



The purpose of John writing this “Gospel” is not debatable, seeing he states clearly the overall intent in 20:31, “... these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” It is clear at the outset that John’s focus is on the deity of Jesus and that He was without question the “Christ” (the Promised One and the “Anointed One” of God) and above all this, He was/is the “Son of God.” The purpose, though, was more than informational, it is life defining! John knew that those “believing” would come to know true life, not just future, but now (see also John 5:24, 10:10, I John 5:10-13).

When reviewing the “god-man” characters of mankind’s imagination, it becomes brutally clear how disappointing these characters are made out to be, when they (as “gods”) become “man.” They have no true and lasting “righteousness” (no purity), and any display of it is short-lived. They are weak and susceptible to all the same vulnerabilities and failings we face. Yet Jesus Christ is infinitely above all and is the very person of righteousness and purity!

This Gospel is known to be the latest of the four Gospels and was most likely written around 100 A.D.. One of (if not the oldest) fragment (manuscript) piece is from about 130 A.D. and another larger manuscript (containing all of John 1-14) is from the late 100’s, so its accuracy is highly proven in its relation to the original manuscript. This is important because so much of our Christology and Soteriology pivot off of what is written in this book.

We will see throughout this study the demonstrations of Christ as God, specifically referred to at the start as “the Word” and in so doing, Christ brings about (by His very presence and message) belief and disbelief in those interacting with Him. His miracles are more presented as proving His deity, and more of what He taught in conjunction with these miracles is revealed by John because it fits his intended purpose (Jesus as the “Christ” and the “Son of God”). As this is done, those seeing and hearing him are revealed to be who and what they really are (those believing and those disbelieving), as this Gospel still does today. The Lord Jesus Christ is essential also as John will detail and clarify in 1:18 when he writes that Jesus Christ has “made Him know” (the Greek word being “ἐξηγήσατο”, essentially Jesus “exegeted” God (explains, reveals Him)). John does not deal with a mere man, but eternal Creator God becoming a man and living among those at that time - how would we expect God as man to live, respond, behave and deal with the questions and issues of this world He created? This is what we no begin to delve into and so it is on this exploratory, enlightening venture we begin!

I. In The Beginning Was The Word and The Word Was God - John 1:1-18

A. Jesus as “the Word” and His pre-existence - vs. 1-2

1. Why reference Jesus Christ as “the Word?” - this question has been answered in a variety ways, yet typically with much speculation that proves to be more philosophical than it does practical

Others try to make a case that the word for “word” (Λόγος) as the means by which God reveals and fulfills His will (He speaks, it happens) - such ideas seem possible, but John seems to assume his reader will see the significance of this that it is referring to Jesus, and that it is core to what he is writing at the start

This usage is common in the Targums and along with the various other direct references to Jesus Christ’s deity, it becomes inarguable that this is one of the most direct and absolute references to Jesus as infinitely more than man... He was God in flesh

- a. F.F. Bruce generalized the usage of “the Word” as, “...Jesus is the eternal Word or self-revelation of God, expressed in many ways at various times, but finally incarnated into a human life.” J.B. Phillips renders “In the beginning was the Word” as “At the beginning God expressed Himself...” though he admitted this was lacking in being fully accurate
- b. The most substantial explanation is the usage of this term “the Word” is its usage in Aramaic, especially in what were commonly referenced as the “Targums” (which were Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Scriptures that were read aloud in the synagogues in John’s time) - this phrase was often used in the place of what was called the “Tetragrammaton” (the Hebrew name of God transliterated in four letters as YHWH or JHVH and articulated as Yahweh or Jehovah) - this was the formal name of God
- c. For instance, in Genesis 3:8,10, in the Targums Adam and Eve heard the “Word of the Lord walking in the garden” and so “hid themselves from before the Word of the Lord” - in Gen. 17:1 the “Word of the Lord” appeared to Abram and spoke to him (as well as in Gen.18:1-4); in Ex. 3:1-6, 13-15 the “Word of the Lord” spoke with Moses from the burning bush and “Moses hid himself from the glory of God’s presence”; also, in Ex. 12 the Passover night in the Targums it reads, “the Word of the Lord” and the “glory of God’s presence” went through Egypt, and in Ex. 13:21-22 the “Word of the Lord” was going before them in the cloud and

It needs to be ever before our eyes the reality of who Jesus was and Who He is now - this adds the highest weight to what He said and did and our need to give it top consideration

pillar of fire - it would be the "Word of the Lord" that would speak from between the cherubim above the Mercy Seat - clearly this is a reference to God, and John's usage of it is a direct reference to Jesus as being God ("one with the Father" as well as "the Son of God")

d. These and so many more demonstrate the plausibility of this being the best explanation of John's usage of "the Word" - even without this and other explanations of this term for Christ, we still see more than enough proof for the deity of Christ

2. "In (the) beginning was the Word" - vs. 1

a. Realizing the importance of this beginning in this Gospel (and to the entire scope of Christology), each of these initial phrases will be handled in detail

b. The first few words "Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος" are necessary to get right, not just because the first verse of John's Gospel has been used to try to diminish and even take away the deity of Jesus Christ, but because it answers (at the start) not necessarily "who was this Logos?" as much as it does "from when was this "Logos"?"

Note that John is not defending the deity of Christ- this is actually presumed in light of the way John words this opening

The beginning is apparently playing off of Genesis 1:1 only, rather than describing what came after the "beginning" he is looking to what was before it- "In Gen_1:1, the sacred historian starts from the beginning and comes downward, thus keeping us in the course of time. Here he starts from the same point, but goes upward, thus taking us into the eternity preceding time." Vincent quoting Milligan and Moulton

c. In his explanation of this particular wording and the absence of the Greek article before "beginning," Lenski wrote, "In the Greek many phrases lack the article, which is not considered necessary.... But in John's first sentence the emphasis is on this phrase "in the beginning" and not on the subject "the Word." This means that John is not answering the question, "Who was in the beginning?" to which the answer would naturally be, "God"; but the question, "Since when was the Logos?" the answer which is, "Since all eternity." This is why John has the verb ἦν, "was," the durative imperfect, which reaches back indefinitely beyond the instant of the beginning."

d. At the time and point that all things (that we know) began (creation of matter, time and space), the "Word" **was already there**, and as seen in Col. 1:15-20, all was created "by Him"

e. His timelessness (eternality) and His not only being with God, but being God makes it overwhelmingly clear that **all things about Him (especially His teaching and actions) need to be studied closely, realizing His position and perspective are infinite**

3. This "Word" was with God and was God - vs. 1-2

"By exact and careful language John denied Sabellianism by not saying *ho theos en ho logos*. That would mean that all of God was expressed in *ho logos* and the terms would be interchangeable, each having the article." RWP Note, "Sabellianism" is modalism (that God is not three distinct persons, just one person taking on different "modes")

So, at this point (with these two verses) we know that before all things (before the beginning) there already was God and with Him the Word - try to conceive of a new reader unfamiliar with any of this, and his/her fascination with such a person- they would desire to learn everything about them

a. Much has been made in "cult circles" regarding the absence of the proper article in this phrase ("ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος" - literally "the Word was with the God and God was the Word" though since "Word" has the article, it is the subject and would be translated first in English, thus "and the Word was God")

b. John, in this sentence is identifying "the Word" as being eternal (having always "been") and since only one could fit this description, the "Word" **is** God (again, not seeking to **prove** that "case" just making it so the reader would know of Whom they were reading)

c. And yet, as indicated by Robertson, the "Word" is shown as being with God while being God and so demonstrating a separate "person" of the Godhead

d. To make it very clear, John restates it "... this one was in the beginning with God"

e. We might phrase it, "This one (the Word) was the same one Who WAS already there at the beginning of all things with (as one with) God"

f. This is given to add emphasis to His eternality - if Christ was created, this would have been the place to clarify that He was created before the beginning of the universe - instead, **John stresses the presence of Christ with God at the beginning of all things**

g. Some have so hesitated with these truths and this text, they cannot imaging "God" condescending to this level, as though it would make Him lesser in their eyes - yet seen with the other qualities of God, such a condescension is truly glorious (for us to behold and come to know that such a One would do this)

B. Jesus the creator and the "light of man" - vs. 3-5

1. Notice the **deliberate** wording of verse 3 - "πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο" (everything through Him came into being (was made)) - **He** did not "come into being" since He always "was" but all that we have in the creation (everything) was made through Him - vs. 3

see also Heb. 1:1-3

a. See I Cor. 8:2-6 - It clearly describes that "from Him [God] are all things" and yet also, regarding Christ it states, "... through whom are all things and through whom we exist."

b. And, almost as though he anticipated a misinterpretation, John restates it, "καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν" (and without Him came into being not one thing that has come into being)

- c. The idea is strictly limited; “all things” does not have the Greek article, so is not in reference to the creation as a whole but all/every particular (details) of it - “The reference is to the infinite detail of creation, rather than to creation as a whole, which is expressed by τὰ πάντα.”
- d. Simply put (though a concept that exceeds our comprehension) “all that became, came from Him who always was”) - already, the immediate impression regarding our own perspective is one of shameful amazement that we would ever trust our “read” of how we believe we see “all things” over He who made all things!
- e. It should be noted that Jesus (the Son) is not the only creator; the entire Godhead was at work in the creation - see Gen 1:26 (the use of the plural “us”) - the Spirit is referenced in verse 2

2. In Him (the Word) already was life, and this life (in Him) was the “light of men” - vs. 4-5

Apart from Him there is no other life at all - so all life comes from Him

This is part of the idea of Paul in Rom. 1:16-22 - just in being alive (and seeing the life around us in creation), there is a consciousness of God

John reveals what would seem to be an odd picture - here we have light but it is not seen, and yet this blindness is not just the natural state, but is also intentionally guarded so as not to allow light to come in

Amongst men there would be two groups; those who “received Him” and those who didn’t (and the receiving group did so by the “will if God”)

- a. From Him came life (since He already had it; again the usage of “ἦν” (was) is more than a hint of His self-existence) - the word for “life” here is “ζωή” (dzo-ay’) more than just biological life, but all life (livingness/aliveness)
- b. There is one core idea with another resulting application that John emphasizes - all “aliveness” serves as “light,” which we might reference more as “enlightenment” - since there is life (consciousness), it serves as an insight to “men” that there is more to what is seen than meets the eye - this is the basic idea
- b. But it is more than this - this life (that man borrows) only finds true life (purpose and truly “living”) in Him and the life He lived while here on Earth - this life He lives serves as the “light” of men (to lighten the way) - compare to John 8:12 and 9:5,12:35
- c. Building on this, John clarifies that though Christ was “the life” and so His life was “the light of men”, it was not received/accommodated - the present tense is used “the light shines” (it still does) yet the “darkness” (here, used as the antithesis to light) does not “comprehend” it - the underlying word (καταλαμβάνω) does not just indicate an inability to understand, but also an aggression against it (as rather than receiving, it tries to overtake it, or here it would be more like suppressing it) - the result being what is described in Rom. 1:28 (the reprobate/depraved mind, unable without God’s grace to see the Truth)
- d. The “stage is set” - we have the “main characters” on the stage, that of the “Word” (revealed to be “the life” and “the light”) and men (who are in darkness) - this was clearly more than a struggle between one wise and powerful man against multitudes of other self-righteous men; it was **man against God** (not as much in a power struggles as much as a determinedly stubborn resistance on man’s part!)

C. The witness sent to bear witness of “the Light” and the two resulting responses - vs. 6-15

1. A man “on a mission” - vs. 6-8

Though John (the Baptist) had a special calling/mission, we seek out the same essential purpose ourselves - looking to testify regarding Jesus Christ so that others will believe Him by means of our witness

see Matthew 3:1-11

There is a tendency to focus and rely upon the messenger more than the one the message points us to

- a. The way the first few words of verse 6 are worded, indicate “a man” that came (emerged in contrast to “the Word” who always was), and this man was “sent” (the underlying word where we get our word “apostle”) and so was on a mission from God, and its purpose was to bear witness concerning the “Light”
- b. The purpose of this “witness” (one who openly testifies regarding the validity of something) was to point to “the Light” with the purpose, not of coming to know Him but to “believe through him” (John) - the ultimate point was they “believe” (trust which entrusts)
- c. Making it clear, John was not “the Light,” just one pointing out (and to) Christ and His light, actual/real life - John was sent from God versus impostors pointing to other sources of “truth”
- d. His (John the Baptist) was focused on his purpose - to point to the “Light” and as we see accounts of his message, we identifies the sinfulness of all and the need for repentance
- e. John (the Apostle) wrote this toward the end of his life (near the end of the first century), so apparently there were some still only focused on John the Baptist’s message and had not come to know the full answer (compare this to Acts 19:1-6)

2. The rejection and reception of the “Light” - vs. 9-13

He is the “true light” because He is the source of all light and is light in and of Himself (not needing to borrow or reflect it)

- a. The “Word” identified as the Light is now referenced as the “true light” (ἀληθινός describing what is “genuine” versus “fake” and the truth that is “real” because it reveals the way things really/actually are) - Thayer added, “... opposed to what is imperfect, defective, frail, uncertain”
- b. This is important because Christ was contrasted to false “lights” which (in their seemingly limitless numbers) lead to what is uncertain, false and dangerous

Consider then that any claiming to be “enlightened” without “the Word” are still in darkness and without light, their musings and conclusions are not seen to be what they actually are

Either way, it is evident that any true enlightenment will come in Christ and without Him, nothing can be seen for what it truly is and “how” it truly is

Using their own logic framed and ordered to ignore God (the creator) they cannot see everything for what it truly is, not having the light to see - these are the blind, blind to their own blindness

compare to Rom. 8:18-24

This wasn't written just to point out the depravity of certain Jews, but all of mankind, seeing Gentiles en masse would also reject Him

This answer is key to so much of this Gospel - belief will be stressed and is more than “believing about” but is more dependent trust

All others (the majority) who did not receive Him and actively rejected Him are, in actuality, the oddities (though they are the majority), more so seen in light of the truth of who He is and not in their numbers

It is important to begin with the realization that this is all by the will of God - for as the life of Christ is recounted, it would be “human” to focus on numbers and status versus miraculous associations with faith/belief in Him

- c. The Word as this true light is the source of “true enlightenment” to “everyone” - we know this does not mean that everyone is “saved” as seen in the context before and especially verses 10-11 - it could be understood as “anyone” (in light of those in verse 12 “authorized” (empowered) to become children of God)
 - d. There are some differences of opinion as to how this verse should be read: 1. “...which enlightens every man as he is coming into the world... (as in each person's birth, and that any true light they will ever have is because of the true Light) and 2. “The true light which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world...” (prefer the second)
 - e. This same one (the Word of God, the life, the light of men) was in the world (the “κόσμος” as in the creation/order) that He himself had created (it was His world), and yet this same “world” did not recognize Him - it was His “order” and so all its physical laws and laws/orders of reason found their source in Him and yet so distorted by sin He was unrecognizable by them
 - f. He came to His own creation, and yet was He was unreceived (unwelcomed) amongst His own people (the Jews) - the two words for “own” are “ἴδια” (neuter and in reference to His own inheritance, what truly belonged to Him) and “ἴδιοι” (masculine and in reference to His people to which He was born and had been promised) - vs. 11
 - g. “Into His own world which He created and which was now in rebellion against Him because of sin, He came. The implication is that nature recognized Him, received and paid Him reverence. Nature and her laws were always subject to Him.” Yeager
 - h. Considering first that these Jews of His time (the leaders who were deciding for the majority) were people first and had the “light of men” given, were still **enslaved to sin** and so rejected, mocked and despised this Light of the Word
 - i. Yet, these “chosen of God” people, having the “oracles” of God (see Rom. 9:1-8) rejected Him - they had to deliberately ignore (see past) all the predictions/promises of the Messiah (Christ), seeing and acknowledging only what they instinctively desired (an instinct enslaved to ego, covetousness and blindness)
 - j. All the negative truths just stated are starkly contrasted with “ἅσοι δὲ” (translated “but as many as”) - this contrasts not just the negative rejections of the Lord, but makes the reception of Him **individualized versus corporate or national**
 - k. These now seemingly indefinite and uncategorizable are distinguished as those having “received Him,” this being an indicative active (it's what they did), contrasting to the active rejection of the Word, and so begging the question, “How did they receive Him?”
 - l. It came by means of His “giving the right (power) to become the children of God” and such was evidenced in their “believing in His name” - to believe in the name of another is along the lines of invoking their name in complete trust of association/dependence on them - with this comes the authority (lawfully) to be a son of God (a concept which Paul details in Romans 8:12-17, using adoption as the way to describe how rebellions, lost, blind sinners could become children/heirs of God)
 - m. And such were “born” (begotten) into sonship only “by God” and he places the three “not by's” first to stress that such a “birth” and “right” were not by means of “blood” (not descendancy, so one is not a child of God because of their relationship to an ancestor/ancestors), nor by some physical act/impulse, nor by anything related to the “will of man” (the determination of any man, parents, religious leaders or individuals themselves)
 - n. “But now our evangelist observes, let a man be ever so great, or good, or eminent, for gifts and grace, he cannot communicate grace to another, or to whom he will; none are born again of any such will: **but of God**; of God, the Father of Christ, who begets to a lively hope; and of the Son, who quickens whom he will; and of the grace of the Spirit, to whom regeneration is generally ascribed.” John Gill
3. “The Word became flesh” - vs. 14-15
 - a. The first time the word ἐγένετο is used of Christ is in verse 14 when speaking of His “becoming” flesh - the Word (which already was) became flesh - He was not always in a physical or fleshly form, but at this point in time He became so
 - b. John then elaborates that He lived among them (as in his first hand account) - this was also a point he described in I John 1:1-5 (and also warned against contradicting this point, that Christ came (became) in flesh - 4:2-3) - see also 2 Peter 1:16

Remember the context, that it is “the Word” that became flesh- this eternal One who existed with God since eternity past and where life and the “light of men” comes from

This was core to the reason for writing this Gospel... telling of and the message of “the Word” that “became flesh”

His complete divinity put on complete man (His divine nature also now had a human nature, only without sin)

Notice also that this is the first reference to the Father, now making a contrast to the differing persons of the Godhead- Christ (the Word) as God, and now the Father as God (as being the “begetter” of the One and Only.. the Word)

The specific mention of the Word becoming “flesh” is significant realizing that Docetism was being promoted in their time that Jesus was not actually “flesh” since no “good” could be associated with it - it was a part of Gnosticism that taught that matter was evil, which clearly Jesus demonstrated even the possible redemption of the body/flesh

There have been countless “glories” that have captured the attention of mankind, but none as genuine and glorious as that of the life of Christ - this is one of the concepts we are looking for as we study this Gospel

Truthless grace is presumption and could not be legitimately relied upon, and graceless truth will either promote unmerited pride or despair

His “past tense” message is still witnessing as we desire our testimony pointing to Christ to outlive us

Though John was about 6 months older than Jesus

- c. The word for “dwelt” is ἐσκήνωσεν and could be translated “tabernacled,” being more in reference to a temporary dwelling, but in light of the tabernacle in Exodus, there looks to be a more significant parallel than just a temporary dwelling - more like “God with us”
- d. The tabernacle of Israel’s history was also the “tent of meeting” where God established a physical construction where He would come and indwell, and so have a point where man could meet with his creator and have his sins dealt with
- e. This does not describe God being completely transformed into a man, but more God taking on “man-ness” - see Php. 2:5-8 He “took on the form...” and “... was made in the likeness...” - He did not lay aside His divinity (His “God-ness”) but in His humanity was “emptied of self” (He was not proud/egotistical)
- f. This was the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15, the **first description of the Gospel** and what it would contain in its outworking... the “seed of the woman” crushing the head of the serpent and the necessary beginning to fulfilling Isa. 53:1-12, described as having a “form” and “appearance” and as “a man of pains”
- g. John then elaborates that He lived among them (as in his firsthand account) - this was also a point he described in I John 1:1-5 (and also warned against contradicting this point, that Christ came (became) in flesh - 4:2-3) - see also 2 Peter 1:16
- h. And during His “tabernacling” among them, John and others “beheld His glory” and that not like (nor comparable) to any other glory, since it was “the glory of the only begotten Son of God” - “only begotten” being “μονογενής” indicating, not His being created, but more literally “one of a kind” (the “one and only”)
- i. The first part of μονογενής is “mono” which means single or only while the second part is the word comes from γένος and γίνομαι (the verb form) which means “kind/type” and “to become,” making the translation “one of a kind” or “unique” son more understandable - He is “the only one of His kind” son. This translation is the only way to describe the coming of Christ into this world and in flesh
- j. Either way, though, it does not hinder us when translated “only begotten” seeing that it is in reference to His being born on this earth and never in reference to His existence before coming to this world
- k. The glory of the Word is not just in reference to something like what they saw at the “transfiguration” (Mt. 17) especially since John does not reference that event - so this “glory” is far more than just a “brightness” of Christ at any time, but would be more the glory of His life characterized altogether - it was seen because these “beheld” (ἐθεασάμεθα - to gaze/concentrate) His glory - with so much time spent with Him observing and listening to Him, His true glory became apparent - a passing or casual glance at Christ will not suffice!
- l. This “glory” (of this “one of a kind son”) was described as being “full of grace and truth” - in light of John’s use of the name “the Word” and now the singling out of this combination with “glory” of grace and truth, it looks to be a reference to Ex. 34:6 when God passed by Moses (who was in the “cleft of the rock”) and showed Moses His glory and proclaimed Himself saying, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and **ABOUNDING (full) IN LOVINGKINDNESS (grace) AND TRUTH**”
- m. These two traits are needed with the pulling together the actual Gospel - Truth (literally “reality”) is needed to legitimize and reveal/explain grace (that there actually is such undeserved favor), and truth without grace is condemning only (offering no hope)
- n. As we walk through the details revealed regarding Christ, we need to make sure we are looking for the demonstrations/revelation of grace and truth
- o. **To deny Him or not truly know Him is to live a life without any true/lasting “glory”**
- p. In verse 15, John refers again to John (the Baptist) and his “witness” - the tense of “bore witness” is actually in the present and would better be indicated as “testifies” (even though dead, he still does, as Abel’s testimony still speaking (Heb. 11:4))
- q. His message of Christ was that “He who comes after me outranks me because He existed before me” - John (the Baptist) was never guilty of making his message/testimony about himself, but stressed from the start that He was of “lesser rank” than the one that would follow him, and as stated already, John also witnessed that He existed before him

Barnes (on Micah 5:2)

- r. Texts such as this and others (Micah 5:2) point to the eternal existence of Christ - "Here words, denoting eternity and used of the eternity of God, are united together to impress the belief of the Eternity of God the Son. We have neither thought nor words to conceive eternity; we can only conceive of time lengthened out without end. : "True eternity is boundless life, all existing at once," or, "to duration without beginning and without end and without change."

4. Of His "fullness" grace and truth are received - vs. 16-17

The idea of "fullness" here is more than just "enough" and "complete" but is also "inexhaustible"

- a. The word for "fullness" is πληρώματος and was used to describe a "full compliment" of a group to get done what needed to be done (as in a "full compliment" of a ship's crew), and the Word's fullness is made up of grace and truth (picking back up from verse 14)
- b. This is the source from which we all receive (as John and the others of his day) grace (the favor, kindness, enablement) from God - the way it is worded "χάριτι ἀντὶ χάριτος" (grace for grace) pictures the idea that when one "grace" is used, another comes to replace it
- c. It is true grace we need/desire the most overall for from it comes all other of the "goodnesses" of God (His love, mercy, peace, hope and truth) - as it is "drawn from" there is always more to come- no other entity/being could begin to offer such, and if they did it would not be true grace; some have suggested that "grace upon grace" is also in reference to grace being true grace (without cost or deservedness to/of the recipient), and so "grace received as grace"
- d. Everything the Law (of Moses) was pointing to (and indicating) was fulfilled/completed in "Jesus Christ" (note the proper name of "the Word" is used) - the Law included the sacrificial laws (which ultimately pointed to grace in the dealing with sin ("just punishment" being enforced only on another)) - see also Rom. 3:19-20; 5:20-21
- e. But the Law was not the final answer (it pointed to it) - the Law, with its benefits, was a terrifying system overall (as pictured in Hebrews 12:18-29) and yet with Christ (who is superior not only to John the Baptist but now also Moses and the Law) comes grace and truth- not the picture of grace in the sacrifices, but the **actual** outworking of the promised grace and that dealing completely with sin (in truth/reality)
- f. This texts does not intend to condemn the Law and make it null, but it does state clearly the superiority of Christ and His being the complete fulfillment of all of God's will as being far above it - there should be no preference on our part in ever desiring and clinging to the Law more than to the Gospel of Grace and Truth that comes through Christ

Compare to I Cor. 4:7, Eph. 1:6-8; 42:5-10 and John 3:23

The Law was an answer at the time (the will of God revealed and explained) but it was not the final answer and revelation of God and His will

The Law was given by Moses (but it did not have its source in him), but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ because it is of Him (He being full of grace and truth)

There still are and have been since Christ those that will identify with the Gospel of Christ but will endorse a life and faith in the Law more than faith in Christ (or will adulterate the Gospel with lawful requirements to somehow obtain or live up to the Gospel for salvation)

5. Jesus Christ "exegetes" (explains) God - vs. 18

The earliest manuscripts has "one of a kind God" versus "one of a kind son"

Could one (apart from Christ) have ever imagined a relationship with the Creator as Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden?

Based on this, apart from Jesus Christ we could not truly come to know or understand God as we should

- a. No one has ever seen God (ever) - John directly states the fact to point to the singular explanation of God, that being the "one of a kind God" (μονογενῆς Θεὸς ὁ) - Moses never actually saw God (His face), nor those of Israel, but they saw His glory and the affects of His presence
- b. So what is the answer to this statement (that even the atheists of our day see as a substantive argument against the existence of God)? How is He to be known (truly and fully versus partially and at best in a "blurry" sense as those in the Old Testament)? Were Abraham, Moses, David and the prophets to be the closest any would ever get to God?
- c. The answer is (without obscurity) given here - only one truly with God (the Godhead, at the side of God as in the closest of relationships) could explain/describe/communicate Him - this is done by Jesus as He "ἐξηγήσατο" (defines, explains Him and shows the way to Him) - this is where we get our word "exegete" which pastor/teachers are to do with Scripture
- d. The cults, who seek to take away the deity of Christ make it so God, as He was meant to be known, cannot be known (since it is not one of the Godhead revealing Himself and the tri-unity), but is just another created being who has closer access than we do, but not God Himself "dwelling" with us

6. This ends the prologue of John and the introduction to Jesus Christ and who (and when) He actually was and so the highest attention/focus that ought to be given to Him

The humanity of Christ is important to remember and not take away from, but it in no way lessened His God-ness (even in the texts that seem to indicate His not knowing as much as the Father regarding the end)

- a. Fulfillment in life, light, grace and truth are to be found in Him and any/all true understanding of God, His character, His will, purpose and plan will be best revealed in Him - this was the idea included in Heb. 1:1-4
- b. To over-stress the humanity of Christ at the cost of His being God is to allow for us to devalue and lessen the importance of everything Christ said and did - never has anyone lived where every single detail about them was significant an important!

II. The Testimony of John (the Baptist) - 1:19-34

A. Who John was not and **what** he was - vs. 19-28

1. It was at the time when John the Baptist's preaching and baptizing had become popular - his message was one up repentance, confession of sins and to not trust in lineage (Mt. 3:1-12) - vs. 19-20

Such preaching was a novelty to some, a spectacle to others, a motivating pursuit of truth and to be right with God - but to the religious leaders it was threatening

- a. To the religious leaders in particular, he was most sternly warning them not to have any religious idea that God in any way needed them - "And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham." Mt. 3:9
- b. John's witness was seen first in his denial of any greatness - he is a supreme example of the first essential aspect of not only glorifying Christ, but of how to keep himself as obscured as possible, being more characterized as pointing to Christ
- c. "The Jews" sent "priests and Levites" (religious leaders/representatives) - there would have been a curiosity and an urgency to go see/hear firsthand John the Baptist's message - religiously they would consider themselves (their "take") as protective of not only their "faith" but the traditions that had reformed it over the centuries (their "reformations" were detrimental)
- d. John came from a priest's family (Zechariah) and he was, in many ways, doing more of the work these other priests were to be doing - it may have been more in the tone of "Who do you think you are?" that these religious leaders approached him
- e. "He confessed and did not deny, but confessed..." as if in saying, "He openly acknowledged, without any embellishment (to save some dignity/glorify for himself), and so did not hold-back in his open acknowledgment" that he was absolutely not the Christ - his focus was not on self!

This was a formal delegation sent to ask questions to determine who he was (or more so, who he thought he was)

There was absolutely no motive on his part to bring attention to himself, which is why he is so direct and concise in his answers

2. These religious "experts" then go down their list to see who he would identify with/as - vs. 21-23

It is not probable that they had any notion that he was a legitimate messenger/prophet from God - they likely came to find fault with him as is normal with the self-righteous - they are justified not in their espousal of truth and righteousness, but in their finding flaws/faults in others

- a. It needs to be realized, part of their concern (in their seeking out who he thinks he is) is seen in verse 25 when they ask "Then why are you baptizing?" - this was a significant practice/symbolism of cleansing
- b. They start with Elijah (based off of Malachi 4:5), possibly because he dressed as Elijah was described as dressing (II Kings 1:8) - he was definitive in his answer "I am not" to this and the question as to whether or not he was "the Prophet" (likely in reference to either the promised "Prophet" of Deut. 18:15 (who would be like Moses) or even Jeremiah (as seen referenced in Mt. 16:14) - The prophet of prophets would be the Messiah
- c. Revealing that their pursuit was not one of discovering "the Truth" (but one of reporting who John claimed to be), they ask again so as to have an answer they can bring back to their authorities - but their authorities (though in legitimate positions) had lost sight of their accountability to their actual authority - these may have feared his popularity because they feared losing the respect of the crowd more than God
- d. "They were of the Pharisees, proud, self-justiciaries, that thought they needed no repentance, and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance." MH
- e. John actually does not tell who/what he is as much as he has Isaiah say - John references Isaiah 40:3 when he states "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (note the absence of the proper article... just "a voice," but the message was the importance) - he was in the wilderness (not being a part of the "authorized" leadership in Jerusalem) and not being a "convenient" place - yet it was not a deterrent to true truth seekers
- f. The concept in Isaiah (and so here also) was of a messenger announcing the coming of a king, and the need to remove obstacles and to straighten the paths for His coming (it was preparatory, and here the "paths" would be those of the heart and the preparation that of repentance (removing obstacles now seen for what they are))

There was always some onset of a new "heresy" but these themselves were in error and so would not see the truth when it came

Read Zechariah's prophecy regarding his son in Lu. 1:76-80

He was sent to prepare the way for the King, but many had other ideas of what they expected/desired in a "king"

3. "... among you stands One whom you do not know." - vs. 24-28

They were there to question his authority to do and declare what he was, but he admits to no personal authority - that would be upon the Christ, as it is with us also, having no true authority in His work of our own

- a. These that were interrogating him were from among the Pharisees (a group originally formed to defend the traditions and the Law of God from corruption - yet in their zeal they corrupted it themselves in their attempts to defend/protect it by couching it in more laws and traditions of their own making)
- b. Baptisms at that time were ceremonial and associated with purification, and sometimes done to bring in a proselyte into Judaism, but always under the authority (by the directive) of the Sanhedrin - their focus was more on the "authority" of the one administering the practice than the purpose or meaning of why it was being done - repentance

John was stressing the change of heart and the resulting outward expression of it

There have always been those emphasizing all the appearance of "religion" without substance- see II Tim. 3:1-5

We know, having been introduced to "the Word," the validity of this, but Christ would not appear as special among them (based upon what they were looking for in a "Messiah")

It is of no value for us to have the "look" of the working of God in our lives without the actual working - but as we come to realize, His actual work does not attract the praise/recognition of the age

There never has been nor will there ever be His like again - He is the supreme historical point of study - He is perfect in all senses of the word (flawless, complete, thorough)

see also I Cor. 5:7; I Pet. 1:14-21; Rev. 5:1-10

Taking away the "sin of the world" is clearly (in light of other texts and the reality of an eternal "Lake of Fire") not a statement that everyone who ever lives has their sins removed- simply put, if anyone in the world is going to have their sins removed, it will only be by means of Christ - if not by Him, they are "still in their sins"

Read Rom. 5:17-21

- c. Ceremonialism and ritual typically become the core/main focus of the insincere, misdirected (deceived), and/or those seeking only validation of their spiritual state - if all logistics are followed and it is administered in the "right setting" by the right persons, then it becomes the "guarantee" of their standing before God (having followed-through on the "to-do's")
- d. John agrees that he does baptize, but makes it clear that it is just the symbol ("I baptize with water") making a distinction without actually mentioning it - as if in saying what I do is just with water, but there is far more than this that should be sought beyond this symbol
- e. What was looked upon as a high religious rite would only be in the category of "just/simplely" without the actuality of what it was to represent - the fulfillment was coming in Christ
- f. With this as their focus, John contrasts it with the authority of Christ - even with baptism being a revered rite, it was no comparison to one who "among you stands" who is so much above John that he is not worthy to do the most humble of services (loosing the shoe of a master to take it off) - nothing in His service should ever be viewed as beneath us
- g. "Those to whom Christ is precious reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them." MH - if we elevate ourselves in our own estimation, we downgrade the Lord and aspects of His work are unimportant (the privilege of it is unrecognized)
- h. This demonstrates (as well as much that follows) how misdirected priorities and keeping our eyes on the lookout for what is "impressive" (in this world) distracts, as Luke included in his account, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (in contrast to all other baptisms) Luke 3:16
- i. His use of "ἀξιός" (worthy) pictures the scales of a balance, and he would not "carry as much weight" (he would be found wanting in comparison to the Christ)
- j. Making in clear that this was an actual accounting, John adds the location (Bethany, not that of Lazarus but another location) that all this took place

B. "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" - vs. 29-34

1. From here on, John (the Apostle) demonstrates several titles for the Lord; "Lamb of God" (vs. 29,36), "Son of God" (vs. 34,49), Rabbi (teacher) (vs. 38,49), Messiah/Christ (vs. 41), King of Israel (vs. 49), and Son of Man (vs. 51) - He will also be referenced as the "prophet" Moses prophesied would come in Deut. 18:15 (vs. 45)

- Consider the significance of His variety of qualities/roles - He was God's "lamb" (sacrifice for sins/purification), God incarnate, the ultimate teacher (as God would teach, such was Jesus Christ), He was the promised one specially anointed of God for this purposed perfect life, sacrifice, resurrection and eternal rule/reign; He was also rightfully King of Israel (and truly King over all) and yet contrasted in His humanity as a man, yet one Who would literally speaks for God (as THE Prophet)

2. This statement was far more profound than most could have initially anticipated - vs. 29

- a. John the Baptist references Jesus coming ("Behold" ("Look!")) as He approached - this would have been after His baptism and after the temptation
- b. He was "God's lamb" provided for the sacrifice for sin - yet such a sacrifice had to be "without blemish" (and in this case, being the very Lamb of God, He had to be flawless in every possible way, and so "doing all righteousness" in every possible way) to "αἴρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου" (lift-up so as to remove the failures, to meet all the standards of God (or to meet any of His standards perfectly consistently)) and so "sins," and those, not of just one or a few people but of the world (which, from our perspective would be the countless failures to meet perfection of countless people; and even just one of these sins being powerful enough (regarding us) to condemn all humanity into an eternal condemnation!)
- c. We need to realize also that such a removal of sins is also the removal of all guilt (for there are no sins left to be guilty for and so then all condemnation is gone) - sins are not temporarily removed, but ACTUALLY removed! - see also Heb. 10:14
- d. His "lifting up and removing sins" was by means of Him bearing it upon Himself as God's sacrificial lamb - those focused on a "Messiah" to improve their life situation and restore Israel to world prominence were grossly mistaken, and failing to see the far, far greater victory needing to be won over the greatest enemy of all... sin
- e. As it was then, so it still is; the reality of sin must be acknowledged if it is to be removed and the imperative "Behold!" is for us all - "Look there, for there is the only answer for sin!"

3. And who exactly was this that could fulfill such a role, and can we be sure? - vs. 30-34

With so much “riding” on these facts being true, John is careful to be thorough

It is interesting that in the Targum of Jonathan, Num. 7:89 reads, “he [Moses] heard the voice of the Spirit who spake with him descending from the heaven of heavens upon the Mercy Seat which was upon the Ark of the Testimony between the two Cherubim, and from thence was the Oracle [the Word] speaking with him.”

The “One that sent me” was God - compare John 1:33, 6

Clearly to be “baptized” (immersed) in the Holy Spirit of God is the baptism that is most important - to be “in” the Spirit is an all-encompassing picture of His presence and therefore His work

To learn of Christ is to defer to Him and follow His teaching and example, and not in short “spurts” but ongoing, steady

- a. Having just revealed what John the Baptist stated of Jesus, John (the Apostle) stresses (by restatement) the solid evidence/assurance that could be had that this is the One, sent from God, that was not only truly qualified to serve as His “Lamb” but that He actually did
- b. John had written that John the Baptist testified that this was the “One” he was looking for and now sets it in its full context that **this was Who would be the only one to be looked to as God’s chosen** (His son) - any skeptic would have to deal with these facts and others
- c. John did not know who precisely it would be and that he had revealed to him exactly what to look for - once known, John would also fully realize that He infinitely “outranked” him in position and in ministry- beyond this John also revealed that to have this outward evidence/sign was core to why he “came baptizing with water;” that He might be “revealed to Israel”
- d. John the Baptist “bore witness” (officially testified) that he did see the Holy Spirit “descend from heaven” and this “as a dove” (either as in the form of a dove or as a dove would descend and land)- then an essential detail is also provided that the Holy Spirit “remained on Him”
- e. John the Baptist needed special revelation also to know who the Christ was - it is presumptive on our part to imagine that any of us could “just know” anything truly Truth apart from God’s direct revealing it as such (in contrast to the limitless counterfeits)
- f. There may seem to be some confusion when comparing this text (that John did not “know Him” until the sign after the baptism), when in Mt. 3:13-14 John the Baptist clearly recognized Jesus was above Him - John clearly knew Jesus was uniquely special, but was still waiting for the definitive sign that He as the very one he was supposed to be preparing the way for, and then to point others to Him only
- g. This would be the one (in contrast to John the Baptist) that would baptize “in the Holy Spirit”
- h. So John the Baptist “saw and bore witness” (in the perfect tense so its result was to be realized as ongoing) that this was the “Son of God” - this does not mean that the most important part of this account was testifying to the “evidence” as much as it was to focus upon what He (Jesus the Christ, the Word) taught and how He lived

III. The First Disciples Follow After Jesus - 1:35-51

A. Two of John the Baptist’s disciples act on their teacher’s pointed declaration - vs. 35-37

1. The day after openly declaring Jesus as “the Lamb of God” he states it again to two disciples - vs. 35-36

There is often an apprehension exposed in us when those we invest ourselves in look away from us and to the Lord - some, possessively actually resist this and even resent it

- a. When John sees the Lord walking by (the Greek wording describing this indicates a steady stare), he verbalizes again “Look! The Lamb of God!”
- b. He purposely directs their attention to Jesus - as simple as this description is, it demonstrates a heart/perspective we all must have in any service we are called to for the Lord - it is our highest honor to point to Him and so away from ourselves

2. Trusting their teacher, these two disciples leave John the Baptist and follow Jesus - vs. 37

Would we rather entertain the thought that as we reach life’s end that we would be surrounded with our followers, or that those that followed us are now fully following after Christ?

- a. This appears to demonstrate that John the Baptist had done his service well - no matter the attachments they had with him, they left to follow (completely) the one he had been pointing them to all along
- b. This is the core objective (and ought to be the driving desire) of any servant of the Lord - if those that follow after our teaching/influence turn their life direction and focus to Him, it should be the greatest thrill of all! - there will be times when we are left as they follow after the Lord
- c. One of these first two is named (Andrew (vs. 40)) and the other is not named - this leads most to assume it was John (the Apostle)

B. “Come and you will see” - vs. 38-51

1. The time to act was now - vs. 38-39

Trying not to read into their intention, it looks as though they wanted to know where He would be so as to talk more with Him later

- a. Jesus, knowing they were following Him, turned and asked “What are you seeking?” - He, as He so often did, asks a question as to intent - this is helpful since so many do not consider what they are really looking for or are too timid to reveal it at first
- b. We are not sure why they answered Him the way they did, though at face value they wanted to know where He lived (where He was staying)
- c. Jesus instructs them to “come and see” - there was no need to ponder it further, and His invitation was immediate (He is always open to those genuinely seeking the Truth)

This is what disciples do - they are not casual learners, but ones who dedicate their time and ambitions to learning

- d. His reply is interesting in that He invites them to see firsthand (not just where He lives but ultimately all that He would say and do) - their interest was more than what could be dealt with in passing - they wanted to talk, ask questions, listen and then learn
- e. They stayed with Him all day - the attention to the detail of it being the “tenth hour” lends to the consideration that the unnamed disciple was John (the Apostle) - if so, his first impressions of the Lord were lasting

2. “We have found the Messiah!” - vs. 40-42

It needs to be remembered that Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist and had already been learning, so this was not the unlearned, undiscerning impulse of a gullible man

- a. The immediate impact of Andrew was to go and find his brother (Simon Peter) - the excitement was genuine (to this learner/disciple, so not necessarily one who was a novice to learning) so he was inwardly compelled to go tell his brother
- b. The first one Andrew located (Peter) he is only shown to have stated “We have found the Messiah” (the word “Εὐρήκαμεν” picturing something “happened upon” after a search) - they found what they had been looking for (though they did not know the full magnitude of what they had discovered!) - they had yet to come to truly know Who/what the Messiah truly was
- c. John defined (for his readers) what “Messiah” meant when he used the word “Χριστός” meaning “the Anointed One” - the Lord Himself claimed as much in Luke 4:18-21 when He read from Isa. 61:1 and declared that at that moment, this had been fulfilled
- d. Jesus essentially prophesies of Peter’s future in revealing that he would come to be known as “Cephas” (which translated into Greek was “Peter” (rock) - it would be what Peter was used to reveal/declare in Mt. 16:13-19, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” and would then be associated with this foundation (the rock) and that, not in honor of him but in the truth of Jesus the Christ
- e. Jesus likely had not been told his name and not only used Peter’s current name (Simon) but then told him what his name would be - already demonstrating His omniscience
- f. Some question John’s account and that of Mathew and Mark - the basic answer is that John reveals the initial encounters with the Lord while the others describe the final (formal) call - it is probable that the disciples did not fully to commit to follow a stranger

To be “anointed” was to be specially chosen

It is important to not associate “Peter” as being “the rock” since it wasn’t about his significance as much as it was the significance of the truth God revealed to him and then how God used him - better to be known/associated with God and His Word than even our own name

3. “You will see greater things than these” - vs. 43-51

John is the only one that provides details of this Philip - of the few things recorded of him, the most significant looks to be his bringing Nathanael to Christ (literally)

- a. John (in his Gospel) does introduce us to many people, but their part is to showcase Christ - we are not impressed with these men as much as we are with the One they were impressed
- b. Philip is described as being one that Jesus “found” (same word used of Andrew to Peter regarding Jesus) - here we have the Lord seeking and finding (and as we learn in John 17, Jesus in His prayer to the Father acknowledges that the disciples had been given to Him (17:6))
- c. Philip was apparently ready and one whom Jesus was coming for, so when He said “Follow me” he did (and John makes mention that Philip was from the same city as Andrew and Peter) - Bethsaida was in Galilee and it is believed all the disciples except Judas (who was of Judea) were from Galilee (not considered the most prestigious as Judea - see Jn. 7:52) - it was Bethsaida later denounced in Mt. 11:21 because they ignored/disregarded the great works done before them (fearing the “norm” and the costs of going against it)
- d. Having been “found” by Jesus, Philip finds Nathanael summing-up to him who they had found/discovered - he described Jesus as “the one of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote” (which was a very accurate summary) - but it was the next statement that made Nathanael question; “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” - this is another example of them knowing that Jesus was exceptional in Himself, but they did not know the extent of Who He really was! - each would need to “Come and see” for themselves (there would be no vicarious faith!)
- e. Nathanael, a Galilean himself (and so despised), despised/belittled Nazareth as being a place where nothing good could come from (we see that Jesus Himself was rejected in Nazareth in Mt. 13:53-58) - but **God is not limited by these things and should not be limited in our thinking as to how and where He can work His power and demonstrate His glory**
- f. Philip’s answer was the best that could have been given in response, “Come and see” - this was the same answer given to Andrew and the other disciple (likely John), and for Nathanael to be convinced/converted he needed to go and see for himself - to assess the rightness just from his general experience/knowledge would have been lazy and irresponsible

So, Bethsaida is honored in these being chosen by Christ to follow and learn of Him and then condemned because the majority rejected all the signs/evidences specially given them

All of this took place in “normal” settings and environments and, though many knew the prophesies of “the Christ” they were looking for exceptional circumstances

Prejudice might be proven (at times) to have been correct in its assessment, but prejudice in and of itself is of no value until the actual truth is seen/discovered

The “truly an Israelite” could have been designed to mark the “Israel” side versus the “Jacob” (deceiver) side and to demonstrate how an Israelite ought to be characterized as one seeking for the truth even by getting passed base prejudice

To truly be without guile there must also need to be no self-deception (no internal thinking “games” to justify to self something that is wrong)

The term for “Son of God” would come to later be understood more literally, so Nathanael may not have realized how true his statement was - many had (and still do) an assessment of Christ as being profound, but never seek/allow such an impression/insight to go beyond the scope of their imagination

Possibly some may resent or fear such personal insight into their thoughts/heart

Those who are more immediate “converts” (believers) have so much to look forward to than those who are in a constant state of skepticism

Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of this picture of Heaven being connected to the Earth

The term “Son of Man” is a great example of humility being exalted - this is a term Jesus used of Himself - in an of itself it would be considered a lackluster title

- g. Jesus knew Nathanael before he reached Him and knew what he needed to hear at the moment (as well as those standing near Him) - we do not know exactly why Jesus said all that He did to Nathanael but we do know it was life changing
- h. Jesus references him as “truly” an Israelite and one in “whom is no guile” - as if in saying, “Here is what an Israelite should be” - this was not mockery/sarcasm since it was true of Nathanael, and a compliment like this was an actual assessment of his character (not a form of flattery used so as to encourage) - The Lord always deals in truth
- i. Jesus also identifies Nathanael as one who is without hypocrisy and one who was genuinely honest and trustworthy - the word for “guile” is δόλος picturing the use of bait to lure or trap something or someone - “guile” is a word for deceit (even though they may be technically right, their motive, wording, tone are used to misdirect or hide)
- j. Nathanael was genuinely taken with the insight of Jesus asking, “How do you know me?” - this is a key question (not just for him but for all of us) - His “knowing” is more intimate and limitless than ours of anyone or anything! Nathanael knew that the Lord knew at least something about him, but the Lord confirms it to him when He mentioned “I saw you” and that before Philip called him to come and see - the Lord saw him when alone (in private)
- k. We do not know the significance to Nathanael of being “under the fig tree,” but it thoroughly impressed this scrutinizingly honest man (judging by his response) - he immediately references Jesus as “Rabbi” (teacher, highly honored one) which is to be expected since the other disciples were looking to follow Him (as their teacher), but he then rightly identifies Him as “the Son of God” and “King of Israel”
- l. Nathanael had to be impressed that Jesus saw him and likely knew his thoughts, and such miraculous insight (or sight itself) into him was enough for him to truly believe (versus those, who with many greater proofs, refuse belief/trust in the Lord- it is of the will more than proof)
- m. The Greek word commonly translated in the form of a question “do you believe?” is actually present indicative active, so **it is a declaration not a question** (and could even be taken in an excited sense as in “you believed!” It will never be the amount of “proof” that creates faith
- n. “Thou hast believed because I have made thee feel that I have sounded the depths of thy heart, by means which pass understanding. There are profounder abysses than the human heart. There are powers at my disposal calculated to create a more tender and inspiring faith, one which shall carry thee into other worlds as well as through this.” Pulpit Commentary
- o. There is so much more to look forward to as if in saying “You haven’t seen anything yet!” - those given to doubt have no idea what they are missing, finding more comfort and reverence/respect in their doubts than in the pursuit of a higher object of faith than themselves
- p. Jesus confirms with “Truly, truly...” a certain fact of what will be seen - what Jesus describes here looks to be similar to Jacob’s dream of a ladder reaching to Heaven (Gen. 28:10-17) - though here, the angels are ascending and descending on the “Son of Man” - we have no account of Nathanael seeing this, but realizing Jesus is the one stating this, it happened (and it not needing to be while he was alive on the Earth) - no matter what is seen here (how spectacular), it will pale in comparison to what comes after!
- q. Here, Jesus also references Himself as the “Son of Man,” a term/title that would not have been considered “grand” accept it be seen in light of Dan. 7:13-14 and the “Son of Man” being given “dominion” and that an everlasting one

IV. Jesus Begins His Public Ministry with a Miracle and a Temple Cleansing - 2:1-25

A. John continues to give “witnesses” to Jesus as “the Word” - “And His disciples believed in Him” - vs. 1-12

1. A great deal has been written on this text and many take the route of allegory, looking to read into the particular meanings and pictures representing the old era gone and the new has come
 - a. But verses 1-12 describe an actual event (wedding) and a miracle - the point we seek primarily is “Why did John record these details?” - Did he have a hidden meaning or was his detailing of the facts revealing who/what Jesus was and the results?
 - b. Everything He did and said was significant, but we need not try to read into any of it more meaning than is clarified, for in doing so, we might miss the obvious because we were seeking out the “obscure”

2. "The first of His signs" - water turned into wine - vs. 1-12

He also honored marriage in His reiteration of it in Mt. 19 and in His use of it in illustrations (e.g. the "Ten Virgins" in Mt. 25)

"The mother of Jesus" was also there - it is highly likely she was a widow at this point and was also likely she was either a relative of those getting married or she was working to organize the wedding with the catering crew (seeing her participation in resolving the issue)

The use of "Woman" was also used while on the cross and was how he addressed her there as well (John 19:26-27)

Mary was either rushing Him or seeking to use Him (or both) which explains the Lord's response to her - this, of course, is not seen this way in Roman Catholicism

Though the core reason we obey authorities is because we obey God - but God's clear will must never be usurped by the will of another

Presuming on God is not uncommon for us but must not be looked upon as an acceptable thing to do, nor that God will ever be forced into anything no matter how good we see it to be from our vantage point - God is not our servant... we are His!

It would be easy for us to criticize Mary in this, but how often do we get frustrated when God does not glorify Himself the way (and in the time) we desire Him to?

This miracle was simply delivered - Jesus gave instructions to get the water and then to "draw it out" and take to the "master of the feast"

It needs to be noted that the "wine" (οἶνος) is not directly comparable to our "wine" today - what they drank then (if intoxicating, was mixed with water and would be significantly less in alcohol content)- "strong drink" (as is referenced elsewhere is more along the lines of our wine today and Jesus would not have been a participant in a "drunken party")

- a. The lead-up to the first miracle (sign) of Jesus is described as being the result of an invite to a wedding (and here, the celebratory feast) - it is often referenced (in our wedding ceremonies) the honor to marriages Jesus demonstrated by attending this one in Cana in Galilee
- b. John mentions the location (Cana in Galilee) twice (vs. 1 and 11) possibly to emphasize where this first miracle did NOT take place (not in a more prestigious location such as in Judea) as well as demonstrating real people and real locations (these accounts were not parables and not "made-up" so as to teach theological truths)
- c. Some try to make a case that the wedding ran out of wine because Jesus and His disciples came, but verse 2 makes it clear they were invited - the reasons why the miracle was needed are not the point - Jesus was never improper, and any hint of it is without value
- d. Verse 4 is a difficult verse to understand, though what was stated was clear - Mary (in verse 3) points out to Jesus that there was no more wine - it is commonly understood that this would have been very embarrassing for the family (of the groom) - Jesus answers (more word for word) "What does this have to do with me and you?" and He calls her "Woman" (though not disrespectful, He makes it clear from His usage of this (rather than "Mother") that their relationship is beyond that now)
- e. This response is in the form of a rebuke, so we may assume there was more to her intent than we know or that, even with her apparently good motive, she was mistaken in seeking to somehow utilize Jesus on her own terms - this looks to be further validated when He also mentions "My hour has not yet come."
- f. Some try to "soften" this dialog, not wanting to see Jesus in any way rebuke His mother, but His relationship to the Father was primary (and is at least peripherally illustrative to us that our relationship and responsibility is above that of our parents or other earthly authorities)
- g. When He states "My hour has not yet come" it is also used later in John in reference to His death/crucifixion (and so the resulting glory) - Jesus does meet the need after stating this, but notice how "behind the scenes" He does it and does not showcase Himself - those that knew the miracle (while it was happening) were the servants, disciples and Mary
- h. Some seek to make a case that this was in reference to the timing that He would perform this miracle and that she had to just wait and be patient; but this seem to stretch the meaning and better to take his reference to His being revealed for who and what He was (and was here to do) would come later and not by means of anyone other than the Father giving Him direction of what should be done
- i. Mary shows no hesitancy or resentment but instructs the slaves to do whatever He tells them to do - to say she expected a miracle is to assume into the text - this was His "first sign" (first miracle (2:11)) though she may have been looking for Him to reveal who He was (since she clearly knew He was significant and now He was beginning His public ministry)
- j. John details the number (6) of jars that were used and filled "to the brim" and in doing so, demonstrates the magnitude of what took place - this was not a few pitchers of water, but were 6 vessels that could hold 20-30 gallons of water, so the result being about 150 gallons of water/wine - interestingly, these were vessels for ceremonial cleansing
- k. The wording of verse 8 does not clarify when the water turned into wine (all the vessels instantly, once filled to the brim or when the servants drew out water into the cups and so was wine when it reached the guests) - ***the change in the physical make-up reminds us He is Creator***
- l. The "master of the feast" (the chief butler, or we might say the catering organizer) is instantly astounded and inquired of the bridegroom as to why the better wine was brought out later - the explanation of how things were typically done references "drunk freely" and this is significant (not in that normally guests were intoxicated and then served the "cheap stuff") because having been used to the taste would not normally notice the lesser grade - but even with dulled taste, they headwaiter knew this was exceptional in quality
- m. This was no "parlor trick" in either magnitude or quality which is why John then identifies it as "σημεῖον" (as sign that is miraculous to identify something as significant/supernatural) and so "manifested His glory" resulting in His disciples believing in Him (trusting Him) - note that His "brothers" are also mentioned as with Him (vs. 12) and are not listed as those believing

B. "Zeal for your house will consume me" - Jesus cleanses the Temple - vs. 13-22

1. "My Father's House" (the Temple) had become a marketplace - vs. 13-17

Jesus would become the Passover lamb, so this time was sacred before God and should have demanded the utmost respect and reverence whether or not they fully realized its significance - reverence was deserved whether or not full understanding was had

Consider that we also must not treat as common what is to be set aside specially for the Lord - this includes our bodies/selves as being the "Temple of the Holy Spirit" which are His - I Cor. 6:19

We do not have a direct parallel today since Church buildings are not the Temple - but the concept should still be honored that a place and overall ministry ought not be looked upon or used to make money

Compare this to the seriousness indicated in I Cor. 11:20-30

Formality for formality's sake is not endorsed/encouraged, but flippancy or being casual when we need to be serious in prayer, worship and obedience is seriously wrong

The second half of Psal. 69:9 is also interesting in light of what Jesus would do, "... and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me."

Coming before God honestly (open) is core to the seriousness we ought to have

Paul summarized the Jews and the Greeks and what they are seeking on their own terms in I Cor. 1:22

So many embrace Scripture and Scriptural concepts until they are called upon to believe/trust them in practice

- a. "The Passover of the Jews" time had come - this time was set aside (sacred) to commemorate the night before the Jews were delivered from Egypt - but the significance of this time was more on the deliverance from condemnation /death by means of the blood on the doorpost
 - b. This was an example of Jesus keeping the Law (it was required that He attend and participate) - it is interesting to realize that not only would He keep the Law in following its ordinances, but also in His **complete fulfillment** what these were all pointing to
 - c. When coming into the Temple area (the courtyard) He came into what would have likely been (because it was Passover) a frenzied marketplace - Jesus referenced it in His rebuke as "ἐμπόριον" (an emporium - a place selling a variety of goods on a large scale)
 - d. The point was not to do away with or criticize the sacrificial system or even the buying and selling of things, as much as it was the dishonor that was shown in conducting such business in a place reserved for the highest of reverence
 - e. It was to be expected that travelers from far away from Jerusalem would need to purchase sacrifices and other items for the Passover - the use of the Temple courtyard for this was the wrong
 - f. He formed a whip of cords and proceeded to drive out all the livestock and sellers and the money-changers - it is miraculous (truly a miracle) that we read of no resistance while He disrupted so many/much - The "Father's house" was never meant to be a "house of merchandise" (a place of business) - Jesus' treatment of it makes it clear that this was an insult and violation of how the entire Temple area was to be used - such distractions needed to be removed so that the business and formality not become the focus (as though it was just something that needed to get done), but that all those coming would remember and honor why they were coming and sacrificing
 - g. This was the first Temple cleansing (here at the start of His public ministry and then later at the end of it), so this was an important demonstration of our Lord's/God's view of how to approach Him and how to treat His institutions and memorials/ordinances
 - h. It is most normal to include in this description that Jesus used the scourge to drive out the animals and the people - rather than react to the thought that He would have been so harsh on these, we should marvel that they were allowed to live (remembering how defiling what was holy when the Tabernacle was setup was handled) - notice the seriousness of treating lightly (presuming) upon the goodness of God in Rom. 2:1-5 (dealing with the self-righteous and the undue confidence they have in their "read" and approach to God)
 - i. Seeing what Jesus did, how boldly and without hesitation He did it, the disciples remembered the first part of Psalm 69:9, "For zeal for your house has consumed me..." realizing the "zeal" (jealous enthusiasm of the place set aside to meet with the Lord and to deal with their sins) was all-consuming of Him and that such behavior and practices could not be tolerated - though often frowned upon in our day, a seriousness and sober authenticity needs to be stressed again in our gatherings as Christians (emotionalism for public display and flippancy, stale formality, and all insincerity should not be deemed as acceptable norms)
2. The demand for a "sign" that would validate His authority to do what He had just done - vs. 18-22
- a. This is distinctly different than in Mt. 21:23-27 where they just asked for His authority (after He had cleansed the Temple again) - here as well as there, the issue was authority not a "sign," and though they demanded a "sign" it would not have made them yield, realizing that Jesus gave them a sign infinitely better than they would have ever dared requested (resurrection)
 - b. The Jews (likely the religious leaders) ask Him for the evidence (His credentials) that allowed Him to take such authoritative action - they would "prove" that the "sign" they would demand must meet whatever undeclared criteria they would determine (which we still see in so many would-be followers of Christ... that He would/must meet their demands on their terms)
 - c. Jesus gives them an answer and the sign to be looking for (so He does not rebuke/correct them for demanding a sign), but the answer would be one they would not understand - Jesus reference of His own body as "this temple" was another verification of His deity (for the Temple was where God's presence was - Col. 2:9)
 - d. The Jews understood His answer as only in reference to the physical temple (which took 46 years to build, and which Jesus could have also built again in less than 3 days)

This statement was “believed” after the Lord proved it in His resurrection

- e. The disciples, though, remembered (after the Lord’s resurrection) that Jesus had said this- it demonstrates the significance of learning and listening to God’s Word even when it may be (at first) unclear, as well as the understanding that trust will always be a major aspect of being a “disciple” (a dedicated/invested learner versus a student only when convenient)
- f. Notice also that they not only believed what Jesus had spoken but also believed “the Scripture”(what had been written in particular of Him (see Psa. 16:10 and Acts 2:31-32)) - this is often the way things will work; God will “prove” His truth (rightness) and we will need to keep this in focus when **again** faced with trusting His Word over what we see/perceive

C. Jesus knows “what is in man” - vs. 23-25

1. “Many believed in His name” because “they saw the signs He was doing” - vs. 23

These statements were added to point out a significant fact to keep in mind moving forward

As we will see later, even the miraculous will not win-over a sin-hardened heart - only rebirth will do this!

- a. This addition by John should be seen as key, realizing how much he admittedly left out (20:30-31) - many miracles (signs) will be described/detailed, but as this text demonstrates, the “signs” were evidential that He was significant and should be heard; but His message would be the point - all this He did up to a week after Passover (this was the “Passover feast”)
- b. The “many” seeing the signs He performed “believed in His name,” but this was not a faith/belief that was grounded in what it would need to be - many believe what they see, and since they cannot deny what they’ve seen they must “believe” it, but it is not the core indicator of a true, believing/trusting heart

2. While the many were “believing” (ἐπίστευσαν) Jesus was not “entrusting Himself” (ἐπίστευεν) - vs. 24-25

The wording is “διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν πάντα” (“because to His knowing all” (men)) - He knew that all these “believers” would not continue to believe

compare to I Chr. 28:9

Jesus being “God with us” knows all, so it is futile for us to imagine we can ever hide anything from Him - our lives should be characterized as one of openness before Him all the time

How many times have we experienced where God’s Word has revealed something about ourselves we had not realized? We may not always appreciate this fact, but we need it

- a. His not “entrusting Himself” demonstrates a practical result of trust (entrusting, and so committing/investing special time and effort into something/someone)
- b. As often seen, many have a superficial “faith” and even though sincere in the moment, proves to be fickle (changing loyalties) depending on the moment - the current disciples (to whom Jesus had entrusted/invested Himself) believed more because of what they heard
- c. It is common to see or hear of those that transfer their belief from one thing to another - texts such as Jer. 17:7-10 reveal what none can fully realize their heart because of the innate infection of sin
- d. In the text in Jer. 17, we read that it is “the Lord” that “searches the heart” and now John makes it clear that Jesus needed no one to “bear witness” (give revealing evidence so the inner character of one could be known) of “τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” (of the man) so, here, any person in particular that would ever have approached Jesus
- e. Since, as John reveals, Jesus “Himself knew what was in man” then He could never be deceived or misdirected and we should also realize that He would have known each one better than they knew themselves (for none of us can fully know our own heart without His revealing insight) - imagine how nervous one would be (knowing this about the Lord) to approach Him and find out what was truly in their heart!
- f. This fact about the Lord will be illustrated in His encounter with Nicodemus and the woman at the well (in Samaria) - He would not dialogue with them on their overly cautious and maybe even masked terms (as most do)

V. You Must Be Born Again From Above To See The Kingdom Of God - 3:1-21

A. Nicodemus came to inquire (possibly scrutinize) Jesus, only to be scrutinized himself - vs. 1-4

- 1. Before studying out the particulars of these verses, note first who Nicodemus (and we) are actually dealing with - it is common to find the majority of humanity “coming to God” (in one way or another) only they do it to see if He can and will live up to their standards and scrutiny

compare to Rom. 9:19-21

This is another reminder of why we are so dependent on the revealing Word of God, for we cannot even begin to contemplate how things really are and our absolute need until God reveals it to us

- a. ***It does not nor will it ever work this way*** - we being finite and He being infinite can never “call Him to account” in regards to our “tests of authenticity” to be considered worthy of our obedience and worship
- b. We are not told what Nicodemus was seeking because Jesus answers to the need of Nicodemus and not to his perceived need/question - one of our greatest deficiencies in the pursuit of the Truth is our inability to formulate the correct questions
- c. Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night” possibly (though we are not sure) out of fear - but his fear was not that of Jesus as much as it would have been of his colleagues
- d. One more note on this - Nicodemus came to Jesus to personally inquire further rather than do so in an accusatory manner with others - his (and ours) is personal first and needs to be genuine!

2. Nicodemus approaches Jesus knowing He is “from God” but unsure in what capacity - vs. 1-2

The point of significance was that he came to Christ at all versus just assuming what was happening, reaching conclusions that are unchallenged (as many do)

History (even/especially Church history) demonstrates the commonness of advanced learning yet not reaching the most important truths/conclusions (as some reach a level of knowledge and credentials to prove it, yet lack a practical understanding or use of it)

Notice also one of the evidences of His truthfulness as seen even by His enemies in Mt. 22:15-16

- a. His approaching Jesus by night may also have been because that was the only time he could speak with Him alone - since Jesus does not rebuke him we should not either
- b. Nicodemus speaks for himself and unnamed others (“we”), and that these knew for certain that He was sent from God (and this based upon the “signs” He was able to do) - since it was certain He was God-sent, Nicodemus addresses Him as “teacher” and “Rabbi” (not being sure of the magnitude of Jesus’s position, yet showing Him high honor)
- c. Jesus would later affirm (in John 5:36-42) that He was sent from God with “greater signs” and that even though they searched the Scripture seeking eternal life, and that even though the Scripture bore witness of Him, they (others) refused to accept it (truth)
- d. Nicodemus (from what we can see) was a sincere seeker and Jesus would go on to demonstrate that the advanced learning and religious position Nicodemus had, had not brought him the understanding he needed most - see 3:10
- e. Nicodemus knew that “God was with Him” (because of the miracles/signs) and as their history would show, this was a way for a true prophet of God to be validated, but with the purpose to be heard (for these signs were evidence the prophet had a *message* from God)

3. The prerequisite of rebirth (from above) - vs. 3-4

The core of the most important truths for us to know are beyond this age and are rooted in what cannot be produced by anyone or any thing but God Himself (for only God can re-create the person, for all else is recycled and has the fundamental flaw as before)

As we come to learn in the doctrines revealed in places such as Romans 5, our nature is dead in sin at our birth and will be seen as much as we live on in life- the change that is needed is a new nature that will then (also) be revealed for what it is in decisions and overall life direction

One of the most “righteous” men in Israel was told he needed to be completely redone

This type of response would be similar to one hearing the Gospel and responding that they cannot “change” (which is actually true apart from being “born of the Spirit”) - there is a helplessness indicated in this

- a. We do not know what was on Nicodemus’ mind but clearly Jesus knew and more importantly, what he needed to hear and come to realize - it is not a stretch to assume it had something to do with the “kingdom of God” (and possibly because he was trying to determine if Jesus was the Messiah) and many believed the Messiah was purposed to establish the kingdom of God on Earth(which He was/will, **but something of greater importance would happen first**)
- b. What Jesus answers him uses the twice repeated word “ἀμὴν” (with absolute certainty as if saying “absolutely, absolutely!”) and the certainty is of Himself (“**I** say to you”) - the emphasized statement of fact/necessity is “unless one is born from above [again] he will not [cannot] see the kingdom of God”
- c. The precise wording is “ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν” (“if not anyone is born from above (or “from the first” which is the origin of “again” as in going back to the start/origin)) - this is what is required! There is no spiritual, mental or emotional “renovation” that will do - the person must be made anew as Paul described in II Cor. 5:14-21 (a “new creation in order (prerequisite) for reconciliation with God (so as to then see/participate in His kingdom)
- d. Considering the concept of birth (as the picture used to explain this truth), that when one is originally born it looks as though nothing is set and final for their life, and that what they become is yet to be determined by the choices they make - this has a degree of truth, yet one’s nature will be seen for what it is as each grows and reveals themselves in the decisions that are made and the irreversible results that follow
- e. It is important to see also that the Lord addressed Nicodemus directly (“I say to you”), he being a religious leader in Israel and one who would have been consider exceptional in his life and morals - if he needed this, who could think themselves above this need!?
- f. “... by the term *born again* He means not the amendment of a part but the renewal of the whole nature. Hence it follows that there is nothing in us that is not defective.” Calvin
- g. This is what is absolutely needed is one is to be able (have the power (δύναται)) to “see”(ἰδεῖν which is more than physical sight, but includes perception and understanding also) the kingdom
- h. The response of Nicodemus is, at first glance an apparent reaction, for it is likely he understood the usage of a metaphor and responds (no matter how this is looked upon) as an impossibility - certainly a person cannot be physically born again, but from Nicodemus’ understanding neither could someone (especially someone “old”) be “reborn” in such a way as to be “new” (in their inner nature)

B. Spiritual (the true, inner self, the nature of a person) rebirth only by means of the Spirit - vs. 5-9

1. Birth of “water and the Spirit” to “enter the kingdom of God” - vs. 5-6

- a. Once again the Lord makes an absolute statement (and so not to be questioned as to its truth), “Truly, truly...” and again this is directed to Nicodemus (“to you”) that anyone not born of “water and the Spirit” will not have the ability/power to enter God’s kingdom
- b. The questioning of this verse typically focuses on the use/meaning of “water”

Jesus could have said in the positive that one that is born of “water and the Spirit” will enter the kingdom, but He stated it in a way that would exclude those not born “from above... of water and the Spirit”

The idea of cleansing with water (and its necessity) is seen in texts such as Eph. 5:25-27 and the “washing of regeneration” found in Titus 3:4-7

If one was determined to make the reference to “water” to be connected to “Christian baptism” it would still be clear that even with such baptism, the person is not “saved” until the rebirth (of spirit) has occurred - any rite/ordinance is to reflect something of salvation and is not the saving itself!

To this day there is still an astonishment at the reality of what Christ is stating (especially realizing it is in the same context of John 3:16)

It has been long purported that one can simply be told they need to be born again and that at that point it rests upon them to decide for it or against it - this has sometimes been referenced as “decisional regeneration”

“Nicodemus was clinging more and more eagerly to the old ideas of national privilege, of sacramental purification, of soundly taught principles and habits. He marvelled at such representation which took the heart out of all his previous training. The Messianic kingdom for which he had been looking and longing seemed to fade away in the clouds of an utter mysticism, and to vanish out of his power of recognition.” Pulpit Commentary

Regeneration (rebirth) is something we are totally dependent upon - we did not stage our own birth and no one can cause to happen their spiritual birth

- c. Does the use of “water” refer to baptism? This is a common handling of this in this verse, yet the magnitude of its impact is missed, for if this is the case then the restrictive statement “...unless one is born of water and the Spirit...” would indicate that water baptism is required to enter the kingdom, so without it one could absolutely not enter
- d. Others believe it references physical birth, but why would this be necessary to explain (that one had to actually be born first to then be spiritually reborn)? What about those unborn, that are never birthed? Also, this would be essentially stating the obvious and would also go against what the Lord is doing with Nicodemus (directing him away from his reference to and focus on physical birth and toward the needed spiritual birth)
- e. The words “of water and the Spirit” ought to be taken as a unit, in that the reference to “water” is in reference to cleansing and is used in parallel with the Spirit in texts such as Isaiah 44:3-5 and in particular Ezekiel 36:22-27 - as John the Baptist made clear, Jesus was the One coming who “baptizes in the Holy Spirit” - such cleansing is needed so as not to become what they once were
- f. Making the distinction clearer, Jesus reiterates that whatever is “born” (birthed) of the flesh is just that, flesh; and that which is born (birthed) of the Spirit is spirit - nothing associated (or of) the flesh (of us or this world) will save or lend to our salvation - Jesus Christ is the unifier between the two (flesh and spirit) and only His work could regenerate our dead souls/spirits
- g. Only those “reborn” (in spirit by the Spirit) can “see” (perceive, understand, recognize) the Kingdom of God and only those truly cleansed by the Spirit in their spirit (their true essence/self) can ever enter this coming, eternal kingdom
- h. When Jesus tells Nicodemus not to “marvel” (be startled/amazed) that he must be born again (from above), it is with the understanding that “like begets like” (flesh begets flesh and spirit begets spirit) so one born of flesh cannot change their nature - such must come from “spirit”

2. Do not be overwhelmed/surprised at the necessity of rebirth - vs. 7-9

- a. There is still an overwhelming sense of the concept (unadulterated) of regeneration and its absolute requirement for salvation - the normal viewpoint (especially of religious leaders as Nicodemus) is that of some predictability, measurability and a process (definable and instigated of the will and by the planning of religious authorities and institutions)
- b. If we did not have some understanding of regeneration and were to be introduced to the command “You must be born again,” and even if it was clarified that this was in reference to spiritual rebirth, how would we expect we could make or ensure such to happen?
- c. The Lord will take this concept and steer the focus off of a forcible or predictable process of religious rites and confessions toward the resulting, undeniable results/effects of a spirit reborn
- d. The natural response to such a command is in line with that of Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” - How is such to happen? For it would mean that it is the resulting work of the Spirit and not that of “mine” (as the cause/source) that is required
- e. The Lord tells him not to be amazed/astonished (as if it is unacceptable or even ridiculous) that this must happen to a person - but, they may deduce, did they not have national and historical privileged, the law and traditions that if followed as prescribed one was guaranteed entrance into God’s kingdom? Traditional, religious dogma resists challenge and correction
- f. Jesus uses the example of the wind; it is heard and its movement is seen - so it is with the working of Spirit of God and His working in any of us and those around us - we cannot predict where He will work and where His influence will go next - but we can see the results of a regenerated spirit! It is easy to treat the concept of regeneration (salvation) as almost fragile because of the artificial means that have been constructed to a salvation of our own making/defining - many forsake and walk away from it, but in contrast to this, those truly regenerated will never walk away and are permanently, inwardly changed in their nature
- g. “So is everyone that is born of the Spirit” - it “happens to them” though this is no denial of the various other means and methods God will use in regenerating someone; but such means/methods must never be confused with the actual cause, for no external means/method can regenerate a soul! Salvation must never be “institutionalized”!
- h. Nicodemus’ response is understandable in light of our instinctive response to the same truth - we would rather regeneration be (at least) a cooperative event - not necessarily because we desire credit but because we desire certainty (evidence produced and defined by us)

One of the core factors/realizations leading to our conversion is our helplessness on our own or by means of anything on this earth

- i. Nicodemus responds, still puzzled, and asks a question still being asked in relation to true “regeneration,” (literally) “How are these things able to be?” - we might state it differently (such as “I don’t see how this can be” or just “I don’t see it”) - yet it all comes down to the point being forced on Nicodemus; that it will ultimately be by faith

C. Receiving the “witness” (firsthand testimony) “believing in Him” - vs. 10-21

1. “You a teacher don’t know?” - Jesus response to the perplexed (possibly unbelieving) Nicodemus was one of almost astonishment, that one who was a “teacher in Israel” (likely one of prominence because of the proper article before “teacher”) did not understand these things - vs. 10
- a. “How exactly would he have supposed to have known such a truth?” one might ask since; at first glance, such a concept as regeneration seems new to Scripture - but consider what the Lord is stating first, that one cannot just be “altered” or improved but that the need is a recreation, and the resulting new nature
- b. All the way back to Gen 3:15 we see that the dealing with sin will need to be another’s work for us (He crushing the head of the serpent), and other texts such as Eze. 36:22-32 where God promises the solution for Israel being “a new heart” and “a new spirit” (nature) - then those like David in Psalm 51:10 and his recognition of a “new heart” - see also Eze. 37:1-14
- c. Yet rather than have regeneration most (instinctively, to preserve some of sinful self) seek (religiously) only reform

There was never to be a “rehashing” of a person but a recreating and this being “from above”

2. Only the One who has “descended from heaven” is to be believed - vs. 11-13

Even if someone has experienced, perceived and seen something that has convinced them of some “truth” it does not mean it is correct - we are constantly subject to error and must seek out the One whose perception and perspective is infinite (for all others cannot see and know everything)

- a. What Jesus states (emphatically) is based upon what “we” know (οἶδαμεν, perceives so is able to recognize) and what “we” have seen (ἑώρακαμεν, to see and so to experience) - the use of “we” is not certain as to why the Lord used the personal plural, but could be in reference to He and John the Baptist (who also testified) or to Jesus and His disciples, and it may have in contrasting the authoritative “we” Nicodemus came to Christ with (likely as their representative)
- b. It is true that anyone can use such language to anchor their point upon, but this does not change the fact that there is a perspective better than ours and that the pursuit is to get it (the answer) right (to trust the correct source)
- c. So we need to come to know the one testifying - here it is the one who has seen the “heavenly” having come from above and descended to us (for none ever “descends to Him”) and it is of these truths, these facts, that He and those that are His “bear witness” to its reality
- d. For if one will not/cannot come to accept that which is taught that affects the “earthly things” (that just deals with the things of this life (for good or bad) and where it is heading), then how will one come to grapple with “heavenly things”?
- e. It is true that spiritual birth, though it is “from above,” is done while we are alive on the Earth - if one cannot come to know that what is here (earthly) must be remade, how can he/she even begin to consider the “heavenly things” if they are in their unregenerate state?
- f. His is the only witness we can bank our souls upon, so His message, and His initial point in it that one must be born from above must be trusted/believed!
- g. The infinite perspective of Jesus is the point of His descending from Heaven (the abode of God, Who is eternal and omniscient) and since no one could have ever started from the Earth (of the earth) and ascended up to God, then only He can be trusted (the only legitimate object of our faith) - “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”

There is a great deal of interest in religious circles regarding “earthly things” that are then refused when it is initially disagreeable - if there is not practical submission/trust how will there ever be spiritual submission/trust?

All “religions” of the world either avoid the idea of rebirth or make it something of one’s own doing

Enoch and Elijah were brought into Heaven, but neither, of themselves, “ascended” there

3. This “Son of Man” that descended from Heaven had to be “lifted up” and believed-in for “eternal life” - vs. 14-15

It is often asked why a serpent was the focus on the pole - it would seem to fit best that it represented their sin and the judgment of their sin that needed to be dealt with - it was not necessarily a type of Christ as much as it was a type/picture of how God would use judgment (on Jesus) to save others

- a. Jesus references an incident in Israel’s history as a point to illustrate what He is teaching Nicodemus - In Numbers 21 we read of Israel’s rebellion against God and His judgment on them of “fiery serpents” to kill them - Moses was told to make an image of the serpent on a pole and those that would look to it would be healed from their deadly/poisonous wounds
- b. We know (from the following context) that the Son of Man being “lifted up” is in reference to His crucifixion (and ultimately, those that look to this in faith will be saved from God’s rightful judgment of their rebellion/sin) - see Jesus’ use of “lifted up” in John 12:27-35
- c. The word for “lifted up” is “ὑψωθῆναι” and is also used of one being exalted, which is included in the idea here, though how it came about is not typically seen as “glorious” (His being lifted up on the cross) - His submission to the will of the Father and His ultimate conquering of sin was the greatest act of true glory we could know

We may be shamed/humbled ourselves by God’s leading us to the display of His glory, not ours

We are to be thinking and living now as those who will live eternally in the next age, true life versus the eternal "second death"

So the answer to Nicodemus' response, "How can this be?" is "...whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Many go to great lengths to try to harmonize this verse with concepts of predetermined election and others work to explain away the misuse of this verse to make a case for "universalism" - yet it should be taken first/primarily at face value in its context

We know, of course, that there are many who will not even consider God's actual love and the offering of Christ - we need not lessen its magnitude to "protect" other "doctrines of grace" since the text resolves itself with the qualifier of "belief in Him"

Essentially, the trust (faith) is in the love of God and the work of Christ and not the "degree" of our faith/sincerity- as soon as "belief" is made a work, doubts and confusion flood in!

Those "believing in Him" are the result - to make "believing" a work, it would then be subject to change and make the promise and comfort of this verse weak because it still would pivot on something of ourselves that would be constantly subject to change

Based on the context, His primary purpose for being sent into the world was to save it and the secondary consequence would be condemnation for those not believing - see verse 19

It's important to keep it clear in our thinking that the great identifier of regeneration is faith (actually believing) - so though there will be many claiming belief, their actions (over time) will reveal whether or not it was real faith

As just stressed above, faith/believing/trust is the critical point and will be proven for its authenticity by what each does (how they live and what they do)

- d. If "eternal life" and "the Kingdom of God" are together, then the practical sign/means of obtaining it is "believe in Him" - this "ζωὴν αἰώνιον" (life eternal) describes not an endless life in this age, but an age (the next) that is endless - there is also an endless "death" (in unending separation from the goodness of God) - see Rev. 21:1-8
- e. Note that the object Christ referenced (the bronze serpent) that God had used as a temporal salvation later became an idol to Israel and needed to be destroyed - II Ki. 18:1-6 - it is "in Christ" we believe and in so doing we are "in Him" and believing (having faith in) so anything else, no matter how closely associated with Christ or used of God, does not deserve our faith

4. For God so loved He gave - vs. 16-17

- a. Still in explanation of regeneration from above, we're now told the reason/motive for the sending of the "one of a kind Son" - "For God so loved..." - this is a profound statement regarding God, that the first revealed truth regarding why He gave His son was that of love (ἠγάπησεν - basically "a preference" and so an affection for another that acts for the best of the object of their love)
- b. Still considering context, God "gave" His Son to be "lifted up" (on a cross) with the purpose that any who believe in Him (more than "believe on His name" as seen in chapter 2) which is an entrusting of themselves for salvation on/in Him - compare Rom. 5:6-9, II Cor. 5:17-21
- c. Nicodemus was desiring an explanation of "how can these things be?" (as to how one can be "born of the Spirit") and it is "belief in Him" as the source of salvation from sin ("perishing") just as Israel needed to trust God that they need only look at the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole to be spared from the results of their rebellious hearts
- d. This love was for "the world" and not just a select ethnicity (as some in Israel may have presumed) - though there is apprehension on some to say there was love "for everyone" there was, at the very least, a demonstration of love that all who would could consider
- e. As seen at the end of chapter 2, there were (and still will be) basic levels of some type of "faith" in Christ and affection and curiosity regarding Him, but it will prove itself far short of "saving faith" - for this "believe" is also qualified in its tense (present active), it is continuous (in the ever "now") - some may react to this conclusion, but this does not discount some struggle with doubt; just that no other object of faith will ever usurp/replace it
- f. We realize this is a result (the rebirth and its results (which would be belief/faith)) and is the work of the Spirit (3:8) and not that of the one "born again from above" - there is a necessity to explain this since so many have taken this verse independently of its complete and immediate context
- g. This rebirth and the resulting belief ensures one will not "perish" (ἀπόλῃται - to be utterly ruined, "to incur the loss of true or eternal life; to be delivered up to eternal misery" (Thayer)) which is contrasted with "eternal life" (never ending life "of the age" (the one to come in contrast to the temporal one in which we live now) - either our death or the return of the Lord will end this age for us, so we live in light of the one coming and not for the "now"
- h. God did not send His son to condemn the world, that He "so loved" (though as we see in the next verse there will be those condemned, so we do not want to exaggerate the extent to everyone (the unbelieving especially)) - instead, Jesus was sent so that the world through Him would be rescued (σῶζω - delivered, saved from the coming penalty of "perishing")
- i. The primary idea of "judge" (condemn) in verse 17 is that of separation - He came to do the will of the Father which involved daily living perfectly His standard (Law), teaching Truth and then to pay the required penalty for sin - the resulting "judgment" (separation of the saved from the unsaved) will ultimately come later (by Christ as is Mt. 25) but also there would be a separation (practically) in the present between those truly believing and those not
- j. So the mission of Christ was that of salvation, though many will be condemned by the very offer of salvation and the refusal to believe/accept/trust

5. Faith or the lack thereof "in Him" is evidenced in what one does ("works" expose) - vs. 18-21

- a. Anyone believing in Him (Christ, the only "Son of God") is not condemned (judged, so "separated out" from God) but the one not believing (also present tense) is "condemned already" (perfect passive, so they already stand in the judgment of God) - if this is considered in reference to time (as we see it), all are born under the judgment of God and so are "condemned already" needing a savior

As verse 17 clarified, God sent Jesus, not to condemn it, but to save it, but there will be those refusing salvation out of preference for something they love/desire more than salvation

This is the best of news for those believing; they stand uncondemned and this is their condition from then on (for one to stop believing demonstrates they did not truly believe/trust (were not actually persuaded) to begin with))

“The message of the gospel is not that the world is going to be made better but that you and I are saved out of it.” Lloyd-Jones

It's not necessarily the amount of faith/belief one has as much as it is the object of their faith-rightful condemnation before God is our natural “lot” and any other pursuit of salvation/redemption not focused on the work of Christ alone keeps one in their condemned state- there is only one answer/solution!

The word for “evil” here illustrates the hardship people would rather face than face the truth/light

These “hate the light” because they love for things to remain the same or at least *seem to be* what they desire and expect them to be

Mankind, in the pursuit of self-justification and when confronted with the reality of evil (even in themselves) seeks to make themselves out to be the victim - here they are all shown to be willful participants

These verses show that there are really only two considerations when it comes to “works” - those done out of (by means of) self and those done by God

Again, walking in the light and practicing the truth are essentially living in the light of what things really are, why they are, and where they are heading, all based on the Truth - if the truth is believed to be the truth one will live by means of it and for it

- b. Notice the key word in verse 18... “believe” (πιστεύω- trust, being persuaded) - “Already in need of a Saviour before God’s Son comes on his saving mission, this person compounds his or her guilt by not believing in the name of that Son. As with the arrogant critic who mocks a masterpiece, it is not the masterpiece that is condemned, but the critic.” D. A. Carson
- c. It is a profound and fearful declaration in verse 18, yet it is simply put - those “believing” are not standing in judgment (present tense) yet those not believing “have been judged already” (perfect tense (describe a completed action which produced results which are still in effect all the way up to the present)) - they were born (in Adam) this way, so nothing changes
- d. For the believing, “... he is saved from the curse: condemned *by the world*, it may be, but not *condemned with the world...*” MH
- e. Yet to the unbelieving this should be the worst of news, yet they are likely not shaken by it because they are “lovers of darkness” (not necessarily picturing lovers of evil as much as it does being lovers of not having to see things for what they actually are (revealed by the light) and prefer to live their lives in such darkness)
- f. Notice in the transition from the end of verse 18 into verse 19, these unbelievers do not necessarily “not believe” anything (or in anything), they just don’t believe in the name of the “one of a kind” Son of God - they likely believe (in) someone or (in) something, but it is this particular slighting that keeps them in their condition they had at birth; condemnation before God
- g. “And this is the judgment...” (κρίσις- sentence against someone and so a separation (distinction) between the one sentenced and the Law they are answerable to) - the evidence against them being their response to the “light” (the light of the Truth described in John 1) - these refusing to believe/trust Christ do so because they “loved darkness rather than the light,” and the reason this was/is so was their “works were evil”(they prefer their “works/deeds” (what characterizes their life) not be held under the scrutiny of the light and be revealed for what they truly are... **evil** (actually “πονηρός” describing something morally bad and so it is “grueling” and “laborious” “full of labors” because it is determined/stubborn in its error!)
- h. Preferring “darkness,” they prefer anything that validates what they seek (which is why they love darkness, for it seems to offer them protection and concealment in their “evil works” which they do not want to lose) - love of sin makes the Truth offensive and even repulsive
- i. This fact is plainly stated in verse 20 - everyone “doing evil” (evil here being the word “φᾶλος” which describes what is “worthless” and Thayer in his lexicon associates the ideas of “easy, ordinary” with it) hates/detests the light and so (naturally) does not “come to the light” so as not to have their works “exposed” for how evil, worthless and sinful they are
- j. The word “does” [evil] in verse 20 is different than the word for “does” [or practices] the truth- both words demonstrate the true nature of the person (what they do, the one more just out of natural instinct (evil) and the other more deliberately, because it is firmly founded/driven by something other than his natural self)
- k. “The implication is not that men helplessly lie in the toils of wickedness but that, when the saving power of the Light comes to them and battles to free them, they fight the Light, hug their wicked works, and continue to make them the sum and substance of their lives.” Lenski
- l. The one “doing the Truth” (they do not just verbally assent to it, but because they truly believe it, they live it (the normal byproduct of true faith) - and, because they are regenerated (born again with a new nature), their motive for coming to the Light has nothing to do with self-glory - these, because of the new nature, are inwardly driven to live out and stand with the Truth (the Light) because it reveals that all the good (living the Truth) that was done, was “wrought of God” (the original wording being “τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ἐν Θεῷ ἐστὶν εἰργασμένα” (the works that in God have been done (worked))
- m. These verses also demonstrate the core (to the heart) difference between these two groups - those that love their sin and actively seek to shun the true light/truth (even when giving lip service to the “truth”) while those truly regenerated are always “coming into the light” - these stand with the Truth and have an inner goal that God’s grace at work in them being shown as His work and not theirs)
- n. Compare this context to that of I John 1:5-7 (and the evidence being “walk in the light”) is focused on the “practice of the truth” (same wording as in verse 21)

VI. The Final Testimony of John the Baptist - 3:22-36

A. "This joy of mine is full" - vs. 22-30

1. The context of this phrase from verse 30 is not one that looks to end with an expression of joy - a religious debate ensues, stirring-up attitudes and ending with a criticism of Jesus - vs. 22-26

It may seem, at first, that these details are unnecessary, but they demonstrate (at least) the significance and profundity of the right response in a bad situation

John adds the clarification that this took place before John the Baptist was imprisoned lest some disqualify this account because they believed John was imprisoned before Jesus began His ministry - with such careful attention, the accuracy is defended (because of the importance of the message)

There is always a dangerous tendency to become more loyal to the messenger than the focus of the message!

Even in our day there are some who would be more loyal to their teacher than even (possibly) the Lord when all is seen for what it is

Some commentators believe that John is countering a sect in his day that were still more loyal to John the Baptist and "his baptism" than that of Christ

In Mat. 21:23-27 Jesus asks the Jewish leaders where the authority of John's baptism really came from - the correct answer was "from heaven" but they dared not openly agree or disagree with it

As with John, all of us should see our core purpose in pointing to Christ (and so away from ourselves, even on the inside (in our hearts/thinking))

see also Col. 1:15-20 where Christ is to have "first place" (preeminence) in everything- this leaves no pride/glory for self (in anything), yet when we steal a little away, now and then, we become dependent on it and come to "work" others for ego boosters

There is no "fullness of joy" when "glory" is directed at us- we feel drawn to it but know inwardly that "self" does not belong in the spotlight - if a spotlight catches us on the stage of life, let it show us pointing to Christ, diverting attention from self to Him

- a. The historical context is quickly laid out that Jesus had moved on with His disciples (from (likely) Jerusalem) to the countryside of Judea - there He "was baptizing" (His disciples (4:2))- these details are given to show all that led up to the last recorded testimony John the Baptist would give of Christ
- b. Religious and spiritual "competition" is often legitimized as a result of a legitimate beginning- John points out that Jesus was sanctioning baptism with His disciples in another area and John the Baptist had also carried on his ministry of baptism - some would make it a "competition"
- c. So, while both groups (under the direction of their leaders) were teaching and ministering (baptizing), the disciples of John the Baptist get drawn into a debate regarding the value of this baptism in contrast to the purification rituals (washings) already in place amongst the Jews - no doubt the disciples of John thought they needed to rightfully defend this baptism of repentance, yet as we see in the next verse (26), it evolved into a resentful questioning of Jesus altogether (as, sadly, many initial "fights to defend the Truth" wander onto other areas of discussion that end up bringing more harm than good)
- d. After their efforts to defend the rightness of their leader's message and baptism, their enthusiasm carried them into a solid, defensive loyalty to him causing them to question Jesus- after all, was not He baptized by John? Now "all are going to Him" (they reactively exaggerate)
- e. Their numbers (in a legitimate, God-ordained ministry) were shrinking, while those of Jesus were growing, and this looks to have caused them concern - as John will point out, the intent all along was to direct all to Christ (and so, away from themselves)

2. "He must increase, but I must decrease" - vs. 27-30

- a. As any true teacher/minister of Christ would do, John the Baptist directs them from himself and in genuine humility, glorifies (rightfully) Jesus Christ above himself - it might be natural for any servant of the Lord, in the service of the Lord, to sense some level of success in their work based on the loyalty of their followers to themselves, but this is not helpful!
- b. John immediately redirects their focus to God and His overriding control of all things - first of all, regardless of how they would see/define "success," God was not only the assigner of responsibilities and gifts/callings/opportunities, but also would do what is best with each of them at any time - there is not "one thing" given to any unless it is done so "from heaven"
- c. This is a significant point to remember with anything at anytime that God gives, places us in, or takes away (see also I Cor. 3:1-10, 4:5-7, I Pet. 4:10-11)
- d. He reminds his disciples of his core purpose and identity: he was not "the Christ" but was the one "sent before Him" (which should, as one might expect, end in all focus being on Him) - the herald of a King would not expect attention on himself after the King arrives!
- e. It would seem obvious, yet John the Baptist had to again (John 1:20) state directly "I am not the Christ" only now this was to his followers - it must always be "the Christ" (and not ourselves) that we long to have those (we are enabled to influence) to follow - it is "the Christ" that is the authority, the Savior, the Truth, the One all glory belongs!
- f. Jesus uses the picture of a wedding, distinguishing the bridegroom from the "friend of the bridegroom" - the friend would be wrong to treat the event as though it was about himself and to be focused upon himself - instead he "rejoices greatly" at hearing the voice of the groom (meaning the focus of the celebration has arrived)
- g. His heart being anchored (and focused) correctly was truly fulfilled with the realization that "all men" were going to hear Christ - Robertson noted of this, "Perfect passive indicative of plēroō, stands filled like a cup to the brim with joy" picturing the meaning of "complete"
- h. If we are to consider the opposite (rightful discouragements and disappointments) it would be when others are distracted from Christ (by those supposed to be His followers) viewing life as though its fulfillment is to be found in some form of self-focus
- i. Stating the summation of the matter succinctly, John states a "must" - simply "He must grow and I must shrink (be demoted)" - He becomes preeminent and I fade

B. "He who comes from heaven is above all" - vs. 31-36

1. Even with the best, most reliable, most authoritative witness to the truth, it was not "received" - vs. 31-32

Paul, when referencing Christ coming by means of the Jews (Rom. 9:5), calls Him "the Christ, who is God overall" - His being "above all" is "ἐπάνω πάντων" (on top of the whole) - all should expect to defer to Him

Such, only of themselves can speak only "in an earthly way" and so, no matter how seemingly profound their wisdom/teaching or their gifted, motivational teaching, it will be deficient in regards to the eternal, and their offering of "hope" will not withstand hardships and thorough scrutiny

Many will follow after Christ in intellectual, superstitious, ways and out of curiosity - interest and even "partisanship" does not necessarily prove "receiving"

- a. Jesus Christ, being the "One from above" is, as should be obvious, "above all" - realizing who He is, there could not possibly be anyone or anything considered as being "above" Him (as being more reliable and authoritative)
- b. As in 3:11, Jesus "bears witness" of what He saw and knows (firsthand), yet then (and now) it is (sadly) normal for even the religious (even professing Christians) to entertain some idea of their "right" to question Him and to pick and choose what they will "believe"
- c. So for John the Baptist's disciples to resent the popularity of Jesus was horribly wrong - there will be no possible better perspective, teaching and "way" to follow-after, learn and devote life to - so if earthly teachers/mentors fail/fade or (the opposite) become popular and highly admired, they do not deserve attention and loyalty usurping that of Christ
- d. For, simply put, "he who is of the earth is from the earth" and so their wisdom and experience are limited to this restriction (there is no way for them/us to know what lies beyond this universe apart from "special revelation")
- e. He (Christ) "bears witness" to eternal (beyond/above (and so better than) the earth and its wisdom and experiences) and yet no one "receives His witness" (what He teaches, declares and represents) - this is clearly far more than following, admiring and listening to Him, for many did this - it carries more the idea of taking into one's self, "owning" it, trusting in it (proven in a life set aside (consecrated) to it)
- f. This "no one receives His witness" is in direct contrast to the conclusion of John's disciples that "all are coming to Him" (vs. 26) - not all actually were "coming" and based on this verse, those that were coming were (at least at this point) not "receiving" - there is much more than appearance

2. The "sealed testimony" that "God is true" - vs. 33-34

Romans 1:24-28 lays out the downward slope into reprobation, after having "exchanged the truth about God" and reaching a point where they do not "see fit to acknowledge God" they become determined deniers of truth/reality and are given over to a "debased mind"

compare to I John 5:10

Such a concept should force us to consider whether our lives could serve as any type of "seal" (endorsement) or might we be guilty (at times) of responding as though God is not true?

This is fascinating to consider; that here we have God incarnate possessing not just deity but the entirety of the Spirit of God - truly in Him "dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily"! - Col. 2:9

- a. Before considering these verses in this context, it helps to realize that some common words carry more of an idea than the common definitions we must deal with - for instance, here the word for "true" (as in "God is true") it is the word ἀληθής from "α" (not) and "λανθάνω" (concealable, escape notice) providing us an idea of "true" or "truth" as being that which is actual reality - if it is not truly "of the truth" it is not based in reality and so is, at best "pretend"
- b. There is some debate as to precisely who is being discussed in verse 33 when referencing "He who has received His witness" - having just stated that "no one receives His witness/testimony" we have here someone(s) that do/have/will receive it and in so doing, place their "seal" openly and officially acknowledging that "God is true" - a few say it is John the Baptist, others that it is anyone that comes to "receive" Christ
- c. If we consider it being John the Baptist, it fits the context easily (for verse 33) and he clearly did receive the testimony and it would not be a stretch to consider the use of the word "seal" (as an official, authoritative) acknowledgment... he being a prophet of God
- d. There is also a reasonable sense in taking this also to mean "whoever" (anyone) that has received (from λαμβάνω meaning to "lay hold of" and "take") "His witness" (what He has said regarding the things "from above") is essentially placing their "seal" (using their life of faith/trust in His witness), openly endorsing it with their lives/living
- e. And not only should Christ be trusted because He "comes from above" and so is "above all" but also because He, being the one that "God has sent," is the one that "speaks the words of God" (in other words, **all that He says are the words of God**) - see also John 8:21-30
- f. He (Christ) being who He is, is given "the Spirit without measure" - all others had the working of the Spirit of God in them, we have the "gifts of the Spirit" doing the same, but He had it all (it was not meted out to Him; instead the Spirit came upon Him fully and stayed fully)
- g. We see that it was then as it still is that the majority will not receive Him nor His witness, and so will reject or disregard His message, instinctively desiring God to not exist or at least not be true (and so a "liar") - yet we, having come to the truth, would rather "God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4) for, if mankind is "true" we have no hope for a lasting/eternal hope!

3. The Father, out of love for "the Son" has given (once for all) all things in His hand - vs. 35-36

- a. It is the Father's love that once again is seen in giving - having just mentioned that the Spirit was given "without measure" (all gifts and enablement in His humanity)

It is interesting to consider that the Son took on humanity (the flesh) and has not “put it off” - He made it (flesh/humanity) what is its ideal and what we will retain also (because of Him) throughout eternity

Notice the opposite here to “believes in” is not the word for “unbelief” but is **disobedience**- this demonstrates one of the key identifiers to true faith being obedience

It is very important we never lose sight of the original condition of us all when we come into the world - depraved and deserving the wrath of God

- b. No other person has or will ever have such credentials (so any competition or perceived competition with Him is ludicrous) - He (Jesus) is God’s “plenipotentiary” (a person, invested with the full power of independent action on behalf of their government)
- c. “Therefore, having deigned to send us the son, let us not imagine that it is something less than the Father that is sent to us. The Father, in sending the son, sent His other self.” Augustin - compare this with John 14:8-9 - it was the humanity of Christ that received “all things into His hand” in the carrying out of all that was the “will of the Father”
- d. Note also that the word “δεδωκεν” (given) is in the perfect tense, making it clear that this now “having all things in His hand” is ongoing, without end
- e. This being the case, there are only two categories of peoples; “the one” believing in the Son has (has it now) “life everlasting” (perpetual, never ending true life/living) and the one “not obeying” (ἀπειθέω - not loyal, not conforming and so rebellious) and will not see life (what true life is, eternal with God) but will instead have upon him (forever) the “wrath of God”
- f. “The entrusting of the soul in utter moral surrender to the Son of God, is life—eternal life. All cruel suspicions of God vanish when the veil is lifted which sin and the corruption of the human heart have hung over the holiest of all.” Pulpit Commentary
- g. Such disbelief has what it has always had in the life of the disobedient; the “wrath of God” (in the present tense, so such have it right now) - the only hope for this disobedient one living under the wrath of God (and no chance on their own to ever “perceive” (see) life) is the entrusting of their soul into the hand of the one all things have been given

VII. Jesus, the Singular Source of “Living Waters” - 4:1-42

A. Jesus departs to Galilee when learning of the attention being directed at Him from the Pharisees - vs. 1-4

1. A change in direction to avoid unnecessary conflict - vs. 1-2

Misdirected passion (turned against other believers and even against the Lord Himself) may need to be faced, but most often are best to avoid (mindless and misinformed religious passion leads to a battle of wills and not the Truth)

Jesus was not interested in drawing crowds, seeing His focus was on imparting the Truth to all regardless of its perceived popularity

Those driven by popularity should not be allowed to influence the ministry of the Gospel

- a. Having just described the conflict within the disciples of John, we see a potential conflict arising (possibly motivated by the enemies of Christ as was evidenced in the “discussion” between John the Baptist’s disciples and “a Jew”)
- b. The report to the Pharisees was in error regarding the actual baptizing of disciples by Jesus- apparently this was a sensitive point since John goes on to clarify that Jesus did not Himself baptize any of these new disciples, but that His disciples did this
- c. There was now an even greater threat to the Pharisees and to their version of their faith - they were wary of John the Baptist because of the crowds he drew and now was even greater under Jesus - it must be remembered that this group was not seeking the truth and whether or not they realized they were actually fighting the Truth, their traditions, influence and even their “life-callings” were at risk if popular opinion drifted from them
- d. Note that these followers (now baptized disciples) did not all stay consistent (the majority walking away when Christ’s teaching became “difficult” (see John 6:59-66)) -in the John 6 context Jesus reveals that only those “granted by the Father” can come to Him, so His focus was not on the people and their opinions/tastes, but on the will of the Father

2. Jesus then decided to leave Judea and return to Galilee (where He had begun) - vs. 3-4

Clearly Jesus was greater in His insight than we, but in His greatness we should see an obligation to always be seeking His provided opportunities of ministry (especially in the “normal,” mundane times of life)

- a. As most do, Jesus set His sights on where He was headed, yet the journey to where He was headed had an opportunity and purpose in an unlikely place and in an unlikely way
- b. The statement “had to pass through Samaria” doesn’t necessarily mean He was obliged to, but that it was the path to be taken to get to where He was headed - John looks to be demonstrating a profound happening in the midst of a normal situation (travel)

B. “... a spring of water welling up to eternal life” - vs. 5-26

1. Take note of the setting of this account - Jesus (a “rising in prominence” Jew) talks with not only a Samaritan woman (unusual because she was of a group that Jews would not usually talk to and would feel obliged to have no association with them at all) and yet all this in a place of historical significance to the Jews (being land given to Joseph by Jacob and an historical well/spring) and also the burial place of Joseph

The Jews despised Samaritans because of their historical disobedience and intermarrying with Gentiles - this would have seemed to be even a morally justified prejudice to some

- a. There were numerous “strong” reasons why the discussion with the “woman at the well” should have never happened - this may help make the point that common prejudices (even considered legitimate) should not usurp our responsibility to always be looking out for those in need of the Gospel - we are not those “judging” who *deserves* to hear it

As demonstrated by our Lord, we are to see others in light of their need (not as they discern it but as it really is within their soul, especially when lost and blind in sin)

- b. This woman was also likely a woman of disrepute (having had so many husbands and living with a man not her husband), so Jesus even being near her would have been frowned upon by the religious authorities - but Jesus was not there to become close friends (having her remain the way she was), but to convert her with the Truth
- c. "A religious, male, Jewish aristocrat like Nicodemus, or an untrained, female Samaritan peasant who had made a mess of her life - Jesus converses frankly with both, and happily breaks social and religious taboos to do so." Carson

2. The leading circumstances of wearied travel - vs. 5-9

This was a place that had degraded through the ages (as far as its historical ties with "faithful" Israel) and would not have been a likely destination for most when considering the best places to share the Gospel

The full deity and full humanity of Christ may seem contradictory but is a good example of an apparent paradox (a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.)

G. Campbell Morgan

Jesus knew who/what she was and used the example of a physical need/longing to compare to the spiritual longing

- a. Jesus came to a town called "Sychar" which had been formally known as "Shechem" and was not only within the land that Jacob had given to Joseph (to Ephraim), but was also the burial place of Joseph (Jos. 24:32) - it had a long history with Israel having been the place Joshua reviewed the covenant with the leaders in Israel before his death (Jos. 24), it became a place of idolatry in Judges and later became the residence of King Jeroboam (after being rebuilt when it had been destroyed shortly after the death of Gideon)
- b. And, as we now see in the narrative, it was also the location of "Jacob's well" and so a place Jesus stops to rest "wearied from His journey" - John clearly demonstrates both the deity of Christ as well as His actual humanity (fully God, fully man, though seemingly irreconcilable at times, yet we see as undeniably true)
- c. The "sixth hour" was likely about noon (Jewish time) and so in the heat of the day Jesus asks the "woman of Samaria" to draw Him some water - His disciples were off to buy food so Jesus asks her to give Him a drink - there is no reason to think Jesus didn't ask because He was thirsty, but He also used the opportunity as a point of ministry - we do not read anywhere where He received the drink of water He requested - her need was more important than His
- d. "He gained admission to the soul of a sinning woman, by asking her to do Him a favor." - it was a general point of respect in not only speaking to her, but by being willing to partake of something she would give Him - this is a good example of how we ought not ever present ourselves as above others
- e. The woman seems surprised He would ask for a drink from her (He being Jew and she a Samaritan) since they "had no dealings" with each other - regardless of the physical make-up of an individual, each has an eternal soul and that is what we strive to see first

3. Jesus tells the woman what she should have asked - vs. 10-15

We all could (to some degree) answer what we desire, but none (on their own) could rightfully determine what they SHOULD desire

It is the same for us also; God does not need us but uses us for His purposes and this for our own good - we are always the losers when refusing God-given responsibility

We naturally crave water to live and in like there is an internal craving for something to cause us to truly live!

The skeptic and the sincere "seeker" may both ask challenging questions though for different motives (something we need to be aware of when monitoring the attitude of our response)

Many would rather maintain dependence on historically "good" things over that of the eternally best things!

- a. Since the woman could not know what she should ask for (as anyone, apart from special revelation does not know even what to ask for since focus and inclination is always to the physical, and so to the pursuits of temporal satisfaction... including emotional)
- b. Her biggest issue at that moment was more what **she did** not realize (the "gift of God that was right before her, an opportunity of an eternal lifetime, eternal satisfaction)
- c. She did not know who it was that was asking her for a drink (He, being who He was, could have had this need met in many other ways, but chose (because of her need) to ask this of her)
- d. In His gracious revealing of the opportunity she had (and would have continued to miss) He tells her what she should have asked, "Give me a drink" and His supply would be "living waters" (the physical illustration being that of moving waters (a spring) versus that of stagnate/stale water) - **only God could offer such** (see Jer. 2:13, 17:13, Rev. 21:6, 22:1, 17), the genuine eternal living water, being the source of endless (true) life - compare also John 7:37-39
- e. As with Nicodemus, she does not see past the analogy and focuses on His lack of something to draw up water from the well... unless He is speaking of something else (for she then asks almost as though she is realizing He is speaking of something else; something better when she asks "where do you get that living water?" (vs. 11))
- f. If He is referencing another source to something better, she wants to know if He is (or thinks He is) better than "our father Jacob" - this could be taken as a challenging question (as in "who do you think you are?") or a sincere desire to know if He actually is better
- g. Again, as in His discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus stays focused on the need and not her possibly diverting questions
- h. Jacob was "great" in God's use of him, and the Samaritans realized they were also descendants of him and lived in his land - this made this well/spring very special to them and would not think (possibly out of loyalty) that any other source of water could be better

This spring-fed well would have been considered "living waters" - even though its supply seemed infinite, its fulfillment wasn't - the issue isn't amount - as much as it is quality - money is a good example of this; even though one may have more than enough for their lifetime, it cannot satisfy

All sources of satisfaction here are temporary and the same needs will cry for satisfaction again and again

Such is better than a "fountain of youth" for it eternally resides within and provides an endless supply of what truly fulfills

Her focus was on a possible freedom from having to come daily to get water - convenience was what she thought the offer would bring her (or possibly a gratification of her laziness)

We have more than we will ever need for lasting contentment so it's a perspective/focus issue that leads to discontentment - see also I Tim. 6:6-10

Jesus, as the Lamb of God came to "take away the sins of the world" would need to actually deal with sin - core to the Gospel is the forgiveness of sin and the change in nature (born again with a "well spring" of living waters within)

As it still is today, religious or philosophical debates typically act as lures to draw someone into a conversation, or as here, to divert it another direction (away from sinful self)

Notice it is "worship of the Father" and not worship of the location or even of worship itself (as so many religions are prone to do)

- i. Was Jesus greater... even more than Jacob? The answer is clearly "yes!" - based upon Jesus' previous response He was infinitely greater than Jacob, He himself being the very "gift of God"
 - j. Some commentators chide the woman at this point, believing she should have known this was a spiritual reference and was still focused on the physical - we see no rebuke from the Lord, only a patient leading of the conversation to exactly what she needed to hear and see
 - k. He, as the "gift of God" was so by God's grace (also the motive for the gift) - all other "gifts" and "need-fulfillers" will only be temporary (as here, those drinking of these well-spring waters), though high in quality and having a substantial heritage, its consumers would thirst again - there is an unquenchable, inner desire to have lasting fulfillment
 - l. Jesus, now guiding her further into the conversation, contrasts "Everyone... be thirsty again" over against "whoever... never be thirsty again" - everyone (all inclusive... the norm) will drink of this water (from this historical, living-waters well) will thirst again, stating what would have seemed to be obvious in order to offer that which would seem impossible
 - m. The offer is that water "that I will give him" (for there is no other source) will never thirst again, made so by it becoming "in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" - using the Lord's illustration, we drink water and our thirst is quenched but once used up and dispelled, we thirst again (having no internal supply) - as anything that offers fulfillment now is outside us and must be sought out again - He is the source of "eternal living" in contrast to the normal course of humanity leading to "eternal death/dying")
 - n. Now interested, she asks that He give her this water, though she was still focused on the physical (temporal) and not the spiritual (everlasting) - just as so many (even the religious) still seek for - an endless supply of the non-satisfying "temporal"
 - o. Jesus demonstrates a loving compassion for this woman - this was no theological or philosophical debate (though she would soon try to direct it that way) - Jesus knows her need far greater than she knows it (or she thinks it to be) and is about to make it clear His knowledge of her is all-knowing - for it will be her testimony of Christ ("He told me all that I ever did" (vs. 39)) that many would believe in Him
 - p. Many might speculate that, though they are in Christ, they still suffer from a life of dissatisfaction and that they still "thirst" - this is due to the fact they still define "satisfaction" on the wrong scale and related to the wrong things - my body and even thoughts may feel discontent when looking to the "temporal" for fulfillment (and may make the "feeling" of discontentment even more pronounced as we're prodded to what is truly lasting) - see Heb. 13:5
4. Jesus demonstrates His knowledge of her sinful state and yet a profound revelation given - vs. 16-26
- a. Jesus began with a basic request for water, followed by an offer of "living water," all of which would become more profound when she comes to realize He knows her for who/what she is
 - b. Rather than answer her request for the "living water" as she interpreted (viewed) it He tells her to go and bring her husband - she simply responds with a technical fact, that she had no husband (leaving out a great deal of information which would expose her moral condition (her character)) - sin's guilt seeks remedy in concealment, blame or excuse
 - c. Jesus does (technically) agree that she has no husband when He responds "You have well said "I have no husband" (singular) for she "had five husbands" and that she is living with a man (unmarried) so is (lawfully) without a husband - Christ exposes that even though she has spoken literal truth, she had an underlying deceit
 - d. She uses two, often used techniques when confronted with personal sin - she simplified her situation avoiding any negative light on herself, and then proceeded to divert the conversation (here, to a "religious" discussion) - the Lord was not going to deal with her according to her sin (which she might have expected anyone to do) and the Lord used her topic of "where the best place to worship was" to declare to her who He actually was
 - e. She immediately acknowledges that she realizes he must be (she "perceives") a "prophet" (one who speaks for God) - her interest is to get the answer from Him regarding the debate over the true, best place to worship (on "this mountain" (Gerizim) or in Jerusalem)
 - f. The Lord's initial answer is not the straight-forward answer that "salvation is of the Jews" but reveals where it is all heading (where it will end up) - the location of "worship" will no longer be a the focus (rather than "in Jerusalem" it will be "in spirit and in truth")

Even the advantages the Jews had (see also Rom. 3:1-4), they were not enough without the reception of all of what these Scriptures were pointing to - many love the study of Theology but dislike it's application

As then so we still have many focused on a religion and tradition yet not knowing who/what they are actually worshipping

It would seem that the Lord worded it this way because He was the fulfillment but the sacrifice for sin and resurrection had yet to be finished

"True worship" is not defined by us - to be truly worship it must be in response to who He really is and in submission to what He has given and instructed us to do - many can praise Him but do not/will not follow Him

This does not indicate the Holy Spirit Himself, though we know it is His work that regenerates and so enlivens our dead spirits

There are those in professing Christianity whose knowledge and stance on the Truth is strong but whose soul is little or not affected while there are those whose soul feels much but it is inspired by untruths or adulterated truth

Nicodemus and this Samaritan woman demonstrate the two common groups of the religious- the religious informed, self-righteous unregenerate and the religious mis-informed self-righteous unregenerate

Jesus had directed the conversation from the physical to the spiritual, using the reality of temporal thirst quenching to the internal discontent (lack of fulfillment) and landing on not only the answer, but the authoritative source of the answer - the reliable source of the answer is essential to the viability of the answer itself

- g. Consider also the possibility if Jesus would have answered her with just the plain facts of where true worship was supposed to be at that time (in Jerusalem), she could have responded that the Jews forbade them to do so
- h. Both groups, as far as their firm holding to the location of proper worship, would both soon become obsolete (for even Jerusalem would be destroyed some 40 years later)
- i. So, Jesus makes it clear that they (the Samaritans) "worship what you do not know" - the Samaritans only accepted the first 5 books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) and though their origins were similar, because of what they left out, they worship in ignorance
- j. "Salvation" would come by means of the Jewish people, not exclusively to the Jews but to all, from (starting with) the Jews - salvation would "emanate" from the Jews (Rom. 1:16)
- k. "The hour is coming, and is now here" - vs. 23 - the system setup by God with the Jews (and the ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices and the Temple) was fading out and, essentially was (initially) fulfilled with the presence of Christ (God incarnate and so with them rather than in the Temple)
- l. The result would be seen in "true worshipers" (literally those that were genuine adorers, submissive followers) would worship the Father (adoringly serve/honor Him) "in spirit and in truth" for such the Father would have to worship Him - "worship" is a word that has become more focused on praise than it has obedience and servitude (which worship **must** include)
- m. To "worship" (from προσκυνέω describing someone going down on their knees before another in reverence, kissing the hand of the master) is to be done in "spirit and in truth" (stated twice in this text, verses 23 and 24) - both words carry much content
- n. To worship "in spirit" is (as is also clarified in verse 24) not only regarding the non-tangible, but as being "of the soul" (in the "inner self" of who we really are on the inside and not just an external "front"), so it is the occupying "inner man" (the real "me"), describing one whose heart is truly engaged
- o. To worship "in truth" carries the core idea of "in reality," not just the genuineness of ourselves in it, but that it be based upon what is true/real - we realize, based in John 14:6 that Jesus Himself is the Truth and so to worship the Father "truly" it must be in the light of Christ
- p. "Omit the spirit, and though you have the truth, the worship becomes formalism, mere ritual observance. Omit the truth, and though the whole soul is thrown into worship, it becomes an abomination. Thus "spirit and truth" form a unit, two halves that belong together in every act of worship." Lenski
- q. The Father is not "seeking those" who work to come to Him on their own terms and in their own ways, for there are seeming limitless, zealous pagans and spiritually dead formalists, both fighting with each other (and internally) for self-rightness, neither of which God "seeks"
- r. So, going back to her question regarding the debate as to where worship must take place, the "must" was not on where but on "how" (which is commonly seen (erroneously) as subjective (a matter of personal choice/preference)) - God "is spirit" (this is His "essence") and so true worship must be "in spirit" and that "in truth" (notice the word "must")
- s. In response to these profound words of Jesus, the woman declares that she knows the Anointed One is coming (though their idea of Him was flawed, she still knew He would reveal "all things" to them, answering all that needed to be answered and known) - it looks as though she had been led to consider this thought (by Jesus)
- t. Jesus immediately responds by telling her that "I am *He* speaking to you" - He had laid the initial proof of this when He demonstrated He already knew her, and she would later declare, "He told me all that I ever did" in verse 39
- u. He had not revealed this to others (His being the Messiah) possibly because the others would "take Him by force and make Him king" (John 6:15), all of their own initiative and timing

C. The witness of the Samaritan woman - vs. 27-38

1. The significance in the testimony of this woman was not in her experience as much as it was to whom she was directing others to come and see/hear
- a. The point in any witness for Christ is that the hearer not be more impressed with the testifier and his/her experience, but that it be used to point to Christ
- b. The discussion with this woman was interrupted by the return of the disciples who had gone to get food - their initial assessment was that of astonishment (prejudice versus need)

To view others in light of their need above all else would be something Jesus would demonstrate throughout His ministry

2. The disciples were taken aback (surprised) that Jesus (a “Rabbi”) would be talking with a woman - vs. 27
- It was widely known that a Rabbi was not to talk with a woman in public (not even his wife) and certainly not matters of the Law - most did not believe a woman had anything of substance to contribute to such discussions (a prejudice Jesus countered by His action)
 - Yet many conversations we will have (as demonstrated here) are more in the conversing with another, discovering their questions and needs and pointing to solutions
 - The answer to such inequities is not an enforced equality as much as it is a change in thinking and perspective of “the peoples” to value all as being made in God’s image, and having that truth dictate our first impressions - there are always consequences (good and bad) to any philosophy/worldview of life - Jesus contradicted a bad practice, not just speak against it
 - John reveals what they were thinking - they were questioning why He would talk with a woman in public and what He was looking to get out of the conversation

None is beneath us - we are all equal in need before God and to allow self to be elevated in its own estimation is never good

One of the fallouts of many philosophies such as evolution and even “racism” is a focus on what is substantially irrelevant to the core need of people

3. The resulting impact of intimate insight versus that of theological/theoretical insight - vs. 28-30
- Notice the excited urgency of the woman - she leaves her pot to hurry (possibly not to be encumbered going back to town) to tell what has happened and to bring others back with her
 - Her message to those she met is intriguing - she was more taken with the fact that He knew her without having met her previously - she, knowing what she was (morally), was encouraged that He was gracious and actually took an interest in her (He listened and offered hope)
 - Her message was for them to “Come and see a man who told me all the things I have done” - this is illustrative of what we inwardly desire; not just to know the truth or know of it, but that the truth of ourselves (who we really are, what we really struggle with, what we truly desired and all that we lived in fear of) can be faced - at the core it is very personal to us!
 - Her question, “Can it be this is the Christ?” was not intended to question that He was as much as it was to present the possibility to those she wanted to come and find out for themselves - this is an example of what evangelism is focused on - not “trust me, or believe me” but come to Him and see for yourself - people are not “won” to ourselves; they are “won” to Christ
 - Those that she talked with were intrigued enough to leave the town and make the short journey out to hear Him for themselves

This was more than just telling others of some type of “magic trick” and for them to come see it - she knew there was much more to this man which is why she was considering the concept of the “Messiah”

Evangelism is not “trust my take” on salvation, for as it is personal with us so it must and will be for others (not personal in that we define it but that we are affected to the core of our inner most self and are radically changed (regenerated))

4. True “sustenance” - doing the will of God and finishing it - vs. 31-38

- As the Samaritans were gathering to come hear Him, the disciples, having suppressed their shock of seeing what the Lord was doing, focus on His physical need (food in this case, for this is what they went into the town to do)
- The Lord responds to their requesting Him to eat; as with the Samaritan woman, Jesus uses another physical need to illustrate a far more important fulfillment (i.e. fulfilling purpose)
- Jesus response is to tell them what His was, in a sense, to describe a food He has already been eating on (food to eat that they didn’t know about) - this, of course, causes them to wonder if someone had already brought Him food
- His food (not just the substance but the entirety of its fulfilling its purpose in meeting a need for living) was not only doing the will “of Him who sent me” (God the Father) but to **finish it** (τελειόω - reach the end, complete, from the same core word Jesus used on the cross, “It is finished”) - this contrasts those that see doing the “will of God” as participating in intervals rather than staying with it till it is finished
- As far as analogies go, in this case (when it comes to the harvest work of the will of God) do not be like farmers when they say there must be a time in between planting and harvesting (though in their case it is true) - with God’s harvests, do not assume there will always need to be a length of time between the planting of the seed and the harvesting
- Jesus, giving them an example of the “harvest” He was talking about tells them to “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest...” - we may assume in this context that the Samaritans (here, the “harvest”) were coming at this point
- The potential of lives forever changed should drive us, fulfill us, as it did our Lord - many did not respond as this group (later in Jesus’ ministry), but it did not change His “fulfilling sustenance” (doing the will of God and not allowing predictable norms to dictate the possibilities we look for)
- Our focus is to be looking for God’s working (readiness for harvest) realizing He may have been “working on” someone long before we met them

Hunger and thirst are vivid pictures of desires coming from need - Jesus would use “food” (what is consumed to sustain) to speak of what actually sustains Him

Doing the will of God (as in the day to day happenings demonstrated in this text) is fulfilling (even surpassing the natural cravings) when it is our focus, joy, purpose

Jesus describes a “miracle grow” that there is no counterpart in creation

A heart for others and their actual needs should be what stirs us “to the heart” - we are to look on others, not for how they can encourage us, but how we may encourage them

The thrill of the Lord's work is that harvest can happen at any time and we need not know when and how the "seed" was sown - we just live in the anticipation of His work already in progress

Results (the "fruit" the "harvest") belong to the Lord and we (as these disciples) will participate in either or both throughout our lives - while no "harvesting" is present we expect to be sowing

This is true with many believers - they are drawn to consider the Gospel through the witness/testimony of another, but it becomes their own testimony, and the personal relationship that is born out of it

Note how long after Philip was able to reap where Jesus had already sown - Acts 8:4-8

People desire answers to the deepest questions of life and life purpose but it will involve far more than some intellectual, philosophical answer (which the age has plenty to recommend) - it is the "cry of the heart" that needs an answer to rest securely in!

It looks as though these Samaritans were not given to pride as so many of the Jewish leadership - being "upper class" has issues often not considered (i.e. not having any substantial needs or being self-sustaining)

True honor would be seen in the faith/belief in the message and the resulting conversion rather than the need to see "signs and wonders" in order to believe (and even then, the message was often rejected)

- i. The analogy of the harvest now focuses on the workers (the sowers and reapers) and Jesus tells His disciples that the "reaper" is already being paid - both the sowers and reapers rejoice together - we don't know who is referenced here as the "sowers" other than the Lord is demonstrating a fact that they are to be looking for from here on out
- j. The "sowing" can come in many ways and we could consider that some of this was the initial teaching this woman (and her fellow citizens) had received regarding their past - there was clearly enough that had been learned for them to know of "the Christ" - the "reaping" can be practically seen as those coming to Christ - compare to I Cor. 3:5-9
- k. The proverb Jesus references is helpful to keep in mind; "One sows and another reaps" - the sower can be encouraged just in the "sowing" (the seed) even though he may not get to participate in the "reaping" - we all must not limit our joy to seeing the "harvest" for ourselves
- l. This text is a good reminder to be wary of those who present themselves and their presentation of the Gospel as a **certainty** for a quick harvest - it can and may come, but not because of them
- m. Jesus tells the disciples that they will reap where they have not (themselves) labored - the others have "labored" long before they had (this could even reference the prophets from long ago, or John the Baptist and certainly means Christ Himself in the immediate context)

D. The progress of true faith from that of another's testimony to becoming personal faith - vs. 39-42

1. The readiness to believe in the Samaritans - vs. 39-40

- a. The power of a testimony should be neither underestimated nor overestimated - many believed because of the testimony/witness (literally her "word") - this would lead them to come hear Him and then their belief would be firsthand versus secondary
- b. Her witness was that He "told me all that I ever did," and though that is either an exaggeration on her part or a figure of speech, He really did know all she had ever done
- c. These asked Jesus to stay (and He did for two days) - we have no account of Him performing miracles (as they seem to be unneeded) - they "believed because of His word"
- d. It had to have been impressive to this group that such a Jew would come to them and minister to them and teach them - Jesus had just described this opportunity as His "food" (that which He was sustained with)

2. Many more came to believe Him to be "the savior of the world" - vs. 41-42

- a. His "word" was truth and rather than waning, the group and their interest grew
- b. John points out that these other Samaritans believed because they "heard for themselves" - again this is key, not that they "saw" (as in miracles) but "heard" - it is the truth of what is what and why everything is what it is (and where it is all heading) that is needed more than religious sensationalism
- c. Their conclusion was not that He was the best philosopher (though He was/is), nor that He was the most powerful (though He was/is) - they conclude with certainty ("indeed") that He is the one to save the world - they knew (likely instinctively) that the world needed to be "saved" (rescued from itself and all that mankind had done and would continue to do to it)
- d. The world cannot save itself because it cannot deal with the core cause... sin - Jesus had real answers because He dealt with the real issues (not the superficial results of sin that the world seeks to resolve with the best of its "experts") - Jesus truly is the only answer, but so many don't even seem to know the most important question(s)! - see also I John 2:1-2 and John 12:44-50

VIII. More Honor Given to Miracles than the Creator's Message and to His Law than the Lawgiver Himself - 4:43-5:17

A. A prophet "without honor in his own country" - vs. 43-45

1. The contrast between the reception in Samaria and that of Galilee - vs. 43-44

- a. There has been no small amount of debate as to the insertion of John that Jesus had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country - many seek to tie this to the poor reception in Nazareth which is in Galilee (described in the other Gospels), or that it references Judea in general (especially considering the overall resistance in Jerusalem)
- b. The best answer (because it is reasonable and fits the entire context perfectly) is that John points out the differences in the reception in Samaria (likely an entire town came to hear Him and believed) and all this without miracles (other than His knowing the woman at the well without having previously met her)

True faith is most interested in where everything is headed rather than being obsessed with the present- saving faith looks beyond the present

c. Jesus spent two days with the Samaritans and “many more believed because of His word”- these desired the truth and answers and not to have their immediate needs addressed as top priorities (as would be the case in Galilee)

2. When Jesus arrived in Galilee He was welcomed - but the reason given was because some of them had seen what He had done in Jerusalem (miracles) - it was a fascination with what was seen rather than what was heard - vs. 45

note John 20:29

- a. To this day, there is a greater interest in the supernatural power of Christ/God to relieve temporal burdens than there is in His eternal message and purposes in/for life
- b. A welcoming reception does not necessarily indicate a reception of what Jesus was truly bringing - many would have the “supernatural” at their beckon call or to excite them when life gets dull, but few would have His truth redirect and dictate their lives

B. “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe” - vs. 46-54

1. The faith of desperation - vs. 46-50

It is common for even the self-identifying godless to appeal to God in desperation when their helplessness is painfully before them - but this is not true faith; instead it is more along the idea of “hope” - temporary help was found in miracles while lasting help and hope was found in His truth and who He was

- a. A “royal official” approaches Jesus when He enters Cana of Galilee - many had seen some of His miracles in Jerusalem and (likely) many knew of His miracle of turning water into wine - His reputation was spreading (though the enthusiasm seemed to be motivated with the excitement that they might see more miracles)
- b. This official’s son was “at the point of death” and judging by this urgent request, he had no option but Jesus - his request, in his helplessness, was sincere though he only knew of the reputation of Jesus’ power and likely knew little of what Jesus taught and who He was
- c. This man’s approach to Jesus was one asking for assistance and not as one coming to exercise his authority/rank to force or intimidate Jesus - this was the normal approach people took with Christ when facing a situation beyond their ability - no one dared demand help! (as some have done and believe they may get what they request if they threaten something)
- d. It was at this point that Jesus declares the “normal” prerequisite to have “signs and wonders” in order to believe - there is a natural (seemingly logical) inclination in us all to require some type of “proof” (and that on our terms) in order to trust/believe
- e. As will be seen later, even His miracles could not persuade a majority to follow Him when His teaching became controversial, difficult or association with Him might cost them something
- f. It is instinctive to “walk by sight” in all areas of our lives and a resistance to trust Him completely - how many miracles and what type of miracles would be “enough” to get us to a point where we would believe everything He said from that point on?
- g. The Samaritans believed when they “heard” what He said - this is true faith (trust)
- h. This man’s request became urgent as soon as Jesus said this, so he insists that Jesus “come down” (to Capernaum) before his child dies - the appeal and urgency was more on the need of the child and the perceived restrictive time limit - this man did not know who he was dealing with
- i. Notice how he thought that Jesus had to be present to heal his son - this is an example of how we often pray (request) something of God and narrow its answer to how we believe things must be done
- j. The man “believed the word that Jesus had spoken” when Jesus simply stated “your son lives” (ὁ υἱός σου ζῆ) and the man took Him at His word - this was still a faith, though, that needed validation and it was validated (to the very moment Jesus uttered these few words)

Yet the core of what God would have is trust/belief in what He says - this is where all that He reveals of Himself is leading

This is the problem with man-made faith - it does not know its own standard nor what will satisfy its demands in the future - it may believe today but when faced with a fear it falters or forsakes tomorrow

Jesus would not meet him on his terms but would do above what this man could have anticipated

2. Trust validated and its affect on a household - vs. 51-54

- a. As the man was returning home (which was likely about a day’s journey) his servants met him on the way to tell him “your boy lives” (not that, as some version indicate, he was recovering - so we realize this as instant restoration of health)
- b. Suspecting the greater power of Jesus (than he had expected) he inquired as to the timing and it was at the same time Jesus had told him that his son “lives”
- c. This man “believed” (having pieced the information together) along with his “household” - this belief (as John uses the term throughout this Gospel) indicates true belief and here, it was focused on Jesus Christ - in contrast to this man and his family’s response, others believed Jesus could heal and do other miracles, but did not come to believe Him (truly believe in Him)
- d. The whole family/household had been under the stress of the child’s looming death and so shared in the result of this miracle

Not only had Jesus healed this boy, but He did it instantaneously and at a great distance

There are different types of faith, some more exploratory while others fully trusting

C. Focus on the Law without consideration of the Lawgiver - 5:1-17

1. John has made it a point to describe the signs/miracles of Jesus to not just validate His authority and genuineness (that He was “the eternal Word”), but to also demonstrate how “He came to His own and His own received Him not” (John 1:11)

Having the miraculous/supernatural “happen” may seem appealing to consider until we realize how it brings to light what lies within the hearts (and the negativity that ultimately comes when God’s existence and authority are actually considered)

This would have been quite a sight to see so many in such a condition in one place, each essentially competing to reach the waters at the right time - the superstition that drew them is common with humanity when considering God’s help (that somehow those that get it are “lucky” - yet “Bethesda” means “house of mercy”)

It is easy to become someone used to being served and to prefer a weakened condition over the obligations that come with good health - there was, of course, a greater healing needed that the Lord alludes to in verse 14

This is also common, where we limit how God can meet a need to a small list of possibilities

Texts such as Jer. 17:21 were used to add to the Law (interpretations) to detail work restrictions - but doing the “Lord’s work” on the Sabbath was never forbidden

The Jews in this text demonstrate the normal tendency in humanity to focus on an outward standard/measurement of “rightness” - this leads to the “outward evidence” becoming the priority over what is actually true- compare to John 7:23

“take up your bed and walk” are the words that Jesus used (in the Greek)

2. “Do you wish to get well?” - vs. 1-9
- a. In the beginning of this chapter we have the account of the healing of a man who had been an invalid for 38 years and the response of “the Jews” (the religious leaders) to it because of it being done on the Sabbath - their “read” on it was their supposed authority to judge it
 - b. John uses this account (now back in Jerusalem) to relay Jesus’ warning regarding the man’s (who was healed) sin, and to describe Jesus equating Himself with God (in verses 17-18)
 - a. The setting for this miracle is in a unique location in Jerusalem (a pool located near the “Sheep gate” named “Bethesda”) - Jesus had returned to Jerusalem for “a feast of the Jews” and came to this location where there were “a multitude” suffering from various afflictions
 - b. This looks to have been designed to accommodate the infirm and had the reputation for being a place where one could be healed (when the waters were moving) - the end of verse 3 through verse 4 looks to have been added (not being in the earliest manuscripts) and was likely added (possibly by a scribe) to offer information as to why so many were there and why the man who was healed was waiting to be “first in”
 - c. Yet we are told of only one healing (amongst so many) and so we remember miracles were not WHY the Lord came - He singles out one man that had been in a weakened condition for 38 years - we do not know how long he had been coming to the pool
 - d. Jesus, knowing his condition and how long he had had it asks a question that might seem odd to us, “Do you wish to be healed?” - we are not certain as to why Jesus asked him this, but it does make us consider that there would be some that, though ill/infirm, they do not truly wish to be completely healed
 - e. The man, likely realizing Jesus as a possible help, describes his biggest issue as not being able to reach the waters first (someone always is ahead of him) - rather than assist the man by giving him what he wanted, in the way he wanted it, Jesus commands him to stand up, pick up his “bed” and walk
 - f. The power of Jesus’ words is on display in this moment, for there is no gradual healing taking place but complete healing - a man who was unable to walk for almost 40 years not only is able to stand, but to walk and to carry his own bed/mat
 - g. John now reveals one of the reasons he has shared this particular miracle - this was done on the Sabbath (Jesus having done it with so many around, and even commanding the man to carry his own mat which was a “technical violation” of the Rabbinic law on the Sabbath)
3. “Persecuting” Jesus - Jesus is undeterred with the diverting attacks - vs. 10-17
- a. We are unsure if these Jewish leaders knew the man they saw carrying the mat had just been crippled shortly before - their focus was on enforcing the law (with a particular focus on the outward conformity and not as concerned with the inward reality of the person)
 - b. Even if one could make a case that what this man was doing was a genuine violation of the law, the point of John is to make the case of Jesus being equal with God and so Lord over the Sabbath - but knowing that Jesus kept the entirety of the Law (as it was meant to be kept and understood), it is not reasonable to believe Jesus had this man do something truly unlawful
 - c. “True religion is assaulted most cruelly by the pretense of religion itself.” GBN
 - d. The man who had been healed tells the religious leaders that it was the one that healed him (that made him whole) that had told him to take up his bed and walk - many commentators look upon this man as fearful of these authorities and that he was shifting blame - taken at face value, he was likely just stating the facts (and possibly trusting them to be genuine in their spiritual responsibilities)
 - e. Still undeterred with the profound reality that he had been healed, they stay focused on getting the identity of the one that told him to “take up your bed and walk”
 - f. Those that are in such positions and are hypocritical are often most afraid of competition (that might threaten to unseat them or show them to be what they really are)

Jesus in no way could have been accused of trying to exploit this man or the situation for undue attention - as seen in the following verse, His concern for the man's spiritual well-being was highest

We don't have to know what the sin was, just that sin when yielded to as "master" will always lead to life paths that are worse and will end in eternal misery

see I Peter 4:1-5

One would have hoped that there would have been an interest in Jesus' telling the man not to sin, but the religious self-righteous inwardly love their sin and cling all the more to some type of external evidence of "righteousness" to protect and preserve inner sin

The ever-working since creation applies only to God (and such a stance as the Lord took here could not be taken by us - He was declaring equality with God)

IX. Jesus is Equal (One) With the Father and Has Authority in All He Does - 5:18-47

A. Jesus explains what equality with the Father actually is - vs. 18-23

1. The Jews understood Jesus correctly (in what He inferred in verse 17) that He was equal with God

This context is a clear description of the deity of Christ and the Lord is detailing it in answer to how He truly had the authority to do and say all that He did

- a. Now these opponents of Jesus focused not only on the issues with what He was doing on the Sabbaths, but that in His calling God His own Father He was claiming equality with God
- b. Rather than hear Him out, they determined already to work to kill Him - it would normally be understandable to be so reactive to such a claim but Jesus was the actual Son of God, one with the Father and this is partly why John is writing this Gospel

2. We see no verbal response from the Jews, but Jesus responds anyway - vs. 19-23

This concept is important to accept because it not only explains a perfectly united equality, but also that subordination does not prove inequality

- a. The issue (for many, and likely these Jewish leaders) is the wrong understanding with "equality" - most look on it as "I'm equal in power and authority so I can do and will do whatever I choose" - yet in His equality with God (as it is in the entire Godhead) there is unity and equality worked out through subordination
- b. Jesus begins, emphasizing what He is about to say with "Truly, truly" (absolutely) that the "Son can do nothing of Himself" - so His equality with God did not indicate His independence from God (and actually it was the extreme opposite - with their equality was a unity of will and direction, revealed to be coming by/through the Father)

- g. "Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the power of godliness with a pretended zeal for the form of it." MH
- h. The healed man did not know who Jesus was (didn't even know His name) when asked - the key to the relationship with God in Christ is His knowledge of us and does not rest upon the depth of our knowledge of Him - this is again an indicator of grace !
- i. Jesus had immediately worked His way through the crowd and the healed man could not point Him out to the Jews
- j. It is interesting that Jesus finds the man again in the Temple and it's Jesus that finds Him (not the man looking for Jesus) - Jesus says only a few words; "Look, you have become well" followed by a command, "μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε" (no more sin) and the way this is stated it looks as though somehow he would know how his sin had brought him to his being disabled
- k. The reason Jesus gives him is that there are worse things than 38 years of being an invalid (especially considering an eternal condemnation) - it is understandable (knowing human nature) than even after great suffering (as a result associated with our sin) there is still a tendency to return to it when all seem well again - apart from grace it cannot be fully resisted
- l. One of the lies of sin is that when rescued from its consequences, it is "worth the risk" to return to it (forgetting all of its dominating and addictive controls, its promising "freedom" and fulfillment while delivering only bondage and unfulfillment/frustration)
- m. The man left Jesus and went to tell "the Jews" that it was Jesus "that healed him" - this was still the man's focus and he may have thought the religious leaders would desire to know (for the right reasons) - there is no reason in this text to affix ill-will in this man toward Christ (or even possible fear of the Jews)
- n. Instead of exploring more of Jesus and what He taught and who He really was (or could be), these Jewish leaders took on a mission to "persecute" (ἐδίωκον - aggressively pursuing as in hunting down to capture and kill), and John indicates this was what began the process (not just "breaking the Sabbath" in this instance, but because He was becoming (in their eyes) a continuous Sabbath breaker) - they saw this as moral leverage against him
- o. Jesus' answer to the charge of breaking the Sabbath by working was a statement that would be even more offensive to these "religious police" - He makes it clear that the Father never stops working (not being subject to the same command He gave the Jews), and in like manner Jesus does the same (the working of God (God's true work) does not stop even for the Sabbath)
- p. As Jesus would explain in John 7:14-24, doing God's will (God's "work") is the right thing to do always (even on the Sabbath) - He, in a sense, pitted one obedience against another to demonstrate the overriding pursuit to obey God in what is done, not just in what is not done (avoided)
- q. Jesus plainly states that "My Father" has always been (in a sense) working (even when resting from the work of creation) and He Himself then, does the same

- c. This is not a “stretch” to handle this text as Jesus’ declaration of His equality with the Father (God) - as in verse 18, the Jews “were seeking all the more to kill him... “because they knew He was “making Himself equal with God”
- d. So here in verse 19, Jesus is making it clear that His equality with God did not hint of independence and self-will, demonstrated what a oneness of will actually looked like - it was as one watching what another was doing and then doing the exact same thing, and He does it “ὁμοίως” (in the exact same way) - **there is no competition in the Godhead**
- e. Jesus makes it clear why He can see the Father working - the Father loves “the Son” and so shows Him ALL that He Himself is doing; and Jesus does it all - because there is genuine, pure love in the Godhead, everything the one does is in perfect harmony (which is the result of perfect love) - true love unites around something - See Heb. 1:2 (how now God speaks to us)
- f. And Jesus lets them know this was just the beginning - “greater works than these” the Father will show Him (and so He will do them) with the purpose that they would “marvel” - even the unbelieving would be amazed (though confounded rather than believing)
- g. They had yet to see Him raise someone from the dead, yet He tells them this is coming, for as God “raises the dead and gives them life” so also the Son will raise the dead and give them life - giving life is impossible for any created being (for only God gives life)
- h. Their will was/is so much “one” that Jesus could “give life to whom He will” and it would be in perfect harmony with the Father - this describes a “power unity” and not a “power struggle”
- i. Those that seek to accept some of what Jesus taught and stood for but not other parts (yet still considering Him a “good teacher”) cannot grapple with such a text as this - for if what He stated was not true, He would have been a blasphemous madman of the highest sort
- j. Jesus then goes on to claim the highest authority in “judgment” (making final sentence based upon His determination of what “should be”) - in light of the previous verse, Jesus has all authority to give life (in the fullest sense) and to officiate final judgment to those not given life
- k. “He does not make them dead, does not slay them. They are spiritually dead already, and will not be made alive. Here, as in Joh_3:17-18, the judgment is one of condemnation...” - Cambridge Bible Notes - this was an ominous statement yet those finding moral/spiritual authority in themselves were undeterred (religious and secular) - He will judge the “living and the dead” (separated from God and true life) - notice how this was used to challenge Timothy in II Timothy 4:1-5 (so “preach the Word”)
- l. The reason for this authority is so that the Son is honored as much as the Father - those that say they honor God (the Father) more so than the Son (as in making Him lesser than the Father in any way) do not truly honor the Father - Jews who still reject Christ are rejecting (dishonoring) the Father as well

B. Passing from death to life - vs. 24-29

1. “Death” is separation from life (true life) - the dead of this earth (physically) have no sense of what is happening now in this world for they are dead (separated from life here), so also the spiritually dead have no sense of true life/living (no sense of the greatness/glory of God) because they are separated from it - vs. 24-27

- a. Jesus is about to use the phrase “passed out of death into life” because the natural state of mankind is actual spiritual death (deadness to true life) - note Eph. 2:1-10 - notice that those “dead” were not unconscious but only to eternal life
- b. This statement is prefixed again with “Truly, truly” that the dead will hear “the voice of the Son of Man” (as in Daniel in reference to the Messiah) and will live (vs. 25) - this is true (as is about to be mentioned in the resurrection) but is also true now here in verse 24, those dead in sin, separated from God, will show the ultimate signs of life in hearing “my word” and believing it - as illustrated in the parable of the sower there will be those that seem to hear and grow but their “belief” (faith) is inauthentic and is stolen away and choked out
- c. Those truly trusting Christ and all He taught have “eternal life” (life unending) - one of the key indicators of this is that such “do not come into judgment” (they, having started in the state of condemnation before God will never return (be returned also) to that state)
- d. Physical life is included in this also - again, with another “truly, truly” (absolutely, absolutely) the time is coming and is even beginning at that point (“and now is”) when those dead will hear His voice (physical and spiritual) and will live - note also verse 28

Many Christians will read of what God is doing and how He says to follow Him but will feel at liberty to do it on their own terms, their own way

The Lord’s explanation is good for us to understand - His focus was more on what God would have done and not on the people (predominately)

This demonstrates that true “greatness” stems from obedience rather than self-rule

Jesus is declaring the same nature/essence since God is His Father, and is also claiming equal power with God (and this out of love in oneness of will)

Jesus left no room for partial following and belief - He tied all of what He did and taught together

Even though many think they are the only ones that can rightfully judge themselves, they are grossly in error - the Father could judge but has given this to the Son

This is why the cults (who deny the deity of Christ) cannot possibly be considered honoring to God because they miss this core, authoritative point

Notice also Jesus’ allusion to this in Mt. 8:18-22, “leave the dead to bury their own dead”

This is not a conditional sentence but an indicative - hearing the word of the Lord and acceptance in faith of it is the first sign of eternal life

Some of the most precious words being “ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον” (he has life eternal) now (not just in the future)

Life is temporary here and we are all accountable to our Creator, the Lord Himself - so Jesus brings to focus the accounting in the end

Some have and will claim to know the "God of the Bible" yet differing from all that Jesus taught and revealed - if Jesus is not believed, God the Father is not believed

All other sources that are sought after for any life meaning, fulfillment and direction are incapable of providing it for none of them are the source!

compare this to Eph. 1:15-23

see Heb. 4:14-16

It is true that we do not have (as believers) a "blind faith" but neither do we expect that faith will be the scrutinizing everything the Lord reveals as though it is subject to our acceptance of it - once we understand what it says, we accept it even though it may be difficult or beyond our present comprehension

Compare John 6:37-40, I Cor. 15:42-58 and then Rev. 20:11-15

This is as serious as it gets! To disregard the Lord in any way is the highest of risks at any time! - Realize also that these will be condemned because even now they are condemned already (born into it and in disbelief) - John 3:17-21

The important thing to consider here is whether or not the witnesses were considered trustworthy and whether or not their witness would be believed

- e. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can cause those spiritually and physically dead to hear His voice and, when all things are ended as regards this age (the Judgment), only those having heard Him and believed (a belief/faith that characterized their life/walk) will not face judgment (their judgment having been taken in full by Jesus Christ Himself, the Judge!) - see Col. 1:9-14
- f. Note also that hearing and believing are linked - if there is hearing but no believing (faith) is does not transfer them from death to life - many "religious" people associate knowing with believing, but this is not "saving" - notice also this "belief" is "Him who sent Me" (that He (the Father) bears witness to Jesus, all He says and does and is the one that sent Him)
- g. As to the source of life ("aliveness" and all true life/living) it is from the self-existent One, God (here, the Father and the Son) so Jesus, He being God incarnate, in His humanity was "granted" to have life in Himself (and so would be even as a man, a life-giver) - God does not receive life; all others get their life from Him (no other is self-existing, self-sustaining and so no other is "self-purposing" or self-determining) - vs. 26
- h. He (Jesus) as now having "life in Himself" then also has the authority of ultimate, authoritative judgment (for the creator (source of all life) is the true judge of all life) - vs. 27
- i. Jesus has been given authority (He being called here "Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου" (son of man, man's son)), He, not only being God but being one of us, will be our judge - think of the significance of those who were opposing Jesus were trying to stand in judgment of the Judge of all!

2. Don't be seized upon with an "analysis paralysis" (inactive with incredulity) - vs. 28-29

- a. The first words of verse 28 "Do not marvel at this" might seem unreasonable to most and in most contexts, but here it is an imperative, because many will fight such faith that confounds them (it seems too much to believe) - such paralyzing responses put off (fight off) a submissive yielding - for see what's coming next (where it's all heading)
- b. As almost saying, don't let this overwhelm you as being too much to believe, for there is much more to be revealed that is coming and that will be done (in the outworking of this power)
- c. For instance, something even greater is the picturing of the outworking/result of this authority and power - the time is coming (has yet to come, as distinguished from verse 25) when those not just spiritually dead but all the physically dead will hear His voice, and upon hearing Him will come out (rise from physical death... so their bodies are resurrected)
- d. All will be judged by the same standard (as all judgment will be done) by what they have done (what characterized their life; their works) - those distinguished by "good" are raised to the "resurrection of life" (and such because of faith in what Jesus said (verse 24) do not come into this judgment - those distinguished for being who/what they actually are because their life output was "evil" (φάυλος - a word that means "worthless" so it may not be called "evil" by some but before God it is of no true value) to the "resurrection of judgment"
- e. All the dead will be raised to their eternal ends (each is everlasting) - those in Christ to eternal life and those judged according to their own works (and so worthless because they are, at their best, self-righteous) to eternal condemnation/damnation - see Mt. 25:46 and II Thes. 1:8-9 for two texts that describe the condemnation as eternal
- f. Note also Paul's defense before the Governor, Felix; his case and included the resurrections of both the "just and unjust" - Acts 24:1-21 (and because of his stance on the resurrection he was on trial) - it is abhorrent to human nature to be faced with the idea of final judgment
- g. In contrast, it is the hope throughout life to realize what eternal life will be and that it, as our inheritance, is already ours - see I Peter 1:3-5 and Rev. 21

C. Disbelieving the "witnesses" of Jesus (and so a refusal to come to Him to have life) - vs. 30-47

1. The witness of God (the Father) - vs. 30-32

- a. It was common to expect that claims as profound as those of Christ would need to have verification (support) from other sources (other witnesses)
- b. Jesus, facing this and verifying that if His witnesses was "just of Himself" about Himself, then His testimony/witness would not be "true" (not trustworthy) - see also John 8:17-20
- c. Jesus reiterates that He can "do nothing of my own" - this also is an answer to those who try to push forward in theological debates whether or not Jesus could sin - clearly He could not (unless one desires to posit the idea that the Father would consider such a notion) - see verse 19
- d. Jesus, as should we, did not seek His own will - His will was to do the will of the Father

Simply put, "My judgment is just" - His ongoing and ultimate final judgments are correct, right and cannot legitimately be deemed wrong in any way - no other "judgment" of anyone else can claim such!

This is one of many texts that demonstrates that disbelief is more an act of the will than it is actually a lack of "evidence"

We may not even know at times that our wills are at the core of why we refuse to believe/trust God - see vs. 40

John the Baptist was sent to serve as a witness, pointing to Christ for mankind's sake, but not for Jesus' - see John 1:7

Even those that would say they condemn themselves don't have that right

As illustrated in the Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13, Luke 8) there are some religious encounters/experiences that enthusiastically respond but other "cares of life" choke it out

see Mt. 11:9-19 where Jesus describes the response of the people to John the Baptist

Note also these works were not just begun, but included the accomplishment (finishing) of them - many begin works for/of God but do not finish them

Jesus had already revealed that He heard the Father (directly) and this witness would be personal to Himself mainly - others did not have to believe it for it to be true - sadly, some doubt what they once believed, not necessarily because they find fault, but because others doubt it - they trust the doubts of others more

- e. Jesus deals with the concept of a "witness," not just for traditional validation, but to demonstrate that even though there are "legitimate" witnesses," many will not accept them, either because they just don't desire it or because they trust other witnesses more
- f. Some might ask, in light of all this, why then is it significant that judgment is given to the Son if the judgment (anyway) of the Father - in answer to this question, the Pulpit Commentary answered, "It lies here, that the Incarnation is perfect; that the manhood has not obliterated the Divinity, nor the Godhead absorbed the manhood, of the Christ. The human consciousness of the Son becomes the basis for the Father's judgment, which is uttered thus absolutely and finally through human lips."
- g. There is "another who testifies of Me" - Jesus went on to clarify, that (as seen in verse 37) is the Father - the Jews had sought out the testimony of John the Baptist (seen in the next verses), and though they had this, the miracles and other "witnesses" (proofs) they refused to believe
- h. Many feel safe in their disbelief using "lack of evidence" as their justification, but it is revealed that the core issue is the heart (the soul/spirit) and in that, the will of a person that refuses to accept any "proof" because the alternative (belief) holds them then ultimately accountable and they are no longer "master of their own destiny" and definers of their own life's worth

2. Four witnesses to who/what Jesus was/is - vs. 33-40

- a. This listing of witnesses is detailed by the Lord to counter the objections by the Jewish leaders who recognized themselves as the authorities to judge and what "right" judgment really was - yet the proofs provided were not the sort and manner that met what they were looking for
- b. **The testimony of John** - serving in an official capacity here as a witness, John the Baptist was one they sought out to see what he had to say regarding Jesus - this was not who Jesus referenced in verse 32 seeing He Himself was "not receiving testimony from man"
- c. Jesus intent in saying all this was "that you might be saved" - John testified to the truth also for this purpose (to point them to the one that could save them from what they all rightfully deserved; condemning judgment) - but when one is essentially their own judge, it is not possible to reach a righteous conclusion (and so they will not (willed not) be saved)
- d. Jesus calls John the Baptist a "lamp that was burning," picturing not just a light but one that lights a way because it was set aflame (was lit) itself for this purpose - there was an initial attraction to this "light" as John was declaring the coming Messiah - but these did not like what/who the Messiah truly was (in contrast to their perceived ideas of what He was to be) and they were unenthusiastic when the light shown them for what they actually were... hypocrites
- e. Their rejoicing in the light was "for a season" (and so it is with those that only "give it a try")- it is interesting to realize that there is no mention of any uprising against Herod when he imprisoned John the Baptist - possibly the political/secular intimidation was stronger than the religious one - religious zeal is sometimes just from reaction and not transformation
- f. **The testimony of works** - vs. 36 - Even more important and significant that the testimony of John regarding Jesus was the testimony (of the Father) by means of the works that He gave Jesus to do - every work of Jesus was of the Father (not just the miracles, but the teachings, His graciousness, His forthrightness, and His work of redemption on the cross)
- g. All of these "testify that the Father has sent Me" - each and all the works combined point to Him being sent of the Father to do the Father's will and it was more than just miracles, for others did these, but His message and completely flawless character in all He did demonstrate, His being of God - objectors were dealing with God Himself!
- h. **The testimony of the Father** - vs. 37-38 - Jesus now directly states that the Father Himself, the one that sent Him, "has borne witness of Me" - He has done this by His word (which will be stressed in the upcoming verses), as just mentioned He also demonstrated He sent Jesus by means of the works He did (and Nicodemus knew this in John 3:2) - the Father had also borne witness audibly (at the baptism of Jesus and on the Mt. of Transfiguration, though these are not likely the main focus here, which occurred (likely) later)
- i. Yet even with such witnesses, they were unswayed for the fundamental reason they truly did not know the Father - they had never heard Him (audibly nor in all His revelation) nor had they ever seen Him - Jesus had, in the fullest sense seen and heard the Father, and knew Him completely - these knew of the Father, but it was not personal

This starkly demonstrates the difference between mere knowing/knowledge and true belief/faith - its integration into life/living/thinking is core to its purpose - it's the difference between abiding just in the mind and not the heart also

It is likely the result of having added so much tradition and superstition and other religious baggage to their studies and thinking, that it clouded out what should have stood out to them - the plain meaning would have done them well, but their rationalistic priorities and additives to make the texts more useful and "religious" adulterated it to such a degree it hid its core contents

To come to Him for life is to come in humility and with no other hope but Him - all else is constructed in futility

This is quite the revelation of their true selves - they are, though presenting themselves as at the pinnacle of godliness are godless in their core - why would Jesus seek the praise of those that do not seek the glory of God - why would we?

This also could include the groups that come in the names they have made-up for themselves (groupings)

People have an instinctive desire to follow after those who have a priority and a pursuit of this age and all of its "trimmings" - if one is focused on God's eternal glory and our fulfillment in it, that just doesn't "sell"

This addictive, natural life focus is blinding to the paths of actual "glory"

see Mt. 6:1-2

Moses was already "accusing" them in what he had been used to write - they knew his writings but did not understand them - bias towards self has a blinding affect, so that even while learning, there is no genuine comprehension of the purpose/main focus

- j. This was all most evident in that they did not "have His word abiding in you" for if they did, they would have believed Jesus since it was the Father that sent Him - they, in an intellectual and vocational sense, knew God's Word but it was not a part of who/what they were
- k. Instead of the Word living in them, "They locked it up with sacred care in ark and synagogue, but it found no home in their innermost life, and had no real power on their practice. They could take it up and put it down. It was something outside of themselves." Ellicott's Commentary
- l. It is key how Jesus sums up this statement - the reason they do not believe Him is because they do not believe the one that sent Him (the Father) - they clearly believed in God but did not actually believe God
- m. The testimony of the Scriptures - vs. 39-40 - Jesus points now to their "searching" (ἐρευνάω - diligent pursuit and scrutiny) the Scriptures, which would normally be a good thing, and in their searching they believe they would have eternal life (either just by the study of it that they will gain some credit for eternal life, or that they will come discover how to have it)
- n. The Scriptures "bear witness" (testify) of Christ yet, with all these witnesses, they were unwilling to come to Him for life - even with their knowledge of the Scriptures they did not recognize their Messiah and the actual answer to eternal life (that all was pointing to)
- o. Notice also the usage of the word "think" ("you think that in them you have eternal life") the underlying word being δοκεῖτε which fits our idea of "thinks" in its reference to personal opinion - it was a pursuit of eternal life as it fit within their "take" on things
- p. Because of this, they refuse to come to Him (which is the only way to life) - humanity summarily accepts all "ways to life" except that of coming to Jesus for it - it will tolerate (over time) just about anything except what it means to come to Him for life
3. The obstacle/wall of the pursuit of glory from man and the glory of men - vs. 41-47
- a. Jesus was not motivated as they were - they refused to come to Him, even for true, eternal life, because they love and so seek the praise/glory from people - notice John 6:14-15
- b. The word translated "receive" is λαμβάνω revealing that Jesus neither sought for it neither would He receive it from them - He being perfect in all ways, was solely focused on the praise of the Father, from the Father and for the Father
- c. After all, why would He seek glory/praise from them when they do not have the love of God in them? - they truly do not love God - vs. 41 - some of these were the same ones referenced in Mt. 23:5 who exaggerated their religious apparel, one part be their "phylacteries" which contained Deut.6:5 (the command to Love God with all the heart)
- d. These were those "diligently searching the Scriptures", assuming that such diligence would lead them to eternal life and would then also lend them the praise of their peers
- e. Tragically, these would prefer and seek to follow (loyally) those that would come "in their own name" while Jesus came in His Father's name - humanity, naturally, loves those that adore themselves in a glorious way! (those that come in their own name) - vs. 43
- f. Humanity prefers those subject and motivated by its own vices - such can be controlled, manipulated to some degree or at least be more predictable - Jesus was a disappointment to them, He not coming to them in glorious splendor - these glory seekers were embarrassed and ashamed of Him - yet how could they then be trusted?
- g. In verse 44 Jesus spells it out in a question form - How could they possibly believe/trust Jesus when they themselves pursue glory from each other? How could they trust someone so unlike themselves (not motivated the same way they were)?
- h. The only true, lasting (unfading) glory comes from God - so what they could possibly receive from each other would be temporal (fading) - compare with II Cor. 10:12,18
- i. Simply put, what one "seeks" drives them and defines/directs their life pursuits
- j. When all comes to final judgment, Jesus (focused on where everything will ultimately end, which ought to be the most influential life director) plainly states that He will not act as "the accuser" (the prosecutor) to the Father, not just because He will be the Judge, for Moses will do this - vs. 45 - imagine the shock of such a statement! The very one they appealed to for authority and their "rightness" would be the one accusing them before God in their error (getting it all wrong) - it is possible they used details (too many details) to cloud the point
- k. They had set all their hope on what they thought Moses meant, missing what he meant

These, as so many self-righteous do, interpreted the Law (writings of Moses) in a way that fit them and not as God gave it (to lead them to Christ)- they were not focused on where it was all pointing, just on where it was at that time and how they could utilize it for their own interests - this is how many see "religion" today

Many will espouse a belief in something but will not actually believe it - many believe in God but do not believe Him

- l. Lenski, quoting Stier, listing what these Jewish leaders actually did not believe regarding what Moses wrote, "They did not believe in the sacred earnestness of the law he delivered, judging the hearts, else their Pharisaic work-righteousness would have fallen to the ground. Finally, they did not believe him when his entire order of priests and sacrifices constantly reviewed the memory of their sins and pointed in shadowy outline to a future real fulfillment, else they would have become through Moses already what the Baptist finally tried to make them, a people ready and prepared for the Lord, embracing his salvation with joy like Simeon."
- m. Even after Jesus said, "...for he wrote of Me" we do not see them asking Him for clarification (through examples) - they did not desire to argue Scripture, just their particular takes on traditions and interpretations - see Deut. 18:15-19
- n. They did believe that these "writings of Moses" were Scripture, so the issue was their not actually believing the words - this being the case, how then could they possibly not believe the words of Jesus?

X. Jesus The "Bread of Life" - The Separation of True Believers From Unbelievers ("convenient believers") - 6:1-71

A. This chapter gives us two miracles of the Lord followed by teaching that turns away many followers

1. Trying to stay focused on John's purpose for writing this Gospel, we need to ask ourselves why John shares this (and any of the other) miracle and why in this context
 - a. As seen already, the accounts John has focused on have lent to stressing a point of truth/teaching as well as distinguishing between those that are true followers and those that are not (as well as those that are true spiritual leaders and those that are hypocrites)
 - b. This chapter retells the feeding of the 5,000+ and John points out that this is near the time of Passover - he also points (a couple times) to the fact that many were following Christ to see miracles and get fed - and after dealing with food (bread in particular), John recounts Jesus declaration of being the "Bread of Life" (to be consumed)
 - c. This chapter will end in what will look to be a discouraging way, but what looked to be negative was actually very positive and productive
2. Some time after the confrontation with the Jewish leaders in chapter 5 (all of which was "pushed" by Jesus to be confronted openly), John now brings us to what brought on the Lord teaching about His being the "Bread of Life" - vs. 1-7

One of the core points being communicated through these accounts is the insincerity of many of these "disciples" after Jesus reveals that He is what is needed to sustain them forever (in contrast to food)

John clarifies that this is now called the "Sea of Tiberias" - John wrote this toward the end of the first century and the names of some locations had changed

The majority of these were there to see supernatural works (satisfy curiosity or to have some type of entertaining experience)

God will frequently use "impossible" situations (greater than we can handle) to show us our limitations and dependence, and "wow" us with His wisdom and power

Philip's assessment was that they didn't have enough to give enough

- a. Jesus changed the location of His ministering to "the other side of the Sea of Galilee"
- b. A "great multitude" was following Him, and as indicated here, it was "because of the signs He was doing" and because He was healing the sick - also, crowds typically draw crowds
- c. It is at this point in time that John the Baptist had been killed (Mt. 14) and so many more were now following Jesus - Jesus was all the more bold in His presentation which was likely appreciated by His followers... until His teaching became difficult for them personally
- d. John mentions in verse 2 that there were "large crowds" following Him because they saw the "signs" (miracles) - the underlying Greek word is "σημείον" and "sign" is the better translation because it was a word to indicate a miraculous event that was to point to the authenticity of someone with the purpose to hear what they would teach - as will be seen, these were more interested in the venue than they were the message and the required dedication
- e. Jesus, seeing the crowds, asks Philip a question with the intent (as John reveals) to "test him" - since they were "coming to Him" Jesus proposed they feed them - so how was this to be accomplished? It was clearly impossible at first glance (to mere humans)
- f. It is believed He directed this question to Philip because he was from this area, though Jesus already knew what was about to do - He "tested" Philip, not to learn something of him, but to reveal something of Philip to himself (primarily) - Philip had already seen many miracles of Jesus and heard Him teach - what would his initial thoughts/instincts be in the face of a seemingly impossible need when posed with a question seeking a "normal" approach (money/costs)?
- g. Philip estimates that even with 200 denarii (equivalent to about one half to 3 quarters of a person's annual income) wouldn't even be enough to buy enough to give everyone "a little"
- h. Jesus was about to take "a little" and make out of it (create of it) something of enormous magnitude - the phrase "little is much when God is in it" is proven to be astoundingly true!
- i. Philip needed to see life in light of Jesus' power and not in light of "normal" solutions

B. Feeding of the multitude with more than enough - vs. 8-15

1. "So little for so many" - vs. 8-9 (this account is also in Mt. 14:31-21, Mk. 6:32-44, Lu. 9:10-17)

It is key to see also that both Philip and Andrew offer comparisons, just comparisons to the wrong thing - "things" were measurable (estimable), but they still did not learn to include Jesus in their estimates

note Isa. 59:1-2

It is almost miraculous to consider so little food was found among so many

- a. We are not told (here) why Andrew brought this little meal from a little boy (both ideas of the meagerness appear to be amplified in contrast to the multitude) - his answer is in harmony with Philip - Philip offered estimates in money and Andrew offers a comparison of substance (what they actually had on hand) - but what is this compared to so many!?

• Mark clarifies in Mk. 6:38 that Jesus had them go and see how much food there was

- b. As is about to be demonstrated, Jesus is not limited in His ability, so to anticipate **how** He should meet a need is also something to approach with reverent trust/anticipation
- c. The boy's lunch (which is the only food identified) was made up of five little loaves/cakes of barley (typically considered to be the bread of the poor) and a couple fish (used for making the barley bread "savory")

2. A miracle of creation - vs. 10-13

John identified earlier that this was partly for the "testing" of Philip, though all the disciples would benefit from seeing the Lord, once again, face the impossible with the impossible!

In Mark 6 we see that they sat down in groups of 50 and 100 and just the men were 5,000 (the estimate including women and children would be about 15,000-20,000)

Ungratefulness is an evidence of moral decline (see Rom. 1:21 - note also Rom 14:5-8 where even though there are differing situations, thankfulness is to be present)

Or was the quantity growing from the serving resource (basket?) the disciples were using?

Many, when blessed with excess resources, become extravagant and wasteful - all the leftovers would be used later - whenever God provides more than enough we must not assume it is without an upcoming purpose

- a. "Jesus superseded the law of conservation of matter by creating a great amount of bread and meat for the multitude. This law, considered one of the most basic and universal laws of physics, states that matter (or "mass") can neither be created nor destroyed." Henry Morris
- b. Having had the two negative responses from His disciples, Jesus has them seat the multitude - it might have seemed as though they should have been sent away to go get food and prepare for the night, but Jesus having waited till a seemingly most inconvenient time to meet a need, meets the need abundantly, miraculously!
- c. Before the miracle (before there was anywhere near enough food) Jesus has them seat the people (to be prepared to eat what was not yet prepared) - we read of no resistance, just compliance (as it always should be when following any direction from the Lord - obedience leading to a better understanding) - disobedience seeks anecdotal support for validation
- d. Jesus "gave thanks" for the food, setting the example and following the tradition to thank God for His provision of food (always), even though it was very little (for thanksgiving is based/founded in faith, because any "thanksgiving" that is not is a "gratefulness" based upon self authority and so self determination of what is enough) - note it is stressed again in verse 23
- e. Note it was the bread and fish together that were distributed - vs. 11
- f. In light of Philip and Andrew's initial conclusions, the statement that each had "as much as they wanted" (desired) is profound - not only was there enough, there was enough to fill them to satisfaction (fullness) - again, the Lord is the knower and determiner of "enough"!
- g. We do not know the particulars of how this was worked out, but it is interesting to think on it - was the Lord distributing enough to each disciple over and over again to distribute to each group, or did each disciple receive a basket from the Lord and it continued to grow in content (in each basket) as it was handed out and then stopped when they had distributed enough to each group?
- h. Jesus has His disciples gather up the "leftover fragments" (the literally "over and above" fragments of food) - each had their fill (having taken more than they could use) and Jesus will not have anything wasted - there were 12 baskets filled with the leftovers (John mentions these fragments as being from the "five barley loaves" and Mark adds that they also included the fish - The Lord miraculously created more bread from bread and more meat from meat in massive quantities) - His source of provision is not of this world (Php. 4:19)

3. The misinterpretation of the event by the followers - vs. 14-15

To those living for "the now" (the temporal), Jesus was a tremendous disappointment - the promised "answer" was not the answer they were looking for

- a. The crowds interpreted the sign correctly in concluding that this must be "the Prophet" who was foretold to "come into the world" - their response to this correct conclusion was incorrect - they believed the "Prophet" (the Messiah) to come focused upon life as it was and not for the purpose for the life to come
- b. The obtaining of food was a daily task, and the appeal to having someone that could provide it, non-stop was very appealing - they wanted what Jesus could offer regarding their "practical" needs but were mostly uninterested (and later even offended) in Jesus' teaching and method of provision to eternal life
- c. Their response (Jesus perceived, knowing their thoughts and intentions) was to "take Him by force" and make Him king - they would seek to exalt Him on their terms and in their timing

To this day there are many who see Jesus only as a means to their own personal ends- there's an initial interest until they realize they must conform to Him and not He to them

- d. Their interpretation of Deut. 18:15-18 morphed in its meaning to include a kingship of sorts and an earthly rule, more than it did its core imperative; to listen to what He said (and not seek to conform Him to their ideas of leadership and their "most important" things to be done)
- e. These "saw an opportunity" and worked themselves into an urgency of timing (as in it should happen, the way they think it should happen, and it should happen now!)
- f. So, in response, He withdrew from them to be alone rather than cooperate with their seeming offer of exaltation (which was similar to that of the Devil in the temptations in Mt. 4)

C. "It is I, do not be afraid" - circumstantial fear relieved with the coming of Jesus - vs. 16-21

1. This account of Jesus walking on the water is also in Mt. 14:22-33 as well as Mk. 6:45-52 - We're told in Matthew that Jesus sent the disciples on while He dismissed the crowds - vs. 16-17

We should never be resentful whenever we believe God should have shown/proven Himself in a way or in a timing that He did for another

- a. Another of the most profound and unique miracles is about to be demonstrated, yet only to those closest to Him (it would not be showcased) - the disciples were the ones needing to see it, as God still does today where He walks us all through unique/customized life situations to show Himself strong over against our unique fears and circumstances (customized by His sovereign control)
- b. Notice the setting - the disciples went to cross the sea/lake, it was dark and Jesus "had not yet come to them" - this last phrase was an odd way of setting this scene unless we keep in mind John's focus on where it was all heading - Jesus was about to come to them and meet them where they were at, just in a very unpredictable manner
- c. Astonishment at the working of God is often seen as being always good, but there is a sense in which we ought not be too surprised with the demonstrations of God's power and wisdom because we, in faith, have grown to trust Him to be perfectly right in all situations (what He is seen to actively do and even in what He seemingly, passively allows)

One of the points Mark reveals in Mk. 6:52 was the reason these were "astounded" when Jesus did what He did - they had not truly understood (grasped) the power demonstrated in the feeding of so many with so little, because their hearts were hardened

2. From fear to glad willingness - vs. 18-21

It is interesting to read in Mark's account that he mentions Jesus "meant to pass by them" as though He would continue on to the other side just as He was

- a. John simply lays out the circumstances of a wind stirring-up the waters to such a point the disciples were making very little progress - in Mk. 6:48 we're told they were making progress but that it was now early in the morning when they saw Jesus walking on the water
- b. John tells they had rowed about 3-4 miles (about half way across) - they were clearly struggling but don't express true fear until they spotted Jesus walking on the water - the way this is worded makes it as though the walking was a normal walk, so it wasn't the walk that was special as much as it was upon what He was walking
- c. Here was water (what we would normally sink in), and that in mass, overwhelming quantity, and it all being "stirred-up" - the scenario for terror was ideal - there was darkness, high winds over troubled waters and finally, a sight of something that defied their imagination
- d. We cannot explain the physics of how this happened; just that He could utilize or even defy the observable "laws of nature" for His purpose - in Mt. 14:32-33 we see that the disciples realized that Jesus was truly the Son of God, but we also see they had not come to know Him personally enough to look on life with Him as supreme over all
- e. When they saw Him they were afraid (though John does not elaborate on why as Matthew did, letting us know they thought He/it was a ghost) - fear has a way of revealing our superstitions and scary presumptions about life
- f. It all changes when He simply states "It is I" (we read in the other accounts also that He told them not to be afraid because it was Him) - Here was their dear friend (though they had yet to still know how dear) in a fatiguing, almost hopeless situation
- g. Their fear became "willingness" (which is an interesting contrast seeing it reveals that one of the core results of fear is stubbornness/resistance)
- h. As soon as He was welcomed into the boat, they were at their destination (no more effort was needed, the purpose of the Lord had been fulfilled, and so another miracle occurred in an instant where they all were suddenly at the shore)
- i. These miracles were far more than "magic tricks" intended to "wow" an audience - they were "signs" in which the observers were to redirect their amazement/wonder over to attentive learning, submission and obedience
- j. It has been noted that when Jesus addressed them in their fear His wording was simply "I am" (and so, "don't be afraid") - compare to Rev. 1:17-18

Fears and fearful circumstances are to be compared to the Lord and not to ourselves- fear comes when we either exclude Him from our consideration of the situation or we presume ill-intent on His part (both of which are wrong)

They were likely confident in their "read" of the circumstances (and were unanimous)- we need to learn that even in our unanimous doubts, we must never so trust them so as to discount the Lord

Fear and panic beget more fear and panic but the Lord's confident, reassuring response changed everything

We don't need to look on this as a reference to His deity (His "I AMness") but it is fitting to sum up why we do not live by fear... simply because He is the great "I AM" and also why any ruling fear is so wrong to try to justify

D. What is the genuine “work of God?” - vs. 22-33

1. Just like the woman at the well, we come to another instance where the Lord Jesus offers something of eternal value and the audience cannot see past their temporal, immediate needs and desires - vs. 22-27

As just seen, the crowd would “forcibly” make Jesus their King (on their terms) - if God does not conform to their demands (often disguised as “wishes”) they will not accept - some would come to believe and accept, yet doing so by not following the crowd

- a. This section will pinnacle in verse 28 when some in the crowd ask what they must do to do the “works of God” (motivated to receive “food which endures to eternal life”)
- b. Jesus will point them to the simple answer of “believe in Him whom He [the Father] has sent,” but such an answer finally explained (Jesus Himself being this “Bread of Life”) will drive most of them away - there is a desire for truth and to have what is lasting (what does not, nor will ever “fade away”) but in the core of the heart of humanity there is the obstacle of pride and self-righteousness which will refuse (to the end to yield) - compare Psa. 106:12-15

2. The curiosity of the crowd (that something miraculous may have happened that they had not witnessed) drives them to find out more - vs. 22-25

John is setting the scene that led up to their initial question when they finally found Jesus - they wanted to know how He ended up across the sea when they saw no transportation He could have taken

- a. The day following the feeding of the multitude, the people were searching for Jesus again, and John points out their observations - they noted that there had been only one boat that the disciples had taken to cross the sea, but that Jesus was not with them
- b. It may seem to always be good when there is a curiosity regarding Jesus, but their motive was self-focused and founded upon the immediate and near future; not eternity
- c. Verse 23 looks confusing to some, but it was added by John to clarify how the crowd was finally able to get to the other side to find Jesus - one thing in particular to note about this apparent statement of transition is the reference to bread they had all eaten “after the Lord had given thanks” - why add this? It may be that this was the very moment the actual miracle began
- d. When they find Jesus, the first thing they desire to be told “when did you get here?” - they felt this needed to be revealed, possibly because they suspected it may have been a miracle and they were very interested in actually seeing the miraculous - such a “draw” can be addictive to those only seeking amazement/experience more than answers and purpose

If so, it places emphasis on the giving of thanks to God as a core part of this miracle (for it was from the Father it came) - gratefulness is a must and ungratefulness a sign of rebellion (Rom. 1:21)

3. Jesus reveals their true motive and challenges them to what they should be “working” for - vs. 26-27

Such examples should help us realize that even in our prayers (and thoughts) we should expect we will need to be led rather than lead

- a. As the Lord had done with the woman at the well, so He does here - He reveals what they should be seeking and prompts them to the right questions - His guidance will steer the discussion to where it needs to go
- b. He begins again with “Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν” (truly, truly), His emphasis stressing His insight into their hearts (motives) is indisputable - He reveals their motive to be physical (practical) fulfillment more than seeing “signs” - they were interested in where this was all going (possibly to their being fed from here on out, as the manna had done) - there is an instinctive desire to be taken care of and that in a predictable way (because of laziness and a wrong approach to dealing with their worry over life’s necessities) - see also James 4:1-10
- c. They were “filled” and were drawn to have it again (but it was a temporal fulfillment, not one that would be lasting - yet many are willing to forgo the future for immediate fulfillment)
- d. The Lord’s exhortation would likely seem odd, but would stir-up another (better) question - most of their lives were spent preparing for the next meal (since their situation was not like ours where we can store-up provisions for months and even years)
- e. Instead, Jesus tells them to “work for” (set their core focus on seeking after) a food that “endures for eternal life” - this was the point of the Lord in Mt. 6:25-34
- f. The source of this eternal fulfillment is the “Son of Man” (the one upon God had “set His seal” not only with the witnesses He had just explained in chapter 5, but even one of the ultimate “signs,” that being the response of true faith to Jesus in John 3:33)
- g. This can only come (be given by) the “Son of Man” (Jesus’ favorite title in His incarnate association with mankind - He positionally being infinitely above us and yet one of us)
- h. No other has this authority (God the Father’s seal) so no other can provide eternal life (and the means to get it) - plenty will offer it (“life”) with no ability or authority (or genuine insight)

There is the inclination in all of use to resist constant need and dependence - yet such a drive/desire (as illustrated here) can be distorted to see freedom as independence from need and reliance upon God - it is seen as a burden because there is an underlying distrust in God

Preserving the emphasis of the Greek order, “for Him the Father sealed, even God”

4. “The work of God” - that you believe in Him whom He sent - vs. 28-29

Their idea was that of works they could do for God versus the work God would do for them)

- a. They latched onto His use of the word “work” (ἐργάζομαι, acquiring something by labor) though they make it plural, expecting a variety of meritorious deeds they can perform to earn this “eternal life” - their wording was more along the lines of “what must we be doing (making happen, manufacture) to be doing the works of God