



New
Creation
Publications

JOHN

a Commentary

Geoffrey C Bingham

The Gospel of St. Mark
The Gospel of St. John
The Acts of the Apostles
The Epistle to the Galatians
The Epistle to the Ephesians
The Epistle to the Philipians
The Epistle of First Peter
The Book of the Revelation

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

to “*New Creation*” Commentary Series

The Commentaries which have been prepared, and which are in preparation for this series, are intended to be modest both in their material and format. There are reasons for this kind of production.

Although the first consideration is not that of cost, we will, nevertheless say that it is an important reason. Many books are made to be attractive, and welcome as this is, it adds to the cost. We have tried to keep the price within that range which makes it easy to purchase the volumes as they appear. Secondly, we make no claim to have produced a work of either great scholarship, or one for the meticulous exegete. It is for those whose time is limited in looking up many commentaries. We have done this work for them, and in that sense the commentaries are the result of the fruits of other men’s labours, with a modest addition by the writers, who themselves gather impressions by the way and often, even have helpful insights.

Those who use these commentaries will not find them inspirational, for that was not their intention. They simply present valuable material and insights on the books with which they deal. Is it too high a claim to say that the material presented is worthy of trust, and should prove valuable to those who teach classes, groups, and who preach from pulpits and other places? We think they can be valuable, if not, always, wholly sufficient.

The Editors.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

By

GEOFFREY C. BINGHAM

NEW CREATIONS PUBLICATIONS INC.

PO Box 403, Blackwood, 5051

Adelaide, South Australia

www.newcreation.org.au

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

First published by New Creation Publications Inc., Australia, 1980
Reprinted 1989, 1992, 1999

CONTENTS

© Geoffrey C. Bingham, 1980

National Library of Australia card number and
ISBN 0 86408 147 2

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Cover Design by John Hinds

Wholly set and printed at
New Creation Publications Inc.
Coromandel East, South Australia

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

ABBREVIATIONS 4

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL. 5

Authorship

The Date of the Gospel

Place of writing

The purpose of writing

The Theology of the Gospel

ANALYSIS 19

COMMENTARY 21

ABBREVIATIONS

Barrett *The Gospel According to John*, by C.K. Barrett, (S.P.C.K. London 1965).

Hendriksen *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, by W. Hendriksen, (Banner of Truth, London 1961) .

Hoskyns *The Fourth Gospel*, by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns, (Faber & Faber, London 1956).

Lenski *St. John's Gospel*, by R.C.H. Lenski, (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1961).

Tasker *The Gospel According to St. John*, by R. V.G. Tasker, (Tyndale, London 1961).

Westcott *The Gospel According to St. John*, by B.F. Westcott, (James Clarke, London, 1958).

INTRODUCTION

AUTHORSHIP

Conservative scholarship is agreed that this Gospel *issues* from the Apostle St. John. Not all scholars, however, agree that it was written by John directly. The reason for supposing John to have used an amanuensis, if not for another to have written the Gospel having obtained his material directly from John is the 24th verse of chapter 21. NB 21:20 “the disciple whom Jesus loved” would John speak thus of himself? “This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things, and *we* know that his testimony is true.” The “we” here may refer – as some think – to an attestation of the truth of the facts related, this attestation being given by the elders of the church at Ephesus where John was residing in his later life, or it may refer to the writer (not John) who was also an eye-witness of Christ (cf. 1:14), so that he speaks on behalf of others who knew the facts. It does seem that the “these things” of Vs.24 refers to the account of Christ’s reference to the disciple whom Jesus loved (V.20f), and not to the whole Gospel which seems to have terminated at the end of chapter 20 initially, and was added to (by the same writer) to include the last incident described and to scotch a false rumour. Vs.25 “has written” may only mean as much as in 19:14 “He caused to be written.”

The question of authorship is a vexed one, and not conclusive. What is conclusive, however, is that the Gospel issued from St. John. If verse 24 “has written these things” refers to the Apostle John, then the thought of a causal here cannot be excluded. The Gospel does not lose in authenticity if the actual writer is not John,

but the validity of the Gospel rests upon the fact that it issues from John, and this it was understood to have done, by the earliest patristic witnesses. *Irenaeus* (Bishop of Lyons from 177) says that “John the disciple of the Lord who reclined on His breast and himself issued (edoke, ‘gave out’) the Gospel at Ephesus.” Irenaeus also tells that Polycarp (martyred AD 155 at age of 85) had related what he himself had heard from the lips of John. Polycrates (Bishop of Ephesus) wrote in AD. 190 that “John who reclined on the breast of the Lord was a witness and a teacher.” This would be a reference not to martyrdom but to John’s testifying to Christ.

The second century document the Muratorian Fragment (c.170) has a sentence “that John should delineate or sketch out what he wished to be said, so that the information should have the stamp of his authority upon it and that all present should certify that what was written down tallied with what he said” (Tasker ad. loc. p.19). The second prologue to the Gospel of a tenth century Ms. of the Latin Vulgate at Madrid has “(the Gospel) was given to the churches of Asia by John while he was yet in the body, as one Papias by name bishop of Hierapolis, a disciple of John and dear to him related, he wrote this Gospel at John’s dictation.” Jerome in ch. ix of his “*De Viris Illustribus*” has a similar account, ie. a much older equivalent.

The internal Evidence is conclusive that none but John could be the source of the Gospel, if, indeed, he were not the writer— Some points are as follows:—

1. *He was a Jew.* He is acquainted with the Old Testament which he quotes from the Hebrew and the Greek Sept. 2:17, 10:34, 35, 12:40, 13:18, 17:12, 19:24,28 36,37. He also refers to both Jewish and Samaritan beliefs especially in regard to the Messiah 1:41,46, 49; 4:25; 6:14,15; 7:27,42; 12:34. He is also acquainted with religious and political conditions in Palestine (4:9; 7:36; 11:49; 18:13,28,31,39) with feasts and purification rites (2:13,23; 6:4; 13:1; 18:28 – Feast of Passover; 7:2,37,38 – Feast of Tabernacles; 10:22,23 – Feast of Dedication). Also

-
- he is familiar with Jewish feasts and weddings 2:1–10; 11:38,44; 19:40.
 2. *He was a Palestinian Jew.* This is significant as Gospels written after AD 70 when only one who was in Palestine before Titus’s invasion could give the true and intimate details. Cf. 1:28 (cf. 11:1) 2:1, 12; 3:23; 4:11,20; 11:54, 12:21. Jerusalem:– Cf. 5:2; 9:7; 11:18; 18:1; 19:17. Temple:– Cf. 2:13–20; 8:2,20; 10:22,23; 18:1,20.
 3. *He was an Eyewitness.* He remembers when the events occur – sometimes even the exact hour. Cf. 1:29,35, 39; 2:1; 3:24; 4:6,40,52,53; 6:22; 7:14; 11:6; 12:1; 13:1,2; 19:14,31; 20:1,19,26.
 4. *He was One of the Twelve.* This is shown by the fact that he partakes of the Last Supper. (13:23). He is closely associated with Peter (1:35–42; 13:23,24; 18:15,16; 20:2; 21:20–23. He knows all about the group as only an Apostle could:– 2:17,22; 4:27; 6:19; 12:16; 13:22,28; 21:21. See also 6:66–71; 20:24–29. By a process of elimination of the apostles we can finally come down to John as the narrator of the events of the Gospel, ie. he is associated with Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael (1:35–51) but is not one of them, nominally. Nor is he Judas. Matthew was the author of another Gospel – not the one who leaned on Jesus’ breast. Those near to Jesus were Peter, James and John. Peter is excluded here as author, as also James who was martyred before the writing of the Gospel. As no other disciple was as close to Christ we assume John is the source of the Gospel.

THE DATE OF THE GOSPEL

Assuming that John is either the source or the writer of the Gospel bearing his name, it must be concluded that the Gospel was written in the last decade

of the first century. There are clear indications that the writer—of John’s Gospel was familiar with Mark’s Gospel which must have been written before or just after AD 70. John seems to assume that his readers are familiar with such a Gospel (St. Mark’s) and this means it would have been in circulation some time before John’s would have been written. Clement of Alexandria (died 212) states on the authority of the elders of an earlier age that John wrote his Gospel last of the evangelists. Irenaeus states that John survived until the reign of Trajan, which began in AD 98.

Doubt is cast on the Gospel that it was written before 140 when it began to be known. We must distinguish, however, between the “publishing” of a work, and its time of writing. It is true that Polycarp and Ignatius do not mention the Gospel. Polycarp does use a phrase “everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is Anti-christ” – a direct quote from 1 John 4:2,3 – but we do not know whether the Gospel or Epistle was first written. Ignatius has a phrase “the Spirit knows whence it cometh and whither it goes” (cf. Jn. 3:8) and also the phrase “living water” (Jn. 7:38). However the argument from silence – that the early fathers did not know the Gospel is tenuous. Certainly it does not prove it did not exist. In any case fragments of these fathers only remain. Justin Martyr, writing between AD 140 and 150 knows the Apostle John as the author of the Revelation, but does not speak of his Gospel. He, like Ignatius has phrases which are Johannine although this may not prove anything.

Tatian, a disciple of Justin Martyr composed a harmony of the 4 Gospels called the Diatessaron, and it is recognised that the Gospel of John must have been authoritatively in use for some time for him to use it. This was written about 170 AD or even earlier. In this century papyri which have been assigned to the first half of the second century have come to light (cf. Tasker p. 23 “Gospel According to St. John”) and in them are clear references to St. John’s Gospel. As these were found in Egypt and a time lapse would exist between receipt of the Gospel in

that date, and papyri in which the Gospel was quoted Kenyon thinks it is reasonable to fix the date about the end of the first century.

PLACE OF WRITING

The traditional place’ of writing, with some Patristic reference, is Ephesus. However this evidence rests almost solely upon the statement of Irenaeus “John himself issued the Gospel at Ephesus”. Polycrates gives some support, also, to this tradition. Jerome in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians accepts the tradition that John was in Ephesus in his old age. C.K. Barrett puts forward attractive theories to show that Alexandria or Antioch may have been the places where the Gospel was written. Alexandria is partly suggested because the oldest papyri of John are Egyptian, but this may be due simply to the more ideal weather conditions for preservation. It is clear that tradition usually develops on some original basis so that probably Ephesus was the place of writing.

THE PURPOSE OF WRITING

This is clearly stated in John 20:30,31 “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” This passage shows us that John is concerned with a person – Jesus. This Jesus (of Nazareth) has done *signs*. Signs lead to, and are not apart from realities. The great realities here are (i) Jesus is the Christ. (ii) Jesus, being Christ, is the Son of God. (iii) Belief brings life, ie. eternal life. The Gospel is given to seven or eight of these signs. They are never “empty” signs – they always lead to that truth which further reveals and confirms that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They are the basis of believing in Him as such. Quite a deal of the Gospel account is given to controversy

on the themes “the Christ”, “the Son of God.” These signs are not necessarily believed. Jesus Himself not only gives explanation of many of the signs, and teaches through them; He also speaks of “life” meaning eternal life.

The passage 20:30–31 has variant readings for believing. If it is the present subjunctive then the purpose of the Gospel is that “you may continue to believe (ie. be confirmed in your faith); and if it is the aorist then it means “that you may now believe (having understood the signs) ie. “coming to believe you may have life.”

The later aorist would indicate that the Gospel was written for *those who had not believed*, but who may well believe once having the story before them, or if the subjunctive, then that those who had wavered or been somewhat indeterminate in their faith might truly be strengthened, and the life become a reality to them.

Whilst this is the general purpose, it involves many particular aims, and these we will discuss under the theology of the Gospel. In any case John addresses an audience familiar with the Gospel, and who had probably read one or more of the accounts. He is not then interested in writing another account of Christ’s life and ministry. He ignores all the birth and childhood narratives and concentrates on the seven (or eight) signs and other material relevant to them.

Clement of Alexandria wrote “Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual (*pneumatikon*) Gospel.” This is not to say that the Synoptic Gospels are not spiritual but probably refers to the fact of their being more historical in nature whereas John’s Gospel is intended (cf. 20:30–31) to be a thesis and is frankly composed to that end. At the same time it does not mean that John goes outside Of the historical, as such, but that he draws from it, or uses it to show the significance, literally of Christ and His ministry. It would be wrong for us to think of the Synoptics as simply historical, and not theological, but it is apparent that their reasons for being written are somewhat different. Certainly heresies

which had developed, and the ending of the apostolic age called for an understanding of the Gospel which such a one as John might renew.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL

John was called “the Theologian” and it is clear that he does not leave his readers simply to draw their own conclusions. Whether, as we observed above, he is anxious to refute Docetic and Gnostic theories or not, his Gospel is the kind that will. He is positive in communicating the totality of his theology. When then we see them briefly under the following heads we should remember that they are simply parts of a whole, the substance of which was known to John.

1. Christology

To show Jesus is the Christ is John’s avowed aim. This on any level holds a high place in the Gospel: John the Baptist emphasises that he is not the Christ (1:20; 3:28): the Jewish authorities (1:19–24; 7:52) the common people (7:25–31, 40–43; 12:34); the Samaritans (4:29f) discuss Messiahship – it is on the lips of most. The earliest disciples confess the Messiahship of Jesus (1:41; cf. 4:29 and 6:69 where “the son of God” is probably a Messianic title) although to make such a confession is an offence, punishable with excommunication (9:22; cf. 16:1).

It is clear that the “signs” show Jesus to be Christ. Not all, however, understand the signs. There are those who hear and those who will not hear. Whilst Jesus does not hide His Messiahship, yet not all acknowledge it. The Jews ask Him the question 10:24 and Christ says He has already told them. They have not believed Him. He gives the interpretation of Messiahship in His relation to the Father. This they reject. Their concept of Messiahship is different. To them His is blasphemous. Many scriptures of the OT are used by Jesus to testify to His Messiahship. His acts too, show this. Tasker summar–

ises them (p. 28–29) as:

- (i) Fulfilling the promises of salvation promised in the Old Testament, particularly embodying the truth of the Festivals (eg. Passover)
- (ii) Cleansing the temple.
- (iii) Messianic claim to “work” on the Sabbath in healing the paralysed man, as also the man born blind.
- (iv) 5,000 fed, and by his entry to Jerusalem.

2. Jesus is the Son of God

There are variations in the terms “Son of God” and Son of man” in the Synoptics and this Gospel. In the Synoptics he is attested as such in the Baptism and Transfiguration. In the Synoptics this Sonship is a unique relationship with the Father. Here is a metaphysical relationship, but whilst this is never, as such, discussed, except to show that Jesus as Son had pre-existent relationship with the Father (cf. ch. 17:4–5, 18, 24–25). We can say the relationship of the Son to the Father is *moral*, ie. one of obedience. in that he does nothing of himself, but in fact simply does the “works” of the Father. (cf. 10:17–8; 14:30, 31; 5:19f; 14:9f). For this reason the Father is seen in the Son (14:6f) and indeed one can only come to the Father through the Son (6:44, 65: cf. 14:6).

3. Jesus is the Son of Man

The Son of Man in the Synoptics rather points to a heavenly figure – One Who returns in the clouds etc., and whilst this is not absent from John the title is a synonym for his being human, yet possessing a humanity which was uniquely significant. As to his humanity he is weary and thirsty, sitting on the well at Sychar (4:6–8, 31); he spits on the ground when he is in process of creating sight to the man born blind (9:6). He weeps at the tomb of Lazarus (11:35). He is troubled when he contemplates the passion (12:27). He thirsts upon the cross (19:28).. Blood and water flow from his side (19:34). He says “I am a *man* that hath told you the truth” (8:40). However he is not just *a* son of man, but “the Son of man.”

In 1:51 the Son of man is the One by Whom the heavenly traffic ascends and descends (greater than Jacob who only beheld) in 3:14, 12:34 the Son of Man is the means of salvation through humiliation and sin-bearing. Precisely because He has the nature of those judged will He be the Judge at the last assize (5:27). However it is this Son of Man who has come to give men life (6:27, 53). He was pre-incarnate and will again ascend to the Father (3:13; 6:62). The truth of the Son of Man is no less vital than that of His being Son of God.

4. Signs

They are important viz. the reason for writing the Gospel. In 2:11 we see that the sign shows the glory of Christ. These miracles are not just wonders, but signs which disclose the reality, which is in fact His Messiahship, being Son of God. However these are not just offices, but they disclose the Father. His signs are *works* (erga) but they are the works of the Father (cf. 5:36; 9:3; 10:32, 37f). These *works* Christ does in His moral obedience (4:34) as a Son, and as sharing in the nature of the Godhead (14:10). Thus the works bear witness to Him (5:36, cf. 10:25; 10:38; 14:11). These are not just proofs, but the action of God Himself. On these grounds no sign can be either empty or pointless but only that action that has purpose. The purpose is the redemption of men, and all those things linked with the “end” ie. eschatological purposes. Westcott saw that the whole Gospel is absorbed in the matter of the signs. The actual signs are seven before the Resurrection, one following it. (i) Water turned to wine (2:1–11) (ii) Nobleman’s son healed (4:46–54) (iii) The Paralytic at Bethesda (5:1–15) (iv) The feeding of the 5,000 (6:1–15) (v) The walking on the sea (6:16–21) (vi) The healing of the man born blind (9:1–12) (vii) The raising of Lazarus (11:17–44) (viii) The miraculous draught of fishes (21:5–11). The meaning of the signs we will see as we meet them, but we must repeat the thought that they reveal the reality of Christ, and so of the Father, and actions which do

not only symbolise, or effect a local result, but which have a deeper action as well as significance. The water changed to wine stands at the commencement of Christ's ministry. Changing water to wine, and revealing glory are apparent of what He will do. Belief which does not see is that higher faith that believes ie. in Christ. The four following miracles are deliberate – the healing of the paralytic showing Christ works on the Sabbath to repair the ravages of sin in the world – as does the Father. That men are fed with bread points to the Bread they really need – indeed for which man has been made Eternal Bread. This is how they are constituted – otherwise they die. Christ has power over the elements (whatever they may be) which disturb man, and He can rid him of his fear. The blind need the light – “I am the light of the world.” Men are made for light. He has come that many which are blind may be made to see, many which see to be made blind. This is like refusing the heavenly bread – you die, you go blind. The raising of Lazarus signifies the truth that faith in Christ assures that a man shall never die. The fish hauled in secure assurance of the haul to come, the presence of the Son in history no failure for followers.

We may conclude, in the matter of the signs or miracles that they feed faith to those who believe, but to those who do not, these signs though multiplied indefinitely will not produce faith (12:37). We see (chs. 5, 6, 9, 11) that they give rise to controversy and this must be part of their purpose also. They who resist Jesus and condemn Him, in reality condemn themselves and show their own blindness (9:41; 12:47f). We might also conclude that the great saving events are also signs. Perhaps however these events are the truth *itself* which bring the very salvation the signs would lead us to (20:30,31).

5. Salvation

Salvation is the great theme of the Gospel. John has already said this is his reason for writing it (20:30,31). Jesus does not come to condemn the world,

but to *save* it. (3:17, 12:47). One believes and is saved (3:36, 20:31). In receiving Christ one becomes a child of God (1:12). The salvation comes through Israel (4:22) because it is of the Jews. However Jesus is shown as the Saviour of the world (4:42).

To know Him is life eternal (John 17:3). Christ alone is the instrument of this life (6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 10:11, 11:23, 14:6, 15:1). Salvation is not just knowing the Son, but *by* knowing the Son. He leads to the Father (John 14:6). It is to show the Father that He has come (1:18), but the Father draws to the Son (6:44, 65 cf. 12:32). Christ is judge (5:25–27) and the One who raises at the last day (6:39).

Sin is clearly discussed in relation to salvation. 1:29 Jesus is the Lamb to take away sin. Jesus frees from sin (8:32,34) because he is the truth. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (16:7–11) which is primarily unbelief in Christ (cf. 3:36), ie. having been convicted of sin (unbelief) one may see this fact and come to belief – then one may have life! Sin brings bondage (8:34). 3:14 would seem to bring out the implications of Numbers 21, and not be unrelated to 1:29. *Knowing* is deeply linked with salvation, meaning in effect that one knows (experiences, believes) Jesus is Saviour, and so receives salvation by believing.

6. The Holy Spirit

The first mention is 1:32. The Spirit here rests *upon* Jesus, that is He is not just *visited* with the Spirit, transiently. John may even be implying Isaiah 42:1, as undoubtedly the Synoptics do. However in this Gospel the reference to “baptise with the Spirit” is deeply significant, supported as it is by 7:37–39. Unlike the Synoptics John has a deep teaching of the Holy Spirit. Verse 34 indicating Sonship is of course linked with the permanency of the possession of the Spirit. In 3:1–8 regeneration is said to be of the Spirit, and entrance into the kingdom of God by His begetting. In 4:10–14 (cf. 7:37–39) eternal life is said to be of

the Spirit, and in 4:22–24 it is by the Spirit that true worship of the Father is made. In 6:63 we cannot distinguish whether the word should be “spirit” or “Spirit” but we can conclude that the words or sayings are from God, therefore they are life-giving. This life is always *communicated* through the Spirit. The teaching concerning the Spirit in John 14–16 is not limited just to the verses which name the Spirit eg. 14:18 where “come to you” obviously refers to Christ coming in (by) the Spirit. However the teaching in these chapters is clear. He is the Spirit of *truth* (14:17, 15:26, 16:7) *conviction* (16:7–11) *exhortation* (Paraclete) 14:16, 17:7, 15:26) *teaching* (14:26, 16:13), *eschatology* (16:13). He is also the Spirit of the Father (15:26) as He proceeds from the Father. In this context we see the teaching of John is clearly Trinitarian (cf. 14:6, 10:23, 15:9,26; 14:16). Finally He is the Spirit of “mission”. Here (John 20:19–23) we have another Trinitarian situation. The Father has sent the Son. The Son in parallel sends the apostles. Not however without the effusion of the Spirit. It is He Who makes “mission” as it is related to “remission” and “retention” of sins.

7. The People of God

It is clear from our studies on the Holy Spirit that the Spirit is closely connected with the Kingdom (3:1–10). Whilst the *people of God* is the theme rather than the kingdom (see 18:33–40) yet the concept of the *church* is implicit. This means there is a continuum of the life of Christ. This is shown under the concepts of the *flock or fold* (John 10:1–16). The thought is pursued in John 11:52 of the ingathering into one of the scattered children. Under the *vine* (15:1f) the new vine which is the true vine (archetype) is Jesus and all in Him (branches) are the people of the true Israel. This is to bear fruit. Bearing fruit approximates with the ministry of the people of God (20:19–23). They go and bring others. The high-priestly prayer of chapter 17 is to do with the unity of the present and coming believers. The catch of fish in chapter 21 represents the function of the sent-

ones to catch a haul. Fisherman and shepherd are similar figures. The concept of the people of God is strong.

8. Eschatology

The Spirit will tell of “things to come” (16:13). That the church has this teaching ensures the continuity of the people of God – ie. there is an historical continuum. Christ will come to them again in (by) the Holy Spirit (14:18). Yet there is also another Parousia. The Holy Spirit comes to the believer and the Church (7:37–39, 14:16f,26; 15:26, 16:7–11, 13–15). His function is to be as Jesus, ie. *another* Comforter. Passages such as John 4:2–23, 5:25f, speak of an hour coming which is now, thus speaking of things to come, yet giving them a present connotation. In 11:23–26 the resurrection has both future and present relationship. 5:25–29 is a future judgment, just as 14:3 and 21:23 are His future coming. The concept of the kingdom as we saw above is an indication that the kingdom, whilst not simply a mystery is not merely political (18:33–37).

9. Related Concepts

Under heading “5. Salvation”, we saw that *knowledge* and *life* are closely related. This life is *eternal life*. Men are confronted by the need to make a decision about Him that they might have life or not. (3:36, 5:24, 11:25, 17:3). This is not, however, simply receiving a life into one, because *death* is necessary for man to have this life, that death being of the Cross. 1:29, 3:14, and 12:24 plus the strong emphasis given upon the death and passion show that the life is eternal only because of the death. This life comes through knowledge. Time and again those who see Jesus do not *know* Him (16:3, cf. 8:19f etc.). By knowing Jesus men come to know the Father (8:19, 14:7). We come to know Him – Jesus first (10:14; cf. 14:9) and so the Father (14:7). Knowledge is not esoteric, or gnostic. It is linked with truth.

Truth is a powerful concept in the Gospel. In the world humanity is characterised by error, imperfection and sin because it has lost contact with God, the True One (7:28) Christ brings truth – 1:14,17 and is Truth (14:6). After Him will come the Spirit of truth (14:17). He leads men to true worship of God (4:22–23) and frees them from the error of the devil (8:44), through the knowledge of truth (8:32 and 44). The witnesses to this truth are John the Baptist (5:33–36) the Father (5:36–37) His own works (5:36) and the Scriptures (5:39) especially Moses (5:46–47). *Knowledge and truth* are linked *with faith*. Faith is the action which follows knowledge of the truth. It is not simply mental assent but acceptance of the claims of Jesus 8:24, 11:42, 11:27, 20:31 but with full committal to Him 3:16, 4:42, 9:35–38, 14:1 and actual reception of Him 1:12. Of course the signs Jesus does lead to this faith (20:30–31) and faith brings one to salvation.

The concept of *glory* is a rich theme in John – cf. – the first chapter introducing the subject summarily. Verse 14 says “we beheld his glory”. It is in 2:11 that the glory is seen by the apostles and they believe – not, apparently having believed before. In 7:18 Christ says He is seeking the glory of the One Who has sent Him. 8:50 reiterates this. In 12:23 Christ points out that it is His hour for glorification (cf. 7:37) and yet this is to glorify the Father’s name (12:28). The raising of Lazarus is when the Father–has glorified His name – 11:40f. The prayer of chapter 17 is deeply occupied with this theme. Glory is the relationship and office the Son eternally possessed. It is however linked with the oneness with the Father, and that glory Christ would see in the oneness of the apostles and the ones believing on their word. Glory is undoubtedly the very nature of God, but linked not simply with transcendence, but with suffering love, divine unity. 1:14 shows it is the glory of the Sonship – revealing Fatherhood.

ANALYSIS

I. JESUS THE WORD OF GOD, INCARNATE AND REVEALED

1:1 – 2:11

- (a) The prologue (1:1–18)
- (b) A week of witness and revelation (1:19–2:11)

II. THE NEW TEMPLE: THE NEW BIRTH: THE NEW WORSHIP

2:12 – 4:54

- (a) The cleansing of the temple (2:12–25)
- (b) The interview with Nicodemus (3:1–21)
- (c) John the Baptist’s final witness to Jesus (3:22–36)
- (d) Jesus and the Samaritans (4:1–42)
- (e) The nobleman’s son (4:43–54)

III. THE UNBELIEF OF ISRAEL 5:1 – 6:71

- (a) Introduction
- (b) The disabled man at Bethesda (5:1–47)
- (c) The feeding of the five thousand (6:1–71)

IV. JESUS THE APOSTLE OF GOD: THE GIVER OF SIGHT: THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP: 7:1 – 10:21

- (a) The feast of tabernacles (7:1–13)
- (b) Jesus the Apostle of God (7:14–52)
 - (i) Jesus and the woman taken in adultery (7:53–8:11)
- (c) Jesus the Light of the world (8:12–30)
- (d) Christian freedom (8:31–59)
- (e) The man born blind (9:1–41)
- (f) Jesus the Good Shepherd (10:1–21)

V. JESUS THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE 10:22 – 12:50

- (a) The Festival of Dedication (10:22–42)
- (b) The raising of Lazarus (11:1–57)
- (c) The supper at Bethany (12:1–8)
- (d) The triumphal entry and the final rejection (12:9–50)

VI. THE UPPER ROOM 13:1 – 17:26

- (a) The feet–washing (13:1–17)
- (b) The traitor (13:18–35)
- (c) The disciples’ questions (13:36–14:31)
- (d) The allegory of the vine (15:1–17)
- (e) Persecution (15:18–25)
- (f) The work of the Advocate (15:26–16:15)
- (g) The ‘little while’ (16:16–33)
- (h) The prayer of the great High Priest(17:1–26)

VII. THE ARREST, THE TRIALS, AND THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS 18:1 – 19:37

- (a) The arrest of Jesus (18:1–11)
- (b) The trial before the high priest (18:12–27)
- (c) The trial before Pilate (18:28–19:16)
- (d) The crucifixion (19:17–37)

VIII. THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS 19:38 – 20:31

- (a) The burial (19:38–42)
- (b) The resurrection appearances (20:1–29)
- (c) The purpose of the evangelist (20:30,31)

IX. THE EPILOGUE 21:1 – 23

X THE CONCLUSION 21:24,25.

Various commentaries shape the analysis according to the standpoint by which they see the Gospel. R.V.G. Tasker’s outline above divides the ministry into clearly defined sections and shows the progress of the action of that ministry.

COMMENTARY**CHAPTER ONE****I: JESUS THE WORD OF GOD,
INCARNATE AND REVEALED (1:1–2:11)****(a) The Prologue (1:1–18)**

The prologue is divided into four sections.

1. Vs. 1–5. The Creational world situation and the Logos. There is light by the Logos, but darkness is there although less than the Logos who is the source of life.
2. Vs. 6–8. John’s witness is important, necessary. The Word does not come unannounced.
3. Vs. 9–13. The coming of the Light is significant because it brings sonship to men, whilst unacceptable to others.
4. Vs. 14–18. The coming – here enlarged upon – is the situation where God’s being, and glory are seen, and known – through the Son.

1:1 “*In the beginning*”, ie. when creation began.

“was” means he (the Logos) did not come into being at this point, but already was – “was being”. This means he is uncreate, his generation is eternal. Any heresy is here refuted. Cf. Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:8, 7:3, Rev. 1:8.

“*Was the Word*” What is the “word”. The “Logos”. A word communicates. It is not just that which is communicated. It communicates what is not self–evident, or which has to be made known. This the Logos does.

THE LOGOS This word has a long theological

history. It is debated whether the word has Hellenistic or Hebrew origins. *The Hebrew development* is seen in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 1:3, Psalm 33:6, 148:5, 107:20, Isaiah 40:8, Jeremiah 1:4–9 – “the Word of the Lord”), particularly in a passage like Proverbs 8:27–30 which should be studied closely. Here “wisdom” is not so much a word uttered as an almost separate entity. In the Apocrypha the personification is extended (Ecclus. 1:1–20, Wis. 6:22–9:18), and even more so in the Targums (commentaries of the Jews) eg. Gen.3:8,9 – “they heard the voice of the *Word* of the Lord God..” “the *Word* of the Lord called unto Adam.” This is not quite what we find in John but John’s use is consistent with it. *The Hellenistic development* is generally associated with Philo, who was an Alexandrian Jew of 1st Century AD, and whose view is hard to grasp seeing he uses the term some 1300 times. He has a compound of Judaism, Platonic philosophy and oriental mysticism, in fact a theosophical approach. His Logos is metaphysical, not historical, and indeed barely defined. He is a kind of agency – an archetype – by which God created material things and communicated with them. We need not feel John was in any way influenced by this thought. John is not dealing with metaphysics here. Metaphysics is the theoretical philosophy of being and knowing. John is concerned with historical facts. What, then, is the Logos? John describes his being and action. (i) He is already when time commences. (ii) He is with God. (iii) He is God.

“and the Word was with God” ie. “*face to face with God*” “*abode with God*”, that the Word was as God (a) a discrete Being (b) equal with God. This is how he knows, and can “express” God – cf. Heb. 1:3.

“And the Word was God”. We do not say “God was the Word” for the Word is to express Him, reveal, and even “actuate” Him by deed. “was God” NEB “What God was, the Word was.” Some have translated it “was Godhead” ie. He has that deity of the whole Godhead. This statement makes the Logos to be undoubtedly the true revelation which God accords to man.

1:2 “*The same was in the beginning with God*” ie. “Dwelt with God” was co–equal, co–eternal “What God was, the Word was” NEB.

1:3 *‘All things by him were made’* ie. those things which had never been in being came into being. There is nothing to do with creation with which he has not had to do. Thus the Logos contains all knowledge to do with creation for he is the source of all things.

1:4 *“In him was life”* What life? Creational? Yes: Sustaining? Yes. It is his life which creates and sustains. For men that life has deeper significance. It is to do with their *moral* being, as well as their physical and intellectual life. There is no other light for men, morally. He, alone, is the light of men. They must come to him for the true light.

1:5 *‘And the light shineth in darkness’* Cf. II Cor.4:6. What darkness? This may well be a reference initially to the creation time, to do with the darkness overcome by the light, but it has deeper moral reference. Thus the darkness is all spiritual darkness, and in particular that of Old Testament times. The present tense “shineth” means that it has shone, and goes on shining. This is made clear by the second clause “*the darkness comprehendeth it not.*” The word translated “comprehend” means either “did not overcome” or “did not understand”. Both of these elements obtain. This leads us on to a deeper understanding of the darkness. It is as an opponent. The darkness then must have to do with Satanic forces. Whilst in the past the light of Christ has shone through the promises, patriarchs, covenants and prophets, yet now in the very Person of Christ it shines. Light cannot be hidden.

1:6 Man is “anthropos”. Here is contrast between “Logos” and “anthropos, . John is man. Man witnesses to the Logos, but he is a man *sent by God*. “Sent by God” is no small claim or commission. It sets John apart. God is introducing the Logos. In John 5:35 John is a shining and a burning light but not *the* Light.

His witness is great.

1:7 *“a witness”* This Gospel makes much of the idea of witness. Cf. 1:15,32,34, 3:26, 5:33,39, 12:17, 8:18 etc. One does not just accept anyone coming. God must witness to the One coming. John was to be the channel through which men believed in the Logos.

1:8 *“He was not that light”* An unusual messenger is often accepted beyond his message. Some may have clung to John rather than his fore-runner’s proclamation.

1:9 The sense of this verse is “The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world” (NEB). “Real” or “true” does not mean John’s light is false or unreal. Christ is the archetypal light. Any other “lights” have no meaning against this “Light”. The word “illuminates” does not mean that everyone is illuminated. This is the Light which is there to illumine (ie. bring understanding and response to God) but the Light shines and everything (or everyone is illuminated) but the response is not to “come to the light” from all. See John 3:19. The great truth is that illumination is there. Man is not left to darkness.

1:10 *“He was in the world”* The word “world” has many connotations in John. It can mean simply creation in general, it can mean the world of men, it can mean a system opposed to God, whose prince is Satan. Here it simply means he was in the world of creation, with particular reference to men and women.

“the world was made by him” is intended to indicate its intricate order and form. Nothing lacking, yet *“the world knew him not”* ie. did not recognise this “man” as Creator and Sustainer.

1:11 *“his own”* ie. possession or “home”. Through the Incarnation he comes to Israel, ie. his “own

people”. They do not receive him. “Receive” has the idea of spontaneous reception and recognition. None of this happened.

1:12 He is Messiah, come in accordance with the prophecies and God’s will. The Gospel shows the reluctance to accept this truth. Some, however do recognise (however dimly) that he is the Messiah and receive him. This confrontation demands a response. Men are not by *nature* the children of God. No one has the “authority” to be a child of God. (In this Gospel Jesus is “Son” and believers “children”). *“Believe in his name”* This means to completely accept; trust, place reliance upon, and give allegiance to him. These ones believe in him as the Son of God, although it is not stated in so many words. They are – as it were – a new race.

1:13 *“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.* All this adds up to one thing – the (new) birth is not from man, either by his procreation, nor his willing, nor his manipulation. It is only *of God*. The *authority* comes from God, the regeneration is of God. “Flesh” here, and in other places should not be taken to mean morally evil, but simply “human”, yet weak in its humanness.

1:14 *“and the Word was made flesh”*. That is the Word which was always the “expression” or communication of God in nature and providence is now entering the human scene as flesh, to express the redemptive purposes of God, ie. God in redemption. The Word does not “become,,’ but “becomes flesh”. He comes on the human scene as man. The Incarnation is not so much emphasised as the *fact* that the Logos does not remain apart from man, but is man to man.

“dwelt among us” ie. “to live in a tent” “tabernacled”. This means he lived as man, and was not just clothed with humanity. He was (is) *really* man.

“We beheld” – whoever writes it is a corporate

testimony. This glory was looked at – it is not in the realm of esoteric truth. It was an historical fact. The question is “What glory”. The answer is found in every aspect of the Gospel – God revealed by His Son in action, in teaching, in redemption– (See above references to “glory”.) Yet the glory is such as the Son possesses – the only–begotten Son of the Father.

“*Grace and truth*” The Son is full of these.

Grace is really God’s act of bringing to men, through Christ His revelation. This too, is truth. There is, then, no falsity. It is exciting that God gives all to man in Christ. Grace normally means unmerited favour “God going towards man to do him good”, and truth means that which is obscured by darkness, falsity, and which is the heart of the matter and (in John) saving– See 1:17, 8:32, 17:17,19. Jesus is not only communicating truth. He is the truth (14:6).

1:15 “*John bare witness*”. Note:– John is in the Old Testament line. The Holy Spirit has given new understanding but John is speaking in Old Testament context– His witness remains. It can never be forgotten in Israel. John makes it clear that the “Word–made–flesh” is superior to him and before him in time.

1:16–17 Verses 16–17 are making a contrast here of the Old and the New. “*Out of his fulness*” ie. He is the source of light and of life, and here of grace. The grace and truth we saw was the source of grace for us, grace at every point that we needed it. Moses *gave* the law, ie. it was a thing apart from him. The grace and the truth are not “things” separate from Christ. They came with or by Him.

1:18 This prologue finishes on a high note. Moses it is true has seen God (Ex. 33:18) but not in the sense that is declared here – ie. he did not receive of His fulness – One of the great themes of John is the revelation of the *Father*. This is not quite the same as that of *God*. 14:6 cf. 6:44,65 and 8:19,42. *Bosom*

is a Hebrew idiom and expresses the close and personal relationship of child and parent (cf. 13:23). declared is “to exegete” or to make known or interpret. Nothing can be made known of God the Father but by Christ. Barrett “The invisible God has now in Christ been manifested in His glory, grace and truth.”

(b) A Week of Witness and Revelation (1:19 – 2:11)

1:19 At this point begins that revelation. Westcott says that the revelation goes on from 1:19 to 12:50. Here however the witness to Christ himself begins and continues to V.34. The passage bears three elements of witness to Christ (a) Jesus is the Lamb of God (b) he is the one who, equipped with the Spirit will baptise with the Spirit. (c) He is the Elect one, the Son of God. Verse 6 following, speaks of John’s witness. Here we have it. We first (here) hear of the Jews. The ministry of John is famous. However it has to be interpreted. Messianic claims are grounds for apprehension (11:47–53). If he is the Christ, then all Israel must be involved. If not then he has no right to such ministry. However the mention of Jews here is the beginning of the account of a great conflict between the Messianic mission and the people who should belong to Messiah. (V.11). Note that priests and Levites both come. It is at the heart of the religious situation that the strife commences.

1:20 John is clear on his own mission. It is a preparatory ministry.

1:21 They want to make it clear that John is not the fulfilment of any Old Testament person. Because of Mal. 3:1 and 3 it was thought Elijah must return. (See Matt. 11:14, 17:12 and Mark 9:13) Matt. 11:14 RSV. *.If you are willing to accept it he is Elijah who is to come.*” Here John is not anxious to draw attention to

himself, but to Christ – he evades controversy.

1:22–23 Isaiah 40 does not nominate a *person* but a *voice*. John is that voice. A *voice* heralded the *certainty* of liberation of Israel from Babylon – so John’s heralds a similar certainty. His baptism could not *release* but it could tell of release. His voice implies a wilderness in Israel, and a release needed to be accomplished.

1:24 The variant reading could mean that some of those sent were Pharisees. It is they who ask the question in verse 25.

1:25–28 The theme here is as follows: If John is the voice, and Israel is as in bondage (Romans? Sin?) then John as the voice baptises. This seems no less than what Messiah, Elijah, or “the prophet” (Deut. 18) might do. What is his (John’s) authority? John’s answer is not to justify himself by making his own ministry conclusive but to make his ministry simply an anticipating one. The One–coming–after has the true ministry. As yet (V. 26) he is not recognised. “ye know not” is not an indictment for their dullness. John himself (even being cousin of Jesus) had to have this revealed to him (V. 33). V. 27 shows that this other one’s being and office was immensely above that of John. It was not John of whom they should be asking questions. The name Bethabara is probably better named as Bethany, and this Bethany is distinguished from the better known one of 11:18. John was away out from the stream of popular life. Yet the people had come in large numbers. Still John seeks no name. He is thinking in terms of the coming one.

1:29–34 “*The next day*” Shows that what has gone before is on one day — the next day Jesus is seen and John speaks of his ministry – Christ has now come. Three elements may be contained in “Lamb of God”. (a) A lamb provided as with Isaac (Gen. 22:8) (b) a passover

Lamb (Ex. 12:3–17) (c) The Lamb of Isaiah 53 – here a figure representing the Suffering Servant. The typology of sacrifice would be richly in the minds of His beholders. In their minds would be no doubt about the “taking away of sins”. The statement is dramatic and vitalistic.

In verse thirty John makes it clear that Jesus is greater than John because he was before (in existence) him. In Y. 31 “I knew him not” does not necessarily mean John did not know Jesus but did not know “he was the One coming”. Yet, says John it was to make him known that I came baptising. In verses 32 and 33 John does not mention the baptism as such (although we see it in the Synoptics) but mentions the significant fact that the Spirit will *remain* upon Christ. This in itself might not be significant but when the same one is to *baptise with the Holy Spirit* then it is clear that this is a new situation – in effect the Messianic one. That is why John has to have the true identity of Jesus revealed to him. When the writer says “I have seen” he means he has seen the incident, but more he means he has heard – as in the Synoptics – “This is my beloved Son.” As we have said before, John’s Gospel always assumes the Synoptics.

Verses 35 – 51

1:35 The third day of this action. “stood” = was standing silently–waiting. One disciple was Andrew (V.40). In V. 36 John again points to the Lamb. In V. 37 they do that which is natural follow the one of whom John has spoken, and for whom his ministry exists. V. 38 “*What seek ye*” Not “*Whom?*” Their counter–question “Where do you dwell” means they want to talk to him quietly. The word “Rabbi” means a teacher, and teachers usually had a place where they could teach. The *other* disciple is obviously John. All the details of this day stand out in his mind. “*Tenth hour*” This introduces the debate of whether it was Roman or Jewish time. Hendriksen has a good argument for the Roman time (ps. 104–5). “Abode with him that day”

seems to suggest almost a day, whereas Jewish time would be 4 pm. and demand “that evening.” Verses 40–41. Andrew infects Simon Peter with the wonderful news of the Messiah. John has pointed, and Andrew has seen. He is in no doubt. The word “Messias” is the Hebrew form of Christ (the Greek form). However it was a tremendous thing for them to say and not without its dangers. *V. 42* Jesus “looked upon him” or “stared into him” or “looked him over.” Not seeing a present bulwark (morally) Jesus predicts a future firm foundation. That is he is to be the Rock (cf. Matt. 16:18). *V. 43* Jesus gives a personal call to Philip. (Bethsaida not far from Capernaum, but site unknown). *Verses 45–51.* The story of Nathaniel is that Nathaniel whilst listening to the news of the discovery of the Messiah is unconvinced because of Jesus’ origin – Nazareth. His reticence is valuable and outlines his sincerity (“no guile” – Psalm 32:2). He comes nevertheless and is in contrast to the first Israelite (Jacob, in whom was guile Gen. 27:35).

V. 48 shows Nathaniel’s candid answer “Do you know me?” Jesus’ reply concerning the figtree shows Nathaniel that One is standing before him who is more than *natural*. His reply leaps over the “Nazarene” difficulty. He is convinced. His confession is deeply significant. Undoubtedly linked with Psalm 2. *Verses 50–51* Jesus makes the confession of Nathaniel on so small demonstration of the supernatural to be commendable. Yet Nathaniel is to see greater things. “The heavens opened” (Mark 1:10) is great, but to see the *Son of Morn* (see Intro. ad. loc.) as the Ladder (cf. Gen. 28:12) upon Whom the heavenly traffic is to show (a) The Son of Man (cf. Matt. 26:64, Dan. 7:13f) (b) The new “Ladder” by whom the heavenly traffic ascends and descends. We are not told the implication of this here, but doubtless Nathaniel understands much.

C.K. Barrett (p. 156) adds “The Son of man is both in heaven and on earth, (3:13); he descends to give life to the world (6:27,53); he ascends again to his glory (6:62), but this ascent and glorification are by way of the Cross (3:14; 8:28; 12:23,34; 13:31)”

CHAPTER TWO

The First Sign (2:1–11)

The prologue finished, the transition from John to Jesus commenced, it now remains for John’s thesis to be expounded ie. that signs show Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God, upon whom believing a man receives eternal life.

Six disciples accompany Jesus to the wedding at Cana in Galilee. There were several Canas and possibly this was some 8 miles from Nazareth. The disciples were invited – a matter of course in the East. Jesus (Matt.’ 11:19) was no ascetic. Jesus’ mother was there (v.3) she is not mentioned by name in the Gospel.

2:3 “*When the wine failed*” No reason is given.

2:4. “*Woman, what have I to do with thee?*” The word “woman” is not harsh, but it is impersonal. It is intended to make Mary see clearly that he cannot do just what she demands – probably a great miracle. There we have to leave it. “*mine hour*” – undoubtedly the hour of revelation – which for him would be the Cross (cf. Mark 1:24, 5:7, Matt. 8:29).

2:5 Mary clearly accepts the words of Jesus – without demur. She accepts the fact that he is in control. Her command to do whatever Jesus wanted is clear proof.

2:6–10 The action of the sign is plain enough. The water was some 108 to 162 gallons (18–27 gallons apiece). Perhaps “of his fulness have we received” is indicated. The water is changed to wine. *Wine* “makes glad the heart of man” (Psalm 104:15). We do not know whether in the waterpots or the jugs drawn off it was wine. It does not matter. Nor was

the miracle strictly necessary. The “governor” of the feast, was in fact the steward. He calls this wine “good” ie. better than the “old”. In one sense it is *new* wine. (Cf. Luke 5:36–39).

2:11 What is the significance of the sign? Is it an act of pity, human warmth, necessity? The passage does not tell us. Water into wine is clear enough. The disciples saw it as an act of *glory*. They had been pointed to the Lamb (blood, wine). Here when there is “no wine” (V.3) wine is supplied in abundancy. The outcome is that the disciples believe (v. 11) and this is significant, especially with the Johannine idea of belief. Some see significance of ordinary water into the *surpassing* wine. When the idea of wine is seen in the Scriptures there may be this significance. In any case it was an opening out of the glory – “we beheld his glory...”

II. THE NEW TEMPLE: THE NEW BIRTH: THE NEW WORSHIP

2:12 – 4:54

Jesus Enters His Public Ministry

(a) The cleansing of the Temple (2:12–25)

2:12 This showed that Jesus’ family moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. “Brethren” could have a general or a particular meaning. Could mean his actual brethren, or close relatives. But it was the family situation. They at this point are joined with the disciples.

2:13 *The passover.* It is at this passover (V. 19) that he foretells his own (paschal) death.

2:14–15 “he drove them out of the temple” We can only see this as a Messianic act. *MALACHI 3:1–3* shows that he is the messenger of the covenant. This means he comes to bring covenant–fulfilment. He is to purify “the sons of Levi.” Mark 11:15–18 shows

that the second incident – to “close” his Messianic ministry – actually leads to his death. The significance is not lost! The truth behind the act – read in the light of the prophecy of Malachi is that he came to fulfil the Jewish *cults* by a pure offering their’s, the Jews’ being inadequate. *Be found in the temple those etc.*” There was no provision made for the Gentile’s court to be filled with this “business.” Worshipper’s, technically, brought their own. This however was big business. The quietness demanded was absent. It was no place for prayer! The “them” would refer to “men”. He drove out all three.

2:16 The use of “my Father’s house” now shows the relationship in which Christ lives to God. This is a clear Messianic claim.

2:17 The use of Psalm 69:9 which is clearly a Messianic Psalm (cf. Vs. 4,21) heightens the thought. The word “remembered” is an aorist, meaning they remembered at that time. They saw the significance, being in possession of belief in him. NB. Note contrast of V.22 “when... he was raised from the dead .. remembered.” “THE ZEAL OF THINE HOUSE HATH CONSUMED ME” must read (RSV) “*WILL* consume Me” ie. Psalm 69:9 “the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me” – the meaning being “because I have zeal for your house I will be eaten up ie. destroyed” – a prediction that the consequence of this act will be the Cross.

2:18 What Christ had done was reprehensible. The Jews whilst not being able to deny that what He had done was in order, yet sought his authority. They sought a *sign*. As always what Christ does *is* the sign – ie. leads to the truth behind the act.

2:19 “Destroy this temple..” This was a most emotive saying. It was not forgotten – See Mark 14:58, Matt. 26:61 – “I will” (Mk) “I am able” (Mtt). See

also the taunt at the cross (Matt. 27:40). “destroy” – does this constitute a challenge to the Jews? The verse could have deep meaning. (a) The actual temple will be destroyed and Christ’s risen body will constitute the New Temple (See A. Cole “The Living Temple in the New Testament”). (b) Destroy my body (by crucifixion) and I will rise the third day and that will mean I am Messiah – I have authority as Messiah to do this (cf. Rom. 1:4). (c) You destroy this Temple (sanctuary – naos – not hieron) and I will build a new (spiritual) temple – I will bring purified worship (cf. Romans 12:1–2). Note that “destroy” is a command, not a concessive “if”. This is the sign he gives them – Destroy and he will raise it up.

2:20 Jesus does not say that He will destroy the Temple although later they accused him of this – Mark 14:58, Matt. 26:61 – and even upon the Cross repeated the accusation – Matt. 27:40. He told them – if they would – to destroy it.

2:21 However Christ was speaking of his body, the significance of which we have seen above. The forty–six years in building of the temple (originally built by Solomon, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and rebuilt by Nehemiah and Ezra, whilst not again destroyed was gradually rebuilt because of its inferior condition under Herod, from about 20 BC) may or may not have been completed the building. It was close enough to finished, in any case.

2:22 In Mark 14:58 the Jews accuse him of Saying he would build another “made without hands.” They must therefore have grasped something of the deeper meaning of his saying. The disciples do not grasp the significance of the “three days” anymore than do the Jews, until his resurrection. The phrase “he said” is really the imperfect “he was saying” probably referring to other occasions also, and this accords with “the Scripture” ie. passages either used by Jesus or now

understood by them, eg. Psalm 16:9–11, Isa. 53, the type of Jonah etc. (cf. Luke 24:45, John 20:9, Acts 2:24–32, I Cor. 15:4).

We can sum up the whole incident by saying it was Messianic in content, and that the first conflict with the Jews was on the basis of an inferred Messianic claim, and that it is stoutly and blindly resisted.

2:23 Verses twenty three to twenty five (23–25) are grouped. Jesus has Messianically cleansed the Temple. Now he is looked at. Despite the opposition of the leaders, the pilgrims who are up for the Passover Feast do not reject him. His miracles impress them. However, 2:24 makes it clear that they were impressed by the “signs” only as “miracles”, ie. as wonder works, without seeing the true meaning they were intended to convey. Christ was not seeking to gather followers (his various sayings on discipleship teach this) but to reveal his mission to those whose hearts were prepared to receive the teaching of the signs. John 6:60–66 makes this clear. A sign without the word is a bare sign. It is interesting that John does not describe the signs.

2:25 He knew what kind of belief they had. It was not forgiveness–seeking belief, but on another level altogether. It did not deceive him. His word actually delineated the kind of belief.

(b) The interview with Nicodemus (3:1–21)

CHAPTER THREE

3:1 The “now” connects Vs. 23–25 of ch. 2 with this incident. V. 2 shows that “signs” have also attracted and convinced him. He is a Pharisee (see 1:24) and they have investigated Christ already. “Ruler” means a member of the Sanhedrin (cf. 7:50). Being one of the seventy elders and teachers – he was an eminent man.

3:2 Nicodemus's coming by night was for fear of the Jews – but not so much cowardice as caution or discretion– See also John 19:38. He comes, not as a disciple but to investigate – sincerely. The signs are not altogether lost on Nicodemus – but by no means clear. He addresses Christ as *Rabbi* (teacher) and is sure that the signs indicate that Jesus is from God. He does connect *signs* with *teaching* which others have not so done.

3:3 is most significant. Jesus speaks about the “kingdom” Why? Because Messianic claims are linked with a kingdom. Dimly Nicodemus has connected these signs with such action. The strong words “Amen! Amen!” are intended, not to scorn the little understanding of Nicodemus but to give the setting of assurance for what he says. What has Nicodemus to do with this Kingdom? The answer lies in 1:19–28 where John's link with the *kingdom* is questioned. Jesus is acclaimed by John as the one linked with the kingdom” unless one is born anew” What does this mean? It means (a) Nicodemus has not had this kind of birth(b) He requires such a birth as will give him “sight” (perception, understanding) of the kingdom. It is to be an act which Nicodemus cannot initiate.

3:4 Nicodemus is not being flippant in his answer. He is simply clearing the ground for Christ's (coming) explanation. He is saying, “I know a man cannot be reborn physically – how then can he be reborn – and especially (a gesture towards himself) when he is old?” However he is mystified. A professionally trained teacher (ie. trained academically) he is in danger of other such of not thinking of another realm – the spiritual. The ecclesiastical always tends to think institutionally ‘ ie. feel things are tied off, and always within the realm of man's immediate reason.

3:5 “Except a man be born” – notice Christ's solemn

“Truly, truly, I tell you...” He is re-emphasising the spiritual nature of rebirth. Something, that is, that is outside of man's *manipulation* (cf. 1:13). He uses two phrases “water” and “spirit”. These have been hotly debated. Christ said (above) that without rebirth a man could not *see*, now he says “enter” the kingdom. Water and spirit then are linked with this entrance. If we look at 1:26,31, Mark 1:8, and Luke 3:16 we get the most logical explanation. John the Baptist had promised baptism with a view to entering the (coming) kingdom. He had promised Christ would baptise with the Spirit. Others have seen the “water” as the Word (cf. Ephes. 5:26) or even “semen” ie. The Word as seminal for birth, and whilst these things may (in other contexts) be true (cf. I Peter 1:23) yet this is too complex a thought at this point for Nicodemus.

3:6 Christ simply emphasises that what is human will produce only that which is human. “Flesh” here does not necessarily have an evil connotation. The human stream cannot rise above the human source. Nicodemus has looked to Christ's miracles in a human way. Let him see them in a “higher” way and he will then truly understand. Not however, without that new birth – from the higher source. Only what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

3:7 “*marvel not*” ... This is, indeed staggering... Without doubt Christ is striking at the principle of human-religious-manipulation. Nicodemus would not have suspected a defect in his “salvation-pattern.” Now Christ takes manipulation out of his hands and puts it into the hands of the Spirit. “*ye must be*” the “must” here is not of moral duty so much as of moral indispensability. The Greek “*dei*” is seen in many such contexts (cf. Luke 24:44, Acts 17:3). It does not mean Nicodemus *can* manage this, but it is necessary for it to happen – by the Spirit. Nicodemus needs this.

3:8 Here the sovereign nature of the action is seen.

The Spirit is not *like the* wind here described – He is this actual *wind*. You cannot know the movements, much less manipulate them. This might have driven Nicodemus to fatalism – well, only as God pleases! but Christ adds so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Some are born. The Wind moves – who knows, when or where? – and birth comes as God wills – but what of the mystery of resistance etc. John’s baptism – water Christ comes with the Spirit – all these are here suggested. Some are born!

3:9 “How can these things be.” The teaching is revolutionary – and probably the presentation not scholastic. On both scores Nicodemus is confused – but deeper – troubled by a new *concept entirely*. IS he, in fact, as deeply trained as a Jewish leader ought to be?

3:10 Christ admonishes. A teacher ought to be deeply trained, ought to have imbibed deeply of the waters of truth. His Hebrew Scriptures are filled with deep truths – such as this very one. It is obligatory on Nicodemus to know such things – not upon Christ to explain them– NB “knowest not” is the verb *epigosis* meaning “deeper knowledge inward apprehension.”

3:11 Christ makes his solemn claim to authority– We speak what we know, we testify to what we have seen. Here is no rabbinic complexity of thought, no theological “whirligig” – but direct truth being taught. The “we” some see to refer to the Son and the Father possibly it means John the Baptist and Christ – as both speaking of “water” and “Spirit.” This would then make “we know we have seen” for John had claimed such knowledge and “sight” cf. 1:21,33– “You do not accept our testimony.” They had not accepted that of John. 2:23–25 is the introduction to this chapter and places Nicodemus in those that “believe”, yet Christ knows the heart, and this is part of his prophetic ministry to Nicodemus at this time. Nicodemus has not really be–

lieved. Even here he is asking as though the onus is upon Jesus to answer and vindicate himself. If he had even believed him to be “a teacher come from God” then he would have listened with modesty and affirmed all that was said with an “I see...” etc.

3:12 “If I have told you earthly things...” All Christ’s teaching has been connected with things on this earth – before Nicodemus – ie. the kingdom, repentance (water), John the Baptist’s teaching, regeneration – all of which whilst they have a spiritual side, are nevertheless of this world, related to man’s affairs. These things, in any case, are what Nicodemus as a leader of Israel ought to have known. “Heavenly things”... The teaching of the Spirit, and of regeneration is all in the Old Testament.

If Nicodemus does not understand this primary teaching, how then will he go on the higher, spiritual level? His failure to understand has already judged him – not Christ.

3:13 Christ now shows how he can speak of heavenly things. He has descended from heaven. Nicodemus has not been there (nor any other). The phrase “Son of man” may have had a deep implication for Nicodemus (see 1:51 and notes). “which is in heaven.” This is a powerful phrase. There is in fact no *emptying* of his essential being when he comes down. His relationship with God remains as ever it was – and so Jesus is indicating to Nicodemus by using the third person, and yet identifying himself with this Son of man, that his authority comes from heaven itself. He knows these things. Nicodemus is impressed by the mention of the Son of man, but even more by the fact that the Son of man speaks from a heavenly relationship. *Note*: “Heavenly things” denotes the very principle which makes it difficult for a person to understand and hearing such a phrase he repeats “How can these things be?”

3:14 Having alerted Nicodemus to his own failure to

understand – especially the doctrine of salvation through the action of the Spirit, Jesus points to Numbers 21:8,9 – the story of the rebellious Israelites, their being bitten, and their looking to the transfigured serpent for new life. Elements fall into place. (i) The Son of man must be lifted up. (ii) “Lifted up must be” is the order. Again the *dei*, the “must” of indispensability– No lifting up, no believing’ no believing, no salvation. The “as” here makes Christ parallel to the “type” of the serpent. However we should be wary of pressing types too much. In the light of later Scriptures (II Cor. 5:21, Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20, 5:24 and I Pet. 2:24) we can say that he made evil (in his Cross) to be transfigured but probably it is best to draw the simplest conclusions– (i) The act is from God (He provides the “Son of Man” from heaven). (ii) Human wisdom will reject such an act – “How can a brazen serpent destroy death?” (iii) Faith which availed for Israel in the Numbers account will likewise avail for sinners now. As then, so now, *no other remedy* for sin.

3:15 “Believing” The “that” (Gk. “hina”) means “in order that..” No “lifting up” – then no object of faith. Once an object, then faith (believing) is possible– But not without looking! This parallels the Numbers account. “Should not perish” is not in the Greek. “Eternal life” ie. a life of *quality* rather than just endlessness, nevertheless having that also.

3:16 A famous verse. The use of “God” and not “Father” may indicate that Christ finishes his speech to Nicodemus at V. 15. That is not certain, however. If Jesus is speaking it is objectively, in the third person. The Father’s love is to the degree that He gives His only Son. “So loved” sends back the thought in time to the beginning, and perhaps beyond. “the world” of course is of *men* as the “whosoever” indicates. “gave” (cf. I John 4:10, 3:16, Rom. 8:32),

is the practical indication of the love. “perish” is the opposite to “have everlasting life.” ie. it means not to have that terrible separation from God, the anguish of eternal suffering. The adjective everlasting (*aionos*) is used 17 times in John.

3:17 The *Son* was not sent to *judge*. He comes as Saviour. However it is only through him. Of course he saves from judgment.

3:18 Those who have faith are not judged. Those who believe not “in the name of” are already judged. They are judged because God has *acted* – in sending His Son – and this action has been rejected. Nicodemus’ initial exuberance is stilled. Where is he now? Believing?

3:19 Explains that it is not mere failure to give assent to Messiah. It is that they actually love that which is darkness. The *cause* is their evil works. *Darkness* is not simply the absence of light, but positively the *power* that is Satanic.

3:20 Shows that they habitually do evil and actually hate the light. The word “evil” really means “worthless things” and shame is one of the reasons that the light is hated. His deeds are not simply worthless but he recoils from them being revealed, and so reprovved. He thus *hates* light. He hates the Son who is Light.

3:21 It is the opposite with the one “doing the truth”. (cf. 18:37) “doing the truth” is more than doing good. It is being at the core, the heart of the matter. Only such works can be wrought in union with God. He loves the light. The light proves the works which *have been done*. Could Nicodemus come to the light? What of his works? Love of light is not incidental, but a whole love – a full union with God. For Nicodemus (later) see 7:50f and 19:39, it is

evident that Nicodemus did respond.

**(c) John the Baptist's Final
Witness to Jesus (3:22 – 36)**

3:22–30 The gist of this passage is as follows: The author of the Gospel is showing how John's ministry began to be completed. Jesus, leaving Jerusalem comes into Judea and the number of his disciples increases as he baptises (cf. 4:2). John is farther north, on the western side of the Jordan. Aenon, near Salim was some miles south-west of Bethany. John was still baptising as his ministry had not yet finished— A Jew (the name is always used for those opposing Christ) was disputing about John's manner of baptism. He may have suggested Jesus' baptism was superior. The disciples of John see that Jesus is attracting more disciples than John and they are grieved. They knew Jesus to be the one to whom John had witnessed, but they had not followed. Now John reminds them he had witnessed to Christ. He says Christ could not be accepted unless his ministry had been of God ("given him from heaven"). John then sees himself as a groomsman to whom responsibility for the wedding is given, which having discharged he is happy because of the bridegroom— Jesus, however is Christ. Him John loves. So he climaxes his explanation by saying "He must increase, but I must decrease." John has never been inflated. He simply means "My ministry is almost completed. That of Jesus will grow from this beginning".

3:31–36 In *V. 31* John the Baptist shows the difference in origin— John's followers must recognise that he, John, is of the, earth. Jesus is from heaven and is above all men. This is no light statement. It speaks of *origin* and *character*. John's disciples ought to so see Jesus. In *V. 32* John notes that Jesus (in heaven) has seen and heard things of which he now testifies – incredible thought! – yet

42

no one accepts this testimony. *V. 33*. John infers that he (John) received that witness and so sealed the fact that God is true. John had received a revelation of this Messiah. He (of all of them) alone could seal God to be true. *V. 34* has been said to refer to John the Baptist. This could be, except that it can scarcely be said of John that he speaks God's (own) words. It needs the heavenly One to do that. John was not given the Spirit "without measure." However the verse is a debated one. It may mean that Jesus is the subject and so gives the Spirit without measure, or it may be God who gives (to Jesus) the Spirit without measure. The latter seems more reasonable. In that case John is further testifying to Christ. "whom God hath sent," then would refer to Jesus. *V. 35* then follows naturally. The Father *has given* all things to the Son. John the Baptist is now making the relationship of Father and Son clear— "all things" means supremacy. This is why it is imperative to believe on the Son "everlasting life," too, is in his hands. Note that true translation is "he who does not obey the Son" – this is the rejection of faith in him – it must be attended by wrath, which "goes on remaining on him." We imagine John's followers are silenced by such high testimony.

(d) Jesus and the Samaritans (4:1 – 42)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Woman of Samaria

4:1 The evangelist introduces us to a new aspect of Jesus' ministry— The Jews (Pharisees) had watched John's ministry, and had perhaps rejoiced that it was waning. Their anger, however, was aroused when they saw that Jesus' ministry was progressing rapidly. The alarm they felt would want to make them do something. Not fear but discretion makes Jesus return to Galilee – see Vs. 43–44.

4:2 Jesus did not baptise with his own hands – possibly through fear that men would expect–immediately–Spirit baptism. Baptism was the sign of discipleship, and overtly was connected with the Kingdom.

4:3–4 Josephus informs us that Jews passed through Samaria (from Galilee) when they went up to the Feasts– No other “compulsion” is here suggested.

4:5 Here begins the story of the Samaritan woman, and Jesus’ dealings with her. The historical background is rich, especially in the memory of Jacob – his well, which he gave to Joseph his son, and here to Jacob’s grave (Acts 7:16).

4:6–16 The story can be told as follows:

4:7 Jesus is physically weary. A woman of Samaria, ie. from this country of Samaria comes to draw water. *Sixth hour* could mean *noon* (Jewish time) or 6 pm. (Roman time)– Some say noon because it would be the time he was weary, and an *unusual* time for women to draw water. Others say the evening time, and that other women not coming proves nothing – as they may have come earlier– It does not matter much.

4:8 Jesus asks for water. As a Samaritan her water pot would be ceremonially unclean – she also is a woman (V.9). The Samaritans were despised by the Jews for their hybrid origins, their acceptance only of the pentateuch, and their various religious differences (see Ezra 3 and 4). See also Luke 9:51–53.

4:10 Christ takes her word and uses it to lead in “If thou knewest”— ie. if you had been knowing – when I talked to you – you would have asked. The principle is (a) know the gift (b) thus be *compelled* to ask (c) it will be given. “living water” is water needed to give life. It also is flowing (see V. 14), either running or bubbling up. Cf– John 7:37–

39. *Vs. 11–12* show her involuntary respect – “Sir”. Her question is still on the human level. It is strange that Jesus asks her for water but will supply better than she has. If Christ is suggesting allegorically that he has *Jewish* water as against *Samaritan* water (ie. Jewish worship, truth etc.), then she counters his suggestion. She wants to know his *source*. What he says has the implicit claim to being greater than Jacob. We must remember that the Samaritans had intense reverence for this patriarch. *Vs. 13 and 14* give the clear answer to her. *Water = life. Faith = drinking*. The *kind* of water she drank has a *known source* ie. earthly. His water has an *eternal source*. Indeed drink once, and it is life *forever*, that life now springing up, to *life eternal*. The end of the welling shall be to reach life eternal, or one is kept fresh to/for eternal life (cf. Phil. 3:11, Gal. 6:8).

V. 15 shows the woman’s response. If she suspects Christ’s emphasis that the *Jewish* source is superior to that of the *Samaritan*, she nevertheless wants what he offers. Johannine teaching shows he is offering (a) life through faith. (b) The fulness of the Spirit. These involve forgiveness, and rebirth. To ask for this water is to believe. This is astonishing. *V. 16* “call thy husband” is not a *condition* for drinking, but a *preparation*. The sin of her life must be dealt with. Notice: no criticism or scolding. *V. 17* Gives her response. Painful as is the truth she tells it. She is “of the truth” cf. John 18:37 “He that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Also John 8:32–34. *Vs. 17b, 18* show Jesus’ directness, and his helpfulness. He excises the evil. *V. 29* (later) shows that this had freed her “...told me all that I ever did” – this was the highlight to her – freedom from past sin.

4:19 “I perceive you are a prophet” ie. you have the capacity for seeing the truth. This, too is an admission of guilt. This leads her on to the burning question exercising every Samaritan – the real

place and *mode* of worship. The bitterness of the Samaritans was not unconnected with insecurity, .ie. in regard to *authentic* worship. As a matter of historical fact worship, and sacrifice at Gerizim in Samaria still continues. Perhaps she feels that the prophet's dealing with her may make *Jewish* demands upon her in relation to this repentant heart she now experiences.

4:21 – the reply must have astonished her, ie. that Gerizim and Jerusalem will not be the exclusive (or debated) places of worship. In accordance with Zeph. 2:11, and Mal. 1:11 *pure* worship shall be offered *universally*. Note however the word “*Father*”. The word is eloquent of a new concept. It speaks of a new (and perhaps, old) relationship of Father and children Samaritans being naturally included.

4:22 “You are worshipping what you do not know..” This was true. The Samaritans had only the Pentateuch, and not the Psalms and Prophets which were of immense importance in deeper revelation. The Jews (in this sense) knew what they worshipped. It is not a *place* argument (Jerusalem versus Mt. Gerizim) but a *revelation* claim. Salvation is thus, necessarily, of the Jews – see Ps. 147:19,20, Isa. 2:3, Amos 3:2, Mic. 4:1,2, Rom. 3:1,2, 9:3–5, 9:18.

4:23 “but” = “yea” (alla) – emphatic – contrasting – the *hour is coming and now is* “this is Messianic, not prophetic language” (Hoskyns ad. loc.) – a new situation has come. It is “coming” in the sense that this *age* (Messianic) has yet to be finally established yet it has *come* in that he has come – Jesus confronts her as the Messiah. Having said “*salvation*” (above) he can now talk about *true worshippers*. The word *worship* has deep significance – it does not simply mean “give respect to”, but implies a worship that is deep and living. The idea of the Father comes through again but this Father–worship is only known in the realm of

(a) Spirit (b) Truth. What Spirit, what truth?

The Holy Spirit – those who are born of the Spirit. Spirit as against formal institutionalised worship – worship with some immediacy – but through the Spirit. Spirit in that is not confined to *place* or *form* (nor necessarily apart from them for that matter). To worship in (one's) spirit is intimate, deep, real, living (cf. Phil. 3:3). Truth is not just propositional. The woman would know what truth meant – and not just an esoteric truth – hidden, mysterious, graspable only by the initiated, but truth that is truth of action (cf. Rom. 1:18 cf. John 3:20–21 “doeth evil” “doeth truth”). Spirit and truth are inseparable. Separated are individually dangerous.

4:24 “God is Spirit” – what would this have meant to the woman? That God was not bound to time and place for worship and that to truly worship Him would be to deny anything idolatrous, and to know that in *the truth* one could worship *spiritually*. There is no metaphysic here, no idea of God not being substance. It separated His worship just from temples and cultuses as such.

4:25 The most we can say is that all of what Jesus says stirs the woman to think of Messiah. She – as it were – yearns for him.

4:26 Jesus – at the right moment – reveals himself as Messiah. This is not his custom – to reveal his Messiahship. It is not unlinked with V. 23b “the Father seeks the (ones) worshipping Him.” The Messiah comes to make this worship (of the Father) possible. At the moment of revelation (V.27) his disciples come. They are amazed that he will speak with a woman, and on matters of “the Law” (forbidden by custom).

4:28 The woman hastens away at the arrival of the disciples – perhaps timid at meeting them –

perhaps excited by the dazzling news of the Messiah. She too, forgets her waterpot – a proof of her excited state. She is gripped with the truth, and seeks to grip others.

4:30 Shows the effect of her *witness* (the fountain welling – the rivers of the Spirit flowing?) so that they “were coming to him.” A stream flowing out of the city.

4:31–33 Show the obtuseness of the disciples. They cannot understand the joy of Christ in bringing life to a lost woman, nor the harvest which is about to be reaped. *V.* 32 shows a deep satisfaction that is revealed fully by *V.* 34. The food of Jesus is doing the will of God. He longs only to “finish his work.” The rich love here glows forth for a wonderful moment.

4:35 Shows that although the *time* was four months away from the harvest, the *real* harvest was now ready – he had been, and is at the moment – reaping.

4:36 The word “already” of *V.* 35 really belongs to *V.* 36 ie. *already* the harvester is reaping, receiving wages, so that the time of sowing and reaping is – as it were – simultaneous. This is in accord with Amos 9:13 “the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed.”

4:37–38 Conclude the theme that what the disciples did not sow, yet they shall reap. Yet they are not apart from the *sower*. The harvest is undoubtedly men and women won to God. Whilst the reaper may think his is the true work, the spiritual principle here set forth is that both *equally* share in the joy.

4:39 Seems to begin another section but in fact it simply follows on the idea of harvest. “Others” have sown – ie. Moses (the Pentateuch Was among them keeping alive the idea of God worship etc. see Samari-

tan woman) John the Baptist, Jesus. There is an incredible spiritual harvest which does not follow the lines of *natural* harvest for in minutes the Spirit can do a work. It is not just time which determines the response, but the power of the Seed, the Word, and faith. The result is here seen “many of the Samaritans believed on him.” We have seen above the things which would have impressed them – here we are told it is her word “A man told me all that I ever did.”

4:40–42 “They kept requesting him to remain with them.” Culturally it was not what a Jew would do. Jesus is the first to tackle the Samaritan “problem”. Acts 8 shows the consummation of the harvest. His remaining would be deeply affecting. That they saw him to be “the Saviour of the world” was amazing. This links not only Jews and Samaritans (“in-betweens”) but Gentiles together. He may have taught them this by word. The phrase however is freely used in the Epistles (eg. Rom. 1:8,16, 11:11, I Cor. 1:23 etc.) Isaiah 49:6 gives the same thought. Note that the phrase “the Christ” (*V.* 42) is omitted in the ancient MSS.

(e) The Nobleman’s Son (4:43–54)

4:43–54 Jesus had been on his way to Galilee (through Samaria) until halted at Sychar. Now he proceeds again (*V.* 43). *V.* 44 shows why he went to Galilee. He had been in danger at Jerusalem as the leaders were suspicious of him. It was not that he was *not* known – he *was* known. Now he will not have much to fear in Galilee. *V.* 45 may appear to be the opposite as they welcomed him, but note it was only on the basis of the miracles they (too) had seen at the Feast, and we have seen “he did not commit himself to them.” *VS.* 46–54 take us on to the *second sign*. Note the “therefore” of (i) *V.* 45 (ii) *V.* 46 (this is “so” in the AV.) which indicate a purposive action. The Galileans receive him, but he does not

make anything of that. News would have spread both of the events at Jerusalem, and also of the wedding at Cana. This is why “where he made the water wine” is added. “a certain nobleman” might be translated “courtier” or “royal official” (basilikos). *V. 47* shows the courtier had heard the entire news of Jesus’ return from Jerusalem and had hastened to him. “Went” is *aorist* but “asked” is imperfect ie. “went on asking” – perhaps passionately imploring. Some 25 miles still separates him (and Jesus) from his ailing son. He must have Jesus come. *V. 48* – Jesus teaches that there is a way deeper than the way of seeing signs and wonders. “Wonder–works, for the sake of wonder–works “is what he means. It is not quite clear whether this official is a Jew or not, though it could be supposed that he is, as he seems to be a member of the “royal” house of Herod Antipas. Note the use of “ye” including (also) other Jews. The official does not flinch – he is earnest about his son, (*V. 49*) as Jesus has made his point. He now gives a basis for faith to rest upon *V. 50* He makes an outright “word” about the healing. He also commands the official to return. The man does both – he has gone beyond just “signs and wonder–works”. *V. 51* shows he was on his way when the servants met him. The “is living” fits with the “thy son liveth” of Jesus– The enquiry reveals that it was “yesterday” which seems a little strange, seeing Capernaum was only 25 miles from Cana. Some have supposed he was so confident he spent the night at Cana and left next day. If however the “seventh” hour was Roman time then it is all clear. They would probably not travel at night—it was dangerous – but would travel as early as possible On the new day. However this cannot be solved. The important point is that the seventh hour is the hour of healing, and *V. 53* shows that the courtier and his whole house believe. The word *believe* reminds us that the disciples at Cana had seen his glory and “believed” on him, and of course this is the purpose of the signs. Lenski places the time spent in Judea

(ie. between these 2 signs) as some eight to nine months– The miracle related (see Matt. 8:5–13, Luke 7:1–10) should not be confused with this one.

What is the significance of the sign? The answer is that they believed. If we contrast their belief with that “belief” mentioned in 2:23, then faith is given a deeper connotation. The true meaning of faith is brought out, ie. apart from signs and wonders, a clear resting upon the word of Christ, rather than anything “supernatural”. At the same time the supernatural need not be absent. We remember that this, too is in the context of Jesus not having honour in his own country, ie. that some do truly believe whereas others have only “wonder” – belief.

III. THE UNBELIEF OF ISRAEL

5:1 – 6:71

CHAPTER FIVE

(a) Introduction

The Samaritans had believed ‘(it appears) *without* miracles (signs). The Galileans believed (some of them) because of the signs. The Jews seemed to believe not at all (fully). Thus we are introduced to a theme (of disbelief) which takes up chapters five and six. Indeed this Gospel has been called “The Gospel of the rejection,” and certainly its chapters uncover a sad story of Jewish opposition. It might be called the account of those who “saw the signs and did not believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God etc.”

(b) The Disabled Man at Bethesda

(5:1 – 47)

5:1 The discussion concerning the actual feast may be studied (Hendriksen pp. 188–189, Lenski 359–360) in commentaries, but it is difficult to determine the actual one. All we can say is that it is between one Passover (2:12) and another Passover (6:4). Jesus’

disciples are not named as going up. They are, however present later, so may have gone with him.

5:2 It is not easy to identify this “sheep-gate”— Some have, with the pool near the gate called St. Stephen’s, but its placement makes it impossible to be the correct one. Technically the text supports the word “Bethzatha” (house of the olive-tree) rather than Bethesda (House of Mercy). The five porches were covered colonnades which would protect the sick in sun and rain.

5:3 This collection of sick, blind, lame, withered, would not be a strange sight in the East.

5:4 This is a verse which is not included in modern versions because it is not in the ancient MSS. Whilst it is true that this is an *insertion* it does not necessarily mean that (a) an angel could not have troubled the waters, or (b) people did not believe the waters were thus troubled – cf. V. 7. It seems this note may have been inserted to give an explanation of V. 7. Tertullian (145–220 AD) accepts this idea of the angel.

5:5 “A certain man”. There were many others (whom he did not heal) but he had a purpose with *this* man. 38 years of suffering had not, necessarily been passed at this pool. The 38 years simply outline the hopelessness of the man, and what Jesus could do – in a moment!

5:6 The question “Do you want to recover?” may have “sign significance—”. It may have been intended to rouse faith. Probably it is simply to bring the man to the point of considering healing.

5:7 The man’s state of morbidity is revealed. He has no hope, it having been placed upon the “troubling of the waters” — and this unrequited. At the same time Jesus’ words could have stirred hope –

however faintly. We are not told that (apart from V.4) the waters actually healed anyone.

5:8 In the midst of this hopelessness the voice of Jesus cuts across this life. “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.”

5:9 “All at once (straightway) the man was healed.” He does not pause to think about it, but obeys the command to lift up his pallet or (possibly) light camp bed. The last part of the verse is significant: “It was the Sabbath-day.” It is about this that the whole matter turns.

5:10 Christ has deliberately healed on the Sabbath day. This is his *sign*. The healed man is told that it is wrong to carry his pallet on this day. *Verses eleven to thirteen* cover the anonymity of Jesus. *Verse Fourteen* the man is confronted with his past. On the one hand he is reminded of this priceless healing. On the other with his sinful past. It cannot be a general command; it must be a particular one. It is the one which points to sin which has caused the sickness and (former) despairing attitude of the man.

5:15 Note the man tells that it was Jesus who had *healed* him.

5:16-18 The Jews *were persecuting* because Jesus was *doing* these things on the Sabbath. Imperfect shows the continued action (cf. Mark 1:21, 2:23-3:6, Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6). *V. 17* shows the wonderful truth (of the sign) that God has always worked, and the Son is continuing as the Father. To accuse Christ of Sabbath-breaking is so to accuse God. The Jews are angry because this statement makes Jesus equal with God, (*V. 18*) and plan to kill him.

5:19-47 Show the *manner* in which the Son is like and equal to the Father (God). He alike: (i) In *actions* (works *Vs. 14-25*) (ii) Rela-

tion– “The Father loves the Son” (*V.* 20). (iii) Power to give life (*V.* 21). (iv) Authority to judge (*Vs.* 22,27). *Vs.* 19–25 mean that Jesus shows his equality with God in showing the Father–Son relationship to be connected with doing the same works as the Father, which includes raising to life the dead. God the Father does not even judge but has made His Son judge. The Son, then must be honoured as the Father. *V.* 24 is important because one must *hear* his word and *believe* on the One that sent him. *Vs.* 25–29 show this point clearly. To hear the voice of the Son of God is to live – He has life in himself, ie. is not dependent upon another. Yet he is Son of man” (NB “man’s son”) and so can judge man, as such. *V.* 28 says “Do not marvel” – there must have been many aghast at his words. *Vs.* 28–29 show the amazing truth of the resurrection to life or to judgment (condemnation). – Who then are these Jews to oppose or judge *him*? *V.* 30 should be linked with *V.* 29 his judgment is according to *authority* Yet he listens to all that the Father says – he is not independent in his judging, ie. apart from the Father. That is why his judgment is *just*. *V.* 31 states the principle that he cannot bear witness to himself ie. *so far as they accept* (or reject) *a witness*. From *V.* 32–46 he actually produces the following witnesses (i) “Another” (*V.* 32) ie. God – the Father. (ii) John the Baptist (*V.* 33–35). He only receives this witness – not because he needs it, but because they do (for salvation). (iii) The works (*V.* 36). (iv) Now the Father is named (*V.* 37–38). (v) The Scriptures (*Vs.* 39f). (vi) Moses – *V.* 45f. *Points in Vs.* 19–47. *V.*31 “my witness is not true.” cf. Deut. 19:15 – two or three witnesses required. *V.* 34 “that ye may be saved” ie. John’s witness is something to you (your possible salvation) and that is why I use it. *V.* 35 “He was a burning and shining light.” He was a *lamp* but not ‘the *light*. *V.* 37 “Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape” – simply that apart from the Son He has not been truly communicated.

V. 39 “In them ye think ye have eternal life..” *V.* 40 They only *think* they have eternal life if they “have” it without Jesus. *V.* 41f shows their *attitude* which precludes them from eternal life.

(c) The Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1 – 71)

CHAPTER SIX

We now come to the *fourth sign*. *Vs.* 1–21 are covered simply, so that we do not need to deal with them in detail. John rapidly passes over the time when Jesus was in Jerusalem healing the impotent man. Now he has passed over to Galilee and is indeed gone to the north–eastern side of this lake. We are not to assume that the crowd (great multitude) was there because (*V.* 4) it was near the Passover, for in fact they were not in the stream of those going to Jerusalem. The great crowd signifies that Christ has been having a ministry which attracts. We have seen above that the Galileans did not believe but *V.* 14 shows that the *Sign* impresses them. “This is of a truth *that prophet* that should come into the world.” ie. Deut. 18:16 –”Moses wrote of me.”

6:3–13 cover the incident. *V.*3 (cf. Matt. 14:13, Mark 6:31) takes place when John the Baptist had been killed. *V.* 5 does not tell that Jesus has been teaching, but his delaying of them is deliberate – he is about to give a sign. *V.* 6 makes this clear. Philip is tested, and shows the general attitude of the disciples – they do not expect a miracle. *V.* 10 The mention of grass makes for authentic eye–witness.

6:15 Shows the tremendous motivation which had seized the people. They were aware of a strange time – the *coming* Prophet had *come*. Deut. 18 shows he was to be greater than Moses. Moses had fed them in the wilderness – NOW what might not happen. “by force”

means “kidnap”. It was not to be his choice but theirs. Perhaps they would proclaim him at the coming Passover!

6:16–21 Deal with the next sign – walking on the sea. Matt. 14:22 shows he had given them orders to sail for Capernaum without him a little before dusk. Matthew and Mark show that they had rowed (abandoning sails because of the wind) until about 3 to 6 am. and now we see only some 3¹/₂ miles had been covered. It had been a terrifying night. More terrifying was his appearance. However he says “Stop being afraid”, and so they do – willingly as they receive *him*. *V. 21* indicates that the boat miraculously reached the shore at Capernaum cf. *V. 24*

6:22–40 This section covers Jesus giving the Bread of Life. *Vs. 22–25* describe the people’s action. They saw that the one boat had gone, but knew Jesus had not been in that. Other boats had arrived, and although none had come from Capernaum (but from Tiberias on the south–west shore of the Lake), they somehow knew they must seek to find Jesus in Capernaum. This is their first question. on meeting him. (*V. 25*). *Vs. 26–27* quickly transfer their immediate concern of his (miraculous?) arrival at Capernaum to the heart of the matter. The vehement “Truly, truly” shows his earnest concern. They did not see the *signs* (*V. 26 AV* “miracles”), but only the “wonder” aspect. The sign did not lead them to the *reality* of the Living Bread. Physical satiation can well destroy the inner longing for the true satisfaction – “ye were filled.” *V. “labour”* – “work” means they do put out effort. Up to this point a great “build–up” has gone on through John the Baptist, and Christ’s initial baptising. These Galileans want the *temporal*. Christ is concerned with the eternal. Jesus points to his being by God, ie. Jesus is attested as true Son. *V. 28* Their answer is interesting. Jesus has spoken of Gideon. They want to know what *they* shall *do to work* the *works* of God. *V. 29* is a superb answer. God’s

work (not theirs) is that they should go on believing on him (Jesus) – the One sent by God. This is not their work but God’s work. *V. 30* shows their incorrigible nature. They refuse to believe without a sign. The thought is “If you would do *more* we would respond *properly*”. There is accusation here .. “What art thou working?” *V. 31*. They point out that Moses gave bread out of heaven – and Jesus – for all his claims is only expanding ordinary bread – is he greater than Moses? (cf. Psalm 78:24 LXX “bread out of heaven.” Exodus 16:4). *V. 32* A most powerful answer. (i) *Moses* did not give bread *out of* heaven. It was heavenly only in that the Supplier was heavenly. It was earthly bread, in that it satisfied only the body. (ii) The Father (as against Moses). gives the *tree* bread. This *alone* gives life to the world (*V. 33*). This is clear enough. *V. 34* (cf. 4:15). “Sir” (Lord) shows respect. Yet they want the bread “evermore”! ie. they wish to go on eating what he will give – ie. without buying. They do not really understand. *V. 35* “I AM”. This is unmistakably clear. They cannot mistake his meaning. Manna – at the most came from the “near–heavens”, but Christ is the Bread sent down for the life of the world. The thirst and hunger are satisfied by *coming* and *believing*. *V. 36–40*. Those the Father GIVES will come, and they will be received. (Not all believe). Jesus has come to do the will of the Father and save all given him, even to raising them up on the last day.

6:41–59 *V. 41* The phrase now is not “the people” (*Vs. 22,24* etc.) but “the Jews”. Certainly Galilean Jews, but hostile. They “murmur” – a strong word allying them with the murmurers in the wilderness. It is not because they do not understand his argument they complain but because they do. He has shattered theirs. This gives them no alternative but to accept him as Messiah – the “bread of God” apart from which there is no life, no salvation. *V. 42* Their answer is petty – on another level. They make his birth *only*

earthly. Whilst they oppose his “came down from heaven” with “only of the earth” they presuppose a doctrine like that of the virgin birth, as being necessary— *Vs. 42–46*. Jesus points out to them that their understanding is not dependent upon human acceptance, but upon God *drawing* them (*V. 44,65*). The thought is not that of *attractiveness* but of God’s *action* of drawing (actually “dragging”)— *V. 44* repeats “and I will raise him up at the last day” ie. he who is *drawn*. *V. 45* shows the *manner* of drawing – by being *taught of God* (*Isa. 54:13* cf. *Jer. 31:33,34– Isa. 60:2,3* etc.). Taught of God means *by* God. Those who *have* heard will come to Christ— *V. 46* refers to Jesus – he alone is “of God—” *Vs. 47–51* make it distinctively clear. The manna from heaven was perishable, and he Who ate died – it was not better than any earthly food. Jesus is the *true* (archetypal) bread. He is heavenly. Eat earthly bread and die. Eat heavenly bread and live. Eating = believing (*V. 47*). *V. 51* makes the matter clear “my flesh, which I will (future) give for the world,” is the (true) bread. It is then, not just flesh, but flesh *given*, ie. the bread is the sacrificial life of the Son, the sacrificial death. *Without the death there is no “life for the world.” Vs. 52–58* go on to make it clear. *V. 52* “The Jews strove amongst themselves” (contending, wrangling). His statements, understood or otherwise cause an excited and angry conflict. We must remember they are frustrated by his refusal to be their king, and now his clear demand for belief in him as Messiah and the true Bread. Uneasy consciences, frustrated greed and typical human reasoning cause a hotch-potch of feeling. The foolish conclusion of an inverted cannibalism is ridiculous. *V. 53* shows that Christ takes their words and makes them clearly to apply. They must break through to the truth. They must consume the *Son of Man*. *V. 57* gives the parallel – the Son lives *because* of the Father, so one lives because of (by) the Son. The Father is *living*. The *Son* is living. One lives by

partaking of the Son. Manna is not life in itself. Only the Son is living bread. We repeat – to believe is to eat. This avoids carnal ideas of the bread (“body broken”) in the Communion. It cannot be said that this discourse is on the Communion. It cannot be said that it is not related to it. *Vs. 60–71* “Many of his disciples” – I Cor 15:6 tells us there were—in one place – 500. John 4:1f shows us many had been made. In Luke 9 and 10 we find the Twelve, and the Seventy. These “many” (*Vs. 60,66*) are scandalised. The question is – “By what?” The answer is – “You have no more believed in the origin of the Son than these others.” *V. 62.* gives the key in question form – “If this one you do not accept, who claims to be the Son of Man, and heavenly in origin, and life-giver, should go to that place – heaven – from which he claims to have ascended – what then – will you believe?” *V. 63* He dispels any idea that he is asking for them to eat his physical flesh (had they *really* thought this?). The *spirit* is his. Flesh and blood do not even give themselves, but *the Person* does. *He* is speaking, *his* utterances are life. They demand acceptance, believe–feeding upon. The very words (of him) are spirit and life. *V. 64* Jesus does not wait for capitulation by them. He knows they *will not* believe. This is why they do not hear. *V. 65* again speaks of the mystery of the *drawing*. The “were given” is “having been given.” They do not come, because they cannot. *V. 66* shows the *judgement* of the word. *Spirit* and *life* are not what (even) his disciples Want. It does not mean *all* go except the twelve, but in *V. 67* Jesus speaks to the Twelve. He wishes to precipitate decision in their minds – and also to show them they have been *drawn* by the Father. *V. 68* might seem a brave but pitiful and loyal utterance. Instead *V. 69* shows it to be a strong affirmation of faith. Whatever others have not realised they have *known* and *believed* him to be “the Holy one of God” (not “Christ.. etc.”) *Vs. 70–71* show the lot of those who had left in rage was better than that of Judas who at this

present time IS a devil. Think what it means for a devil to live with The Holy One of God! The devils too saw the holiness of Jesus (Mk. 1:24).

**IV. JESUS THE APOSTLE OF GOD:
THE GIVER OF SIGHT:
THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP (7:1–10:21)**

CHAPTER SEVEN

(a) The Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–13)

7:1–9 4:1–3, 5:43f, plus the stir here in Capernaum show that Jesus kept withdrawing himself from possible conflict. Vs. 2–9 show that his own brethren are not aware that his mission is not to captivate the multitudes. They want him to be famous, but for their own (lesser) motives. They envisage vast numbers coming to him, and their own reflected fame. The Feast of Tabernacles took place at the end of September. All the Jews would be present (Lev. 23:39–43, Deut. 16:13–15). *V.* 5 shows that not only did not the Jews, nor the Galileans, nor his (former) disciples, but even his own brethren did not believe. *V.* 7 shows that they move freely in the world. It does not persecute them, but he has come, and it persecutes him because he brings its evil into relief. *Vs.* 10–13 reveal the nature of the feelings of the time. All are interested in him. Because of this he goes – but not in the manner prescribed by his (sensation-seeking) brethren. He goes incognito. The conviction is growing that he is a “good man.” This opinion is dangerous.

**(b) Jesus the Apostle of God
(7:14–52).**

Jesus arrives when the Feast is half over. He sits quietly, beginning to teach. He has not so done before. We hear of no *acts*, just teaching. Before long however this begins to stir people. They are astonished at his (not formal) manner of teaching.

V. 16 He answers that he has not created such teaching. It is from the Father. Anyone willing to do God’s will will know it is God’s doctrine. *V.* 18 shows that the one who gives glory only to God, has no unrighteousness. *Vs.* 19–24 make the contrast. On Jesus’ reckoning a true teacher carries out what is God’s will. Moses gave the law of the sabbath but they (the Jews) do not keep it. They will not hesitate to circumcise on that (if it be the eighth) day to bring the blessing of the Covenant, but they reject Christ for bringing actual *healing* on the same day! *V.* 19 comes home with deeper significance. *He* would *heal* on the sabbath – but they would *kill* (6th commandment) him for doing it on that day! *V.* 24 Is his appeal (command) to render judgment not according to outward appearance, but rightly, in conformity with true principles. *Vs.* 25–27. Some (rather privately) begin to wonder (i) The Jews were to kill Jesus but do not – can he then be the Messiah? (ii) No of course not for his earthly origins are remembered. Messiah will come unknown. These words are given to give point to Christ’s consequent teaching. *Vs.* 28–36 *V.* 28 The “then” or “therefore” links Jesus’ cry with the former. The crying out of Christ is indignation at their summary treatment of the Messiah. It is a denial of their smugness in concluding he is *not* Messiah. He has not come on his own initiative – he has been sent. Their statement is a denial of the Sender and the sending. However Jesus knows the One Who sent him. In *V.* 30 the same “therefore.” Because of this they try to take him, but cannot – for it is not his time. *V.* 31 shows that although have faith it is still “miracle-faith”, and not a deeply penetrating understanding. *V.* 32 shows a planned (as against an unplanned *V.* 30) arrest, by the Pharisees. This they would not have dared had the People not murmured. When we remember that hostile Jews, probably Sanhedrin members as well as officers are watching for a moment to catch him the situation is sad. *Vs.* 33–34 are heart-chilling. He has told them

of the One Who has sent him. Now he will return to Him. Then they will *seek* him but he will be gone, and they cannot go to where he will be. *Vs. 35–36* show the blindness of the hearers. Amos 8:11 and Proverbs 1:24f show the terrible state of rejectors. *V. 35* is a cutting sneer on their part – will he go amongst the Dispersion (among the Greeks) of the Jews, and there teach the (pagan) Greeks, seeing he cannot be Messiah to the Jews? They are baffled by his saying. Unconsciously, however they are prophesy-ing: *Vs.37–39*. There is a little debate as to whether the last day had the ceremonies of the preceding days of the Feast. It was the last festival day of the year and was called the “last good day” or the “sacred close of the year.” Each morning of the feast a priest took a golden pitcher of water from the fountain of Siloam and accompanied by a solemn procession bore it to the altar of burnt sacrifice, pouring the water, together with the contents of a pitcher of wine from the drink offering into two perforated flat bowls. The trumpets sounded and the people sang Isaiah 12:3 “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Later Jewish authorities say this was also done on the 8th day. Certainly Christ’s cry was linked with the ceremony – present or absent. The ceremony commemorated the water that gushed out of the rock at Meribah. Note – Jesus stands – this is the position of a herald – not of a teacher who sits (cf. 7:14). Scriptures – “as the scripture hath said” – are in principle such as Isa. 44:3, 55:1, Zech. 13:1, 14:8, etc. Perhaps Isa. 43:19 is closest. The *living water* is his life (cf. 4:13, 6:35). Drinking is believing– The “rivers” are the Holy Spirit. However believing is not a light thing. The Holy Spirit is not yet given – the age is “not yet.” It is what is in the future (the Cross – the smiting of the Rock) which will make it difficult for men to believe (cf. Acts 2:36–38)– The glorification is undoubtedly his being seated at the Father’s right hand – from there he sends the Spirit. It would however include the

death and resurrection – these are elements of the glory. The Holy Spirit, nevertheless is called the “throne gift” cf. Acts 2:33, 5:31–32. *Vs. 40–53* Three responses – (i) He is the Prophet (Deut. 18:15). (ii) The Messiah. (iii) Cannot be the Messiah because of his Galilean origin – it must be the Messiah comes from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Isa. 11:1, Jer. 23:5). *V. 43* shows there was a “party division.” Feeling was high. *Vs. 45–49* show the tremendous effect Jesus had had upon the officers (temple-police) and their rebuke is placed upon the *fact* of the hierarchy not believing, *not* the conviction of Christ Himself as an imposter. “this people” (“*ochlos* – crowd, multitude – rabble!”) they despise as having no power of discernment – just because they are “people!” *V. 50* Nicodemus does not let them get away, however, and his challenge must have caused further dismay and consternation. (NB “to Jesus by night” should be omitted and “to him firstly” should be added). The Pharisees had said the people did not know the *law* (*V. 49*) and Nicodemus points out that they do not know the law if they act in the present manner! See Exodus 23:1, Deut. 1:16. General sense of law, however would demand a fair “trial” before rejection of the one claiming to be Messiah. The answer of *V. 52* is plainly insulting. It is not logical. They had not even investigated whether Christ was basically a Galilean. It is interesting how the character of Nicodemus is forced into prominence by their unfairness. This itself outlines the unreasonableness of their attitude. (NB *V. 53* is not in the ancient authorities).

(i) Jesus and the woman taken in adultery
(7:53–8:11)

CHAPTER EIGHT

7:53 NB. The ancient manuscripts omit this passage. Some include it but enclose it in asterisks showing it is doubtful of inclusion. One group of MSS inserts it after Luke 21:38, and one MS has it after

John 7:36, and some after John 21:24. However it is undoubtedly a genuine piece of Gospel description. The AV includes phrases not in old MSS – ie. “as though he heard them not” (*V. 6*); “being convicted by their own conscience”; “even unto the last” (*V. 9*); “and saw none but the woman” and “thine accusers” (*v. 10*).

V. 53 shows that every man went to his own house. *V. 1 of ch. 8* has “but” (*de*). *V. 2* shows that he sat down to teach. The scribes and Pharisees are out to catch him. *V. 4* shows her sin to be serious. Probably she was betrothed and fornication at this time was considered as adultery (Deut. 22:23,24). This, of course was with another than her betrothed. Their question is not genuine, from a true ethical motive. If he votes for the Jewish law of stoning (rarely invoked anyway!) he opposes the Roman right to punish with capital punishment. The self-righteousness of the Pharisees and accusers needs to be dealt with. Jesus does this powerfully (*V. 7*) *V. 6* is not evasion but the setting for *V. 7*. He cuts to the heart of the matter – *their* supposed righteousness. “Being convicted by their own conscience” (AV) – the *older ones* (fullest memories) being first convicted. We cannot estimate the terrible cut and thrust of his words. They set out to *accuse her*, and on another level to *accuse him* (*V. 6 AV*), but go out accused in their own hearts, whilst *she* goes out acquitted (*V. 11*). He cannot give this acquittal unless he vindicates it upon the Cross. It costs him the Cross to say these words.

(c) Jesus the Light of the World

(8:12–30)

8:12 If we connect the discourse with 7:51 it certainly has a continuity. However as we do not hear of the “crowd” from here on it is safe to conclude that there has been a break – the pilgrims now having gone. Jesus, unimpeded by any kind of arrest continues his discussion. The Pharisees are still

there to hear him – perhaps to “catch” him. “Therefore” may be linked with a resumption of discussion or teaching. “I am the Light of the world.” This is thought by some to have reference to the great candelabra on which a vast number of lights were lit, flooding Jerusalem with light, under which many danced a torch-dance. However the light as such was stationary so it is better to take “he who follows” as meaning the Light is moving, precisely as the light that led Israel in the wilderness. The *Light* (see 1:4,7, 3:18 etc.) is the true, the archetypal light, the antithesis of human sin and impurity, darkness of human woe and lostness. “he that followeth” has strong meaning, ie. that one is attached to the Light – believing, obeying. He “shall not walk in darkness” the terrible state of which is now apparent. The phrase “shall have the light of life” is thrilling. Now it becomes *personal possession*. This is union with his life. It is the light of the *whole* world. There is no other.

8:13 Note the “therefore” – the Pharisees are stimulated to deny this incredible claim. Already he has given his witnesses above. If his claim to be *Light* is true, then there is no truth but his.

8:14 Seems to contradict 5:31 but this is not so. Here the *high* level of what he has revealed is evident. The second half of the verse shows that only *he* knows whence he has come, and where he is going. Who else could know?

8:15–18 They are judging according to the flesh ie. what they see of him (his flesh). This is the *way* they judge all men. He does not do things this way – he judges *with the Father*. This constitutes two true witnesses. *V. 17* accepts two such witnesses. In *Vs. 16 and 18* he emphasises that he is *sent*.

8:19 They hear now the word “Father”. The imperfect may denote a tone of mockery – “were asking

him...” As usual Christ does not answer directly. He places the responsibility upon them to have known. It is no use telling “where” until they know the “Who”. This they do not know or they would have known Father and (so) Son. Cf. Matt. 11:25f, John 14:6–8.

8:20 This shows the action has shifted from the Temple court, to that place where the 13 treasure chests stood. It was right in the public eye. 7:30 shows why they could not touch him.

8:21–30 In 7:34 Jesus had pointed out a divine destination. Now he repeats it, he will leave them in their sins – they cannot come to where he goes. *V. 22* is a foolish answer. *V. 25–24* show his divine origin and destination and their need to believe him – or perish. *V. 25* – In response to their blunt question “Who art thou?” He gives his kind of answer – not a self-justifying reason, but points them back to what he has continually told them – and which they know! *V. 26* Now Christ carries the battle to them. Far from justifying himself he tells them he has much to say to them, and he has much to judge concerning them. For himself he only says what he has been sent to say. *V. 27* shows they did not understand. Thus in *V. 28* he tells them that only the Cross will reveal all. (i) He is Son of Man. (ii) His crucifixion will show them they are in their sins, and doomed to death. This will be because they will not have *finished him* upon the cross, but his influence will continue – powerfully, not in spite of, but because of that death. *V. 30* The effect of this authoritative and strong statement was to make many believe on him. In hostility he was victor.

(d) True Freedom (8:31–59)

A slight problem exists here. *V. 30* makes it clear some believe. Against the background of the Gospel we can see this belief has been hardly won. We are not to make this belief a transitory thing. In

V. 31 Jesus turns from the Jews – the general group and starts talking in particular to these who have believed. His condition for discipleship is obedience to his word. This they know by now – the principles he has stated. *V. 32* shows the result – freedom! To *know the truth* – as the Gospel shows – is no little thing – cf. 7:17. It is not only to know it is *true* but to know (experience, be changed by) *the truth*. *Freedom grows out of truth*. *V. 33* shows the strong reaction of the (general group of) Jews. They need no freedom. “Seed of Abraham are we” they say. That is they are God’s royal people – they were never in bondage (history gives the lie to this). They are really saying – “We have the truth which has made us, and keeps us free.” *V. 34* cuts across this sort of technical argument – the facts are plain – Whoever commits sin is a slave (of sin). *V. 35* A slave is not the son of the house. The son is forever in the house, the slave – disposable – he has no rights. *V. 36* Perhaps Jesus is addressing the new believers now – “If the Son shall make *you* free, you shall be free – indeed.” *Verses 37–45* are strong in their utterance. Of course Jesus recognises they are technically Abraham’s seed. Two fathers appear – One —the Father of Jesus, and their father – Satan. Let them not think Abraham is (truly) their father. Had they been Abraham’s children they would act as did he. The truth would have been recognised. Thus Abraham is not their father – but *another*. *V. 41* shows that their desire to kill him is of *that* father, ie. an evil father. Their reaction to this “whiplash” is immediate. They can only have one father – Abraham of course – as they were never born of fornication. They then claim they have one Father *even God*. Jesus has driven them to make this claim. *V. 32* catches them entirely. Had they been from God they would have known Jesus. They would *love* him. Tremendous phrase “I *proceeded* and *came forth* from God.” This origin and procession is not only the seal of his *mission*, but —even more – he has been sent, ie. *commission*.

Vs. 43–45 now state clearly (i) it is impossible for them to hear his word. (ii) they are as their real father – Satan. He is incapable of truth. They would murder Jesus – they reflect the murderous nature of their father. They cannot perceive truth – they reflect his inability (and total lack of desire) to know or perceive the truth. As God speaks only truth the devil speaks only lies. This is their bondage —the Son, abiding for ever in the house – alone can make free from this. *V. 45* is pungent – they cannot believe him because he speaks not *lies* but the *truth*. *V. 46* None *can* convince him of sin – his very “challenge” they dare not accept. They forced then to one admission – he is of the truth, and they must believe him. *V. 47* is the logical conclusion – they are not of *God*. *V. 48* Their answer is the proof of their moral bankruptcy – they abuse. (cf. 7:20). *Vs. 49–51* give his calm reply – they dishonour him whilst he honours the Father – he seeks only to glorify the Father – not himself. *V. 51* is at once both an incredible claim and a promise – to keep (observe, guard) his word (logos) means life—forever. Contrast to death’s grim bondage. Salvation lies in *his* utterance of truth. *Vs. 52–53* They recognise the high claim of Jesus. This places Jesus above all as he makes a (ridiculous) claim, that is to save from death. Who could be greater than Abraham? *Vs. 54–56* Jesus shows them the weakness of their statement. (i) He has not gone before what he has constantly affirmed – ie. that he is one with the Father, and aiming at his (the Father’s) glory. (ii) The Father glorifies him (the Son). However they do *not know* this very God they assert they know. Jesus would lie if he said he did not know the Father, as they indeed lie in saying they do know the Father. “Abraham had a vision of the Messianic age and rejoiced in the knowledge of what was going to be the climax of the divine revelation, which began with his own call to be the progenitor of the elect people of God.” (Tasker ad. loc. op. cit.)

V. 57 shows the Jews still on the banal level. *V. 58* asserts the pre-existence of Jews (to Abraham) and His present continuance of being with no beginning at a point of time. *V. 59* The Jews understand this to be the claim of Deity and act accordingly, trying to destroy him. He simply evades them – his time “is not yet.”

(e) The man born blind (9:1–41)

CHAPTER NINE

9:1–12 Jesus attests himself by healing a blind beggar. The ministry of Jesus in the Temple ceases at the end of ch. 8 and not until 10:22 do we hear of his visiting it again. He remains in Jerusalem and obviously to reveal himself as the Light of the world. He had said so in *word* in 8:12 – now he will show it in *deed*. *V. 1* shows a man congenitally *blind*. *V. 2* The disciples raise the problem of sin and its consequences. It is an aorist “Who *did* sin?” The disciples are insisting that *someone* must have sinned. Whilst Jesus does not deny that sin of parents or of a person may cause sickness (blindness) yet he is not affirming it for this case. *V. 3* shows that he is on a different line, altogether. Whatever may be the *general* case or principle *this* case is different. ie. God is ruler of the universe and not only *takes* but *makes a* situation such as this. If this man (as he really does) represents man in darkness then “from his birth” has deep significance. God is using *him* to show “the works of God.” *V. 4* AV has “I”. Best texts “We”. “the works” are very important. God has entrusted His own works to agents – working with the *Agent*. “The day” is the present moment of opportunity – it cannot come again. Day is for work. Night for rest. There is a time to work, and a time to rest. “Night” may mean the suffering and sorrow of the Cross – when (for a time) all ceases. *V. 5* AV “*the light*” Gk. “light”

(or a light). whilst he is present – whilst “works” are going on he is light. There is no other light. *Vs. 6–7* The *work* is now described. It is also a *sign* therefore its action is to be observed. (cf. Mark 7:33, 8:23). The first action is *by* Christ on the beggar. The second is *by* the beggar in going and washing. The pool means “the One Sent”. This would refer rather to Jesus than to the beggar, cf. *V. 4*. Typically it symbolises God’s act in regenerating, and man’s need to be obedient. Baptism is washing. “He *went ... washed and came seeing.*” *V. 8* The tremendous change makes him (virtually) unrecognisable. He is transformed – so the *fulness of the sign*. *Vs. 9–11* confirm the manner or acts of the sign ... “Jesus anointed ... said .. go .. I went .. washed .. received sight. In *V. 11* he is asked as to where Christ is. In *V. 13* we cannot be sure it is the neighbours (he must have gone home) who bring him to the Pharisees. There is surely some link between his being brought and the Sabbath day, and the Pharisees. It is the old story. The Sabbath is more than the glory! *V. 15* RSV “again” is better translated “also”. *V. 16* makes it clear that the Pharisees themselves are divided. One group says that Sabbath observance Would mark a man sent from God. The other group makes the point the *sign* authenticates. There is an impasse so – *V. 17* – they seek to resolve it by a question. The man is courageous enough to give his opinion – “He is a prophet.” *V. 18* Suspicious that it is not true (How can it be true?) they call the parents. Their testimony – *Vs. 20–21* was couched in careful language but it established the fact that their son had been born blind, and that they did not know how he had been healed only the fact that he *had* been healed. Their caution was forced by fear – it being widely known that the Jews (Pharisees) hated Jesus, and would punish any confessing Christ. To be put out of the synagogue (*V. 22*) was, virtually excommunication which would bring great suffering. It meant being under a curse. *V. 23* the parents then refer the Pharisees back to the son – he being able to defend

himself. *V. 24* shows that the Pharisees do not believe even in face of the facts’. They think it a hoax and are determined to restore the *status quo* which Jesus has interrupted. They insist that if there is any glory it is God’s, and all failure is that of Jesus. The foolish nature of their saying provokes the beggar. *V. 25* His answer is superb. He knows he is healed – that is the fatal flaw on their reasoning. The facts do not add up to their kind of reasoning. *Vs. 26–27* show him to be ready now, with rising courage. Indeed *V. 27b* infers (i) he has become Jesus’ disciple. (ii) Are they questioning with a view to doing likewise? Their anger – *V. 28* leads them to use an abusive term “this fellow” – whereas his act ought to have reduced them to adoring reverence.. They admit – *V. 29* that they do not know Jesus’ origins —implying that God has not spoken to him, as he has to their Master – Moses. *Vs. 30–33* The man–cuts across their (complex) theology (?) with bright common sense. Anyone knows he (Jesus) is from God because he has done a miracle. *V. 31* makes it clear– to do such is to do God’s will. A sinner (evil person)! is not in this relationship. *V. 33* sums it up. – “if, this man were not *from* God ...” This, then, explains “whence he is.” It is only being from (of) God that he (Jesus) can do what he has done. *V. 34* The weakness of their argument is only paralleled by their rage. They fall back on the fact that the man was blind(they admit it:) and so must have been a sinner – this against Jesus’ statement that he had *not* sinned – *nor* his parents, Note the “altogether” (“*holos*” Gk.) “wholly” in sin. ie. in “utter sin.” They threw him out – in violence, and judgment. Their subjective (emotional) involvement is interesting to see and understand. *Vs. 35–41* Jesus seeks the man out. The man has no ecclesiastic in which he can believe. Jesus’ question, then, is timely. Does he believe (trust with his heart) in the Son of God? He is prepared for true! belief. ‘He has not simply received physical eyesight – he is not just a cipher, a tool used by God, but a person who has been deeply changed and who

responds. He wants to believe *Vs. 37,38* show how naturally he responds. The “thoughts seen” of indicates that spiritual insight had come to the healed man with his opened eyes. He had recognised that only a Great One could have healed. He is now informed that the One speaking is he. His faith is shown by his adoration. The tremendous act of belief searches his heart. *Vs. 39–41* are deeply significant. Christ has said (*V. 5*) “as long as I am in the world I am (a) light of the world.” In *3:17* Jesus has said he has not come for condemnation. Yet in the same passage he shows that the light automatically judges. *V. 39* is clear. Jesus is saying “I have come so that those who are positively blind (spiritually as this beggar) may be made to see. Those who are not blind (it would seem – such as the Pharisees here) will really become blind – “from him shall be taken that which he seemeth to have.” Although this is said to no one in particular it catches the Pharisees and they are forced to respond in defence. They say scornfully – “Are we also blind?” They do not doubt his meaning. The reply of *V. 41* means “If you had admitted your blindness *that kind of judgment* would not have been yours. Your refusal to admit it binds you to it.” Tasker: “They continue to be guilty men however unconscious of their guilt.”

(f) Jesus the Good Shepherd (10:1–21)

CHAPTER TEN

It is clear that the discourse of *Vs. 1–21* follows on the *blindness* of the Pharisees (see *8:13f*). Bogus shepherds they are because blind leaders. They are sure they see, so Jesus tells them what they really are.

10:1–2 The “Verily, verily” simply continues the discourse. The picture is simple – of a sheepfold. A thief does not come in *obviously* by the door. Only the shepherd does that. Who is the robber? Who

the shepherd? *V. 3* we do not have to see significance in a doorkeeper, but only in the shepherd. The concept of the *flock* and the *shepherd* is greatly dealt with in the OT (eg. Jer. 23:1–2, Ezekiel 34:11). The *fold* if it means anything may mean Israel (after the flesh). It is certain that the flock is God’s people and in this case the believing Jews, eg. the healed blind man. The true sheep *hear* (listen) and obey – responding to his voice. There is a “call” and a response. There is a personal knowledge – “by name”. *V. 4* If more than one flock is in the fold the shepherd’s flock will follow only him. If the shepherd had not come, the flock had not heard, responded etc. His coming *separates*. All of this concerns the action upon the blind man and the Pharisees. The *tree flock* follows. Certainly the blind man has not followed the Pharisees! *V. 5* shows that they actually *flee* from the stranger. *V. 6* nominates this as a parable. They did not understand ie. his listeners, especially the Pharisees. They missed the “dig” at them, but even more the concept of the flock being *drawn out* (*V. 4*) from the general fold and drawn in from the scattered (*V. 12*) which may include both the Jews of the dispersion and the Gentiles. *V. 7* Because they do not understand Jesus speaks again. (he gives more light). He is the Door of (*to*) the sheep. A true shepherd (there may be many) uses the *Door* ie. he comes to (and through) Jesus to tend the flock. *V. 8* shows that those before Christ (the false shepherds inveighed against by the prophets) were not really heard (accepted). Cf. The Pharisees were sensed to be wrong by the (healed) blind man – *9:30–33*. *V. 9* “I am the door”. Preceded by the “Truly! Truly!” – a solemn affirmation. Who is “saved?” Sheep? Shepherd? Answer – Both. The shepherd will be men, coming to the Door to call their sheep. The sheep too will come in and out. Salvation in John’s Gospel = life. There is also a future sense to it. “Find pasture” = the fulness of life, life, sustenance etc. *V. 10* The thief does not come to do good – eg. Pharisees (nor do they, here, come to the Door, although they think of them–

selves as pastors!) If grace is God going towards man to do him “good”, then evil is Satan going towards man to do him “bad!” The contrast is between death–dealing and life–giving. “Good” here means the perfect, the true the “archetypal” as against any shepherd and especially a “bad” shepherd. NB. not “have come” (perfect) but “came” (aorist). If we take the “thief” to point to Satan, then the “death” is understood as he gave man over to death (cf. Gen. 3:5f) and does so. His “children” (cf. Pharisees) do the same thing. Life (eternal) is in contrast to these things. *Abundancy* contrasts with the *miserableness* of death. *V. 11* This shows that there is no giving of life *to man* without the giving of life *for man*. Note, however that it is not “give” (AV) but “lay down” (RSV and Gk.). He lays it down with a view to taking it again (*V. 18*). The “laying down” is seen in *V. 12*. The “hireling” (again cf. “false” shepherds, Pharisees etc. who “cast out” from the “fold”) does not *love* the sheep. *Laying down* of life is in the struggle with the wolf. Who is the wolf? Satan? If the Shepherd is destroyed – it is of no use to the sheep, – but he is not – he takes up his life again – see following. There is a *thief, a Wolf*. Who? The faithless shepherds, leaders abandon the sheep – to what? Whatever is the meaning of the *wolf* it is at the point of his coming that the good shepherd *lays down his life* – so cf. *John 14:30–31*. *Vs. 14–15* Repetition and amplification of the former – including reference now to the Father – the *Son* being shepherd, the Father being involved in the action. This is again a whiplash on those who have not been faithful shepherds. *V. 16* NB AV second “fold” should be translated “flock”. In *Vs. 14–15* the kind of *knowing* that the Father and the Son have, is also the kind the *sheep* have – in this, Israel’s, fold. Yet this is not all – this fold or covenant is for Gentiles also. He must “bring” them. They will hear – not just future “shall” but volitive —it is God’s plan. The “one flock”, the “one shepherd” is the ultimate purpose of God – see 17:20f.

V. 17 The Father–Son relationship is shown. The Son is loved *because of obedience* – with a view .to the fruits of that obedience – the saving of the sheep for whom life is laid down. This indicates a deep love for the sheep by the Father. However it is not just laying down, but laying down with a view to taking up. *V. 18* Laying down (“of my own accord”) is the proof of being “supreme arbiter of His (own) destiny” (Tasker. ad.loc), as also in taking it (up) again. “power” here is “authority”, not, however denying the dynamic necessary for the act. “No one taketh it from me.” ie. he is not defeated by any other power. They could do nothing except it were given them. etc. (John 14:31, 19:10–11). The act, however is *commanded* by the Father. *Vs. 19–21* show the reactions – His words inciting both. There is division of feelings.

V. JESUS THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE (10:22 – 12:50)

(a) The Festival of Dedication (10:22–42)

The previous events belong to the time about the Feast of Tabernacles and this took place in October. The Feast of Dedication took place in December. What happened in the intervening period we do not know. This Feast was designed to commemorate the recleansing (dedication) of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 167 BC after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes. *V. 22* “It was winter” (the rainy season) simply shows us why Jesus was walking under cover —Solomon’s Porch – *V. 23*. Jesus has said (9:4) “I (we) must do the works (of God) while it is day (light).” Now the scene is set for the last (seventh) in this Gospel of John. *V. 24*. The Jews are able to get Jesus alone, and they fire the questions – perhaps bitterly. Are the questioners sore with months of wrestling with conscience and the problem of Jesus? *V. 25* Jesus is plain enough – telling them he has never indicated otherwise as he takes up the two

themes he has used before (not that they need reminding). (i) The works – these are and they *witness*. (ii) *V. 26* “the sheep” if they had been his they would have heard his voice. They *cannot* believe because they are not his sheep. *Vs. 27–29* tell of the glorious results of true response to the Shepherd. He is really effecting a *separation* of the true and false elements of the flock. His word which had been invitation is now winnowing. As he speaks of what the sheep will receive – eternal life, and eternal security, the Jews are enraged. They understand the depth of what he is saying. These sheep will belong to the Father. The Father is “greater than all” ie. the enemies (wolf, thief etc.) who would snatch them. The Father maintains the flock. *V. 30* is not a technical claim to equality with the Father but rather equality in *purpose* and *power* to keep the flock secure. It is however, virtually a claim to equality. That is why *V. 31* they seek to destroy him for blasphemy. *V. 32* Since he has been speaking of *works* (*V. 25*) they have no grounds – the works prove his Messianic being. These are “works from the Father” ie. the power to achieve has come from him – this ought to cancel their action of stoning., (Were the stones lying loose at the time of the Temple’s rebuilding?) *Which work is wrong? V. 33* In accordance with Lev. 24:15–16 because he (virtually) claimed equality with God (see also 5:17, 18, 8:58,59) in making others believe he was God. *Vs. 34–36* The argument here is (i) the Scripture is unbreakable and must be accepted. (ii) The Scripture uses (in other context) the phrase “sons of God” (Psalm 82:6). At the least to be “a son of God” cannot be called blasphemous. In addition to this *general* use of the term “son of God” Jesus has *demonstrated* that he is more than a son. His relationship – shown by *works* is *the* son. No works —then no need to believe. In *V. 38* he reveals a powerful principle that if one were to *believe the works* ie not doubt them, but seek to know them, then

one would eventually come to know (and would go on knowing) that Jesus is really “in the Father” and the Father “in Jesus.” That is identity of works, for there is one *essence* and the *persons* exist in and through each other (Hendriksen ad. loc.) as moments in one divine self-conscious life. *Vs. 39–42* Some power makes it impossible to stone him, and even arrest him. He goes to a district across (beyond) Jordan where John had baptised. The “again” of *V. 40* may refer to a place where he had retired in the October–December interval. It may refer to the first visit to where John had baptised Christ. Here the memory of what John had said concerning Jesus was revived. John had attested to him; John had done no miracles *but Jesus had*. Now real belief is evidenced.

(b) The raising of Lazarus (11:1–57)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Jesus was claiming continually to be doing the works of the Father, and so claiming that relationship which was looked upon as blasphemy. For this they attempted to stone him. When he made the claim to give *spiritual resurrection* – according to the sign of Lazarus (being raised) – then he did that which led to his crucifixion. Without doubt (according to John) this was the incident which led to his (planned) death. A man whose body had been in the processes of decomposition for *four* days and who was raised must, eventually, be known by the world. This *sign* then is powerful, and any opposition to it must be equally vicious.

11:1 This launches into the account of the sign – “There was a certain person lying sick..”

Lazarus = “he whom God helped.” It is suggested by the mention of Mary and Martha and *V. 2* “Mary who anointed..” that the readers are familiar with Luke’s Gospel, and in particular Lk. 10:38–42. See also Matt. 26:13,

John 12:1. *V. 3* does not tell *how much* Lazarus was sick – this is indicated in their sending for him. The “behold” indicates importance of the entreaty. “They use the *philein* of affection and personal attachment, not the *agapao*, the love of the spirit and of reason” (Lenski). This latter is used appropriately in *V. 5*. *V. 4* gives the impression that the sickness is not lethal, but Jesus’ meaning is that it is with a view to God’s glory, and not simply to death. The *Son of God* too, is to be glorified. This clearly means that the glory of the Father and of the Son is to be shown – no mean claim! *V. 6* It is clear that the choice is between *healing a sick man* or *raising a man from the dead*. Human choice would speak for the former. Divine wisdom sees different-ly. *Vs. 7–8* show that the disciples think Lazarus is all right, and seek to dissuade Jesus from danger (cf. 10:39). *V. 9* Jesus shows that the time of “safety” is appointed by the Father – that is enough. The hour of darkness will come (Luke 22:53). No one should walk (work) in the dark hours – for that is a different situation, and one is not working according to God’s will. He is working at the *wrong* time – he has no *light*. *V. 11* The news comes as a shock to the disciples (*V. 14*). (i) Jesus draws them into his circle “our friend Lazarus.” (ii) Jesus gives death the name of sleep. (He who sleeps – wakes,.. ie. will rise again). (iii) It is *Jesus* who will awaken him – “I go that..” *Vs. 12–13* show his disciples are under the influence of his former words. *Vs. 14–15* make it plain to them. *V. 15* is most significant. If Jesus had been there when Lazarus had been dying he would have acted in a way that would not have revealed (fully) the glory of God. The first miracle caused them to see his glory – light from darkness (the blind man’s healing) must have caused more joy and belief – but what of this? It will be a “height beyond all heights.” “..to the intent that ye may believe.” Thomas’s cry of *V. 16* is that of (loyal) despair. It is “pessimistic unbelief” (Lenski). *V. 17* states that Lazarus had been dead four days – the condition fulfilled to

accent the glory of God. It is thought that it may have taken about these four days for their journey —if Jesus, by some special knowledge or sensing had stated the moment of Lazarus’ death (*V. 14*). *Vs 18–19*, The explanation that Bethany was (only) two miles from Jerusalem is given to explain the arrival of the Jews. “The Jews” in John is to express something of unfriendliness. Probably not unfriendly to Mary and Martha, and in any case the family must have been a well known one. We get the hint of trouble at this point of the narrative. Note the “many” – always significant of a large crowd. *V. 20* indicates that the general group of the mourners did not know of Jesus’ coming. Jesus wished to have a quiet talk with Martha and had sent a message. Mary, quiet and contemplative remains in the house – not knowing the news. *Vs. 21–22* have to be read closely. Martha believes clearly that Jesus could have healed had he been present. She does not reproach for his late coming but expresses the sad “if” of humanity – (“if...then..”). Nevertheless she believes something can happen even now – as some say “Everything can be made right” – probably by Christ’s praying for Lazarus to restore him. However her weakness in *faith* is that he has to ask God (the Father). She does not see him as “having life in himself” or, himself being the resurrection. *V. 25* Jesus tells her clearly Lazarus will rise – meaning he will raise him. He does not tell her *how* or *when* her faith should grasp this fact untutored. *V. 24* Martha takes this to be a *general* (and true) statement, not seeing what Jesus is promising her *in* the present for the present. *Vs24–25* are a firm and glorious declaration of *Who and What he is*. He is not the *way* to life, but that life. The great “I AM” declares HE IS THE RESURRECTION – not simply the instrument of it. “Though he were dead” (AV) is really “though he die” (even if he dies) and this means that when a man dies (sleeps) he does not go into death but into life – *no death covers him*. “and whoever lives and believes shall never die” means

simply that as Martha looks at him now she must believe so that she shall never see death (die eternally) – He asks her – “Do you believe this?” Her answer – *V. 27* – is clear. “I have believed” (not as RSV “I believe”). All the time she has believed when others did not. Now her belief is alive and vital through his *Word*. He is the one (now coming into the world) for whom the world has waited. She may not understand all the depths of her (now alive) creed, but that does not matter. *V. 28* Mary (deliberately) lets her sister know by secrecy. Jesus has called Mary. *Vs. 29–32* show that Mary’s hastening to her Lord was not unseen the Jews follow her. *V. 32* whilst she worships at Jesus’ feet she reiterates her sister’s words – showing that the news of his being the Resurrection has not reached her. Jesus had called her to prepare her. *V. 33* When Jesus sees her weeping (over the death of Lazarus) and the Jews weeping. something “happens to him.” RSV “He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” Tasker “He was enraged in spirit and troubled himself.” Lenski: “He was indignant in the spirit and shook himself.” Lenski adds “What John describes is a deep emotion of indignation, which produces instead of indignant words only a quivering of the body.” It is true that Mary is moved by human sorrow, and the Jews (hard hearted enough after a few minutes) are moved to mourning with her, yet it is also true that *none* believes in what is going to happen – that the Resurrection and the Life, himself, is present. Yet Jesus would understand that. The deeper explanation is that he is indignant against this death which holds them enslaved (Heb. 2:14–15) and keeps them in the indignity of slavery when they are God’s created ones. The sad thing is that they do not see they may be free; they accept it that they are hopeless. This is why —*V. 34* – he asks (still trembling in indignation) “Where have you laid him” as though he were saying — “Where is this (frightful, hopeless) death?” Warfield (see Tasker ad.loc.) suggests he is as a warrior going in to smite the foe – for *us*. *V. 35* When Jesus

weeps it may be for reasons deeper than we can comprehend, but the elements we have mentioned are not missing. In addition is his great intention to smite the foe, and give the glory to God to be seen by all. However there are those there *who will not believe* *V. 36* is true – but more than the utterers can hope to understand. *V. 37* Are these the cynical ones —not really believing he could or would have healed Lazarus, but nevertheless wanting to criticise him —or is it just the statement of perplexity, the same with which Martha and Mary were involved? Perhaps the answer is that both kinds were speaking. *V. 38* The “therefore” is linked to the “comes to the tomb”. The indignation (against death) is powerfully present. *V. 39* gives emphasis to the fact that Mary is the sister of the dead man. Martha seems to be thinking of Mary and the terrifying sight she will soon see and smell. *V. 40* It does not mean that Martha does not believe, but that she does not know the *manner* of the miracle. He reminds her of what he has told her of the resurrection. She will not see the glory of God cause she has faith. The promise is “Thou shalt see.” cf. *V. 41* – “that they may believe” and *V. 4* “that the Son of man may be glorified...” *Vs. 41–42* This is most important as it reveals that Christ does *nothing apart from the Father*. It is not a prayer for the Father to do something, but the revelation of his utter *oneness* with the Father – the act is *Their’s* —together. Jesus has claimed to be the Resurrection and the life. Now he will demonstrate it, but he must first *witness* to the relationship. The Son can do nothing *of himself* (5:19,30), but there is no such situation. Christ has so often done things and then the critics (and others) have come; now they are here. *V. 45* He shouted – all would hear – as well as Lazarus. What a mighty demonstration of his power. It was for this Lazarus had died – that the glory of God – Father and Son might be shown, ie. by the power of resurrection (cf. John 5:28,29). *V. 44* Lazarus walked from

the tomb, but must have been greatly impeded by the encircling wrappings of cloth and the sweat cloth over his face. Jesus will have him to be no spectacle and orders his release from the impediment, and the opportunity for him to depart without the curiosity of the crowd being given expression.

Vs. 45–57 Show the various reactions to this miracle. Designed to glorify the Father and the Son – ie. to show their glory – it nevertheless draws a strong reaction. *V. 45–46* many of the Jews believe. (The number of believers is growing). Others immediately tell the Pharisees (who seem not to have been present). *Vs. 47–53* Show the action of the chief priests and council. *V. 47* – they now admit that Jesus is doing signs, yet (incredibly) fail to believe the signs. *V. 48* They acknowledge (without investigation lawfully) that these signs are dangerous. The political balance (this is their true meaning) will be upset. Both Sadducee and Pharisee are seeking to maintain *the status quo* without any thought to the fact that this may well be the Messiah. They fear an action of Rome which will destroy their remaining traces of autonomy. *V. 49* Caiaphas was not priest just for “that year.” He blurts out his statement — “You know nothing.” The Pharisees were more controlled generally. *V. 50* Whilst the Pharisees seek a way Caiaphas is blunt – “Kill him!” He makes substitution necessary and in this is unconsciously prophetic. This is the best way out. *Vs. 51–52* “not of himself” means “not *by* himself.” God was using this man who was unconsciously being prophetic. This authenticates the fact of substitution. Whilst it may be pressed with the reasoning of Caiaphas that it was best for this one man to die, yet the truth is he is to die not only for the Jews but all people – this referring us back to “other sheep I must bring etc.” There is a deep truth “all the children of God into one.” This is not just general salvation, but the purpose of the one family coming together. *V. 53* is terrifying as it measures man’s sin. They have seen him bring to life, yet plan

his death. Logically it is incomprehensible. Practically it demonstrates the depravity of man, and religious man at that. *V. 54–57* indicate the “hunt” for Jesus. He retires to a small place called Ephraim – possibly in northern Judea. *V. 55* Speaks of the Jews going up early to perform their purification rites – lustrations, sacrifices etc. *Vs. 56–57* show that the public did not expect him to come because of the attitude of the hierarchy. Orders had gone out prior to the arrival of the pilgrims, for his arrest. So the scene is set for the great events of the Passion and Crucifixion.

(c) The Supper at Bethany (12:1–8)

CHAPTER TWELVE

12:1 If the Passover began on the (following) Thursday evening, then the *six days* would mean Jesus arrived at Bethany on the (previous) Friday evening, possibly just before the Sabbath began.

12:2 The evening in which the special supper was given is not stated, but Mark 14:1 and Matt. 26:2 (equivalent accounts) indicate it took place two days before the Passover – probably Tuesday evening. Mark and Matthew indicate that the host was Simon the leper. Lazarus did not serve with the sisters as that was not proper, for a man.

12:3 Although the story has certain similarities with that of Luke 7:36–50 it is certainly not the same incident. This Mary (in John 12) is certainly not Mary Magdalene. Nor should the latter be identified with the woman of Luke 7. The “therefore” of this verse *may* link the act of anointing with the fact of Lazarus. The act of anointing him was a beautiful one, and because costly. The use of her hair was an act of humility. Anything in the East to do with feet is exceptionally humble. The whole act was one of *worship*.

12:4 Judas does not see it this way but (*Vs. 4–6*) interprets it according to his greed. In any case it is severely legalistic. Nature shows amply that God is prodigal in His gifts – why not we in worshipful response? Mary listens quietly and does not defend herself. Lk. 10:38–42 shows how she was content always to sit at his feet, and listen. Now she is at his feet – to anoint them – and this probably with a deep spiritual intuition. We must not discount the fact that she *had understood* many of the things he had said (about his death – cf. Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32) and was not prophetically (and sacramentally) anointing him.

12:7 Jesus defends her “let her alone” and then he gives the reason. Matthew says “For in that she poured this ointment upon my body she did it for my burial.” Mark says: “She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying.” This then is John’s understanding when he says: “she kept the ointment for the day of my entombment.” In actual fact she kept none of the ointment, and she did not anoint his body. She deliberately executes this act – and not just unconsciously. In this we see Mary’s depth.

12:9–11 The Jews are on their way to Jerusalem. Some are actually staying at Bethany – out of the city – and all come to see Lazarus, having heard that he was raised from the dead. Because of the belief of many the Jews are hardened in their decision to kill Jesus – cf. 11:47f.

(d) The triumphal entry and the final rejection (12:12–50)

12:12–13 The fame of Jesus has grown. Not really knowing what they think the people (having come from far distances) arrange a vast welcome for Jesus.

It must be assumed in the light of this Gospel that some really believed, some believed only on the miraculous, and some were unbelieving but caught up in the great movement. Their cry is from Psalm 118:26 to which they add “the King of Israel” thus showing their hopes.

12:14 This is one of John’s rare usages of OT Scripture to show a fulfilment. Quoting Zech. 9:9 he interprets the act – rightly (cf. Matt. 21:5).. Zechariah 9:10 “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea: and from the River to the ends of the earth” is significant of the whole ministry of Christ. The concept of *Kingship* (Christ’s) in John’s Gospel is rich. However John does not draw out the full implications showing in *V. 18* that the disciples did not at that time understand “that this had been written of him and had been done to him”. Psalm 118 is a Messianic Psalm and speaks of the rejection of the “corner (head) stone.” Thus the series of incidents from the Messianic welcome until the termination of the crucifixion are involved in this “welcome” to the King. *Vs. 17–19* give the setting – those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus are influencing others. The act is a *sign*, and these recognise that this *sign* attests to the unique nature of Jesus. The passionate movement of the hour seems to sweep countless numbers over to Christ, and the Pharisees are concerned.

12:20–26 These Greeks are *proselytes* (see I Kings 8:41–43). They could worship in the Court of the Gentiles (only). *V. 21* We do not know why they approached Philip (perhaps they had met him at Bethsaida) but they Wished to *be presented* to Jesus. They do not take this as a right, but having heard the amazing things of Lazarus’ raising they want to meet Jesus. It is no *right* on their part. Are they

dissatisfied or unsatisfied by what they have met in Judaism; do they recognise Jesus has so much more to give? Do they – even – understand the concept of Messiah, and so seek him as that? *V. 22* shows that Philip hesitates to make the introduction. Jesus has been most insistent that his ministry is to Israel. *V. 23* Whether Jesus speaks to them or not is not recorded, but the *significance* of their request is stated. John 7:6,30, 8:20 etc. have stated that “the hour is *not yet*.” Now the hour is indicated. If the Pharisees (*V. 19*) have said the world is gone after him, here is evidence. But it is for the *world* he is to die. The Son of Man must be glorified – but how? The answer is – *by death*. Whilst it is true that he must die in order to be glorified in the risen, ascended, reigning life; it is also true that it is the very dying which is the act of glorification. This is the burden of *V. 24*. It is both the *manner* of his death – love giving life for the world – and the *fruit* of that death – “When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of heaven to all believers.” No death – no fruit. Augustine: “The death of Christ was the death of the most fertile grain of wheat.” Of course it is the visit of the Greeks which precipitates this question—*V. 25* simply amplifies the truth of *V. 24* – ie. as the seed falls into obscurity so man’s self-emphasis is lost in the darkness. Yet the spiritual principle here is that One must lose one’s identity to truly find it. “Dying in order to live” is the principle (see also Matt. 10:37–39, 16:24–26, Mark 8:34–35.)

12:27 Such a decision is not made in a vacuum. He *will* have to go into the darkness – the principle in practice is fraught with horror. If the statement is in the form of a question, then *V. 28* answers it – he will go into it – “Father glorify thy name.” If it is a statement a petition, then the use of- *ek* (“out of”) and not *apo* (“from”) shows that he would go through the hour, yet not be destroyed by the hour.

In *V. 28* the assurance comes as his prayer is answered. From *11:40* it is clear that the Father has been glorified. In fact *both* are glorified by this very act. This is reassurance as to the nature of the cross (glory) as against the *horror* of the cross (evil) from which Christ may naturally shrink. *V. 29* makes it clear that this is an affirmation – but cannot be directly understood by the hearers who have both a natural and supernatural explanation. *V. 30* Jesus uses the attestation to teach – he does not affirm. *V. 31* The explanation of the conversation is the beginning of the world’s judgment. “By killing Jesus the world pronounced its own death sentence, lost its right to exist.” Zahn. The clear decision of the cross will crystallise the inherent rebellion of the world – the disordered cosmos. Also its leader – Satan, will be judged (cf. 16:11). *V. 32* The triumph over the world (thief, hireling, wolf) and its Ruler will liberate men – thus the cross will draw the liberated. The “lifting up” principle is explained by John as the manner of death – crucifixion (see 3:14) but is not so understood by his listeners.

V. 33 makes it clear that they think it is being “lifted to heaven”. They expect the Messiah to remain on earth, ie. rule in power, forever. They are disappointed. Many of them who have “believed” are seemingly disillusioned. Their question “Who is this Son of Man?” is in frustrated anger. *V. 37* shows that, in spite of many signs, they had not believed. *Vs. 35–36* constitute the last appeal of Jesus for their true belief. This Son of Man is the light (whilst he is in the world). See also 7:33, 8:21. It is not enough to say one will not accept light. To do this is to be subject to the power of darkness. The horror of ‘darkness only’ cannot be explained – it is terrible to experience. Belief in the light is the way to becoming sons of light, ie. derive their light from Jesus, and *become* light through him. See Ephes. 5:8, Matt. 5:14 etc. This statement was dangerous as it aroused rage. So Jesus hides himself.

Vs. 37–50 cover the fact of

belief and unbelief which occupies John. *V.* 37 should be compared with 20:30–31. The principle of *Vs.* 38–40 is that of Isaiah 53:1 and Isa. 6:10 (cf. Matt. 13:14) It should be seen in the light of Jesus' *call to belief* in *V.* 36. Whilst the question of God's will is here involved we must not make that call to belief as sham and unreal. He calls to repentance; those who respond *will have been wrought upon by the word*. Those who do not respond will be thus hardened because they have refused the word. Hendriksen: "The terrible consequence of hardening ourselves against the solemn admonitions and warnings that come to us is here pointed out. Again, as made clear in the discussion of *V.* 38, the fault lies not in any sense with God! He is the God of love. He is not a cruel monster who deliberately and with inward delight prepares people for everlasting damnation. On the contrary, he earnestly warns, proclaims the Gospel, and states – as Jesus did repeatedly during his earthly ministry – what will happen if people believe, also what will happen if they do not. He even urges them to walk in the light. But when people, of their own accord and after repeated threats and promises, reject him and spurn his messages, then – and not until then – he hardens them, in order that those who were not willing to repent may not be able to repent." Hoskyns adds: "The purpose of this final summary of the public ministry of Jesus is not to deny the whole tenor of the narrative, as though it was impossible for the Jews to recognise him as the Son of God, but to point out that the rejection of the Messiah by his own people ought not to surprise those familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures." Tasker adds: "In fact the unbelief was not total unbelief, for there were many who believed, but for fear of excommunication, and desiring at all costs to stand well with their fellows, they made no open' confession of their faith (42,43)"

12:41 Note: Some texts have "because" instead of "when". It was Christ's glory seen in the temple. So John adds in this note.

12:42 "nevertheless".. This insight into the true state of some hearts in the Sanhedrin is surprising. We know that later Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea did later confess Christ and perhaps others did.

12:43 Shows that they loved the praise (glory) of men rather than the glory of God. This is one of the terrible dangers of ecclesiastical professionalism.

12:44–50 This section is a solemn one. *V.* 44 shows that Jesus cries – the sign of a solemn warning —and it is the last he gives to the Jews. The judgment which has been slowly manifesting itself through the opposition of the Jews is now being sealed and cemented. Was this cried to those, too, who in their hearts believed (*V.* 42)? *Believing* is no little thing – involving knowledge, assent and trust. Without belief there is unbelief. Not to believe in Jesus is not to believe in God (7:16, 8:42 etc.)

Vs. 44–45 both emphasise "him that sent me.." The mission of the Father is clearly stated. To reject this mission is to reject God. To see Jesus is to see the Sender. *V.* 46 Believing is positive – taking darkness, dispelling light. These are not just conceptual ideas, but *facts*. To believe is to have light; to come out into it. *Vs.* 47–48. Strong words. The intention of judgment was not in his Coming, but it is inevitable where there is not response. No one can accuse him. He came to save. That is why the *words* (he has spoken) must, inevitably judge those rejecting them. The test of a man's salvation is whether he has heard (and obeyed) or heard and disobeyed. This will be the test at the *last day* – the final judgment. This cry of Christ must have come with awfulness, especially to the rejecting ones.

VI. THE UPPER ROOM (13:1 – 17:26)

(a) The feet–washing (13:1–17)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

This commences a new section of John. The *action* has finished. The *signs* are completed. The last hours, including the passover, and the discourses are to inform the disciples for the events of the Passion and Death of Christ, and to point them through, ahead, to the coming of the Holy Spirit’.

13:1 This verse does not *necessarily* lead on to the incident of the feet washing. In a way it is an introduction to all of Chs: 13 – 17. The commentary of this verse, then, covers all these events and teaching. (i) He knew his mission was almost at an end – he would soon be returning to the Father out of the world into which he had been sent. (ii) He had loved them all the time – *his own* ie. those who believed in him. He loved them to the full, the utter—most – not simply the end in time. There is some controversy concerning the “before the feast of the passover” and “supper being ended” (V. 2). If V. 1 applies to the *whole* sequence of events, and not simply the feet washing (the last act in “loving them to the uttermost”) then the seeming contradiction appears. The further question of whether it was truly the Passover is dealt with by Hendriksen (Commentary ad.loc.) The problem is whether Jesus ate the Passover Supper on the Thursday night and died the following day. This would seem to contradict the thought of some that he died on the Passover Day. The question raised is, Did he die before or after the Passover Feast? The harmonising of the accounts is not simple. (see also Lenski – Commentary ad.loc. p. 906f). *His hour* denotes the time of death as well as of departure.

13:2 The events of the Supper (the Passover) John has not described because his Gospel does not deal

with such details unless they fit his “thesis” – and he knows his readers have the Synoptics, in any case. Jesus *knows* that Judas is about to betray him. He knows the action of the Evil One.

13:3 We might ask now – “What is the significance of this whole event of feet–washing?” One part of the answer is supplied (from the Synoptists) in the arguments which happened at this Supper as to who would be greatest amongst them. “I am among you as he that serveth” (Lk. 22:24–27) is illustrated by this act. However V. 3 shows that Jesus knew all things were in his own hands, that he had come from and was now going to God. This is the basis of his act of feet–washing.

13:4–11 Since the act is deliberate Jesus is *teaching* something. Not simply humility. The act is deeply significant. Of what? It is not *in spite of* his imminent death but *because of*. The *action* is that Jesus lays aside his garments, and in an under garment begins to wash their feet. They are stretched out and do not jump up to take over the task. The key lies in “What I am doing you do not know now” – the “doing” does not refer just to the act, but to all that is transpiring this night, even to the death and resurrection. Therefore the whole incident must be seen in the light of this. They *will* know later —when the Spirit comes and reveals. The washing therefore has deeper significance than an act of humility. Peter’s desire to do everything *himself* (“I will wash my own feet”) is wrong. He must have Christ wash him. The *cleansing* is, then connected with the *death*. Jesus reply (V. 8b) is “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” *Not* “If I do not wash your feet.” He is really saying that what he does is to wash —renew, cleanse. (Titus 3:5). Peter’s objection to Jesus washing his feet is impatience with a little thing, but reveals his own spirit – he *can. will* do everything. Peter’s desire then to be totally washed goes against the fact that he *has been washed* “ye are all clean.” To bathe demands only, later, washing — eg. of the feet. Only Judas is unclean.

13:12–17 Cover our Lord’s explanation of the act. The act (in its Passover–meal setting) is linked with the Death. The Death cleanses. He – the Master – has given himself in this act – may they do less? If the Master serves – how much more ought the servants? Whilst the act is one of humility, it is also one of *cleansing*. They ought to cleanse one another. The closest to this is I Peter 4:8 – “love shall cover the multitude of sins.” This, however will demand an act of *servantship*. Blessing, joy, comes from so doing (V. 17).

(b) The traitor (13:18–35)

13:18–20 Are not said to criticise Judas, but to give the (bewildered) disciples a clear *reason* for his death. This death will seem to spell the end to all their hopes (Luke 24:21) so he tells them before it happens so that they will understand it was not a dreadful tragedy. Even the choice of Judas was not a mistake, but in conformity with the Scripture itself (Ps. 41:9). V. 20 Shows the high calling of the disciples who have truly accepted him – they have accepted the Sent, the Sender, and the “Mission.”

13:21–30 This can only be understood in the light of (a) it is Satan’s hour (Luke 22:53). (b) He (Satan) is active, (V.2, 14:30–31 etc. Cf. 12:31, 16:11. V. 21 Jesus testified to his troubled spirit. V. 18 comes into highlight – they are still eating, and the terrible evil of darkness is “sharing” with them. Jesus is troubled because of what he is going to say – about one of them. The Synoptics show the fears of the disciples, *not knowing their own hearts* as to whether they might betray him or not. Matt. 26:25 shows Judas virtually saying “Certainly it is not I, Rabbi?” when in fact he knows it is, and this is arrogance on his part. Giving the sop to Judas (V. 26) reveals the

betrayal to the disciples. V. 27 shows that Satan who (V. 2) “put the thought into the heart” now enters the same heart. The sop simply crystallises the decision for evil, not causes it. Judas (V. 27) is told to execute his evil plan quickly – “more quickly” than he had intended. He is now cut off from the disciples by his exposure as traitor. Vs. 29–30 show that the act precipitated his action – although some did not understand completely. V. 30 Adds a strong poetic touch – “it was night.”

Vs. 31–38 This might have been one of the few occasions in which the traitor was not present. *True* fellowship can now be. Jesus has his mind set on the (soon to happen) betrayal, but more, on the glory that will ensue. Death may come – but then resurrection, and enthronement! V. 33 Note the tender use of “little children”. They are beloved, but immature, scarcely able to be left. He goes to death; his “children” cannot follow. Vs. 34–35 are not a moralistic precept, but a present and urgent necessity – not a high ideal to be obtained some time. The commandment is *new*. Anything that is true can be stale, unless it come freshly – “new”. Of course they are to love *as* he has loved, and that is *new*.

(c) The Disciples’ questions (13:36–14:31)

Vs. 36–38 are virtually part of the stream that flows into Ch. 14. Peter knows by Jesus’ answer that the “going” is to death. He too will have part of that (for various human motives and loyalty), but the Synoptic Gospels show that his confidence is only human. (Cf. Matt. 26:33–35, Mk. 14:29–31, Luke 22:33–34).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

In relation to what has been said about their not (immediately) following him to death – that he is on a “special way” – Jesus reassures them. His death will puzzle and dishearten them. Part of his “loving

them to the end (uttermost)” he makes things clear to them so that they do not (later) stumble. *V. 1* They must not *disbelieve, distrust* because he is going away, but they must believe in God (see RSV) and also (equally) believe in Jesus. This should take away the trouble and distress of their hearts. *V. 2* This is where and why he is going. This also is what they must believe. The “mansions” (monai) are “permanent abiding places rooms” (RSV). The concept is of *home*. It is in the *home* that the *Father* is present. It is the Son going to the Father to prepare – set up the family situation. *V. 3* His going is not permanent, only purposeful. He will take them to be with him. *V. 5* Thomas’s question is because he thinks only spatially. Jesus has a different thought. *V. 6* The Way to God is not a path but a Person, or rather the Person is a Path – the Path. He is the embodiment of the way, truth and life of the Father. A father is known only through a son, the Father through the son. Just as he was not the Messiah asking life, but the actual Resurrection, so he does not point a way, or ask a way, but is the way. (See also Matt. 11:27). The goal is the *Father*. *V. 7* To know the Son is to know the Father. “henceforth” means “from now on” – ie. they – through the events about to happen will see the Father, and know Him – as the Son reveals Him. *Vs. 8–11*. Philip obviously demands a theophany but Jesus – pained – insists that as Son he *has* shown the Father. The fault is Philip’s. He has been so long with Philip that Philip *ought* to know. The essence of *Vs. 10–11* is that as the–Father is so is the Son. Their *union* and *relationship* is such that the Father is inevitably revealed by the Son. The Son neither *speaks* nor *acts* apart from the Father. (See also 7:16, 8:26–28, 12:49). In this sense they are the Father’s works. Thus Philip must keep his eyes on the works, however much (as yet) he cannot understand this oneness of Father and Son. *V. 12* shows that the geographical limitations Jesus has deliberately entered will not confine the disciples. They will exercise (not of themselves) an even greater

ministry. Probably the *quality* is not the point so much as the *quantity*. Emphasis should not be given upon the *type* so much as the opportunity for works, eg. the spread of the Gospel into all lands .. cf. also, Mark 16:20. “Because I go to the Father” must include (i) Completion of His part of the Mission, and thus the commencement of their’s. (ii) The coming of the Holy Spirit by Whom they may do works. (iii) The outworking of the whole plan of God – involving wider outreach, development of ministry etc. *V. 13* indicates that *prayer for action* which has formerly been *his* (not their’s) will now be *their’s* – but through him. Thus the “greater works” will be done. *V. 15*. shows love will be the drive for obedience – love for Christ. *V. 16* shows that Jesus will arrange for the sending of the Holy Spirit – the same Spirit Who enabled him in his ministry. The word “comforter” is better translated Counsellor or Advocate. This Christ has been – this the Holy Spirit will be. His coming will be permanent. *V. 17* Only He can give the truth. The world who does not recognise truth will not see or know Him. They will know by His presence and indwelling. *Vs. 18–24* cover the fact that Jesus will come again – by the Holy Spirit. *V. 20* “in that day” undoubtedly refers to Pentecost, although the beginning of that day will be his resurrection. The full relationship of Father, Son and believers will be in actual experience. Obedience and love (*V. 21*) will make the conditions for manifestation of the Son. *V. 23* strengthens this – obedience and love make the conditions in which both Father and Son indwell one. *V. 25–26* bring a contrast: Jesus was speaking then, but the Spirit will in the future – for always He will be their teacher. .What they have heard He will renew, and so enlighten them. *Vs. 27–31* deal with *peace*. The disciples need peace at this–time.. The *world* (cf. 7:1f) cannot give peace. They have no need for fear. In fact when he reappeared these were his first words. Peace is based on Christ – none other. *V. 28* shows that they do not fully understand the “way” he is going – it is to the Father; He will be received,

elevated, his mission finished, Yet they are bewildered. V, 29 shows he wishes to clear away their bewilderment and shock—thinking it has all been a terrible mistake. *Vs. 30–31* get to the heart of the matter – a battle is on! Judas’ betrayal of Christ is part of it. Deeper than this is the conflict for man. The world (and its ruler) cannot give peace. Jesus cuts away fear by submitting himself – in accordance with his Father’s will to the whole action of Satan (in the death and passion) that the true Father’s love (redemptively) may be seen. Cf. Heb. 2:14–15. The injunction to “Arise – let us go hence” does not mean they moved out in a moment. Jesus had more to say.

(d) The allegory of the Vine (15:1–17)

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Chapters 1–14 speak of two groups – his people, and the world. Here his people are incorporated in the Vine. He is the vine – they are the branches. He is the tree vine, ie. true as against “vines that are not vines.” Cf. Jer. 2:21, Isa. 5:2. Lenski: “Jesus is not merely like a vine, he is more: the actual original, of which all natural vines, genuine in the domain of nature, are only images. As the real and genuine vine in this supreme sense he exceeds all others who may in some way also be called vines, and he stands forever in contrast with all those who are not real, but only spurious and pretending vines.” (Ad.loc. op. cit. p. 1026). Tasker says the true Israel – the true Vine has now come of which old Israel had been an imperfect foreshadowing. The main point is the contrast between the true and the false. The vine and the branches go naturally together and so the latter bear fruit from the vine – they cannot but do this. If they do not do this they are not of the vine – as, say Judas – and have to be severed and destroyed. The branches have no life (or fruitage) independently of the vine. The disciples have been abiding in Christ – except Judas –

and so they are what he says they are – the branches. The lesson here is *total dependence upon Christ*. There is no “self–source” or self–effort which can ever bring forth fruit. All of this is significant because it bears out the fact of the constant “I AM”. He IS the source and fact of all things, and here of the *tree people of God*. The abiding of the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and the people of God in Christ (and so in the Father) is the ultimate of the Gospel. The Father is the Vinedresser – He purges (or prunes). 14:14 is reproduced in V. 7. *V. 8* on fruit–bearing makes it clear that fruit–bearing is glorifying to the Father, as also it glorifies the Son – through discipleship. *Vs. 9–10* re–iterate the love and obedience ideas – ie. Christ loves and obeys the Father, they him, and so in this (mighty) love they will be “abiding.” *V. 11* shows such to be the true source of joy. *Vs. 12–14* set the *quality* of love (agape) as that of the Son. Obedience springs from love not “joyless duty”. *V. 14* introduces the concepts of *friends*. servants (slaves) do what they are commanded. *Friends* share together in a task. *Vs. 15–17* show that Jesus is sharing the whole (historical) plan of redemption with them – he has kept nothing back. Their fruit resulting from abiding (obedience in love) will be eternal. *V. 17* makes it clear – loving is commanded. Friends, too must obey (abide). Without that love fruit cannot come.

(e) Persecution (15:18–25)

Following the rich – yet mandatory teaching of abiding, with its promise of fruit, Jesus clearly reminds them that this will entail persecution. there are two “groups” – the Satanic, and the Son’s – then there will be conflict. The world (*V. 19*) will see they are *chosen out* of the world system, and will accordingly hate them. *V. 21* emphasises that as he was persecuted because they did not (would not?)

recognise his origin, so they will not recognise the origin of the believers. *V.* 22 shows that he has revealed their sin – the deepest cause of their hatred. It is impossible (*V.* 23) to hate Christ without hating the Father. Their sin is, actually, unbelief. The Father has sent him, and inevitably he uncovers their sin. His works (*V.* 24) are unique (“which no one else did”) and so they are without excuse. The signs have (whether they like it or not, know it or not) revealed both Father and Son – thus they have no excuse. So (*V.* 25) it is correct to quote Psalm 69:4 (the whole Psalm is Messianic) and Ps. 35:19. “They hated me without a cause.”

(f) The work of the Advocate (15:26–16:15).

The theme of persecution continues into Ch. 16 but the introduction of the Holy Spirit here is linked with this. The testimony of and to the truth continues through the Holy Spirit. (NB 14:16 – the *Father* will give. 14:26 Father will *send* (in my name). 15:26 “Whom I will send”; 16:7 (“Whom I will send. In the midst of persecution, *through the Spirit* Who alone can actually tell the truth (seeing, too, he proceeds from the Father) the disciples will be witnessing. To witness is not only to tell what one has seen, but to tell it *out*.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Vs. 1–4 tell of the intensity of persecution because of the reasons told above. *V.* 3 “because they have not known (recognised) the Father nor me” seems to contradict 15:24, but whilst they have “seen” they have not known. The same principle will continue. *Vs.* 5–6 show their self-concentration (and pity) blinds them to the great truth of *V.* 10 – “I go to the Father.” The *nevertheless* of *V.* 7 is in contrast to their sorrow (fear of persecution etc.) The *going* of Jesus will be great blessing for the disciples (not cause of sorrow etc.) for he will *send* the Comforter.

Jesus completes his redeeming work, the Holy Spirit comes to *communicate* (teach) it. Comforter = Paraclete (One who stands alongside of, exhorts, advocates). *Vs.* 7–15 speak of two works of the Paraclete (i) Towards the world – in convicting (rebuking, convincing) it of sin, righteousness and judgment,— and (ii) Towards the disciples (church) in revealing Christ. Note in *Vs.* 8–11 the reasons or grounds for conviction and note that these convictions came on the day of Pentecost, ie. with the coming of the Holy Spirit. *SIN* is unbelief – and this is what the Gospel of John has been indicating. It is unbelief in Christ. *RIGHTEOUSNESS* is the Son related to, going to the Father, being in eternity. *JUDGMENT* is the whole system of evil being judged, defeated (cf. 12:31, 14:30–31). *Vs.* 12–15 speak of what the Holy Spirit will do in relation to the disciples – (i) Speak of the things now unbearable (too deep, powerful, revelatory – cf. I Cor. 2:9f). (ii) Guide into all truth – speaking *not from* Himself. (iii) Show things to come – immediate and eschatological. (iv) Glorify by witnessing to what is – of Christ. To “show” is the high water–shed of revelational truth.

(g) The ‘little while’ (16:16–33)

The phrase “little while” (*Vs.* 16, 17, 18, 19) puzzles the disciples. They do not know what we know *V.* 20 makes it clear. There is only one “little while” – that of the period between the crucifixion and the resurrection. The world will laugh whilst they sorrow; but then they shall be filled with joy as the truth (and, fact) of resurrection breaks in upon them. Lenski: “Here one and the same event first produces the most painful agony and then the most abounding joy” (*Vs.* 20–22). “I will see you again” means that from Easter (for 40 days) they will see him. The whole situation will be changed – no one can take this new, settled, authenticated joy from them. *V.* 23 is ‘important because “ask” means “enquire” not “petition”. Trench: “in that day, the day of my seeing you again, I will by the Spirit

so teach you all things that you shall no longer be perplexed, no longer wishing to ask me questions, which yet you dare not put.” The second half of the verse shows that they will still need, but not remain needy. They are to ask. What is asked in Christ’s Name, is done in his Name. We must remember that this is in the context of a new situation, when the Spirit is present. *Vs. 25–33. The new relationship.* In this passage Christ tells them that they will come into a full flush of understanding. He will not give them *another* or *different* truth – but that which, as yet, they could not fully understand will be clear to them. In one sense he will no longer be intermediary, but they shall approach the Father directly (though through Christ) – for the Father loves them for their love of the Son. *V. 28* is clear enough, but he has not been less clear before. It has simply – as it were – been insulated for their “protection”. Now it is evidently clear. *Vs. 29–30* Show that the disciples think that their thinking and understanding and faith is clear, but *V. 31* indicates that Christ throws doubt on this. This *belief* (about which the Gospel has said so much) seems a matter of degrees, also. The test will show the belief for what it is. He will be alone – they “scattered”. He has loved them “to the uttermost” –informing of all things, so that, thinking back, they will not be dismayed. Here he tells them clearly they will have tribulation, yet also that he has overcome this world. The battle with evil is already foregone in its conclusion. The foe is conquered and crushed!

(h) The prayer of the great High Priest (17:1–26)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

This has always been known as the great High Priestly Prayer. Where they are the prayer is uttered (aloud) for the disciples’ sake. The content of the prayer must (in its principles) have fixed itself indelibly upon the hearers, and later its import must

have broken open to them. The prayer naturally breaks into the following sections:

1. Vs. 1–5 The Completed Work of the Son.

Here Christ acknowledges (*V. 1*) that the hour is come – for the Cross. He wishes the Father to use this hour for the full and final display of His love, as Jesus offers himself in sacrifice, this his own humiliation may glorify God. The purpose – to give life to the elect – will be fulfilled.

2. Vs. 6–18 The Lord Prays for his disciples.

The *essence* of this prayer is that he has shown forth the Father to the disciples. They have seen and acknowledged that he has come from the Father. They have kept his word. He has no prayer for the world, but only for them, and this is that they remain in the world, without being of the world, and even further that they being sanctified (set apart) should be sent into the world, as was Jesus sent by the Father.

3. V. 19 Jesus dedicates himself as an Effective Sacrifice.

Here Jesus “consecrates his own sinless humanity to death” (Tasker ad. loc.) His dedication will prove to be their – both an example, a motivation and a sharing. The meaning of the word sanctify (AV) is better “to dedicate” as it is a dedication of that which is already holy.

4. Vs. 20–26 The Lord prays for the Church.

This is a most effective and lasting prayer. Its outworking is seen in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, and in history. This love, – which can be called no less than supernatural – is the unity which exists between Father and Son. The same love is in believers uniting them to the Father and the Son, and each other. The effect of this love will be to demonstrate to the world the sending by the Father of the Son (to be the Saviour of the world). This will now be shown in the Cross, as it has always been in fact – and this is the glory of God.

**VII. THE ARREST, THE TRIALS, AND
THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS
(18:1 – 19:37)**

(a) The arrest of Jesus (18:1–11)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

There is no doubt that in a literary sense the Gospel of John is orientated towards the last hours of Christ upon earth – the arrest, the trials, and the crucifixion, whilst these also are linked with the resurrection, and post–resurrection appearances.

In this commentary we can only give the events simply, and here and there refer to significant points, peculiar generally to this Gospel–

Vs. 1–11 Given also by the Synoptists. The Gethsemane prayer is not described– The prince of the world is “coming” (Luke 22:53). The flock is soon to be scattered. *Vs. 8* Shows his love “to the uttermost” as he protects them. *Vs. 12* Shows he does not seek to avoid drinking the cup of suffering and of death. The disciples, even now, have thoughts of a temporal kingdom.

(b) The trial before the high priest (18:12–27)

First before Annas (*V. 13*) and then before Caiaphas (*V. 24*) if the AV stands as it is written, or simply before Caiaphas if *V. 24* is an emendatory note, Jesus was arraigned– Jesus simply suggests that they ask of witnesses what he has said, as he has done nothing in secret – it was all public, and heard by all. The thrice–denial of Peter is recorded.

(c) The trial before Pilate (18:28–19:16)

The trial has a number of elements that should be seen. *V. 28* “eat the passover” has been explained

as “keep the seven days of Passover Festival.” (See notes on 13:1 of Tasker p. 209). In any case they would not enter a defiled area at this time. The demand for accusation is followed by vituperation from the (incensed) Jews. The charge of being a king, Jesus meets with a calm statement concerning its non–temporal (spiritual) nature. Christ arouses no pity (why are they afraid of such a pitiful object?) and whereas Pilate is anxious to release him they are determined to kill him. Pilate is further intrigued (and his fear is deepened) when Jesus is accused of claiming to be the Son of God (a title, incidentally which could be disloyal seeing it was used of the Caesars).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

V. 11 Is an important verse. It accords with 10:17 – only he has power for laying down life. In other words what Pilate does is under God’s sovereignty. Pilate understands this and is now positively seeking to release Christ. The violent opposition of the Jews on the (pretended) basis of Jesus’ claims to (Jewish) kingship seal the matter, but not before Pilate displays keen irony – “Behold your king! Shall I crucify your king?”

(d) The Crucifixion (19:17–37)

Pilate remains Caesar’s representative. Caesar remains king. Christ is crucified. The Jews utter blasphemy (“We have no king but Caesar”). Pilate however would have the last word – even if in irony (*Vs. 19–22*) Jesus is accorded to be king of the Jews – in his crucifixion. The fulfilling of scriptures is a particular feature of the Johannine crucifixion account see *V. 24, 28, 36, 37*. Special features of the Johannine account–are the seamless garment, the handing over of Mary (Jesus’ mother) to John, and the unbroken bones of the body. The “I thirst” – designed to draw the fulfilment of the Scriptures, and the “It is finished” – designed to show the completion of his ministry – “to the uttermost” are both peculiar to John’s Gospel. The surrender of his Spirit (*V. 30*) is again in conformity

with “laying down his life”. *V.* 34 – “blood and water” seems to have special significance for the writer of the Gospel – see *V.* 35. He attached significance (by his words) to this outflowing of the blood and water. Blood itself, and water itself, has special significance in the cleansing of sins, and the river of life in cleansing. Zechariah 12:9,10 are invoked – which see.

VIII. THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS (19:38 – 20:31)

(a) The burial (19:38–42)

The time of trial, crucifixion and burial are touchy times. Anyone associated with Jesus is liable to come under suspicion. Two former “secret” disciples of Jesus become bold, when seemingly they ought to have further concealed their devotion to Jesus. The honour paid to him through the binding of his corpse, and the interlacing of myrrh and aloes testifies to their true devotion, and preserves and protects the body of this despised One from mutilation. Normal corrupting forces are eliminated. It is yet to be seen what will happen in the tomb, the place of corruption fresh hewn though it was, and in which no body had formerly been laid (cf. Isa. 53:9).

(b) The resurrection appearances (20:1–29)

CHAPTER TWENTY

Note: It is quite clear from the whole Gospel that John knows his readers will be conversant with the Synoptic Gospels. For this reason what John *adds* to the Synoptic accounts is *new* material. A harmony of the accounts though difficult is not beyond accomplishment.

Vs. 1–10 The matter of the wrappings.

Other Gospels indicate that it was early the

women came – others with Mary Magdalene. They came to anoint his body – signs of their not yet believing in the resurrection. Mary seeing the stone taken away runs instinctively to Peter (leader). Her use of “we” in *V.* 2 shows others were with her. Her conclusion re the stone is her own. (Nor need we think it had to be rolled away for Christ’s emergence) but only for the revelation of that emergence. The essence of *Vs. 3–10* is this: John – the younger – outruns Peter (John is recounting this) and looks into the tomb and sees the wrapping lying undisturbed – does not go in. Some have conjectured that he thinks the body is still there, others that natural dread prevents him. Peter rushes into the tomb, and then looks. John follows. He sees that the body has *risen through* the wrappings. The headcloth a little way off “in a place by itself” can mean either it had been neatly wrapped and so placed, or (after Latham) was in that distance from the body natural to the embalming and also had not been disturbed. The former seems most natural. In any case John is convinced of the resurrection, although at this point the disciples are not thinking in terms of resurrection. They had, of course, been told.

Vs. 11–18 Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.

The supernatural surrounds the resurrection. Mary should rightly be reassured by the fact of angels. Her grief is too deep, too human. She clings to the link of the corpse of her beloved Lord. In *V. 14* it may be a gesture of the angels which causes her to look at (the now present) Jesus. Only the utterance of her name (*V. 16*) brings her out of the haze into true recognition. Mary’s desire to hold him is rebuked for Jesus is in the process of ascending, but has not yet ascended. The word “Master” does indicate that she thinks of him (and “the good old days”) as having returned to the former situation they knew. He must remind her of (as it were) a *new relationship* – a disciple and the risen (ascending, ascended) Lord. She must know the new relationship. She must cease fearing she will lose him. *V. 17* gives the mighty message

Of his unique Sonship, and the Father's unique Fatherhood, but our share in it because he ascends; not uniquely do we share; but by unique grace. His relationship is of nature, ours of grace.

Vs. 19–23 Jesus appears to the disciples.

A number of elements appear here: (i) the presence of the ten disciples (cf. Luke 24:36f). (ii) The salutation of "Peace" from the risen Lord, the evidence being his *wounds* (not scars, cf. *V. 27*). (iii) The convinced *joy* of the disciples as they realise. (iv) The commission: *as* he had been sent (from the Father) so he sends them (cf. 17:18). (v) The breathing upon them of the Holy Spirit (see note below). (vi) The commission of the gospel of forgiveness. This is best understood by reference to Luke 24:47 – "repentance and remission of sins should be preached." By their preaching men will be loosed from their sins (their guilt etc.) or their sins will be retained (with guilt etc.), the message being rejected. *J. Stott* "not magisterial, but ministerial authority". The breathing of the Holy Spirit has been called a minor impartment of the greater affusion to come (ie. at Pentecost). Better still, the actual impartation of the Holy Spirit, the power of *Whom* was to be known (in epochal significance) at Pentecost. They needed the Spirit *now*. cf. I Cor. 15:45 "the last Adam was made a quickening spirit". He *breathed* on them..."

Vs. 24–29 The convincing of Thomas

Sight (Tasker points out) had been enough for the women and other disciples. Thomas demands *touch* in addition. However *sight* proves enough. It might be supposed that Thomas's experiences of "resurrection" –eg. that of Lazarus, might not have allowed him to place his Lord in a similar category. *Sight* dissolves scruples, and he is convinced. The lesson is that *faith* is of the highest order when it does not require sight. The other lesson is that theology is deepest at the point of devotion (though linked with knowledge) – "My Lord and my God!" Note *V. 29* "Blessed are they which did not see and did believe." This does not exclude

the future but shows that in the present at this point, and in the past there were such who did not demand belief on the conditions set by Thomas. This is surely the "lead-in" to the verses 30–31 of this chapter. (cf. I Peter 1:8, John 1:50, 2:23, 4:45,48,50, 6:36, 10:37, 11:40,45, 14:11, 15:24, 20:8).

(c) The purpose of the evangelist (20:30–31).

If this was the original conclusion, then it was a strong one. We have seen that the *signs* are not apart or distinct from the words. They were done in *the presence* of the disciples (witnessed as historical happenings – ie. not "myths"). Others also were done but not selected. *V. 30* seems to have strongest MSS evidence for "that ye may continue to believe" – ie. this is written for believers to strengthen their faith. This cannot exclude some coming to belief, however (the other reading) as those who believe scarcely need such a Gospel to maintain their belief, although it could have value in this regard. One believes that Jesus is (a) The Messiah (b) The Son of God. These two terms are inseparable, but not totally synonymous. However the greatest point practically (echoed through the Gospel) that *such believing* brings life to man, ie. "in" or "through" the means of his name. This means that one is in union with him, his life, power, etc.

IX. THE EPILOGUE 21:1–23

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Note. Since no MSS with Ch. 21 omitted are to be found it is to be assumed this is part of the Gospel as "issued by John". The primary purpose was to correct an error caused by a misquotation of what Jesus had said about the "beloved disciple" surviving until his return in glory. This is given in *V. 25*. Whilst the main "thesis" of the Gospel finishes at Ch. 20 it does not mean that the last chapter is not valuable. It is a

supplement. Thus we must resist adding the miraculous draught of fishes as another of the signs designed to initiate or encourage (strengthen) faith, although it may well do that.

V. 1 Indicates another post-resurrection appearance – this time in Galilee. Seven are present with Peter – with the sense of invitation – indicates his intention to fish. Whilst they respond, there is a sense of aimlessness not only because they catch nothing – but as the context indicates, there is a situation to be rehabilitated. They had fled at the time of his betrayal, and Peter had denied him thrice. Now empty-handed (as on another strange occasion) they answer the stranger on the shore in the negative when asked whether they have been successful. At this point they obey the command to throw on the right hand of the boat, the result of which is another obvious miracle. John, sensitive as always divines who has commanded. Peter, hearing this dashes to the centre of his need; for he needs the experience of forgiveness (so often demonstrated and expounded before him previously) that he might be free to be a “fisher of men.” The other disciples drag the net to shore rather than the fishes into the (small) boat. The end is not yet, for they see a charcoal fire laid, and fish and bread roasting. Commanded they bring in the haul – though not to eat. Then they come to eat, although all are silent about the main fact – *it is the Lord!* They eat at his invitation – as he gives bread and fish. John concludes this by saying it was the third time of Jesus revealing himself to them (the disciples). *V. 15* following may well be called the rehabilitation of Peter. It is painful, based on the demand of love; at which Peter is deeply (though rightly) hurt. The various interpretations of “love” (here “agapas”) and “like” (love, here “philo”) should perhaps not be pressed, as at that time the same distinction which is later theologically so, may not have been present or obvious. The question “Lovest thou me more than these?” *V. 15* would mean – more than these disciples love me? Peter is clearly

ashamed; not able to be absolute. He can only cling to what is (deeply) true – he loves Christ. Perhaps the episode of the fishes is intended to remind him of the other (dramatic) episode when he had been promised he would be a fisher of men. Now the figure of fishes is added to, and supplemented by that of the shepherd (of which he also has heard much) and he is given oversight over the flock. He is “re-instated” and more he is given the highest commission of all, as a pastor.

Vs. 18–19 Speak of the ministry and life Peter was to have as a pastor. In the early stages he will have freedom in ministry; later that freedom will be more curtailed, until finally it will lead to his death (traditionally by crucifixion, upside-down, in the reign of Nero). His death will glorify his Lord. The “Follow me,” of *V. 19* would thus mean “Be following me (in the manner I have outlined)”

Vs. 20–23 Cover the incident over which there had been some misunderstanding. Jesus has told Peter to follow him. Peter catching sight of John (his own close companion) is curious to know what will happen in regard to him (John). Jesus gives an answer which does not fulfil Peter’s curiosity, but which is a rebuke, meaning “Even if he were to tarry till I come – even if it should be that strange – what business would it be of yours – I have told you to follow me – that is primary – concentrate on *that*”. *V. 24* then corrects what may have been a prevailing misunderstanding.

X. THE CONCLUSION (21:24,25)

V. 24 This has occasioned much debate; although some would see such debate as unnecessary (see Tasker pp. 234–35). What emerges is that the beloved disciple is still alive not only when ch. 21 is written, but the testimony (of his testimony) by the “we” of *V. 24*. The “we” certainly seems to indicate men of authority in a certain place.

V. 25 Seems to be a resumption of the writer –without the corporate “we”, and a comment on the vastness of material which was available had he so wished to use it.