

# WHERE EAGLES FLY



JEAN FOUQUET - (c. 1416-1480) - MUSEE CONDE, CHANTILLY

MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

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## MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

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## FORWARD

This present work, *WHERE EAGLES FLY*, is part of a larger Catholic bible study, *Invitation to Christian Discipleship*, a seven year study which consists in lectures, summary of lectures and worksheets. *WHERE EAGLES FLY* is the summaries and work sheets for the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint John.

This seven year study has been designed for the Catholic laity that the "Word of Christ" rich as it is, dwell in them.

*Thus they will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and heights and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that they may attain the fullness of God himself. (Eph. 3:18-19)*

The general motivating force behind this study is the preservation and growth of the Christian Faith as understood and transmitted by the Catholic Church through the centuries. It has four immediate goals:

1. To ensure a true spirit of repentance;
2. To foster a deeper commitment in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ;
3. To create a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; and
4. To encourage a more vibrant participation in the life and mission of the Church.

*Invitation To Christian Discipleship* has been accredited by the Catechetical Institute of the Diocese of Orange, California. It is now available to all parishes and at-home study groups. It is designed for a lay person to present.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### TO THE GOSPEL OF SAINT JOHN

Saint John's gospel account emphasizes truth! Jesus declares: *Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice. (John 18:37)* In other words, those committed to truth will obey and fulfill the will of Jesus Christ. The study of this gospel account, spoken of as the 'Fourth Gospel', ought to be undertaken with the intention of knowing and loving the truth Jesus reveals to us. When we end our study, if we possess a deeper love of this divinely revealed truth, it will be a successful study.

Since the Scriptures reveal divine truth, we could expect the study of these scriptures would be means for Christian unity. Unfortunately the most Christians are able to agree upon is the literal meaning of words (what the words actually say). The literal meaning does not often lead to the same theological interpretation. The differences in theological interpretation are often what make one Catholic and another non-Catholic. In the midst of such differences, only the Holy Spirit of truth and love can bring unity.

To be an instrument of Church unity means that each of us must seek the truth with purity of intention and with effort, expressing loving zeal for the truth of God. We must endeavor not merely to know the truth but to bring it alive in our thinking, feelings and actions—in what we do and do not do. To incarnate truth in this degree is, in the words of Paul, to put on "the Mind of Christ. When truth clothes itself in charity, we have not only the Mind of Christ but the Heart of Jesus Christ.

## A UNIQUE REVELATION

The Fourth Gospel is a most intriguing work. It is the unique gospel account, a constant challenge to biblical scholars. It is called by one "the great enigma" of early Christian tradition. Another claims: "to understand this gospel is to understand what early Christianity really was."

The Gospel, as we possess it today, was probably completed around 90 A D. Composed in Ephesus and written in Greek by John the Evangelist. These facts have all been questioned by certain scholars but never disproved. However, the Fourth Gospel has proposed many problems to scholars. Placing the creation of this gospel account in an apostolic environment solves only one such problem.

A critical analysis of the Gospel presents these problems: More than one hand has been involved in the production of the work as possessed today; the evidence indicates the primary author produced a well constructed, cohesive document; to this document other hands appeared to have made alterations, insertions, and re-editions; the Prologue and the last chapter appear to be addition to the original document. (This of itself does not imply that John the Evangelist was not its author.)

## COMPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL

Christian tradition affirms that John lived in Ephesus. In the beginning, he exercises his ministry in the Palestinian area. John arrives in Ephesus shortly before 70 A D. Historical tradition relates that John first records his gospel account at the insistence of the Bishops of Asia Minor. This may have been written as early as 70 A D and originally in Aramaic—later translated into Greek by John or a disciple. A Christian Community and a school grows up around this venerable Apostle. His disciples understandable record many of his teachings. John lives long enough to give birth to a rumor he would not die but live to the Second Coming.

During his long teaching career John, no doubt, expresses his gospel message in different ways, adapting it to the new problems facing a growing and aging Church. There is a belief he made a second edition of the Gospel with additions. It appears that after his death another hand re-edited the Fourth Gospel, adding material taught by John but not recorded in the original gospel account. This unknown disciples did not take the liberty of



re-writing the Fourth Gospel but rather tacked on material where it seemed appropriate. The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel being one of the major additions. The last chapter of the Gospel seemingly was added to correct the widespread error that Jesus had told John he would not die.

### THE HISTORICITY OF THE GOSPEL

The Fourth Gospel is deeply historical. The author reveals a knowledge of Jerusalem landmarks existing before 70 A D but destroyed during the Roman conquest of the city. We are indebted to this gospel account for certain historical facts about the life of Jesus not recorded in the Synoptic Gospels: Jesus, as did John the Baptist, had a baptizing ministry before He began His preaching; He had a public ministry extending over two years in which time He made several visits to Jerusalem; the authorities and Pharisees opposed Jesus long before His death; John supplies us with many details of the Passion and death of Jesus not found in the other accounts. Because of John's intimate friendship with Jesus, he was able to give us valuable insight into many of the historical events in our Lord's life.

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

When you know that *the Word was God and the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we have seen his glory: The glory of an only Son come from the Father filled with enduring love. . . (John 1:1,14)* and this 'enduring love' is Jesus of Nazareth—Son of God, Son of Man, Son of Man, it follows, as the dawn does the darkness, the foundation of John's theology is grounded in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is rooted in the historical Christ: *What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched. (I John 1:1)*

John roots his theology in the life of Jesus to protect it from pious conjectures and myths. As has been said: You do not gild the lily! As with Mary of Nazareth, John theology rises out of his prayerful contemplation of the Person of Jesus, of the words He speaks and the works He does. These treasures he shares with his readers that they may believe *that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)*

In Jesus of Nazareth the Light of God shines in a world darkened by sin. The very presence of Jesus is Judgment. The very encounter with Jesus reveals

a person to be a child of the day or child of darkness. *Everyone who practices evil hates the light and does not come near it for fear his deeds will be exposed. But he who acts in the truth comes into the light to make clear his deeds are done in God. (John 3:20)*

John finds inspiration in the Old Testament for his portrait of Jesus. We do not have to look beyond Sapiential Books to see the ‘Wisdom’ of the Old Testament incarnated in the Person and Life of Jesus of Nazareth. John presents Jesus as the New Moses. He indicates this is in both chapter six and seven of his gospel account. Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 18:15 are never far from John’s mind: *A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from you own kinsmen; to him you shall listen.*

### THE PURPOSE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

John writes to meet certain concrete difficulties facing the Church at the end of the first Christian century. John the Baptist is one such problem. His position was not all that clear in the minds of many people at that time. Some people fail to follow Jesus, as they believe John to be the Messiah. We possess records from the third century of an existing group opposing Christianity and maintaining John the Baptist to be the Messiah.

John writes for a certain number of Jewish people that believed in Jesus but remain silent. They could not bring themselves to be dissociated from their religious and cultural background. John makes an appeal, through this Gospel, to these Jewish believers to leave the synagogue—to put their faith completely in Jesus.

For the most part, John uses the term “Jews” as a reference to those who have refused to accept Jesus and actively oppose belief in Him. There is no effort of John part to appeal to them or to convert them. They are incorrigible in his mind. The Jews who accept Jesus, John refers to them as Israelites. They form the true Israel.

We know from the writing of Paul that certain Christians within the Church were perverting the truth of the Gospel. John seeks to protect the Christian Community from these heretical Christians.

The delayed Second Coming is another problem John must deal with. John endeavors to correct this by teaching what has been called 'realized eschatology'. He seeks to turn Christians from looking to the heaven with expectations to seeing what is, here and now, in their Christian lives—what the Church has already received from Jesus Christ:

1. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has returned and is present in the most intimate manner.
2. Through Baptism and the Eucharist the greatest possible blessings have come to Christians—divine sonship and eternal life.
3. Since eternal life is a present possession, physical death should hold no fear—either for themselves or their beloved departed. The spirits of the departed are live with Jesus and one with the Father.
4. There should be no fear of the final judgment. This judgment has already occurred for Christians through their belief and acceptance of Jesus.

The Fourth Gospel is a document of Faith. It demands a response from its reader: One believes and accept Jesus Christ as *the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)* or one rejects Him. This is a matter not only of life and death but eternal life or death.

Let us prayerful undertake the study of the Gospel according to Saint John that our faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, will increase and that we may have eternal life in His Name.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*DEATH IS NOT GOD DOING. HE TAKES NO PLEASURE IN THE  
EXTINCTION OF THE LIVING. TO BE—FOR THIS HE CREATED ALL.  
(WISDOM 1:14)*

**FIRST DAY: Read Proverbs 8:22-36.**

1. What does this reading tell you about Wisdom?
2. As “Wisdom Incarnated” what does this reveal about Jesus?
3. Does verse 35 recall to your mind any teaching of Jesus?

**SECOND DAY: Read Wisdom 7:22-30.**

1. What does this reading reveal about the nature of Wisdom?
2. What 5 expressions in this reading describe Jesus’ nature?
3. What does ‘literal meaning’ and ‘theological interpretation’ mean?

**THIRD DAY: Read Sirach- Chapter 24.**

1. Do verses 1 through 12 recall to your mind any fact about the life of Jesus?
2. Can you recall any words of Jesus similar to verse 18? Verses 28-31?
3. What problem does critical analysis reveal about the Fourth Gospel?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Job- Chapter 28.**

1. What does this reading reveal about the source and origin of Wisdom?
2. Being “Wisdom Incarnated” what does it mean when Jesus say “I am the way?”
3. How would you explain the apparent disunity in the Fourth Gospel?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Sirach 2:1-18; Baruch 3:9-15.**

1. What characteristic of the life of Jesus is praised in the reading from Sirach?
2. What direction does this reading give to a disciple of Jesus?
3. According to Baruch 9-15 what happens to those who forsake Wisdom?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Sirach 6:18-17 and Baruch 3:37-4:4.**

1. What does the reading from Sirach teach about possession of Wisdom?
2. How can this reading help a disciple to put “on the Mind of Christ”?
3. What does the reading from Baruch teach you about being a disciple of Jesus Christ?

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PROLOGUE

#### INTRODUCTION

On one occasion Jesus of Nazareth arrives in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi with His apostles. There He asks them this question; *Who do people say the Son of Man is?* They readily reply: *Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.* (Matt. 16:13-14) Looking at His disciples Jesus asks them another question—an extremely personal one: *‘And you, who do you say that I am?’* An embarrassing silence follows. Suddenly Simon Peter saves the moment with *‘You are the Christ, the son of the living God!’* (Matt. 16:16)

Some are not as quick as others to speak. It takes time for them to formulate feelings and thought into speech. Some things are never said. We wait too long to speak. All the opportunities to do so have passed. One of the silent disciples that day is the author of the Fourth Gospel. He could never forget that haunting question: *Who do you say that I am?* In time John answers the question. The Prologue to the Fourth Gospel is his answer!

Within the writings of the New Testament the Fourth Gospel is referred to as the “Pearl of Great Price.” The Prologue is the pearl within the Gospel. Fathers of the Church, such as Augustine and John Chrysostom, believe it is beyond man to express the sublime words of the Prologue. Because of the majesty of such writing, the symbol of the eagle, who soars alone and higher than other winged creatures, is applied to John the Evangelist.

The words of the Prologue has its own unique history within the Church. Many Christians believe these words possess their own charism. They wore these words as an amulet around their necks to protect them from evil. The Church has used them as a benediction over a newly baptized child and over the sick. For centuries it was the final blessing in all Latin Masses.

As John contemplates the Person and the life of Jesus Christ, he finds nothing on this earth comparable to Jesus of Nazareth. All that the other Evangelists express leave still unsaid what his faith must express. What is his adequate response to *Who do you say that I am?*

### THE WORD MADE FLESH

Are there words to express so sublime a faith? There is a Hebrew expression which signifies an utterance alive, filled with energy and life. Seemingly it expresses a being with life within itself. The expression is 'dabar'. John finds in 'dabar' the word that best expresses the true nature of Jesus Christ. The Greek translation of 'dabar' becomes 'logos'; the English translation of 'logos' becomes 'word'. The 'Logos' already possesses a sacred history in the Greek. 'Logos' became John's word expressing the Lord who came to dwell among us.

In the Sapiential Books of the Scriptures John finds expressions that adequately clothe his belief: . . . *is an aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty. . . is the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the image of his goodness. (Wisdom 7:25-26)*

How can John express the origin of the 'Word' who *is the refugence of eternal light?* When the authors of the Old Testament desired to express an occurrence beyond creation, beyond the beginning of all created things, it used the word 'genesis'. Translated into English it becomes 'in the beginning'. To that question, *Who do you say that I am?*, John responds: *In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God. . . The Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory: the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love. (John 1:1,14)*

Under divine inspiration, John expresses the sublime truth that the Person of Jesus proceeds from the Father with whom He possesses a relations of Divine Sonship. He is a pre-existing Person before He becomes a man among us. *He was present to God in the beginning* declares the existence of the Word before creation.

## THE DIVINE WORD

How does this divine reality of Jesus of Nazareth find expression within the Fourth Gospel? It runs like a golden thread through out the Gospel. This thread must be recognized in order to appreciate the power of this gospel account.

In Book of Exodus, God reveals to Moses that He is the existing One: *I AM WHO AM. . . This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations. (Genesis 3:14,15)* The holy name of God is YAHWEH, When Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, God's name became EGO EIMI. In the Greek Septuagint Bible 'ego eimi' becomes the divine name. In the Fourth Gospel the words 'ego eimi' appear time and time again on the lips of Jesus Christ. This divine name is being identified with Jesus of Nazareth. However, the simple 'I Am' translation in English fails often to carry the concept of divinity to the reader. In Chapter eight Jesus says to the Jews: *Before Abraham came to be, I AM!* His hearers clearly understood what Jesus implied with those two little words: *At that they picked up stones to throw at Jesus. . . (John 8:58-59)*

## SOURCE OF LIFE

According to the Prologue whatever came to be in creation flows from the creating activity of the Word. The Word is the source of existence and being. Creation is an act of revelation. All creation bears the stamp of God's Word.

John sees the Word as the Source of all life. However—John teaches that the life that flows from the Incarnated Word—Jesus Christ—is distinct. The gift of life to a human person that comes through Jesus is the gift of eternal life. When John speaks of 'life' in his gospel account, we need to realize he is speaking of 'eternal' life. Eternal life is not the same as 'everlasting life' which could mean the continuance physical or natural life. Eternal life possesses the divine quality of God own life. Eternal life is a sharing in the divine life. The Incarnated Word brings forth into the world a New Creation: *the real light which gives light to every man. (John 1:9)* *Anyone who did accept him he empowered to become Children of God. (John 1:12)*



## LIGHT AND DARKNESS

The terms 'light' and 'darkness' are prevalent in the Fourth Gospel. These are symbols of powerful forces existing in this world. When a person seeks to know the truth, to seek to walk and to live in the truth, to conform his or her life to God's holy will, that person becomes a child of the light. When a person rejects the will of God and abides in sin, such a person invites darkness into his or her life. Darkness in time permeates their very soul and the person becomes a child of darkness: *The light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were wicked. (John 3:19)*

John sees the Incarnated Word, Jesus Christ, as the Light that has come into the world to destroy the darkness of sin. As Jesus is rejected the darkness grows and prevails. Darkness so prevails in the world that the world becomes synonymous with Darkness. John proclaims that the whole world is in the power of the evil one. (1 John 5:19) As Judas leaves the Upper Room to betray Jesus, John writes: *It was night. (John 13:30)*

## THE WORLD

The word 'world' is a common expression in John. It can refer to the creative universe (the kosmos) or to the society of men and women. After the episode in Chapter eight where Jesus is rejected, the world becomes more and more associated with people who have no faith in Jesus. The 'world' becomes so synonymous with disbelief in Jesus and hatred for Him that no follower of Jesus can be of the world. (They will be 'in' the world but they cannot be 'of' the world.) The Spirit of Jesus becomes incompatible with that of the world and hostile to it. As the gospel account draws to a close the world and darkness become one.

## BORN AGAIN

John the Baptists is inserted into the Prologue at verse six. This indicates that the remaining verses of the Prologue pertain to the public ministry of Jesus. We are told in verse eleven that Jesus comes to claim His own. It is a clear reference to Israel. We are told that He was neither recognized nor accepted. The pride of Israel is the source of its rejection of its Messiah.

Pride darkens the mind and it resists the light for fear that its sinful condition will be revealed.

However, as we read in verse twelve, not all reject Jesus: *Any one who did accept him he empowered to become the children of God. These are they who believe in his name—who were begotten not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God. (John 1:12-13)* Becoming a child of God is completely a divine work depending only on the openness of the human will to the grace of God. It teaches the disciple's need for baptism—to be born again of water and the Holy Spirit. Through baptism a person becomes a new creation completely regenerated by the grace of God. This great blessings becomes possible because in the Incarnation God enters into humanity and now human being, through Jesus Christ, can enter into God.

### THE INCARNATION

The Incarnation of the Word of God is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. The Prologue does not say that the Word entered into flesh or abided in the flesh but that the Word became Flesh. 'Flesh' implies a complete human being. Because of the Incarnation, union with God is now bound with human history and human existence. In becoming a man the Word does not cease being the Divine Word but become God's full expression to humanity. To encounter the Word made Flesh—Jesus of Nazareth- is to encounter divine revelation. God has entered our world not only to encounter us but to speak to us and be heard by us.

### THE DIVINE PRESENCE

When the Prologue proclaims that the Word made His dwelling among us, we are being told that the body of Jesus Christ is the new localization of God's presence on earth. The ancient Temple of Jerusalem is replaced in the Person of Jesus Christ. We read in Revelations: *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them—and be their God. (Rev. 21:3, 7:15)*

The Prologue ends with the desire to communicate that the Incarnation is the supreme moment in human history. All that occurred on Mt Sinai pales into insignificance in the light of the Incarnation. It is more than a hymn, it is the overture sounding the themes to be expressed in Gospel according to John.

## THE PROLOGUE

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE-MEMORIZE)

*THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MAKE HIS DWELLING AMONG US, AND WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY: THE GLORY OF AN ONLY SON COMING FROM THE FATHER, FILLED WITH ENDURING LOVE. (JN. 1:14-16)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read John 1:1-18.

1. What does the Evangelist express in these verses?
2. What expressing indicates the pre-existence of the Word?
3. What is expressed by the Hebrew word 'dabar'?
4. What is John's answer to Jesus' question at Caesarea Phillippi?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Genesis, chapter 1.

1. What themes run through the Creation account and in the Prologue?
2. How is the 'Word' in John similar to the Creator in Genesis?
3. What is the symbolism of 'light'?
4. Why is the Word called the 'real light'?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Philippians 2:6-11.

1. What is the theme in Philippians that is found in the Prologue?
2. What is the divine virtue expressed in this reading?
3. What is symbolized by 'darkness'?

4. What important virtue of discipleship is emphasized in this reading?

**FOURTH DAY: Read Colossians 1:15-23.**

1. What concepts in this reading that are found in the Prologue?
2. How is the divinity of Jesus expressed in Colossians?
3. What two words does John use to indicate the divinity of Jesus?
4. What is the Doctrine of the Incarnation?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Hebrews 1:1-14.**

1. How is the Word described in Hebrews?
2. What name inherited by Jesus is superior to that of the angels?
3. What does it mean 'to believe in his name'?
4. Is belief in his name sufficient for salvation?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Wisdom 13:1-10; Romans 1:19-20.**

1. According to these two readings, what should Creation reveal about God?
2. Why is it so important to be 'born again'?
3. What is meant by 'life' in the writings of John?
4. What are some qualities needed to be a child of God?

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

#### INTRODUCTION

Many themes within the Fourth Gospel find expression within the dramatic framework of a trial. A legal vocabulary such as testimony, interrogation, confession and witness is prevalent throughout the Gospel. It may be called the Trial of the Word; the Word vs. the World.

The Gospel opens with the interrogation and testimony of the first witness—John the Baptist. The Scriptures clearly reveal that John, before birth, was marked for a special divine mission by God. St. Luke ends his narrative of the infancy of John with *The child grew up and matured in spirit. He lived in the desert until the day when he made his public appearance in Israel. (Luke 1:80)*

John was not alone with God in the desert. They shared this wilderness with a godly group of men known as the Essenes. The discovery of the Qumran Scrolls in 1948 opened to the modern world the lifestyle and spirituality of two thousand years ago. We find at Qumran the ruins of a monastery occupied by the Essenes from around 150 B C until 68 A D.

The discovery of the Qumran Scrolls emphasizes how strong and alive, at this time, is the expectation of the Messianic Age. These writings reveal also how diverse are the thoughts concerning the Messiah. The Essenes defend their lifestyle in the desert with a quotation from Isaiah: *A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord. (Isaiah 40:3)*

Some scholars believe there was a close relationship between the Essenes and John the Baptist. The passages from Isaiah concerning “the crying out in the desert” and “preparing the way of the Lord” are common to both. Baptism with water is practiced by both. It is possible that during his maturing years within the desert, John is greatly influenced by the Essenes. The matured John the Baptist, also, made a powerful impression upon many of the Essenes.

## THE WITNESS

The Fourth Gospel opens with a three-day encounter with John the Baptist. The thoughts expressed are summarized in verses six through nine of the Prologue: John is not the light; he testifies to the light; men come to believe in the light through his testimony.

John is presented primarily because of the importance of his testimony. He is a prophet sent by God to announce that the kingdom of God is at hand. The people accept him as such. More than all this, John is God's personal representation on earth to verify that Jesus is God's Chosen One. The testimony of John is also presented to counteract the teachings of certain men that John is the Messiah and Jesus was a disciple of John.

A committee of priests and levites arrive from Jerusalem to interrogate John. They are a delegation from the Pharisees. They locate John in Bethany across the Jordan River and there question him: *Who are you?* He replies: *I am not the Messiah.* They question further: *Who, then? Elijah?* (*John 1:19-21*) The Prophet Malachi writes: *Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day.* (*Mal. 3:23*)

John dresses as Elijah. He proclaims the kingdom of God is at hand and judgment will follow. Yet, he denies that he is Elijah. Jesus will later confirm that John was Elijah. The expectation is that Elijah will return in the flesh. John, along with contemporaries, accepts this belief. His own conscious awareness testifies to himself that he is John son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. It would have been a conscious fraud on his part to claim to be Elijah. Jesus reveals that Elijah returned in spirit and power in John the Baptist. In his humility John does not behold himself in this role.

Again the committee questions John: *Are you the Prophet?* *No, he replies.* (*John 1:21*). They ask this question because Moses teaches God will again raise up a prophet like himself. This we read in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Jesus Himself fulfills this role: He makes laws; He changes legislation; He gives new teachings to the people. The people all comment that Jesus, indeed, acts with authority.

From the questions put to John, we see a belief exists among the people concerning three messianic roles to be fulfilled in the Messianic Age: There is the kingly Messiah, the son of David; there is a priestly Messiah (Elijah); there is the prophet-like Moses. John identifies with none of these recognized messianic roles. He does not visualize himself as fulfilling any such roles. John knows he has a role to prepare 'a way' for the Messiah to come to his people.

John defends his baptizing ministry by explaining it as a preparatory ritual of penance. He does tell his interrogators that his mission is to identify for Israel its Messiah: *The one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is he who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit'.* (John 1:33) The Scriptures clearly foretell in Ezekiel 36:22-28 and in Zechariah 12:10 and 13:2 a coming baptism that will bring inner regeneration.

## THE SECOND DAY

On our second day encounter with John in Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist gives his greatest testimony to Jesus of Nazareth:

*The next day, when John caught sight of Jesus coming toward him, he exclaims: 'Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! It is he of whom I said: After me is to come a man who ranks ahead of me, because he was before me.' (John 1:129-30)*

John uses here a scripture formula for revelation. A messenger of God sees a person and he cries out 'Look!' at which time he reveals the mystery of that person's mission. We read in the Old Testament when the Prophet Samuel see Saul, the Lord says to Samuel, *'Look! Here is the man who will rule over my people! (Samuel 9:17)*

Within these verses John expresses an entire Christology: John reveals Jesus as the one who takes away the sin of the world; Jesus is a pre-existing being; Jesus is the channel of the Holy Spirit and He is the Chosen One of God.

When John refers to Jesus as the 'Lamb', this is not a symbol we would have in mind. It probably has reference to a popular Jewish symbolism in which the figure of a conquering lamb destroys evil in the world in its final

days. Nevertheless, the Evangelist John probably had another symbolism in mind. One that recalls the Suffering Servant of Yahweh wherein Isaiah uses the symbol of a suffering lamb: *Like a lamb led to slaughter. . . he was silent and opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)* This is more likely true in the light of the fact that Jesus is pictured as the channel of the Holy Spirit. God says of his servant in Isaiah: *Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my Spirit. (Isaiah 42:1)*

John the Baptist reveals the mystery of Jesus' mission. Jesus will remove the 'sin' of the world. Within the Greek the use of the singular 'sin' carries a different meaning than the plural usage of 'sins'. The singular signifies a sinful state whereas the plural indicates sinful acts. The mission of Jesus is to remove the sinful condition that inflicts all humanity. Jesus will remove not only the sins of people but the very cause of sin.

### THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Previously God revealed to John the Baptist that *when you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is he who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. (John 1:33)* This Person is the Chosen One of God. John the Evangelist understands the impact of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon a human person. It marks the person as the Messiah, the Servant of Yahweh. Isaiah foretells: *But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a god shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord will rest upon him. (Isaiah 11:1)*

When John says the Spirit 'rest on him', he uses a word for 'rest' (menein) which implies a permanent indwelling. The Spirit remains permanently with Jesus. This is an essential moment in the history of salvation. It carries our minds back to Genesis when Yahweh reveals that the Spirit can no longer remain permanently with the human person: *My spirit shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. . . His days shall comprise one hundred and twenty years. (Genesis 6:3)* Because of the sin of disobedience, God withdraws His spirit and death results for all.

The Holy Spirit of Yahweh returns at the baptism of Jesus taking up a permanent residence in humanity. When Jesus steps into the water for baptism, he who is without sins, identifies with sinful humanity and takes its sins upon Himself. As death is the fruit of sin, Jesus commits Himself



to death. He accepts this burden, as He realizes it God's will for him to do so. He will be obedient unto death. It is this obedience which restores the Holy Spirit to humanity—to eternal life. This obedience confirms Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God: *You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rest!* (Mark 1:11)

### THE THIRD DAY

*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. As he watched Jesus walk by he said, 'Look! There is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard what he said, and followed Jesus. (John 1:35-37)* When it is reported to John that many of his disciples were leaving him to follow Jesus, he replies: *He must increase, while I must decrease. (John 3:30)* He did what he was sent to do and that done, he steps aside. At the end John is imprisoned, abandoned and beheaded. He is saint and servant whose love is expressed by serving. He took more delight in giving joy to Jesus than in his own enjoyment of Christ. When Jesus receives the report of John death, we read: *When Jesus heard this, he withdrew by boat from there to a desert place by himself. (Matt. 14:13)*

**JOHN THE BAPTIST**  
**INTRODUCTION**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*HE MUST INCREASE, WHILE I MUST DECREASE. (JOHN 3:30)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read John 1:19-36.

1. Why is the Fourth Gospel called a 'trial'?
2. Why was the testimony of John the Baptist important?
3. How does John answer the question, "Who are you"?
4. What does John reveal about Jesus in John 1:29-30?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Luke 1:5-22 and 57-80.

1. How was the birth of John announced?
2. What do you think it means, "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb"?
3. What was his mission foretold to be?
4. What does the angel reveal about the mission of John?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Luke 1:26-45.

1. How does Mary's reply to the angel differ from that of Zachariah?
2. What do you see to be the difference between these two annunciations?

3. What did Luke intend by placing these two accounts side by side?
4. What do you understand by Luke 1:77?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read Isaiah 40:1-11.

1. Who were the Essenes?
2. What reason did they give for living in the desert?
3. Why do some scholars believe John was closely associated with them?
4. What does Isaiah 40:9-11 teach you about the Messiah?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Sirach 48:1-16 and John 7:25-32.

1. What were the popular beliefs concerning the Messiah?
2. Can you give any scripture references to support these beliefs?
3. How did John the Baptist recognize that Jesus was the Messiah?
4. What is the significance of Jesus' baptism?

**Sixth Day:** Read Zechariah 12:10 and 13:1-2; Isaiah 11:1-2 and 42:1-9.

1. Why did people suspect that John was Elijah?
2. How do you explain John's denial and Jesus' affirmation of John being Elijah?
3. What do you understand by the title 'Lamb of God'?
4. What is meant by, "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him"?

## CHAPTER 4

### THE FIRST DISCIPLES

#### INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One of the Fourth Gospel John recounts a few scenes in which one apostle after the other makes a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Within eleven verses, the belief of the early Church about Jesus is expressed. The Scriptures tell us that this is not the way it happened. John obviously uses an literary device to clarify what faith in Jesus implies.

#### FAITH IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

As faith is primary with John, it is of primary importance that we understand what he means by faith. Being a believer and being a disciple are synonymous. Faith is the primary factor in becoming a disciple, a Christian. John never uses a noun to express faith. Faith for John is a verb because faith expresses activity. What we do and to whom we are committed expresses our faith! Truly, faith must be incarnated!

Faith relates to a Person. Thirty-one times John relates faith to Jesus. Faith for John means to accept *Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth (Jn. 1:45)* for what he claims to be: the revelation of God. It involves much more than trust and confidence in a person. It demands a commitment to Jesus expressed by a dedication of one's life to Him. It demands a willingness to respond to God's demands as manifested by Jesus. It finds perfect expression in perfect obedience. "To be baptized in His name" is to take a step by which one passes into absolute ownership by Jesus Christ. Henceforth allegiance is owed to Christ.

The practical effect of faith is that one 'stands firm' in one's relationship with Jesus Christ. If one does not stand firm in the faith, one will not be made firm, will not receive the power to resist the enemy. The Lord said to Ahaz, King of Judah, *Unless you faith is firm you shall not be firm! (Isaiah 7:9)* For John, faith in Jesus always means to stand firm in the will of God as revealed through Jesus Christ.

## TRUTH IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

According to John, to know God is to grasp ultimate reality—final reality. The Final Reality is what exists when all other things pass away. This is 'the Truth': the Reality that endures forever. It is Eternal Life.

To know the Eternal Truth, a disciple must not only hear the Truth that Jesus teaches, but he must in some way be united to the Word who is Truth. Knowledge of God involves a personal union with Jesus Christ.

When John uses the word 'truth' (Alethes or alethanos) as an adjective, as in *the true light (1:9)*, *the true bread (6:32)*, and *the true vine (15:1)*, it carries the meaning of the only real. 'Real' for John implies that Jesus is the Eternal Light, Eternal Bread, and the Eternal Vine. John expresses the belief that only that which is of God is eternally true—the Ultimate Reality lasting forever.

## SEEING IN JOHN

Jesus says to Martha: *Did I not assure you that if you believed you would see the glory of God displayed? (John 11:40)* Jesus implies that faith gives the believer a spiritual vision. Call it the 'eye of faith'. Faith sees the hidden presence of God. When John writes of 'seeing' he is speaking of 'believing' in Jesus. John deliberately uses different words to express the degrees of belief. Some people believe only what they see, what their senses present to them. Others are able to see beneath sense perceptions and come to some in-depth insight but still not to total understanding of what transpires. Some by intuitive vision are able to penetrate into the depths and behold the Divine Reality. These have the faith that enables them *to see the glory of God*. In Chapter 16:16 we have an example of two types of 'seeing': *In a short time you will no longer see me ( 'theoria' loss of faith), and a short time later you will see('horan') me again*. One expresses the loss of faith through the scandal of the Cross and the other expresses the fullness of faith that comes through the Resurrection.

## THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION

In Chapter One, verses 35 through 51, John presents the psychology of the Christian Vocation. In the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples receive a direct call from Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel, we see both the human and divine forces operating in the 'call'. The disciples vocations result partly from the influence of their teacher (John the Baptist) partly as a result of a direct call, partly owing to family relationship and partly owing to personal friendship.

When John uses the expression 'to follow', he means to dedicate oneself to discipleship. John would not have us miss the reason why they follow Jesus. They accept their teacher's testimony that Jesus is the Messiah. If He is the Messiah, He is King and they must follow Him. They owe to Him allegiance and obedience. Belief that Jesus is the Messiah is an essential requirement for discipleship.

*What are you looking for? (John 1:38)* These are the first spoken words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Needless to say, John considers them extremely important. They are addressed to every reader of this gospel account. In the Aramaic language these words carry the meaning of 'search'. To all would be disciples Jesus asks: "What are you searching for?" This question touches upon the basic human need—a hunger for God and union with God. As Saint Augustine observes: "You made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." The proper motive for following Jesus is to fulfill the basic religious need of the human spirit—union with God.

The answer of the two disciples to Jesus' question must be understood within the same theological dimension. *Rabbi (Teacher) where do you stay? (John 1:38)* John himself answers this question in verse eighteen of the Prologue: *No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father's side, who has revealed him.* Jesus dwells in the bosom of the Father. When Jesus is satisfied that these two men possess the fundamental spiritual condition for discipleship, He replies with a challenge of faith: *Come and see. (John 1:39)*

Throughout the Gospel the verbs 'coming' and 'seeing' will convey the concept of believing. We read in verse thirty-nine, *So they went to see where He was lodging, and stayed with him that day.* A Greek word implying enduring relationship is used here. Two essential qualities of discipleship are established: First, we must follow Jesus which implies believing in Him; second, we must remain with Him. Christian discipleship demands a permanent commitment. Only then do you see the glory of the Lord and share that glory. *If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be. (John 12:26)* The continual interpersonal relationship of the disciple with Jesus results in growth of faith. John illustrates this truth in Chapter One by having the disciples addressing Jesus with a series of titles expressing a progression of faith: Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God and King of Israel.

In the very beginning of his gospel account, John clearly teaches us that being a disciple does mean being a missionary. We must witness to Jesus; we must bring the 'good news' to family and friends. John relates: *One of the two who had followed him after hearing John, was Simon Peter's brother Andrew. The first thing he did was seek out his brother Simon and tell him, 'we have found the Messiah. He brought him to Jesus. . . (John 1:40-42)* Andrew's faith, we see, has come from 'Rabbi' to 'Messiah.' The next day Jesus calls Philip and Philip heads off to call his friend Nathanael.

Nathanael is the last disciple called. His name means 'God has given.' John, no doubt, intends Nathaniel to represent the symbol of Israel coming to faith in Jesus. He is the prototype of many others who will follow Jesus—those whom the Father will give to Him out of this world.

Philip, in his witness to Jesus, places before Nathanael the stumbling block for many a Jewish person: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph, is the Messiah. The very fact that Nathanael is 'coming' to see Jesus indicates an openness to faith. This is all that Jesus' needs. A person is made for truth. The heart longs for it and when it encounters it, the heart should know what it has found.

*When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, he remarked: This man is a true Israelite. There is no guile in him. (John 1:47)* Jesus expresses a necessary inner quality for the acceptance of the kingdom of God. Nathanael is open to the truth. He is without deceit and falsity. Nathanael has no hidden

agenda. Jesus refers to him as the true Israelite. Again this 'true' implies a 'real' Israelite—eternally real Israelite.

The popular interpretation of the name 'Israel' is 'the one who sees God.' It means a person of faith. Jesus implies that the 'man who sees God' is the guileless one. Nathanael acknowledges Jesus to be the 'Son of God'. Therefore, the eternal Israelite is the one who sees in Jesus of Nazareth the eternal Son of God. Jesus is King for such an Israelite. Nathanael caps his profession of faith with *You are the king of Israel. (John 1:49)* A true subject acknowledges his true King.

In the mind of John the Evangelists, the real Israel is the new humanity re-born in Jesus Christ. It is not the nation of Israel. It is the community of those who are 'of the truth' and Jesus is their King.

### SON OF MAN

The last title John ascribes to Jesus is Son of Man. This title Jesus applies to Himself. It appears twelve times in John's gospel account. At the time it was not considered a messianic title. Within Jewish history the 'Son of Man' appears as an idealized human person who is a representative of redeemed humanity. For John, Jesus, the Son of Man, is much more than one individual among the many. He is the true Self of the human race. The person standing in perfect union with God—a union others can obtain only in the degree they are incorporated into Jesus. Jesus, as Son of Man, is the Mind whose thoughts are absolute Truth which others think after Him. As Son of Man, Jesus is the true life in which others are invited to share.

How well it is for us, dear friends, to keep in mind these admonishing words of Holy Scripture: *Take care, my brothers and sisters, lest any of you have an evil and unfaithful spirit and fall away from the living God. Encourage one another daily while it is still 'today', so that no one grows hardened by the deceit of sin. We have become partners of Christ only if we maintain to the end that confidence with which we began. (Hebrews 3:12-14)*



**THE FIRST DISCIPLES**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*THE POWER THAT HAS CONQUERED THE WORLD IS THIS FAITH OF OURS. . .THE ONE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.  
(1 John 5:4-5)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29.

1. How is King David's faith proven?
2. What is meant by the Messiah of Israel?
3. Why does John prefer the verb to express faith?
4. What does this reveal to you about your faith?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Isaiah 7:10-16 and 9:1-6.

1. What were some expectations concerning the Messiah?
2. What was the difficulty in accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah?
3. Why did John the Baptist believe Jesus was the Messiah?
4. What does the "Final Reality" mean to you?

**THIRD DAY:** Read the First Letter of John 5:1-13.

1. In the mind of John, what does it mean to have faith in Jesus?
2. How does one faith in Jesus conquer the world?

3. How do you understand: Unless your faith is firm you shall not be firm?
4. What does John mean when he uses 'true' as an adjective?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 1:35-51.

1. What degree of faith is needed to be a disciple?
2. What does it mean to 'follow' Jesus?
3. What is meant by the question, "What are you looking for"?
4. If Jesus asked you this question, how would you respond?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Genesis 27:1-27.

1. What was Jacob's sin?
2. What does it mean to be a 'true Israelite'?
3. Name two essential qualities to be a disciple of Jesus?
4. How do you see your self as Jesus' disciple?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read Genesis 28:10-22 and Daniel 7:10-18.

1. What do you understand by Jesus' reference to Jacob's dream?
2. What is meant by a 'Son of Man'?
3. Why do you think Jesus has a preference for this title?
4. What do you learn about Christian faith in Chapter 1:35-51?

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WEDDING AT CANA

#### INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel, John presents Jesus of Nazareth as the Person in whom we may have the highest faith. Before John introduces us to the public life of Jesus, he illustrates how a believing group of disciples have already formed around Jesus. These are those chosen by the Father and given to Jesus. They form the nucleus of a New Israel. There is a New Genesis. In this first section John has carefully illustrated a period of seven days. God has risen from His rest and creates anew.

#### SIGNS AND WONDERS

Many miracles are presented in three Synoptic Gospels. John is much more reserved in his use of miracles. He enumerates seven miracles and speaks of them as 'signs'.

Only the miracle of changing water into wine belongs uniquely to the Fourth Gospel. *Jesus performed the first of these signs in Cana of Galilee. Thus did he reveal his glory and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)* This first miracle, called a 'sign', relates to the six miracles to follow. They will encourage you to look back to the first sign to understand their significance and intention. Many interesting elements will be found in these seven miracles. Regardless of the interesting circumstances in which they occur and their edifying theological interpretations, we must realize that these are secondary effects. We need to bear in mind that Jesus is the sun and center of these narratives. As John concludes his gospel account, he tells us that he has chosen these 'signs' in order to bring his readers to faith in Jesus Christ and, therefore, to eternal life.

Jesus refers to His miracles as 'works'. The word appearing as 'works' is 'ergon'. It is found in the Creation account (Genesis 2:2) and in the history of the Chosen People. By using this expression, Jesus associates His ministry with creation and implies a miraculous intervention of God on behalf of His People:

*My Father goes on working, and so do I. (John 5:17)*

John intends to express more than miracles by the use of the expression 'works'. Usually a discourse will follow each miracle. The words of Jesus are also works. Not only is God obviously working through Jesus in these miracles but God is speaking to His People through the words of Jesus. In Chapter seventeen, verse four, Jesus will summarize His entire ministry as a "work"—in a sense, a miracle. *I have give you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.*

As mentioned, although Jesus refers to His miracles as 'works', John speaks of them as 'signs'. This use of the word 'signs' emphasizes the symbolic nature of the seven miracles presented. John intends to draw the attention of the reader to the spiritual teaching following the miracle. John considers the whole ministry of Jesus as a divine sign. All the occurrences within this ministry are teaching divine truths.

Nevertheless John demonstrates a distrust for signs. Even though people came to belief in Jesus because of signs, their faith is often inadequate. John knew only too well that people could see signs and wonders and persists in their disbelief's. He did not trust signs and wonders to produce sufficient faith.

## SIGNS AND SACRAMENTS

Many scholars, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, recognize the sacramental symbolism in the Fourth Gospel. As Dr. C. H. Dodd expresses:

John has chosen not to speak directly about the sacraments, but for the Christian reader the allusions are inescapable. . . The use in the early Christian Community of water, bread, and wine in the sacraments made these inevitably symbols for the sacraments in the Fourth Gospel.

As the miracles were a sign of God's Presence in Christ, John would have us see the Sacraments as a sign of Christ's Presence in the Church. A rejection of Baptism and the Eucharist for John was a dangerous infidelity. When John exalts a faith that does not depend upon 'signs' (*Blest are they who have not seen and have believed. John 20:29*), John presents the

situation in which the Sacraments are the chief channels of God's power and presence.

### THE WEDDING BANQUET

The introduction to the Fourth Gospel ends on the seventh day with Jesus, His mother and His disciples attending a wedding. Such wedding celebration usually lasted seven days—occurring after harvest time when there was more leisure time. The bare facts of this narrative relate that Mary and Jesus are invited to the wedding. They arrive along with twelve friends of Jesus. As the celebration unfolds, Mary notes the dwindling wine supply. Perhaps she felt some responsibility for the situation. Mary brings the situation to her Son. Jesus appears somewhat reluctant to be involved. In the end, he orders the servants to fill up six large jars with water. They fill them to the brim and Jesus changes that water into 120 gallons of very fine wine.

Symbolically the number 'seven' expresses perfection, fullness; the number 'six' expresses imperfection and defect. This seven day wedding feast may express in John's mind the glorious ending of discipleship. We have already seen how he presented, in a time span of few days, a life time of growth in faith. The presence of Jesus and His disciples at a wedding celebration is used by John to represent symbolically the eternal messianic banquet that will celebrate the marriage of the Lamb. In the Old Testament a wedding symbolized the messianic age. Jesus sees Himself in the role of the bridegroom on the way to the eternal banquet. The bride is Israel. The Book of Revelations tells us: *Happy are they who have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:9)* St. Matthew teaches that Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a banquet: *The reign of God may be likened to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. (Matt. 22:1)* *Many will come from the east and the west and will find a place at the banquet in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Matt. 8:11)*

### SYMBOLISM AT CANA

In the wedding at Cana episode, the most obvious symbolic elements are water and wine. Water symbolizes purification and life. Wine is a symbol of celebration and joy. Wine and an abundance of wine are symbols of the messianic times. It especially indicates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The changing of the water into wine symbolizes the changing of the human

spirit within a person by Jesus Christ. This occurs when Jesus pours out upon the person the Holy Spirit. The person becomes a 'new wine'—possesses a new spirit and must live a new life. One must die to the life of the flesh, for one has become a new creation in Christ. Jesus caution disciples not to put new wine into old wine skins but into new skins—a newness coming from personal repentance and Baptism. Jesus words serve as a warning against trying to cling to the old why still having the new. Jesus indicates the results will be tragic—the new wine will bust the old wine skins and all will be lost.

We read there were present six empty jars used for purification. As six represents imperfection, by this detail John calls attention to the imperfection of purification under the Old Law and the termination of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Old Covenant. Now the Spirit and purification will only come through Jesus Christ. The true water of purification is the Blood of the Lamb.

We read in Second Baruch 29:5, a pious Jewish work from the time of John, that in the messianic days, the harvest will be multiplied 10,000 fold: each vine 1,000 branches, each branch 1,000 clusters, each cluster 1,000 grapes and each grape about 120 gallons of wine. Since an abundance of wine symbolizes the messianic days (Amos 9:11,13), and Jesus makes 120 gallons of wine *when the guests have been drinking awhile (John 2:10)*, John is telling that those disciples who persevere will one day be with Jesus at the Eternal Banquet. They will be present as the Bride of the Lamb. There—joy will be full and unending.

When Jesus makes use of the vessels of purification, John teaches the readers of Jesus' readiness to make us of the Old order as far as possible. He comes not to destroy, but to fulfill—to the brim and overflowing. When He can do so, Jesus meets our human needs, satisfies them and makes use of them.

The Head Steward's ignorance of the source of the wine and its symbolism comes because of his ignorance of Jesus. John contrasts this with the fact that the servants and, of course, His mother know. It implies such knowledge comes only to those obedient servants of the Lord. John does not use here the common word for 'servant' but the word 'deacon' that signifies a ministry within the Church.

## MARY MOTHER OF JESUS

Let us note that John calls attention to the fact, *the mother of Jesus was there. (John 2:1)* Mary must be seen in the Scriptures both as an individual person and as a symbol. In the mind of the early Church Fathers, Jesus and Mary are symbols of the New Creation. Mary is the New Eve.

Mary, by her obedience to God's will, plays an essential role in the Redemption by becoming the Mother of the Messiah. By her untiring life of devotion and unconditional love of Jesus Christ, Mary becomes the fitting symbol of the Church. Mary symbolizes the Church because she personally embodies the grace and holiness to which the Church is called. The Church must achieve, in a corporate way, what Mary achieves as a person. The Church beholds in Mary's assumption into heaven, its own glorious future.

John interprets Mary's presence at the wedding in Cana symbolically. She represents the Church. Her concern for the lack of wine is interpreted as a concern and request for the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist—the first prayer of the Church for the Holy Spirit. Jesus' reply to His mother is seen not as a refusal but a delay. The Holy Spirit, the New Wine, can only flow from the death of Jesus Christ. The actual changing of the water into wine is the promise the prayer will be granted.

Mary appears only twice in the Fourth Gospel—at its beginning and at the end. She is mentioned one other time (John 6:42). John leaves with his readers Mary's last spoken words in the Gospel. They are addressed to the 'servants':

***DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU! (JOHN 2:5)***

**THE WEDDING AT CANA**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU! ( JOHN 2:5)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Ezekiel 4:1-17.

1. What means does the Prophet use to teach truth in this reading?
2. What difficulty does such a method propose for future readers?
3. What book of the New Testament do you find difficult? Why?
4. What do you see as the benefit in using symbolic language?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Matthew 2:1-12.

1. What does John mean by a 'sign'?
2. Why does John refer to miracles as 'signs'?
3. What was the 'sign' to the astrologers in the reading of Matthew?
4. Do you see any other signs in this reading?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Matthew 12:38-43.

1. What does John mean by the 'works' of Jesus?
2. To whom are the works of Jesus ultimately related?
3. Why did Jesus refuse to work any signs for the Pharisees?
4. What does a demand for signs and wonders demonstrate?



**FOURTH DAY:** Read Numbers 14:1-12; Isaiah 54:1-10.

1. Why was God angry with the Children of Israel?
2. Why does John distrust 'signs and wonders'?
3. How does John use miracles different from the other Evangelist?
4. What symbolism does Isaiah use to describe the messianic age?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Matthew 22:1-14; John 2:1-11.

1. What does this reading from Matthew symbolically present to us?
2. What is John's general intention in presenting the wedding at Cana?
3. What is the symbolism in the six jars for purification?
4. What is being symbolized by Mary words, *They have no more wine?*

**SIXTH DAY** Read: Revelations 12:1-17.

1. How does Mary symbolize the Christian Church?
2. Why do we mean when we say that Mary is the Mother of the Church?
3. What do you see as being symbolized in the reading from Revelations?
4. What does John 2:5 say to you?

## CHAPTER 6

### THE HOUSE OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

When Jesus was twelve years of age, Mary and Joseph took Him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. As they drew near the city, they had a magnificent view of the walled city and its glorious temple visible for miles. The temple gleamed all over with gold. During the feast of the Passover over 125,000 pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem.

Upon entering the temple, Jesus had to pass through a double gate covered with gold and silver. No doubt the Boy Jesus received an awesome impression of the temple—the sole place of His Father’s presence. We know that after this visit, he failed to return to Nazareth with His parents. Three days later they found Him in Solomon’s Porch arguing with the rabbis and amazing them with His questions and answers. Mary said: *Son why have you done this to us. You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow.* The Boy Jesus replied: *Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father’s house? (Luke 2:48-49)*

Jesus truly loved the temple. He called it the ‘House of God’ (Matt. 12:4), ‘a House of Prayer (Matt. 21:13), and the ‘House of His Father’ (John 2:16) To Jesus the temple was holy because God dwelt therein and His presence sanctified all the objects it contained.

#### CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

John opens the public ministry of Jesus by His sudden appearance in the temple. How far Jesus has come from the Boy of twelve. Luke tells us of those hidden years in Nazareth: *Jesus, for his part, progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men. (Luke 2:52)* He comes now in the spiritual maturity of His manhood. He is God’s Son entering His Father’s House. All the zeal of the prophets past culminates in His spirit and emotions. The divine displeasure with the worship of Israel incarnates itself in the Spirit of Jesus. He drives from the temple area all the animals of sacrifice: *Get them out of here! (John 2:16),* He commands. A divine sign

is given. Temple worship and sacrifice is at an end. The temple doors are to be closed. A new form of worship will replace the old. The temple sacrifice that has endured for a thousand years is replaced by the Lamb of God. The temple will come to an end. It occurs through the permissive will of God but, also, from the willful actions of the Jewish leaders themselves.

### IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

This temple episode occurs in all four gospel accounts. In the Synoptic Gospels it occurs shortly before our Lord's death, following His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. The time sequence in the Synoptic Gospels appears the more accurate one. As can be seen and expected, Jesus behavior outrages the priests and only Jesus popularity with the people impede them from arresting Him. This action is an attributing cause of His death.

In Mark's account of this event, Jesus speaks these words: *Does not Scripture have it, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples?' but you have turned it into a den of thieves. (Mark 11:17)* Is this not a complaint against the provincialism and narrowness of Judaism? The minds of men put limits upon the actions of God in this world. Worse still, they put limits upon peoples access to God.

Matthew follows closely Mark account. He omits Mark's reference "for all the people" but he adds this line: *There were also blind and lame people who came to him in the Temple, and he cured them. (Matthew 21:14)* Here Matthew indicates the mercy and compassion to be found in the New Temple when God will receive the afflicted of this world and restore them to health through Jesus. It should be noted that they come to Jesus in Temple. The significance of this is understood when we realize that such people were legally forbidden entrance into the temple.

Luke's account of the cleansing of the temple is the shortest but it precedes a most dramatic scene. As Jesus approaches the Jerusalem and the city comes into view, perhaps He recalls that boyhood experience when first He saw the holy city. Now there is no joy. Childhood expectations have been replaced by harsh reality. Tears fill the eyes of Jesus and He sadly prophecies:

*If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes! Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all around you, when they will circle you and hem you in on all sides; they will dash you and your children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you, and because you did not recognize your opportunity when God offered it. (Luke 19:42-44)*

In all the accounts, Jesus makes a whip and drives out all those in engaged in commercial business. Only force compels them to cease their activity. Of their own free will, they will not permit the temple to be a House of Prayer, but will keep it commercial and profitable. This stubbornness and persistence in disobedience results in a complete rejection by God and a replacement of the old forms of worship. We read these words of the Prophet Malachi:

*Oh, that one among you would shut the temple gates to keep you from kindling fires on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts; neither will I accept any sacrifice from your hands, for from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering. (Malachi 1:10-11)*

In the Synoptic Gospels we read that the chief priests and elders come to Jesus and say, *What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?* (Matthew 21:23) Jesus tells them that He will answer their question, if they first will tell him from whence came the authority of John the Baptist. They refuse to give an honest answer. These men demonstrate clearly that although they act in God's name, they do not accept the authority of God in their own lives. They use their authority for selfish ends and actually war against God's authority when it is detrimental to their own selfish ambitions.

When humble and obedient Servants of Yahweh *hear the Word of God and keep it*, they do encounter destructive and diabolic forces of pride and rebellion—and often in high places. When divine obedience calls them to correct misuses of authority, such prophets often end as did John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.

## THE FIRST PUBLIC SIGN

In the mind of the Evangelists, the cleansing of the temple is a symbolic action demonstrating the coming end of temple worship. John presents it as the first public sign Jesus performs. When His disciples witness this action in the temple, they recall to mind the Scripture: *Zeal for your house consumes me. (Psalm 69:30)* Jesus will suffer because of this zeal for His Father's House.

The Jews demand signs. John illustrates from the very beginning their inability to understand the words and deeds of Jesus. They always misunderstand. They fail to see the cleansing of the temple as a sign foretelling the coming destruction of temple worship. They lack the vision necessary to interpret the sign. In veiled language Jesus offers them the supreme sign of the Gospel—His Resurrection from the dead: *Destroy this temple. . .and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2:19)*

In actual fact the disciples also fail to understand this sign. John records: *Only after Jesus has been raised from the dead did his disciples recall that he has said this, and come to believe the Scripture and the word he had spoken. (John 2:22)* Then they understood: *“Actually he was talking about the temple of his body.(John 2:21)*

Within this first sign John foretells not only the passing of the Old Order in religion but the means by which the New Order will be inaugurated. It will flow from the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus will die, rejected by the builders. He will rise from the dead to become the foundation stone of the New Temple.

## THE NEW TEMPLE

The knowledge that the Lord's body would replace the Jewish temple of stone, profoundly influences the thought and spirituality of the early Christian Community. It came to understand that not only is the Person of Jesus the Temple of God but that the Church itself is the Body of Christ on earth. Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth: *Didn't you realize that you were God's temple and the Spirit of God was living in you. (I Cor. 3:16)* Paul goes on to tell Christians: *You are part of a building that has the apostles and*

*prophets for its foundation, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20)*

*Let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through him the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)*

### THE DARK PROPHECY FULFILLED

We read in Mark that as Jesus was leaving the temple area one of His disciples turned around to contemplate the majesty of the temple and commented on *the huge block of stones and the enormous buildings*. Jesus says to this disciple: *You see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left on another—all will be torn down. (Mark 13:1-2)*

This dark prophecy of Jesus can true in the year 70 A D The Roman Army under Titus conquered the city and put the temple to flames. In 132 A D the political-religious attempts of Bar Cochba culminated in a partial restoration which in 135 A D was frustrated by the Roman Emperor Hadrian who built on the site a temple to Jupiter and set up a equestrian statue of himself within the temple. Equally unsuccessful was the attempt of Julian the Apostate (361-362) to rebuild the Jewish temple. As soon as the enterprise was begun, the work was suspend because of fiery eruption from the soil.

After this time, the Mount of Moriah was abandoned and became a dumping ground for trash. Christians viewed it as a place cursed. And so it remained until 691 A D when the Arabs arrived. According to the Moslems, the Rock of Moriah had been made holy by the presence of Mohammed. Upon this site they constructed one of the most important and beautiful mosque of the Islamic world.

**THE HOUSE OF GOD**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*DIDN'T YOU REALIZE THAT YOU WERE THE GOD'S TEMPLE AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS LIVING IN YOU. (I Cor. 3:16)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read I Chronicles 22:5-19.

1. Why did the Lord prefer Solomon over David to build the temple?
2. How did David express his love for the temple?
3. What was the importance of the temple of Jerusalem?
4. Why did David insist that the people build the temple?

**SECOND DAY:** Read 2 Chronicles 7:1-5; verses 12-22.

1. What does God promise to those who pray within His temple?
2. What were the conditions for the fulfillment of God's promises?
3. What did the future destiny of the temple depend upon?
4. According to this reading, what separates people from God's blessings?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Malachi 1:6-14.

1. Why is God displeased with the sacrifices in the temple?
2. What does this tell you about your offerings to God?
3. What is being symbolized by shutting the temple gate?
4. How would you see verse 11 being fulfilled today?

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 2:13-22.**

1. What was Jesus' attitude towards the temple of Jerusalem?
2. Describe the Jesus you see in this reading?
3. What does His action symbolize?
4. If Jesus walked into your life and said: "Get them out of here!", what would His command refer to in your life?

**FIFTY DAY: Read Psalm 69.**

1. What does this Psalm express to you?
2. How would you interpret "zeal for your house consumes me"?
3. What was the price of the New Temple?
4. What is the price to be paid to be part of the New Temple?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Mark 11:12-25 and Ephesians 2:11-22.**

1. What does the fig tree symbolize and why is it cursed?
2. What lesson does the barren fig tree teach you?
3. How is Jesus love for you expressed in the reading from Ephesians?
4. What is your relationship to the New Temple?



## CHAPTER 7

### BORN AGAIN

#### INTRODUCTION

In the teachings of John, Jesus demands a certain quality of faith in His disciples. This quality of faith is beyond achievement by unaided human nature. To illustrate this truth John uses the example of Nicodemus, a man with insufficient faith. He is a scribe, a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. He is one of the religious and intellectual leaders of Israel.

John presents this leading rabbi as coming within the cloak of night to hear Jesus. A normal time for teacher and pupil to meet for an intimate discussion; certainly a prudent time for a leading political person as Nicodemus to encounter one such as Jesus of Nazareth. Night is too symbolic in John for us to miss the point that Nicodemus comes out of the darkness within which his fellow Jews are immersed. Into this darkness the true light of the world shines. John presents Nicodemus not at a rabbi but a 'Talmid'—a pupil sitting at the feet of the Divine Teacher to receive from Him the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Not only Christ and Nicodemus encounter each other this night but it may well symbolize the encounter between Judaism and the Church.

Nicodemus represents those Jewish people who recognize in Jesus evidence of divine origin. He addresses Jesus respectfully: *Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God, for no one can perform signs and wonders such as you perform unless God is with him. (John 3:2)*

#### NECESSITY OF REBIRTH

We have the first discourse given by Jesus in this scene. It is one of the major revelations of Jesus Christ—the absolute necessity of human regeneration—to be born again. The loving shadow of the Most Holy Trinity fall across the scene revealing the Triune Love of God for mankind. Nicodemus opens the conversation by hailing Jesus as *a teacher come from God*. His faith, based upon signs and wonders, is insufficient. As far as he

can go, he is right; but he does not come to the radical truth. He fails to recognize the divine reality confronting him in Jesus of Nazareth. 'Signs and wonders' are insufficient within themselves. The man represents the limited vision of human being unaided by grace. Jesus touches upon this limitation when he teaches, *flesh begets flesh, spirit begets spirit.* (John 3:6)

The Divine Revelation is divided into two sections. The first section between verses two through eight teach first that a person can neither believe in the reign of God nor enter into the kingdom of God unless one has been born again: *I solemnly assure you, no one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above.* (Remember in John's account 'to see' is to believe.) *I solemnly assure, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit.* (John 3:2-4) Jesus teaches clearly that faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for regeneration. Here we have the explanation of John 1:12: *And who did accept him he empowered to become children of God. These are they who believe in his name—who were begotten. . .by God.*

Nicodemus speaks from a sensible awareness—visible 'signs and wonders.' There is need of a supernatural awareness—the eye of faith. The reign of God has come in Jesus of Nazareth—in way so opposed and different from anything occurring on this earth. A person cannot believe this without divine grace. He or she is left with *is this not Joseph's son?* A person cannot believe in Jesus nor enter into the kingdom of God unless, as Jesus teaches, he or she is *begotten from above.* (John 3:7) The principle of both faith and regeneration is divine—the Holy Spirit.

It would be clear to the Christian reader that when Jesus speaks of *begotten of water and Spirit*, the Christian rite of Baptism is intended. From time to time, the Church decrees that a passage of Scripture must be interpreted in a particular way. John 3:5 is such a verse. The Council of Trent declares that this text refers to actual water baptism.

Jesus teaches through this doctrine the essential alienation of the human person from God. All sin damages a person ability for union with God. We are born men and women of the flesh. The Greek word for 'flesh' is 'sarx'. It implies the entire human person. We inherit at conception the sinful condition of the human person and this condition grows heavier by our own personal sins. Jesus tells us not to be surprised *that I tell you, you must all be begotten from above. . .flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit.* (John 3:6-7) It

is a divine revelation that spiritual regeneration is necessary for all human beings.

Things of the flesh can be precisely measured and calculated. Jesus teaches it is not so with things of the Spirit. Its origin and activity is mysterious. Jesus compares its working to that of the wind: *The wind blows where it wills. You hear the sound it makes but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes. (John 3:8)* And so it is with the Holy Spirit: the Presence of the Holy Spirit will be manifested in a human life through its activities and effects upon the person.

Nicodemus is bewildered. His Teacher enters a realm in which he is unable to follow being a man of the 'flesh', judging by appearances and human insight. And so he asks, *How can this be? (John 3:9)* He is not yet among those who reject Jesus, nor can he be one of his disciples. We leave Nicodemus with his question in the limbo of faith.

The answer to Nicodemus question will be given in the verses to follow: the answer will be the enduring love of the Triune God.

Jesus now warns Nicodemus and those like him that the revelation now to be given must be accepted on the grounds of His testimony and the verification of this truth will be found only within the spirit of the hearer: the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer. Jesus confirms: *I solemnly assure you, we are talking about what we know, we are testifying to what we have seen. . . (John 3:14)* Jesus goes on to teach: *Whoever does accept this testimony certifies that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God. (John 3:33-34)*

Jesus reveals that He is the 'Son of Man' come down from heaven. He tells us who He is and why He comes into this world: *Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)* Jesus goes on to explain that His Father has sent Him into the world *that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)*

These Scriptures reveal the great love of God that has come to us in Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of God has descended from heaven into the 'sarx/flesh' of man becoming the 'Son of Man'. Through this Incarnation the human race will come to rebirth in the Holy Spirit. Before this can

come to be, the Son of man must be lifted up'. *Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all who believe may have eternal life in him. (John 3:14)*

The early Church sees in this 'lifting up of the Son of Man' the returning of the 'descend One' to heaven. This Ascension is seen in three stages: the ascension to the Cross, the ascension from the grave, and the ascension to the right hand of the Father. When the Ascension is completed, Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, will send the Holy Spirit for the rebirth of the human race.

John uses in verse sixteen the words 'eternal life'. It expresses the quality of life to be received by the believers, not the duration. Just as did the Son of Man so all those who believe in Him will share in the Divine Life of God. When John speaks of God's love, he uses the Greek verb 'agapan'. As with faith, John chooses to express love as an action. The love of God is the divine giving of His Son in the Incarnation and the sacrificing of His life upon the Cross. God does not ration His love: *The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. (John 3:35)* Nor does God ration His gift of the Spirit. (John 3:34)

#### THE JUDGMENT OF LIGHT

The Lord's words make it clear that although He has come into the world as its Savior and not to condemn it, nevertheless His very Presence in the world brings judgment. The Incarnate Word is filled with life, love and truth. His very existence is 'the Light' revealing what is true love, what is a godly life and what is eternal truth. In the light of His life we can know if our deeds are truly loving, if we walk in the truth, and if we are really alive in God's grace. The seekers of life, love, and truth will come into the light of His life that they may be guided out of darkness, error and death into the fullness of life, truth and love. *He who acts in truth comes into the light to make clear that his deeds are done in God. (John 3:31)* Jesus teaches us that the greatest obstacles to our faith comes not from intellectual difficulties but from moral evil: *Everyone who practices evil hates the light; he does not come near it for fear his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:20)* Many men and women in today's society call 'darkness' light and 'light' darkness. Jesus says: *"If your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be. (Matthew 6:23)*

John closes this section with the vital importance of coming to faith in Jesus of Nazareth. *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure the wrath of God. (John 3:36)* Our sinfulness eclipse the light of the Son and we do not see, we do not believe. John express the read cause of disbelief is disobedience. Obedience is the other side of the coin of faith. When John uses the present tense for disobedience, he indicates not a single act of disobedience but a pattern of rebellion. There is a strong logical connection between what a man believes in his heart and how his life unfolds. The fruit of our life reveals the heart of our life.

A spirit of disobedience begets a spirit of disbelief. Such a spiritual condition endures the wrath of God. Here again the use of the present tense for 'endure' indicates that God's punishment has begun and will endure.

### HE MUST INCREASE

John the Baptist's farewell witness to Jesus concludes in the third chapter. John the Evangelist continues the baptismal theme began with Nicodemus. The baptism of John is contrasted with the baptism of Jesus. John's baptism is one of repentance. Jesus' baptism is one of spiritual rebirth. The spirit of John's baptism is a necessary spirit for the reception of Jesus' baptism. Repentance for ones sins is a necessary condition for Christian Baptism. Because of its heavenly origin such a baptism can only come from Jesus.

John the Baptist serves again as an admirable example for the disciples of Jesus. When the disciples of John complain that his disciples are leaving him to follow Jesus, John tells them: *It is the groom that has the bride. . . This is my joy and it is complete. He must increase while I must decrease. (John 3:29-30)*

Disciple need to realize their importance in the apostolic ministry of Jesus Christ. They are needed instruments for bring people to Jesus. All their knowledge, their virtue, their natural charm maybe useful to bring a soul to Jesus. They must be content to see others grow more and more in their love of the Lord and less dependent upon themselves. A pure love of the Lord sings always: *He must increase while I must decrease.* St. Augustine beautifully paraphrased the character of John the Baptist: "I listen; he is the one who speaks. I am enlightened; he is the light. I am the ear; he is the Word."

## BORN AGAIN

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE-MEMORIZE)

*GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM MAY NOT DIE BUT MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 3:16)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read John 2:23-3:8.

1. Why did Jesus refuse to trust Himself to those believing in His Name?
2. What is the quality of faith demanded in the Fourth Gospel?
3. How would you describe the character of Nicodemus?
4. What do you see to be his problem of believing in Jesus?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Romans 6:1-14.

1. According to John and Paul why is baptism necessary?
2. Why do you think Paul speaks of baptism as a 'death'?
3. What does it mean to be 'begotten from above'?
4. What is meant by saying the Holy Spirit is the principle of faith and regeneration?

**THIRD DAY:** Read I Corinthians 15:44-458.

1. What do you understand by natural body and a spiritual body in Paul?
2. What is meant by "the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit?"
3. What is the dogmatic teaching of the Church in John 3:5?
4. What do you understand by "flesh begets flesh, spirit begets spirit"?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read Numbers 21:4-9; Wisdom 16:5-11; John 3:9-15.

1. In what way is human nature reflected in reading from Numbers?
2. What do we learn about rebirth by Jesus' reference to this scene?
3. What is the "sign of salvation" (Wis. 16:6) for us today?
4. How is the Presence of the Holy Spirit discerned in the human soul?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 3:16-21 and I John 1-5:2-2.

1. What answer does John give to Nicodemus' question: "How can this happen"?
2. What does John 3:16 say to you?
3. Why does the Presence of Jesus bring judgment upon people?
4. What does John mean by "eternal life"?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 3:22-36.

1. What do you understand by a "spirit of disobedience begets a spirit of disbelief"?
2. What do the words in John 3:30 say to a disciple of Jesus?
3. What does John teach by the use of the present tense with 'disobeys' and 'endure' in verse 36?
4. What does being 'born again' mean to you?

## CHAPTER 8

### THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

#### INTRODUCTION

The baptismal success of Jesus of Nazareth in Judea brings Him to the attention of the Pharisees. Jesus prudently withdraws from that region into Galilee. Jesus and His disciples head directly north through Samaria. Samaria, a part of Palestine, extends from the sea to the Jordan River. Jews, intending to go to Jerusalem from Galilee, have to cut through Samaria or go to the east of the river and come down through the Jordan Valley.

Samaria lies deep in the heartland of the old Kingdom of Israel while Jerusalem lies at the center of the Kingdom of Judah. Between Samaria and Judea a hostility existed so ancient that many historians believe it demonstrates a division between the tribes of Israel and Judah long before the time of David and Solomon.

In chapter four of the Fourth Gospel Jesus enters into a dramatic encounter with a Samaritan woman. To appreciate properly this encounter we need to understand what it meant to be a Samaritan and, also, a woman in the time of Jesus.

The Jews regard the Samaritans as being on the level with Gentiles even though they have a Jewish background. "Samaritan!" was a gross insult in the mouth of a Jew. Judaism even forbids the conversion of Samaritan. Rabbi Eleazar would teach: "He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is like one that eats the flesh of swine." He absolutely forbids the eating of bread made by Samaritans. There is no question of marriage between a Jew and a Samaritan. A Samaritan woman is considered "from the cradle" as always impure in a very high degree and a cause of ritual impurity. Anything that touches her body is considered a source of ritual impurity.



## THE ROLE OF WOMEN

It was considered preferable, at Jesus' time, for a woman, especially an unmarried girl, not to ever go out of her home. When going out in public, a woman's face was hidden by an arrangement of two veils, a head-band on the forehead extending to the chin. Likewise, she wore a hairnet with knotted ribbons attached to it to conceal her features. It was considered so offensive for a woman to go out without her headdress and face hidden that a husband had the duty to divorce her and was under no obligation to pay the money contracted at the marriage.

A man was forbidden to be alone with a woman other than his wife, to look at a married woman or to greet her. If a woman conversed with anyone in the street, she could be divorced with no payment of money.

In general, women are shut away from the general society, under submission first to their fathers and later to their husbands. Their religious obligations are at a minimum. Only against such a background can we judge Our Lord's attitude towards women. When He permits women to be part of His company, He is knowingly overthrowing the customs of His times.

Seemingly, Jesus does not directly attack the social injustices of His day. This would be like knocking the fruit off the tree; the fruit would grow back. In His own behavior He ignores unjust laws and customs and He seeks to change the hearts of men who create these social injustices. He struggles to change the 'tree'. Men must be 'reborn' if the tree is every to bring forth good fruit.

## LIGHT SHINING IN DARKNESS

We read: *Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down at the well. The hour was about noon. (John 4:6)* As the weary Jesus rests, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. In the encounter to follow, John presents the drama of a soul struggling to believe in Jesus. This woman represents the human spirit alienated from its heavenly Father by sin and error. Jesus' attitude towards the woman makes clear He has come to save and not to condemn. She is a sinner in need of salvation. He makes no judgment about her past. The bare facts are stated. The light shines into darkness.

This woman would never dare approach Jesus. It is Jesus who breaks the barrier between them by requesting a favor from her. He places her in the superior positions of a 'giver'. He asks for a drink of the well water and there is a brief interchange in which Jesus issues a two-fold challenge to the woman: *If only you recognized God's gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him instead, and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10)*

### THE LIVING WATER

*Gift of God* and *living water* are two expressions used to describe the Torah by both the Jews and the Samaritans. Living water is the living Word of God—the Torah. When Jesus offers the woman 'living water'. He is not referring to Himself but to a spiritual gift to be given to those who recognize God's gift. God's gift has already been identified in chapter three, verse sixteen: *God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.* To recognize God's gift is to believe that Jesus is God's Son, the Savior of the World. The 'living water' is the Holy Spirit communicated by Jesus to those who believe.

The Book of Sirach makes this reference to the Torah: *He who eats of me will hunger still, he who drinks of me will thirst for more. (Sirach 24:20)* Jesus contrast His gift of 'living water' with the 'water' of the Old Covenant gone flat and dead: *Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty. (John 4:14)* He speaks of the water *leaping up* to provide eternal life. The verb used to express 'leaping up' expresses the quick movements of a living being. This again verifies this 'living water' to be the Holy Spirit of God.

### THE GIVER AND THE GIFT

The Samaritan Woman does not understand the deep revelation these words imply, but she is moved to accept the second half of the challenge: *Give me this water, sir, so that I shall not grow thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. (John 4:15)* She regards this as a useful gift for herself, not only to quench her thirst, but also to make life easier for herself. She reaches for the gift but has not met the challenge to recognize the Giver. Only then will she receive the Gift which will flow from her personal encounter in faith with her Savior.

Jesus endeavors to lead her to accept the first challenge:

*He said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and then come back here. 'I have no husband,' replied the woman. 'You are right in saying you have no husband!' Jesus exclaimed. 'The fact is, you have had five, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. What you said is true.'* (John 14:16-18)

The light of God's truth, Jesus Christ, brings the truth out of us whether we try to disguise or deny it. The religious life of this woman reaches a crucial moment: Will she hate the Light and turn her back upon truth, bringing on self condemnation, or will she remain in its painful but healing rays? She remains but diverts the rays of truth from her life to something less personal. One of the best way to avoid having a religious experience is to have a religious discussion. But, progress occurs. She begins to think upon spiritual matters.

#### IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

When Jesus speaks of worshipping the Father in Spirit and Truth, we must not make the mistake that this means worshipping God in the inner recesses of one's own spirit. The 'spirit' is the Spirit of God, not the spirit of man.

Jesus is the Truth revealing Divine Truth, the eternal realities. The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. In short—to worship the Father in *spirit and truth* is to worship God in and through Jesus Christ. *It is just such worshipers the Father seeks.* (John 4:23)

The Samaritan Woman now indicates her willingness and eagerness to know God. She expresses this when she says, *I know there is a Messiah coming. . . When he comes, he will tell us everything.* Jesus replies, *I who speak to you am He.* (John 4:25-26) Jesus reveals more than His Messiahship, He reveals He is God's Son.

#### BIRTH OF AN APOSTLE

The woman leaves behind her water jar. What she came for she no longer needs. She now becomes a symbol of the Church born again through the

Spirit and now gives witness to others about Jesus. She says to the people: *Come and see someone who told me everything I ever did! Could this not be the Messiah? (John 4:29)* She gives her personal testimony. It encourages others to come to Jesus. Even through her religious knowledge and commitment are immature, she brings not just one man to Jesus but many to the Lord. Such as it was, it was adequate for the purpose. They came and listen to Jesus and came to faith. They say to her, *No longer does our faith depend on your story. We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this really is the Savior of the World. (John 4:42)* This is the only such reference to Jesus in the Gospel.

It clearly indicates that belief in Jesus on the testimony of others (parents, teachers, friends etc.) should be but temporary. The hearer must come also to meet Jesus personally. If he or she continues to believe only on the witness of another, it will have little meaning in time. Those who wish to become full grown must not let their faith rest upon 'signs and wonders' and the tales of others.

When the disciples return upon the scene we are told they *were surprised that Jesus was speaking with a woman. (John 4:27)* They were shocked. When they urged Him to eat, He said to them *I have food to eat of which you do not know. (John 4:32)* Jesus is echoing the words of Deuteronomy 8:3: *Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the Lord.* Jesus teaches that just as eating bread nourishes and strengthens the body, so the spirit is nourished and strengthened by accomplishing the will of God and bringing His work to completion. In bringing the Samaritan Woman to salvation, John gives us a practical example of Jesus fulfilling the will of His Father.

The salvation of the world is God's will. As Savior of the world, Jesus continues His mission. This mission continues daily in the Church until the end of time. It is truly impossible to be a true disciple of Jesus and not be at heart and desire an apostle. The Spirit will always be saying to us: *Why I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields: they are ripe for the harvest! (John 4:35)* In chapter four John leaves future apostles an important lesson in the ways of evangelization .

**THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*DOING THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME AND BRINGING HIS WORK  
TO COMPLETION IS MY FOOD. (JOHN 4:34)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Ezra 4:1-24.

1. What was the Jews' attitude towards the Samaritans at the time of Jesus?
2. Why did the Jews reject the Samaritans offer to rebuild their temple?
3. What was the effect of this rejection?
4. What does this teach us today about building the Temple of God?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Luke 7:36-50.

1. What social customs did this woman violate?
2. How did Jesus react to the social injustices of His day?
3. How did Jesus seek to change society?
4. What do you see as your Christian obligation towards social injustice?

**THIRD DAY:** Read John 4:1-15.

1. How would you describe this Samaritan woman?
2. What was Jesus' attitude toward such a person?
3. What technique did Jesus use to approach the woman?

4. What two-fold challenge did Jesus put before her?

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 4:16-24.**

1. What was the crisis within this religious experience?
2. How did the Samaritan woman react?
3. How do you react to unpleasant truth about yourself?
4. What do you understand by “worship the Father in Spirit and truth”?

**FIFTH DAY: Read John 4:27-42.**

1. What motivated Jesus to encounter this woman?
2. What effect did her conversion experience have on others?
3. What do you understand by Jesus saying to do the will of God is His food?
4. What do you learn by this episode about evangelizing others?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Acts 8:4-25.**

1. How would you describe the Church’s attitude towards the Samaritans?
2. To what would you attribute this change in Jewish Christians?
3. Do you see any comparison between the Samaritan Woman and Simon the Magician?
4. What do you see as your responsibility towards nonbelievers?

## CHAPTER 9

### THE LIFE-GIVING WORD

#### INTRODUCTION

God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save the world. Born in this world as the child of a Jewish maiden. He is a Jew. Therefore, "salvation comes from the Jews!" (John 4:23) The city of Jerusalem is the heart of His earthly home. There is the House of His Father. Shortly after Jesus of Nazareth begins His public ministry, the heart begins to grow cold toward Him. Soon it will disown and cast Him out. Jesus Himself testifies that no one esteems a prophet in his own country (John 4:44) With the authorities expressing their hostility towards Him in the very House of the Father and the acceptance of Him in faith by the Samaritans, the fulfillment of the prophecy has begun. John now prepares his readers for the inevitable.

#### THE SECOND SIGN

John presents now a miraculous encounter between Jesus and a pagan. With slight variations, the same scene appears both in the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke. It is clear in these accounts that the 'royal official' in John's account is the Gentile highly praised by Jesus: *I assure you, I have never found this much faith in Israel. (Matthew 8:10)* What transpires now becomes a sign for the coming conversion of the Gentiles to Jesus Christ.

From Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee the royal official makes a twenty-mile journey over the hills of Galilee to Cana. He arrives in need with faith. His reception by Jesus is somewhat cool: *Unless you people see signs and wonders, you do not believe. (John 4:48)* In other words, unless your faith is supported by signs and wonders, there is no faith. Perhaps here Jesus is addressing not so much the royal official as the crowd around him.

Our author witnessed many miracles in his time and he sadly noted they seldom produced lasting disciples of Jesus. He was suspicious of a faith that needs miracles to sustain it. He is not against miracles but against the spirit that demands sign and wonders in order to believe. Such faith has its

foundation in the flesh and not in the spirit. Such faith blooms no longer than a field flower. The heat of trials and tribulations wilt the memory of yesterday's blessings. The faith of such people is comparable to people who deep down have no belief that they are lovable. They can only believe it when being loved in some concrete way. Without constant assurance of love, they become desperate and despondent. They have no faith in their lovableness, only in the signs and wonders of love: hugs and kisses and whatever else means love to them. The Old Testament confirms people can behold divine occurrences and refuse belief: *Despite the many signs and wonders that I will work in the land of Egypt, he will not listen to you. (Ex. 7:3-4)*

The royal official has come to Cana to take Jesus to Capernaum, so He can lay his hand upon his son and cure him. Jesus grants his prayer but the means he sought are denied. He must return home 'empty handed' but not empty-hearted. His heart is filled with hope in the 'word' Jesus has spoken to him. His faith has become of a higher quality. One dear to the heart of our author. The royal official believes in the Word of Jesus.

### THE THIRD SIGN

Jesus performs His third miracle in Bethesda (House of Mercy), a healing center within the city of Jerusalem. The recipient of the miracle is a man debilitated and crippled for over thirty-eight years. He appears crippled both in body and spirit. Jesus, completely aware of this man condition, asks the man, *Do you want to be healed? (John 5:6)* In other words, do you have the will to be a healthy person? Jesus' questions implies human will can impede God's good will. People do get sick and die because they will it. (Often on their unconscious level.) Countless sicknesses result from bad—not necessarily sinful—willing on the part of human beings. In this man's case, his sickness did result from his sins. However, we must not deduce from this case that all sickness results from personal sin. Jesus will correct, in chapter nine, this common error of the time.

When Jesus asks the man if he wanted to be healed, he only responds with a few feeble excuses for his personal condition. The man has not the will. This is not the case in which the human will opposes God's good will but one in which the human will is so sick and weak that it is completely debilitated. This is the case were deliverance is need. Jesus imparts to this man both



the will and power to live: *Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk! (John 5:9)* The faith of the man has nothing to do with the miracle. He has no awareness of Jesus' identity. This miracle flows purely from the will of Jesus and the power of His words. This miracle and the previous one both express themes stated in verse 21: *Just as the Father raises the dead and grants life, so the Son grants life to those to whom he wishes.*

This man well serve as an example of 'signs and wonders' not producing a disciple of Jesus. When this man discovers the identity of Jesus, he does not seek to follow him but rather allies himself with the enemies of Jesus: *The man went off and informed the Jews that Jesus was the one who had cured him. (John 5:15)* This man may well represent a general spiritual anemia effecting the Jewish people, leaving them unable to respond positively to Jesus. All the gospel accounts emphasize that there is a correlation between repentance for one sins and the acceptance of the reign of God.

### THE JEWISH SABBATH

John informs us, *It was because Jesus did things such as this on the sabbath that they began to persecute him. (John 5:16)* The sabbath is the most important religious observance for Jews. The word 'sabbath' derives from the Hebrew word for 'rest' or 'cease'. The observance of the 'seventh' day as a day of rest was an ancient practice among the Israelites. We read in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 that it was orientated and directed towards the good of the people. The Book of Exodus (20:11) refers to God's resting on the seventh day and this establishes the theological basis of man's rest at the end of the week.

In later Judaism the emphasis changed. It emphasized more and more the worship of God and less and less a day of rest. More Sabbath restrictions developed. With the rise of the Scribes and Pharisees the restrictions grew more severe. Essentially it became a holy day dedicated to the Lord and man lived to keep the Sabbath. The Pharisees strict observance of all sabbath restrictions became the hallmark of their union with Yahweh. It was the measure by which they measured the holiness of every other man.

Seemingly Jesus of Nazareth hears the beat of a different drum—Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Jesus expresses best His teaching when He teaches: *The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. (Mark 2:27)* And for that reason Jesus insists that the Son of Man is Lord of the

sabbath. In the mind of our author, the life-giving works which Jesus performs on the sabbath are instances of divine activity and are exempt from sabbath restrictions. The situation is summed up in these words: *The reason why the Jews were even more determined to kill him was that he not only was breaking the sabbath but, worse still, was speaking of God as his own Father, thereby making himself God's equal. (John 5:18)*

### THE TRIAL BEGINS

The trial of the Word is about to begin. Jesus' defense will fall into two parts, essentially related. The first and main part of the defense will be between verses nineteen and thirty (within which, verses 26-30 will repeat much of the thought expressed in nineteen through twenty-five). The second part of the defense will be between verses thirty-one through forty-seven, wherein Jesus presents the evidence for His remarkable claims.

The rabbis taught that God rested from work of creation but not of the moral judgment of the universe. They identified three works of the Father on the sabbath: life, death and judgment. Jesus identifies His own works as giving life to the dead and bringing judgment to all people:

*Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and grants life, so the Son grants life to those to whom he wishes. (John 5:21)*

*I solemnly assure you, an hour is coming, has indeed come, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have heeded it shall live. (John 5:25)*

*I solemnly assure you, the man who hears my word and has faith in him who sent me possesses eternal life. He does not come under condemnation, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24)*

The scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus of making Himself God's equal. Such an accusation implies one is setting himself up as a rival to One, True God. Lucifer was the prototype of such a person. Isaiah expresses such a spirit: *I will ascend above the top of the clouds; I will be like the Most High (Isaiah 14-14)* Jesus does not deny His divine activity, but attributes this activity solely to His unity with the Father. This unity consists of a total, unqualified obedience to the will of the Father. In the fullest sense of the meaning, these acts of Jesus are acts of the Father as the will of God is

fully expressed . The foundation of Jesus unity with the Father is the love of the Father and the obedience of the Son.

### THE DEFENSE WITNESSES

Upon what evidence does such an extraordinary claim rest? The Jews say to Jesus in chapter eight: *You are your own witness. Such testimony cannot be valid. (John 8:13)* The rabbis held that no man can bear witness on his own behalf. Both Deuteronomy (17:6) and Numbers (35-40) demand several witnesses in legal matters involving capital punishment. Jesus offers four witnesses. When all is said and done the four witnesses are but different aspects of the One Witness—the Heavenly Father.

1. The first to bear witness is John the Baptist, a man sent by God.
2. The miracles produced by Jesus. These were heavenly works. Peter preached in Jerusalem: *Jesus the Nazorean was a man whom God sent to you with miracle, wonders, and signs as his credentials. These God worked through him in your midst, as you well know. (Acts 2:22)*
3. Jesus mentions that the Father, Himself, gives testimony to Him. This may refer to the Father's internal evidence within minds and hearts of the hearers. We read: *This is the testimony that God has given about His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within himself. (John 5:19-20)*
4. The final witness is the Scripture which comes from God: *Search the Scriptures in which you think you have eternal life—they also testify on my behalf. (John 5:39)*

Divine testimony fails often to find acceptance in the human heart. This very failure serves as judgment. As it is not an intellectual problem but a moral one. It lies at the heart of a person's life and love of God. Jesus gives two answers to the problem: *You do not have the love of God in your hearts (John 5:42)* *How can people like you believe, when you accept praise from one another yet do not seek the glory that comes from the One God. (John 5:44)*

**THE LIVE-GIVING WORD**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

**FIRST DAY:** Read John 4:43-54 and Matthew 15:21-28.

1. Why do you think a prophet fails to be esteemed among his own people?
2. What is being implied by “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you do not believe?”
3. What do you see as the teachings of the Second Sign?
4. What do you learn from the episode with the Canaanite Woman?

**SECOND DAY:** Read John 5:1-15.

1. Why does the Lord ask the man, “Do you want to be healed”?
2. What do you see as unique about this Third Sign?
3. What does this miracle teach you about healing of sickness?
4. What does it teach you about Jesus?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Romans 7:7-25.

1. How do you see sin effecting our ability to relate to God?
2. Why is it important to discern the root cause of sickness?
3. Can you give an example where a certain type of behavior caused illness?
4. What can be done when the will is too weak to will spiritual health?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Exodus 20:8-11; Matt. 12:1-15.

1. How would you describe the spirit of legalism?
2. What are its effects upon a person's spirituality?
3. What do you see as the difference between external and internal sanctity?
4. In what way is God said to continue His work on the Sabbath?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 5:16-30.

1. How would you defend Jesus against the charge that he violates the Sabbath?
2. What works of Jesus testify to His divine sonship?
3. What does verse twenty-five say to you?
4. What is the judgment for those that accept Jesus?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 5:31-47.

1. Who are the witnesses that confirm Jesus' authority to act as He does?
2. What do you understand by verses forty-five and forty-six?
3. What reasons do the Scriptures give for people rejecting divine truths?
4. How can you know if God's word abides in your heart?

# CHAPTER 10

## THE LIVING BREAD

### INTRODUCTION

The Sixth Chapter of the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus' fourth sign, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the fifth sign, His walking upon the sea. Jesus appears at this point as an incomparable Person. The world has never beheld the likes of Him. The truth revealed demands a radical faith in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. The supreme blessing will flow to the believer through this faith. In the light of this revelation, many disciples of Jesus will simply fade away.

The past, present and future blend together in the unfolding of this historic moment in discipleship. A note from the past and present sets the theme for what will follow: *The Jewish feast of Passover was near. (John 6:4)* The ancient Passover of the Jews, its present day celebration in Jesus' time, and the Christian paschal celebration are all essential, blending elements of this chapter.

Within Jewish history the Passover celebration became the great national feast of Israel, celebrating their establishment as the people of Yahweh. It was the ritual reliving of their exodus from slavery. The ritual celebration of it was the greatest feast in Israel

In preparation for the feast of Passover, a three-year cycle of prescribed Scriptures were read each sabbath in the local synagogues. One group of readings from Exodus (9-16) would cover the period beginning shortly before the first Passover and ending with God sending the quail and manna. Herein Moses explains the meaning of the manna: *On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, 'What is this?' for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, 'This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.'* (Exodus 16:15) A second group of readings came from the Book of Numbers (6-14). Herein is recalled the celebration of the second Passover and the continuing grumbling against Moses. *Would that we had meat for food! We remember the fish we use to eat without cost in Egypt. . . We see nothing before us but this manna. (Numbers 11:5,6)* Here we see the work of Moses and all

the prophets of Israel: bringing people from where they are to where they should be—from Egypt to the Promised Land. The life of Moses illustrated the arduousness of the task. More than once Moses opted to die.

Reading from the Prophets and the Psalms likewise accompanied the reading of the first five books of the Bible. During the preparation for the feast, the Jewish people would have listened to these words of Isaiah:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord, As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. For just as from the heaven the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11)

Manna from heaven was a theme woven closely into the Passover Feast. Jewish tradition held that manna fell for the first time on the 15 of April. Manna fell for the last time on Passover eve. There was a popular expectation that the Messiah would come on Passover, and manna would once again begin to fall from heaven.

### THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES

The scene opens with Jesus walking into a desert region followed by a very large crowd of people. He goes *“up the mountain and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of the Passover is near. (John 6:3-4)* John is presenting a symbolic reenactment of the Exodus from Egypt with Jesus, as the New Moses, leading Israel into the desert to encounter Yahweh.

Beholding the vast crowd before Him, *Jesus knew well what he intended to do. (John 6:6)* To test His disciples he asks, “Where shall we find bread for these people to eat.” Philip response was there would be enough money to buy food for this crowd. Andrew noted the presence of five barley loaves and a couple of fish but remarked: *But what good is that among so many. (John 6:10)* The disciples have an extraordinary situation on hand and there is no realization among them that they are in the presence of an extraordinary person. In the hands of Jesus the blessed (eucharistesas)

bread and fishes feeds to the full the vast multitude. Not just with bread but with the 'fish' the Israelites of old complained of missing out there in the desert.

What has occurred is not by magic but by power. In a lesser degree, we have two other accounts in Scripture of such an occurrence: Elija in I Kings 17:1-16 and Elisha in 2 Kings 4:38-44. An adequate Cause is present for this occurrence. We read in the Prologue of this gospel account: *Through him (the Word) all things came into being and apart from him nothing came to be. (John 1:3)* Within the hand of One who brought the barley and fish into existence from nothing—something could certainly be infinitely multiplied.

All misinterpret what has occurred. They interpret it in the light of their own religious expectations. *This is undoubtedly the Prophet who is to come into the world. (John 6:14)* Like barn yard chickens, they lack the insight and power to lift up their heads and see beyond their immediate concerns. They were lost in the 'sign'.

Jesus immediately separates Himself from the disciples and the crowd and their earthy ambitions for Him. John records, *He fled back to the mountains alone. (John 6:15)* Within the Greek the word translated 'fled' carries the connotation of a panic flight. Jesus faces once again the temptation Satan placed before Him in the desert. The scriptures do encourage 'flight' in the face of certain temptations: The moth that courts the flame will sooner or later be consumed.

Jesus needs no man to make Him King. He is Lord. He will later acknowledge before Pontius Pilate that He is a King: *My kingdom is not of this world. (John 18:36-37)*

### WALKING UPON THE WATERS

The scene which follows seeks to correct the apostles' misconception resulting from the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Mark relates, *They were taken aback by these happenings, for they had not understood about the loaves. On the contrary, their minds were completely closed to the meaning of the events. (Mark 6:51-52)*



The apostles have embarked alone for Capernaum. Without the presence of the Lord in the boat, things go not well: strong winds and rough seas are their lot. It is 3 AM. They have covered about four miles in eight hours and eight more miles to go. If they are thinking at this time, they are the disciples of The Prophet— a Moses-like prophet, the episode now occurring destroys any such concept of the Son of Man. Suddenly they sight Jesus coming towards their boat walking upon the sea. They are terrified by this revelation, shaken to their very souls. They are brought face-to-face with the divine reality within Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus speaks to them: *It is I; do not be afraid.* (John 6:21) An echo of the message shepherds once heard one cold winter night: *You have nothing to fear. A Savior has come to you.*” (Luke 2:10,11) Jesus has identified Himself by the divine name—EGO EIMI. Their acceptance of this revelation is indicated by the words. *They wanted to take him into the boat.* (John 6:21) The following seems to indicate this: *Suddenly it came a ground on the shore they had been approaching.* (John 6:21) A shore without help they would not have reached. We read in Psalm 107:30: *He brought them to their desired haven.*

The author would have his readers understand, just as the works of Jesus go beyond the works of other men, so the person of Jesus goes beyond that of all other men. Jesus is no Moses, no Elijah—these are but stars in the night that pale into insignificance in the presence of the Sun. Jesus demonstrates the powers of creation in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. He demonstrates His lordship of the Universe with putting the wind to rest and walking upon the waters. Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord. He has come to call us into the kingdom prepared for us by His Father since the foundation of the world.

The discourse following the third and fourth sign is a clarification of the Person revealed in these signs and His relationship with the disciples and their relationship with Him. Some unfortunately seek to divide the discourse into two unites, teaching that the ‘bread of life’, in the first section, is the teachings of Jesus. This distracts from its primary revelation that the Person of Jesus of Nazareth is the ‘Word made flesh’ upon whom God has places ‘His seal.’ Nicodemus confirms this seal when he says: *No man can perform signs and wonders such as you perform unless God is with him.* (John 3:2) Only when a person knows who Jesus Christ is and the importance of his personal relationship with Jesus will the teaching of Jesus be precious and important to him. This entire discourse will end with Jesus asking the disciples, *Do you want to leave me too?* (John 6:67) What question

could be more personal. What answer will ever be more personal, affective in the life of a human being? There is only one discourse. The second half only confirms the first section emphasizing the depths of Jesus personal relationship with His disciples and theirs with Him.

In the final scene of Chapter Six, the crowd confronts Jesus again. Apparently their ardor is somewhat cooled, they are no wiser but a bit more discerning and critical about their first impression of Him. As we see from verse 59, the encounter occurs in the synagogue at Capernaum.

### THE BREAD OF LIFE

In the following scene John makes it clear those present at Jesus' discourse have witnessed the miraculous signs performed by Jesus. They will now interrogate Jesus—however, it is not His trial, it is theirs. The Scriptures reading for the Passover feast have set the theme of the following discussion.

Jesus says to the crowd, *You are not looking for me because you have seen signs but because you have eaten your fill of he loaves. (John 6:26)* Jesus meets them within the reality of their spiritual situation. He endeavors to elevate them from mere physical and material concerns to a spiritual awareness. Jesus speaks of works to be done: *You must not work for perishable food but for the food the Son of man will give you(John 6:27)*—a food that gives eternal life. They want to know what are “the works of God” they need to perform (John 6:28). He explains that the work God demands of them is the work of faith in the One upon whom God has placed His seal: *This is the work of God: have faith in the One whom he sent. (John 6:29)* For John faith is the greatest work of God in the human heart.

Jesus is speaking to those whom have seen the ‘signs and wonders’ and, yet, they insists: *So that we can put faith in you, what signs are you going to perform for us to see (to believe)? (John 6:30)* The sign they seek is for Jesus, as Moses, to feed them daily with bread from heaven at no cost nor labor on their part.

Jesus tells them they seek the wrong thing in wanting the manna the Children of Israel ate in the desert. This was not the true bread from heaven. His Father gives them the ‘true bread from heaven’ that will give life to the world. In other words, it will nourish eternal life in those who

receive it. Jesus insists: *Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. (John 6:49) The man who feeds on this bread will live forever. (John 6:56)*

Jesus declares unequivocally: *I am the living bread come down from heaven. (John 6:51) (Three times in this section 'ego eimi' appears—verses 35, 48, 57.) I have come down from heaven to do the will of him who sent me. (John 6:38) Here Jesus truly reveals the Doctrine of the Word made flesh. The Father has sent His Son into the world that the world might be saved through Him. Indeed, this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. (John 6:40)*

The general response to this revelation is disbelief: *They kept saying: 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph. Do we not know his father and mother? How can he claim to have come down from heaven?' (John 6:42) Here we have verified the doctrine—Flesh begets flesh, spirit begets spirit. (John 3:6) They have closed their hearts to the grace of God and will now remain in spiritual darkness. Jesus will say to them: This is why I have told you that no one comes to me unless it is granted him by my Father. (John 6:65)*

### THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS

It is understandable that Jesus' discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum 'the bread come down from heaven' would lead in John's mind to the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. It flows so naturally from this discourse as does the fruit from the blossom on the tree. Around 55 A D Paul writes to the Corinthians about that night:

*The Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way after the supper, he took the cup, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' (I Cor. 11:21-25) Paul reminds them: Whoever eats the bread or drink the cup unworthy sins against the body and blood of the Lord. (I Cor. 11:27)*

Jesus reiterates His earlier statement and clarifies it: *I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he shall live forever: the bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. (John 6:51)*

This could have been interpreted as the sacrifice of His life upon the Cross. However, this is not what is meant by His giving His flesh for the life of the world. The hearers understood its meaning. It shocked them! *How can he give us his flesh to eat? (John 6:52)* Of course, an extraordinary and divine answer to their question will be given at the Last Supper—but most of the hearers will not be present. What is demanded at this time is belief in Jesus and trust in His words, not an explanation now beyond their comprehension. At the present, Jesus only emphasizes the literal meaning of His words: *Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh (John uses the word 'trogas' for feeds which strongly indicates eating in a realistic way.) and drinks my blood has eternal life. For my flesh is real (alethes) food and my blood is real (alethes) drink. (John 6: 53-55)* John use of the word 'alethes' emphasizes that the flesh and blood of Jesus possesses the true nature of the food and drink.

In verses thirty-five through fifty, the main theme is belief in Jesus. This belief culminates and is perfected in verses fifty-one through fifty-eight where the exclusive theme is that eternal life results from eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Jesus. It is no longer the Father who gives life but the Son has life within Himself. A new vocabulary is introduced: 'eat', 'feed', 'drink', 'blood'. The stress is on feeding upon the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood. The only favorable meaning that can be given to such expressions are the one found in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The language is so powerful it precludes any figurative interpretation or any over spiritualization of Holy Communion.

Rudolf Bultmann, a famous Lutheran biblical scholar, observes:

These verse refer without any doubt to the sacramental meal of the Eucharist, where the flesh and blood of the 'Son of Man' are consumed, with the result that this food gives 'eternal life', in the that the participants in the meal can be assured of the future resurrection ( St. John's Gospel, pg. 228)

In these brief verses are found the most powerful expression of Jesus' giving to human person a share in God's own life. While the Synoptic Gospels record the Institution of the Eucharist, it is John who tells us what the Eucharist does for the Christian person. If the glorified Son of man, whose flesh is vivified by the Holy Spirit of God, feeds men and women with

His flesh and blood, the effect of such a communion is total. The Eucharist effects the whole person—body, soul and spirit: *He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day.* (John 6:54)

To have faith in the Word made Flesh is the foundation for faith in the Most Holy Eucharist. The believer asks, “Why not? Are we to put limits on the love of God for His people?” Disbelief in the divinity of Jesus Christ leaves no foundation for belief in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

One denial is the source of the other. We read: *After hearing these words, many of his disciples remarked, ‘This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?’(John 6:60) From this time on, many of his disciples broke away and would not remain in his company any longer. (John 6:66)* We should note: It is His disciples who would no longer remain in His company. (The Book of Revelations give the mystical mark of the Anti-Christ as 666. This is the only scripture in the entire New Testament that bears this number of 666. Of added interest is that the Bible was only divided into chapters and verses a few hundred years ago. To whom does John 6:66 refer?)

John stresses the importance of these beliefs in the life of Christians by having Jesus now turn to the remaining Twelve and saying to them: *DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE ME TOO? (John 6:67)* Simon Peter gives faith’s only possible reply: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that you are God’s holy one.* (John 6:68-69) Peter speaks for the Twelve—all but one, the one who did not love, did not believe—the one who would betray! It leads us back to the Last Supper.

## THE BREAD OF LIFE

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE-MEMORIZE)

*I MYSELF AM THE LIVING BREAD COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. IF ANYONE EATS THIS BREAD HE WILL LIVE FOREVER. (JOHN 6:51)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Exodus 12:1-14; 16:1-8 and Numbers 1-15.

1. What do you understand by the Jewish feast of the Passover?
2. What was the importance of this feast to the Jewish People?
3. What was the Israelites ultimate reaction to the manna from heaven?
4. What were the expectations of the people about Passover in Jesus' time?

**SECOND DAY:** Read John 6:1-15 and I Kings 17:1-16; 2 Kings 4:38-44.

1. What is the picture John presents of Jesus and the Jews as this scene opens?
2. What do you see to be Jesus' lesson to the people in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes?
3. What do the miracles in First and Second Kings have in common with Jesus' miracle?
4. How did the crowd misinterpret this miracle?

**THIRD DAY:** Read John 6:16-21 and Psalm 107.

1. What do these miracles reveal to you about the person of Jesus?
2. What does the condition of the apostles in the boat reveal about them?
3. How does Psalm 107 relate to the scene in John 6:16-21?

4. What in this psalm could relate to your relationship with God?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 6:22-40.

1. How would you describe the spiritual condition of the crowd?
2. Why do you think these people fail to do “the works of God”?
3. What do you see to be the theme of this discourse?
4. What do you understand by Jesus’ words: “I am the bread of life.”?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 6:41-59.

1. What do you understand by John 6:44?
2. What two great Christian mysteries are being revealed in these Scriptures?
3. What do you understand by John 6:51?
4. What do you learn from the reading of Paul’s words to the Corinthians?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 6:60-70.

1. What do you see to be the connections between receiving the Body and Blood of Christ and eternal life?
2. What do you see that could possibly be the reason the Father does not draw some people to Jesus?
3. What does John 6:66 say to you?
4. What would be your answer to Jesus’ question, “Do you want to leave me too?”

## CHAPTER 11

### THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

#### INTRODUCTION

The earthly life of Jesus, from beginning to end, is directed by the Heavenly Father. The holiness of the Son is demonstrated by His humble obedience. Jesus knows God's will for Him. The Scriptures clearly reveal it to Him. When Satan confronts Him with temptation, Jesus overcomes each temptation by clinging to the revealed Word of God. Two of the temptations of Satan in the desert have again been presented to Jesus. They come not directly from Satan but through his human instruments: the offer of kingship by the people and their insistence that He give them bread from heaven, if He is the Messiah. The third temptation will be presented by His 'brothers' in this chapter.

It is God's will that Jesus give His life in atonement for the sin of the world. Jesus is to die at a certain time and in a particular way. The entire human life of Jesus is a willful and intelligent cooperation with this Divine Plan. He does not move in some hypnotic and mindless fashion as if directed by a blind fate. No spirit of 'kismet' directs Jesus. As He understands God will, He uses all His energies—intellectual, moral, and physical—at His disposal and command to cooperate in the Divine Plan, to bring it to a perfect completion. To be able to say from His heart: *Now it is finished!* (John 19:30) He prudently guarded against a premature death or being forced into a situation that would jeopardize the Divine Plan. After the discourse on the Bread of Life we read: *After this Jesus moved about within Galilee. He had decided not to travel in Judea because some of the Jews (the chief priest, the Pharisees and scribes) were looking for a chance to kill him. (John 7:1)*

As a great general in battle, who prudently estimates the resource of his enemies, Jesus will take calculated risks. However, Jesus never expects God to do what He as man has the God-given ability to do!



## THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

The end of the Jewish year comes around the middle of our autumn. With the beginning of the New Year came the celebration of an eight-day feast called the Feast of Booths, or the Feast of the Tabernacle. This harvest festival coincides with the Cananite grape festival of Shechem. It is a feast of rejoicing, celebrating a harvest completed and another year's work finished. This feast commemorates for the Jews the acquisition of the Promised Land and the end of their long sojourn in the desert. It likewise celebrates the dedication of the Temple of Solomon. During this feast, all the people lived in the fields in huts made of branches and thereby in a realistic way tasted the life of their ancestors.

This autumn feast became an occasion to pray for rain. Rainfall during the feast was a good omen of early spring rains, assuring a good harvest for the coming year.

## THE BROTHERS OF JESUS

The brothers of Jesus now come to Him and encourage Him to go up to the feast. These 'brothers of the Lord' are identified as James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) In the Hebrew the word 'ah' covers masculine relatives of varying degrees: brothers, half-brothers, cousins, brothers-in-law. The Greek Septuagint Bible uses 'adelphos' to render all these shades of meaning. 'Adelphos' is used in this text.

Some people insist that the 'adelphos' are the children of Mary. The Anglican biblical scholar, Bernard, observes: "It is difficult to understand how the doctrine of the Virginity of Mary could have grown up early in the second century if her four acknowledged sons were prominent Christians, and one of them Bishop of Jerusalem. An early Christian Father, Epiphanius, held these men to be son of Joseph by a previous marriage. This is an example where the interpretation of a text of Scripture must look to the Church Tradition for a true interpretation. Without a knowledge of this tradition the most honest statement would be that the meaning of 'adelphos' is uncertain.

These 'brothers' of Jesus pressure Him to go to the feast and make a public display of great power in Jerusalem. Here are the echoes of the third temptation of Satan in which he takes Jesus to the temple and urges Him to leap from pinnacle of the temple as a sign He is the Son of God. These 'brothers' are very much of this world and they know what Jesus should do to prove He is the Messiah. The 'signs and wonders' have impressed them and they desire Jesus now to impress the world. John indicates their behavior results from a lack of faith: *As a matter of fact, not even his brothers had much confidence in him. (John 7:5)* Since the wishes of His brothers contradict the Will of His Father, Jesus refuses their request. "No!" is an answer to prayer.

The spirit of this feast is not in keeping with the Spirit of Jesus. It celebrates the harvest in the Promised Land. He could not keep this feast. He would not go up for the celebration of the feast. His work is yet to be completed. He has yet to lead His people to the true land of promise- the kingdom of God.

It is not easy to disappoint those you love or be despised by them even for God's sake. During the last months of His public ministry, Jesus daily bears this bitter cross in order to be faithful to God. He bore the burden in His very being: What He is, what He does, what He teaches declares to the self-righteous person the Truth. This revelation threatens the security and self-sufficiency of their lives. In this light they see how alien their way from the way of God and how willfully they oppose the will of God. What they call the love of God in their lives is a projection of their self-love—a love of a god made in their own image and likeness. This is a terrible revelation to bear and the hatred it releases is directed to bearer of the revelation. Jesus testifies: *The world does hate me because of the evidence I bring against it that what it does is evil. (John 7:7)*

### THE PROPHET IN THE TEMPLE

Jerusalem is in expectation of Jesus' arrival. The city is in ferment over Him. In truth, He is the talk of the town. The miracle at the pool of Bethesda on the sabbath was like a stick poked into a beehive. The city is divided over Him. The authorities loudly voice their thoughts: *Where is that troublemaker? (John 7:11)* The people guardedly express their divergent opinions of Jesus. On the one hand you hear, *He is a good man!* On the other you hear, *Not at all—he is only misleading the crowd. No one dared talk*

*openly about him, however, for fear of the Jews. (John 7:12-13) It was widely spread that the authorities plot to kill Jesus.*

Jesus uses the advantage of surprise. Midway during the feast He appears in the Temple as a prophet not a pilgrim. All are caught off guard. His teaching is so powerful even His enemies are amazed: *How did this man get his education when he had no teacher (rabbi)? (John 7:15)* Jesus answer confirms that God is His Rabbi and He is God's Pupil: *My doctrine is not my own; it comes from him who sent me. Any man who chooses to do His will will know about this doctrine, whether I come from God or is simply spoken on my own. (John 7:16-17)*

The teachings of Jesus are so godly that their divine source will be recognized by people whose minds and wills are in harmony with the Spirit of God. The Word of God will ring true within their hearts. They will say to one another: *Where not our hearts burning inside of us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:33)* A righteous spirit hungers for the will of God; it nourishes the soul and makes it strong: *I have food to eat of which you do not know. (John 4:32)* If the human spirit has no sympathy for the will of God, it impedes any conscious acceptance of His will.

Jesus denies that His heart is the source of His teachings. That would be self-glorification. When man teaches his own ideas or philosophy, he reveals his inner self and gives himself either glory or shame. Jesus does not share His thoughts with us but those of the Father. This amazement at His display of knowledge is a glorification of His Father. Jesus confirms He is God's Apostle: a true apostle doing the will of Him who sent Him. *There is no dishonest in his heart. (John 7:18)*

## SPIRIT AND LETTER

According to John, the Pharisees and scribes prided themselves upon their knowledge and love of the Scriptures. They would use these Scriptures to refute and condemn Jesus. Jesus would use the example of their lives to prove that they had not the spirit of God, the Author of the Scriptures. The Scriptures in the hands of such men became a murderous weapon to destroy the very Word of God Himself. This is a frightful concept and a terrible sacrilege. The Word of God, the Scriptures, beget life and here they are perverted to produce death—the death of God's own Son.

In Chapters Seven and Eight we witness an unholy war against Jesus with holy Words. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating the Scriptures by healing a man on the Sabbath. Jesus denies there has been any violation by citing the example of circumcisions being practiced on the sabbath in order to keep the Law of Moses which decree circumcision be performed eight days after birth—sabbath or not. If this health practice of circumcision could validly be performed on the sabbath, a healing, giving total health to a person, could even more validly be performed on the sabbath. Jesus demands: *Stop judging by appearances and make an honest judgment. (John 7:24)*

Jesus endeavors to make these men honestly face themselves: *Moses has given you the law (Thou shall not kill!), has he not? Yet not one of you keeps it. Why do you look for a chance to kill me? (John 7:19)* Our Lord illustrates how truly alienated in their hearts from the spirit of Moses they have become with their murderous intention to kill Him who comes to fulfill the Scriptures.

If people fail to grasp the spirit that motivates the Scriptures, they are bound to persecute a person of the Spirit. They may fail to extinguish the Spirit but history records their success in extinguishing the lives of the bearers of the Spirit. Man may have his day, but so will God! When God wills to bring His light into this world, it will shine despite the combined efforts of hell and earth, devils and men. God will present salvation to the world whether the world wills it or not. For God wills it!

The Word of God is dynamic, a holy entity capable of creating and nourishing life. But it is a spiritual power and it effectively operates in a spiritual dimension. It is not effectual in the realm of the flesh. St. Paul clearly teaches: *The natural man (the man of flesh) does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. For him, that is absurdity. (I Cor. 2:14)*

### THE LIVING WATER

With His enemies swarming around Him like mad hornets, our Lord stands up on the last day of the feast and with cool courage and enduring love cries: *If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes I me! As scripture says: 'From his breast shall flow fountains of living water.(John 7:37-38)* Jesus invites all people to come to Him in their spiritual want and need. They will find fulfillment in the fullness of faith.

The refreshing energies of faith will always well up within them to sustain and strengthen their earthly lives. Those who drink of this spiritual rock become in turn sources of living water to quench the thirst of others. A true disciple of Jesus will always find the spiritual food and drink to nourish their own spirits with enough left over to give something to the hungry and thirsty they meet along their way—the ones God will encounter through them.

Jesus warns people that the time of salvation has its limits. The truth will not shine forever in their lives: *Only a little while longer am I to be with you, then I am going away to him who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; where I am going you cannot come. (John 7:33-34)* Revelation is presented to people during a certain limited time of God's own choosing. These divine revelations are not self-evident truths that can be grasped at all times. The light of grace must shine upon them. This light shines with a human heart for a limited time. A person is confronted with the challenge to believe. If rejected, there comes a time of darkness.

When evil lives bear bitter fruit, they will look for salvation but not in Jesus. Within the realms of darkness they will search: in drugged minds and pleasure-satiated bodies and in the anti-sacraments of the occult—in the stars, in tarot cards, the Ouija boards and forms of spiritualism— they will search and they will find their False Messiahs!

**THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*IF ANYONE THIRST, LET HIM COME TO ME; LET HIM DRINK WHO BELIEVES IN ME. . .FROM WITHIN HIM RIVERS OF LIVING WATER SHALL FLOW. (JOHN 7:37-38)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Deuteronomy 8:6-20.

1. What did the feast of Booths recall for the Jews?
2. What was Moses warning concerning days of prosperity?
3. What is the lesson humility taught here?
4. How can these teachings apply to my spiritual life?

**SECOND DAY:** Read John 7:1-10.

1. What explanation does Tradition give for the 'brothers of Jesus'?
2. In what way is the urging of the Brothers like the temptation of Satan?
3. Who do you think their attitude reveals a deficiency of faith in Jesus?
4. What evidence does Jesus give that causes the world to hate Him?

**THIRD DAY:** Read John 7:11-24.

1. What do you think Jesus intended to teach in verse 17?
2. What is the proof that Jesus does not seek His own glory?
3. How would you explain the spirit of those angry by Jesus' sabbath cure?

4. What does, "Stop judging by appearances and make an honest judgment," say to you?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 7:25-36.

1. Why do you think men wanted to kill Jesus?
2. What does this tell you about human beings and their relations with God?
3. Why do you think they fail to see the fulfillment of divine prophecy in Jesus?
4. What does Jesus teach in verses 33-34?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Exodus 17:1-7; John 7:37-39.

1. Do you see any way the Jews in Exodus were like those in Jesus' day?
2. In what way is Jesus pictured as another Moses in verses 37-38?
3. How has the invitation in verses 37-38 say to you?
4. How do you see this invitation fulfilled in your life?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 7:40-52; I Corinthians 10:1-13.

1. What hindered the chief priests from carrying out their plan at this time?
2. What did they use to justify their action?
3. According to Paul, what do the events in the Old Testament teach us today?
4. What do you think Paul meant in verse 13?

## CHAPTER 12

### TRIAL IN THE TEMPLE

#### INTRODUCTION

A practical way to understand Chapter Eight of the Fourth Gospel is to view it in the context of a legal trial. Legal terms and trial terminology permeate the entire chapter: judge, evidence, testify, judgment and condemnation. In the Old Testament, judgment (*nispat*) is that which a judge (*sopet*) primarily declares. The judge is presented with a case: Both Jacob and Esau claim ownership of the same sheep. What is the primary duty of the judge? To decide which person has the proper ownership of the sheep. If the judge declares that Jacob has the 'right' to the sheep, Jacob has the '*nispat*'. Jacob is the 'righteous one'. In such a case someone loses. One of the parties does not have the '*nispat*'; he is not the 'righteous one'. This is the secondary effect of judgment. The primary work of the Judge (*Sopet*) is to declare righteousness and not condemnation.

We shall present Chapter Eight as a trial: **THE PEOPLE VERSUS JESUS OF NAZARETH**. If Jesus is condemned in the trial, then we need to ask, who then has the '*nispat*', who is righteous one?

#### PUBLIC OPINION OF JESUS

The setting and emotional environment for the trial has been set in Chapter Seven. Let us briefly review this background. To His 'brothers' request, Jesus responds with a 'mental reservation': As far as they are concerned, He is not going up to the feast. In other words, He is not going to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast; he is not going up as a pilgrim. He will appear in the temple of Jerusalem the Prophet sent by God.

Jesus' delayed arrival in Jerusalem is a cause of some anticipation on the part of the people. The chief priests, the Pharisees and the scribes are inquiring among themselves: *Where is that trouble maker? (7:11)* Among the crowd itself varied opinion—pros and cons— are expressed: *He is a good man. Not at all—he is only misleading the people. (7:12) He is the Messiah.*



*Surely the Messiah is not to come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah, being David's family to come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived? (7:41-42) Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? (6:42)*

Obviously the crowd is sharply divided over Jesus. Some of them even wanted Him arrested. (7:44) The Pharisees took note of this debate among the people. It gave them concern. After consultation with the high priests, the decision was made to send the temple guards and arrest Jesus. (7:32) The guards returned empty handed with the excuse: *No one ever spoke like that before!* (7:43) This infuriates the high priests and they retort: *You do not see any of the Sanhedrin believing in him, do you? Or the Phrisees? Only this lot, that knows nothing about the Law—and they are lost anyway.* (7:43) However, Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, meekly speaks up: *Since when does our law condemn any man without first hearing from him and knowing the facts?* (7:51) They quickly silence Nicodemus for this unwelcome imput: *Look it up! You will not find the Prophet coming from Galilee.* (7:52) Jesus' advise to the lot of them is **STOP JUDGING BY APPEARANCE AND MAKE AN HONEST JUDGMENT!** (7:24)

This very contentious day in the temple ends with *each went off to his own house, while Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives.* (7:53-8:1) They go off to sleep on it and Jesus goes off to pray.

### THE HORNS OF THE DILEMMA

Early the next morning all concerned parties are back in the temple area. Jesus arrived at daybreak. As soon as the people came to Him, He sat down and began to teach them. Seemingly the Pharisees and their lawyers had a busy evening and had devised a pre-trial encounter with Jesus, hoping to place Him between the horns of a dilemma—in a no win situation—and eliminating the need of a trial. Arriving in the temple with a woman. *They made her stand there in front of everyone.* (John 8:4) Addressing Him as "Rabbi" they explained that this woman had been caught in the act of adultery (On wonders where is the male partner in the crime?) and they want His opinion or what should be done with this woman? Should she be stoned as the law of Moses prescribed? If Jesus answers "No!", he will be in opposition to the Scriptures. If he answer "Yes!", His reputation among the crowd as 'a friend of sinners', a merciful and compassionate man will be destroyed. Apparently Jesus is utterly ashamed of the entire charade.

Ignoring them, he bends over and begins to draw on the ground. They persist. He sits up straight and looks at them and says: *Let the man among you without sin be the first to cast a stone at her. (8:7)* Again Jesus bends over and this time He does not draw on the ground He writes. As He writes, the oldest and most veteran of the sinners are the first to get out of there and soon followed by the youngest sinners. Only the woman and Jesus remain. None remain to condemn her. Jesus tells her: *Nor do I condemn you. (8:11)* The only judgment given is God's that adultery is sinful. Jesus advises her to repent: *From now on, avoid this sin. (8:11)* Her judgment is left, as it should be, in the hands of God.

### JUDGMENT FROM APPEARANCE

Jesus has come not to condemn sinners but to save them. He is the Savior of the world! But from what does He save the world? He tells us: *Stop judging by appearance and make a honest judgment. (John 7:24)* When Jesus cured the poor man by the pool in Bethesda, He advised him: *Remember now, you have been cured Give up your sins so that something worse may not overtake you. (John 5:14)* He has been freed of his wretched state lasting thirty-eight years. Jesus' words imply the man's sinfulness played no small part in his sickness. Being restored to health implied also spiritual health. Jesus had forgiven his sins and encourages him to maintain his present healthy status by freedom from sin.

Let us return to the woman in the temple and look beneath the surface of the situation. Obviously, the woman has lost her freedom and her good name. She presently is in a dangerous situation. She is going to die. Why? Because of her sin of adultery she has lost her freedom, self-respect and has placed her life in jeopardy. Has this occurred because she broke a law? That's the surface picture. Beneath the breaking of the law lies a heart that rejects the authority of God in her life, rejects her union with God and cuts herself off from the grace and life of God. Whether she consciously recognizes this reality or not does not alter it. She is no longer free and has placed herself in situation leading to eternal death. Later, Jesus expresses the spiritual reality in these words: *I give you my assurance, everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. No slave has a permanent place in the family. (John 8:34-35)* One becomes a slave because sin achieves a dominance over the human will and worse—it brings the soul under the dominance of Satan. To the sinner Jesus says: *Indeed, you are doing your father's (Satan) works. (8:41)*

What happens when this sinful woman meets Jesus. She encounters in Jesus the compassionate and merciful love of the heavenly Father. She obtains her freedom. Her life is restored to her. Her sin forgiven: *Nor do I condemn you! (8:11) If the son sets you free, you will really be free (8:36)* with that deep down freedom of the will from the chains of sin mooring the soul to sin and death. To every sinners Jesus says, *If God were your father, you would love me because I came forth from the Father. (8:42)*

### THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus remains seated in the temple. Again the people have gathered around him and He teaches them: *I AM the light of the world! No follow of mine will ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life. (8:12)* There is heavenly light that shines and reflects back from an object as did the shining face of Moses after an encounter with Yahweh—a fading light for it is external and not internal.

The light of Jesus shines deep down into the hidden recesses of the human heart. Into those areas our psychiatrists refer to as the deep subconscious level of human existence—wherein lies powerful forces of energy daily effecting conscious behavior both for good and ill. The shining light of divine truth reveals the deep down hidden sources of sin in the human heart. Not to create despair nor hopelessness nor burdensome guilt—but to call the heart to repentance and salvation. It is not a flood light of condemnation but the ‘kindly light’ of healing and *kindness for thousand generation—forgiving wickedness and crime and sin. (Exodus 34:7) But for you who fear my name, there will rise the sun of justice with its healing rays. (Malachi 3:20)*

Jesus continues His teaching in the temple: *If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples: then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. (8:31-32)* The disciples do not understand. They insists that they are children of Abraham and they have always been free. Jesus explains: *I give you my assurance, everyone who lives in sin is a slave of sin. That is why, if the son frees you, you will really be free. (8:34,36) Whoever is of God hears every word God speaks. (8:42) I solemnly assure you, if a man is true to my word, he will never see death.(8:51) Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.(8:30)*

The Pharisees—the eyes and ears of the temple—are all around. They have listened and His words scandalize them. They cannot restrain themselves from interrupting Jesus—they are the watchdogs of Jewish orthodoxy. *You are your own witness*, they cry out. *Such a witness cannot be valid!* (8:13)

The public conflict begins: The Prosecuting Attorneys are the chief priests, the Pharisees and the Scribes. ( John simply refers to them as “the Jews”.) Seemingly Jesus stands alone as His own Defense Attorney. And yet as Jesus says, *I can never be alone; the Father is with me.* (John 16:23) He told his disciples: *When they bring you before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do no worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say—the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment all that should be said.* (Luke 12:11-12) The Defense Attorney is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is present: Jesus is the obedient Son of the Father. The Son of Man is the meek and humble partner of the Holy Spirit. In the soul of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has the freedom of full expression, expressing on earth the Truth and Light that is His. To shine on all who “*sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and guide their feet into the way of peace.*” (Luke 1:79)

Jesus rebuttal is that He is not the lone witness: *It is laid down in your law that evidence given by two persons is valid, I am one of those testifying in my behalf, the Father who sent me is the other.* (8:19) *The One who sent me is with me. He has not deserted me since I always do what pleases him.* (8:29) *I only tell the world what I have heard from Him, the truthful One who sent me* (8:26) *I do nothing by myself. I say only what the Father has taught me.* (8:28b) *I tell what I have seen in the Father’s presence.* (8:38)

Simon Peter became a belated defense witness for Jesus: *Men of Israel, listen to me! Jesus the Nazarean was a man God sent to you with miracles, wonders and signs as his credentials. These God worked through him in your midst, as you well know.* (Acts 2:22-24)

Jesus rebukes them: *You pass judgment according to appearance.* (8:15) Jesus declares as the Son of Man—I pass judgment on no man. (8:15) That does not imply that judgment does not come through the Son of Man. It comes through Him but not personally from Him. As with all the prophets of Israel: God speaks to His people through His prophets.

Jesus assumes the offensive. The light shines into the depths of their souls. He ask the question and does not wait for their answer. He gives it

to them. *Why is it that you do not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. (8:43) Who is of God hears every word God speaks. The reason you do not hear is that you are not of God. You belong to what is below; I belong to what is above. You belong to this world. (8:23)*

Their great spiritual boast and their anchor of hope rested upon, *We are descendants of Abraham. (8:33)* Jesus attacks this foundation of their security: *I know you are of Abraham's stock. . .If you were Abraham's children you would be following Abraham's example. The fact is you are trying to kill me, a man, who has told you the truth he has heard from God. (8:37,39-40)* The terrible reality of your spiritual condition is, *The father you spring from is the devil, and willingly you carry out his wishes. He brought death to man from the beginning and he has never based himself on truth; the truth is not in him. Lying speech is his native tongue; he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I deal in the truth, you give me no credence.*

Jesus identifies two fundamental characteristics of Satan. Where these are found, you have his presence and influence. "He is a liar! He is a murderer from the beginning." Deceive and Destroy! Deception and Destruction! These are his works. These are finger prints he leaves.

His opponents are liveried with anger an retort: *Are we not right after all, in saying you are a Samaritan and possessed besides.(8:48)* Jesus replies: *I am not possessed. I revere my Father, while you fail to respect me. (8:49) You will surely die in your sins unless you come to believe that I AM. (8:24) .*

*We are now sure you are possessed. Abraham is dead. The prophets are dead and yet you claim, 'A man shall never know death if he keeps my word.' Who do you make yourself out to be?(8:52.53)* Jesus tells them when they lift up the Son of man,(8:28) they will have their answer.

The Defense Attorney closes his arguments on this note: *I solemnly declare it, before Abraham came to be, I AM!(8:57) At that they picked up rocks to throw at Jesus, but he hid himself and slipped out of the temple precincts. (John 8:59)* If you cannot tolerate the prophets message, you kill the prophet.

**TRIAL IN THE TEMPLE**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**

**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*STOP JUDGING BY APPEARANCE AND MAKE AN HONEST JUDGMENT.*  
*(JOHN 7:24)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read John 8:15-20 and Matthew 7:1-6.

1. What is the meaning of judgment in the Old Testament?
2. In what way does Jesus become a judge of people?
3. According to Matt. 7:1-5, why should we avoid judging others?
4. What do you think Jesus meant in Matt. 7:6?

**SECOND DAY:** Deuteronomy 22:13-29 and John 8:1-11.

1. What difficult situation did the Pharisees place Jesus with their question  
about the woman?
2. How would you have answered such a question?
3. How would you describe the spiritual condition of this woman?
4. What do you learn by the way Jesus dealt with this situation?

**THIRD DAY:** Read John 8:12-30.

1. What does “I am the Light of the World” tell you about Jesus?
2. What does it mean to you to possess “the light of life”?
3. How would you explain “If you knew the Father, you would know me”?

4. What do you learn from John 8:24: "You will surely die in your sins?"

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 8:31-36; Romans 1:18:25.

1. What does verse 34 mean to you?
2. How is this teaching verified in Romans 1:18-24?
3. What essential element of discipleship is taught to us in verse 31?
4. What do you understand by "The truth will set you free."?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 8:37-47; Galatians 5:1-26.

1. What do you see to be the spiritual importance of Abraham for the Jews?
2. What does "Where God you Father, you would love me." mean to you?
3. What does verse 43 teach you about faith?
4. What does Jesus teach you about Satan in this reading?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 8:48-59; Mark 3:20-30.

1. How would you describe the character of a person possessed by the devil?
2. How would you describe the character of a person possessed by the Holy Spirit?
3. What do you see to be the evilness in the Jews accusation of Jesus being possessed?
4. How does the temple trial end and what is your verdict?

## CHAPTER 13

### LIGHT OF LIFE

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter Eight records that at dawn Jesus enters the Temple of Jerusalem. Having seated himself within the temple area the people gathered around Him. As the rising sun is dispelling the darkness of night, Jesus reveals: **I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.** (John 8:12) Presently the temple is filled with the 'light of life'. What follows fulfills Jesus words to Nicodemus: *The light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were wicked. . . But he who acts in truth comes into the light, to make clear that his deeds are done in God.* (John 3:18-20) What will follow in Chapter Nine dramatically demonstrates this truth.

Ancient people held light in great reverence. It nourished their life. The Hebrews shared the ancient concept of light. They frequently applied the concept of light to God whom they believed to be 'life-giving'. "*The Lord is my light and salvation (Ps. 27:1),* cried the psalmist. *For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we see light. (Ps. 36:16)* The psalmist sings: *You are clothed with majesty and glory, robed in light as with a cloak (Ps. 104:2). He dawns through the darkness, a light for the upright. (Ps. 112:4)*

Israel rightly sees itself as the light in a world darken in paganism, as it possesses the Torah, the inspired Word of El Shaddai—the Almighty God. The Torah itself is the light shining in Israel: *You, indeed, O Lord, give light to my lamp. (Ps. 18:29)* In the shining light of the Torah, Israel stands as a lighthouse midst a black and stormy sea. It is the joy and glory of Israel's prophets to proclaim the Word of God as the light of the world. *He dawns through the darkness, a light for the upright. (Ps. 112:4) Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. (Isaiah 9:1)* Isaiah encourages Israel: *House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Is. 2:5)*



## LIGHT OF THE WORLD

During the Feasts of Booths, the celebration of the illumination of the temple occurred. As evening fell, four great candelabra were lit in the Court of Women. The temple and the area around Mt. Moriah were all illuminated. In this celebration the people sang: *The Lord is God, and He has given us light. Join in procession with leafy boughs up to the Horns of the altar. (Ps. 118:27)* The celebration of lights occurs on the first night of the feast and some believe, again, on the last night. It is believed during this second celebration, Jesus declares: *I am the light of the world. No follower of mine will ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life. (John 8:12)*

When the vision on Mount Tabor—in which Jesus is gloriously transfigured and speaks with Moses and Elijah—ends, only Jesus remains with the words of the heavenly Father resounding, *This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to Him. (Luke 9:35)* To listen, to hear is to obey. Jesus now replaces the Law and the Prophets, as He brings both the law and the prophets to fulfillment. As such, Jesus of Nazareth is Light of the world. He is both lighthouse and bark of salvation in a black, stormy sea.

John the Baptist, the last and greatest of the Jewish Prophets is, indeed, a fitting representation of Israel. What Jesus says of John applies equally to Israel itself: *He was a lamp, set aflame and burning bright and for awhile you exulted willingly in his light. Yet I have testimony greater than that of John's. (John 5:36)*

In revelation to Saul of Tarsus, Jesus reveals not only Paul's mission to the Gentiles and the mission of the Church in the world, He also clarifies and pinpoints His own mission—to *open the eyes of those to whom I am sending you, to turn them from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that through their faith in me they may obtain the forgiveness of their sins and a portion among God's people. (Acts 27:18)* In chapter nine, John masterfully presents a narrative portraying the birth of a child of light. This child of light will be illuminated against the growing darkness of those rejecting Jesus. The words Jesus spoke in the temple are being fulfilled: *Whoever is of God hears (obeys) every word God speaks. The reason you do not hear (obey) is that you are not of God. (John 8:47)*

When our author writes that Jesus is *The light of the world*, He places no article—neither an ‘a’ nor a ‘the’ before the noun ‘light’. It is John’s intention to say that Jesus is light. There is no lesser nor greater light other than Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus the words of Isaiah find their fulfillment: *He shall come to Zion, a redeemer to those of Jacob who turn from sin (Is. 59:20). Then light shall rise for you in the darkness and gloom shall come for you like midday (Is 58:10) See darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples: but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears His Glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. (Is. 60:1-3) No longer shall the sun be your light by day, nor the brightness of the moon shine upon you at night; the Lord shall be your light forever, your God shall be your glory. (Is 60:19)*

### THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

As Jesus walked along with His disciples, they came upon a blind man. The man was born blind. He never had the experience of light and darkness is an excepted fact of his life. He is not seeking physical vision, a aim would be the most for which he hoped. Light comes to him as a free gift from God.

The presence of the blind man, for the disciples, is no more than a stimulus for a theological discussion. It was a current belief among the people that such evil resulted from personal sin. Later the Jews will express this to the man when they say to him, *You were steeped in sin from your birth!* (John 9:34) The disciples ask: *Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?* (John 9:2) For Jesus the blind man is not an object of curiosity but a person. Our Lord responds: *It was no sin, either of this man or of his parents. Rather, it was to let God’s works show forth in him.* (John 9:3) Both the question of the disciples and Jesus response indicate another common belief of the times: the human soul pre-existed prior to birth and could sin before being born.

The existence of human suffering in the light of a loving God is a deep mystery. Why do good people suffer in this world? is a question asked since time began. There are mysteries in this world with which we must live. We must see them in the light available to us. We know that Jesus, Son of Man, endured great suffering in His life. He confessed to His disciples: *My heart is filled with sorrow to the point of death. (Mark 14:34) In his anguish he prayed with all the greater intensity, and his sweat became like drops of blood*

*falling to the ground. (Luke 22:44) We read in Isaiah: Through his sufferings, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. Because he surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked—he shall take away the sins of many and win pardon for their offenses. (Is 53:11,12)*

Paul knew some Christians vicariously suffer, as Jesus, for the sins of others (see 2 Corinthians 1:5-7) He spoke of the sufferings within his own life as filling up the suffering lacking in the Body of Christ, the Church. The whole book of Job tells about an innocent man whom God permits Satan to test through suffering. Some people do suffer because of personal sins. Some people do suffer because of their physical inheritance from their parents. Some suffer because of their lack of faith. For others suffering purifies their spirits. Then, there are those, as Paul, who suffer because they are chosen and are exceptional friends of the Lord—they overcome Satan with his own weapons. Both St. Francis of Assisi and Therese of Lisieux were such friends. It was Teresa of Avila who said to Jesus: “If you treat all of your friends like you do me, no wonder you have so few!” God is never the direct cause of evil. It is permitted by God for one reason or another. If God permits suffering in our lives, we should wisely pray to discern its purpose and for the grace to patiently deal with it.

#### A NEW CREATION

Jesus tells His disciples: *We must do the deeds of him who sent me while it is day. . . While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)* It is the will of Father that His Son give the light of life (John 8:12) to those who trustingly put their faith in Him. Jesus now bends down and with His own spittle made mud and smeared the mud on the eyes of the blind man. This deed recalls the words of Genesis: *The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground. (Gen. 2:7)* The theme of creation is indeed present in this episode. The man never possessed sight. It is not a matter of restoring sight but creating sight where it never existed. Others view this as the ‘creative completion of the human person’. The gift of sight will certainly open to the man a new life. What is symbolized by the gift is a new quality of life for this person. This miracle symbolizes the transformation that occurs when Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit into the life of human being. The person still remains his unique self, but a self that is never the same. As Paul himself expressed it: *I still live my human life but it is a life*

*of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave his life for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

This man has never seen Jesus. He is unable to see any signs or wonders. Perhaps he has heard about Jesus. However, he hears the words of Jesus: *Go wash in the pool of Siloam. (John 9:7)* He blindly goes in obedience to the voice he hears. He washes in the water. His faith in Jesus' words leads him into a new creation. Now he has vision but he does not yet see Jesus. He has had a profound experience and, as yet, the full meaning escapes him.

### GROWING IN THE LIGHT

The neighbors of the man know he has received an extraordinary miracle which occurred on the sabbath. They take him to the Pharisees to discover the significance of the healing.

The Pharisees interrogate the man. Three times the man born blind confesses ignorance while each time growing in knowledge of Jesus: Jesus is a Prophet (Ver. 17); Jesus possesses unique power (Ver. 32); Jesus comes from God (Ver. 33). Three times the Pharisees render their verdict about Jesus and each time are plunged deeper into darkness.

God deals with us as individuals. He expects us to deal with Him as an individual. Our commitment to Him is personal and must be measured by the graces that are uniquely ours. What others do must never be the measure of what we do. The behavior of other people towards God ought never to be the criteria of our personal relationship with God. If necessary, as indicated in this narrative, a disciple must be willing to lose family, friends, and life itself in order to be true to what God reveals to him or her and what He asks.

The Pharisees, unable to answer the man's arguments, turn to attack the personal integrity of the witness. All pretense of justice is dropped: *What! You are steeped in sin from your birth, and you are giving us lectures? With that they threw him out bodily? (John 9:34)*

We ought to be careful of people who have no openness to truth and use inquiry only as a pretext to draw you into disputes. They do not seek to

know the truth but to destroy the truth. Regardless of what they call themselves—recognizes for whom they labor. Ask yourself, “Is the truth in them? Are they open to the truth?” If the answer is “No!”. It is wiser not to become involved with them.

The Pharisees excommunicate the man. Excommunication was considered the severest punishment next to death. To be excommunicated was to be placed in a position in which no true Israelite would have any business or communication with the person. For his loyalty to truth, the man finds himself all alone—cut off from his religion, his family and his friends. Jesus comes to him. He sees Jesus for the first time. Already he has recognized Jesus as a prophet, as a man authorized by God. He has come as far as he can come within the limitations of his Jewish background. He does not yet see Jesus as Lord and Savior. In order to do this, he must be willing to leave the old way behind. He must go in faith where he has never yet gone. This step can only be made when confronted by Jesus’ self-revelation: *Do you believe in the Son of Man?* He answered: *Who is it, sir, that I may believe in him? You have seen him,* Jesus replied, *He is speaking to you now. I do believe, Lord, he said, and bowed down to worship him. (John 9:35-38) Whoever is of God hears every word God speaks. (John 8:47)*

Jesus tells His new disciple: *I came into the world to divide it, to make the sightless see and the seeing blind. (John 9:39)* Hearing this some of the Pharisees asked him: *You are not calling us blind, are you? To which Jesus replied: If you were blind there would be no sin in that. ‘But we see,’ you say, and your sin remains. (John 9:40)* Early in the temple Jesus warned them: *You will surely die in your sins unless you come to believe I AM. (John 8:24)*

The gift of faith in Jesus is the true miracle narrated in chapter nine—the spiritual insight to behold in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, the Light of the World. The faithful acceptance of the teaching of Jesus may be spoken of as following after Jesus. However—the light the believer possesses is always the light that Jesus is. We do not possess the light of truth unless Jesus abides in us and we abide in Him as with the branches and the vine.

Soon, within the study of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus will no longer speak to the world, but only to His disciples. Let us be prepared to hear *every word God speaks!*

**LIGHT OF LIFE**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

**WHOEVER IS OF GOD HEARS EVERY WORD GOD SPEAKS. (JOHN 8:47)**

**FIRST DAY: Read John 1: 6-13 and 8:12-14; Genesis 1:3-5 and 1:14-19**

1. Why do you think among people light is a symbol of God?
2. How does one become a child of light?
3. Why do you think Jesus calls Himself “Light of the World”?
4. In what way is Jesus the “Light of Life” for you?

**SECOND DAY: Read John 12: 35-36; 44-46 and Job 29:1-20.**

1. What do you understand by John 12:36?
2. What do you think the psalmist means by “in you light we see light”?
3. What do you think Job means in “his light I walk through darkness”?
4. What does it mean to you “to keep faith in the Light”?

**THIRD DAY: Read John 9:1-5; Job 1:1-12 and II Corinthians 1:3-11.**

1. In Jesus’ day what did people believe to be the cause of suffering?
2. What does the reading in Job tell you about suffering?
3. What does St. Paul teach you about suffering?

4. How do you think a Christian should deal with suffering?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 9:6-12 and Isaiah 42:1-9.

1. Why does Jesus' action with the blind man call to mind the act of Creation?
2. Where do you see present in this scene the initial faith of the blind man?
3. What do you think—"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" symbolize for the early Church?
4. In what way does Jesus fulfill these words of Isaiah?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 9:13-33.

1. How does the spirit of this man differ from that of the Pharisees?
2. Why do you think one grows in light and the other in darkness?
3. How do you see the behavior of the man's parents like the behavior of many people today?
4. What do think aided the man's growth in faith?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 9:34-40.

1. How would you explain the Pharisees final reaction to the man's witness?
2. In what way do you see the fulfillment of John 8:47 in the life of the man born blind?
3. What do you see is necessary within the human soul to come to true faith?
4. What do you understand by John 9:40?

## CHAPTER 14

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

#### INTRODUCTION

The Holy Land is pastoral. Everywhere you see the shepherd and his sheep. The shepherd leads a nomadic existence leading his flock from one green pasture to another. From morning to evening, he guides his flock. As the sheep are primarily raised for wool rather than for mutton, a shepherd may have the same sheep within his flock for many years. Sheep often have individual names and they all know the voice of their shepherd; the sound of his voice guides and assures them. They panic and flee from strangers.

Sheep are defenseless little creatures. They demand constant care and protection. If the shepherd does not guide them, they lose themselves and die of hunger and thirst or become prey to beasts. When evening comes and the weather is fair, they are herded into sheepfolds formed in the fields from stones. Such sheepfolds have no doors. The shepherd himself sleeps in front of the gate and no sheep can enter or leave without passing over his body. When the weather is inclement, they take refuge in nearby caves. Villages and towns have their sheepfolds. They are protected by a heavy door and only the caretaker holds the key. When several folds are herded together for the night, they are separated in the morning by the individual shepherds' giving their unique calls. The sheep, knowing the voice of the shepherd, will separate himself from the rest and follow the voice of his own shepherd.

#### THE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, all the great patriarchs of Israel, had been shepherds. In such a pastoral environment, it would be natural for the outstanding characteristics of good shepherds to be: protective, fearless, constantly vigilant, always leading the flock to life and nourishment. These characteristics would be projected into idealized leaders—God and kings



For Israel, Moses, the shepherd, leading the people to the Promised Land was a pictorial representation of God, their Good Shepherd lovingly tending his flock. We read in the Scriptures: *But his people he led forth like sheep and guided them like a herd in the desert. He led them on secure and unafraid. (Ps. 78:20-21)* Isaiah speaks of Yahweh: *Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care. (Is 40:11)*

The Scriptures teach that God chooses men as his representatives to be shepherds of his flock here on this earth. We read in chapter three of Exodus, the call of Moses to be the shepherd of the flock of Israel. We read in Psalm 78: *And he chose David, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance. And he tended them with a sincere heart and with skillful hands he guided them. (Ps. 78:70-72)* David as Shepherd sins and brings affliction upon the people. David prays: *It is I who have sinned; if is I, the shepherd, who have done wrong. But these are sheep; what have they done? Punish me and my kindred. (2 Sam. 24:17)*

Following David and Solomon, leadership deteriorated. The title, shepherd, was given to whichever rulers had authority over the people. The prophets make it only too clear how the later shepherds failed. We hear these words of the Lord in Jeremiah: *The shepherds rebelled against me (2:8). Lost sheep were my people, their shepherds misled them, straggling on the mountains; for mountain to hill they wandered—whoever came upon them devoured them. (50:6-7) Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. This is the name they give him: 'The Lord our Justice. (Jer. 23:1-6)*

Our Lord testifies that the Pharisees and Scribes now occupy the seat of Moses and command obedience to their authority. This authority they misused in excommunication one who was but following the voice of the True Shepherd of Israel. One more little sheep has been driven away. But the end of these evil shepherds over the Lord's flocks is at hand for the Good Shepherd is on the scene. Jesus fulfills the words of Ezekiel's prophecy when he seeks out this abandoned and lost man: *Thus says the Lord: I swear I am coming against these shepherds. I will claim my sheep from them and put a stop to their shepherding my sheep. (Ezk.34:10)*

## A HOUSE DIVIDED

Jesus declares he came into the world to divided it. God declares through the Prophet Ezekiel: *I will judge between one sheep and another. . .you push with side and shoulder, and butt all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them out. I will save my sheep.*(Ezk. 34:17,21-22) Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will fulfill this prophecy and He will divide Israel. Those who believe Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God and the Davidic Shepherd sent by God—these will be separated from the Jewish Nation. Already this has symbolically occurred in Chapter nine with the case of the man born blind.

The man in question before his encounter with Jesus—despite physical blindness—was well integrated into this world. His problems in living in this world only began after he meets Jesus of Nazareth. We ought to see this physical blindness as symbol of the spiritual blindness within which he lives his life. Apparently the spirit of this man is sincerely open to the truth. He is a fulfillment of Jesus early teaching that anyone who is prepared to do the Will of God, *he will know if my teaching is from God or whether my doctrine is my own.* (John 7:7:17) God, through Jesus, performs a miraculous work within this man life. He cooperates with the grace received. He recognizes the work as divine and its agent as one sent by God. As he is questioned—discussed and pondered what occurred—his faith in Jesus solidified. He is ready and open to follow Jesus. When Jesus reveals Himself as Messiah and Lord, the man places unconditional faith in Jesus through his adoration of Him. A Christian is born and he follows Jesus as his Good Shepherd.

Others listen to His words, see His signs and find Him wanting according to their standards. They choose to remain confirmed and comfortable in their darkness. His words find no hearing in their hearts. They heed not His voice as they are not His sheep. As the shepherds of Israel, they warn and threaten people not to heed Him: “He is His own witness. His witness cannot be true! “He is a Samaritan, a heretic!” “He is mad!” “He is possessed!” “By the Prince of Devils, he cast out devils!” “Why pay any attention to him?” So they judge Him and condemn themselves.

The people are divided: *“These are not the words of a madman. Surely a devil cannot open the eyes of the blind.* (John 10:21) And so some side with the Pharisees. Some, as Nicodemus, are not certain. Some, as Joseph of Arimathea, believe but are afraid to follow Jesus. But some, as the man

born blind, leave all things to follow the voice of his Shepherd and with Simon Peter profess: *You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced you are God's holy one. (John 6:68)*

### FALSE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL

To demonstrate to the people the differences between the false shepherds and Himself, the Good Shepherd, our Lord uses the common illustration of the true shepherd's behavior and how his sheep respond. The shepherd comes to the gate of the sheep-fold. Recognizing the shepherd, the gate keeper opens the gate to him. Calling each sheep by name, the sheep hear his voice and obediently respond to the call. The shepherd leads the way and the sheep follow. A stranger's voice they will not heed but flee from the sound of it.

The false shepherds, who seek only to steal and destroy the sheep, cannot enter through the gate and sneak in by other means. They enter among the defenseless, shepherdless sheep like wolves in sheep's clothing.

Within this analogy the "thief and marauders" represent primarily the Pharisees and scribes. These men who are the Shepherds of Israel, who sit upon the chair of Moses, have usurped this authority. They are not called by God to lead the people and they are no better than thieves and bandits. They have assumed positions of authority with selfish motivations. They have come Jesus says, *only to steal and slaughter and destroy. (John 10:10)* In actuality they are no more than "hired hands" of Satan, the Wolf. They are neither shepherds nor owners of the sheep. These characters when they catch sight of the wolf coming, they run away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf. *(John 10:12)* They work for pay and have no concern for the sheep. *(John 10:13)* They always get out when the getting is good. False shepherds are always off to safer, greener and more serene pastures in search of fatter sheep to fleece. From time to time—it is not unknown for them to carry off a cute little sheep from the flock.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

Mark writes in his gospel account: *Jesus saw a vast crowd. He pitied them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them at great length. (Mark 6:34)* Jesus of Nazareth fulfills Moses' prayer for Israel: *May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind set over the*

*community a man who shall act as their leader in all things, to guide them in all their actions; that the Lord's community may not be like sheep without a shepherd. (Numbers 27:16-17)* The prophet, John the Baptist, stands at the door of the sheepfold. He recognizes in Jesus the true Shepherd of Israel. He opens the gate to Him: *'Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. . .two disciples heard what he said, and followed Jesus. (John 1:29,37)*

As Jesus' teaching is lost upon His listeners, Jesus tells them plainly: *I am (Ergo eimi) the Good Shepherd! (John 10:11)* This time He uses the example of the sheepfold erected in the fields in which the body of the shepherd is the gate of the sheepfold: *My solemn word is this: I am the sheepgate. . .I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out and find pasture.(John 10:7,9)* Within this example Jesus implies much more than being the shepherd who goes before his sheep. A vital and intimate relationship exists between His very body—His very Person and His sheep. In Him and through Him His disciples will come to the fullness of life: *I came that they may have life and have it to the full. (John 10:10b)*

Jesus reveals the high price the shepherd must pay to be the Good Shepherd of Israel: *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep(10-11). . .I know my sheep and my sheep know me. . .for these I will give my life.(10:15). . .No one takes it from me. I lay it down freely. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again.(10:18)* Jesus reveals that He received this command from His Father and His Father loves Him because *I lay my life down and take it up again. (10:18,17)*

Jesus moves freely to fulfill the Will of God. He will die in order to become the Sheepgate—God's gate into the heavenly Jerusalem. By His obedience unto death, He will snatch His sheep from the jaws of eternal death. Yes, Jesus is the Gate—but Jesus Crucified.

From Jesus' death a New Israel shall be born and it will be composed of both Jews and Gentiles: *I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must lead them too, and they shall hear my voice. There shall be one flock then and one shepherd. (John 10:16)* John uses the Greek word 'kalas' to express 'good'. It is special and adds 'loveliness' to the concept of 'goodness'. There is, indeed, a quality of beauty and loveliness about this Good Shepherd.

## IT IS WINTER

The scene changes within Chapter ten but the mood has not—growing only colder and darker. It is time of the winter solstice (December 22) when the nights grow deeper as the light of day wanes. It is the Jewish feast of Hanukkah which celebrates the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 165 BC. It is popularly called “The Feast of Lights” from the custom of illuminating the streets and homes. Jesus walks in Solomon’s Portico, an area sheltered from the winter winds and warmed by the sun. Again the opposition interrogates Him: *How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you really are the Messiah, tell us so in plain words. (John 10:24)* The literal translation of ‘keep us in suspense’ means ‘take away our life (psyche)—our breath of life.’ Perhaps John is implying, it is their lives that are on the line.

The public life of Jesus is drawing to a close. The present scene sums up the situation at this time. The Jews ask two questions: “Are you the Messiah?” “Are you making yourself out to be God?” Jesus responds to their first question: *I did tell you, but you do not believe. . .you refuse to believe because you are not my sheep. (John 10:25-26)* If Jesus openly proclaims to be the Messiah, he would have immediately been categorized into a false messianic role. He corrects the misconception of His role by His wise and prudent method and reveals the true nature and person of the Messiah.

The Jews say to Jesus: *You who are only a man, are making yourself God. (John 10:33)*. It is part of the message of the Fourth Gospel to declare that Jesus is the Son of God, a divine Person. However—John firmly denies that Jesus made Himself God. According to John’s witness, Jesus never makes Himself anything; everything He is comes from the Father: Jesus is the Divine Word the Father has sent into the world as the Son of Man. Jesus answers His interrogators: *Do you claim that I blasphemed when, as he whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?* (John 10:36)

For our author, disbelief is a free, deliberate act. Men have their own image of God and His Messiah. Neither God nor the Messiah conforms to their image. God became man and this was unthinkable—unforgivable. The Messiah came as the Son of Man and He was too human to be acceptable.

**THE GOOD SHEPHERD**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. I KNOW MY SHEEP AND MY SHEEP KNOW ME IN THE SAME WAY THAT THE FATHER KNOWS ME AND I KNOW THE FATHER. (JOHN 10:14-15)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Isaiah 40:9-31 and Psalm 23.

1. Why is God referred to as a Shepherd?
2. What do you see as the main characteristics of a good shepherd?
3. In way is the Lord a good shepherd to you?
4. How do you shepherd the lives of those under your influence?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Jeremiah 23:1-6 and Ezekiel 34:1-16.

1. What are some characteristics of a bad shepherd?
2. What does our Lord promise to do for His sheep?
3. Who, in your opinion, are the lost and scattered of today?
4. Do you feel you have any responsibility towards these people?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Ezekiel 34:17-31.

1. Why do you think God chooses people to be shepherds of His flock?
2. What are some of the problems the shepherd has with the sheep?
3. What do you think the Lord means by 'I will judge one sheep by another'?
4. What is your attitude towards your earthly shepherd?

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 10:1-21.**

1. What are the qualities of the Good Shepherd of Israel?
2. What are the qualities of the bad shepherds of Israel?
3. In what way are they the 'hired hands' of Satan?
4. What do you understand by Jesus being the 'sheepgate'?

**FIFTH DAY: Read John 10:22-39.**

1. How does Jesus deal with the question, 'Are you the Messiah'?
2. What does John teach to be the cause of their disbelief?
3. How is John demonstrating the divinity of Jesus?
4. What is Jesus' evidence that the Father and He are One?

**SIXTH DAY: Read John 10:40-42 and Acts 20:a7-36.**

1. If you had been in the temple crowd, what side do you feel you would have been on? Why?
2. Why do you think many came to believe in him 'back across the Jordan'?
3. How does St. Paul prove to be a good shepherd?
4. Why does Paul believe that we still need human beings to act as good shepherds on this earth?

## CHAPTER 15

### THE LORD OF LIFE

#### INTRODUCTION

Jesus of Nazareth's last encounter with the people within the temple precinct ends no better than the previous one. We read: *At these words they again try to arrest him, but he eluded their grasp. (John 10:39)* Prudently Jesus leaves the area over which the Sanhedrin could exercise its influence. He takes up residence on the other side of the Jordan, the place in which John the Baptist had ministered. Here in an environment uncontaminated by the influence of the Pharisees and their scribes, Jesus' ministry meets with success: *Many people came to him. . . in that place many came to believe in him. (John 10:42)* What is the difference between 'that place' and the temple precincts? The people in the temple are all under the influence of 'the hired hands' of the Evil One. In 'that place' the people are open to the grace of their heavenly Father. They recognize the presence of God working in the life of Jesus. Their words express well the grace working in their hearts: *John may have never performed a sign, but whatever John said about this man was true. (John 10:41)*

Our heavenly Father achieves the salvation of the human race through the instrumentality of the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. Satan, also, needs the instrumentality of human being in order to carry out his deceitful and destructive plans for people. Jesus teach us that there are people on earth *as soon as they hear the Word, Satan comes to carry off what was sown in them. (Mark 4:14)* The people within the temple precinct do hear the Word of God, but the Pharisees and scribes, as Satan's instruments, destroys the seeds of divine truth planted in their hearts. Paul reminds the Corinthians: *For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. It comes as no surprise that his ministers disguises themselves as ministers of the justice of God. (2 Cor. 11:14)*

We have within the temple area, blind guides leading the blind. Their spiritual condition is comparable to the brothers in Jesus' discourse on Lazarus and the Rich Man: The rich man desires Abraham to send



someone from the dead to warn his brothers of their precarious spiritual condition. Abraham replies: *They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.* The Rich Man says to Abraham, *'No, But if someone would only go to them from the dead, they would repent.'* Abraham responds: *If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if one should rise from the dead. (Luke 16:30-31)* The episode now to follow will demonstrate the darkness of the mind and the hardness of the heart of those under the power of the Evil One.

## THE FRIENDS OF JESUS

Now will unfold within the Fourth Gospel a beautiful ( a 'kalas') narrative in friendship: the friendship between the Creator and His creatures. A crystal clear manifestation unfolds of our Lord's intimate association with those whom He loves.

After commencing His public ministry, Jesus said: *The foxes have lairs, and the birds of the air have nest, but the Son of Man has no where upon which to lay his head. (Luke 9:58)* It is a comfort to know that Jesus of Nazareth did have friends inviting Him to rest and refresh Himself in the loving environment of their homes.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle teaches friendship is the greatest good and the highest form of love. Friendship is a mutual communion between two person whom mutually seek, above all, the good of their beloved. Genuine friendship involves a degree of psychological and emotional maturity to keep the parties from using one another for selfish needs.

The Scriptures teach us that Jesus has friends and they are very, very human friends. Luke introduces us to two of them—Martha and Mary who are sisters living in the village of Bethany about two miles east of Jerusalem. Luke relates that Martha welcomed Jesus to her house; as she busies herself with all the details of hospitality, Mary seats herself at Jesus' feet and listens to His words. Martha becomes somewhat miffed with that sister of hers acting as if she has nothing to do but sit and listen to pearls of wisdom from the Master.

Martha is task orientated and expresses her love for others by her service. Also she is one of those perfectionists who knows exactly where everyone should be and what they should be doing. She feels at this moment Jesus is

not doing what He should do. She moves to correct the situation: *Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me to do the household tasks all alone? Tell her to help me!* (Luke 10:39-40) Jesus replies lovingly to Martha: *Martha, Martha, you are anxious and concerned about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it.* (Luke 10:41-42) Jesus does not tell Martha not to care about things but not to be anxious and upset. In that is a lot of self indicating defects both in faith and love. Jesus' words seem to imply that much of this work is more out of Martha's choice than necessity. He seeks to teach His friend the doctrine that runs like a golden thread through all His teachings: *Blest are they who hear the word of God—keep it and act upon it.* (Luke 11:28) If Martha listen more to the Word of God, there would be more of God's will and less of Martha's in what she does and more peace in her. One has the feeling that Jesus' point is—for the time being—lost upon her. Probably returning to the kitchen with a few tears, complaining to herself that not even the Lord appreciates all she does!

#### THE SEVENTH SIGN

When next we hear of Martha and Mary, things have changed in all their lives. Hostility towards Jesus has forced Him to leave Judea. The two sisters' beloved brother, Lazarus, is dying. They are aware of the personal danger involved in Jesus' returning to Bethany. They do not ask Him to come; they simply inform Him of the situation: *Lord, the one you love is sick.* (John 11:3) They leave the rest up to Him. They trust He will come in time. (Martha should have known better.) Our author makes it very clear: *Jesus loved Marsha and her sister and Lazarus very much.* (John 11:5) These three are symbols of Jesus' personal love for all his friends.

Martha and Mary desire Jesus to come in order to keep their beloved brother from death. They represent the early Christians' longing for the Second Coming in order to escape death, in order not to have to see death.

From the very beginning, John teaches Jesus' deeds are not directed by family, friends nor enemies. Nor are they directed by His personal desires. From the Alpha to the Omega—from the First Coming until the Second Coming—the Father's will, always and in every way, directs the doings and non-doings of Jesus Christ! The Glory of God is the One end of all He does.

Jesus delays His trip to Bethany and the physical death of Lazarus occurs. God will use his death to teach a profound and overwhelming truth: Friends of Jesus Christ will never die—they have passed from death to life. Here and now forever, they are eternally alive. Physical death is but a body at rest.

The disciples are reluctant for Jesus to go to Bethany. They protest: *Rabbi, with the Jews only recently trying to stone you, you are going back up there again? (John 11:7)* Jesus reminds His disciples that God's work on earth must be accomplished within a certain time frame. The work of God must be accomplished while the time is available. The disciples must realize that time of life passes quickly and the opportunity to accomplish God's work must not be lost. Our Lord warns: *Walk while you have the light! (John 11:9)*

Jesus now makes it clear to them: *Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, that you may come to believe. At any event, let us go to him. (John 11:14)* The disciples Thomas' response is, *Let us go along, to die with him. (John 11:16)* Is there already a vague awareness in the mind of Thomas that a disciple must be willing to share in the sufferings of the Master?

Jesus arrives in Bethany four days after Lazarus' burial. He even missed the funeral. Jesus is not into funerals. When possible, He dispensed with the need for one. Jewish tradition held that the spirit (nepes) remains close to the body for three days and departs completely when decay begins. On hearing that Jesus was approaching Bethany, Martha goes alone to meet Him. Things have not gone as hoped. Jesus failed to live up to her expectations. Her words carry an implied criticism of his behavior: *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would have never died.* Martha's response reveals the limitations of her faith in Jesus: *Even now, I am sure God will give you whatever you ask of him. (John 11:21-22)* Martha sees Jesus as a prophet, a man close to God. She does not know Him as the Lord of Life.

Jesus tells Martha that her brother will rise again. Martha interprets His words in the light of the present Jewish belief: *I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. (John 11:24)* This truth was of little comfort for a practical woman as Martha. In His response to Martha Jesus makes one of His most important and profound revelations to mankind: ***I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE: whoever believes in me, though he***

*should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die.*"(John 11:25) Jesus' reference to the 'resurrection' implies death proceeds from life. Looking straight at Martha, she asks her: *Do you believe this?* At the word of Jesus, Martha makes the leap of faith and replies: *Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God: he that is to come into the world.* (John 11:27) No adoration follows this profession of faith implying Martha has yet to realize its full significance. Fullness of faith in Jesus, for John, finds expression in praise and adoration. Even in the fullness of faith Martha, at this moment, is not all that happy with God.

Martha informs Mary, *The Teacher is here, asking for you.* (John 11:28) Immediately Mary goes to Jesus. The Jew follow her thinking she is going to the tomb to weep. For these Jews, the only end of death is sorrow and tears. So it is for all who fail to find in Jesus the Resurrection and the Life. A difference in Mary's behavior to Martha' is noted. She falls at the feet of Jesus. Mary leaves all in His hands.

A most revealing scene now occurs: *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had accompanied her also weeping, he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions. . . Jesus began to weep.* (John 11:33-32) The Greek expression in this account appears to express a man suddenly overcome with anger to the degree it shakes His body and forces a cry of distress from His lips. If anger is being expressed, it is directed towards sin and Satan which begets this devastating suffering and death upon humanity. Jesus weeps for the sufferings of humanity, as later He would do over the city of Jerusalem. God weeps! Never, after hearing of the tears of Jesus, should we believe God is indifferent to human misery.

To non-believers, the tears of Jesus indicate He has come to the end of His power. It is unbelief that puts limits upon divine power on this earth. *He opened the eyes of that blind man. Why could he not have done something to stop this man from dying?* (John 11:37) Suffering and death—the evils of human existence—are incompatible, in our understanding of love, with a God of love. In the face of this mystery and the temptations which accompany it, a disciples must, as did Jesus, cling to the Word of God: *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.* (John 3:16)As Jews remarked: *See how much he loved him!* (John 11:36)

Jesus now moves to perform the seventh sign: the greatest sign of all confirming Jesus Christ to be the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus commands the stone be removed from the tomb. But Martha arrives in time and assumes command. Jesus responds to her: *Did I not assure you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God displayed? (John 11:40)* The answer is, Martha did not believe. Was she so busy listening to her own thoughts that she could not hear what anyone else was saying—even God? Martha is impressed by action. She is about to be impressed! Jesus called loudly: *Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, bound hand and foot with linen strips, his face wrapped in a cloth. 'Untie him!' Jesus told them, 'and let him go free.'* (John 11:43-44) What now occurs recalls the words Jesus spoke earlier: *I solemnly assure you, an hour is coming, has indeed come, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have heeded it shall live. (John 5:25)*

It is certainly understandable that the resurrection of Lazarus caused many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary to put their faith in Jesus. What is difficult to understand is the extent that evil can darkened the mind and harden the heart of man. We read: *Some others, however, went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done. (John 11:46)* As a result, a meeting of the Sanhedrin was called: *From that day forward there was a plan afoot to kill him. (John 11:53)* The fact was, the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too, because many Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him on account of Lazarus. (John 12:10)

John deliberately ties together the resurrection of Lazarus and the death of Jesus to illustrate to his readers that Jesus dies in order to give life. A disciple must not miss the significance of the death of the Lord: *I lay down my life. . .no one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. . .I came that they might have life and have it to the full. (John 10:17-18, 10)*

Six days before Passover, Jesus deliberately returns to Bethany. Martha gives a banquet in His honor. Things have changed: Martha continues to serve and Mary continues to do her thing but now Martha is content to serve and let Mary and the Lord be. We now see how intense love leads to exquisite charity. Mary produces a most expensive perfume and she pours the entire contents over the feet of Jesus. The entire house was filled with the sweetness of the perfume. The perfect love of the Lord ends always with a most exceptional love for the Body of Christ—the Christian Community—as the lives of all the saints teach us. Deeds of love on earth, do not go unnoticed in heaven. “Wherever the good news is proclaimed through the world, what she has done will be told in her memory. (Mk. 14:9)

## THE LORD OF LIFE

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE- MEMORIZE)

*YOU ARE MY FRIENDS IF YOU DO WHAT I COMMAND YOU. THE COMMAND I GIVE YOU IS THIS, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER. (JOHN 15:15,17)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Mark 4:13-20; Luke 16:27-31.

1. What do you see to be the difference between the people in the temple and those on the other side of the Jordan?
2. What do you learn about evangelism from this?
3. What do you learn about the virtue of faith from Luke 16:31?
4. What does 2 Corinthians 11:14 teach you?

**SECOND DAY:** Sirach 6:5-17; I Samuel 18:1-5; 20:11-17; John 15:15-17.

1. How did Jonathan demonstrate his friendship for David?
2. What does John 11:5 teach you about Jesus? about God?
3. What kind of friend does Jesus have in you?
4. What do you understand by John 15:15, 17?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Isaiah 38:9-20; Psalm 6; Wisdom 3:1-9; Psalm 116.

1. What is the feeling about death in the first two readings?
2. How did the early Jews look upon death?
3. What changes are noted in Wisdom and Psalm 116?
4. What is your personal feeling about death?

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 11:1-16; Luke 10:18-42.**

1. If Martha, Mary and Lazarus symbolize Christians disciples, what does this tell you about the relationship between disciples and Jesus?
2. What does true friendship mean to you?
3. When the Lord does not do what you desire, how does that effect you?
4. What does Martha attitude towards Jesus teach you about friendship?

**FIFTH DAY: Read John 11:17-44.**

1. How would you describe the faith of Martha?
2. What do you understand by John 11:33?
3. What does it mean to you that Jesus wept?
4. Can you give two examples in which Jesus dispenses with the funeral?

**SIXTY DAY: Read John 11:45-57 and 12:1-11.**

1. What do you understand by John 11:25-26?
2. What do you see to be the connection between the 7<sup>th</sup> Sign and Jesus' death?
3. What does the attitude of the Sanhedrin towards the resurrection of Lazarus teach you?
4. What do you learn about loving Jesus from Mary's final gift to Him?

## CHAPTER 16

### GRAIN OF WHEAT

#### INTRODUCTION

As the sun displays itself in dazzling beauty moments before darkness—Jesus of Nazareth, in godly glory, triumphantly appears in Jerusalem shortly before His death. Jesus proceeds towards Jerusalem from Bethany with a great crowd. Word reaches Jerusalem—He is coming! The people gather palm branches and proceed towards Bethphage, a village near the summit of the Mount of Olives. When Jesus saw them coming to meet Him, he sent his disciples for a young donkey. The disciples *led the animal to Jesus, and laying their cloaks on it, helped him mount. They spread their cloaks on the roadway as he moved along (Luke 19:35-36)* The words of Zechariah are being fulfilled: *Rejoice heartily, O daughter of Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek and riding on an ass, on a colt, the fold of an ass. (Zech.9:9)*

*As he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred to its depths, demanding, 'Who is this?' And the crowd kept answering, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. (Matthew 21:10)* The Pharisees, like brooding vultures, stood by despairingly. God wrings from their bitter hearts prophetic words: *See, there is nothing you can do! The whole world has run after him. (John 12:19)* Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus: *Teacher, rebuke your disciples. Jesus replies: It they were to keep silence, I tell you the very stones would cry out. (Luke 20: 3-4)* Jesus clearly confirms: *This is the day the Lord has made. (Ps. 118:24)* It is all beyond human hands. The Father wills to glorify His Son.

The Synoptic Gospels present a picture of the messianic King who come to claim His capitol and His temple. John's interpretation is different. Jesus triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, for John, is a recognition of His messiahship. Seemingly, the Spirit of God sweeps through the hearts of the people; they knew Jesus to be the Messiah. But, always, the moment of inspiration must be distinguished from the moments following inspiration when man 'takes the ball and runs with it.' That moment may be motivated by man's ambition or perverted by the evil one.



The knowledge of Jesus being the Messiah arouses national enthusiasm. They go forth to meet Him carrying palms. The palm symbolized their nationalism. Later the palm would appear on their coinage minted during the second revolt of 132 AD. The expression that *the crowd came out to meet him* is a Greek expression for the joyful reception into a city of a ruler. John wishes to leave no doubt in people's minds that Jesus is their kingly liberator, coming to destroy the great enemies of Israel. All this is true, but not in the realm of Jewish expectation.

The true interpretation of Jesus' role—in John's mind—is found in the words of Psalm 118: *Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.* The coming of Jesus is the coming of the Messiah. Jesus reinforces His role and mission by entering the city riding upon the back of a colt. A king bent upon war approached a city riding in a war-chariot or upon a war-horse. A king coming in peace rode upon a donkey. Jesus comes to fulfill the spiritual destiny of Israel—to bring salvation to all mankind. *Salvation comes from the Jews!* However, Israel was absorbed in national pride and longed for a Messiah to bring conquest of their political enemies.

In John gospel account, the resurrection of Lazarus stimulates much of the enthusiasm on this day. Jesus' appearance as the King of Peace seeks to recall to the minds of the people the great prophecies concerning this title and that the miracle of Lazarus is a sign of the gift of faith and life for all people of the earth—not a sign of the national glory of Israel.

The Jewish people complete misinterpret the destiny of their own nation. They are God's People. They have a divine destiny. Their failure to recognize it causes the tears of Jesus and His lament: *If only you had known the path to peace this day: but you have completely lost it from view. (Luke 19:42)* When we seek our peace beyond the will of God, we are the cause of our own restlessness and distress!

John swiftly brings the activities of Palm Sunday to its climatic conclusion. Andrew and Philip, two disciples of Jesus, inform Him that some Greeks *would like to see Jesus. (John 12:22)* This desire "to see Jesus" must be interpreted 'to believe' in Him. It is a request for the gift of faith. In this request Jesus beholds the fields ripe for harvest. He hear the call of the sheep not of His fold.

## GLORIFICATION OF JESUS

The Hebrew word for glory is 'kabod'. When the Scriptures speak of the glory or the 'kabod' of God, two important elements are essential: first, the invisible God must be made visible; second, God must become visible through acts of power.

The Fourth Gospel presents Jesus of Nazareth as the glory of God. We read in the Prologue of this gospel account: *We have seen his glory: the glory of an only Son coming from the Father filled with enduring love. (John 1:14)* Firstly, Jesus Christ, the Word, is God incarnated. He is the invisible God made visible in the humanity of Jesus. Secondly, all the signs, deeds and words of Jesus are acts of divine power: the Father speaks and acts through Jesus.

This simple request of the Greek people have a profound effect upon Jesus. He immediately proclaims: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* In this gospel account, the word 'hour' designates a unique and significant moment in Jesus' life. We heard it first at Cana in Jesus' words to His mother: *My hour has not yet come. (John 2:4)* Its meaning is best expressed when John writes: *Before the feast of Passover, Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. (John 13:1)* 'The Hour' is the passover of Jesus' life from earth to heaven. This hour encompasses the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The hour begins on Palm Sunday and ends Easter morning. The grace of faith for the Gentile world will flow from the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus makes a prayerful request at this moment: *Father glorify your name! (John 12:28)* All through this gospel account John identifies Jesus with the divine name of 'ego eimi'. Jesus' prayer is that the Father will glorify Jesus Himself on this earth. John identifies the essential essence of God as love: *God is love. (I John 4:8)* Jesus teaches us the gift of self for the good another is of the nature of love. The supreme expression of love is to sacrifice one's life for the life of another. Jesus expresses a human being's greatest love of the Father by sacrificing His life to fulfill the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus, as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, will fulfill God will as expressed in Isaiah: *If he gives his life as an offering for sin. . the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him. . Because he*

*surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked; he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses. (Isiah 53:10,12)* As it is the Will of the Father that this sacrifice be made, Jesus reveals, in the sacrifice of His life, the love of God for fallen humanity. The death of Jesus on the Cross reveals both the love of the human being for God and the love of God for the human being. The death of Jesus on the Cross glorifies both Jesus and His Father.

The heavenly Father vocally responds to Jesus' prayer: *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again. (John 12:28)* On three occasions in the earthly life of Jesus a voice from heaven proclaims Him: at the Baptism of Jesus; at the Transfiguration of Jesus—neither of which are mentioned in John—and in this third instance recorded by John. In each case, it follows upon either an explicit or implicit acceptance of death by Jesus for the sins of mankind.

There is no agony in the garden within the Fourth Gospel. However, we do hear echoes from the Garden of Suffering: *My soul is troubled now. (John 12:27)* Here the human nature of Jesus instinctively draws back in fear when facing the impending encounter with Satan entwined in the sufferings and death awaiting Him. Jesus foresees that through His sufferings and death, Satan's hold over man will be destroyed: *Now will this world's prince be driven out. (John 12:31)* A better translation of 'driven out' would be 'cast down'. With the 'lifting up' of Jesus from the earth, the cast downing of Satan occurs.

Although the human nature of Jesus experiences fear in the face of death, His spirit joyfully embraces it for from it will flow His heart's desire: *And, I once I am lifted up from earth—will draw all men to myself. (John 12:32)* The Jewish rabbis spoke of conversion as "to draw". It is the natural desire of a loving heart, the rabbis teach, to draw people to the Torah so they could come to know God. John sees the natural love of Jesus drawing all people to Himself in order to experience the love of the Father. As Jesus says: *It is for this I came to this hour. (John 12:27)*

### A GRAIN OF WHEAT

On one occasion Jesus tells His disciples: *Learn of me for I am gentle and humble of heart. (Matthew 11:29)* Out of the depths of the humility of His spirit, Jesus sees His human life as a grain of wheat that must forget itself and die: *I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and*

*dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. (John 12:24) Because Jesus willingly sacrifices His life, the riches of eternal life will flow into countless human lives: He shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. . .He shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses. (Isaiah 53:11,12)*

Jesus teaches the paradox of human existence: *The person who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this world preserves it to life eternal (John 12:25)* We must not conclude from this that the scriptures encourage a hatred of self, of human life. What the scripture is teaching is that a person must prefer their eternal life to their life on earth. When the Semitic people desired to express a preference for one thing over another, they spoke of love one and hating the other. What Jesus teaches us is that the person who gives preference to their spiritual life in this world, will preserve their life both physical and spiritual. In another places Jesus tells His disciples: *Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things (earthly blessings) will be given you besides. (Matthew 6:33)* John makes it clear that to be a disciple of Jesus implies becoming a servant of Jesus Christ: *If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be.*

John teaches that the enthusiasm of Palm Sunday fades rapidly before the doctrine of the Cross. A scandal for the Jews. *We have heard it said in the law that the Messiah is to remain forever. How can you claim that the Son of Man must be lifted up? (John 12:34)* Earlier Jesus taught: *When you lift up the Son of Man, you will come to realize that I AM. (John 8:28)*

Jesus makes a final appeal for faith: *I have come to the world as its light, to keep anyone who believe in me from remaining in the dark.(John 12:46) The light is among you only a little longer. Walk while you have it or darkness will overcome you. (John 12:35)*

Jesus public ministry ends John writes: *Despite his many signs performed in their presence, they refused to believe in him. (John 12:37)* Jesus leaves them in darkness. He hides Himself from them and so does God. *As they preferred the praise of men to the praise of God. (John 12:43)*

## GRAIN OF WHEAT

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (MEMORIZE-PLEASE)

*UNLESS THE GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS TO THE EARTH AND DIES, IT REMAINS JUST A GRAIN OF WHEAT. BUT IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES MUCH FRUIT. (John 12:24)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Zechariah 9:9-11 and Matthew 21:1-17.

1. According to Zechariah, what is the mission of the Messiah?
2. What did the Jews expect from the Messiah?
3. In Matthew, what indicates the Spirit of God working in the people?
4. What is revealed about Jesus in Matt. 21:10-13.

**SECOND DAY:** Read John 12:12-19; Psalm 118:19-29.

1. What was the symbolism of Jesus riding upon the colt?
2. How does Psalm 118 describe the nature of the Messiah?
3. In what way are the Pharisees' words in verse 19 a prophecy?
4. In what way could it be said that you "run after Him"?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Luke 19:28-47.

1. What do verses 39 and 40 teach us about Palm Sunday?
2. What unique element does Luke introduce into the account?
3. What caused the enemies of Jesus to restrain themselves?
4. If Jesus addressed to you the words in verse 42, what would they mean?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 12:20-27; Mark 8:31-38.

1. What is the significance of the Greek wanting to see Jesus?
2. How does verse 24 in John apply to Jesus?
3. What does verse 25 in John mean to you?
4. What do you learn about discipleship from Mark 8:35-38.

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 12:28-36.

1. What do you understand by Jesus' hour?
2. What does the prayer, "Father glorify your name", mean?
3. In what way is it fulfilled by the crucifixion of Jesus?
4. What do you understand by verse 36?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 12:37-50.

1. In John's mind, why do men reject Jesus?
2. Why would Jesus hid Himself from people today?
3. What do you understand by verses 44 and 45?
4. What does the parable of the grain of wheat teach you ?

**THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS ENDS WITH CHAPTER 12:**

1. What do you see to be the successes and failures in Jesus' public ministry?
2. What do you think now it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

## CHAPTER 17

### THE BOOK OF GLORY

#### INTRODUCTION

Chapter Twelve of the Fourth Gospel closes the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Chapter Thirteenth begins the Book of Glory which ends with Chapter Twenty One. These following words express the theme of the Book of Glory: *He had loved his own in this world and he would show his love for them to the end. (John 13:1)* The use of the verbal form “had loved” reveals that Jesus’ love extended across his entire public ministry. His entire public ministry was an act of love for His disciples. When John tells us that “he showed his love for them to the end,” he is speaking about a definite act of love. This final act of love being ‘His hour’. From this hour will flow eternal love to all His disciples—to all men and women of good will.

From this moment on Jesus directs His teachings to His disciples. In the Book of Glory appears the “Beloved Disciple”. The Beloved Disciple should be seen as a corporate symbol of one person representing the many. The Beloved Disciple is the symbol of the perfect follower of the Son of Man. In the Prologue we read Jesus is ever in the bosom of the Father—or is ever at the right hand of the Father. (John 1:18) During the Last Supper the Beloved Disciple reclines on the bosom of the Lord. This intimate action of the Beloved Disciple shows that the relationship between Jesus and His disciples is the same the relationship existing between Jesus and His Father. The Beloved Disciple sits at Jesus’ right hand and reclines upon His bosom. As we would say today, he is Jesus’ heart. Is it hoping against hope that—in some small way—he represents us?

#### THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CENACLE

The Jewish feast of Passover is near. John tells us: *Before the feast of Passover, Jesus realized that the hour has come for him to pass from this world to the Father. (John 13:1)* Before this occurred, Jesus strongly desired to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. He sent Peter and John into Jerusalem to prepare the place for their celebration. He described the place they would find—*an upstairs room, spacious, furnished, and all in order. (Mark*

14:15) In the ancient city of David, on Mt. Sion, the disciples found their 'upper room' in the home of the mother of John Mark, the Evangelist.

In the Greek language the 'upper room' is 'cenacle'. This Cenacle will one day be known as the Mother Church of Christianity. Here will be instituted the Most Holy Eucharist; the place where the Apostles found refuge and a place of reunion after the death of Jesus; the Risen Savior will appear to them in this Cenacle and here the Holy Spirit will come upon the Christian Community. Tradition holds that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, lived here after the Lord's Ascension into Heaven. The Cenacle will always be a place of holy and sacred memories for the Christian Church.

### FEAST OF PASSOVER

In the Synoptic Gospels the Lord celebrates the Last Supper on the eve of Passover. In the Fourth Gospel it occurs the day before. According to this arrangement, Jesus will be led to death at the time the lambs for the feast are being slaughtered in the temple. The first Passover in Egypt took place before their deliverance from slavery. The feast celebrated, in hope, the saving event to occur that night in Egypt. In the Cenacle the disciples of Jesus—the New Israel—anticipate with a meal their great deliverance from the enslavement of sin and death. A meal in which the New Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God is consumed in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The New Passover celebrates the night in which the power of the Angel of death is destroyed.

When the thirteenth chapter opens, Jesus and the disciples are already in the Cenacle. John does not mention the presence of the 12 Apostles although several of their names are mentioned. He would have his readers see the Lord and His community of disciples gathered together. To this community Jesus speaks and ministers. A Passover-type celebration is in progress. According to custom, it is a meal eaten while reclining upon couches, symbolizing the Jews freedom from slavery. The couches are arranged in a horseshoe shape, with the table of food in the middle. Those at table leaned upon their left hand and ate with the right. The Beloved Disciple occupies the favorite position to the right of Jesus. The most honored guest sat to the left of the host.

This community represents the success of Jesus' public ministry. These have heard His voice and have followed Him. Upon these the future mission



of Jesus will rest. On the night before His death, the group does not look too promising. Luke relates following the Eucharistic celebration, the disciples have a verbal fight over who should be considered the most prominent and the greatest among them. As the atmosphere heats up, Jesus breaks in with: *Earthly kings lord it over their people. . . Yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you. (Luke 22:25,27)*

### THE WASHING OF THE FEET

John tells us that Jesus is fully aware of His divine origin: *He had come from God and was going to God, the Father who had handed everything over to him. (John 13:3)* Paul writes: *Though Jesus was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form a slave, being born in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:6-7)* John relates that at this moment, Jesus arises from the table, removes His cloak, girds himself with a towel, pours water into a basin and begins to wash His disciples feet and dry them with the towel.

The disciples feet were dirty from the dusty road. There were no slaves to do this service. Because of their rivalry and concern for self esteem, they would certainly have never washed the feet of one another. It simply would have never occurred to them. Jesus does this complete favor alone. His behavior devastates them, dissipating much of their hostile mood towards one another. Jesus prepares their hearts to listen to Him. Jesus, no doubt, is not anxious to speak to the hearts of His disciples when they are filled with enmity for one another.

Jesus, washing the feet of His disciples, presents the picture of profound humility. Much more than a portrait of humility: It is a prophetic action symbolizing the deepest act of humility ever enacted. The dialogue between Jesus and Peter reveals much more is involved. The washing of the feet symbolizes the death of Jesus. It reveals the utter abasement of Jesus in death on the cross. *It was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:8)* The washing of the feet prophetically foretells the forgiveness of sin flowing from the death of Jesus. The Blood of Jesus, alone, will wash away the sins of mankind: *Behold! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)*

With this understanding, the real dialogue between Jesus and Peter is evident. Peter insists that Jesus cannot die for him. He, Peter, will not

permit it. The Lord informs Peter that if He does not die for Him, he, Peter, will be cut off forever from the kingdom of God. In this dialogue with Peter, Jesus teaches His disciples they must not be scandalized by His death. It is necessary for their salvation.

Without doubt the Sacrament of Baptism and its necessity for salvation is symbolized in the washing of the feet. Jesus' pouring the water upon His disciples feet symbolizes His pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon His community through His death. Salvation flows entirely from the death of Jesus on the Cross. The only thing human beings can do is bring their sin-filled lives to Jesus in faith.

### THE JUDAS MYSTERY

The scene with in the Cenacle opens with the symbol of death: the presence of Judas Iscariot. We read in verse two: *The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to hand him over. (John 13:2)* Judas is present with the intention of betraying Jesus into the hands of His enemies. We know he was infuriated when Mary of Bethany poured the perfume over the feet of Jesus: *Why was not this perfume sold? It could have brought three hundred silver pieces, and the money have been given to the poor. (John 12:5).* He forces Jesus to defend her: *Let her alone. Why do you criticize her? She has done me a kindness. (Mark 14:6)* John informs his readers: *Judas did not say this out concern for the poor, but because he was a thief. He held the purse, and used to help himself to what was deposited there. (John 12:6)* Both Mark and Matthew relate that immediately following upon this scene over the perfume, Judas Iscariot went off to the chief priests and said, *What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?(Matt. 26:15)* Jubilant over the proposition, they paid him thirty pieces of silver—thirty shekels: the price fixed by law for the sale of a slave. (Ex. 21:32) His treachery makes it possible for them to arrest Jesus on the darkest of nights and destroy Him before Passover. Luke remarks: *Satan took possession of Judas, the one called Iscariot, a member of the Twelve. (Luke 22:3)*

Jesus knew Judas intention to betray Him. Regardless, Jesus reaches out to him in total love. He seats Judas close to Himself, seeking to express the friendship He desires with Judas. He gives Judas His Body and Blood, as both Luke and John indicate. He humbles Himself to wash the feet of Judas—to die for Judas, and yet, Jesus indicates *not all are washed clean (John 13:11)* Herein lies the terrible truth: a person freely accepts or

rejects the atonement of Jesus Christ. To reject Jesus is to remain in one's sins. Judas remains unmoved by the love of Jesus. Jesus seeks to prepare the disciples for the betrayal: *He who partook of bread with me has raised his heel against me. (John 13:18)* The phrase "has raised his heel against me" expresses contempt for a person. Jesus beholds Judas with love. Judas hold Jesus in contempt! *Jesus grew deeply troubled. (John 13:21)* It is moment of great distress and anger for Him. In the face of Judas' own perverted will, Jesus is helpless as the wolf carries away one of His lambs. Jesus announces: *I tell you solemnly, one of you will betray me. (John 13:21.)* All the disciples are frighten and filled with self-doubt—all but one whom none of them suspect. At this moment *Satan entered his heart. (John 13:30)* Jesus turns to him and dismisses him for the Cenacle, from His company: *Be quick about what you are to do. (John 13:30)* As Judas departs from Jesus, John closes the terrible scene simply with, *It was night! (John 13:30)*

The only Light is within the Cenacle. The night which ends the visible presence of Jesus upon this earth has come. With the departure of Judas, the countdown begins. Knowing the hour of His death is at hand, Jesus says: *Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. (John 13:31)*

#### MESSAGE TO THE CHILDREN

John relates that after Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, *he put his cloak back on and reclined at table once more. (John 13:12)* It may symbolize for John that our glorified Lord, who has died for our sins, has again assumed His lordship at the right hand of the Father. He speaks to us now in His glory from heaven and says to His disciples: *Do you understand what I just did for you? He desires them to contemplate his sufferings and death. You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Lord' and fittingly enough, for that is what I AM. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so must you do. (John 13:14-15)* The message to the disciples is clear: His disciples must be willing to live and die for the salvation of others. They are not merely to be receptors of divine goodness but dispensers of God's grace on this earth. Jesus teaches them that their happiness depends upon their knowing these things and putting them into practice. *(John 13:17)*

## THE NEW COMMANDMENT

Jesus addresses the disciples as *my little children* for the first and only time in the Fourth Gospel. The expression fits well in the Passover environment in which the Father explains to a little child the events of salvation. Jesus will respond to the heart-felt questions of His disciples. Peter, Thomas, Philip and Jude will serve as representatives of the community.

Jesus' personal presence in the word has come to an end. No matter how much they long for the 'good ol' days', they cannot be recalled. Jesus meant it when He said, *The light is among you only a little longer*. The past and present are no guarantee of the future. Some flowers bloom only for a day. They cannot measure the emptiness and loneliness to be experienced isolated from Jesus. They "have grown accustomed to His face." A great love, a wonderful gift is often only properly appreciated when gone.

The disciples' lives with Jesus, up to this time, have centered upon themselves. Their lives were filled with what Jesus did for them—night and day. Their lives satellite around Jesus—warming and bathing themselves in His presence; held in their course by attraction to His beauty; greedily absorbing His love, His light, His life.

The departure of Jesus—the disappearance the sun of their lives—throws them back upon their own individual selves. If His ministry has effected them, now is the hour to prove it. Would they now live listless lives filled with ghostly memories of the past—using the past to deny the future—spending their time telling any who would listen to their shattered dreams: *We were hoping he was the one that would set Israel free (Luke 24:21)*? Would their energy for living be consumed in self-sorrow for their personal loss? Would every tear and drop of sympathy be conserved for self—a myrrh for their personal wounds—shrinking their souls into barren islands? Would they merely forget Him as one does a misadventure, a bad investment? Would they exist as if He had never lived and touched their lives?

Their anxious eyes are centered upon their present situation. Our Lord asks them to raise their eyes and with hope look to the future. Their despairing gaze into the past is redirected to the coming future which lays its obligations upon their hearts. This concern for one's self will be changed into care of others. Their past has been for the sake of their future. It is

an offer of freedom—the freedom offered by faith: freed from the past, freed from self, the most enslaving of all slavers. Whatever their answer will be, whatever their lives will become will be determined by their personal response to the farewell command of Jesus of Nazareth: *Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for others. This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another. (John 13:34-35)*

This commandment of Jesus is always new—even two thousand years later—as ‘newness’ is of its essence. This love of Jesus continues to create a new order, a new world. So much is this love of the essence of Christian Community that it is the essential criterion of Christian discipleship.

People with true knowledge of the character and characteristics of Jesus of Nazareth will identify those who are true disciples of the Master. If they must ask if one is ‘Christian’, they are probably only ‘so called’ or self-proclaimed Christians. Those who know not Christ should, however, experience the hidden presence of Christ in the disciples relationship with them. John writes in his first epistle: *See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called the children of God! Yet that is what we are. The reason the world does not recognize us is that it never recognized the Son. (1 John 3:1)*

The disciples, as ‘talmids’ (pupils), are presently gathered at the feet of the Master, their Rabbi. The disciples, troubled with certain difficulties of their faith, have four designated disciples present their problems to the Lord. Peter speaks first: his problem deals with the essence of discipleship—the following of Jesus. His question is, *Why cannot I follow you now? (John 13:37)* Thomas presents the second question. Thomas represents the uncertain disciple who feels insecure in his relationship with the Lord. His questions deals with the uncertainty about the Way: Where are the footprints that lead us? *We do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way? (John 14:5)* Philip asks the third question put in the form of a request which denotes some confusion about Jesus’ nature. *Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. (John 14:8)* The unspoken question is, “Lord, when will you lead us to the vision of the Father?” The final question comes from Jude and deals with the mystery of conversion to the Christian Faith: *Lord, why is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world? (John 14:23)*

These questions asked by Peter, Thomas, Philip and Jude express not only personal difficulties of individual disciples but the deep concerns of first century Christians. The Lord's response to these question will be considered in the following chapter.

Jesus Christ is well aware of His disciples human frailty that will give rise to anxiety, fear and doubt concerning their relationship with the Lord and their own eternal salvation. Jesus hasten to reassure each disciple of the personal and individual love He possesses for each one: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. (John 14:1)* The Hebrew word for faith, 'mn', expresses firmness.

Jesus here speaks of firmness of belief in God's love and His love for His disciples. The love of which Paul later refers when he asks: *Who will separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord?(Romans 8:35,39)* To each and everyone of His disciples Jesus says: *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places; otherwise, how could I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be. (John 14:2-3)*

We have learned from John that the House of God is the temple wherein the glory of God dwells. Jesus has replaced the temple. Jesus' Himself is the House of God. The word 'many' in Hebrew means all. In Heart of Jesus there is room for every disciple. Jesus' arms are open to receive each of us as His friends. In our friendship with Jesus, we may be reassured of our relationship with our heavenly Father. It is a relationship established in Jesus' peace and love with the Father.

When the Lord speaks of preparing a place for us, it is to be understood that the preparation takes place in the heart of the disciple. All in the life of the disciple is being used by the Lord to prepare the disciple for everlasting union with the Lord. When we are prepared, He will come to call us. Some see this at the moment of our death. In the meantime, be comforted knowing the Lord does not expect you to be another Peter, or Paul, or Mary or Martha but only you—His Friend. ***I AM INDEED GOING TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU!***

## THE BOOK OF GLORY

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE-MEMORIZE)

**I GIVE YOU A NEW COMMANDMENT: LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, SO YOU TOO MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER.(JOHN 13:34)**

**FIRST DAY: Read Exodus 12:1-20; Psalm 116.**

1. Why can it be said the Last Supper is the New Passover?
2. What verses in Psalm 116 best describe Jesus in the Fourth Gospel?
3. What does the “cup of salvation” in verse 13 recall to your mind?
4. What verses in this psalm best describe what Jesus has done for you?

**SECOND DAY: Read Luke 22:7-29.**

1. What great Christian events took place within the Cenacle?
2. What kind of men were present at the First Cenacle Meeting?
3. Who do you feel would have best represented you?
4. When the presence of Jesus is not in the Cenacle, what can be expected?

**THIRD DAY: Read John 13:1-17.**

1. What do you understand by the Book of Glory?
2. What do you learn from John 13:1?
3. What is the symbolic meaning of the washing of the feet by Jesus?
4. What do you understand by John 13:17?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 13:18-30 and Matthew 26:6-16.

1. Who does the 'Beloved Disciple' represent in the Fourth Gospel?
2. How would you explain Judas' behavior?
3. What do you understand by the expression: "Jesus grew deeply troubled"?
4. What does John 13:30 teach you?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 13:31-35; Philippians 2:1-11.

1. What virtue was uniquely the virtue of the Son of Man?
2. How is Jesus manifested in the Christian Community today?
3. What is the measure of love demanded of a Christian today?
4. Why will it be impossible to love as Jesus did without the virtue of humility?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 13:36-38 and 14:1-4.

1. How will the success of Jesus' ministry be demonstrated in the future?
2. What do you understand by "in my Father's House there are many mansions"?
3. What message do you receive from John 14:1-4?
4. If you were present at the First Cenacle Meeting and could ask one question about the Christian life, what would your question be?



## CHAPTER 18

### HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Gospel presents at this time the disciples gathered around Jesus in the Cenacle for the last time. It is the time for Jesus' farewell message to them. As mentioned in the last chapter, certain disciples, as Community representatives, present to the Lord particular problems facing the Christian Community. Simon Peter presents the first question which deals with the difficulties of following in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. This deals with a problem facing every disciple of Jesus in one degree or another. In Peter's case it deals with the ultimate degree of discipleship: The sacrifice of one's own life for Jesus Christ—for the kingdom of God. Jesus' response to this question brings to our conscious awareness that the ability to follow Jesus is not a matter of human heroism but of 'call' and God-given grace.

#### WHY NOT NOW?

Jesus tells the disciples that He must leave them and leave them behind. They cannot follow Him now. Peter wants to know why not? "*Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you!* (John 13:37) Peter feels he is ready to die in order to follow Jesus, thinking it to be a matter of human heroism. What this truly involves is victory over self, the world and the devil. These are victories not within human power to achieve. Peter is not led by grace but by self-delusion and his evident desire to be heroic. He will learn the hard way. He will have to endure the bitter embarrassing and sinful situation of denying that he even knew Jesus Christ.

Peter's good desires and willingness to face death are truly essential ingredients within the spirit of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Peter's mistake is that it is a matter of human heroism. It is not a matter of heroism but of faith in the victory of Jesus Christ. It is a matter of humble submission to His will; a matter of patiently and prayerfully awaiting His grace and call. "Come follow Me!" The victory of Jesus must flow through His disciple.

Only Jesus can truly say, "I have overcome the world! I have cast down the Prince of Darkness!"

Jesus reassures Peter and all disciples, *later on you shall come after me. (John 13:36)* The Divine David must first face Goliath (Satan). First He must conquer Satan and death. Only then can the disciple follow Jesus—the Pioneer of our salvation. Jesus knows disciples will become discouraged because they will put faith in themselves. Their success will be no greater than Peter's. The only foundation for victory is total faith in the love of God and His Son. Jesus points the way out of discouragement and failure: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. (John 14:1)*

### HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?

After three years of close association with the disciples and constantly teaching them privately, Jesus presumes they understand the plan of salvation. So He says to them: *You know the way that leads where I go. (John 14-4)* He encourages to be firmly confident in Him: *Have faith in me! (John 14:1)* Thomas response is, *We do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way! (John 14:5)*

Thomas, as mentioned earlier, represents the insecure disciple. He does not lack sufficient evidence for faith in Jesus. His problem is not one proposed by his mind but his emotional makeup. He seeks to quiet his insecurities by seeking further evidence and proof. It will be an unending quest adding not a drop of faith or confidence to his life. He is like the person with all the rudiments of Drivers Education—all that remains now is to driver the car. The Thomas-type wants one more lesson. What is needed is the leap of faith.

Thomas feels he needs something more. Jesus informs Thomas he needs nothing more—but nothing less than his faith-love relationship with the Lord. The spiritual security of Thomas must rest not on what he knows or who he is, but upon who Jesus is: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*

Thomas' first difficult is removed. He knows where Jesus is going: Jesus is going to the Father, He returns to heaven. Jesus makes clear to Thomas that He Himself is the only way. In the Old Testament 'truth' and 'way'

are synonymous: *Teach me O Lord, your ways, that I may walk in truth. (Psalm 86:11)* Truth, for our author, is the eternally Real. Jesus is eternal Reality—‘enduring love’. Truth permeates the very life of Jesus. And ‘life’ (zoe) implies eternal existence—the life possessed by God. Thomas has the Way to eternal life in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The very Person of Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. A person’s personal relationship with Jesus determines his final destiny. To withdraw from Jesus is to lose the Way. The ‘Way’ is never a matter of academic knowledge about Jesus, but rather of a person’s union with Jesus.

### SHOW US THE FATHER

The human spirit longs for the living God, the psalmists tell us. Moses requested to see the face of the living God. The request of Philip echoes this desire: *Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. (John 14:8)* Jesus for Philip remains the way to God and not the goal of discipleship. Jesus replies to Philip: *Philip, after I have been with you all this time, you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ (John 14:9)* *If you really knew me, you would know my Father also.” (John 14:7)*

Jesus insists that a disciple realize that He does not bring His disciples to a revelation of God: The Son of Man is the revelation of the Father to humanity. To demand more of discipleship than this, is to fail to believe and understand Jesus’ revelation. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of divine experience. One must never look beyond Jesus to see God. To do so means to miss God! All true divine experiences must be grounded in the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ.

Such a faith produces wonders. It brings a disciple into such conformity with Jesus that the Father expresses Himself through the disciple as He did through Jesus. Truly, this is the secret of the saints! Their lives picture human being living extraordinary lives. We hear their testimonies: ‘Of myself I am nothing. I am the weakest of human beings—the lowest!’ We behold their virtues, we hear their words and doubt their testimony. After we fail to imitate their virtues, we conclude they are cut from superior cloth than ourselves. We settle for spiritual mediocrity. We miss the whole heart and essence of Christian faith. It implies such a unity of person with the life of Jesus that the only expression describing Christian existence is

the word of Paul: *The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

### LORD, WHY NOT TO THE WORLD?

The final question asked by the disciples comes from Jude: *Lord, why is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world? (John 14:22)* Jude expresses the concern of many in his day and many in every age of the Church: Why is this great revelation of the Father through Jesus Christ not a revelation for all people? Why the grace of faith to some and not to others? God's compassionate love extends to all. Paul teaches that God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (I Tim. 2:4)

Seemingly the answer to this question lies not in the will of God but in the opposition to the will of God by man. There arises within the human heart an opposition to truth and goodness. The truth and goodness of God confronts the human mind and heart *in fragmentary and varied ways*. It often confronts them in *his Son. . .the refecction of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being. (Heb. 1:1-3)* When this truth and goodness confronts a person, there is a reaction to this revelation within depths of his or her heart. This reaction reveals the true nature of the person: opened or closed to the presence of God. Verse twenty-four in chapter fourteen reveals that men and women in this world do not see God within Jesus because they do not love what they do see in Jesus. Regardless of what their conscious awareness reveals about themselves or how they appear to other, they do not love God. Apparently the means of faith are not bestowed. Jesus teaches His disciples: *If you love me and obey the command I give you, I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete—to be with you always: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, since it neither sees (believes) him nor recognizes him; but you can recognize him, because he remains with you, and remains within you.(John 14:15-17)*

When presented Jesus to others—children or adults--He ought to be presented in all the goodness, the truth and beauty possible, as the Person most worthy of human love, admiration and imitation. In the spirit of Saint Luke, present Jesus as the Human Ideal. Otherwise we may contribute to

their disbelief. Love will lead to faith: *He who loves me will be loved by my Father. I too will love him and reveal myself to him. (John 14:23)*

## LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JESUS

Since the disciples of Jesus remain in the world as He leaves the world, Jesus gives them the commandment, if obeyed, will keep the spirit of Jesus alive among them and active within this world. Jesus tells them: *My children, I am not to be with you much longer. . .I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must you love be for each other.*(John 13:33-34) This commandment of love becomes as a reframe in the Book of Glory: *This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.*(John 14:12-14) We read in verse seventeen: *The command I give you is this, that you love one another. (John 14:17)* Such love is not a suggestion nor a pious wish: It is a command! It is an obedience to every disciple of Jesus Christ. This is how the angels in heaven will identify Jesus' disciples from those of the Evil One: *This is how all we know you are my disciples: you love for one another. (John 13:35)*

John uses the Greek word 'agape' to express Christian love. When he writes of love between the disciples, he uses the verb 'agapen'. As he does with faith, so he does with love: he indicates the active element of love. Jesus "had loved"; Jesus "loved to the end" and His disciples must be loving person. The verb 'agapen' appears one hundred and forty-one times in the New Testament and seventy-one times in the writing of John.

Agape emerges as unconquerable good will that will seek nothing but the good of its fellow human beings. It is a spirit not conditioned nor curtailed by what others do. It proceeds from the nature of the lover rather than the merits of the beloved. No one needs to merit a Christian's love. One of the distinguishing qualities of Christian love lies precisely in its ability to love the unloved, the unlovely and the unlovable.

Agape goes beyond the power of human love. It is love beyond the reach of the good pagan. Before this command of Jesus, the human spirit is reduced to repentance and dependence upon the mercy and compassion of the Lord. Agape is more than a command: it is a gift. Agape becomes possible in the life of a Christian through the dynamic Spirit of Jesus. As all other divine

gifts to Christians, it comes from the Father through Jesus Christ. Paul teaches us: *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)*

#### ANOTHER PARACLETE

The imminent departure of Jesus from the world, leaves the disciples fearful and apprehensive. They have heard his last will and testament. They must continue His Presence on earth through a loving community which enables His Spirit to remain alive and operative on earth. Likewise they must be His witnesses to the world. The impossibility of their tasks overwhelms them, Their spirits are sinking fast into sadness and despair. Immediately Jesus moves to reassure them that He would not abandon them as orphans in the world: *If you love and obey the commands I give you, I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete—to be with you always. (John 14:16-16)* The 'you' in this statement equals the Christian Community—the Church.

In the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete appears as personal Agent intimately associated with the disciples as a great Friend who consoles, helps and guides them. He appears, in relationship to the world, as a prosecuting attorney that convicts the world of sin and injustice because of its treatment of Jesus Christ.

We are aided by the Scriptures in our understanding the role and nature of the Paraclete when we are told that the Father "will give you another Paraclete." The Paraclete is identified in verse twenty-six of chapter fourteen *the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name.* In some special way, the Paraclete is another Jesus. The Scriptures speak of the divine origin both of the Paraclete and Jesus—both proceed from the Father and are sent into the world. Their divine nature are know through faith. They both lead the believers to faith. The Holy Spirit comes only when Jesus departs. He is the presence of Jesus when Jesus is absent. Not in the sense that there is no distinction between the Paraclete and Jesus but rather because of their divine natures both bring the Divine Presence—the Father's love—into the world. In this sense, Jesus returns, in spirit, to His disciples in the Paraclete.

John indicates the personal separation between the Paraclete and Jesus when he teaches that the Person of Jesus remains in heaven with the

Father and the Holy Spirit remains on earth with the Church. John distinguishes the unique roles of Jesus and the Holy Spirit: God's only Son saves us by meriting our salvation by His death on the Cross; the Holy Spirit accomplishes our salvation by sanctifying the disciples of Jesus. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to anglicize human beings, as if being human is an error, but to sanctify humanity.

As the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to His disciples, the very presence of the Holy Spirit is a verification of Jesus. The truth of life and teachings are verified. The disciples are confirmed in their commitment to Jesus Christ. Proceeding from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is the personal expression of divine love. The Paraclete is Divine Love existing as a Person.

The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. The primary effect of sanctification is love of God. The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into our spirits. The Spirit of Love makes discipleship possible. His love creates the children of God. The active presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the fulfillment of the New Commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you." This activity of the Holy Spirit produces a unity between the Father and His children on earth. What sin divides, the Holy Spirit unites. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the Gift of Peace. Peace is essentially not a quality or condition but the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

### I AM THE VINE

As Jesus beholds His disciples in the Cenacle, they are one with Him. He warns them that they must never separate themselves from Him. Their union with Him is vital for their lives as Jesus is the Vine of Eternal Life. A disciple, as the branch, only has life by abiding in the Lord. This implies obedience to His command.

We have only to look at our spirit of obedience in order to discover the motivating spirit of our lives. Obedience to Jesus proves both our love and faith in Jesus. Certain wonderful effects flow from such obedience: The Father loves us; we become the friend of our Friend and live joy-filled lives. *All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete. You are my friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:14)*

Jesus speaks about fruitless branches. Some disciples will bear no fruit. Evidently their own wills block the Holy Spirit. They may produce a great deal of foliage but no heavenly fruit. The good they produce proceeds from their own natures (their own wills)—not from grace. Their good works do not remain. There is nothing godly about them.

Jesus calling Himself the “true vine” in the context of the Last Supper awakens within the mind of His disciples the Eucharistic celebration. Both Mark and Matthew refer to “the fruit of the vine” during the Eucharistic Celebration. In one of the earliest Christian works (the Didache), we read, as part of the Eucharistic blessing: “We thank you, Our Father, for the holy vine of David, your servant, which you reveal to us through Jesus your servant.” The words of Jesus: *He who remains in me and I in Him*, are truly echoes of *the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. (John 6:56,57)* When Jesus says, *I am the true vine*, the thought expressed is not that far from—*this is my blood*.

The Eucharist Celebration is a memorial of the death of Jesus. In dying, Jesus bears eternal fruit. He commands His disciples not only to recall His death by a re-enactment of the Last Supper but, by bidding them to receive His Body and Blood, He draws them into His death—the death that gives Life. It is hard to deny the implications that if a disciple shares in the life of Jesus, the disciple must share in His death—a redemptive, life-giving death. Only love makes discipleship possible. The Lord encourages growth in His love to the degree of laying down one’s life for the kingdom of God.

Eucharistic Communion symbolizes both the faith and love demanded by discipleship. It not only symbolizes faith and love but its worthy reception actually expresses loving faith, nourishes and conserves it and brings a disciple to Christian maturity: *He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:54)* *The man who feeds on this bread shall live forever. (John 6:58)*

Created we were for the glory of God. Jesus confirms: *My father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming of my disciples. (John 15:8)* *You may ask what you will, it will be done for you. (John 15:7)* *All you ask the Father in my name he will give you. (John 15:16)*



**HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. HE WHO LIVES IN ME AND I IN HIM , WILL PRODUCE ABUNDANTLY, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING. (JOHN 15:5)*

**FIRST DAY: Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and 32:45-52.**

1. What virtue does Moses extol in his farewell address?
2. What is the effect of this virtue?
3. Why do you think it is so important in discipleship?
4. What is the difference between the deaths of Moses and Jesus?

**SECOND DAY: Read John 14:5-31.**

1. Why was Peter unable to follow Jesus 'now'?
2. What does this teach you about discipleship?
3. What do you understand by the Gift of the Paraclete?
4. How do you see the Holy Spirit as the Gift of Peace?

**THIRD DAY: Read John 15:1-27.**

1. What do you understand by John 15:5?
2. What do you see as the importance of the Holy Eucharist in your life?
3. What does John 15:14 teach you?

4. How would you answer the question: Are you a friend of Jesus?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 16: 1-11.

1. How can you bear witness to Jesus in this world?
2. How will a true disciple of Jesus live in this world?
3. Why was it good for the disciples that Jesus departed this world?
4. What does the Holy Spirit do in your life?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 16:12-22.

1. What does the Holy Spirit teach you about the world?
2. How do you see the Holy Spirit giving glory to Jesus?
3. What sustains a disciple during times of tribulation?
4. Why can a disciple expect sufferings in this world?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 16:23-33 and Revelations 22:15?

1. What is the cause and source of a disciples joy in this world?
2. What do the words of Jesus—"in me you may find peace"—mean to you?
3. How would you summarize Jesus' farewell message to His disciples?
4. What great truth is symbolized in the reading from Revelations?

## CHAPTER 19

### OUR ETERNAL HIGH PRIEST

#### INTRODUCTION

When the life of Moses grew to an end, he gathered the family of Israel around his person. He gave his farewell message and offered a final prayer for his people—a hymn called the Canticle of Moses. Moses separated himself from the people after his prayer. He climbed alone to the top of Mt. Nebo. He saw from a distance the Promised Land which he would not enter because of his infidelity. Another—Joshua—would lead the people into that land. The name ‘Joshua’ implies ‘savior’ as does the name ‘Jesus’.

The image of Moses has never been absent in the Fourth Gospel. He serves not as man superior to Jesus but as a shadow of the Lord Jesus. Jesus’ farewell in the Cenacle purposefully recalls Moses to mind. The true Promised Land is in view. Moses alone climbed the mount upon which he must die before his people could claim their inheritance under the leadership of Joshua. Jesus will now climb Mount Calvary alone and beholds the kingdom of God. His very person become the Way through which His people enter the kingdom of God. A far greater than Moses is present within the Cenacle.

We read in the Book of Sirach of God’s consecration of Moses: *For his trustworthiness and meekness God selected him (consecrated him) from all mankind. (Sir. 45:4)* ‘To consecrate’ means ‘to make holy.’ As God is holy, it implies being set apart for God—for His work. God instructs Moses to consecrate his brother Aaron and his sons as priests: *Anoint and ordain them, consecrating them as my priests. (Exodus 28:41)*

Aaron was anointed priest of God by his brother Moses. His priesthood is hereditary and permanent. Aaron would remain high priest throughout the Old Covenant through his personal descendants. Only a man from the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron could serve as High Priest.

Jesus of Nazareth has no natural claim to the priesthood, being born in the tribe of Judah and not of the family of Aaron. However, we see that King

David foresaw that his descendant, one from the tribe of Judah, the Messiah, would be both king and priest. David speaks of the Messiah as being a high priest in the type and order of Melchizedek.

The name 'Melchizedek' carries us far beyond the days of the priesthood of Israel. It carries us back to Abraham, the father of the future nation of Israel. Abraham is returning from victory over his enemies when suddenly appears the man Melchizedek. Genesis records: *Melchizedek, king of Salem (Peace), brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High. . .who delivered your foes into your hands.'* Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (Gen. 14:18-20)

Melchizedek makes this one appearance with no reference to his origin nor ending. He becomes a symbol of an eternal priest, having no beginning nor ending. He is acknowledged to be a high priest of God. When Abram gives tithes to Melchizedek, he acknowledges his superiority. This action of Abraham symbolizes this line of priesthood to be superior to that of Israel. As the descendants of Abraham, all Israel paid reverence to Melchizedek in Abraham. When the New Testament refers to Jesus as a priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek', it infers an eternal priesthood given by God superior to any other. It implies a change in the religious worship of God.

Jesus speaks of Himself as being consecrated by the Father and sent into this world. (John 10:36) According to the New Testament, God consecrated Jesus to be the high priest of the New Covenant: *Holy brothers who share a heavenly calling, fix your eyes on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we acknowledge in faith, who was faithful to him who appointed him. (Hebrews 3:1-2) Christ did not glorify Himself with the office of high priest; he received it from the One who said to Him, 'You are my son: Today I have begotten you'; just as he says in another place, 'You are a priest forever, according to the order (the line) of Melchizedek.'* (Hebrews 5:1-6)

The Scriptures reveal the work of the high priest: *Every high priest is taken from among men and make their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (Hebrews 5:1) John writes in his first epistle: If anyone should sin, we have, in the presence of the Father, Jesus Christ, an intercessor who is just. He is an offering for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world. (1 John 1:2-1) Paul speaks of Jesus who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34)*

## THE PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS

While Jesus is present amidst His disciples in the Cenacle, John the Evangelist erases the lines between time and eternity. It is the eternal present in which Jesus pours out His Spirit before the Father. This moment is called 'the Holy of Holies' of the New Testament. We hear the communion of the Son with His Father. Perhaps, we hear only echoes of His Heart—it is enough!

It is believed by some, this prayer existed in the early Church as a hymn sung during the Eucharist celebration. It is not a prayer recorded verbatim by the apostles, but one expressing the sentiments in the Heart of Jesus during His last earthly hours. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John has been able to verbalize for all us these holy sentiments in the Heart of Jesus.

It is a divine and timeless prayer—more of union than petition. As Jesus prays aloud, He brings His disciples into His own Spirit. It is a prayer of petition and revelation for the disciples. It reveals His loving concern for the glory of His Father and for His disciples and all whom come to believe in Him. He prays of you and me.

The psalmist sings: *I will proclaim your name to my brethren. (Ps. 22:23)* And Jesus tells us: *I have made your name known to those you gave me out of the world. (John 17:6)* In the Semitic sense to make one's name known is to reveal the personality of the Person, to reveal their very heart. Jesus sums up His entire ministry with the words: *"I have made your name know."* This implies not only revealing the nature of God but much more: it implies bringing men and women into personal union with God—into eternal life.

We are made aware in verse three that the knowledge of God is not without correct doctrinal belief: it demands we believe and confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. *Eternal life is this: to know you the only true God, and him you sent, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3)*

We are instructed in the first part of Lord's priestly prayer that the disciples will glorify their Father because His kingdom will come through their completing the work given to them by Jesus. This work is to make the name of God know on this earth. Jesus entrusts to the disciples the

message given to Him. Through their work, Jesus Himself has been glorified: *It is in them that I have been glorified. (John 17:10)* This would especially be true after their reception of the Holy Spirit.

### PRAYER FOR THE DISCIPLES

Jesus' disciples are in His Heart and in His Prayer: *I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one. (John 17:15)* The work of the disciples is in this world, as is the work of the Son of Man: *As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (John 17:18)* They must remain in the world, as it is their mission to bring men and women to their heavenly Father and to their Savior, Jesus Christ. They are not sent to condemn the world but to save it.

As this present world is under the power and influence of the Evil One, the disciples live in a hostile and deadly environment—the same environment in which the Apostle Judas was destroyed. They will live in this world in a state of tension. How well the Lord knows they are not immune to their environment. By one means or another, the world seek to seduce the disciples from Jesus Christ. Our Lord prays: *Protect them with your name which you have given me. (John 17:11)*

The disciples will find protection in the Divine Name. This does seem to indicate that the Divine Name carries certain power within itself, not in some magical nor superstitious way, but its use always implies a commitment and union with the Person of Jesus. The Scriptures reveal: *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just man runs into and is safe. (Prov. 18:10)* We have at the arrest of Jesus a powerful demonstration of the Divine Name. When the Lord responds to the men arresting Him “Ego eimi” (I AM He)—they fell back and to the ground. Paul proclaims that at the Name of Jesus every knee will bend in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth. Peter confirms that there is no other name given under the heaven by which men may be saved.

Our Lord prays that His disciples will be consecrated in Truth. They are to be set aside from the world, as Moses and Aaron were, for their special mission on earth—the work of Jesus. Jesus prays for their holiness—an essential quality for the successful disciple. Their holiness comes through their obedience to the command of Jesus. These disciples are holy because they obey Jesus: His will lives in them. As they abide in His Word, they

abide in holiness on this earth. To be "consecrated in Truth" means to be holy through obedience.

As the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (obedience), Jesus prays for the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon them. The Holy Spirit will create a spirit of docility to the will of God. His Presence counteracts the poison of pride. The Holy Spirit will keep the disciples obedient to the will of Jesus Christ.

The Father in heaven hears the prayer of Jesus. These disciples will be kept safe in the world from the Evil One. They will deliver the message, the Good News entrusted to them. They will witness Him before the world. Their lives will bear fruit. Many men and women will come to faith in Jesus through their ministry.

### PRAYER FOR FUTURE DISCIPLES

Jesus prays for those who will in future years come to faith in His Name and obedience to His word through the ministry of the apostles and other disciples. John stresses, through the ministry of the apostles and disciples, the importance of the disciples of Jesus in the conversion of the world. Even though the Holy Spirit is given, it must not be forgotten that the Holy Spirit is sent into lives of men and women on this earth. The Holy Spirit primarily operates through their lives. These disciples are His personal instruments of grace in the world. Apparently it is God's will that salvation comes to the world through the instrumentality of human lives docile to the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit was not sent into the clouds. He does not hover over the heads of men and women. He takes up residence within the spirits of human beings. He depends upon their willing cooperation with Him in order to touch the lives of men and women in this world. There are many people in this world who will hear of God and will be saved. They must first hear the Word of God and there must be tongues that proclaim and teach the Word. As Pope Paul VI preached in Rome: "We are all responsible for our times and our brothers!"

## PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Jesus prays for unity within the Christian Church. The model for this unity is divine: *That all my be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be one is us. (John 17:21)* If Jesus prays to the Father for unity, then such unity must come from God and not from the operations of man. Christian Unity is a divine sign in the world testifying to the divine sonship of Jesus Christ and the love of the Father for Jesus' disciples: *So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me. (John 17:23)*

Christian unity for John the Evangelist is not simply human fellowship nor harmonious interaction of Christians—even pagans can do that! It demands a unity patterned upon the union between the Father and Son. It is a unity empowered by the divine love flowing from the Holy Spirit. This truth Jesus emphasizes when He says: *I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one. (John 17:22)* The glory of Christian Unity is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Disunity is the work of man. Holy unity is the work of the Holy Spirit! It will come as will all things for which Jesus prays. When Divine Love finds entrance into humble and obedient Christian hearts, the Prelude of Christian Unity will sound throughout the earth: Peace on earth to men of good will!

When we count the cost of Christian Discipleship, let us never lose sight of its final end: *Father, all those you gave me I would have in my company where I am, to see this glory of mine. (John 17:24)* Jesus prays His disciples will be with Him in the kingdom of God. The prayer is heard. It will come to be! Paul reminds Christians that eye has not seen; hear has not heard; it has not enter into the human mind what God prepares for those who love Him. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9)

The priestly prayer of Jesus to His heavenly Father ends with the assurance of His ever enduring love for His disciples: *To them I have revealed your name, and I will continue to reveal it so that your love for me may live in them, and I may live in them. (John 17:26)* With this divine assurance John the Evangelists says to all disciples of Jesus Christ:

***COME THEN! LET US BE ON OUR WAY!***

(John 14:31)



**OUR ETERNAL HIGH PRIEST**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

*I PRAY THAT THEY MAY BE ONE IN US , THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT YOU SENT ME. ( JOHN 17:21)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read Sirach 45:1-26.

1. In what way is Moses like Jesus?
2. How does Aaron remain perpetually a high priest?
3. How did Aaron become the high priest of Israel?
4. As priests, what work did Aaron and his sons perform for Israel?

**SECOND DAY:** Read Hebrews 4:14 through 5:14.

1. What are some characteristics of a high priest?
2. Why are we encouraged in Heb. 4:16 to go to Jesus in times of trouble?
3. What does Heb. 5:8 mean to you?
4. What do you think verses twelve through fourteen in chapter five mean?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Hebrews 7:1-28.

1. Why would the priesthood of Melchizedek be considered greater than that of Aaron's priesthood?
2. Why is Jesus said to be a priest according to the line of Melchizekek?
3. Why does the sacrifice of Jesus end all other sacrifice?
4. How would you explain the Christian Mass in light of verse 27?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 17:1-8; Wisdom 7:22-30.

1. What does John mean when he speaks of 'knowing' God and Jesus in verse three?
2. What particular works are mentioned by Jesus that He has finished?
3. In what way do you see Jesus as Wisdom Incarnate?
4. In what way could you say that you "know" God?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 17:9-19.

1. What particular things did Jesus request from the Father for His disciples?
2. What do you think Jesus meant by "protect them with your name"?
3. What do you think verse 17 in John means?
4. What does John 17:18 teach to be the mission of the disciples in the world?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read John 17:20-26.

1. What two requests does Jesus make for His future disciples?
2. What is the model and source of Christian unity?
3. What do you see to be the cause of Christian disunity?
4. How will Christian unity be achieved?

## CHAPTER 20

### BEHOLD THE MAN

#### INTRODUCTION

The decisive battle between the Son of Man—Jesus of Nazareth and the Fallen Star—Lucifer will now be waged. Not a battle between flesh and blood but the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Darkness. The earth and its human inhabitants are the spoils of this war. It is a war for the eternal life of the children of God. A war waged through human instruments—men and women of this earth.

A New David, the Son of Man, will go forth from the Cenacle clothed in the Armor of God, the power of the Holy Spirit to encounter the satanic Goliath with all his earthly power and fury of Hell. The Prince of Darkness comes forth to destroy God's beachhead on this earth—Jesus of Nazareth. This Lord will not yield one inch of human soil to the power of evil.

When it comes time to leave the Cenacle, our author makes clear who is in charge this night as the vilest of events unfold. Jesus is *well aware of all that will happen to him. (John 18:4)* Jesus previously made it clear: *I lay down my life. . . No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. (John 10:17)*

In the heart of the night, Jesus departs the Cenacle with His disciples, crossing the Kidron Valley, they enter a garden. This path from the Cenacle recalls the night King David fled from the treachery of his son Absalom. Jesus recalled this episode at supper by quoting David's reference to Ahitophet, his counselor who conspired with Absalom against the king: *Even my friend who had my trust and partook of my bread, has raised his heel against me. (Psalm 41:10)*

When Jesus reaches the garden, he assumes a more ancient and fundamental role. John simply writes: *There was a garden there, and he and his disciples entered it. (John 18:1)* The scene evokes memories of the Garden of Genesis—the Garden of Temptation. There the First Adam betrayed his sonship with the heavenly Father at the instigation of the Ancient Serpent.

If the First Adam obeyed God, his obedience would have given God the human channel through which His infinite love would have come to the human race. There would have been no evil on earth: no tears, no pain—nor suffering and death. These bitter fruits are now the realities of disobedience.

Wherein lies the Will of God for the New Adam? From His childhood Jesus has *known the sacred Scriptures, the source of wisdom*. That source through which *the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work*. It is the Will of God, as prophecy has foretold, that Jesus of Nazareth will be the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Through His sufferings the will of God will be fulfilled and the sins of men atoned and forgiven. *If he gives his life as an offering for sin. . .the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him. Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear. Because he surrendered himself to death and was counted among the wicked; he shall take away the sins of many, and win pardon for their offenses. (Isaiah 53:10-12)*

The Son of Man, as the New Adam, must abide in God's Will. Therefore, He must abide in God's Love: abide in the love for His Father and abide in love for those who reject and destroy his earthly life. This is His road to glory. It will be the glorification of the Father and of the Son.

Jesus tells His Father: *I have glorified your name on earth and will glorify it again. (John 12:28)* As the will of God flows through the obedience of the New Adam—it must flow through the realities of this earth: through tears, pain, suffering and death. God must be glorified amidst these elements. The sufferings and death of God's only Son for the sins of mankind reveal the Father's love for sinful humanity.

In the garden this night, the New Adam awaits the trial before him. Very soon they arrive: Satan and his servants. His primary presence is within Judas, the one he entered and possessed; the one Jesus referred to as a "devil": *Did I not chose the Twelve of you myself? And yet one of you is a devil. (John 6:70)* All are represented that night: the chief priests, the Pharisees, and Rome. Bringing Jesus to trial, they will be on trial and condemn themselves.

Jesus steps forward to meet the arresting party. He takes command: 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus the Nazorean,' they replied. 'I am he,' he replied. (John 18:4-5) When Jesus uttered the divine Name 'Ego eimi', they stepped back and fell to the ground. Jesus tells them if He is the one they seek, they must let His disciples go free. They had no choice but to obey his command. This gift of physical safety granted to His disciples is a symbol of their eternal salvation to come to them through the name of Jesus. As John interprets it: *This was to fulfill what he had said, I have not lost one of those you gave me. (John 18:9)*

### PORTRAIT OF PETER

Our author clearly presents two portraits for comparison: a portrait of Jesus under fire and one of Peter, the representative of discipleship. Jesus' behavior is contrasted with that of Peter. Jesus reveals that He could impede His arrest, if He so willed. With good intentions Peter strikes the first blow for the kingdom of God by cutting off the ear of Malchus, a slave of the high priest. Peter's attempted defense of Jesus illustrates, one more time, Peter's inability to accept the role of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh for the Messiah of Israel. Peter is still a long way from going Jesus' Way. One wonders how often the Lord has had to undo the work of well-intentioned disciples before the divine plan could truly unfold? Jesus commands Peter: *Put your sword back in the sheath. Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me? (John 18:11)* Jesus permits Himself to be arrested, bound and led away first to *Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. (John 18:13)*

*Simon Peter, in the company with another disciple, kept following Jesus closely. (John 18:15)* Peter loves Jesus but love is not enough to closely follow Jesus. Peter neither understands himself nor the forces to be conquered before a disciple can follow the Son of Man. Peter will be disgraced before the night ends.

### HOUSE OF ANNAS

In the next scene, Jesus stands before Annas. This man held the office of high priests from 6 to 15 A.D. Four of his sons later became the high priests. Presently his son-in-law is the high priest. The old man Annas remains the most influential power, perhaps the real power. From his religious position he had been able to amass a fortune. Animals for

sacrifice in the temple must be without a blemish. They could be purchased in the temple or outside the temple. Those purchased within the temple were guaranteed to be without a blemish. These all belonged to Annas. Their place of purchase in the temple was known as the Bazaars of Annas. He used his position to exploit the people: a pair of doves sold outside the temple for 4 pence and within the temple for 75 pence. The House of Annas was historically notorious. We read in the Talmud: "Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to the serpent's hiss! They are High Priests; their sons are keepers of the treasure; their sons-in-law are guardians of the Temple; and their servants beat the people with staves."

It is before these "serpents" Jesus stands for judgment. When Jesus drove the animals and money changers out of the temple, He personally attacked the vested interests of the House of Annas and indirectly branded his family as "thieves". The trial before Annas and Caiaphas is a pretense. All ready they condemned Him without even hearing evidence. Nicodemus has protested in vain against this. They interrogate Jesus only in order to gain information to present to Pilate.

The two questions put to Jesus concerned His disciples and His teachings. Both could have political and religious implications. On the religious level they may have reflected the charge that Jesus was a false prophet. An ancient Jewish reference, Talbab, Sanhedrin 43a, relates that Jesus was executed for practicing sorcery and exciting Israel to apostasy. As we read in Luke, their first accusation before Pilate was *We found this man subverting our nation, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and calling himself the Messiah, a king.* (Luke 23:2)

Jesus stands before his interrogators and denies nothing. He appeals to the openness of His teachings: *There was nothing secret about what I said.* (John 18:20) With this defense Jesus indicates their violation of Judaic justice: In Jewish law a man could be condemned of a capitol offense only on the testimony of two witnesses and never on his own testimony.

As Jesus defends Himself, we see Peter is unable to handle his situation: *'Are you not a disciple of his?' He denied it and said, 'I am not!' 'But did I not see you with him in the garden? (John 18:25-26)* When Peter denies being with the New Adam in the garden, he cuts himself off from the salvation that flows from unity with Jesus. When his words "I am not" re-echo in his heart, did he hear their full significance. Jesus had answered "I

Am", signifying the fullness of divine life. In the mind of John, to be not of Jesus Christ is to be not of life. If one was not His disciple, one was on the way to becoming nothing. *Without me you can do nothing*", Jesus has said and John believes you cannot truly be anything without Jesus.

### PORTRAIT OF PONTIUS PILATE

We are told at break of day, they bring Jesus before Pilate. Pontius Pilate, appointed prefect by Rome, represents the political power of the world. John describes with subtle irony the encounter of Pilate with the Jewish leaders. They have most seriously violated the Law in their unjust condemnation of Jesus, yet they scrupulously observe the laws of ritual purity in order to be able to celebrate the Passover feast.

The trial unfolds on two stages: the outside court of the praetorium, where the Jewish leaders and their cohorts are gathered; and the inside room of the praetorium, where Jesus remains prisoner. Pilate goes back and forth from one stage setting to other which symbolizes the struggle within his own soul. The outside stage, filled with lies, unjust accusations and hatred, represent the world and its pressures. The inside stage represents the spirit of Pilate confronting the presence of Jesus. As the certainty of Jesus' innocence grows in Pilate's mind, the political pressure outside mounts for the condemnation of Jesus.

Pilate seeks to avoid the responsibility of dealing with Jesus by sending Him to Herod. Once Jesus enters a person's life, no one but that person can deal with Jesus. The Jews leaders have made their decision and Pilate will have to make his. Pilate tries not to deal with Jesus on a personal level—to avoid making a personal decision about Him. This is impossible. Pilate, in the end, must accept Jesus or reject Him.

Pilate is typical of the person seeking the middle course in a struggle that is truly totally personal. John demonstrates that the man who fails to decide for Jesus is led to tragedy. By failing to give justice to Jesus and to release Him after declaring Him innocent, Pilate is now forced to make a travesty of justice by releasing a guilty person. Not protecting the interest of Jesus, Pilate now finds himself compel to act against his own interests. Failing to listen to the voice of Jesus, Pilate must now listen to the voice of the world. The would-be neutral man is frustrated. Having failed to listen to truth and decide in its favor, he inevitably finish in the service of injustice.

## YOU ARE A KING?

This entire trial is dominated by the kingship of Jesus. Jesus claims possession of a kingdom. He does not refuse to be known as a king, but He knows this concept conveys an improper concept of His kingship. His answer to Pilate's question, *'So, then you are a king?'* is a reluctant 'yes' that demands clarification: *The reason I was born, the reason why I came into the world, is to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice.* (John 18:37) The Kingdom of Jesus is concerned with the eternal realities—things that endure forever. The passing glories of this world—its elusive and temporal goods—are not of His kingdom.

The Fourth Gospel presents Jesus of Nazareth as the revelation and source of these eternal realities. Only those who love the truth will 'hear' His voice. Of these Jesus is King—*those who hear the Word of God and act upon it.* (Luke 8:23) Jesus challenges Pilate personally: "Are you of the truth?" Pilate is now the subject of the trial.

## THE END OF THE TRIAL

*Pilate next move was to take Jesus and have him scourged. The soldiers then wove a crown of thorns and fixed it on his head, throwing around his shoulders a cloak of royal purple. Repeatedly they came up to him and said, 'All hail, king of the Jews!', slapping his face as they did so.* (John 19:1-3) Pilate presents this pitiful Jesus to the Jews as their king with these words: "Ecco Homo! Behold the Man!" Behold the Son of Man and what the world has done to Him! This presentation led the Jewish leaders and their followers to utter the fateful words: *'We have no king but Caesar!'* (John 19:15)

For our author the real trial has ended: *'Now has judgment come upon this world.'* (John 12:31) When the Jewish leaders proclaimed the half-mad Caesar of Capri to be their king, they, in the mind of John, renounced their status as God's people. They renounced the Covenant at the precise moment the priests of the temple are beginning the preparation for the feast of Passover. At the moment the Passover lambs are being slaughtered, the trial comes to an end as Pilate hands Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified.



## BEHOLD THE MAN

### SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK (PLEASE-MEMORIZE)

*THE REASON I WAS BORN, THE REASON I CAME INTO THE WORLD IS TO TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH. ANYONE COMMITTED TO THE TRUTH HEARS MY VOICE. (JOHN 18:37)*

**FIRST DAY:** Read II Samuel 15:13-30 and John 18:1-14.

1. Why is Jesus called the New Adam?
2. How does the New Adam atone for the sins of the First Adam?
3. Who is the motivating principle behind Jesus' sufferings?
4. Why does John recall to mind the memory of David and his sufferings?

**SECOND DAY:** Read John 18:15-27.

1. Why does Peter attempt to follow Jesus on the night of his arrest?
2. Why do you think he fails to truly follow Him?
3. What is implied by the denial, "I am not!"?
4. What do you learn from the failure of Peter?

**THIRD DAY:** Read John 18:28-40.

1. Why was Jesus' trial before the high priests illegal and unjust?
2. What type of man do you see symbolized by Pilate?
3. What is being symbolized by Pilate going back and forth on the two stages?
4. How would you answer Pilate's question: "Truth! What is that mean?"

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 19:1-16.**

1. What one theme runs through the trial of Jesus?
2. What does “my kingdom is not of this world” teach you as a disciple?
3. What do you understand by Pilate himself being on trial?
4. What does “We have no king but Caesar” imply?

**FIFTH DAY: Read Mark 15:1-20.**

1. What similar theme runs through both Mark and John?
2. What does the silence of Jesus before men imply?
3. What do you see to be symbolized by choosing Barabbas over Jesus?
4. In what way could we make this same choice?

**SIXTH DAY: Read Luke 23:1-25.**

1. What is the implied crime against Jesus in verse two?
2. What is Pilate attempting to do by sending Jesus to Herod?
3. What does Pilate seek to indicate by the washing of his hands?
4. Do you recall any time you washed your hands as did Pilate?

## CHAPTER 21

### THE ENDURING LOVE

#### INTRODUCTION

The Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth carries us deeply into the incomparable mystery of Divine Love. Human hearts are stunned before this incomprehensible scene. It is the Way of God and not man's way. St. Luke expresses the scandalous effect upon the disciples on the road to Emmaus: *We were hoping that he was the one who would set Israel free. (Luke 24:21)* Their faith and hope were destroyed by His death. Only when the disciples came to realize it had been foretold in the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer all these things in order to enter into His glory, was faith and hope revived. This is why when the Evangelists tell of Jesus' death, you hear the refrain: "According to the Scriptures. . ." In a word, it was God's will.

#### KING OF THE JEWS

Pilate had an inscription placed on the cross which read, JESUS THE NAZAREAN THE KING OF THE JEWS. The inscription in Hebrew, Latin and Greek was read by many of the Jews, since the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. *The chief priests of the Jews tried to tell Pilate, 'You should not have written, 'the king of the Jews'.*(John 19:21) All the gospel accounts agree the charge of being a king was inscribed against Jesus. Only John turns the charge into a worldwide proclamation of kingship and enthronement. For John, Pilate, as representative of the greatest political power on earth, proclaims to the world that Jesus has been enthroned as King. Many see this as a sign that the kingship denied by the Jews will later be acknowledged by the Gentile world.

#### THE ETERNAL PRIEST

The next scene of the Passion presents Jesus on the Cross as the eternal priest of the New Covenant. His seamless garment is symbolic of the priestly garment worn by the high priest. Jesus is presented as not only

King but as High Priest. The Jewish historian Josephus describes the ankle-length tunic of the high priest as one long woven cloth, not composed of two pieces. The Book of Exodus speaks of the linen tunic of the high priest as "a woven piece".(39:27)

On Calvary Jesus is both the sacrificing Priest ( *No one takes my life from me but I willingly lay down my life*). Jesus is the sacrificial victim—the Lamb of God. The wood of the Cross is the sacrificial altar on which the sacrifice of atonement is offered. We read in Hebrews: *He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priests before God on their behalf, to expiate the sins of the people. (7:17)* Simon Peter reminds early Christians: *Realize that you were delivered from the futile way of life your fathers handed on to you, not by any diminishable sum of silver or gold, but by Christ's blood beyond all price: the blood of a spotless, unblemished lamb chosen before the world's foundation and revealed for your sakes in these last days. (I Peter 1:18-20)*

The early Christian Community beheld at the death of Jesus their eternal High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies—the Presence of the Father—carrying His own Precious Blood sacrificed for the sins of all peoples. There he remains to make intercession for all sinners until the end of time.

#### THE NEW EVE

The earthly life of Jesus draws to an end. He loved His own to the very end. Jesus now demonstrates His loving concern for the community of disciples he leaves behind. The Mother of Jesus is presented twice in the Fourth Gospel. Mary appeared at Cana and now she appears at Calvary. John now indicates that something powerful occurs at Calvary between the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of Jesus by his using a scriptural formula of revelation: *Here is your son. . . Here is your Mother. (John 19:26-27)* In this formula the one speaking reveals the mystery of the divine mission to be undertaken by the person mentioned in the formula. Jesus speaks both of sonship and motherhood from the Cross. Evidently these two concepts are important in the Divine Plan and they are being brought into being by Jesus' death on the Cross. What has occurred between Mary and the Beloved Disciple completes the work the Father has given Jesus to do.

The words addressed to Mary and the Beloved Disciples indicate an adoption process. In this process, the Beloved Disciple becomes the adoptive son of Mary and thereby the adopted brother of Jesus Christ. When the Lord speaks from the Cross: *Woman, there is your son*; and to the Beloved Disciples, *There is your Mother!*, the words are creative. The Creative Word of God has spoken these words. His Word brought the world into being, and now it brings a new creation into existence. We have arrived at the heart of Calvary's mystery, the Redemption.

The first book of the Bible speaks of "the Woman": *I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. (Gen, 3:15)* Between Satan and the Woman there existed a separation. It does not refer to Eve She had ended the separation, closing the gulf through her sin. By her disobedience, she entered into the dominion of Satan. The last book of the Scriptures, Revelation, recalls the woman of Genesis. It describes a war between Satan and the woman and her seed. It relates the inability of "the great dragon" to touch the Woman. Both at Cana and Calvary John deliberately refers to Mary as "woman", identifying the Mother of Jesus as the Woman of Genesis and Revelation.

Mary has a God-given role in the Christian Community that must be recognized and accepted in order to be at peace in the fullness of revelation and to enjoy the fruits that flow from the "obedience to the truth". Mary is part of God's plan and not man's idea.

On Calvary, Mary becomes the New Eve—"mother of all the living" as she accepts the Beloved Disciple as her son. There at the foot of the Cross, Mary, Mother of Jesus according to the flesh, becomes Mother of the whole Christ according to the Spirit. As the Mother of the Messiah, Mary's role is in the struggle against the satanic serpent. Now she is entrusted with offspring whom she must protect in the continuing war between Satan and the disciples of Jesus.

Mary now becomes a corporate symbol of the Church itself which must bring forth children of God and care for them as a mother for a child. The loving relationship between Mary and the Beloved Disciple represents the loving relationship binding the Church and its members. The Beloved Disciple has no difficulty in accepting Mary as his spiritual mother nor does the Church she protects.

John presents the death of Jesus as the completion of all the Father had given Him to accomplish. He now writes: *Jesus realizing that everything was now finished, said to fulfill the Scriptures, 'I am thirsty.'* (John 19:28) A soldier at the foot of the Cross dipped a sponge in common wine and presented it to Jesus. The common wine offered symbolized again that the old wine of Israel had grown sour—an old spirit no longer able to give life than the waters from Jacob's Well could quench the thirst of man. The good wine has been saved until last.

John previously affirmed that those who believed in Jesus would receive the Holy Spirit once Jesus was glorified. Understandable at this climatic moment there would be a symbolic gesture of Jesus imparting the Holy Spirit to His disciples. John records now: *When Jesus took the wine, he said, 'NOW IT IS FINISHED.'* Then he bowed his head and delivered over his spirit. (John 19:30)

John pictures Jesus breathing His last breath over the heads of His Mother and the Beloved Disciples as symbolic of the Church's reception of the Holy Spirit. At the hour of Jesus' glorification, as Jesus returns to the Father, the mission of the Holy Spirit—proceeding from the Father and Son—has begun. A new creation comes into being flowing from the work of the New Adam through the channel of the New Eve.

#### FINISHED BUT NOT ENDED

The death of Jesus completes the work the Father had given Him to do—a work foretold in the Scriptures. When Jesus' life ending with the handing over the Spirit, it indicates now the Holy Spirit will take up the work of Jesus: "Father, I have completed the work you gave me to do. *IT IS FINISHED* is His cry of Victory.

John emphasizes that from the side of the dead Jesus, flows blood and water. The very birth of the Church is symbolized in this episode. From our study of the Fourth Gospel, we are aware that 'flowing water' and 'living water' are symbols of the Holy Spirit. It clearly symbolizes the Christian Sacrament of Baptism which imparts eternal life. The blood flowing from the side of Jesus represent the Holy Eucharist—the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus which nourish Christian life.

John completes his masterpiece with a reference to the Pascal Lamb. He began his narrative with John the Baptist proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God!" He ends speaking of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb: *Break none of his bones. (John 19:36)*

### CALVARY REVISITED

For the Christian Church the Holy Eucharist is a constant memorial of the unforgettable death of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Holy Eucharist is both a sacrament and a sacrifice. It is a sacrament as it contains the Body and Blood of Christ. As Paul asked the Corinthians: *Is not the cup of blessing we bless a sharing in the Blood of Christ? Is not the bread we break a sharing in the Body of Christ? (I Cor. 10:16)* Paul reminds the Christians: *This means whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup unworthy sin against the body and blood of the Lord. (I Cor. 11:27)*

The Holy Eucharist is our sacrifice. As Paul writes: *Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. (I Cor. 5:7)* The author of Hebrews reminds Christians: *We have an altar of which those who serve the tabernacle (the Mosaic Law) have no right to eat. (Hebrews 13:10)* The Eucharist is essentially linked to the Sacrifice of the Cross insofar as the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is truly present under the separate species of bread and wine. This separation symbolically represents the real separation of the Body and Blood of Christ on the Cross.

The sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist in no way detracts from the Sacrifice of the Cross. It draws its whole power from the Cross. The sacrificial gift offered in the Eucharistic celebration is the Christ of the Cross. One important distinction between Calvary and the Eucharist must be borne in mind: on the Cross—the sacrificial Gift was offered in a bloody manner by a real separation of the Body and Blood—in the death of the Lord Jesus. Jesus cannot die again. In the Eucharist, Jesus is offered in an unbloody manner by a mystical separation of the Body and Blood. The Eucharist is a living memorial of the death of Jesus—not in the sense of merely recalling the memory of Jesus' death, but in an actual mystical renewal of the supreme sacrifice. Paul tells the Christians of Corinth: *Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes! (I Cor. 11:26)*

The primary sacrificing Priest is Jesus Christ. The ministerial priest is but the servant and representative of the Lord through whom Jesus speaks the

words of consecration over the bread and wine. This power to consecrate the bread and wine the Lord imparted to His apostle at the eucharistic celebration when he command them: *Do this in remembrance of me. (I Cor. 11:24)*

The Sacrifice of Jesus took place in time but it is a timeless act. The Sacrifice of Jesus abides in the eternal presence of the Father. Through the ritual of the Holy Eucharist the eternal sacrifice of Jesus was made present at the gathering of the Christian Community under Paul in Corinth in 50 A.D. It is made present today in the Christian Community and will be made present tomorrow. Through the Eucharistic celebration, Calvary is always present.

In the Eucharistic celebration, the fruits of the death of Christ are made applicable to sinful human beings. The Resurrected Christ of the Holy Eucharist still bears those wounds from which flows streams of grace flooding the participation with the peace and joy of His victory over sin. In the Eucharist we rejoice in the Lord Jesus as the God of the living!

The celebration of the Eucharist is both Mount Calvary and Mount Tabor. It makes the hours, days and years in the desert possible. The Bread of life infuses into our hearts the obedience and self-sacrificing love of Jesus—bringing the Spirit of Life into our hearts. It strikes a death blow to Satan's hold over the soul. In the power of the Eucharist, we take up our cross and follow the Lord.

While he lived, Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. In death, Mary had nowhere to lay His body. The Lord provides. Already the uplifted Jesus begins to draw men. Two men, Joseph of Arimathea and Nichodemus, who never admitted they believed in Him while he lived, acknowledged after His death their faith before the world. What His living among them did not do, the power of His dying accomplished. The buried him in the garden, in a new tomb in which no one had ever been buried. The Passion of the Lord began in a garden. The New Adam finds rest in the Garden. It is finished!



**THE ENDURING LOVE**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

**SINCE, THEN, WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO HAS PASSED THROUGH THE HEAVENS, JESUS, THE SON OF GOD, LET US HOLD FAST TO OUR PROFESSION OF FAITH. (Hebrews 4:14)**

**FIRST DAY: Read Genesis 22:1-18.**

- 1. How do you see Abraham as a symbol of the heavenly Father?**
- 2. How do you see Isaac as a symbol of Jesus?**
- 3. How did Abraham demonstrate his love of God?**
- 4. What was the reward for such a deed?**

**SECOND DAY: Read Isaiah 53:1-12.**

- 1. What did the early Church discover in this Scripture?**
- 2. Why does the Suffering Servant of Yahweh undergo such sufferings?**
- 3. How did he bear this suffering?**
- 4. What resulted from these sufferings of his?**

**THIRD DAY: Read Psalm 22:1-23; Zechariah 12:10 and 13:3.**

- 1. According to Mark, Jesus prayed this psalm while dying. What do you see as the theme of this psalm?**
- 2. Do you feel Jesus was expressing a sense of abandonment?**
- 3. What elements from the Passion do you find in this psalm?**

4. According to Zecahariah, what will flow from the death of the Messiah?

**FOURTH DAY:** Read John 19:17-27 and Revelations 12:1-17.

1. What is being proclaimed by the title placed on the Cross of Jesus?
2. What is the symbol of the seamless garment worn by Jesus?
3. What is the significance of verses 26 and 27?
4. What does Revelations tells us about the sufferings of Jesus and the Chruch?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read John 19:28-42.

1. What is being symbolized by the physical thirst of Jesus?
2. What do you think is meant by "Now it is finished!"?
3. What does the blood and water from the side of Jesus symbolize?
4. In what way is the Holy Eucharist connected with the sacrifice of Calvary?

**SIXTH DAY:** Read I Peter 1:18-2:1-9.

1. What does Peter teach you about the death of Jesus and yourself?
2. What does, "your faith and hope, then, are centered in God" mean to you?
3. What do you understand by I Peter 2:5 ?
4. According to Peter, what are some of the spiritual effects of being a disciple?

## CHAPTER 22

### THE NEW GENESIS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Gospel is a document of Christian Faith. John the Evangelist presents Jesus of Nazareth as the object of faith. The ending of the Fourth Gospel clearly reveals the purpose of this gospel account: *Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of his disciples. But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you many have life in his name. (John 20:31) There are still many other things that Jesus did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them. (John 21:31)*

There is only one Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and four accounts of the one Gospel: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. John's written account closes the authored Gospel presentation to the world. Chapter Twenty originally concluded this gospel account. John climatically ends this gospel account presenting the greatest sign and wonder performed by Jesus of Nazareth: His Resurrection from the dead; His glorious Ascension to the Father. Amidst this account he presents the diversified effects of this wonder upon the disciples of Jesus.

John presents to us four symbolic examples of the disciples reaction to the Resurrection of Jesus: the reaction of Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, the Beloved Disciple and the Apostle Thomas. The last words spoke by a disciple, in the original conclusion of this gospel account, are a full profession of the Christian Faith in Jesus of Nazareth: *MY LORD AND MY GOD! (John 20:28)*

Jesus Himself, understandably, speaks the final words—words not expressed to the disciples of His time; but words directed to the future, those yet to hear the preaching of the Gospel: *BLEST ARE THEY WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND HAVE BELIEVED! (John 20:29)*

## Mary Magdalene

Mary comes to the tomb while it is still dark, searching in the darkness of unbelief for Jesus among the dead. Mary appears in the Scriptures as a public sinner, touched and transformed by her personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus became the center of a new life for Mary. The death of Jesus overwhelms her with grief and despair. Her eyes are directed toward the grave, towards the dead. Life holds no attraction for Mary. Her strength of living she channels into grieving and weeping over the remains of her loved One. She weeps for what has been. Her despair only deepens with an empty tomb: *The Lord has been taken from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him. (John 20:2)*

John indicates the Resurrection of Jesus occurs on Sunday when he relates that Mary comes *early in the morning on the first day of the week*. The phrase “while it was still dark” symbolizes Mary’s spiritual condition of unbelief. When Mary discovers the empty tomb, she runs immediately to inform Peter and the Beloved Disciple. Both disciples run to the tomb, but the Beloved Disciple reaches the tomb first:

*He did not enter, but bent down to peer in and saw the wrappings lying on the ground. Presently, Simon Peter came along behind him and entered the tomb. He observed the wrappings on the ground and saw the piece of cloth which had covered the head not lying with the wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the disciple who had arrived first at the tomb went in. He saw and believed. (John 20:5-8)*

The Beloved Disciple arrives first at the tomb; he arrives in faith in the resurrection first. He believes without having seen the Lord. This is attributed to the unique loving relationship between Jesus and this man. The Beloved Disciple sees the signs and these testify to him that Jesus has risen. He sees in the empty tomb the evidence of the resurrection. The position of the clothing indicates being discarded, the headband removed and carefully rolled up by someone.

Lazarus came forth from the tomb wrapped in the symbols of death. Death still holds its claim over him. Jesus comes forth freed from death’s hold—victorious over death. This the Beloved Disciple believes. Peter’s

thoughts are not revealed. We only read: *With this, the disciples went back home. (John 20:10)* The home of Simon Peter was in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.

Mary Magdalene arrives back at the tomb after the departure of Peter and the other disciple. There is no other place for her to be. Mary's love wins for her the privilege to be the first to see the Risen Lord. Mary turns away from the empty tomb and see Jesus standing before her. *But she did not know him. (John 20:14)* John does not wish merely to imply that tears of grief blinded her eyes, making it impossible to see Jesus. Much more appears to be indicated by the phrase "she did not know him".

Paul teaches us in Corinthians that the transformation taking place at the resurrection is quite total. The resurrected body is as different from the former dead body as the seed of a flower is from the flower in full bloom. The Resurrected Jesus is not the physical Jesus Mary knew. Mary had encountered Jesus in a body dominated by the flesh. The Risen Jesus possesses a body dominated by the spirit.

Mary stands before the Resurrected Jesus Christ and there is no recognition. There were tears in her eyes, but not blinding tears. She failed to recognize the man before her until He spoke a word: "Mary!" There was a resounding deep within her heart. She knew without a doubt: Rabbouni—My dear Teacher! Mary knows Jesus by the love vibrating in her name: *The sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out. (John 10:3)* Rabbi's often used the word "Rabboni" in prayer to God.

Apparently, Mary immediately ran and fell at the feet of Jesus. He said to her: *Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. (John 20:17)* Mary fails to realize that things have changed. The old relationship enjoyed with Jesus can be no more. It belonged to an earthly life ended. Her past experience led her to love Jesus dearly. What she now experiences brings divine light and wisdom to her love. Truly she knows now the Person she loves is the Lord, the Savior of the World. While He remains in heaven and Mary on earth, she must love Him in a different manner. Jesus gives her the command to love Him by her witness to the brethren that He is truly the Lord. *Mary Magdalene went to the disciples: 'I have seen the Lord! she announced. Then she reported what he had said to her. (John 20:18)* Mary Magdalene, an apostle of Jesus, is the first to give witness to Christian Community of the Risen Lord.

Mary may well represent many today whose lives have been transformed by a religious experience and have failed to understand the importance and purpose of their experience. They seek to keep alive the affect of the experience. They search here and there for religious stimulation to keep alive within their conscious awareness the feeling of God's love. They fail to realize the self-centeredness involved in their spiritual lives. Their search is truly one of spiritual self-gratification that ultimately dwarfs their spiritual growth—keeping them babies in the spirit. They, too, as Mary Magdalene, must find a new relationship with the Lord in their service to the kingdom of God on earth.

### HIS APPEARANCE TO THE APOSTLES

John relates that on the evening of the first day of the week, Jesus appears to the Apostles in the Cenacle. Is this the day of Jesus' resurrection or a week later? This we cannot answer, but the preceding scene between Mary and Jesus indicates that it is the ascended Jesus who appears, having been glorified at the right hand of the Father. Jesus fulfills His promise of giving the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. Both John and Luke present the coming of the Holy Spirit after the Ascension of Jesus. The time sequence and the manner of the coming of the Holy Spirit differ. Each presents the same truth within a framework that best illustrates his own theological insights.

John places each manifestation of Jesus on the first day of the week, Sunday. By the time of writing of the Fourth Gospel, it was legislated that the Lord's Supper be celebrated on the first day of the week. We need to understand that this would be according to the Jewish calendar: the first day of the week would begin at sunset on Saturday. It is certainly a possibility that by placing all manifestation on Sunday, John desires to emphasize the Presence of Jesus at the Eucharistic celebration.

The Apostle Thomas was absent from the Cenacle on this occasion. When informed by the others that they had seen the Lord, his response was one of crass disbelief: *I will never believe it without probing the nail prints in his hands, without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into his side.* (John 20:25) The next Sunday Thomas is with the others in the Cenacle and Jesus appears and confronts Thomas exactly where he is: *Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Do not persist in your unbelief, but believe!* (John 20:27) Thomas responds to the presence of Jesus with the proclamation expressing the fullness of the Christian Faith:

**MY LORD AND MY GOD!** (*John 20:28*) It is the profession of Faith that confesses that all power in heaven and on earth rest in the hands of Jesus Christ. Some biblical scholars have noted that Thomas' confession was a eucharistic acclamation used in the early Church. (Mary heard Jesus on Sunday in the 'word'.)

John relates the joy of the disciples at the sight of Jesus. The prophecy at the Last Supper is fulfilled: *You are sad for a time, but I shall see you again; then your hearts will rejoice with a joy no one can take from you. On that day you will have no question to ask me.* (*John 16:22-23*)

### A NEW CREATION

The disciples have come to the fullness of faith and are one with Jesus. He now commissions them as His Apostles: *As the Father has sent me, so I send you.* (*John 20:21*) There is such an identification between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian Community now takes the place of Jesus in the world and continues His ministry. The faith and the love of the disciples open them completely to the power of Jesus. Jesus breathed on them and said: *Receive the Holy Spirit!* With his use of the word 'breathed', John intends to carry his readers minds back to Genesis to the creation of man (*Genesis 2:7*). John implies it is the time of a New Creation—the birth of the Church.

The Lord Jesus imparts a tremendous power to the Apostles, a power flowing from the Holy Spirit within the Community: *If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound.* (*John 20:23*) Obviously, the power to forgive sins flows from the atoning death of Jesus upon the Cross. Jesus definitely gives to the Church the power to forgive sins, to reconcile sinners with their Lord. It is not merely a commission and power to preach forgiveness of sin, to declare men free of sin, it effects the forgiveness of sin. A power possessed by Jesus, a power Jesus imparts to His Church, His Body on earth-- a power of re-creation.

Jesus sends the disciples into the world; He sends them as the Father sent Him. Sent to reconcile the world to God. Sent to save sinners. They are given the power to remove the primary obstacle to reconciliation—sin. The power to save sinners by freeing them from their sinful chains.

The early Church believed and exercised its power to reconcile sinners. Paul preached: *God has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18)* The Church exercises chiefly this power through the sacraments of Baptism and Penance. The minister of the Church says, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

From its conception, the Church ordains ministers of reconciliation and legislates the use of the power to forgive sins for the salvation of souls. The Christian Church definitely declares that the power granted by Jesus in John 20:23 concerns the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. It is a power given to the Apostles who pass it on through the ordination of others.

At the time of the Apostles, faith came through seeing Jesus. Jesus is no longer physically visible on this earth. With the Ascension of Jesus into heaven, a new age began on earth—the Age of the Holy Spirit, the New Genesis. People must “see” the invisible Jesus through the operations of the Holy Spirit—the testimony of the Spirit—within their hearts. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Jesus. Jesus’ last recorded words imply this latter faith is nobler: *Blest are those who have not seen and have believed! (John 20:29)*

#### SIMON PETER THE SHEPHERD

Scripture scholars generally hold that Chapter 20 is the original ending of the Fourth Gospel. The present final chapter being added later. It preserves a very beautiful and early tradition of an appearance of the Risen Lord to Simon Peter. Paul mentioned Jesus’ appearing personally to Cephas, Peter. The tradition suggests that, after the death of Jesus and Peter’s denial, Peter returned home to his old way of life. If he had not lost faith in Jesus, he had lost faith in himself. He returned to what he knew best—catching fish. The Lord does not let Peter go. He seeks him where he is at—at a place of guilt, self-doubt—in a sense of unworthiness and uselessness to the Lord. Words earlier applied to him by Luke would be appropriate now on his lips: *Leave me, Lord. I am a sinful man. (Luke 5:8)*

The crowning moment of Peter’s life takes place early morn at a fish-fry on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It is a private party of eight with Jesus Host and Cook. The gracious Host waits until after breakfast to bring up



the business at hand. Gazing directly at Simon Peter, Jesus asks: *Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?* (Where “these” his friends, his boat, his nets, his old way of life?) Three times Jesus ask Peter if he loved Him. The first two times Jesus speaks of agape-love, the highest degree of love. Three time Peter responds with filial-love, the best his human heart can give. The third time Jesus Himself uses the verb for filial-love, seemingly accepting the love Peter can give. Jesus’ three responses to Peter’s declarations of love are: “Feed my lambs”; “Tend my sheep”; “Feed my sheep”.

Christ compared His Church to a sheepfold and to Himself as its Shepherd—one fold, one shepherd. The lambs, the shearlings, and the sheep compose the entire fold. Our Lord commissioned Simon Peter to tend, feed and protect His flock. Christ Himself is the Shepherd of His flock and now, he prepares to depart, He entrusts His flock to Peter. But, Jesus remains always the Chief Shepherd to whom Peter is responsible. ( See I Peter 3:1-4)

There is a custom in the New East of saying something three times before witnesses to solemnize it, especially in contracts which confer legal rights and authority. Jesus’ command to Peter before the disciples lends a special legality to Peter’s position of authority in the Church.

The scene in which Peter becomes the Shepherd, is also one of reparation and reconciliation restoring Peter to discipleship. The mention of a charcoal fire is sufficient to recall Peter’s three-fold denial of our Lord. Before a charcoal fire Peter warmed himself the night he said, I am not His disciple. Jesus now speaks only of love. Peter love is what is important to Jesus . Three times Jesus asked Peter to affirm his love. Every sin is a failure in love. Jesus seeks only the reparation of love. As Peter expresses total love for Jesus, Our Lord entrusts the Church to him.

Immediately following his appointment, Jesus speaks of Peter’s death. His ministry will demands a life of loving service and bring him to the level of love desired by Jesus. Peter will lay down his life as a true shepherd of his sheep. *When Jesus finished speaking, he said to Peter, ‘Follow me.’ (John21:19)*

What does Jesus ask of His disciples? To love Him more than anything else, to have loving care and concern for our brothers and sisters, mind our own business and FOLLOW HIM!

**THE ENDURING LOVE**  
**SCRIPTURE READINGS AND QUESTIONS**  
**SCRIPTURE OF THE WEEK**  
**(PLEASE-MEMORIZE)**

**BLEST ARE THEY WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND HAVE BELIEVED! (John 20:29)**

**FIRST DAY: Read John 20: 1-18.**

1. What is the importance of Jesus in the life of Mary Magdalene?
2. What was the effect of His death upon her?
3. How did Mary recognize the Risen Savior?
4. What do you learn from her about a disciple's relations with the Lord on this earth?

**SECOND DAY: Read John 20:19-23.**

1. How would you account for the differences between Peter's and the Beloved Disciples reaction to the Resurrection?
2. What is occurring in John 20:21?
3. What do you understand by John 20:23?
4. What is the Church's definitive teachings on this text?

**THIRD DAY: Read John 20:24-30.**

1. What do you see to be Thomas' problem of faith?
2. How does Jesus deal with Thomas?

3. What do you understand by, "My Lord and my God!"?
4. What does John 20:29 teach you?

**FOURTH DAY: Read John 21:1-11.**

1. What is being symbolized by Peter returning to the sea?
2. What is being taught by, "All through the night they caught nothing"?
3. Why has the Risen Lord come to the shore of Galilee?
4. What is symbolized by the charcoal fire?

**FIFTH DAY: Read John 21:12-19.**

1. What do you learn about Jesus in the breakfast by the sea scene?
2. What does Jesus' behavior towards the sinful Peter teach you?
3. What is the ministry Jesus gives to Peter in this episode?
4. Why do you think Jesus chose Peter to be the Shepherd?

**SIXTH DAY: Read John 21:20-25.**

1. How does Peter come to agape love?
2. What does Jesus response to Peter about the Beloved Disciple teach you?
3. If Jesus said to you, "your business is to follow me" what would He mean?
4. What have you learned in your study of the Fourth Gospel about being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth?

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