside into the palace again, he didn't ask him: 'Are you a king?' This time his question was: 'Where are you from?' (v. 9) In other words: 'Are you simply an ordinary human being, or are you a special human being? And where are you from?' This is now his concern.

And Jesus gave him no answer. How could he have got it across to Pilate, I wonder?

'So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"' (19:10). In other words, Pilate was beginning to lose his temper: 'You'd better start speaking, young man. Don't you realize I have power to crucify you? And power to release you? You'd better start speaking! I'm asking you where you're from.' And our Lord replied, 'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin' (v. 11).

#### *The one who is the truth standing before human judgment*

What did our Lord mean? He meant, of course, that this very occasion was God's arrangement. God had given Pilate the authority to take this decision; it was given him 'from above'. We know it from what the Gospel of John has said, that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. What is the truth about Calvary?

'I came to bear witness to the truth,' says Christ.

'What is truth?' says Pilate (see 18:37–38).

Well, what is truth, then? Truth, ultimately, is a person. 'I am . . . the truth,' says Christ (14:6). The truth of this situation, as Jesus stood before Pilate, is that God had given Pilate the authority; and the one that stood in front of him was God incarnate! Do you believe it? Can it be true that the God of the universe—God incarnate—would come and stand before a human being, and let a human being decide what to do with him, to crucify him or release him? You do believe some extraordinary things, you know, if I may point it out!

It is no good saying, 'Christ, prove it! Show Pilate that you are God incarnate!' Well, our Lord could have done it, but the very sight of it would have shrivelled Pilate to a cinder. It is the fact that, as you preach, as you witness, this is God incarnate putting himself before men. And they can decide what they are going to do with Jesus who is called the Christ. That is the truth about God, you know. That is the kind of god that God is! That is the amazing truth. And as I said earlier, the devil will never do it for you.



*The judgment of the final judge*

So there were two issues at stake. Was Jesus claiming to be king? Yes, he was, but in what sense *king*? He ought to die because he said he was *the Son of God*. So now in what sense was he 'Son of God'? And what was he doing, if he was Son of God, standing before Pilate and making the claim that this was the authority given to Pilate by God to decide in this case? Of course, Pilate will be held responsible for the decision he took with that God-given authority. But when it comes to assessing the gravity of sin, what our Lord says on the topic is highly relevant since he is to be the final judge.

He said on one occasion it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for those in Capernaum (Matt 11:20–24). How did he know what would be more tolerable? It is because he is going to be the judge! So here he says, 'Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin' (19:11); that is, the high priest. It will surely be a sin in Pilate that, in spite of all the evidence, he went against that evidence and he himself confessed Jesus was innocent and then had him crucified. But the worst criminal in it was, of course, the high priest, who was in a position to know better than a pagan like Pilate. His was the greater sin.

Now, that being so, might I go back a bit, and look with you at the trial of Christ before the Sanhedrin?

### **The trial before the high priest**

The trial begins in chapter 18:

So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. (vv. 12–13)

### **The principle underlying the trial**

Thus begins the trial in John, and it is somewhat different from the account of the trial as given in the other three Gospels. First of all, there is the remark:

It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. (v. 14)

The account of that has already been given to you earlier when he said at the end of chapter 11 that it was 'expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not' (v. 50 RV). In other words, this court was to reach its decision on the basis, not of *truth*, but of *expediency*.

There are some things that governments get up to. As you know, bribery in Britain is illegal, and if a wealthy ruler of another strategic country should demand a bribe of a few million pounds in order to buy British made aeroplanes, that too is illegal. Except that the prosecution were told not to go further and investigate, because it would be 'against the national interest'. This is expediency. And here was a court based on *expediency*. Of course, when Caiaphas said that 'one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should

perish', he didn't realize that his words had a deeper meaning. John has already pointed that out, when he recorded the fact that Caiaphas said this, and he pointed out that Caiaphas didn't say this 'of himself'.

He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. (11:51–52)

Nowhere more perhaps than in the trial and crucifixion of Christ will you see the coming together of man's evil intentions, plans and motivations, and the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. God did not make Caiaphas say it, but when he said it, it had a double meaning. Yes, from his point of view it was expedient, and yet it was the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that Christ should die not for that nation only, but for all the potential people of God scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. So it is here in chapter 18 likewise.

### **The question of evidence**

From talking about Caiaphas therefore, and the principles upon which the court was founded, we move on to what happened next.

Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the door said to Peter, 'You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. (vv. 15–18)

#### *Evidence in the courtroom and in the courtyard*

'The servant girl at the door said to Peter: "You're one of them too, are you?" Well, of course she said it. Why shouldn't she say it? She knew the man who was saying to her: 'Please let in this man, he's a friend of mine, you know. He's one of us. Let him in.' So she let him in because she knew this other man. And when he brought Peter in, of course she said, 'You're one of them too, are you?'

Now you're going to get some stories that may look rather weak superficially, but they raise the question of *evidence*. Here was Peter, and this bit of evidence that moved the girl on the door to say, 'You're one of his too, aren't you?' And Peter says, 'No. I am not.'

Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. The high priest then questioned Jesus about *his disciples* and his teaching. (vv. 18–19)

You will notice that our Lord didn't reply to the first: he said nothing about his disciples. How merciful he was. That could have embarrassed Peter badly, couldn't it, if Christ had said,

'Well, there's one of them. Yes, there's two of them down there, look'? No, he didn't reply about the disciples.

The high priest asked him about his disciples and *his teaching*, to which our Lord replied,

I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said. (vv. 20–21)

Which is fair enough. He is not denying that, in the Upper Room he said a lot of things to the disciples, but he said nothing that was subversive, nothing that was secret in the sense that he didn't mind anybody hearing it. So he's making a plain statement: 'I was with you in the temple, for instance, this last six days and subject to your questioning and in front of the people. That is what I stand for. Ask them. Don't ask me; ask them. They'll give you a report of what I said.'

Is that fair enough to let the people say? Well, when he heard this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus.

When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' Jesus answered him, 'If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?' (vv. 22–23)

The offer of Christ is to let the people speak and say what Christ had said in his preaching to them, in the discourses in the temple where the priests, of course, were themselves present. For that he is slapped across the mouth by an officer as being an unsuitable thing to say in the court.

Now look at verse 25.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, 'You also are not one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?' (vv. 25–26)

The man said to Peter, 'I've seen you before, haven't I? Of course he had! Peter had used his sword and cut off his relative's ear! Here again is evidence.

Peter denied it.

And they said, 'You liar, Peter!' and rounded on him.

No, they didn't.

Do you know, it doesn't matter to the world if you deny Christ; the world won't mind it. Peter is denying knowing Christ in the face of the plain, straightforward evidence that he himself had given them (in the garden and by turning up with a known disciple of Jesus). 'Peter again denied it, and at once a cock crowed' (v. 27). It is the question of evidence.

*Evidence for bringing him to Pilate*

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. (v. 28)

What holiness they themselves had!

So Pilate went outside to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?' They answered him . . .

But it was a very weak answer, wasn't it?

If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you. (vv. 29–30)

Oh, so they couldn't tolerate evildoers? It looks as if Pilate had wrong-footed them. They probably had made an earlier agreement with Pilate as to what it was all about, and that he would have the prisoner before him very early in the morning. And anyway, they just couldn't abide evildoers, so they said. They wouldn't have brought him unless he was an *evildoer*! But at the end of the chapter when Pilate offered them the choice, this man or Barabbas, they chose Barabbas. They couldn't stick evildoers, so they chose *Barabbas*? 'Now, Barabbas was a brigand, a political activist' (see v. 40). He'd been convicted of murder, the other Gospels tell us, and was imprisoned. They couldn't put up with evildoers, supposedly. Well, Pilate saw through them, of course. The question therefore is again one of evidence.

## **The crucifixion**

Now, let's complete the story of the crucifixion.

Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.' So [*therefore*] he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. (19:15–20)

That shows you that Jesus was not crucified on top of a hill. Some people have imagined that the cross was on top of that big hill outside the bus station in Jerusalem. It wasn't, of course. Many of those that were coming by read the title. When the Romans crucified somebody they didn't crucify them on top of a hill. They crucified them by the roadside, so that the people coming backwards and forwards could get the warning: 'Don't behave like this, or this will happen to you!' And Pilate wrote the title, and this title was read by many of the Jews as they came by the road. He was crucified along a roadside.

The title was written in three languages. The ‘Hebrew’ (as some translations have it) might here represent Aramaic, but there was also Latin and Greek. People had to know Latin if they dealt with the Romans, because the Romans spoke Latin and refused to speak anything else. So people had to know some Latin. And then Palestine had been Hellenised for some centuries before Christ was born, ever since the time of Alexander the Great who had conquered the place and set up sundry Greek cities in Palestine. The Decapolis were Greek cities, so a lot of people knew Greek. Indeed, the Jewish priests, or rabbis I ought to say, had been working on the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Palestine fifty years before Christ, and afterwards they continued in order to make the Greek resemble the Hebrew a bit more. We know various revisions that were done by Palestinian rabbis, getting the Greek translation nearer to the Hebrew. Lots of people knew Greek in Palestine. Our Lord himself may have occasionally preached in Greek. So the inscription was written in Greek and Latin, and Hebrew (or else Aramaic), so that everybody could read it.

Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”, but rather, “This man said, I am King of the Jews”.’ (vv. 20–21)

And Pilate, who was pretty fed up with the Jews by this time, and wanting to get his own back on them, answered: ‘What I have written I have written’ (v. 22). In other words: ‘I’m not going to change it for you or anybody else, gentlemen!’ That is a marvellous use of the Greek perfect: ‘What I have written, I have written!’ And that is that! Now, only John tells us this particular episode, that the Jews tried to get him to change his mind and write something different, and he wouldn’t change his writing: ‘What I have written, I have written.’

### Four writings

You should now notice that, in John, the story of the crucifixion turns upon four *writings*. They are nicely hidden from you, because the translators in their reverence translate these four writings as ‘the Scriptures’. But of course, you would know without me telling you, that *scripture* means ‘writing’. It refers to the holy Scriptures here, of course, but they are writings. *Scripturam*, in Latin, means ‘writing’. So there are four writings, and in John’s record, the crucifixion turns on these four writings.

*Writing 1—“They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Ps 22:18)*

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier . . . (v. 23)

They were entitled to do that. It was part of the perks of the job. When they crucified somebody, they could share out his clothes. So they made ‘four parts, one part for each soldier’. Now, notice the drama of the thing, how dramatic John’s writing is: ‘also his tunic.’ You can see one of them—he’s got the coat, and he’s about to tear it in four bits and then? He changed his mind. These are Roman soldiers, you remember.

Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. (v. 23 RV)

I call your attention to that. It was a beautiful coat: woven ‘from the top throughout’. It was the *chiton*; it was the main coat that a man would wear. Then he would have other things round it, but the main thing was a long, shirt-like affair, and it had a hole for the head to come through. You put it over the head, and then it had a back and front and sides. And it wasn’t two bits sewn together; it was woven from the top throughout. That was a high quality coat, by those standards.

The idea that Jesus Christ walked around scruffy is not true. If you want to know his taste in clothes, listen to him in the Sermon on the Mount. ‘The flowers of the fields’, he says, ‘they don’t spin, you know, but Solomon in all his glory wasn’t dressed as good as these’ (see Matt 6:28–30). Think of the beautiful anemones and the wild flowers in Palestine: ‘That’s my Father’s concept of dress!’ he says. ‘He dresses the flowers.’ Christ wore an expensive coat. I fancy some of the women had made it for him, and you wouldn’t make anything scruffy for Christ, would you?

The soldiers took it, and were about to tear it in pieces:

They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: That the [*writing*] might be fulfilled, which says, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. (v. 24 RV)

But you say to John, ‘Wait a minute. The Roman soldiers didn’t know anything about the writing. What do you mean: “That the writing might be fulfilled . . . These things, therefore, the soldiers did”? They weren’t trying to fulfil the writing, were they?’

No. They didn’t know anything about it. But, they did what the writing said, and you will notice how they changed their minds. These were Roman soldiers. They were going to tear it in pieces, and then they changed their minds, ‘that the writing might be fulfilled’. And if you say, ‘What made them change their minds?’, well, perhaps it was something beautiful about that garment. Who knows? But what the priests couldn’t do, while standing on their two feet, to get Pilate to change his writing, now the blessed Lord, hung on a cross, made the Roman soldiers do, to change their minds, to fulfil the writing about his clothes.

*Writing 2—‘in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’ (Ps 69:21 RV)*

There then follows the question of his instructions to his mother, and John the apostle (vv. 25–27). But let’s now come to the next verse:

After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the [*writing*] might be accomplished, said, I thirst. (v. 28 RV)

Now, there is no writing in the Psalms or the Prophets where the Messiah says, ‘I thirst.’ The writing was that ‘in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink’ (Ps 69:21 RV). That was what the writing said. Our Lord, knowing that all things were now accomplished, now finished, yet there was this one writing *not* finished. How shall he get them to do it? He said, ‘I thirst,’ and the Roman soldiers, even the squad that crucified him, had enough human compassion left to respond. They took a sponge of vinegar and put it on hyssop and brought it to his

mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (see vv. 29–30). He is in charge, even though he is crucified. He makes the Romans change their minds and fulfil his writing.

*Writings 3 and 4—'Not one of his bones will be broken' (see Ps 34:20)—'They will look upon me whom they have pierced' (Zech 12:10 KJV)*

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. (vv. 31–32)

You know, don't you, why they would do that? Crucifixion was a ghastly death, but a man crucified on a cross could take two or three days to die. It wasn't an immediate death. And because there was a step on the wood where their feet rested, they could lift themselves up to release the pressure on their lungs and breathe, though it cost enormous pain because the feet were nailed through the ankles. If you broke their legs, they couldn't raise themselves up, and therefore they died, of course.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken.' (vv. 33–36)

The priests wanted these three prisoners to be taken down so that they weren't up there on the high day. Very religious they were. So the soldiers came, and they broke the legs of the first. They broke the legs of the other. They came to Jesus, and then they hesitated. Someone might think: 'Go on. Break his legs. You're under army orders to break the legs!'

No. They didn't break his legs.

Why not? Why didn't they?

Well, because there was this writing that had to be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken' (v. 36).

But they didn't know the first thing about it. You say, 'What made them change their minds?'

It was the fact that he was dead already! The fact is that he was dead, and the other two weren't. He had died already when he said, "It is finished", and *he bowed his head and gave up his spirit* (v. 30). It was this fact that he was dead, and the timing of his death, that made them change their minds. And the writing was fulfilled.

Oh, then one of them had a bright idea, just to make sure.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. (v. 34)

It was a good job he had an afterthought, wasn't it? Because there was another writing that said, 'They will look on him whom they have pierced' (v. 37).

And now you notice the emphasis that, when they pierced his side instead of breaking his legs, there came out blood and water, and:

He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. (v. 35)

Why that fuss from John?

Because this was the great Passover Lamb, and this was no ordinary death! And of the Passover lamb it was written, 'You shall not break any of its bones' (Exod 12:46). And the witness is telling you, please notice it, that this was the fulfilment of the details of the Passover lamb now being fulfilled in the great reality of which the Passover was but a prototype.

Pilate would not change his writing, not for the Jewish high priests. Now, here is the Messiah himself—the King himself—and the four writings are fulfilled. It is a study in itself to ask yourself what made them change their minds. The soldiers did not know the writing. What made them do it? What was it about Christ that made them change their minds?

### **The question of relationships at the cross**

I think I will have told you when we went through the early chapters of John, what relevance these verses have to the rest of the Gospel:

but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (19:25–27)

What has that got to do with anything? It is an interesting fact in and of itself, but it is part of one of the dominant themes in John's Gospel. Let me point it out again (and you learn to excuse us old men as we repeat ourselves). It concerns the women mentioned in the Gospel of John, which only John mentions. Or, at least, if others mention them, they don't mention them to the same extent that John does.

#### *The women in John's Gospel*

There is the wedding at Cana of Galilee; the chief thing about which was that the mother of Jesus was there (ch. 2). And he said to Mary, 'What have I to do with you?' (v. 4 RV). So there is one woman. Only John has that story.

Then there is the woman at the well, only John tells you about her (ch. 4). Then he tells you that she'd had five husbands: 'and the one you now have is not your husband' (v. 18). The other five were husbands. I don't know whether they died, or divorced her (divorce was pretty easy in those days). Now she was living with a man and hadn't bothered to marry him: 'The one you now have is not your husband.'



Then there is the story of the woman taken in adultery (ch. 8). Only John has that. And she and the woman of Samaria are sort of twins, aren't they? The second one was a bit worse than the first. She had been caught in the act of adultery.

Then there was Mary and Martha at the death of their brother, as we have seen in chapter 11. Only John has that particular part of the story. 'Your brother will rise again,' said our Lord (v. 23).

Then, as we've just read, there is Mary the mother of Christ at the death of her son. You might even get the impression that those two stories go together. There is Mary and Martha at the death of their brother, and Mary the mother of Christ at the death of her son.

Then, of course, there is the Mary in the garden on the morning of the resurrection (ch. 20).

All of those stories about women create one of the dominant themes in John, and they stress the question of relationship, don't they?

At the marriage: 'Woman, what have I to do with you?'

The woman at the well: 'You've had five husbands, and the man you're now living with is not your husband.'

The woman taken in adultery: enough said; it is a question of relationship.

Mary and Martha at the death of their brother: the cruel thing that death does to human relationships.

Mary the mother of Christ at the death of her son: that is what the world does, and what the cross of Christ does, to relationships. It was the cross that the world gave to Christ. It was the death of her son.

### *New relationships announced*

In each of these instances, our Lord announced a new relationship. So here at the cross: "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" Now, John wasn't her literal, physical son, nor was she his physical mother; but this is a new relationship that Christ creates between believers, and an enormous comfort it is in times of persecution for the sake of the cross of Christ.

The final story is Mary in the garden, after the resurrection. And when Mary had come to him, realizing it was Jesus, he said to her,

Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' (20:17)

Look at how he phrased it: 'my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'. Notice the relationship emphasis.

So this incident that occurred next to the cross of Christ, with Mary and John, isn't a stray object put in. It is important in its own right. It is a new relationship announced at the cross where Christ was crucified.

## The Fourth Journey

### *Part 4—His Commandment is Eternal Life*

What I have been trying to do in these last few sessions is to draw out some of the major lines of thought that link chapters 11–12 and the story of the arrest and crucifixion of Christ in chapters 18 and 19. In this final session, I come back to chapter 12 to comment on the second half of that chapter, which we have not yet considered.

We considered the first half, in which our Lord came to Jerusalem. They made a supper at Bethany, and then he came riding into Jerusalem on the donkey as Jerusalem's king. Then we thought about how there came certain Greeks (presumably ethnic Greeks) who were wanting to see Jesus, which led our Lord to say, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (v. 23). Very soon now, the gospel would go out to the whole world, not merely to Jews. Greeks would come, along with Jews, and put their faith in him.

### **The Son of Man to be glorified by being lifted up**

With the coming of the Greeks in chapter 12, the hour had come for him to be glorified, and now he faces what must be done. He uses an analogy:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. (vv. 23–26)

He is facing the fact that the cost of this victory will be his death, and confesses: 'Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour"?' That's not a question; it's a statement, but then is added at once: 'But for this purpose I have come to this hour' (v. 27). If now he doesn't go through with the experiences of this hour, that is, with his arrest, crucifixion and then resurrection, then the whole purpose of his coming is frustrated. He therefore says:

'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not mine.' (vv. 28–30)

This was to show the crowd that Christ was in touch with the Father, and the Father with him, as he now faces his being 'lifted up'. His being lifted up is not just an unpleasant necessity that will lead on to his glorification; it is a part of his glorification! And you responded earlier to say that is so in your own estimation. It is not that Jesus was glorified and therefore I believe in him. It runs with you that, 'Jesus died for me, and that is the glory in it!' He says here, 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself' (v. 32). So then, far from the Pharisees, and Caiaphas leading them, with their intention to put him to death to stop people believing in him, his being lifted up and crucified would be *the means* of people believing in him.

### **The Holy Spirit will convict the world**

Notice therefore what he says: 'Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (12:31 RV). This is to be the victory over the prince of this world. He goes on to enlarge upon that phrase in chapter 16. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says:

And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world has been judged.  
(vv. 8–11 RV)

#### *Convict of sin*

What do you mean by *sin*? Is it that they go on drugs or get drunk too much? No, no. He will convict the world of sin because they do not believe. This is the cardinal sin: the sin of unbelief. Of course, it was the sin in the Garden of Eden, was it not? It is the sin of unbelief in refusing to believe in Christ. Christ's death and now resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin: 'because, they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father.'

#### *Convict of righteousness*

'Of righteousness, because I go to the Father' doesn't mean: 'Now we can have a perfect righteousness given us by God through the death of Christ.' It means what Isaiah would mean by it (or the Messiah speaking through Isaiah). His resurrection and ascension would demonstrate that Jesus was *right*, and they who condemned him were wrong. Listen to Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. He knows his stuff by this time, after Christ had risen and had spent forty days with them, on and off. Here is Peter going out to the crowd, and to the Sanhedrin. 'You crucified Christ, your Messiah!' he says. 'And the very Christ whom you crucified God has raised' (see 3:14–15; 4:10). When Stephen gave the message, the Sadducees and the high priest gnashed their teeth (ch. 7). This is what Christ is saying: 'When the Holy Spirit will come, he will convict the world of sin because they didn't believe, and convict them of righteousness because I go to the Father—I am right! The coming of the Holy Spirit will demonstrate it. And you've committed the ghastly sin of murdering your Messiah, and God has vindicated me by the resurrection and ascension.'

*Convict of judgment*

The Holy Spirit will also convict the world of judgment: 'of judgement, because the prince of this world has been judged.' In what sense has he been judged? He has been judged in this sense: 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.' The prince of this world, engineering the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, found it is his judgment. Colossians 2 will take it up, and talk about the way that Christ stripped the principalities and powers.

So these three things are involved, and our Lord foresees and says this in chapter 12. He is now advertising to them that he is going to die. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die otherwise it abides alone, but this method is going to lead to thousands of people believing on him. It is going to spell the victory over Satan, and so forth and so on.

### **The light and what can be done with it**

That brings us to verse 33.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, 'We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' So Jesus said to them . . .'

(He doesn't appear to answer what they asked.)

The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. (vv. 33–35)

Our Lord had said the same thing in chapter 9, before he healed the blind man:

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. (v. 4)

'Walk while you have the light.' You imagine the darkness of this world in the three days that Christ lay in the tomb.

While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. (v. 36)

But then we read:

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him . . .' (vv. 36–37)

And now there follows an analysis of why that happened. The gospel, after all, is written so that people will believe, so John is going to tell us at the end of chapter 20:

these [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (v. 31)

Well, if all those signs were meant to lead people to faith, how is it that having done so many signs, they didn't believe? And the great majority of his contemporaries didn't believe. How would you account for that?

Perhaps you had given your atheist friend the Gospel of John, and he said to you: 'I read that funny book you gave me.'

'Oh yes, what did you think of it?'

'I'm surprised to hear you recommending the fact that Jesus made gallons of wine as a reason why I should believe in him. That was a very funny thing you gave me to help me believe. And Jesus did all these signs when he was here on earth?'

'Yes.'

'Oh. Well, they weren't very effective, were they? The multitude of his contemporaries didn't believe on him in spite of the signs. They weren't convinced.'

What would you say to that?

### **An analysis of unbelief**

Here is the Gospel writer John now analysing the reasons why. And having analysed it himself, he records the words of our Lord, from verse 34 onward.

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.' (12:37-40)

Now, whatever has happened to John? Has he suddenly turned into an extreme Calvinist or something?

What he says would direct us to go back and see why Isaiah said these things in the first place. The first quotation comes, as you remember, later on in Isaiah (53:1-2). But the quotation answering why they could not believe comes from Isaiah 6:10. If you read the context in Isaiah, this was what the theologians call God's 'judicial hardening' because of Israel's persistence in unbelief and disobedience. When people, and the people of God in particular, persist in unbelief and disobedience, there comes a point when God says, 'Have it your own way then,' and he hardens their hearts in the attitude that they themselves have first adopted.

#### *Deliberate rejection of the evidence*

If you will say, 'Why did the majority of Christ's contemporaries not believe on him?' Well, John won't necessarily tell you in his Gospel. Matthew will tell you in his, as we have considered. In chapter 12, for instance, he will discuss it at great length, and that was halfway through our Lord's ministry. And our Lord faces them with it himself. Our Lord deliberately healed a man on the Sabbath, because the time had come to expose them. And they, not being able to deny that he had done this by supernatural power, said, 'Ah, but by Beelzebub he casts out the demons. By the devil himself he casts out demons' (see 12:24). Now, that was so outrageous that you might have expected our Lord to turn on his heel, and say, 'That is talking

absolute rubbish, gentleman. It is not worth talking to you,' and walk off. He didn't. He stood and argued with them!

Talk about shades of what he will do at the final judgment. He shows them as they stood there in front of him that, because they were determined to reject him as Messiah, they now had to say what they knew to be absolutely perverse, and to call that black, which in all other circumstances they would have called white.

What do I mean? Well, what he is saying is this:

'You say, gentleman, that I, by the power of Satan, am casting out demons? Is that so, really? Now, Satan, I suppose, has turned about destroying his own empire, has he, according to you? Is that your view of Satan? He destroys his own empire? And he is empowering me to cast out his demons, or something? You really believe that? And you know, if it were a question of some tyrant in his castle, and he'd got a lot of prisoners, and you wanted to release the prisoners, how would you go about it? Would you not have to bind the tyrant first before you could get the prisoners out? But I am working *with* Satan, am I? What, to release his prisoners? How absurd can you get, gentleman? Oh, and it occurs to me: your sons sometimes cast out demons, don't they? Would you mind telling me by what power they cast them out? Do they cast them out by the power of Satan?'

Well, no they wouldn't say that, of course, no, that's not how they did it!

'I see. Ah, well, why do you say that I'm doing it by the power of Satan when I cast out demons?'

Well, there was one very good reason why they said it: their sons didn't claim to be the Messiah; Jesus did. And if he were casting out demons by the power of God, that was an indication that his claim to be the Messiah was true. Rather than admit the evidence that faced them, they were prepared to be as perverse as they were being. And our Lord warns them (see vv. 25–28).

Here are shades of the final judgment. They won't just be cast into hell, you know. It will be demonstrated to them that, in rejecting Christ, and with all the arguments they came up with, they were being deliberately perverse and knew they were being so. That is the lesson of the prophets, and the Prophet Isaiah in particular. It was also the lesson that was demonstrated on Pharaoh. It was Pharaoh who first of all hardened his heart. He demanded evidence, and when God gave him the evidence, time and time and time again, he refused to believe the evidence. Then God stepped in and said, 'Have it your own way, Pharaoh,' and hardened his heart (Exod 4–14). So it is here: John is speaking at the end of our Lord's ministry on earth and explaining why the Lord's contemporaries as a whole didn't accept him. It is serious enough. There did come a point when God stepped in and said, 'Have it your way, gentleman.'

But look at what John adds: 'Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him' (12:42). So learn to think and speak as the Hebrews thought and spoke when they said '*none of them* believed on him'! They are talking like Hebrews: 'The majority didn't believe on him, but . . .' Now he's going to qualify that by saying that even of the rulers, let alone the ordinary people, many believed on him.

but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (vv. 42–43)

You might think of the case of Nicodemus who had come to believe but, in the Sanhedrin, tried rather diffidently to appeal to their sense of justice in at least giving Christ a hearing (7:45–52). But when our Lord was crucified, then Nicodemus came. He came with Joseph of Arimathea who likewise was a member of the Sanhedrin. Joseph had not consented to their deed (Luke 23:50–51), but when he saw Christ crucified, then he plucked up the courage and took his stand and went to Pilate, and buried Christ (19:38–42).

*The word that I have spoken will judge you*

So that is John's analysis of the reason why many of his contemporaries, in spite of all the signs, didn't see the point of the signs (so they said) and did not believe. A good many did believe. Now Christ comes.

And Jesus cried out and said, 'Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.' (12:44–50)

This is our Lord's final comment. Rejecting him is not a personal question of his revenge. He is saying, 'I did not come to judge the world. What I speak is what the Father has told me to speak, and I know that his commandment is life eternal. I speak the way of eternal life.' What tremendous words they are from Christ, a few hours before his crucifixion: 'I speak into the world what the Father has given me to speak, and I know that his commandment is life eternal. That's why I speak it! It offers eternal life. On the other hand, if you don't believe me, because the Father sent me that is equivalent to not believing God. It is no less than that. If you behold me, you are beholding God.' He was God incarnate: 'If you don't believe me, you have one that judges you. Not so much I who judge you, but the word I spoke will judge you. I spoke it because I was commanded by my Father to speak it. That word, if you disobey it and refuse to believe it, will judge you in that day.'

This is our Lord commenting, and it serves to balance what John has just said. They didn't believe because of their perversity throughout our Lord's ministry, and particularly that critical point that Matthew records (12:22–32). Some did believe, of course, but they did not come out into the clear until after Christ was dead, and a lot of them until after he was risen again, because 'they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God'. But some, resolutely knowing they were perverse, deliberately rejected Christ. God stepped in and hardened their hearts. They *could not* believe. They didn't want to anyway, and that was that. It is a very

serious thing: not only knowingly rejecting Christ, but making accusations against him, as the Pharisees did, to say he was of the devil.

*Rejection of Jesus is rejection of God*

So that was John's account of it, based on Isaiah. Now you have our Lord saying it is not vindictiveness on his part. It comes of the fact that he was speaking the words of God, that he represented God. It is useless for the Pharisees to say, 'We reject Jesus, but we still believe in God.' Factually, they did not believe in God.

If I might illustrate what I mean by that remark, take the case of Saul of Tarsus. He hated those Christians:

'Do you know what? They said that Jesus Christ was the Messiah! What blasphemy that was. Didn't they realize that the Old Testament says whoever is hanged on a tree is cursed of God? And they're saying this Jesus that was hung upon a tree is the Messiah—utter blasphemy!'

And Saul of Tarsus thought he knew everything about God that was worth knowing. He didn't, did he? When he was struck down on the Damascus Road, with that light brighter than the light of the sun, he didn't need to be told who it was speaking to him.

He said, 'Who are you, Lord?' He knew enough to know that this was the *Shekinah* glory of God.

And the reply came, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting' (see Acts 9).

Saul thought he knew God before. He didn't, did he? God was infinitely bigger than anything Saul of Tarsus had imagined.

Therefore when they heard Christ speak the very words of God that God had commanded him to speak, when they saw how Christ, the very image of God, behaved, and they rejected that, they were rejecting God, says Christ. You can't reject Christ and suppose you are okay with God.

That is not anti-Semitism. A lot of fuss is made these days, and in certain quarters I should be in grave trouble for saying what I've said today: that Pilate wanted to release Christ, and it was the Jews that secured his crucifixion. I would be accused of the anti-Semitism that led to Hitler's gas chambers. Some will say the real account is that the Jews wouldn't have crucified Christ; it was the horrible Romans that crucified him, thinking he was a political insurrectionist. But that is not true. John says it's the other way round: Pilate would have released him. That is why a lot of scholars don't like the fourth Gospel, I might tell you.

And as for the idea that the Epistles, and John's Gospel are anti-Semitic, well, have a look at Isaiah, and read a few chapters and see whether he's anti-Semitic or not! And if you think he's okay, well, read some Jeremiah and Ezekiel and their denunciations. Were they being anti-Semitic? Well, that's nonsense; they were Jews. So was the writer of the fourth Gospel. Accusing him of being anti-Semitic is rather silly.

But it wasn't vindictiveness on Christ's part. Christ didn't instigate Hitler to gas Jews. The issue at stake is this: did Jesus properly represent God? Did Jesus properly represent the words of God? Was what he said true? Is it, therefore, true, that if you reject him and reject his word, you are rejecting God? Christendom would be divided over that, these days, wouldn't it? But that is the issue.



Now, having said that, I must guard myself. I haven't forgotten Romans 9, 10 and 11, and I hope I've listened to the warning: 'Be not highminded, but fear' (Rom 11:20 RSV). Referring to Israel, Paul says that many branches were cut off because of unbelief. Be careful lest you also be cut off (see v. 21). That is to say, Christendom must be careful, for considering Judaism as a whole, many of the branches were cut off because they continued not in belief. And Christendom? Dear, oh dear, where has Christendom got to as a whole? It too will be cut off because of unbelief. Darkness, blindness has happened, hardness of heart has happened to Israel, temporarily. It shall eventually be removed (see Rom 11:11-24).

But now I mustn't allow myself to wander on. It is what old men do, you know, and I must bring it to a close. Thank you for your patience, and sympathy, and all the tribulation you have thus endured.

## Questions About the Fourth Journey

### Question one

*This may be a bit off topic, but what then happens to those who do die? Where are they?*

DWG: Where are believers who die? I think it would be wise, at least for myself, to cling to the phraseology of Scripture. I am of the simple minded, and that is what I do. We can start with the dying thief: 'Today you shall be with me . . .' (see Luke 23:43). He doesn't say to the dying thief: 'Today, your body will be put into the common pit, but your soul will be with me'; or 'your spirit will be with me'. He doesn't trouble to define it further. He says, 'Today, *you* will be with me.'

When Paul comes to talk about this matter in Philippians, he speaks of having the desire to 'depart and be with Christ' (1:23). Notice the phraseology: 'to be with Christ'. *I shall be with Christ*, he is saying.

In 2 Corinthians 5, he says that, in this body we are absent from the Lord (though we know the Lord is with us in another sense) but in this body we are absent from the Lord. But absent from the body, *we* shall be present with the Lord. It doesn't say that 'my soul will be present with the Lord'. It just says, 'I shall be with the Lord' (see vv. 1-9).

The word he uses is a word you would use nowadays of a commercial traveller: 'He is away from home in London. He might be in a very posh hotel (he probably is because he's on office expenses), but he's away from home, and now he's looking forward to getting back to be with his wife and children.' And they are the kind of words that Paul uses in Greek. In this body, we are away from home: present in the body, therefore absent from the Lord. Absent from the body, we are present with the Lord.

And Peter says, 'I am telling you these things, and really shaking you up, and I'm going to make sure that you remember it when I'm gone, for I must shortly . . .' Now, listen to him: 'I must shortly put off this tabernacle', as the Lord Jesus had shown him (see 2 Pet 1:14 RV). This body is a tabernacle, a tent. Paul uses the same idea in 2 Corinthians 5: 'If this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building' (see v. 1 RV). A tabernacle, or a tent, is easily collapsible. And starting from the top down, some of us give evidence that the old tabernacle is wearing out, and soon it will be collapsed. Listen to Peter talking: 'I must put off this tabernacle. *I shall go out and be with the Lord.*'

So, to answer your question, I would simply reply: We shall be with Christ. That is far better, anyway (see Phil 1:23).

## Question two

*I remember as a young Christian, someone coming to speak, and he must have been quite knowledgeable, in Greek. He read a passage of Scripture, and he said, 'Now that doesn't mean that', and went on to say what it meant. When I got home that evening, I said to myself, 'Hang on, I thought the Bible was the true and infallible word of God.' Now this man had come along and cut the heart out of it by saying what he had said. I think that in gospel preaching, it is a very dangerous thing to do, especially when there are young believers about. In this case, it came over as criticizing the word of God.*

DWG: Yes, we do have to guard our lips, don't we? We need to think not only of what we are saying but of what people will take out of what we are saying. That is why, in most assemblies, before folks get to the final stage of Bible class, they teach them at an adequate level about the textual criticism of the New Testament, and the manuscripts. They do, don't they? That's why they do it: so that people shall know all this business about the different translations and the related issues. Oh, you mean they don't normally do that?

Do you know what? I once took a party of five or six Christian gentleman, and some of longstanding, down to the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin to show them the early manuscripts of the New Testament. And would you believe it? Before the day was over, they confessed to me that they had never been to see them before! Just you imagine that! Believers in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, living within one hundred miles of some of the earliest copies of the New Testament existing on this planet, and never having been to see them! That's very curious, isn't it? Wouldn't you think it was very odd? How on earth would you explain it?

## Question three

*How do we go about trying to show the truth to people who would fall into that category of believing something true about God and yet either completely rejecting Jesus, or believing many false things about him? You mentioned the Jews are primarily in view here, but it also strikes me that Muslims would fit into that category. They hold on very firmly to their monotheism, and yet they won't believe that Jesus is the Son of God, or anything other than a great prophet. Is there something here that would show us to how to reveal Christ to them as well?*

DWG: It's a very important question and a balance to my extreme statements. But it is important to notice, isn't it, that the second half of John 12 is talking about Christ's contemporaries. It isn't necessarily talking about all the Jews that ever have been since then. Blindness in part has happened to Israel. Yes, that is true, but there is a present remnant, says Paul (Rom 11:5). John is talking about the contemporaries that had heard Christ speak and knew what he said and heard his claims and rejected him for the reasons that are listed. A lot of Jews haven't got a clue about what Jesus said or taught. They've been taught all sorts of funny things, by their rabbis, about what he taught. They don't have a clue as to what Jesus taught.

As for Muslims, they also, thousands of them, just accept what the mullahs have told them. They haven't read the New Testament; they don't know really what Jesus said or taught. They hang on to what they have heard. That's another story.

As for multitudes of men and women round this world, there are multitudes of them that so far have never heard the name of Jesus anyway. And Christ is on record in John's own Gospel, of saying that people will never be condemned for not believing what wasn't there to be believed (ch. 9). So how do we go about helping people, like Jews, who are against the faith? And how do you go about helping Muslims who have their traditional notions about Jesus?

### *The gospel and Muslims*

If you start with Muslims, for my own part, I would tend not to talk to them about the deity of Christ. Because if you say to them that Jesus is the Son of God, and they must believe this, they have been taught by their mullahs that what Christians believe about Jesus being the Son of God is that God came and had sexual relations with Mary, and the result of it was born a child called the Son of God. And they find that so hideous, morally, that they think Christians are a disgusting crowd. We know that isn't what it means, but that's what they think. If you try to tell them that Jesus is the Son of God, they think you are perpetuating what is, to them, blasphemy.

It is better to talk to them about the person of Jesus and get them to read some things about Jesus, simply because the description of Christ in the Gospels, and his words, show him to be marvellously attractive as a character, as distinct from Muhammad. You won't find Muhammad saying, 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt 11:28). So try to get Muslims to think about what Jesus said and did, and his attitude. Get them to think about Christ as a person.

Then the other thing that could be useful is to raise with them the matter of Jesus' death. If they are serious Muslims, they themselves will raise it anyway. I was in Jordan at one stage, with a Christian friend from this part of the world, and his fellow medics invited us to a dinner. They were prominent medics: specialists and consultants in various disciplines, and also one famous architect who had built buildings all round the world: New York, London, and goodness knows where else. And very gracious these Jordanians were, and not at all aggressive in our discussions. So they told me after dinner: 'All this strife and killing, and Christians killing Muslims, and Muslims killing the Christians: it's absolute nonsense. Why can't we live in peace? We all believe exactly the same thing, don't we? Except of course you say that Jesus died on a cross. Well, of course, he didn't die. You changed the Bible for that, to make it say that he died, and he didn't die.'

That's what they'd been taught, and my reply to that was to say, 'I see, so we've changed the Bible.' And I asked permission to read from the Bible and said, 'What I'd like to read to you was written six hundred years perhaps before Christ was born. So we Christians didn't write it, and we certainly haven't changed it.'

So I read them Isaiah 53, and when I finished they said, 'You're going to say that's Jesus, aren't you?'

'Well,' I said, 'I will do eventually, but I wasn't going to say it just now! My point now is simply that we didn't write it. We Christians haven't changed it, but this is God telling, through Isaiah, what would happen to Christ six hundred years before he was born: he would die.'

And I said, 'You know, the Old Testament' (they are supposed to believe the Old Testament, you see) 'it had a system of sacrifices. When you sinned, you had to offer a sacrifice. Do you think that the blood of those animals really put away sin?'

Well, they didn't think that at all.

I said, 'Well, what was all that about, then? Were they symbols of something?'

So, yes, it is helpful sometimes not to try and prove that Jesus is the Son of God, but to get them reading the story about Jesus. He is such an attractive character. And then, of course, to get them reading the Gospels about his death and why he died, in spite of their objection that Jesus didn't die on the cross.

### *The gospel and Jews*

As for Jews, I've not a lot of experience with Jews, but I did give some extra-mural lectures in Queens at one stage, and someone brought a Jewish man along, and I got to know him. He came to dinner several times. He managed to escape Hitler from Vienna, just by the skin of his teeth, and he would constantly say to me: 'It's you Christians. You taught the Sunday school children that the wicked Jews murdered Christ, and this is what has caused the Holocaust. It's your fault.'

I said to him, 'My good man, I would never think of accusing Jews of having murdered Christ. Who do you think killed Christ? Why did Christ die?'

'Well, why did he?' he said.

I said, 'Well, I killed Christ.'

'What do you mean, you killed Christ?'

'Well,' I said, 'we Christians believe that when Jesus died on the cross, it was because of our sins. So it was my sins he was dying for. I wouldn't accuse you of crucifying Christ, any more than I would accuse myself. I was responsible for his death. He died for me and for my sins. He died for you, and your sins, as well.'

That began to get home to him. He told me eventually he could see that there were different kinds of Christians. He said, 'That's like some Jews are, you know. They profess to be Jews, and they're not really, and I can see you're different from some of these Christians. Perhaps they're not really Christians or something.'

So then I said, 'My dear friend. Do you pray for the dead?'

'Yes,' he said.

Well, I knew he did, of course. I said, 'What do you pray for the dead for?'

He said, 'So that God, you know, well, it's a nice way of remembering them.'

I said, 'Come off it. You do more than that, don't you, when you pray for the dead?'

'Well,' he said, 'yes, we do, really. We pray that God would let them out of the bad place, you know, and bring them to the good place.'

I said, 'I just don't understand you. I'm an old Gentile, you know. But I've been brought to believe. I don't believe in just any old god, I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

you know! And the one that led me to believe in him was the Jew that you won't have. You tell me of another Jew that has brought millions of Gentiles to believe in the God of Abram, Isaac and Jacob!

Well, he couldn't. Of course there is none.

And I said, 'Take that beautiful Psalm: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Do you know how it pans out? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever"' (Ps 23). I said, 'I believe that. I'm absolutely sure of going to God's heaven. How is it you're not sure? Don't you believe it? It's your Bible anyway.'

### *Our gospel witness*

So, yes, what John is talking about, and our Lord in this Gospel, is Christ's contemporaries in particular who, though he had done many signs, persisted in their unbelief and then engineered his crucifixion. The principle is that there comes a point when, as our Lord put it, people commit the sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:32), and with their eyes open, and knowing they are being perverse, they reject the witness of the Holy Spirit. Well, that's another thing, for God doesn't have any extra power beyond that of the Holy Spirit, does he?

So that is what I mean. I don't think it's a wise thing to say, 'And you, trust Christ tonight. You mightn't get another chance!' Well, that is perfectly true. You might get run over by a bus tomorrow: that is perfectly true. But to say that, 'my spirit shall not always strive with men, and if you don't trust Christ tonight, God's Spirit might not strive with you again'. Well, that is a thought, but it's a complete misinterpretation of the very verse that they're quoting from Genesis (see 6:3 RV, KJV). That should read, 'My spirit shall not always *abide in man*'. Why not? Is it because he rejects the gospel? No, it is because he is flesh, and what that means, well, it's getting late, so I mustn't start into that. But what that means is what Genesis is talking about, namely, that man is made of two bits: he is flesh, and he is spirit. And God calls it *his* spirit: 'And my spirit shall not always abide in man . . .' (notice the reason why not) 'for he is *flesh*'. It is not because he rejects the gospel, but because he is flesh. It is talking about man's constitution. And when men rejected the gospel, God drowned them (Gen 7:17-24). He didn't burn them up like he burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah. In Noah's day, he drowned them. And you know what happens when you drown somebody? (Not that you do it every day.) <sup>29</sup>But if someone is held under water, they don't have to be there very long. If they're under water for five minutes, and you bring them out, what has happened? The body is still there; the flesh is still there, but what has happened now? They start to go rotten. That's what Genesis is talking about: 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever'. It is not: 'shall plead with man', but: 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh'.

But I wander into all sorts of things.

## Question four

*Just a question linking to what you've just been talking about: Christendom having accused the Jews of killing Christ. There is also the reference in Luke's Gospel to the words of Christ on the cross, as he was*

---

<sup>29</sup> ESV—'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever.'

*being crucified: 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, because they know not what they do' (see 23:34). How should we interpret that?*

DWG: It's Luke that records this, so you tempt me to repeat my exhortations. Wouldn't it be marvellous to be able to get up and expound the details of each story of the four records of the crucifixion in their context? Luke is concerned with *the moral issues* involved in the crucifixion. When our Lord said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' he was talking of the soldiers that had just nailed his hands and feet to a cross. They certainly didn't know what they were doing; they were just carrying out their orders. If they hadn't done it, they'd have been executed themselves.

*Luke's emphasis on the moral issues raised by the crucifixion of Christ*

So how should we interpret the words, 'Father, forgive them'. Stephen, when he was being stoned to death said, 'Do not hold this sin against them' (Acts 7:60). He personally didn't hold what they were doing against them. And we are allowed to take that view before God: 'I don't hold this against them, Lord, so please don't lay this charge against them.' But it seems to me to be very important to put what Luke says in its context.

Our Lord was going on the way to crucifixion and carrying his cross, and the women came out of Jerusalem. The dear souls were moved to tears and were wringing their hands: 'Oh, poor young man. He's going to be crucified, and he's such a nice young man!' and they were weeping. Our Lord said, 'Stop that. You can stop that right now. Don't you weep for me! It's not I that has got the wrong end of this stick; it's you. For the days will come when they will cry to the mountains to fall on them and in which they will congratulate women that never had any children. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' (see Luke 23:27–31). If in a society that had more or less stable government and moderately decent laws they were prepared to execute and crucify an innocent man, what do you suppose will happen in 'a dry tree'?

Peter tells us that our Lord, when he suffered, did not threaten. Why not? 'He committed himself to him that judges righteously.' Our Lord went to Calvary, not calling down curses on people, but committing the whole thing to the judge who one day would judge righteously. So Peter says. And because he was content to hand it over to God to judge righteously, then he was free himself to 'bear our sins in his body on the tree, that we might pass away from sin and live unto righteousness'. But he did it in the confidence that one day God would judge righteously (see 1 Pet 2:23–24 RV).

Then there were two brigands crucified with him. We read of them here in Luke 23. And one said, 'You're the Christ? Get us down from here!' It is a typical worldly response: 'If you're the Christ, get us free of the penalty and the punishment that we have brought on ourselves, then we'll believe in you!' But Christ didn't attempt to bring them down. Christ wasn't there just to rescue people from the temporal punishment of their misdeeds, emptying the prisons, and saying people shouldn't be punished. That's a lot of nonsense.

The other criminal who at first had joined in, then came by gradual stages to repentance, and he rebuked the first chap. He said, 'Do you not fear God?'

'Why should I?'

'Seeing you are in the same condemnation.'

The same condemnation as whom? Well, not the same as his fellow criminal.

'Why don't you fear God, seeing you are under the same judgment as this man here in the middle of us? For this man has done nothing wrong.'

How is that the ground for fearing God?

Well, think about it! If it is the fact that there is a God at all up in heaven, and here is an innocent man that has done nothing wrong who is being crucified by the authorities — if there is a God at all, there will be a judgment, a final judgment. If in a world where the innocent suffer and very often are killed and persecuted by violent sinners, there is going to be a judgment, if there is a God at all.

And do you know what? This second criminal began to *wish* there was going to be a final judgment. He hadn't done that most of his life! But these rotters down here: the priests and other hypocrites, and all the rest of them going by here, who had put him on the cross anyway, were a lot of scoundrels themselves. I think he began to hope there would be a final judgment, because if there wasn't, these chaps had won!

If there's no final judgment, Hitler won, didn't he?

You say, 'He killed himself.'

Well, so he did, but he won—he got away with millions of murders, if there's no final judgment.

'There is going to be a final judgment,' says the second thief, and then he had a spectacular thought: 'This Jesus, yes, he's the King of the Jews. He will come in his kingdom! There is going to be a life after death.' And having heard the Lord pray: 'Father forgive them', he ventured to request it. He didn't say, 'Lord, forgive my sins.' He said what for him was a remarkable thing: 'Lord, would you let me come into your *kingdom*?'

That was a conversion, wasn't it? He hadn't been in anybody's kingdom. He'd been a freebooter, a brigand and a political anarchist. Now he is asking the favour of being allowed to come into the kingdom of the rule of Christ! That is repentance, you know. In the story of the crucifixion, Luke's Gospel is very heavily concerned with the moral issues involved in it.

And then there came a good counsellor (Joseph of Arimathea), and he hadn't been consenting to the deeds that the others did, and he was 'a *righteous* man'. Oh yes, he was. How would you know that? Because now, at the cross of Christ, he saw that the time had come when he must make his stand. The highest authority in his land, for him as a Jew, had sentenced Christ to crucifixion. He hadn't agreed with them, but he'd remained in the shadows. He couldn't do it any longer! He was a just man. He must come and take his side with Christ. And he went and asked permission of Pilate, and buried him (23:50–56). How's that for taking a stand against the Sanhedrin?

And as for the ordinary centurion? Well, they were big men in their way, and some of them were very wealthy. One of them had built a synagogue for the Jews out of his own spare cash (7:1–10). They were quite wealthy, and centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. And the man in charge at the crucifixion, 'when he saw that he so cried out: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"' he thought, 'Well, somebody who could do that when the earth was quaking . . .' He said, 'This man is right.' This centurion had met a lot of religious people, you know, and seen a lot of people die. The way this man died? The centurion said, 'This man is right' (see 23:44–47).



Luke is concerned with the moral issues that are raised by the crucifixion of Christ. But you mustn't take my word for it. Those are suggestions, but look into it for yourselves.

### Question five

*What is the significance of the Lord saying at the cross, 'I thirst' if you're paralleling that with Exodus 12?*

DWG: The parallel with Exodus 12 is, 'No bone of him was broken.' The question of, 'I thirst,' is a Psalm, is it not? It is from Psalm 69: 'In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink' (v. 21 RV).

Now, the question of whether it was a mockery, or a mercy, is debated. When it came to offering him wine mingled with myrrh, which in those far off days was an attempt to numb the system and alleviate the pain, they offered it to him, and he put it to his lips but then refused to drink it (Matt 27:34). He acknowledged their kindness in offering it but wouldn't drink something that would numb the pain. But it was an ordinary custom at crucifixions to have sour vinegar (sour wine at any rate) because the thirst was colossal. As a mercy, they used that sour vinegar to refresh the lips of the people being crucified.

Whether therefore it was a mercy, or a mockery, who knows? And I think you have to decide that in the process of answering your question. I myself think that the first thing is that the giving of the sour wine was initiated by our Lord's own statement. He, 'knowing all things were now accomplished . . . ' (see John 19:28). There was this other thing that was not yet accomplished. They had not yet given him vinegar to drink, and therefore he said, 'I thirst.' And in response to that, they gave him vinegar to drink.

Now, some people say, 'But that is altogether a small thing. That would be a very artificial thing to think that our Lord said it just to get them to give him vinegar to drink; that would be too artificial.' And so people say that when he said 'I thirst' he was 'thirsty for the salvation of men', or 'thirsting to please God'. It so happened that they gave him vinegar to drink, and that fulfilled the Scripture, but the, 'I thirst,' was thirsting for the souls of men, or something.

Well, it could be. My own thinking would start, as usual, from the literal. And if he said, 'I thirst,' and you say, 'Is that literal or metaphorical?' I would have said, in the first place, it was very literal. If you had been crucified for three hours, you would run up a tremendous fever and thirst. But it could also be metaphorical, and that I would not deny. 'I thirst to please God. I thirst for the souls of men,' and the soldiers thought it was literal thirst and offered him a drink. But it is that offering him a drink and the thirst that the Psalm ('the writing') is talking about isn't it?

### Question six

*Why do you think the Lord established a relationship between his mother and John when his mother had other children in the house (James and Jude, etc.)? Would it not be strange for Mary to go and live with John, or stay with him?*

DWG: I confess I'm not well read up on our Lord's relatives, but maybe they weren't yet converted. But secondly, it was a question of John taking her into his own home. Thirdly, it

could have been that John was more well off than some of the others. You will notice that John, when Christ caught him, left his father and 'the hired servants' in the boat (Mark 1:19–20). He and his father were employers and had employees working for them. They were in a bigger way of fishing than was Peter who manned his own boat. And it may be that John was more in a position to look after her. And finally, John was a young man, and he looked after her for years. She lived with him, according to tradition, in Ephesus, when he was there.

Also it seems to me it was no accident that our Lord said it at the cross because, first, Mary had come to the cross, and he was about to give up his spirit, and he wanted somebody to look after her when he was gone, so to speak. And it was the John who leaned on his bosom, who was so near the Lord—in the Lord's affections—who had the mother committed to him to look after.

Secondly, there is the meaning of 'the cross'. I don't know whether it is still said around here, but you know the way it is sometimes said, 'I've got very bad rheumatism, but that's the cross that God has given me.' Well, that's talking nonsense, actually. It has nothing to do with the cross. The cross is what the world gives you. Jesus bore his own cross. You'll notice it is never said 'he took it up'. The cross was what the world gave him. It is not a burden such as we all bear, and some of us have different burdens to bear; but the cross is the world's enmity to Christ. This was said next to the cross. It was the world's hostility and crucifixion of Christ that was robbing Mary of her son. It was fellowship in the cross of Christ that made John so suitable to take Mary.

You should remember also that the others had forsaken him and fled.

#### *A suggestion for further study and teaching*

This is only a suggestion, and I wish I could do it. I can't, but I've had a go from time to time. The chapters covering the accounts of the trial and crucifixion of Christ are some of the longest in the New Testament. And there are four of them. If you say, 'Why has the Holy Spirit given so much space in the Gospels to that?' Well, it's because of the importance of the event! But how lovely it would be to be able, from time to time, to stand up amongst the Lord's people and expound the details of the arrest and crucifixion.

Sometimes in thanksgiving we tend to stress the physical suffering: 'the hammer blow swung low' and so forth, and so on—the physical sufferings of Christ. But what of the Gospels do we actually say?

What we have thought about today suggests to me that this account of the crucifixion by John is very carefully written. It is not just to describe that he was crucified, and that was a horrible death. Look at the way John has integrated it with this question of the writing: Pilate's writing and the four writings that were fulfilled. And if that is John's writing about the crucifixion, what does Matthew say? Or, Mark for that matter? Not to speak of Luke. Have they each their own emphases, or are they ditto repeato?

### **Question seven**

*What do you think Pilate actually thought of Christ at the end of it all? Did he have respect for him in any regard?*

DWG: Well, we know, because the text says so three times over in John, that Pilate found the charge against Christ to be unfounded and certainly unproven. That is, the charge that Christ was a political messiah was not true. This was a common thing in Israel. You had zealots from time to time. The people that started the war in AD 66 that led to the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in AD 70 by the Romans were hot-headed extremists who eventually were able to force the hand of the high priests, because they had so much influence with the people. And from the point of view of the high priests and others, they were doing very well under the Romans. They were very wealthy men! They got enormous dues out of the temple. They were hobnobbing with Roman Emperors and other people in high places. They were of that level. The extreme right wing, however, were against the Romans and wanted to lead a revolt against them.

Of course, the high priests and company would try to restrain them. They made out, (and perhaps they partly thought it was true, who knows?) that Jesus was another of these hot-headed extremists who, when all the thousands of people were gathered in Jerusalem, would start a riot on purpose, for political reasons. So they communicated this to Pilate, but Pilate saw that it was quite false. So that is the first thing to be said about Master Pilate.

AUDIENCE: We sometimes think of Pilate as having a sort of respect for the dignity of the person set before him, which would have set Jesus apart from other people who would have been brought in before him.

DWG: Yes, he certainly had that respect. You see from John's account when he heard that he'd claimed to be Son of God, and Pilate wouldn't have understood that except in pagan terms, he was the more afraid. On the other hand, Pilate was an unprincipled brute. He gave way to the priests because they had him blackmailed. He tried to get his own back on them by writing: 'This is the King of the Jews'. On the other hand, he did allow them to crucify Christ.

In Matthew's account and Luke's account, Pilate wanted to release him. He knew that 'for envy' they had delivered him up, but their voices and those of the crowd prevailed (see 27:18). It was liable to be a riot in Jerusalem if he let Jesus go, for the priests had worked on the crowd, and they were shouting their heads off. Pilate could not have afforded a riot in Jerusalem, politically speaking. Tiberius Caesar at Rome would want to know what on earth he was doing letting a riot occur. Israel: Jerusalem and Samaria (and Jerusalem in particular) was a very disliked province by the Romans, and particularly by the Roman governors. It was very difficult to manage, and it was liable to explode at any time.

AUDIENCE: So really it was expediency on Pilate's part, as well as on the part of the high priest, Caiaphas?

DWG: Oh, yes, it was! And of course, as I said, according to John, they blackmailed him.

## Question eight

*When John says that 'Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward . . .' (18:4), what is included in the 'all that would happen'? Is it the details of his suffering and the fact that Scripture would be fulfilled, or was it actually that he knew he would suffer God's wrath?*

DWG: Well, I would think that the ‘all things that were coming upon him’ (RV) that he knew includes what he said about the cup. He says it even here in John: ‘Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?’ (18:11). In the other three Gospels you have his agony in the garden. John doesn’t mention his prayer in the garden, but the other three Gospels show that he surely faced the agony of being made sin for us. You hear it in his prayer, and nowhere more than in Mark’s account of his prayer.

*The emphasis on sincerity in Mark’s account*

You tempt me to say many things! Mark begins the whole story of the Passover and the arrest and crucifixion by saying that the high priests determined to take him by guile.

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him. (14:1)

The Revised Version says, ‘with subtlety’. The Greek means: ‘with guile’. And Mark deduces that, as you see:

for they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.’ (v. 2)

Throughout that week, the people came early in the morning to hear him in the temple. I expect some of them rejoiced when he confounded the priests and the Pharisees, and the people were for him. Our Lord eventually turned on the authorities and said, ‘I was daily with you in the temple. Why didn’t you arrest me then? Why do you come here in the garden with swords and staves as if you’re about to meet a rebellious gang of soldiers, or something? Why didn’t you take me in the temple when the people would have helped you?’ (see 14:48–49). No, of course the authorities didn’t do that. They decided ‘not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people’.

So they were going to wait until after the feast was over, and then arrest him, and Mark is pointing out their guile. If you follow Mark’s account of what happened, you see the supposed sincerity of all of them. Peter himself said, ‘Lord, if it were necessary, I would go to prison and to death for you’ (see 14:29, 31). Was he sincere? ‘Oh, yes, I’m ready Lord. I don’t know about these others, but I’m ready, Lord. I mean, if I have to die, I will! Yes, I’m prepared to die.’

Was he sincere? As far as he knew, he was sincere, you would say. But he found he didn’t have to. There was a way of getting out of it, and he took it. He’s changed his mind when he comes to his epistles, you know. He says, ‘It’s better if the will of God so wills that you suffer’ (see 1 Pet 3:17).

Now, contrast Peter saying, ‘Oh, yes, I have faith! Yes, I’d go to prison and to death for you!’ with our Lord’s attitude in Gethsemane. According to Mark he prayed, not just, ‘Let this cup pass from me.’ He prayed, ‘Abba, Father!’ In Mark, notice the two words. ‘Abba’ is Aramaic. Now he translates it into Greek for you: Abba—Father, dear Father. ‘You love me. Let this cup pass from me, Abba—Father. All things are within your power. Let this cup pass from me’ (see 14:35–36). We mustn’t say he was being insincere, or just heightening the effect when he eventually gave in, as when people say, ‘Oh, Mr Smith, come and play the piano.’

‘Oh, no. I’m no good at it. I can’t play very much.’

Then the hostess prevails on him, and he goes and plays the piano, and the man is beyond concert standard. But, you know, that heightens the effect a bit, doesn't it, when you first refuse?

Our Lord wasn't like that. He meant what he said, 'Father who loves me, let the cup pass. It is within your power, Father. Let it pass.' He meant what he said. If you suppose our Lord came dancing into the Garden of Gethsemane: 'I enjoy this!' Well, think again. The very prospect of being made sin for us: the holier he was, the less he would want to do it. Nevertheless he said, 'Yet not what I will, but what you will' (v. 36). Therefore, the question of sincerity is one of the leading ideas in Mark's account.

*The emphasis on self-control in Matthew's account*

One of Matthew's emphases is our Lord's self-control. When Peter came into the garden, he drew his sword. He got so excited that his aim was very bad. I don't think he meant to cut the man's ear off; he meant to cut his head off! But in his excitement he missed. Our Lord said, 'Put up your sword into its sheath. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Don't you realize that I could now call to my Father, and he would give me twelve legions of angels, each with their sword?' (see 26:51-54). And again we have to take him to mean what he said. He wasn't pretending. If he had called, the Father would have sent the angels. That's what he says. Then why didn't he call when he could have? We mustn't say, 'Oh, but he couldn't.' He says, 'If I called, he would send them,' but what he added was 'but how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?' Can you imagine having twelve legions of angels at your command and refraining from using them when you could have used them? And doing it because the Scriptures must be fulfilled is tremendous self-control.

Of course, that's only one of the things, but that's Matthew. You won't find that in Mark or in Luke, or in John for that matter. But that's what I mean. It would be marvellous to get an understanding of the issues at stake in each Gospel in the great chapters on the arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

## APPENDIXES

### Prologue and Introduction (1:1-2:11)

*From 'in the Beginning' to 'this Beginning of His Signs'*

---

<b>I. 1:1-13</b>	<b>II. 1:14-34</b>	<b>III. 1:35-2:11</b>
A. In the beginning was the Word (1:1). 1. The Word was WITH GOD; the same was in the beginning WITH GOD. 2. The Word in relation to creation and life: all created through him; IN him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Word reveals God through creation.	A. And the Word was made flesh (1:14). 1. The Word tabernacled (dwelt) AMONG us. 2. Christ in relation to Old Testament prophets: before John, superior to Moses. Christ the final and complete telling out of the Father.	A. The next day John (1:35). 1. Rabbi, WHERE ARE YOU STAYING? And THEY STAYED WITH HIM. 2. Christ supersedes John: two of John's disciples leave him for Christ; Peter becomes a living stone in the new spiritual house.
B. There came a man sent from God (1:6). 1. John's preparatory witness: He WAS NOT the light. 2. The true light which lightens every man, WAS COMING INTO the world.	B. And this was the witness of John (1:19). 1. John's identity and preparatory witness: I AM NOT the Christ; NOT Elijah, NOT the prophet. 2. A voice crying 'Prepare the WAY OF THE LORD'.	B. The next day Jesus goes to Galilee (1:43). 1. The preparatory witness of Moses and the prophets: The Messiah, of whom Moses and the prophets did write. Jesus, Son of God, King of Israel. 2. You shall see greater things than these, HEAVEN OPENED, and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.
C. He was in the world (1:10). 1. The world was MADE by him: Creator. 2. Old relationship: The world KNEW HIM NOT, his own received him not. 3. To them he gave the authority to become children of God.	C. The next day John sees Jesus coming (1:29). 1. WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN of the world: Lamb of God. 2. Old relationship: He was before me, I KNEW HIM NOT, but I saw the Spirit descending. 3. This is he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit	C. The third day a wedding in Cana (2:1). 1. A wedding, MY HOUR is not yet come: Bridegroom-to-be. 2. Old relationship: Woman, what have I to do with you? The ruler KNEW not where it came from. 3. You have kept the best wine until now.
From 'creation' to 'regeneration'	From the 'incarnation' to 'Pentecost'	From 'this age' to 'the eternal state'
From 'creatures' to 'children of God'	From 'baptism in water' to 'baptism in the Spirit'	From 'water' to 'wine'

---

## Structure and Storyline (2:13–4:54)

### *A Journey to Jerusalem and Back to Galilee via Samaria*

I. 2:13–22	II. 2:23–3:21	III. 3:22–3:36	IV. 4:1–4:26	V. 4:27–4:42	VI. 4:43–4:54
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Cleansing of the temple: the old temple and the new.	Conversation with Nicodemus: the natural birth from above.	Disciples of John: the man of the earth and the one from above.	Conversation with Samaritan woman: this water and the water that I give.	Disciples of Jesus: believing <i>because of the woman's speaking</i> and believing <i>because of his word</i> .	Nobleman's Son.
<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Judaea</b>	<b>Samaria</b>	<b>Samaria</b>	<b>Galilee</b>
Repeated themes: worship and service of God: orthodox temple at Jerusalem.	The leading theologian at Jerusalem: Nicodemus.	The popular preacher: John Baptist.	Worship and service of God: unorthodox—this mountain in Samaria.	The witness of the Samaritan woman.	The prophet without honour.
A. Religion = money making.	A. The gift of God = the Son. B. <i>Born from above (anōthen)</i> .	B. <i>He who comes from above (anōthen) is above all</i> .	A. The gift of God = the Spirit. C. Living water to satisfy the sinner	C. Food to satisfy the servant and reward to satisfy the workers.	
<b>Thought-flow</b>	<b>Thought-flow</b>	<b>Thought-flow</b>	<b>Thought-flow</b>	<b>Thought-flow</b>	
A. Cleansing of the old temple: <i>disciples remembered</i> .	A. Teacher come from God: the Son of Man descended from heaven.	A. John's role given him from heaven: not the Christ, only the bridegroom's friend.	A. The Saviour's request for water: The Father's quest for worshippers.	A. The woman's witness to Christ: they were coming to him: <i>meanwhile</i> .	
B. Announcement of new temple: <i>disciples remembered and believed</i> .	B. Whether a person comes to the light or not shows whether that person is a true believer or not.	B. Christ is from above. God gives not the Spirit by measure to him: his witness is God's witness.	B. The ignorance of the Samaritans contrasted with the knowledge of the Jews.	B. Christ abides in the Samaritan's city. They believe because they heard him themselves.	

## [The Source and Means of Life \(5:1–6:71\)](#)

### *The Second Journey to Jerusalem and Back*

---

#### **John 5**

#### **John 6**

##### **Christ: The Source of Life**

'As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he will . . . As the Father has life *in himself*, even so he has given to the Son to have life *in himself*.' (5:21, 26).

##### **Christ: The Means of Life**

'I am the living bread . . . As the living Father sent me and I live *because of* the Father, so the one who eats me, shall live *because of me*.' (6:51, 57).

---

##### **I. Miracle on Sabbath (5:1–9)**

- A. 'A multitude of sick people'.
- B. The inadequate and helpless man: 'I have no one to put me in the pool'. But Christ does not use the pool as a means of healing.

##### **I. Miracle at Passover Season (6:1–13)**

- A. 'A great multitude followed, because they saw the signs which he did on the sick'.
  - B. The inadequate means: two hundred pence worth of bread. Five barley loaves and two fishes. What are they among so many? Yet Christ uses these means.
- 

##### **II. Reaction (5:9–18)**

###### *First Reaction*

- A. 'It is not lawful' i.e. according to the law of Moses. 'Who is the man?' (5:9–12).
- B. 'The healed man knew not who it was because Jesus had withdrawn, a crowd being in the place.'
- C. Jesus found the man in the temple, and warned him, lest having been miraculously healed he sinned again and incurred a worse illness. Jesus thus reveals his own identity.
- D. The Jews persecute Jesus for working on the Sabbath (5:16).

##### **II. Reaction (6:14–34)**

###### *First Reaction*

- A. 'This is . . . the prophet that should come into the world', i.e. the prophet like unto Moses of Deuteronomy 18:15 (6:14).
- B. Jesus knew that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king. He withdrew again alone into the mountain, and then across the sea.
- C. The multitude found Jesus on the other side of the sea. Christ rebukes them for seeking him simply to satisfy their physical hunger without seeing the significance of the miracle. He reveals his identity as the Son of Man, sealed by God, the Father.
- D. Christ rebukes the crowd for their misdirected work: 'Work not for the food which perishes but for the food that abides'. In answer to their enquiry he tells them that to work the work of God they must believe on the one whom God has sent. They therefore ask 'what sign do you do, so that we may see and believe? What do you work?' (6:27–30).

###### *Second Reaction*

- A. 'Jesus answered . . . my Father works even until now and I work' (5:17).
- B. 'For this reason the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God' (5:18).

###### *Second Reaction*

- A. 'Jesus said . . . my Father gives you the true bread out of heaven' (6:32–33).
  - B. 'They said therefore to him, "Lord, evermore give us this bread"' (6:34).
-



**III. Christ Expounds His Claim (5:19–30)**

- A. 'The Father has given all judgment to the Son . . . the Father . . . gave to the Son also to have life in himself' (5:22, 26).
- B. 'The Son can do nothing of himself . . . the Son quickens whom he will.' 'My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me' (5:19, 21, 30).
- C. 'All who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth . . . to the resurrection of life . . . to the resurrection of judgment' (5:28–29).
- D. The Jews persecute Jesus for working on the Sabbath (5:16).

**IV. The Witnesses to Christ's Claim (5:31–40)**

- A. John the Baptist: Christ's works and the Father.
  - 1. 'You sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth . . . but I receive not witness from man . . . the witness I have is greater than that of John . . . the works that the Father has given me to accomplish' (5:31–36).
  - 2. 'The Father . . . has borne witness . . . you have neither heard his voice . . . nor seen his form. And you have not his word abiding in you' (5:37–38).
- B. The Scriptures.
  - 1. 'You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life . . . and you will not come to me that you may have life' (5:39–40).

**V. Christ Diagnoses the Cause of Unbelief (5:41–47)**

- A. The love of God is not in them.
  - 1. '**I know you** . . . HOW CAN you believe who receive glory from one another, and the glory which comes from the only God you do not seek' (5:42, 44).
- B. No faith in Moses.
  - 1. 'Think not that I will accuse you . . . there is one that accuses you, even Moses' (5:45).
  - 2. 'If you believe not [Moses'] writings how shall you believe my words?' (5:46–47).

**III. Christ Expounds His Claim (6:35–40)**

- A. 'All that which the Father gives me shall come to me . . .' (6:37).
- B. 'I have come . . . not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that . . . I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day' (6:38–39).
- C. 'That everyone who beholds the Son and believes . . . should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day' (6:40).
- D. Christ rebukes the crowd for their misdirected work: 'Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food that abides', and in answer to their enquiry tells them that to work the work of God they must believe on the one whom God has sent. They therefore ask 'What sign do you do, so that we may see and believe? What do you work?' (6:27–30).

**IV. Christ's Reply to Jews' Objections (6:41–51)**

- A. How does he say 'I have come down out of heaven?'
  - 1. 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day' (6:43–44).
  - 2. 'Everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned, comes to me. Not that any man has seen the Father' (6:45–46).
- B. How can he give us his flesh to eat?
  - 1. Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man . . . you have not life in yourselves. He who eats my flesh . . . has eternal life' (6:53–54).

**V. Christ Exposes the Reason Why (6:52–71)**

- A. Many disciples found his saying hard.
  - 1. 'There are some of you who do not believe . . . for **Jesus knew** from the beginning who they were who believed not . . . NO ONE CAN come to me unless it is given to him by the Father' (6:64–65).
- B. Judas would betray him.
  - 1. Jesus declares Judas to be a devil (6:70).
  - 2. 'You have the words of eternal life . . . and we have believed' (6:68–69).

## **The Divine Method of Self-Disclosure (John 7-10)**

### *Christ's Visit to the Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication*

#### **Chapter 7: Approach to Feast 'In Secret'**

1. Problem: How is Christ to make himself known when his testimony provokes prejudice?
2. Christ's timing of his earthly teaching and of his deliberate 'going away'.
3. Call to use moral judgment and assess Christ's teaching and works.
4. Feature of the new age: the coming of the Spirit. cf. Exodus 17:6; Ezekiel 47.

#### **Chapter 8: Adulteress Convicted but not Condemned**

Christ twice writes with his finger on the ground cf. the double writing of the law, Exodus 31:18 and 34:1.

1. Problem: How to expose man's sin without condemning him?
2. Christ the light of the world—the light by which men see: the I AM deliberately allowing himself to be 'lifted up'.
3. Call to use moral judgment to assess ourselves.

Feature of the new age: release from guilt, slavery to sin and death cf. Isaiah 25:8.

#### **Chapter 9: Man Born Blind Given Sight**

Christ spits on the ground, makes clay and anoints eyes: cf. the creation of man, Genesis 2:7.

1. Problem: what is the use of offering light to a blind man?
2. Christ, the light of the world = the giver of the faculty of sight, deliberately creating sight on the Sabbath.
3. Call to trust in order to receive the new faculty of sight.
4. Feature of the new age: 'never since the world began . . . were the eyes of one born blind opened' cf. Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7.

#### **Chapter 10: Approach the Fold 'By the Door'**

1. Problem: How can the true shepherd be distinguished from the false?
2. Christ's approach to the fold, his attitude to the sheep, his deliberate death and rising again for the sheep. By this the sheep know him.
3. Call to believe Christ's works first, if unable to believe him, so as to get to know him.
4. Feature of the new age: The flock formed of Jews and Gentiles: the security of the sheep. cf. Ezekiel 34:25, 27, 29.

## Outline of John 7-10

<b>I. John 7:1-13</b>	<b>I. John 7:53-8:11</b>	<b>I. John 9:1-12</b>	<b>I. John 10:1-6</b>
<b>The Feast Near</b> Christ's 'approach' ( <i>anabainō</i> ).	<b>Adulteress</b> Christ writes on the ground.	<b>Man Born Blind</b> Christ spits on ground-clay.	<b>First Sheep Metaphor</b> Christ's approach to the fold (cf. <i>anabainō</i> v. 1).
<i>A. Christ's Brothers' Advice</i>	<i>A. The Scribes and Pharisees' Question</i>	<i>A. The Disciples' Question</i>	<i>A. The Thief and Robber's Approach</i>
Go to Judaea that disciples may behold your works . . . manifest yourself to the world.	In the law Moses commanded us to stone such: What do you say of her? This they said, tempting him that they might . . . accuse him.	Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither! But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.	He who enters not by the door but climbs up some other way, is a thief and robber.
<i>B. Christ's Tactics &amp; Sense of Timing</i>	<i>B. Christ Writes on the Ground (1)</i>	<i>B. Christ's Sense of Timing</i>	<i>B. The True Shepherd's Approach</i>
My time has not yet come . . . The world hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil . . . I go not up yet to this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled. The world cannot hate you.	He said 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her'.	We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day: the night comes when no one can work. When I am in the world I am the light of the world. That said, he spat on the ground, made clay, anointed eyes: Go, wash in pool of Siloam.	Enters by the door and the door-keeper opens to him. Sheep hear his voice: he calls them by name and leads them out. He goes in front: sheep follow for they know his voice. Sheep will not follow a stranger . . . they do not know a stranger's voice.
<i>C. Christ Goes Up to the Feast Secretly</i>	<i>C. Christ Writes on the Ground (2)</i>	<i>C. Reaction of Neighbours</i>	<i>C. Reaction of Hearers</i>
Effect on Jews: they sought him and said: 'Where is he?' 'Some said: "He is a good man".' 'Others said: "No: he leads the multitude astray".'	Effect: they went out . . . the woman was left alone. 'Jesus said: "Where are they? Did no man condemn you? Neither do I condemn you: sin no more".'	'Is not this he?' 'Others said: "It is he".' 'Others said: "No, but he is like him".' 'He said: "I am he".' 'They said: "Where is he?"'	They understood not what things they were that he spoke unto them.

*This table continues on the next page*

<b>II. John 7:14–36</b>	<b>II. John 8:12–30</b>	<b>II. John 9:13–34</b>	<b>II. John 10:7–21</b>
<b>The Middle of the Feast: The Validity of Christ’s Teaching, Works, Claims</b>	<b>The Validity of Christ’s Testimony</b>	<b>The Validity of the Blind Man’s Testimony</b>	<b>Second Sheep Metaphor: The Basis for the Recognition of Christ’s Claims</b>
<i>A. Teaching the People (7:14–31)</i>	<i>A. First Conversation (8:12–20)</i>	<i>A. First Interrogation (9:13–23)</i>	<i>A. Jesus: The Door (10:7–10)</i>
<p>1. THE QUALITY OF HIS TEACHING</p> <p>Not having learned, not mine, can be known by any who wills to do God’s will. ‘I seek not my own glory, but his that sent me.’ I am true, no unrighteousness in me.</p>	<p>1. THE VALIDITY OF HIS SINGLE TESTIMONY</p> <p>His claim to be the light of the world, and how it can be verified. His own testimony is true, i.e. valid, because he knows his origin and destination (where I come from and where I go).</p>	<p>1. THE BLIND MAN’S ESTIMATE OF JESUS</p> <p>Making clay and opening eyes on the Sabbath appears to break the law. But how can a sinner do such works? Blind man’s estimate, based on experience: ‘He is a prophet.’</p>	<p>1. THE VERDICT OF THE SHEEP</p> <p>I am the door: all previous claimants were thieves and robbers. How was this demonstrated? The sheep did not hear them!</p>
<p>2. THE MORALITY OF HIS WORK OF HEALING</p> <p>Not against law of Moses: circumcision and healing take precedence over Sabbath, therefore why kill me? Judge righteous judgment, not appearance.</p>	<p>2. THE VALIDITY OF HIS JUDGMENT</p> <p>You judge after the flesh, my judgment is valid, because I am not alone. I and the Father constitute two witnesses and so fulfil the requirement of the law of Moses.</p>	<p>2. VALIDITY OF BLIND MAN’S TESTIMONY?</p> <p>How could he be sure he was born blind? Appeal to his father and mother. Their witness corroborates his on this point. But they are not prepared to witness further.</p>	<p>2. THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENCE</p> <p>I am the door. How is this proved? By experience: if anyone enters, he finds salvation, freedom and pasture.</p>
<p>3. CROWD REACTION</p> <p>Can it be that the rulers know he is the Messiah? The problem of his origin (where he comes from) both known and unknown. He who sent me is true. Sought to take him . . . but his hour not yet come. Many believed: will the Messiah do more signs than he?</p>	<p>3. PHARISEES’ REACTION</p> <p>Where is your Father? You know neither me nor my Father. Hence the force of the witness is lost upon them. No one took him because his hour had not yet come.</p>	<p>3. JEWS’ PREJUDICE</p> <p>The Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be the Messiah, they would be put out of the synagogue.</p>	<p>3. THE DECISIVE DIFFERENCE</p> <p>The thief’s motive and purpose: steal, kill and destroy. My motive and purpose: that they might have life.</p>

*This table continues on the next page*

<b>II. John 7:14-36</b>	<b>II. John 8:12-30</b>	<b>II. John 9:13-34</b>	<b>II. John 10:7-21</b>
<i>B. Response to Attempted Arrest (7:32-36)</i>	<i>B. Second Conversation (8:21-30)</i>	<i>B. Second Interrogation (9:24-34)</i>	<i>B. Jesus: The Good Shepherd (10:11-21)</i>
1. THE 'GOING AWAY'	1. THE 'GOING AWAY'	1. THE CASTING OUT	1. THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE
Yet a little while . . . I go . . . you shall seek and shall not find me: where I am, you cannot come.	Jesus: I go away: you shall seek me and shall die in your sin: where I go you cannot come.	Jews: We know this man is a sinner.  Blind man: One thing I know . . . I see.	The good shepherd's laying down life for sheep: contrast the hireling.
The Jews said: Where will he go . . . will he go and teach the Greeks?	The Jews said: Will he kill himself?	Jews: How?	The mutual knowledge of shepherd and sheep, Son and Father, and unity of all sheep: based on the shepherd's laying down of life and the sheep hearing his voice.
What is this word that he said: You shall seek me and not find me: and where I am you cannot come?	Jesus said: unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins.	Blind man: Would you become disciples?	Shepherd's laying down of life pleases the Father: is authorized by the Father: is voluntary.
	Jews: Who are you?	Jews: We know God spoke to Moses: We know not where Jesus comes from.	Reaction: Has a devil? No! Consider his sayings: his miracle of opening eyes.
	Jesus: When you have lifted up the Son of Man then shall you know that I am. I do always what pleases him.	Blind man: Marvellous ignorance! We know God does not hear sinners. Historically unique miracle! If not from God, he could do nothing.	
	Reaction: Many believed on him.	Jews: You were born in sin: they excommunicated him.	

*This table continues on the next page*

III. John 7:37–52	III. John 8:31–59	III. John 9:35–41	III. John 10:22–42
<b>The Last Great Day of the Feast: Difficulties in the Road to Faith</b>	<b>Christ: The Exposer of False, the Exponent of True Faith</b>	<b>Christ the Catalyst of Sight and Blindness</b>	<b>The Feast of Dedication: Causes of Unbelief and Faith</b>
<i>A. The General Public (7:37–44)</i>	<i>A. Professed Believers (8:31–47)</i>	<i>A. The Blind Man (9:35–38)</i>	<i>A. The Jews (10:22–39)</i>
<p>1. CHRIST’S CLAIM</p> <p>Believers are promised the thirst-quenching living waters of the Spirit, given by glorified Jesus.</p> <p>2. CROWD’S REACTION</p> <p>The prophet!</p> <p>Difficulty: a question of paternity and birth–place: of the seed of David? Of Bethlehem where David was?</p> <p>3. RESULT</p> <p>Some attempt to take him, but none laid hands on him.</p>	<p>1. CHRIST’S CLAIM</p> <p>True disciples are promised true freedom from sin, conferred by the Son.</p> <p>2. FALSE DISCIPLES’ TRUE PATERNITY EXPOSED</p> <p>They are not Abraham’s seed: their works show it.</p> <p>God is not their Father: absence of love for Christ shows it.</p> <p>They are of their father the devil: liars, murderers: that is why they refuse to believe the truth.</p>	<p>1. CHRIST’S QUESTION</p> <p>Do you believe on the Son of God (Man)? Who is he Lord that I may believe?</p> <p>2. CHRIST’S ANSWER</p> <p>You have both seen him and he it is who is talking with you. And he said, Lord I believe, and he worshipped him.</p>	<p>1. THEIR DEMAND TO BE TOLD PLAINLY</p> <p>But they have been told: they have been shown Christ’s works: they do not believe because they are not of Christ’s sheep. Christ’s sheep know Christ and are eternally secure.</p> <p>2. THEIR THEOLOGICAL OBJECTION</p> <p>Their objection to his claim to be the Son of God is shown to be biblically invalid.</p> <p>3. CHRIST’S APPEAL</p> <p>Start by believing my works so that you may come to know and understand.</p>
<i>B. Chief Priests &amp; Pharisees (7:45–52)</i>	<i>B. Christ Himself (8:48–59)</i>	<i>B. The Pharisees (9:39–41)</i>	<i>B. The Many Believers (10:40–42)</i>
<p>1. FAILURE OF OFFICERS TO ARREST HIM</p> <p>Attributed to crass ignorance of the Bible.</p> <p>2. FAILURE OF THE COUNCIL TO HEAR CHRIST BEFORE JUDGING HIM</p> <p>Attributed to unbiblical prejudice.</p>	<p>1. HE IS NOT A DEMONIZED SAMARITAN</p> <p>He honours his Father.</p> <p>2. HE IS GREATER THAN ABRAHAM</p> <p>His followers will not see death.</p> <p>3. HE PRE–EXISTED ABRAHAM</p> <p>They took up stones to stone him</p>	<p>1. CHRIST THE CATALYST OF SIGHT AND BLINDNESS</p> <p>That they who see not, may see, and those who see, may become blind.</p> <p>2. WHERE THE GUILT OF UNBELIEF LIES</p> <p>If blind, no sin . . . now you say you see, therefore your sin remains.</p>	<p>1. CHRIST GOES ‘BEYOND JORDAN’</p> <p>He deliberately evokes in the many who come to him the memory of John’s baptism.</p> <p>2. JOHN’S SIGN-LESS TESTIMONY</p> <p>John’s testimony proves true and leads many to believe.</p>

## Major Elements in John 11-21

The Feast of Passover: A celebration of God's deliverance of Israel from the tyranny of the Prince of Egypt through the death of the Passover Lamb.

### **I. Prelude to the Passover**

#### ***A. Jesus comes to Bethany, Raises Lazarus and Departs.***

1. Preliminary teachings: attitudes to death and resurrection (1) (11:1-16).
2. Raising of Lazarus: attitudes to death and resurrection (2) (11:17-54).

#### ***B. The Passover Near: the King Comes to Jerusalem and Departs.***

1. Attitudes and reactions to death and resurrection (1): the Pharisees' vain attempt to destroy belief: 'the world has gone after him' (11:55-12:19).
2. Attitudes and reactions to death and resurrection (2): the grain of wheat, the Son of Man lifted up: all men drawn to him (12:20-36).
3. An analysis of the causes and results of unbelief (12:37-50).

### **II. Before the Feast of the Passover: The Hour Having Come That He Should Depart out of the World to the Father (13:1-16:33)**

#### ***A. Lessons on Holiness (1) 13:1-14:31.***

1. The enacted parable of the foot washing: the double cleansing by water (13:1-11).
2. The exposure of Judas' treachery (13:12-22).
3. Christ's going. 'Rise, let us go from here' (13:33-14:31).

#### ***B. Lessons on Holiness (2) 15:1-16:33.***

1. The parable of the Vine: the cleansing of the branches (15:1-17).
2. The exposure of the world's hatred (15:18-27).
3. Christ's going (16:1-33).

### **III. Father, the Hour Has Come: Glorify Your Son (17:1-21:25)**

1. Christ's high priestly prayer (17:1-26).
2. The chief priests arrest Jesus: investigation in the high priest's court (18:1-27).
3. The high priest accuses Jesus before Pilate (18:28-19:16).
4. The crucifixion, death and burial (19:16-42).
5. The resurrection, ascension, commissioning of the disciples (20:1-31).
6. The restoration and recommissioning of Peter IN GALILEE (21:1-25).

### Some Leading Ideas (11:1–12:43)

1. Preliminaries	2. To Bethany	3. Departure	4. To Jerusalem	5. Departure	6. Analysis
<i>a. Jesus stays where he was (11:1–6).</i>	<i>a. He comes to the outskirts of Bethany (11:17–27).</i>	<i>a. He comes to Lazarus' tomb (11:38–46).</i>	<i>a. He comes to Bethany (11:55–12:11).</i>	<i>a. He comes to his hour (12:20–28).</i>	<i>a. Reasons for Israel's unbelief (12:37–43).</i>
Lazarus' sickness.	Lazarus four days in tomb.	Resurrection of Lazarus.	Crowd seeks for Jesus.	Greeks desire to see Jesus.	Israel's barrier to healing.
This sickness is NOT UNTO DEATH but for the GLORY OF GOD that the Son of God MAY BE GLORIFIED BY IT.  Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister and Lazarus . . . therefore he stayed two days where he was and did not heal him.	<i>Martha:</i> yet even now . . . whatever you ask . . . God will <i>give</i> you . . . I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. He who believes, even if he DIES, yet shall he LIVE, and he who LIVES and believes . . . shall NEVER DIE. Do you believe this? Yes, I have believed that you are THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD that should come into the world.	Jesus groans: <i>Martha</i> protests at the STENCH OF LAZARUS' BODY.  'If you believed, you would see the GLORY OF GOD.'  <i>The prayer:</i> you have heard me . . . That they may believe . . .  LAZARUS COME FORTH! And the DEAD MAN CAME FORTH.	<i>Mary</i> anoints Jesus: Judas protests: the money should be given to the poor.  THE FRAGRANCE OF THE OINTMENT KEPT FOR JESUS' BURIAL FILLS THE HOUSE.  The crowds come to see Lazarus. The priests decide to kill Lazarus because on his account many believed on Jesus.	The hour has come for the Son of Man TO BE GLORIFIED. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and DIE to bring forth fruit. Hate your LIFE in <u>THIS</u> WORLD, keep it unto life eternal. Jesus was troubled.  <i>The prayer:</i> save me from this hour? Father GLORIFY THY NAME. I have both GLORIFIED it and will GLORIFY it again.	Christ hid himself.  In spite of many signs . . . they did not believe . . . they could not believe . . . He has blinded their eyes . . . These things said Isaiah because he SAW HIS GLORY.  They did not confess . . . for they <i>loved</i> the GLORY OF MEN more than the GLORY OF GOD.

*This table continues on the next page*



1. Preliminaries	2. To Bethany	3. Departure	4. To Jerusalem	5. Departure	6. Analysis
<b>b. He goes to Judaea again (11:7–16).</b> Lazarus' Death.	<b>b. He stays on the outskirts (11:28–37).</b> Mourning for Lazarus.	<b>b. He departs (11:47–54).</b> Jesus Sentenced to Death.	<b>b. He comes to Jerusalem (12:12–19).</b> Crowd welcomes Jesus as king of Israel.	<b>b. He departs (12:29–36).</b> Crowd questions Jesus: 'Who is this Son of Man?'	<b>b. Purpose of Christ's coming (12:44–50).</b> His commandment is life eternal.
The danger for Christ: being KILLED.  <i>Parable:</i> walking in DAYLIGHT or at NIGHT: 'the LIGHT IS NOT IN HIM'.  Lazarus sleeps = HAS DIED and I AM GLAD . . . <i>that I was not there</i> that you may believe.	If you had been here my brother would not have DIED . . . JESUS GROANED, WAS TROUBLED, WEPT.  Could not Jesus have caused that Lazarus should NOT DIE?	The court decides to KILL Jesus to stop belief in him spreading.  It is EXPEDIENT that one man DIE for the people lest THE ROMANS COME.  That Jesus should DIE . . . to GATHER INTO ONE all the children of God.	Because of Lazarus' resurrection, crowds follow as ZION'S KING COMES and crowds come to meet him.  When Jesus was GLORIFIED his disciples remembered.  THE WORLD HAS GONE AFTER HIM.	Now is the JUDGMENT OF THIS WORLD. Now THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD SHALL BE CAST OUT.  I, if I be LIFTED UP = DIE, will DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME.  A little while THE LIGHT is among you. Walk while you have THE LIGHT lest DARKNESS seize you . . . become SONS OF LIGHT.	I have come as a LIGHT into the world that the believer should not STAY IN DARKNESS.  I came not to JUDGE THE WORLD but to save the world.

## Some Leading Ideas (17:1-21:25)

I. High Priestly Prayer	II. Arrest by High Priest's Party	III. High Priests Prosecute Before Pilate	IV. Crucifixion and Death	V. Resurrection—First Lord's Day	VI. Christ Restores Peter
<p><b>A. For Those Whom You Have Given Me</b></p> <p>GLORIFY THY SON; AUTHORITY OVER ALL FLESH; I HAVE FINISHED THE WORK.</p> <p>'I have manifested your name'.</p> <p>Keep them in the name which you have given me. I guarded them: not one perished.</p> <p>SANCTIFY THEM IN THE TRUTH</p> <p>As you did send me . . . so I sent them. They are not of the world.</p>	<p><b>A. Over Kidron: the Garden</b></p> <p>JUDAS COMES TO ARREST CHRIST; <i>the nature of Judas' authority:</i> band, officers from chief priests and Pharisees, lanterns, torches, weapons.</p> <p>Christ identifies himself.</p> <p>1. I am (he). 2. I lost not one . . .</p> <p>PETER ATTEMPTS TO PROTECT CHRIST</p> <p>Put up the sword . . . The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?</p>	<p><b>A. Praetorium (1)</b></p> <p><b>Out:</b> HIGH PRIEST'S CHARGE: Jesus is a worker of evil.</p> <p><b>In:</b> Christ's 'good confession.' <i>The nature of Christ's authority:</i></p> <p>1. Not of this world; else would my servants fight. 2. Witness to the truth.</p> <p><b>Out:</b> HIGH PRIEST'S CHOICE: Barabbas: a brigand-terrorist.</p>	<p><b>A. The Place of a Skull and Cross</b></p> <p>THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE WRITINGS</p> <p>1. Pilate's writing of the 'offence' 2. Psalm 22:18 and the victim's clothes.</p> <p>Christ announces the new family relationship.</p> <p>'Woman, behold your son . . . [disciple] behold your mother.'</p> <p>THE WRITING AND THE DEATH.</p> <p>1. I thirst . . . vinegar to drink (cf. Ps 69:21). 2. 'IT IS FINISHED'.</p>	<p><b>A. Tomb &amp; Upper Room</b></p> <p>The evidence of the grave clothes: John saw and believed; for as yet they knew not the writing that he must rise again.</p> <p>Christ announces the new family relationship.</p> <p>'Say to my brethren, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God.'</p> <p>FIRST APPEARANCE IN UPPER ROOM</p> <p>1. Peace! As the Father has sent me, I send you. 2. The Holy Spirit: authority to forgive sins.</p>	<p><b>A. Sea of Tiberias and the Gentile Mission</b></p> <p>Peter's initiative and that night they took nothing.</p> <p>Christ manifests himself.</p> <p>1. They knew not it was Jesus. 2. The great catch. 3. 'It is the Lord.'</p> <p>THE INVITATION TO BREAKFAST</p> <p>1. The unrent net. 2. None dared ask 'Who are you', knowing it was the Lord.</p>

*This table continues on the next page*

B. For Those Who Believe on Me Through Their Word	B. Annas: Father-in-law to Caiaphas!	B. Praetorium (2)	B. Cross and Garden.	B. Upper Room.	B. Sea of Tiberias and Peter's Pastoral Care
THAT THEY MAY BE ONE that the world may believe that you did send me.	PETER DENIES being one of Christ's disciples. PETER STANDS WITH the high priest's officers.	<b>Out:</b> HIGH PRIEST'S CHARGE: 'He made himself the Son of God'	JEWS' REQUEST TO PILATE: <i>Because it was 'the Preparation':</i> that the legs be broken.	THOMAS REFUSES TO BELIEVE THE APOSTLES' WORD without seeing the evidence.	PETER'S MINISTRY ENLARGED. Do you love me? Tend and feed my sheep.
THE GLORY . . . I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM.	CHRIST ANSWERS ANNAS.	<b>In:</b> CHRIST ANSWERS PILATE.	THE WRITINGS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH.	SECOND APPEARANCE IN UPPER ROOM.	CHRIST ANNOUNCES THE MANNER OF PETER'S DEATH.
That the world may know that you . . . loved them as you loved me.	Asked about his disciples he says nothing. Asked about his teaching he refers to those who heard him.	<i>The nature of Pilate's authority:</i> none at all against me unless given from above.	1. Exodus 12:46 & Zechariah 12:10. 2. The witness of the disciple who saw . . . that you may believe.	1. Thomas confesses Christ, having seen the nail prints & spear wound. 2. Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed.	By which he should glorify God.
THAT THEY MAY BE WITH ME The world knew you not, but . . . these knew.	PETER DENIES 1. Being a disciple. 2. Being with Christ 3. Attempting to protect Christ.	<b>Out:</b> HIGH PRIEST'S CHOICE: No king but Caesar.	JOSEPH'S REQUEST TO PILATE 1. Joseph overcomes the fear of being a disciple. 2. Jesus buried in a nearby garden <i>because of the preparation.</i>	THE MANY OTHER SIGNS done in the presence of the disciples; but these are written that you may believe.	PETER'S FALSE CONCERN FOR JOHN Tarry till I come? THE DISCIPLE'S WITNESS WHO WROTE THESE THINGS . . . IF ALL WERE WRITTEN THE WORLD WOULD NOT CONTAIN THE BOOKS!

## **The Women Mentioned in John's Gospel**

### *Pattern as a Guide in Textual Criticism*

#### **1. Wedding in Cana (2:1-11)**

Woman, what have I to do with you?—a question of relationship.

#### **2. Samaritan (ch. 4)**

The one you now have is not your husband—no true relationship.

#### **3. Adulteress (8:1-11)**

Taken in the very act—unfaithful to relationship.

#### **4. Martha and Mary (chs. 11-12)**

At the death of their brother: Your brother shall rise again—a restored relationship.

#### **5. Mary, Mother of Jesus (19:25-27)**

At the death of her Son: 'Woman, behold your son!' . . . disciple, 'Behold your mother!'—announcement of a new relationship.

#### **6. Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)**

At the tomb: 'Go and tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'—announcement of a new relationship.

## About the Author

**DAVID W. GOODING** is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.