

A Verse-by-Verse Study of John Chapters 5-8

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I am incorporating some minor changes to this paper in December 2012 while working on the paper to put it in the proper format to put on several Christian article sites, which includes updating the references to my other writings.

**by Karl Kemp
March 2007**

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Unless otherwise noted all Bible quotations were taken from the NASB, 1995 edition.

JOHN CHAPTER 5

After these things [Greek *meta tauta*. I'll quote part of what A. T. Robertson says here,¹ "John is fond of this vague phrase (3:22; 6:1). He does not mean that this incident follows immediately. He is supplementing the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark, and Luke] and does not attempt a full story of the work of Jesus." Several months could have passed between the time of the events spoken of at the end of chapter 4 and the feast of the Jews spoken of here in John 5:1. This same Greek prepositional phrase is used at the beginning of verse 14, where the period of time that passed was relatively brief; it could have been a few hours, and it surely wasn't more than a few days.] **there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up [from Galilee] to Jerusalem.** [John often mentions the occurrence of Jewish feasts in his Gospel. He mentions a Passover in 2:13 (and 2:23); 6:4; and in 11:55 (and 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; and 19:14), the Passover on which Jesus was crucified.² He also mentions a Feast of Tabernacles/Booths in 7:2 and a Feast of Dedication in 10:22.] **(2) Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate** [Compare Neh. 3:1, 32; 12:39. Apparently this gate passed through the wall of Jerusalem just north of the temple. The pool would have been outside (north of) the wall.] **a pool, which is called in Hebrew** ["Jewish Aramaic" (margin of NASB); cf. John 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16] **Bethesda** [or Bethsaida, or Bethzatha], **having five porticoes** ["five covered colonnades" NIV; "five porches" NKJV. Each portico/porch included columns supporting a roof.] **(3) In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; (4) for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]** [The NASB included the words of verses 3b, 4 in brackets, which means, from their point of view, that these words were "probably not in the original writings." The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition) omits these words with an A rating, which means, from their point of view, that "the [omission of these words] is certain." The NIV doesn't include these words in the text; the editors give these words in a marginal note after mentioning that they are found in "some less important manuscripts." The KJV; NKJV include these words.

Most commentators opt for the viewpoint that these disputed words were not part of John's original writing. I'll quote a sentence from what D. A. Carson says here,³

¹ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 5 (Broadman Press, 1932), page 78.

² These three Passovers give us some perspective regarding the length of Jesus' ministry. His ministry lasted at least two years if we start counting from the time He publicly manifested Himself in Jerusalem near the time of Passover, as reported in John 2:13-25. (There is widespread agreement we should add approximately six months for the time that passed between the time that Jesus was anointed to be the Messiah and the time He went to Jerusalem for Passover [John 2:13]. That six months includes the forty days temptation, which wasn't mentioned by John, and the events recorded in John 1:19-2:13.) It is quite possible that there was another Passover that John didn't specifically mention, and that Jesus' ministry lasted three years (if we start counting at the Passover mentioned in John 2:13, 23, or three and one-half years if we start counting when He was anointed to be the Messiah). Some assume that the unnamed feast of the Jews here in John 5:1 was another Passover, but that seems unlikely; I suspect John would have mentioned that this feast was a Passover if it was.

³ *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), page 242.

“Probably the lines of vv. 3b-4 were first introduced as marginal glosses [notes added in the margin of Bible manuscripts] (not every clause was introduced at the same time), reflecting popular belief about the cause of the water’s disturbance.” Raymond E. Brown thinks that the disputed words in verse 3 “may be original,” but he agrees that the words of verse 4 were not original. I’ll quote part of what he says regarding verse 4,⁴ “Codex Alexandrinus and the later Greek manuscripts have a verse omitted by all the early witnesses, including those that have the additional clause in vs. 3. ... In the west Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200) gives evidence of having known this verse; Chrysostom (ca. 400) is the first of the Greek writers to do so. That it is a gloss is indicated not only by the poor textual attestation, but also by the presence of seven non-Johannine words in one sentence. This ancient gloss, however, may well reflect with accuracy a popular tradition about the pool.”

I assume that the disputed words (and especially the words of verse 4) were *not* included in John’s original Gospel, but I also assume that the added words do reflect popular opinion regarding what was taking place at the pool of Bethesda and that that popular opinion probably reflects reality. I don’t believe it is very important for us to know for sure whether the disputed words were original, or not. Based on what John goes on to say in verse 7 (and essentially everyone agrees that the words of verse 7 are original), it is clear that the man who was healed believed at least most of what the disputed words of verses 3b, 4 say.

Many commentators (including many evangelical commentators) try to avoid a supernatural explanation for the healing miracles that seemingly were taking place at the pool; they speak of things like a possible spring that stirred up the water and of mineral waters with healing properties. But those things (even *if* they did exist at the pool of Bethesda) do not suffice (it seems to me) to explain what John says in verse 7.

That sick man believed (and it seems that the other needy people gathered at that pool also believed) that it was only the first one who stepped into the pool after the moving of the waters that would be healed. That viewpoint seems to require a supernatural explanation.⁵ This was a large pool, and if the healings came from waters with medicinal properties many people (at least more than one person) could have benefited at the same time. Furthermore, there is a very definite limit to how much can be accomplished through medicinal waters, and verse 3 informs us that those gathered there were “sick, blind, lame, and withered.” It would be hard to explain the multitude gathering there (at the pool in Jerusalem) if no healings were taking place.

There can be no doubting the fact that John’s purpose in writing this account was to focus on Jesus, the Savior, on who He was and on what He said and did, not to discuss an occasional healing miracle that may have taken place at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus was the only One who could save that sick man with full salvation, which would include the much-more-important healing and salvation of his soul along with his physical healing. From the time of the Lord Jesus Christ and the new covenant, God’s work in the earth centered in Him and the gospel of the new covenant.] **(5) A man was there who had been ill** [“Lit. *in his sickness*” (margin of NASB)] **for thirty-eight years.** **(6) When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long**

⁴ *Gospel According to John I-XII* (Doubleday, 1966), page 207.

⁵ It seems that John expected us to believe that God was the ultimate source for the healings at this pool in Jerusalem, not some demonic counterfeit, or something that was purely psychosomatic. Neither Jesus nor John specifically stated that God was actually healing people at the pool of Bethesda, but since they didn’t state otherwise, I believe we are to assume that God was behind the miracles.

time in that condition [The Bible doesn't state that the Father led Jesus to heal this man, but He probably did. Many verses in the Gospel of John demonstrate that Jesus was led by the Father in what He said and what He did. (Especially see John 5:17-20; what Jesus said in those verses was related to this particular healing.) Jesus undoubtedly knew that it would be very controversial for Him to work this miracle of healing on the Sabbath and for Him to tell the man who was healed to pick up his pallet and walk.

Jesus took the initiative in healing this man; this man didn't come to Jesus; he didn't know who He was, for one thing. This man wasn't singled out because of his faith or godliness (see below). It could be that he was singled out (in compassion) just because "he had already been a long time (thirty-eight years) *in that condition*" and had failed to be healed at the pool, with little hope for the future. The Bible doesn't tell us how long this man had been coming to the pool of Bethesda seeking to be healed, but he could have been coming for a long time.] **He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?"** [This man wanted to get well all right. He was disappointed that, since he had no one to help him, he had missed being healed at the pool so far; and he probably didn't have much hope that he would be healed in the future either.] **(7) The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."** [As I mentioned under verses 3, 4 (see footnote 5), it seems that Jesus (and John too) accepted the idea that God was behind the water's being stirred up. At least neither Jesus nor John (the writer of this Gospel) said anything to indicate that the gathered "multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered" were deceived, or that they were into something demonic. It was, however, time for the Jews to begin to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Savior, but this was rather early in His ministry.] **(8) Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet⁶ and walk [cf. Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:11; and Luke 5:24]."** **(9) Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.** [This healing miracle is different than most other healing miracles that took place through Jesus' ministry. For one thing, this man didn't come to Jesus; John 5:13 shows that he didn't know who had healed him. Based on John's brief account, this man didn't respond to Jesus words to get up, pick up his pallet and walk, until *after* he had been miraculously healed.⁷ The faith of this man has to be suspect because he immediately went and told "the Jews" that it was Jesus who had healed him and told him to take up his pallet and walk *on the Sabbath* once he learned that it was Jesus, undoubtedly knowing that the Jews would go after Jesus, which they did (see John 5:10-16). By informing the Jews that it was Jesus, the man undoubtedly got them off his back. Furthermore, the words that Jesus spoke to this man about going and sinning no more lest a worst thing happen to him (John 5:14) may further suggest that this man needed to stir himself up to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Many people that Jesus healed did not press on to become His disciples and then born-again Christians. I have to assume that this man was in that category, but, hopefully (for his sake), I am wrong. For one thing, people can repent.] **Now it was the Sabbath on that day.** [The fact that this healing miracle took place *on*

⁶ "The bed, as it is called in the older English versions, was a mat or pallet of straw, easily rolled up and carried on the shoulder (Greek *krabattos*, as in Mark 2:9, 11, 12)" (F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John* [Eerdmans, 1983], page 124).

⁷ It is possible that the man did respond with faith to the extent he started/tried to get up *before* he was healed because Jesus told him to.

the Sabbath was a really big deal as far as “the Jews” were concerned. They weren’t excited about the miracle, but they were very excited about the fact that Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath and that he had carried his pallet on the Sabbath.⁸ John 7:19-24 show that Jesus was still dealing with repercussions from this particular healing miracle when He came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths at a later time. On that later occasion (as in John 5:17-20) Jesus made it quite clear that He had done something good, not something wrong or sinful, by healing this man at the pool of Bethesda *on the Sabbath* (obviously including His having told the man to pick up his pallet and walk). Jesus frequently got in trouble with “the Jews” for doing things they considered sinful for Him (or His disciples) to do on the Sabbath (cf., e.g., John 9:1-41; Matt. 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17; and 14:1-6). Religious people can be blind to reality, and they can be quick to pass judgment with “righteous” indignation. There is a true righteous indignation (cf., e.g., John 2:14-17), but there are many counterfeits too, as people wage war for God (they think) in the flesh.] **(10) So the Jews** [cf. John 1:19; 2:18, 20; 5:15, 16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11, 13, 15, 35; 8:22, 48, 52, 57; 9:18, 22; and 10:24, 31, 33] **were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”** [Compare Jer. 17:21. I’ll quote a sentence from what J. H. Bernard says here,⁹ “The Rabbinical law was, ‘If anyone carries anything from a public place to a private house on the Sabbath...intentionally, he is punished by cutting off (*i.e.* death) and stoning’ (*Shabb. 6a*, as quoted by Lightfoot, *Hor. Hebr.*.)” I’ll also quote a few sentences from what F. F. Bruce says here,¹⁰ “The ‘tradition of the elders’ distinguished thirty-nine categories of work which might not be undertaken on the sabbath; the thirty-ninth of these was the carrying of a load from one dwelling to another. By this standard the man’s action in carrying his pallet home was a violation of the sabbath law (Mishnah, tractate Shabbath 7.2).”] **(11) But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” (12) They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk?’” (13) But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place. (14) Afterward [Greek *meta tauta*] Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore [cf. John 8:11], so that nothing worse happens to you.”** [Throughout the Bible God makes it clear that sin has penalties/consequences. (This doesn’t mean, however, that all sickness comes as a direct result of a person’s sin.) See the first four chapters of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on this important topic.] **(15) The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. (16) For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. (17) But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”** [For one thing, God the Father was working in and through Jesus, and Jesus was doing the very works His Father wanted Him to do (cf., e.g., John 5:19), very much including His having healed this man on the Sabbath (including His having told him to take up his pallet and walk). As verse 18 shows, “the Jews” understood that Jesus was claiming that He, by virtue of who He was and His special relationship with God (His Father), had the right to work on the Sabbath since God (His

⁸ There were other occasions that the Jews were very concerned because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath (cf. Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; and John 9:1-41).

⁹ *Gospel According to John* (T&T Clark, 1999 reprint), pages 232, 233.

¹⁰ *Gospel of John*, page 125.

Father) works on the Sabbath. Instead of condemning Jesus, the Jewish leaders needed to carefully investigate and verify that He was who He claimed to be and that He truly was doing the works the Father sent Him to do (and which the Old Testament had prophesied that He would do). I'll quote a sentence from what D. A. Carson says here,¹¹ "The consensus amongst the rabbis...was that God works on the Sabbath, for otherwise providence itself would weekly go into abeyance." God keeps the universe functioning, and He deals with men (including His calling them to repent, and His healing, saving souls, and judging) *on the Sabbath*.] **(18) For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him** [cf., e.g., John 7:1, 19; 8:37, 40, 59; and 11:53], **because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.** [Jesus continues with this all-important theme of His Person and His relationship with His Father (God the Father) throughout the rest of chapter 5. Jesus didn't say that He was "equal with God [the Father]" in verse 17, but He clearly put Himself in a class with God the Father, far above what any man could rightly say. (Jesus was/is the God-man.) As John discussed in the prologue to his Gospel (John 1:1-18), God the Son, who became the God-man, was fully deity with God the Father (and God the Holy Spirit). In that sense, He was/is "equal with God [the Father]." In my discussion of John 1:1-18 (in my paper that includes that passage and in the discussion of Col. 1:15-18 in that same paper), I discussed the full deity of God the Son in some detail, and also the fact that He is in some ways subordinate to God the Father in His role. See my subsequent papers, *Who Do We Worship?*; *Who Do We Pray To?*; *More on the Trinity*; and *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*. Those papers are all on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).

Jesus Jewish opponents were sure that He was not the Messiah/Christ. Furthermore, they didn't have room in their thinking for God the Son (or the Trinity). For one thing, the Jews didn't realize that the Christ/Messiah would be deity. God's revelation is progressive. From our Christian perspective, we can clearly see the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, but His deity wasn't clearly revealed in Old Testament days.] **(19) Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly [Amen], truly [amen], I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself** [cf. John 5:30; 6:38; 7:17; 8:28; 9:3, 4; 10:32; 12:49; and 14:10], **unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.** [This very much includes the Son's healing, etc. *on the Sabbath*.] **(20) For the Father loves the Son** [Compare, for example Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 3:35; 15:9, 10; 17:23, 24; and 2 Pet. 1:17. I'll quote two sentences from what D. A. Carson says here,¹² "That the Father loves the Son has already been articulated in 3:35, there with the verb *agapaō*, here with the verb *phileō*. There is no difference in meaning: cf. the shifts in 11:3, 5, 36, and the notes on 3:16, 35; 21:15-17."], **and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing** [see verse 19]; **and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.** [The idea here, as the following verses show, is that *the Son will do these greater works*, and the following verses specify what those *greater works* will be.] **(21) For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.** [The Son will do the *greater works* (of verse 20), of giving spiritual/eternal *life* (by the Spirit; starting with the new birth), to all who submit to Him

¹¹ *Gospel According to John*, page 247.

¹² Same as footnote 11, page 251.

and the gospel in faith throughout this present age (see verses 24-26), and of resurrecting the righteous (the believers) into the fullness of eternal *life* (with glorified bodies) at the end of this age (see verses 28, 29).¹³ On the *greater works* also see verse 22.] **(22) For not even the Father judges [Greek verb *krinō*] anyone** [“For the Father judges no one” NKJV; “Moreover, the Father judges no one” NIV.], **but He has given all judgment [Greek noun *krisis* (derived from the verb *krinō*)] to the Son** [The Son’s *judging all people* that is spoken of here in verse 22 goes with the *greater works* mentioned in verse 20. It would be possible to understand the Son’s *judging* that is spoken of here in verse 22 (and in verse 27) in a strictly negative sense (of His *condemning* the unbelievers/unrighteous).¹⁴ But apparently the *judging* spoken of here in verse 22 (and in verse 27) refers to the Son’s being given the authority to *judge* all people, the righteous and the unrighteous. (The use of the words “judge” and “judgment” in verse 30 lends support to this viewpoint.) This includes His judging (His judging in a positive sense and in a negative sense) throughout this age and at the end of this age. The Gospel of John shows that those who submit to Christ and the gospel in faith throughout this age have their *final judgment* at that time, and they are given eternal life at that time; it also shows that those who reject Christ have their final judgment and are condemned to eternal death at that time (see John 5:24, 25; 3:16-21).¹⁵

I’ll quote Acts 10:42; 17:31: “...this is the One [Christ Jesus] who has been appointed by God [the Father] as judge [Greek noun *kritēs* (derived from *krinō*)] of the living and the dead [those physically alive and those physically dead at the end of this age].” “He [God the Father] has fixed a day in which He will judge [*krinō*] the world in righteousness through a Man [Christ Jesus] whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” And John 5:27 says, “and He [God the Father] gave Him [God the Son/the Lord Jesus Christ] authority to execute judgment [to execute (or, “to do”) *krisis* (Greek noun derived from *krinō*)] because He is *the* Son of Man.”

The verses I just quoted from Acts speak of the Lord Jesus Christ *judging* all the people who have ever lived (the righteous and the unrighteous) at the end of this age. After that judgment is complete (at the end of the millennium) all people will either be in God’s eternal kingdom or separated from Him forever in the lake of fire. The *judging* of John 5:22, 27 includes the fact that Jesus is *judging* now too, throughout this age, not just at the end of this age.

As we seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, we should not think of God the Father being uninvolved or passive when judgments are taking place (positive and negative judgments). Compare, for example, Rom. 3:6; 14:11, 12; Heb.

¹³ See John 6:37-40, 44, 45, 65.

¹⁴ Some commentators take that viewpoint. It seems clear that the word “judgment” is used in a negative sense (of *condemning*) in verses 24 and 29, and the *judging* of John 3:17-21 is a negative judging (a *condemning*). The Greek verb used for judge/condemn in John 3:17, 18 is *krinō* and the noun for judgment/condemnation in 3:19 is *krisis* (the same Greek words used here in John 5:19-30).

¹⁵ If believers renounce Christ and the gospel at a later time, they undo that final judgment and forfeit the eternal life of God. (Believers receive eternal life in a preliminary stage when they are born again. Eternal life in a full sense is not given to believers until the end of this age, when we are glorified.) So too, some of the people who reject Christ when they are first confronted with Him and the gospel later repent and receive eternal life.

12:23; 13:4; Rev. 14:7; 16:7; 18:8, 20; 19:1-6; and 20:11. God the Father is on the great-white throne in Rev. 20:11 (cf., e.g., Rev. 4:2; 5:1, 6, 7, 13).], **(23) so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.** [These words would be blasphemous if Jesus wasn't deity with God the Father (and God the Spirit). He is!] **He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.** [Compare Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16; John 8:19; 12:44; 13:20; 16:3; 17:3; and 1 John 2:23. Jesus made it clear that it wasn't possible for the Jews (or the Gentiles) to honor the Father while rejecting (instead of honoring) the Son, who was sent by the Father.] **(24) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word** [Compare John 8:47. We cannot *hear* Jesus' word (mostly referring to the gospel of salvation through and in Christ Jesus) in an adequate way (with faith, which includes obedience) until we know and are committed to the fact that He is God the Son, the Messiah/Christ, who has been sent from God the Father.], **and believes Him** [Compare John 12:44. I prefer a translation like the following: "believes in Him" NKJV; *Jerusalem Bible*; "believeth on Him" KJV; "has faith in him" NAB; and "believes *and* trusts in *and* clings to *and* relies on Him" *Amplified Bible*. We must believe in (be committed in faith to) God the Father (and God the Son) to be saved.] **who sent Me** [cf., e.g., John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 38, 57; 7:29; 8:42; and 10:36], **has eternal life, and does not come into judgment** [I would translate "into condemnation" with the KJV; the NIV has "will not be condemned." The Greek noun is *krisis* (derived from the Greek verb *krinō*). The BAGD Greek Lexicon¹⁶ (under *krisis*) lists John 5:24 (and John 5:29 and other verses) under this sub-heading: "The word often means *judgment* that goes against a person, *condemnation*, and the *sentence* that follows..." See the discussion of John 3:18, 19 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54; *krinō* is used in John 3:18 (twice); *krisis* is used in John 3:18.], **but has** [already] **passed out of death into life.** [Compare John 6:40, 54. Those who submit (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ and His word (mostly referring to the gospel) have already had their final judgment and already participate in the eternal life of God. Those disciples who had faith in Christ in the days before He died and poured forth the promised life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit (starting on the day of Pentecost) couldn't be born again yet—they could only participate in eternal life in a very preliminary sense through their relationship with Christ. Those who are born again/born from above by the life-giving Spirit already participate in eternal life in a very substantial sense through the indwelling Spirit of life (cf., e.g., John 3:3-8, 15, 36; 4:14; 7:37-39; 17:2, 3¹⁷; Rom. 8:1-17¹⁸; 1 John 3:14; and 5:11-13). The fullness of eternal life, however, is reserved for the end of this age, when we will be born into the fullness of eternal life and glorified with Christ (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 23; Gal. 6:8; 1 Tim. 6:12; Titus 3:7; Rev. 7:17; and 12:5).] **(25) Truly** [Amen], **truly** [amen], **I say to you, an hour is coming and now is** [See John 4:21, 23¹⁹; 5:28.], **when the dead** [*spiritually dead*; cf. Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60; 15:24, 32; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; and 1 Pet. 4:6] **will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.** [Here Jesus is speaking of the fact that the *spiritually dead* will hear (hear with repentance and faith) the voice of the

¹⁶ Third edition, page 569.

¹⁷ These verses from the Gospel of John are all discussed in this present paper or my papers on John 1:19-4:54 or chapters 18-20.

¹⁸ These super-important verses are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

¹⁹ See under John 4:21, 23 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54.

Son of God (they will hear the new-covenant gospel of salvation in Christ) and they will live, starting with the new birth/being born from above. See under verse 24.] **(26) For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself** [cf. John 1:4; 5:21; and 6:57]; **(27) and He gave Him authority to execute** [or, “to do”] **judgment** [The Greek noun behind “judgment” here is *krisis*. See under verse 22. His *executing/doing judgment* here includes His giving eternal life to those who submit to Him and the gospel in faith and His *condemning* those who reject Him and the gospel throughout this age, and it includes His *judging* (both positive and negative judging) at the end of this age.], **because He is the Son of Man.** [On the “Son of Man” see under John 1:51 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54. I’ll quote a few sentences from what Leon Morris says regarding this title, *Son of Man*.²⁰ “In the Gospels it is used by Jesus as His favourite self-designation, occurring in this way over eighty times. Nobody else ever uses it of Him except Stephen (Acts 7:56) and the people in this Gospel [John] who inquire who Jesus means by the term (12:34). ... The origin of the term is probably to be sought in Dan. 7:13f....”

John (and the New Testament in general) makes it clear that the title *Son of Man* was not chosen to focus on the *humanity* of the Lord Jesus Christ, but His humanity *is* included; for one thing, the *Son of Man* came from heaven (John 3:13; 6:62), being God the Son (cf., e.g., John 1:1-18). I’ll quote a few verses that relate to the Son of Man’s having authority to execute judgment; then I’ll list some other relevant verses: “...son your sins are forgiven. ... but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” (Matt. 9:2-8). “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, (42) and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, He who has ears, let him hear” (Matt. 13:41-43). “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. (25) For whoever wishes to save his life [his life in this world] will lose it [will lose his soul and real life]; but whoever loses his life [his life in this world] for My sake will find it [will save his soul and find real life]. (26) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [WORKS]” (Matt. 16:24-27). “...hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN [He is coming to reign, which includes His works of saving and judging]” (Matt. 26:64). Also see Matt. 19:28; 24:30, 31; 25:31-46; Mark 2:10; 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 5:24; 21:27; and Acts 7:56.] **(28) Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice** [At the end of this age, all the dead (physically dead) will be raised/resurrected. If we were limited to the information contained here in verses 28, 29, we would have to assume that all the dead, the righteous and the unrighteous, will be raised at the same time. Other verses make it clear, however, that the believers (the righteous) will be raised earlier, at the time Jesus returns (cf. Luke 14:14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 12:5; and 20:4, 5²¹) and that the “rest of

²⁰ *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1971), page 172.

²¹ Revelation 20:4 pictures the resurrection of the believers who will be martyred during the reign of Antichrist in the second half of Daniel’s 70th week. They will be resurrected at the end of Daniel’s 70th week to join the large number of saints raptured at the time Christ returns (in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week). Those raptured in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week have already been reigning with Christ for

the dead” (Rev. 20:5) will not be raised (for their final judgment at the great white throne judgment) until the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:5, 11-15).²²], **(29) and will come forth; those who did the good deeds** [or *works*] **to a resurrection of life** [Compare Dan. 12:2. The righteous (the believers) will be resurrected into the fullness of eternal life with glorified bodies when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to begin to reign. This will include the believers of Old Testament days and all true Christians who will have died before that time. Their good works (their righteous lives) will demonstrate that their faith was real, and especially in the case of Christians (new-covenant believers) because they had been born again/born from above by the life-giving, *sanctifying* Spirit of God. As I mentioned, I believe the Lord Jesus Christ will return and the resurrection, glorification, and rapture will take place right in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week.], **those who committed the evil deeds** [or *works*] **to a resurrection of judgment** [Greek *krisis*. I would translate “resurrection of condemnation” with the NKJV. The NIV has, “will rise to be condemned”; the KJV has, “resurrection of damnation.” See under verses 22, 24. The unrighteous (the unbelievers) will be resurrected bodily (cf. Rev. 20:11-15), but they will *not* be resurrected into eternal life. Those whose names are *not* found in the Lamb’s book of life at the great-white-throne judgment will be cast into the eternal lake of fire, which is the second *death* (Rev. 20:11-15).²³]. **(30) I can do nothing on My own initiative.** [The Greek prepositional phrase behind “on My own initiative” would more literally be translated “of Myself” or “from Myself.” The Greek here is the same as in verse 19, where it was translated “of Himself” by the NASB; KJV; and NKJV.] **As I hear** [from the Father], **I judge** [In this context Jesus was speaking of His being given the authority to *judge* all people throughout this age and at the end of this age (cf. John 5:19-29).]; **and My judgment is just** [righteous], **because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me** [cf. John 6:38]. [We can speak of God the Son’s being subordinate in some ways to God the Father throughout eternity,²⁴ but it was clearly necessary for the Son to be subordinate to and dependent on the Father in a special sense during the time of His life on earth as the God-man (He never ceased being deity), since He had temporarily laid aside the glory and some of the prerogatives of deity to become a man (but not just a

three and one-half years. The fact that they are pictured seated on thrones at the beginning of Rev. 20:4 shows that they are reigning; that verse shows them reigning *before* the saints killed by Antichrist are resurrected.

²² The verses cited in this sentence are all discussed in my paper on Revelation chapters 20-22 on my internet site.

²³ As I discussed in some detail in my papers on Revelation chapters 20-22 and Matthew chapters 25 and *More Regarding God’s Salvation Plans for the Nations*, I believe (without being dogmatic) that the names of some of the people who are raised from the dead to stand before God at the great-white-throne judgment will be found in the Lamb’s book of life and that they will have a place in God’s never-ending kingdom as part of the *nations*, with the *nations* being distinct from God’s *true Israel* (who reign with Christ throughout the millennial kingdom and then forever). If it is true that some of the names of these people will be found in the book of life, it is clear that they will be saved through the grace of God in Christ and His atoning death (cf., e.g., Rev. 21:27), and it is clear that their salvation was part of God’s plan from before the creation of the world. The New Testament makes it clear that those who have been confronted with the gospel and rejected it have already had their final judgment, but (for one thing) many people have died with being confronted with the gospel.

²⁴ See under John 1:1 (including the footnotes) in my paper on John 1:1-18. Also see my four subsequent papers, *Who Do We Worship?*; *Who Do We Pray To?*; *More on the Trinity*; and *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*.

man) and live on the earth.] **(31) If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.** [It seems that Jesus' primary point here was that if God the Father did not testify to the truthfulness of what He said about Himself and His ministry, then His testimony would not be true, but, as Jesus goes on to show, the Father *did* testify to the truthfulness of what He said.²⁵ Jesus' Jewish opponents would have agreed that the testimony of God the Father was all that was needed to settle any dispute.

As reported in John 8:13, "the Pharisees said to [Jesus], 'You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true ['is not valid' NIV].' " I'll quote Jesus' response to this charge of the Pharisees given in John 8:14-19, "Jesus answered and said to them, Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I came from or where I am going. (15) You judge according to the flesh.... (17) Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. (18) I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." Two witnesses were required according to the Mosaic Law (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15).] **(32) There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.** [Jesus was speaking of God the Father here (see verse 37).] **(33) You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.** [John the Baptist testified to the truth regarding who Jesus was and what He had been sent to do (cf. John 1:6-8, 15, 19-36; 3:25-30).] **(34) But the testimony which I receive is not from man** [Jesus was speaking of the testimony of God the Father (see verse 37) and "the works which the Father [had] given [Him] to accomplish" (see verse 36).], **but I say these things so that you may be saved.** [Jesus knew that the Jews (and the Gentiles) could not be saved apart from believing that He was God the Son, the Christ/Messiah, the Lamb of God, who had come from heaven to save mankind (to save all who submit to Him and the gospel in faith) from sin, Satan, spiritual death, and eternal condemnation, and to give them a place in God's eternal kingdom.] **(35) He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.** [Many Jews submitted to the ministry of John the Baptist (cf., e.g., Matt. 3:5-9; Mark 1:5; and Luke 7:24-30), and the religious leaders hadn't stopped him (some of them would like to have stopped him), but "the Pharisees and the lawyers ["experts in the Mosaic Law" (margin of NASB)] rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John" (Luke 7:30).] **(36) But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.** [I'll quote John 10:24, 25, "The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' (25) Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.' " The fact that God had prophesied in the Old Testament that the Christ/Messiah would do these works made these works all the more effectively testify to the fact that Jesus was the One sent from the Father (cf., e.g., Isa. 35:5, 6; 53:4-6 [with Matt. 8:14-17; 1 Pet. 2:24, 25]; 61:1-3 [with Luke 4:17-21]; Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23; John 2:23; and 3:2).] **(37) And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me.** [I'll quote 1 John 5:9-11, "If we receive

²⁵ Note that the Son's subordination to, and dependence on, the Father is strongly emphasized in John 5:17-30. I'll quote a sentence from what Marcus Dods says here (*Expositors' Greek Testament*, Vol. 1 [Eerdmans, 1974 reprint], page 743), "Here...He means: Were I standing alone, unauthenticated by the Father, my claims would not be worthy of credit." Once we understand who Jesus really is (the God-man), we understand that His testimony is all the testimony we need to settle any issue.

the testimony of men, the testimony of God [God the Father] is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony of God concerning His Son. (11) And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” The Father had testified to Jesus in more than one way (including the works mentioned in verse 36; the miracles and revelations that attended His incarnation, birth, and young life; His speaking audibly from heaven regarding His Son when Jesus was baptized in water; and the revealing, drawing, testifying work of the Spirit), but the idea here (in this context) seems to be that the Father testified of Him in substantial, glorious detail in His Word, the Old Testament (cf., e.g., Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). (The New Testament is God’s Word too, but it hadn’t been written yet.) Note that Jesus goes on to speak of “[God’s] word” in verse 38 and of “the Scriptures” (which are God’s word) and of the “writings” of Moses (which are part of the Scriptures) in verses 39, 46, 47.] **You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.** [Jesus’ opponents (unlike Moses [cf., e.g., Ex. 3:1-4:23; 19:1-6; chapter after chapter in the Mosaic Law speaks of God’s speaking to Moses; 33:18-23] and to others) had not heard God’s voice or seen His form.²⁶ They were not to be faulted for this, but they were to be faulted for not believing the word of God in the Old Testament (cf. John 5:46, 47), which was given through Moses and others, who had been chosen by God to write His word. It was essential for the Jews to submit to God and His word, to understand His word, and to act upon His word.

Jesus’ Jewish opponents would have agreed on the need to submit to God and His word, very much including the writings of Moses, and they would have claimed that they were doing these things (cf. John 5:39, 45), but Jesus said that they did not really love God (verse 42) or really believe Moses (verses 46, 47), which they proved by rejecting Jesus (verse 38-40), and in other ways, including their receiving glory from one another and not seeking the glory that comes from God (verse 44).] **(38) You do not have His word abiding in you** [contrast 1 John 2:14], **for you do not believe Him whom He sent.** [See under verse 37.] **(39) You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life** [I’ll quote a few sentences from what Raymond E. Brown says here,²⁷ “In Hebrew thought, the Law was par excellence the source of life. *Pirqe Aboth* ii 8 says: ‘He who has acquired the words of the Law has acquired for himself the life of the world to come’; vi 7: ‘Great is the Law for it gives to those who practice it life in this world and the world to come.’ ”]; **it is these that testify about Me** [See under verses 36, 37. Compare Acts 13:27-29.]; **(40) and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.** [Compare Matt. 23:37-39. Jesus showed in this discourse (John 5:37-47) that the *unwillingness* of His opponents to come to Him and to submit to Him

²⁶ I’ll quote two sentences from what Andreas J. Kostenberger says here (*John* [Baker, 2004], page 192). “Old Testament figures who heard the voice of God include Noah (Gen. 7:1-4), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), Moses (Exod. 3:4-4:17; 19:3-6, 9-13; 33:11), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4, 6, 8, 11-14), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:13, 15-18). Abraham (Gen. 18:1, 2), Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30), Moses (Exod. 33:11), and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-5) all ‘saw’ the Lord in one sense or another (see Carson 1991: 262; Morris 1995: 291).” The issue of seeing or hearing God (*Yahweh*) in Old Testament days is complicated by the fact that sometimes they were seeing or hearing God the Son in His preincarnate state, the Angel of the Lord (*Yahweh*). I have to assume, for example, that He was the One that Abraham saw and talked with in Genesis chapter 18. (See my paper, *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*.

²⁷ *Gospel According to John 1-12* (Doubleday, 1966), page 225.

and the gospel in faith stemmed from their unbelief (lack of faith) and lack of love for God the Father and His word. Their problem went much deeper than ignorance of the true meaning of God's word; they had a sinful heart problem, and they (most of them) were not open to their need to repent. (Faith and unbelief [and real love] are, at root, matters of the heart.) Their unbelief regarding Christ demonstrated that they were not willing to do God's will (see John 7:17). It was (temporarily) easier to reject Christ as a blasphemous sinner and to reject what He was saying.] **(41) I do not receive glory from men** [Jesus always put God first and sought the glory that comes from Him (as we must), but He charged His opponents with living in the flesh (in a worldly way) and receiving glory from one another rather than seeking the glory that comes from God (see verse 44).]; **(42) but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.** [The context helps show (and most commentators agree) that Jesus was speaking of their not loving God, in spite of their claims to the contrary.] **(43) I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.** [The ultimate example of receiving another will be Israel's reception of Antichrist (cf. Dan. 9:27). False messiahs/prophets/teachers typically tell people what they want to hear, for one thing.] **(44) How can you believe, when you receive glory** ["Or *honor* or *fame*" (margin of NASB); "praise" NIV] **from one another** [cf. John 5:41; Matt. 23:5; and 1 Thess. 2:6] **and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?** [Compare Rom. 2:29. If religious people (including Christians) aren't very careful they can get so caught up in their religion and valuing the approval of their peers that God (for all practical purposes) is left out of the equation. Many such people never knew the reality of salvation in God to begin with, whether living under the old covenant or the new covenant. Those who seek God from the heart in faith (in accordance with the terms of His covenant with them) and the glory that comes from Him will know His approval throughout this age and will be rewarded with eternal glory at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:17, 18; Col. 1:27).] **(45) Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope** [cf. John 9:28; Rom. 2:17-29]. ["The Jews" (cf., e.g., John 5:10, 15, 16, 18) were accusing Jesus of breaking the Law given through Moses, but Jesus says that in reality Moses was accusing them for not believing in Him, including their not believing what he wrote about Him in the five books of the Law (and what is written about Him in the other books of the Old Testament). The apostle Paul (along with Christ Jesus and others) frequently pointed out that the Jews were not keeping the Law given through Moses (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:1-29; 3:9-20; and 7:1-8:4).] **(46) For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.** [See Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 26:22, 23; 28:23-28 (cf. Acts 3:18, 24; 7:52, 53; 10:43; 13:28-30; and 1 Pet. 1:10). There are quite a few prophecies about Christ in the Pentateuch (cf., e.g., Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Num. 24:17-19; Deut. 18:15-19 [with Acts 3:22]), and Moses' writings are full of very important types of Christ, including the sacrificial offerings that prefigure the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, especially the sacrifices of Passover (cf., e.g., Ex. 12:46 and Num. 9:12 with John 19:37) and the Day of Atonement. Furthermore, the Angel of the Lord that Moses (and others) wrote about in the Old Testament was God the Son in His preincarnate state (cf., e.g., Gen. 18:1-33; 22:1-19). (See my paper, *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son.*)] **(47) But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"**

[Compare Luke 16:29-31. I'll quote part of a paragraph from what F. Godet says under verses 45-47.²⁸ "... Every true disciple of Moses is on the way to becoming a Christian; every bad Jew is on that towards rejecting the Gospel. ... The words: *wrote of me*, allude to the Proto-gospel [Gen. 3:15], to the patriarchal promises, to the types such as that of the brazen serpent, to the Levitical ceremonies which were *the shadow of things to come* (Col. 2:17), more especially to the promise Deut. 18:8: "*I will raise up unto them a prophet like unto thee;*" – this last promise, while including the sending of all the prophets who followed Moses, finds its consummation in Jesus Christ. – *Ye would believe on me*: in me as the one whom Moses thus announced. In truth, many of the prophecies had not yet found in Jesus their fulfillment. But we must think especially of the spirit of holiness in the law of Moses and the theocratic institutions, which found in Jesus its full realization. Moses tended to awaken the sense of sin and the thirst for righteousness, which Jesus came to satisfy. 'To give access to this spirit, was to open one's heart in advance to the great life-giver' (*Gess*)."]

²⁸ *Gospel of John* (Zondervan, 1969 reprint), page 490.

JOHN CHAPTER 6

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias [cf. John 21:1]). [John didn't mention Jesus' (and His disciples') return to Galilee after the events that took place in Jerusalem mentioned in chapter 5. The feeding of the five thousand men (plus women and children) that is discussed here in John 6:1-13 is also discussed in Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; and Luke 9:10-17. Apparently Jesus crossed over to the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee, by the Golan Heights.²⁹] **(2) A large crowd followed Him** [They followed Him "to the other side of the Sea of Galilee."], **because they saw the signs** ["or *attesting miracles*" (margin of NASB); cf., e.g., John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 6:14, 30; 11:47; 12:18, 37; and 20:30, 31] **which He was performing on those who were sick.** [Some (many) of the people who followed Jesus as He ministered in Galilee (and elsewhere) didn't really see *signs*, *signs* that pointed them to the fact that they needed to repent and submit (in faith) to Jesus, the Messiah, the only Savior, who could save them from their sins; they just saw miracles that could meet their physical needs (cf., e.g., John 6:26).³⁰] **(3) Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples** [cf. John 6:15]. **(4) Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.** [This is the second of three Passovers mentioned in the Gospel of John; the other two are mentioned in John 2:13, 23 and in 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; and 18:28.³¹] **(5) Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him** [cf. John 6:2], **said to Philip** [Philip was one of the twelve apostles (cf. John 1:43-48; 6:7; 12:21, 22; 14:8, 9; and Matt. 10:3).], **"Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"** [Matt. 14:14, 15; Mark 6:34, 35 show that Jesus had been teaching and healing the people for many hours before He brought up the topic of feeding them.] **(6) This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. (7) Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii** [cf. Mark 6:37; "The denarius was equivalent to a day's wages" (margin of NASB)] **worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.**" [Verse ten shows that the number of men was about five thousand; Matt. 14:21 confirms that women and children were to be added to this number; the total number of people could have been ten to twenty thousand.] **(8) One of His disciples, Andrew** [cf. John 1:35-42; Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; and Luke 5:2-11], **Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, (9) "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves** [John's account was the only one that mentioned that the loaves were made of *barley*.] **and two fish** [cf. Matt. 14:17, 19; Mark 6:38, 41; and Luke 9:13, 16], **but what are these for so many people?" (10) Jesus said, "Have the people sit down."** **Now there was much grass in the place** [cf. Mark 6:39]. **So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. (11)**

²⁹ I'll quote a sentence from what J. Carl Laney says here (*John* [Moody Press, 1992], page 119, "The location of the miracle is described in the synoptic gospels as in a deserted place (Mark 6:35 [45]) near Bethsaida (Luke 9:10), a reference to Bethsaida-Julia located on the northeast shore of the sea (cf. John 1:44 [and John 12:21])."

³⁰ The context in which the chief priest and Pharisees used the Greek noun (*sēmeion*) translated "signs" in John 11:47 shows that they were using the word in the sense of *miracle*. They certainly didn't believe that the miracles Jesus performed were *signs* that should cause men to look to Him as being sent from God; they didn't believe in Jesus; some of them claimed that He worked miracles by the power of Satan.

³¹ See under John 2:13 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54.

Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. (12) When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost.” (13) So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. (14) Therefore when the people saw the sign [On “the sign,” see under verse 2] which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world [cf. John 1:19-25; 7:40-42; and Deut. 18:15-19; the first two references cited demonstrate that *the Prophet* wasn’t always equated with *the Messiah*.]” (15) So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain [cf. John 6:3] by Himself alone [cf. verses 16-21]. [It is clear that Jesus didn’t appreciate the misdirected, fleshly zeal of the people. They were going to take matters into their own hands, take Him by force, and make Him king. Most of them were probably looking for Him to deliver them from the Romans; they were not looking for a King to call them to repentance and save them from their sin(s). Verses 26-30, for example, show that most of the people didn’t really believe in (have faith in) Jesus. His kingdom is not of this world (cf., e.g., John 18:36), but He will return as King to save and glorify His own and to judge this world and its god.] (16) [Compare Matt. 14:22-34 (this account in Matthew includes Peter’s walking on the water); Mark 6:45-53] Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, (17) and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. [Compare John 6:24. Matthew 14:34 and Mark 6:53 mention that they landed at Gennesaret. I’ll quote two sentences from what W. W. Buehler says under “Genneseret, Land of.”³² “Genneseret is a coastal plain about 5 km. (3 mi.) long and 1.5 km. (1 mi.) wide, extending from Magdala [which was south of Capernaum] to just S of Capernaum. Sheltered from the wind by mountains and lying 210 m. (682 ft.) below sea level, it consists of well-watered alluvial soil and enjoys a subtropical climate.”] It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. (18) The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. (19) Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles [“Lit. 25 or 30 stadia” (margin of NASB). I’ll quote two sentences from what F. F. Bruce says here,³³ “A ‘furlong’ (Greek *stadion*) was rather less than our modern furlong; they had rowed about three miles. From the neighborhood of Bethsaida across the lake to Capernaum would be about five miles.”], they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. (20) But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid [“Or *stop being afraid*” (margin of NASB); cf. Matt. 14:26, 27; Mark 6:49, 50].” (21) So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. [John is the only Gospel writer who mentioned the apparent miracle that “immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.”] (22) The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea [referring to the crowd that had seen the miraculous multiplication of food; they were still at the location where Jesus had worked the miracle] saw that there was no other small boat there, except one [the boat in which Jesus and His disciples had crossed to the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee to begin with (cf. Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:32; and John 6:1) and in which the disciples had left to cross over

³² *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, fully revised, Vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1982), page 443.

³³ *Gospel of John*, page 148.

to Capernaum, which was on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee (cf. John 6:16, 17).], **and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. (23) There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks** [cf. John 6:11]. [I'll quote two sentences from what J. Carl Laney says here,³⁴ "By the time the crowds realized that Jesus was gone, some boatmen had arrived from Tiberias, the capital of Galilee, from which Herod Antipas ruled. Tiberias was located along the southwest shore of the lake, about a seven-mile boat ride from Capernaum."] **(24) So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum** [cf. John 6:17] **seeking Jesus.** [Undoubtedly a large number of the people who had followed Jesus to the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee went back the same way they had come, by walking.] **(25) When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" (26) Jesus answered them and said** [Jesus didn't answer their question as to when (or how) He had gotten to Capernaum.], **"Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me** [In verse 24 it says they were *seeking Jesus*.], **not because you saw signs** [They had seen miracles, but not signs that pointed them to their need to repent and submit (in faith) to Christ Jesus, the only One who could save them and give them eternal life. On *signs*, see verses 2, 14, 30; see under verse 2 (including the footnote) and under verse 30.

I'll quote part of what F. Godet says here,³⁵ "The multitudes interpreted the multiplication of the loaves [and fish] as the beginning of a series of wonders *of the same nature*, the inauguration of an era of miracles more and more brilliant and satisfying to the flesh. 'Instead of seeing,' as Lange says, 'in the bread the sign, they had seen in the sign only the bread.' This gross want of understanding is what gives to their search for Jesus a false, earthly, sensual, animal character. This tendency it is which Jesus points out to them from the very first word of the conversation, and particularly by the expression which betrays a sort of disgust: *and because you were filled*. What a difference between these people, who come with their gross aspirations, their earthly appetites, and the spiritual Israel which the Old Testament was intended to prepare and which cries out: 'My soul thirsts after thee, oh living God!' This Israel would say to Him who multiplied the loaves: Give us more still! Do today for our hearts what thou didst yesterday for our bodies!"] **, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (27) Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food** [spiritual, heavenly food] **which endures to eternal life** [cf., e.g., Isa. 55:1-5; Matt. 6:33; John 3:15-17, 36; 4:10-15; 6:40, 47-58, 63; 10:28; and 17:2, 3], **which the Son of Man** [see under John 5:27] **will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal** [To say the Father has "set His seal" on the Lord Jesus Christ is to say that He has testified to His genuineness (cf., e.g., John 5:31-47); His seal guarantees the authenticity of Christ Jesus.]" [In a way that is typical for the Gospel of John, Jesus exhorts His hearers to repent, to find out who He is (God the Son, the Messiah, the Lamb of God), and to submit (in faith) to Him, to the One who sent Him (and the One who testifies of Him and has set His seal on Him), and to the gospel of salvation.] **(28) Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" (29) Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe**³⁶ **in** [Greek

³⁴ *John*, page 126.

³⁵ *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Zondervan, 1969 reprint), page 18.

³⁶ The present tense of the verb *believe* used here confirms what we should have known anyway, that we must continue to believe in Christ.

preposition *eis*] **Him whom He has sent.**” [Compare 1 John 3:23. First we must believe in (submit in faith to) the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe in Him includes believing in the One who sent Him and believing all that is revealed about Him and the plan of salvation that centers in Him. Any works that are done while refusing to submit (from the heart in faith) to the One sent by the Father cannot be acceptable works, and such works can never bring about the new birth, which provides the power to overcome sin. The New Testament makes it quite clear that works of righteousness must be manifested (and that we will be judged according to our works)—but first things first. First we must be forgiven and born again through (and in union with) Christ; then we can do the required works of righteousness (with the victory over sin) by His grace/Spirit through faith and for His glory. If the faith is real the works will be manifested in a righteous life that is lived in accordance with the will of God (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 2:14-26; Rev. 2:5, 26; and 3:1-4). I’ll quote a sentence from what J. H. Bernard says here,³⁷ “This mystical doctrine of union with Christ [by the Spirit] is the core of the Fourth Gospel; see, for earlier statements of it, 3:15, 36 and the notes there.”

I’ll quote a paragraph from what Gerald L. Borchert says under verses 27-29,³⁸ “The interplay between working and believing is crucial to the concept of salvation in John. On the one hand, a person cannot earn acceptability with God by working for it. On the other hand, acceptability with God cannot be on the basis of ‘belief’ in a mere theological formulation about God. Thus the noun ‘faith’ (*pistis*) does not occur in John’s Gospel.³⁹ [The noun *faith* is an *action* noun; very often this noun (as it is used in the New Testament) is full of action. Having faith in God (the triune God) includes making Him, His word, His righteousness, His salvation, and His will top priority. Those who have faith in God trust Him and they obey Him. They have the right priorities, attitudes, and motives. See the second to last sentence in the preceding paragraph, and see the use of this noun throughout Hebrews chapter 11 for many examples of the fact that *faith* is a noun full of action. In general there is no difference between *believing* in God and His Word and *having faith* in God and His Word.] He chose instead to use only the verb ‘believe’ (*pisteuein*), and he almost equated it with ‘obey’ (cf. 3:36). ...believing and obeying are parallel ways one acknowledges dependence on God. As the Son always responded appropriately to the Father, people are to respond to the Son, who was sent by the Father (6:29). That is precisely the way John understood the call of Jesus to the Jews here.”] **(30) So they said to Him, “What then do You do for a sign [cf., e.g., John 2:18; 6:2, 14, 26; Matt. 12:38-42; and 1 Cor. 1:22], so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?** [The apostle John makes it very clear in this Gospel that Jesus taught that saving faith must be based on more than signs. Jesus knew what was in the hearts of people (cf. John 2:23-25). (Faith is of the heart.) He knew, for one thing, that many would not become true believers no matter how many signs, or how great the signs He worked.

As His questioners continue in the next verse (verse 31), they remind Jesus that God gave the spectacular sign of manna from heaven when Moses led the people, heavenly bread that God provided throughout the years of the wilderness wanderings for the people of Israel on their way to the promised land. They are demanding a comparable

³⁷ *Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1 (T&T Clark, 1999 printing), page 192.

³⁸ *John 1-11* (Broadman & Holman, 2002), pages 262, 263.

³⁹ Borchert has a footnote, “Note, however, the untypical use of *pistis* at 1 John 5:4.”

(or greater) sign from Jesus before they submit to Him in faith.⁴⁰] **(31) Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness** [cf. Ex. 16:1-36; Num. 11:1-9; and John 6:49]; **as it is written, ‘HE [GOD] GAVE THEM BREAD [physical bread] OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’**” [Compare Ex. 16:4, 15; Neh. 9:15; Psalms 78:24; and 105:40. I’ll quote two sentences from what Henry Alford says here,⁴¹ “The manna was extolled by the Jews as the greatest miracle of Moses. Josephus calls it ‘a divine and wondrous food,’ see also Wisd. 16:20 [“By contrast, thy own people were given angels’ food, and thou didst send them from heaven, without labour of their own, bread ready to eat, rich in delight of every kind and suited to every taste” (quoting Wisdom of Solomon 16:20 from the apocrypha section of the NEB)].”] **(32) Jesus then said to them, “Truly [Amen], truly [amen], I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven [true, spiritual, heavenly bread], but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.** [I don’t believe Jesus was making the point here that it was God, not Moses, who gave Israel the manna when Moses was leading the people of Israel.⁴² I don’t believe Jesus needed to make that point: His hearers would have agreed that God gave Israel the manna. When Jesus spoke of “the bread out of heaven” here in John 6:32 (cf. John 6:33, 35, 41, 58), He was speaking of “the true bread out of heaven”; that is, He was speaking of Himself and the salvation He came to give to those who submit to Him in faith. His opponents did not agree that Jesus was the true bread out of heaven or that He had the right to call God “My Father” (cf. John 5:17, 18). Jesus goes on to speak of the *true bread out of heaven* in verses 33-58.] **(33) For the bread of God [true, spiritual, heavenly bread. “The bread of God is synonymous with the ‘bread of heaven’ [of verse 32] (cf. ‘kingdom of heaven’ in Matt., versus ‘kingdom of God’ in Mark and Luke).”⁴³] is that which comes down out of heaven** [cf. John 6:32, 41, 50], **and gives life to the world.”** [God the Son literally *came down from/out of heaven* (cf., e.g., John 1:14; 3:13, 31; 6:38, 42) to become the God-man, the Lamb of God, the Savior. He gives life to the world (see John 6:27). I’ll quote John 6:48, 51, 58, “I am the bread of life.” “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” “This is the bread that came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.” I’ll quote a sentence from what C. K. Barrett says here,⁴⁴ “That Christ is the life-giving bread is constantly affirmed in this discourse; that Christ gives life to the world is the central thought of the gospel; ‘bread’, ‘water’, ‘vine’, ‘birth’, etc., are means by which it is conveyed.”] **(34) Then they said to Him, “Lord, always [“from now on” NIV] give us this bread.”** [Compare John 4:15. The fact that they called Him “Lord” here shows that they (at least many of them) were still

⁴⁰ I’ll quote a few sentences from what Leon Morris says under verses 30-40 (*Gospel According to John*, pages 361, 362). “This section of the discourse is to be understood against the background of a Jewish expectation that, when the Messiah came, He would renew the miracle of the manna. Comfortably filled with the loaves Jesus has provided [that was yesterday], the multitude challenge Him to give them a permanent supply of bread. Jesus turns their attention to ‘the true bread’ (32), ‘the bread of God’ (33), ‘the bread of life’ (35). Their thoughts are hopelessly earthbound. He seeks to raise them to heaven and to that eternal life which is inextricably linked with himself.”

⁴¹ *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 2 (Baker, 1983 reprint), page 518.

⁴² Most commentators believe Jesus was making that point here, but not Godet, Lenski, and others. I’ll quote John 6:32 from *Today’s English Version*, “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus said, ‘What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven.’”

⁴³ D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, page 287.

⁴⁴ *Gospel According to St. John* (Westminster Press, 1978), page 291.

showing Him some respect, but this term doesn't mean what we mean when we call Jesus *Lord*. The NIV translates "Sir." Their calling Him "Lord" here had nothing to do with acknowledging that He was God the Son and deity, or that He had come down out of heaven (cf., e.g., John 6:41, 42). Many (most) of them weren't even convinced that He was a man of God. They were asking Him to work a miracle mighty enough to convince them that He was who He claimed to be. Here in verse 34 (in context with verses 30-33), they were asking Jesus to provide something comparable with (or greater than) the daily supply of manna of Moses' day.] **(35) Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger** ["will never go hungry" NIV. Jesus was speaking of *coming* to Him in faith (believing). There is no substantial difference between *not hungering* and *not thirsting* here in verse 35.], **and he who believes in Me will never thirst** [cf. John 4:14; 7:37-39]. [This is not what they were expecting to hear. For most of them it sounded like blasphemous heresy. Verses 41-43 show that Jesus' saying He was the bread that came down out of heaven caused the Jews to grumble. Verse 60 shows that many of His "disciples" could not accept this teaching after Jesus elaborated on what He meant by these words.] **(36) But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe** [cf., e.g., John 6:30]. **(37) All that the Father gives Me** [cf. John 6:39; 17:2, 24] **will come to Me** [An important part of what Jesus was saying here was that He wasn't at all surprised that so many of the Jews were failing to believe in Him (to submit to Him in faith), because He knew that many of those Jews were not truly people of God the Father, not true believers (cf., e.g., John 2:23-25; 5:38-47; 6:44, 45; 8:19, 21, 24, 39-47, 54, 55), and that the Father had not given them to Him. Why would the Father lead unbelieving Jews to His Son? The exception to this rule—a very important exception, an exception that also applies to unbelieving, sinful Gentiles—is that the Father did lead many unbelieving Jews to His Son, knowing their hearts, and knowing that they would repent and become true believers, true believers in the Son and in the One who Sent Him. Even though they weren't true believers or living for God, He knew that they would become true believers and begin to live for Him in truth and righteousness by His grace/Spirit through Christ and new-covenant salvation.], **and the one who comes to Me** [There is a strong emphasis on the role of God (the sovereign God) in working out His plan of salvation in verses 37-51, but the fact that people have a free will⁴⁵ and that they must repent, learn of God's new-covenant plan of salvation, and submit to (appropriate and cooperate with) the grace of God in faith is also included. People must submit to God to hear from Him and be taught by Him (see verse 45 ["It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me"]).⁴⁶ They must believe/have faith in Christ (see verses 29, 47); they must appropriate/partake of/eat of the bread of life by faith (see verses 48-58). It is also understood that those who come to Him (by grace through faith) must remain with Him (by grace through faith)—we must continue in faith to the end to be saved.

It is very important for us to seek God for the balanced truth of what the Scriptures teach on God's role and our role in our salvation (and on every other topic, especially

⁴⁵ After the fall the will of man is still free to some extent to respond to God and His grace.

⁴⁶ The words of verse 45b were especially applicable for the Jews of the generation that Jesus ministered to on the earth. Those who were true believers had been hearing and learning from the Father. It was easy for Him to lead such Jews to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 3:24).

those topics that are the most important). I have discussed this topic, aiming for the balanced viewpoint in several papers.⁴⁷] **I will certainly not cast out.** [Jesus certainly will receive those who have been given to Him by God the Father, who come to Him in repentance and faith. For one thing, as the next two verses show, He came down from heaven to do the Father’s will.] **(38) For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me** [cf. John 4:34; 5:30]. **(39) This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me** [cf. John 6:37; 17:2, 24] **I lose nothing** [cf. John 17:12; 18:9], **but raise it up on the last day** [cf. John 6:40, 44, 54; 11:24]. [As I mentioned, when commenting on verse 39 in my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*, “This verse certainly emphasizes God’s role in our salvation. If this was all the Bible had to say on the subject, I would still believe in eternal security [once saved, necessarily always saved].” When I became a born-again Christian essentially every born-again Christian I knew believed once saved, always saved, and I accepted that doctrine as part of the package, and I could cite a few verses to “prove” that doctrine, including this verse. But after spending quite a bit of time studying what the Bible has to say on the subject, I had to abandon that doctrine. It seems clear to me that there are many passages in the New Testament that clearly demonstrate that born-again believers can lose their salvation through failing to press on in faith. Believers can become unbelievers. Although God takes the initiative in our salvation, He doesn’t give us saving faith (see my *A Paper on Faith*), and He doesn’t make us continue in faith to the end, but His grace is more than sufficient to keep us if we do our part of continuing to look to Him in faith (continuing to appropriate and cooperate with His saving grace).

⁴⁷ Start with the first footnote under Col. 3:12 in my paper that includes Colossians 1:15-3:17 on my internet site. [I’ll include part of that footnote, which I will update here: See pages 20-24 and the relevant parts of the appendix I added to that paper, starting at the bottom of page 25 of my paper “Once Saved, Always Saved?” All of these papers are on my internet site. See my “A Paper on Faith” (much of the content of that paper is relevant to this topic; start with the Introduction). See under Eph. 1:3-14 and Rom. 8:28-30, and see the excerpts from Norman Geisler’s “Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election” in my paper that deals with Ephesians chapters 1 and 4 and Rom. 8:16-39. See under 2 Pet. 1:10 in my paper on 2 Peter. See the Introduction to my paper on Romans chapters 9-11, and most of the section of that paper that deals with Romans chapter 9 is relevant to this topic, and some of the sections dealing with Romans chapters 10 and 11 (especially see under Rom. 11:17-36).] Some Christians overstate the sovereign role of God by denying that man has a role in salvation; some even deny that God’s choice of individuals has anything to do with His foreknowledge of the individuals (since, according to their viewpoint, all are so totally depraved that they have no capacity to have faith or to cooperate with God’s grace—this is the “U” of the Calvinistic TULIP, *unconditional* election). Other Christians understate God’s sovereign role in our salvation and overstate our role. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. For one thing, we can unite around the balanced truth.

I’ll quote a paragraph from what J. Carl Laney says under this verse (*John* [Moody Press, 1992], page 128). “Verse 37 presents a delicate balance between divine sovereignty and man’s response with regard to salvation. Divine sovereignty is reflected in the first phrase, ‘All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.’ Believers are given to Christ by the Father’s sovereign determination. Human response is reflected in the second phrase, ‘Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.’ These statements strongly affirm the two great truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Believers, however, tend to embrace one to the neglect of the other, and theologians rarely embrace the seemingly contradictory concepts with equal enthusiasm.” In my opinion there are no “contradictory concepts” if we take the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this topic. The Bible doesn’t reveal exactly where the balance is between God’s role and man’s role, but it makes it clear that man has a definite role. We must emphasize God’s role and give Him all the glory for our salvation, but we cannot eliminate man’s role—we must do the things the sovereign God requires of us, which are comprehended in the words *repentance* and *faith*.

God's will isn't always done! God doesn't ever will for His people to give themselves to sin and to turn from Him in their hearts and become unbelievers,⁴⁸ but He didn't create robots (we are free moral agents; our wills are still free to some extent after the fall, and we must respond to and cooperate with the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus on a continuous basis), and, although He sent His Son to die for us and gave us the Holy Spirit to *enable* us to be faithful to Him and righteous, He doesn't *force* us to be faithful to Him and righteous. See *Once Saved, Always Saved?* and the other references mentioned above in footnote 47.

I'll quote what I said under John 6:39 on pages 38-40 of my *Paper on Faith*. "This verse puts all the emphasis on God's role in our salvation. If this verse (and several verses like it, including 6:44, 65) was not balanced out by much other Scripture, you would have to say that man doesn't have much of a role (if any role) in God's salvation plan. However, there is much Scripture that emphasizes our role. This paper is filled with such passages, as is the paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* As discussed in that paper, the Bible (in common with other ancient Jewish writings like the Dead Sea Scrolls) sometimes makes statements that seem to teach that man doesn't have a free will at all and God just pre-determines everything, but as you keep on reading you find that this assumption was inadequate and man does have something of free will and is responsible to do the things required of him.

The Bible doesn't fully satisfy our curiosity and give us the full balanced truth in this area. However, our lack of complete revelation/information in this area doesn't give us the right to just emphasize those verses that emphasize God's part and ignore the much greater number of verses that emphasize man's responsibility to do his part. And, of course, we don't want to overemphasize man's part. God is sovereign. We don't earn salvation in any sense - it is all of grace. And God must receive all the glory. Much of the paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* is relevant to this topic and should be read in conjunction with this present paper [*A Paper on Faith*].

In *Once Saved, Always Saved?* I quoted from D. A. Carson (*Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*). I believe he sees the balanced truth in this area better than most. Here I'll quote from another of his works (Vol. 8 of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1984] under Matthew 13:13) where he deals with the same topic. He is discussing the Parable of the Sower. 'Biblical writers in both the OT and the NT have, on the whole, fewer problems about the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility than do many moderns. This is not because they fail to distinguish purpose and consequence [result], as many affirm (e.g., Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 142), but because they do not see divine sovereignty and human responsibility as antitheses [thoughts in opposition]. In short they are compatibilists and therefore juxtapose the two themes with little self-conscious awareness of any problem (cf. Gen. 50:19-20; Judg. 14:4; Isa. 10:5-7; Hag. 1:12-14; John 11:49-52; cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*). ... Thus, even though he [Mark in Mark 4:11, 12] records Jesus' answer in terms of election [which tends to put all the emphasis on God's role], Mark does not thereby mean to absolve the outsiders of all responsibility. How could he, in the light of the interpretation of the parable of the sower he records (4:13-20), his record of John's [John the Baptist's] demand for repentance (1:4), and much more? Matthew has taken up these themes in greater detail because he wishes simultaneously to affirm that what is taking place in the ministry of Jesus is, on the one hand, the decreed will of God and the result of biblical prophecy and, on the other hand, a terrible rebellion, gross spiritual dullness, and chronic unbelief. This places the responsibility for the divine rejection of those who fail to become disciples on their

⁴⁸ "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). The sins of God's people, by definition, go against God and His perfect will. God is sovereign and He is in control. The sins of people (or the sins of the devil) will never catch God by surprise or cause Him to lose sovereign control. But God clearly leaves room for people to go against His perfect will.

own shoulders while guaranteeing that none of what is taking place stands outside God's sovereign control and plan.'

This may be an appropriate place to mention that God has set things up in such a way that His perfect will (when it comes to individuals) isn't always accomplished; He leaves some room for men (and angels) to determine their own destiny. See, e.g., 1 Tim. 2:3-6; Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Pet. 3:9. [2 Pet. 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." "All" refers, at least for the most part, to Christians who need to repent. These words come across in a more powerful way when it is recognized that they are aimed (at least for the most part) at Peter's *Christian* readers. Two commentators that I recommend on this verse are: R. J. Bauckham (Volume 50 of the *Word Biblical Commentary*) and D. J. Moo (*NIV Application Commentary* on 2 Peter and Jude). I doubt that the unbelief and rebellion of God's people ever fits in the category of being in His perfect will."] **(40) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life** [Compare, for example, John 1:12, 13; 3:15, 16, 36; and 5:24-26. Contrast John 6:36. Believing (having faith) in the Son is something *we* do as we respond to His grace and continue on in His grace.], **and I Myself will raise him up on the last day** [cf. John 6:39].” **(41) Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.”** [See verses 32-35.] **(42) They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’”** [They were thinking that the fact that Jesus had been born of Mary (and of Joseph, so they thought) proved that He had not “come down out of heaven.” But, as John has already demonstrated in 1:1-18 (and other verses), Jesus was born of the virgin Mary—He was deity, God the Son, who had become the God-man. Jesus undoubtedly knew that His opponents would not have accepted it if He had stopped to discuss His virgin birth, etc. with them. Besides that, God the Father determined *what* information was to be revealed and *when* and *to whom* it was to be revealed. Many things were not revealed to the apostles until after Jesus was raised from the dead.] **(43) Jesus answered and said to them, “Do not grumble among yourselves** [cf. John 7:12]. **(44) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him** [Compare John 6:65 (“And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father’) and John 12:32. See above under John 6:37-40. What Jesus went on to say in verse 45 helped show what He meant here in verse 44. Verse 45 shows a lot about *what* Jews the Father chose to draw to His Son and *how* He drew them. It shows that He drew those who were true believers, which they had demonstrated by submitting to Him and His word and learning from Him (cf., e.g., John 5:37-47).⁴⁹

It was easy for the Father to draw such people to Christ (since they were submitted to Him and His word), and it was appropriate that He would draw them—they were His people, true believers. He used His word, which prophesied of Christ Jesus and showed the Jews of their need for new-covenant salvation,⁵⁰ to draw them to Him. I'll quote a sentence from what Merrill C. Tenney says here,⁵⁰ “Verse 45 indicates that God would do his drawing through the Scriptures and that those who were obedient to God's will as revealed in the Scriptures would come to Jesus.” The Father also used His ministers, especially John the Baptist, to point the Jews to Christ; He used miraculous signs (which were all the

⁴⁹ Under 6:37 I pointed out that the Father also drew many others to Christ, including many Gentiles.

⁵⁰ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 (Zondervan, 1981), page 76.

more important in that God's word had prophesied that He would do these signs); and, significantly, He drew by His Spirit.

Above, under verse 39, I quoted from my *A Paper on Faith*; John 6:44, 45, 65 are in that paper too. These verses from John chapter 6 are discussed there (along with quite a few other verses from the New Testament) under the heading "Some Verses that Have Been Used to Try to Show that God Just Gives Saving Faith." God's *drawing* people to Christ is very different than His *giving saving faith* to people. Faith is something *we* do in response to God's grace, which includes His drawing.

I'll quote part of what Gerald L. Borchert says under verses 43-48,⁵¹ "Solutions to such problems [Borchert has been speaking of the debates Calvinists and Arminians have over the interpretation of these verses (which applies to other verses too)] normally is best found in a modified Arminian-Calvinistic position that maintains the biblical tension of the divine and human aspects of salvation found in the text. Salvation is never achieved apart from the drawing power of God, and it is never consummated apart from the willingness of humans to hear and learn from God. To choose one or the other will ultimately end in unbalanced, unbiblical theology.⁵² Such a solution will generally not please either doctrinaire [dogmatic] Calvinists nor Arminians, both of whom will seek to emphasize certain words or texts and exclude from consideration [explain away] other texts and words." One thing we need is for both sides in this dispute (and in many other theological disputes) to humble themselves and seriously consider the possibility that they could be out of balance (the biblical balance) and to seek God for the balanced truth—Christians can really unite around the balanced truth; how precious is the balanced truth of what the Scriptures teach! We may not know exactly where the balanced truth is on this particular topic (I don't believe the Bible tells us exactly where the balance is; it doesn't answer every question), but we should be able to see that we are out of balance if we are and to see that the truth includes acknowledging God's sovereignty and man's responsibility to do the things required of them as free (somewhat free after the fall) moral agents. The word *faith* (when it is understood in a broad sense) pretty well covers what God requires of us—you could say repentance and faith.]; **and I will raise him up on the last day** [cf. John 6:39, 40, 54]. **(45) It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.'** [See Isa. 54:13; cf. Jer. 31:34.] **Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.** [See under verse 44.] **(46) Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.** [Compare John 1:18. If people (fallen man) could have an intimate, life-flowing relationship with God on their own and were able to see Him as He is, they wouldn't need the new-covenant salvation that can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Lamb of God, "the One who is from God" and who "has seen the Father."] **(47) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes** [in Christ and the One who sent Him] **has eternal life.** [Compare John 6:29, 35, 37, 40, 51, 58; 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24-26; and 11:25, 26. The *believing* here is continuous action (present "tense" in the Greek); we must, of course, continue to believe in Christ to continue to partake of eternal life in and through Him.] **(48) I am the bread of life** [cf. John 6:27, 32, 33, 35, 40, 47, 50, 51, 53-58]. **(49) Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they**

⁵¹ *John 1-11*, pages 268, 269.

⁵² Borchert has a footnote, "As I argued in *Assurance and Warning*, in most texts there continues to be an unresolved tension that must be recognized. At times one aspect needs to be stressed, and at other times the other aspect should be stressed."

died [See verses 30-33, 58.]. **(50) This** [referring to the true heavenly bread, not the manna of old] **is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die** [cf. John 6:27, 32, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53-58]. **(51) I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also** [The Greek behind “and the bread also” is *kai ho artos de*. I’ll quote part of what Marcus Dods says regarding the meaning of these words here, starting with “and,”⁵³ “...linked to the foregoing by a double conjunction [*kai* and *de*], ‘and besides’ indicating...a new aspect or expansion of what has been said.’ J. H. Bernard mentions that this construction “introduces a new point, hitherto unmentioned.”⁵⁴ The NEB translates, “Moreover, the bread...”; the *Amplified Bible* has, “and also the Bread...”] **which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**” [What Jesus says with the first words of this verse (“I am the living bread that came down out to heaven”) repeats a dominant theme of verses 26-50. The second set of words (“if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever”) is right in line with what He has been saying in verses 26-50, but here in verses 50, 51 He specifically mentions the *eating* of this bread of life for the first time. *Eating* is symbolic language that goes along with the symbolic language of referring to Jesus and new-covenant salvation as *the living bread*.⁵⁵ Eating this living bread means the same thing as believing in Christ and appropriating full salvation through, and in union with, Him by faith.

With the last words of this verse (starting with the word “and”), Jesus adds a very important detail to what He has been saying: He goes on to refer to His all-important atoning death, which He hasn’t specifically mentioned so far in chapter 6. His atoning death was a central feature of God’s plan of salvation that enabled Jesus to become living bread that would give life to the world (to all who would appropriate that salvation/life by faith). In offering Himself to die (to die physically) as the Lamb of God (in accordance with God’s plan of salvation), He was *giving His flesh for the life of the world* (cf., e.g., John 1:29, 36; 2:19-22; 3:14, 15; 10:11, 15, 17, 18; 12:31-33; Heb. 10:1-20, 29; and 1 Pet. 2:24, 25).

It could be relevant (many commentators believe that it is relevant) that these things recorded in John chapter 6, including the words spoken by Jesus, took place near the time of Passover (John 6:4): A year later, at Passover, on the very day the sacrificial lambs were being slain in the temple, the Lamb of God was slain at Jerusalem—He is The Passover Lamb. We must partake/eat of the spiritual bread/food that has resulted from His atoning death to be saved. Jesus goes on to speak of partaking/eating of Him and the fruit of His atoning death in verses 53-58. It must be understood that Jesus’ hearers, even including His disciples, did not understand His atoning death (or His resurrection) yet.

I’ll quote part of what F. F. Bruce says here,⁵⁶ “To give one’s flesh can scarcely mean anything other than death, and the wording here points to a death which is both voluntary (‘I will give’) and vicarious (‘for the life of the world’). ...we may think of the voluntary and vicarious self-offering of the Servant of the LORD in Isa. 52:13-53:12. The Servant’s death was to bring blessing to ‘the many’ (Isa. 53:11f.), from Israel and the Gentiles alike (cf. Isa. 49:6); so

⁵³ *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. 1 (Eerdman’s, 1974 reprint), page 757.

⁵⁴ *Gospel According to John*, Vol. 1, page 208.

⁵⁵ I’ll quote a sentence from what J. Carl Laney says here (*John*, page 130), “Eating is a metaphor for appropriation and assimilation (cf. Ezek. 3:1-4; Rev. 10:8-11).”

⁵⁶ *Gospel of John*, page 158.

Jesus takes the widest view of those who are to benefit by his death: he will give his flesh 'for the life of the world.'"] (52) **Then the Jews** [cf. John 6:41] **began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"** [As it so often happened, Jesus' hearers understood His words in a literal sense when He was speaking in a non-literal, figurative sense. "Their mistake lay in thinking of a physical eating."⁵⁷] (53) **So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man** [On "Son of Man," see John 6:27.] **and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.** [Right in line with what Jesus had been saying in verses 26-52 (and with what He would go on to say in verses 54-58), He was speaking here of the need to have faith in Him and partake (by faith) of the salvation/eternal life that He came to give, a salvation that required Him to die as the Lamb of God, bearing the sins of the world (see under verse 51). "The only possible meaning is the spiritual appropriation of Jesus Christ by faith (verse 47).... Life is found only in Christ."⁵⁸

God had commanded the Jews to not eat the meat of (clean) *animals* with the blood still in it, and they certainly were not permitted to eat (drink) blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26, 27; 17:10-14; and Acts 15:19-21, 29). Eating the flesh or drinking the blood of *humans* would have been considered far more abominable. (It is no wonder that the Jews who thought Jesus was speaking of literally eating His physical flesh and literally drinking His blood would have been offended.) This information, by itself, is enough to convince me that Jesus was speaking here, as He so often did, in a non-literal, figurative sense. His blood was literal and physical, and the new covenant was ratified on the basis of His shed blood, but the drinking of His blood (and the eating of His flesh) is non-literal, figurative language.

I'll quote part of what William Hendricksen says under verses 53-58,⁵⁹ "In the history of theology attempts have been made again and again to conceive of this eating of the flesh of Christ and drinking of his blood in a physical manner. Such interpretations crumble before the following arguments:

a. The passage in which Jesus, by implication, urges the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood is clearly a *mashal*.⁶⁰ Such veiled sayings always require a spiritual interpretation; see pp. 124, 125.

b. If these words be interpreted in a strictly literal fashion, the only logical conclusion would be that Jesus advocated cannibalism. No one dares draw that conclusion.

c. Verse 57 clearly indicates that the phrase 'eating my flesh and drinking my blood' means 'eating *me*.' It is, accordingly, an act of personal appropriation and fellowship that is indicated. Cf. also 6:35 which shows that 'coming to me' means 'believing in me.'

d. We are told that those who eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood *remain in him and he in them* (verse 56). This, of course, cannot be true literally. It must be given a metaphorical interpretation (intimate, spiritual union with the Lord). Similarly, the result of such eating and drinking is said to be *everlasting life*. ...

The section 6:53-58 is a summary of Christ's teaching with reference to the bread of life. Nearly every clause and phrase appears elsewhere in this Gospel. [Hendricksen goes on for a page illustrating this fact and further discussing the meaning of this passage.]...."

⁵⁷ Marcus Dods, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, page 757.

⁵⁸ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 5, page 111.

⁵⁹ *Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 (Baker, 1955), page 243.

⁶⁰ Hendricksen defines a *mashal* on page 124, "a paradoxical saying, a veiled and pointed remark, often in the form of a riddle."

I'll quote a sentence from what John Calvin said under this verse,⁶¹ "This sermon does not refer to the Lord's Supper, but to the continual communication which we have apart from the reception of the Lord's Supper."] **(54) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.** [Note the parallel with verse 40, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Jesus dealt extensively with receiving eternal life through submitting to Him in faith in John 6:26-58 (as He did in many other passages); see verses 27-29, 32, 33, 35, 40, 47, 50, 51, 57, 58. And He specifically mentioned *raising* believers *up on the last day*, which goes with having eternal life, in verses 39, 40, 44. I'll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here,⁶² "... In his strange words...we recognize a powerful and vivid metaphor to denote coming to him, believing in him (cf. verse 35), appropriating him by faith."

I'll also quote part of what A. T. Robertson says under verse 54,⁶³ "Some men understand Jesus here to be speaking of the Lord's Supper by prophetic forecast or rather they think that John has put into the mouth of Jesus the sacramental conception of Christianity by making participation in the bread and wine the means of securing eternal life. To me that is a violent misinterpretation of the Gospel and an utter misrepresentation of Christ. It is a grossly literal interpretation of the mystical symbolism of the language of Jesus these Jews also misunderstood. Christ uses bold imagery to picture spiritual appropriation of himself who is to give his life-blood for the life of the world ([verse] 51). It would have been hopeless confusion for these Jews if Jesus had used the symbolism of the Lord's Supper. [No one (not even the closest disciples) knew anything about the Lord's Supper at that time.] It would be real dishonesty for John to use this discourse as a propaganda for sacramentalism. The language of Jesus can only have a spiritual meaning as he unfolds himself as the true manna."] **(55) For My flesh is true food** [Jesus spoke of the same true "food" in verse 27 ("the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you"), and He spoke of the same true food, using the word "bread," in verses 32-35, 48, 50, 51, and 58; cf. verses 41, 42. In verse 32 Jesus spoke of Himself as "the true bread out of heaven." Note that Jesus goes on to speak of "true drink" with the last words of this verse (verse 55).], **and My blood is true drink.** [By mentioning His blood, Jesus put even more emphasis on His atoning death.] **(56) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.** [What Jesus said in verses 53-56 conveyed the same message as what He said in verses 26-51 about His being the bread of life and the need to believe in Him to appropriate the salvation/eternal life He came to bring, but His using the words *flesh* and *blood* here in verses 51-56 emphasized His all-important atoning death. (As I mentioned, Jesus didn't specifically refer to His atoning death in this discourse until verse 51.) The fact that Jesus went on in verse 58 to mention the need to partake (eat) of the "bread which came down out of heaven," which spoke of the need to partake of the new-covenant salvation that was available only in and through Him, as in verses 26-51, confirms that He is speaking of the same thing here in verses 53-56, but using the words *flesh* and *blood* instead of *bread*. So too, Jesus' speaking of *our abiding in Him and He in us* in this verse is typical language for partaking of new-covenant salvation through union with the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith (cf., e.g., John 15:4-7; 17:23; Col. 1:27; 1 John 2:24; 3:24; and 4:15, 16).

⁶¹ *Gospel According to St. John*, Part 1 (Eerdmans, 1993 reprint), page 169.

⁶² *Gospel of John*, page 159.

⁶³ *Word Pictures*, pages 111, 112.

I'll quote part of what A. T. Robertson says under this verse,⁶⁴ "The verb *menō* (to abide) expresses continual mystical fellowship [Person to person fellowship by the Spirit] between Christ and the believer as in 15:4-7; 1 John 2:6, 27, 28; 3:6, 24; 4:12, 16. There is, of course, no reference to the Lord's Supper (Eucharist), but simply to mystical fellowship with Christ."

I'll also quote a paragraph from what F. Godet says under verses 56, 57,⁶⁵ "By drinking by faith at the fountain of the expiation [atonement] obtained by the blood of Christ and by nourishing oneself through the Spirit on the life realized in His flesh, we contract a union with Him through which His person dwells in us and we in it. This *dwelling* of the believer in Jesus is for his moral being, as it were, a transplanting...into the new soil which the perfect righteousness and the holy strength of Christ offer him: renunciation of all merit, all force, all wisdom derived from what belongs to himself, and absolute confidence in Christ, as in Him who possesses all that is needed in order to fill the void. The *abiding* of Christ, which corresponds to this abiding of the believer in Him, expresses the real effective communication which Christ makes of His own personality ('He who eats *me*' ver. 57). This mutual relation being formed, the believer *lives*: why? This is what ver. 57 explains." **(57) As the living** [cf., e.g., John 5:26] **Father sent Me** [God the Father *sent* His unique Son into the world on an infinitely important mission, a mission that started with His virgin birth (cf., e.g., John 1:14; 3:17; 6:29, 38).], **and I live because of the Father** [God the Son had (eternal) life by virtue of who He was (cf. John 1:4), but He didn't make that point here (at least He didn't emphasize that point). Here He was reiterating what He said in verse 51, for example, about His being "the living bread that came down out of heaven," having been sent by the Father to give life to the world through His atoning death (through giving His flesh for the life of the world). In John 5:19-29, as in John 6:32, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, Jesus spoke of the fact that the Father had commissioned Him to have (eternal/spiritual) life, life that He could share with those who submit to Him in faith. God the Son could not share eternal life with men until after He had condescended to become a man (the God-man), lived a sinless life, died as the Lamb of God, and was resurrected and ascended to the right hand of the Father.], **so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me** [In other words, those who partake of new-covenant salvation in and through Christ will participate in the very eternal/spiritual life of the triune God]. **(58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven** [cf. John 6:32, 33, 38, 50, 51]; **not as the fathers ate and died** [Compare John 6:31, 49. The fathers ate the physical manna and eventually they died.]; **he who eats this bread** [Christ and new-covenant salvation in union with Him] **will live forever.**" [In this verse Jesus summarized the message that He had been conveying starting with verse 26.

Many Christians think that Jesus was teaching about partaking of His flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper here (especially in verses 51-58), and especially those who believe that Christians actually partake of the flesh and blood of Christ when they partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine. Some of them believe that was His primary subject here; others believe that He was only secondarily referring to the Lord's Supper. I agree with those commentators who don't believe that Jesus made any reference to the Lord's Supper in verses 26-58. For one thing, Jesus spoke these words a year before He was to institute the Lord's Supper on the night before His crucifixion.

⁶⁴ *Word Pictures*, page 112.

⁶⁵ *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 (Zondervan, 1969 reprint of the 1893 edition), page 37.

It is true, of course, that Jesus' teaching here has a lot in common with the Lord's Supper in that the Lord's Supper was instituted (for one primary reason) to repeatedly focus Christians' attention on the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ⁶⁶ (the true Passover Lamb has been slain) and on the new-covenant salvation that flowed out of that atoning death (He has become the true bread of life).⁶⁷ *The focus of Christianity is not to be on the Lord's Supper, but on the all-important atoning death of Christ and the new covenant that was ratified by His atoning blood to which the Lord's Supper points.* I discussed the Lord's Supper under 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:17-33 in my paper that includes 1 Corinthians chapters 10-14 on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).

The Lord's Supper is an occasion where believers are to examine themselves as to whether they are being faithful to the new covenant and to determine to make any adjustments necessary. (Of course Christians are not supposed to wait until the Lord's Supper to examine themselves and to make things right.) If "Christians" are not being faithful to God (according to the terms of the covenant) it is hypocritical for them to participate in the Lord's Supper, which commemorates that covenant which was established on the basis of the atoning death (and resurrection) of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christians are living in sin, repentance is the only satisfactory answer. The Lord's Supper is also an occasion to meditate on and to enter into all the blessings provided by that glorious covenant. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper on God's terms, He can meet with us and bless us to the maximum. His presence at the Lord's Supper should be very real and very special, but each individual Christian should know God's presence (a very real communion with Him) all the time.

It seems clear to me that what Jesus said in verses 26-58 was intended to point to the salvation/eternal life that was being made available through believing in Him, the Lamb of God. To think that He was speaking, even secondarily, of partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper confuses the issue. Partaking of the *physical* elements of the Lord's Supper cannot provide salvation and *spiritual*/eternal life—the physical elements (symbols) point to and remind us of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that does provide

⁶⁶ See 1 Cor. 11:23-34. I'll quote 1 Cor. 11:24-28, "and when He had given thanks, He broke it [the bread] and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' (25) In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (27) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. [His body was broken and His blood was shed for us in His atoning death, and the new covenant was established on the basis of His atoning death. We (eat the bread and) drink the cup "in an unworthy manner" if we drink from the *cup of the new covenant in His blood* (see 1 Cor. 11:25) while being unfaithful to and violating the terms of that covenant (through not believing and/or living in agreement with the words of that covenant).] (28) But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup." 1 Corinthians chapter 11 is discussed verse-by-verse in my paper that includes 1 Corinthians chapters 10-14.

⁶⁷ I'll quote several sentences from what Henry Alford says under verse 51 (*New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 2 [Baker, 1983 reprint], page 523). "The question *whether there is here any reference to the ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER*, has been *inaccurately put*. When cleared of inaccuracy in terms, it will mean, *Is the subject here dwelt upon the same as that which is set forth in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper?* And of this there can surely be no doubt. To the *ordinance itself*, there is here no reference; nor *could* there well have been any. But the spiritual verity which underlies the ordinance is one and the same with that here insisted on; and so considered, the discourse is, as generally treated, most important towards a right understanding of the ordinance."

salvation/eternal life for those who have been born again and are literally united with the Lord Jesus in His atoning death, resurrection, and ascension. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63).

I’ll quote a brief excerpt from what D. A. Carson says under the heading, “The ‘Bread of Life’ discourse (6:22-58).”⁶⁸ “...these verses [verses 51c-58] provide a striking metaphor that makes the teaching of the previous verses more vivid, but can scarcely be taken to introduce fundamentally new (and ‘sacramental’) meaning. ... Eating the flesh of the Son of Man is a striking, metaphorical way of saying that the gift of God’s real ‘bread of life’ (v. 35) is appropriated by faith (v. 47). ... ‘John 6 is not about the Lord’s Supper; rather, the Lord’s Supper is about what is described in John 6.’”⁶⁹

I’ll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski (a conservative Lutheran) says under verse 59,⁷⁰ “We must now answer the question whether this discourse deals only with the spiritual eating of faith or with the oral sacramental eating in the Lord’s Supper. We reply, only in the former. The eating of which Jesus speaks throughout (note for instance v. 53) is absolutely necessary for salvation. ... Secondly, the eating of which Jesus speaks is always and without exception salutary (see for instance v. 54). It is impossible to affirm this of the oral eating in the Sacrament. — Finally, it is inconceivable that Jesus should urge upon these unbelieving (v. 36) Galileans a sacrament not yet instituted and urge upon them the sacramental eating of which no one could know until the institution had taken place. ...

Recognizing the force of these facts, some seek a compromise, admitting that primarily this discourse does not deal with the Lord’s Supper, yet maintaining that secondarily or indirectly it does.” Lenski goes on for a page here discussing details and making it clear that he doesn’t agree with this “compromise.”] **(59) These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.** [I’ll quote a sentence from F. Godet here (page 42), “There was a regular meeting in the synagogue on the second, fifth and seventh days of the week (Monday, Thursday and Saturday).”] **(60) Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?** [These “disciples” were referring to what Jesus had said about His being the bread out of heaven, starting in verse 32, and especially what He said about the need to eat His flesh and drink His blood in verses 51-56. What Jesus said in response to the complaint of these “disciples” didn’t satisfy them, and “many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore” (verse 66). The point of view here (at least the primary point of view), as verse 64 shows, is that the “disciples” who withdrew never had become true disciples/believers in the first place. Verse 64 also shows that Jesus knew this from the beginning (cf. John 2:23-25).

Jesus frequently said things that were difficult. He demanded total commitment of His disciples and told them to count the cost before becoming His disciples (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:13, 14; 16:24-27; Luke 9:57-62; and 14:25-33). One necessary characteristic of true disciples is that they continue in His word, which includes obeying His word; I’ll quote John 8:31, “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.’” He wasn’t sent to gather half-committed disciples, and He knew that it was necessary for Him to shock and wake up “disciples”

⁶⁸ *Gospel According to John*, pages 276-280.

⁶⁹ Carson’s quotation was taken from C. Brown, *NIDNTT*, 2. 535.

⁷⁰ *St. John’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), pages 502, 503.

who were following Him in a half-hearted way and/or for the wrong reasons.⁷¹] **(61) But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble?** [“Does this offend you?” NIV. In Matt. 6:11 Jesus said, “And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me”; in the margin (at Matt. 6:11) the NASB has, “Or *stumble over Me.*” The Greek verb *skandalizō* is used in both verses.] **(62) What then if you see the Son of Man [cf. John 6:27, 53] ascending to where He was before?** [Jesus was going to ascend “to where He was before [cf., e.g., John 3:13, 31; 6:38],” that is, He was going back to God the Father after His crucifixion and resurrection (cf., e.g., John 3:13; 13:1; and 14:2, 3). His resurrection, ascension, and His pouring forth the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (starting on the day of Pentecost [cf. Acts 2:33]) would prove that He was the bread of life and that what He had said in verses 32-58 was true. Some disciples (true disciples) would see the resurrected Christ ascend from the Mount of Olives on His way back to the Father (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11). (More than five hundred disciples were privileged to see Christ after He was raised from the dead [cf. 1 Cor. 15:4-8].) And all true Christians know that He was raised from the dead and did ascend to heaven (they have seen with the eyes of faith): For one thing, all true Christians have received the Spirit (the Spirit in His new-covenant dimension) that Christ Jesus poured out from heaven after He ascended), thereby proving that He did “[ascend] to where He was before.” See Rom. 8:1-16, for example; translate “the Spirit is life” in 8:10, with the KJV; NKJV.] **(63) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit** [Whether we translate “spirit,” or “Spirit,” which is found in the margin of the NIV (I prefer “Spirit”), Jesus was saying that His words are of God/of the Spirit of God and that those who accept and submit to His words (in faith) will receive the eternal life (spiritual/Spiritual life, life by the Spirit) that Jesus had been speaking about in verses 26-58. I’ll quote verse 68, “Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’ ”] **and are life.** [Life (physical life and spiritual life) comes from God (and only from God) by the Spirit of life (the Holy Spirit); Jesus was speaking of spiritual/Spiritual life here, as He was in verses 26-58, and often. (See, for example, John 3:3-8; 7:37-39; Rom. 8:1-17; and 2 Cor. 3:6.) Man in the flesh is spiritually dead; that is, He does not have a life-flowing relationship with God by the Spirit. We are dependent on God for spiritual/Spiritual life—that life must come from God; it cannot come from man in the flesh, or from anywhere else.] **(64) But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.** [See under verse 60. Regarding Judas, the one “that would betray Him,” compare, for example, John 6:71, 13:2, 10, 11, 18, 21-30; 18:2, 3; and Matt. 26:6-25 (with John 12:1-8), 47-50.] **(65) And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”** [See above under verses 36-40, 44, 45. Jesus means really *come to Him* in the sense that they really become His disciples.] **(66) As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.** [See verses 60, 64, 65.] **(67) So Jesus said to the twelve** [cf. Matt. 10:2-5; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; John 6:70, 71; 20:24; and Acts 1:15-

⁷¹ In our day many prospective converts and many who have been “Christians” for a long time have not been confronted with Jesus’ call for total commitment. This is a very serious problem. We can’t change God’s gospel.

26.], **“You do not want to go away also, do you?”** [Eleven of the twelve were true disciples, and they stayed faithful to Him to the end (the end of their lives).] **(68) Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. (69) We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”** [This was a good answer! Peter and the other true disciples did not fully understand everything that Jesus said in verses 32-58 (and on other occasions; at least they did not fully understand His words at the time the words were spoken), but they were true believers (they believed, for one thing, that “[He was] the Holy One of God” [cf. Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34]), and they stayed faithful to Him (by His grace). On the “words of eternal life” (verse 68), compare John 6:63; 12:49, 50.] **(70) Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve** [The Lord Jesus had chosen Judas to be one of the twelve apostles; see under verse 67.], **and yet one of you is a devil?” (71) Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot** [I’ll quote a sentence from what D. A. Carson says regarding the meaning of the word “Iscariot.”⁷² “At least six interpretations of *Iscariot* have been advanced (cf. Carson, *Matt*, pp. 239f.), but the most likely is that the term is a transliteration of Hebrew... ‘man of Kerieth’ (there are at least two eligible villages with that name).”], **for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.** [See under verses 64, 67, and see John 13:2, 27; and 17:12. I’ll quote what Edwin A. Blum says here regarding “the twelve.”⁷³ “John’s Gospel does not record Jesus’ choice of the Twelve. He assumed his readers knew the Synoptics or common church tradition (cf. Mark 3:13-19). This choice was not to election to salvation, but was Jesus’ call to them to serve Him [as apostles].”]

⁷² *Gospel According to John*, page 304.

⁷³ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*-New Testament (Victor Books, 1983), page 298.

JOHN CHAPTER 7

After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews [“The Jews” here in verse 1, and often, refers to the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem (cf. John 5:10, 15, 16, 18; 7:13, 15; 19:38; and 20:19). Note that “the Jews” are often differentiated from other Jews (cf., e.g., John 7:12, 13, 25, 26); the words “the Jews” in verse 2 clearly is not limited to the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem.] **were seeking to kill Him** [cf. John 5:18; 7:19, 25; 8:37, 40, 44, 59; 10:31-33; and 11:53, 57]. **(2) Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths** [or, “of Tabernacles”], **was near.** [On this feast, see Lev. 23:33-43; Deut. 16:13-17. This important feast came almost exactly six months after Passover (cf. John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; and 13:1), and it came right after the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 23:5-8, 27-44).] **(3) Therefore His brothers** [Compare Matt. 12:46, 47; 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:5, 10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; and Gal. 1:19. Matt. 13:56; Mark 6:3 show that Jesus had *sisters* too.] **said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea** [Jesus’ (half) brothers, who did not yet believe in Him (see verse 5; cf. Acts 1:14), urged Him to go to Jerusalem (in Judea) where the city would be packed with people for the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles.], **so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.** [For one thing, most of His disciples in Judea would not have seen the works He had been doing in Galilee. Verse 4 shows that His brothers were challenging Him to manifest Himself openly in Jerusalem to all the Jews gathered for the feast. Verse 4 with verse 5 seems to indicate that His brothers were not at all convinced that Jesus had been doing miraculous works *of God*.] **(4) For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”** **(5) For not even His brothers were believing in Him. (6) So Jesus said to them, “My time** [the time determined by God the Father] **is not yet here** [Compare, for example, Matt. 26:18; John 7:8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; and 17:1-5. Apparently Jesus was referring to the *time* of the events that would lead to His all-important crucifixion, which would lead to His all-important resurrection and glorification and the ultimate all-important salvation of all believers and the total overthrow of all the enemies of God. When it was the Father’s time for Him to be glorified, He would *not* go to Jerusalem “in secret” (cf. John 7:10), but He would have His very public *triumphal entry* into Jerusalem and the temple and He would cleanse the temple (Matt. 21:1-16; Mark 11:1-18; and Luke 19:28-48).⁷⁴ As these references show, at that time He would be publicly manifested as the King, in accordance with the prophecy of Zech 9:9, 10.⁷⁵ His triumphal entry and crucifixion were still about six months in the future, at the Feast of Passover. Jesus had already manifested Himself in significant ways in Jerusalem (cf. John 2:13-25; 5:1-47) and in Judea (cf. John 3:22-4:3).], **but your time is always opportune. (7) The world cannot hate you** [At that time His brothers were functioning as part of the world system.], **but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.** [The part of the *world* that Jesus confronted (for the most part) as He lived on the

⁷⁴ Mark’s account of these events includes the added detail that Jesus didn’t actually cleanse the temple until the day after His triumphal entry.

⁷⁵ The prophecy of Zech. 9:9, 10 will not be completely fulfilled until the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

earth was Israel (cf., e.g., John 8:23). He didn't tell them what they wanted to hear. He told them, very much including the religious leaders, that *their deeds were evil* and if they didn't repent, they would all perish (cf. Luke 13:1-5). The hatred of the *world* against Christ isn't surprising when we realize the devil is the god and ruler of this *world* (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; and 2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus told His Jewish opponents that they were children of the devil (John 8:44). See John 3:19-21; 8:31-59; and 15:18-25.] **(8) Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not** [Some Greek manuscripts read "not yet" instead of "not." The *UBS Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition, 1983) has the reading "not," but with a C rating, which "indicates that the Committee had difficulty deciding which variant to place in the text." The NIV; KJV; NKJV translate "not yet."] **go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.** [For one thing, Jesus didn't want to go up to the feast publicly with His (unbelieving) brothers (cf. verse 10). The following verses show that Jesus did eventually go up to the feast. He was undoubtedly led by God the Father as to *if* and *when* He should go up to Jerusalem for that feast. Regarding the words "because My time has not yet fully come," see under verse 6.] **(9) Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. (10) But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. (11) So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" (12) There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray."** [Compare John 7:25-31, 40-44.] **(13) Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.** [Compare John 5:18; 7:1, 25, 26; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38; and 20:19.] **(14) But when it was now the midst of the feast** [This feast continued for seven days, or you could say eight days (see Lev. 23:34-36).] **Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.** [Jesus was undoubtedly led by God the Father to manifest Himself in the temple at that particular time and in that particular way. On His *teaching*, compare verses 15-18, 28, 29.] **(15) The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"** [If "the Jews" had sincerely pursued the answer to that question, they would have learned that He had come from heaven and that His teaching was from heaven, straight from God the Father, as the next verse (and many other verses) shows. The fact that they were astonished/amazed at Jesus' teaching didn't mean that they were open to Jesus or to what He was saying (cf. Acts 4:13). They (most of the Jewish leaders) had already decided that Jesus was a blasphemous sinner, not the Messiah. But they were astonished that Jesus had "become learned" without having been educated in their rabbinical schools.] **(16) So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. (17) If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.** [Compare Psalm 25:9, 14; Prov. 3:32; and Dan. 12:10. This verse (and the next verse) is extremely important. It is one of the verses in the Gospel of John that shows the foundational reason why so many Jews (some of these verses, including this verse, fit Gentiles too) did not submit to Christ and the Gospel in faith (cf. John 3:18-20; 5:37-47; 6:44, 45; 8:37-47; and 10:26, 27). The foundational problem that Jesus pointed out in this verse was that *they were not willing to do the will of God* (which goes with their not really loving Him). Most of them would have argued that they loved God and put a high priority on knowing and doing His will, but God the Son knew better. It is hard to comprehend just how deep

and extensive the sin/rebellion problem is in the heart of man, very much including among the “people” of God (including many called Christians).] **(18) He who speaks from himself** [instead of speaking from God the Father and for *His* glory, as Jesus did] **seeks his own glory** [Pride and unbelief are the two roots of sin and rebellion against God, and pride often leads to unbelief. The devil started the sin problem in the universe when He rebelled against God through pride (cf. Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-19; and 1 Tim. 3:6). He rebelled against divine order; he wasn’t satisfied with the place God had given him. It’s unbelievable how many angels (a third [see Rev. 12:4 with 12:7-9]) and people have followed the devil in his rebellion against God and divine order.]; **but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.** [Christ is referring to Himself here, but what He says here should be true of all God’s people (cf., e.g., John 5:41, 44; 8:50, 54; 12:43; and 17:4, 5). Being where God wants us to be, in the center of His will, is the only place that is right, good, necessary, and safe for us to be.] **(19) Did not Moses give you the Law** [cf. John 1:17], **and yet none of you carries out the Law?** [Although it was true that the Jews were not fully keeping God’s Law in their daily lives (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5; Rom. 2:1-3:23; and Gal. 3:10, 11) and that they were seeking to kill Jesus (which was totally against God’s Law, in that, for one thing, He was totally righteous), apparently that wasn’t the point that Jesus was making here. Apparently His point here was that before the Jews wrongly accuse Him of sinning by healing a man⁷⁶ *on the Sabbath* (in accordance with the will of God [cf. John 5:19]), referring to the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda and the response of the Jews reported in John 5:1-18, they should stop to consider (for one thing) that they circumcise *on the Sabbath* (in accordance with the will of God). See John 7:21-24.] **Why do you seek to kill Me?** [In John 7:20 the apostle John interrupts his reporting of what Jesus said to inform us that the crowd interrupted Him with their response to His charge that the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Apparently a large number of the people in that crowd didn’t realize that the rulers were seeking to kill Jesus, but they were (see John 5:18; 7:1, 25). Jesus didn’t answer the question asked by the crowd in verse 20 (at least John didn’t mention any response of Jesus to what the crowd said and asked in verse 20); He continued making the point He was making.] **(20) The crowd answered, “You have a demon!** [cf. Matt. 9:34; 11:18; 12:22-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-26; John 8:48-52; and 10:19-21] **Who seeks to kill You?”** [See under verses 19, 25.] **(21) Jesus answered them, “I did one deed [work], and you all marvel** [“and you are all taken aback” NEB; “and you are all astonished” NIV. The idea here is that they were astonished in a *negative* sense.⁷⁷ Jesus was referring to His miraculous work of healing the man at the pool of Bethesda *on the Sabbath* (see John 5:1-20, especially verses 16, 18).] **(22) For this reason** [I prefer the viewpoint that these first words at the beginning of verse 22 actually go at the end of verse 21. (The Greek behind “for this reason” is *dia touto*. This Greek prepositional phrase is often translated “on account of [or, because of] this.”) I’ll quote five such translations for the end of verse 21, “and you all marvel at it” RSV; “and you profess

⁷⁶ We know that Jesus healed this man physically, but it is clear that He was offering this man the total healing for spirit, soul, and body that comes with new-covenant salvation in and through Himself (cf. John 5:14).

⁷⁷ The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *thaumazō*) points out that “the context determines whether in a good or bad sense.”

astonishment over it" NAB; "and you are all amazed by it" *New Testament* by J. B. Phillips; "and you are all surprised by it" *Jerusalem Bible*; and "and you all are astonished at it" *New Testament* by E. J. Goodspeed.] **Moses has given you circumcision** [cf. Lev. 12:1-3] (**not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers** [back to father Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:1-27; 21:4; and Acts 7:8); as these references show, circumcision came to the fathers *from God*]), **and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.** [God had commanded the Jews to circumcise the male child on the eighth day (cf. Lev. 12:3), and there was no exception if the eighth day happened to fall on the Sabbath.⁷⁸] **(23) If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken** [The Law of Moses required the male children to be circumcised on the eighth day, even if the eighth day happened to fall on the Sabbath.], **are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well** ["for healing the whole man" NIV] **on the Sabbath** [See under verses 19-22.]? **(24) Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.**" [Jesus' opponents were judging Him according to the flesh (cf. John 8:15), with an *unrighteous* judgment; they didn't know what they were talking about; and, furthermore, Jesus was (and is) the Judge, not them. According to their understanding of the Law, Jesus was breaking the Law, but Jesus made it very clear in John 5:16-20 that their understanding of the Law and of God's new-covenant salvation plans was wrong and that He had not sinned by healing the man on the Sabbath—He was doing the will of the One who sent Him, as He always did.] **(25) So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?** [See John 7:1, 19. The "people of Jerusalem" would have known more about what the Jewish leaders thought about Jesus than many of those who had come to Jerusalem for the feast (cf. John 7:20).] **(26) Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers** [cf. John 3:1] **do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?** [Some of the people of Jerusalem may have begun to wonder if the rulers had changed their opinion of Jesus, but it wouldn't be long before the rulers would seek to seize Him (see verse 32).] **(27) However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.**" [Apparently those holding this viewpoint weren't denying that the Messiah would come from the lineage of David or that He would be born in Bethlehem (cf., e.g., verse 41, 42), but the primary idea here was that they believed the Messiah would remain in total obscurity until it was time for Him to be manifested and accepted as the Messiah—and this didn't fit Jesus, so He must not be the Messiah. (This is the most common view in the commentaries.⁷⁹)

⁷⁸ I'll quote part of what Andreas J. Kostengerger says under verses 21-24 (*John* [Baker, 2004], page 234). "The Jews had always concluded that it was permissible to go ahead and circumcise on the eighth day regardless of whether it fell on a Sabbath or not." Kostenberger has a footnote here, "Thus Rabbi Yose b. Halafta (ca. A.D. 140-65) said, 'Great is circumcision which overrides even the rigor of the Sabbath' (*m. Ned.* 3:11; cf. *m. Sabb.* 18:3; 19:1-3; the midrash *Tanhuma* 19b)."

I'll also quote part of what George R. Beasley-Murray says under verses 21-23 (*John* [Word, Inc., 1987], page 109). "... [What Jesus said in verse 19 about their not keeping the Mosaic Law] may sound a curious charge of sabbath breaking, but the Jews were very conscious that this is precisely what they were doing (on the basis of their understanding of keeping the sabbath). 'One can do anything that is necessary for circumcision on the sabbath,' *Sabb.* 19:2. Rabbi Jose said, 'See how beloved (in the sight of God) is the command of circumcision, for it supersedes the sabbath' (*Tanh* 19b; see Str-B 2:287). For them, therefore, it was sufficient to recognize the superiority of the circumcision law over the sabbath law."

⁷⁹ I'll quote part of what F. F. Bruce says here (*Gospel of John*, page 178). "It was widely believed that the Messiah, after coming into the world, would remain hidden in some unsuspected place until the

They knew that Jesus was from Galilee, but they didn't really know where He was from. See under verse 28.] **(28) Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching** [cf. John 7:14] **and saying, “You both know Me and know where I am from** [Jesus conceded that *in one sense* (after the flesh) they knew Him and where He was from (Nazareth of Galilee), but they didn't really know Him or where He was from.⁸⁰ They didn't really know Him any more than they knew God the Father, and as Jesus said at the end of this verse, they didn't really know God the Father.]; **and** [J. H. Bernard translates “and yet.”⁸¹] **I have not come of Myself** [Those who didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah didn't believe that He was sent by the Father—He must have sent Himself (must have come on His own initiative⁸²), but as Jesus said as He continued (and as He often proclaimed), He was sent from God the Father (cf. John 3:17; 4:34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 38, 57; and 8:42). His opponents didn't really know Jesus, the One who sent Him, or where He came from, which was heaven. See the rest of this verse and verse 29.], **but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know** [cf. John 8:19, 55; 14:7; 15:21; and 16:3]. **(29) I know Him** [cf. Matt. 11:27; John 8:55; 10:15; and 17:25], **because I am from Him** [Compare John 6:46. Jesus, God the Son, was deity with God the Father (cf., e.g., John 1:1-4, 14, 18; 17:3-5). He came from God the Father and heaven, not from the world.], **and He sent Me** [On His being sent by God the Father, see under verse 28.].” **(30) So they were seeking to seize Him** [cf. John 7:1, 19, 25, 32, 44]; **and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come** [cf. Matt. 26:18; John 7:6, 8; 8:20; and 13:1]. **(31) But many of the crowd believed in Him** [cf. John 2:23-25; 7:12, 40-43; 8:30-32; 10:41, 42; 11:45; and 12:11, 42]; **and they were saying, “When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?”** [On His signs, compare John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; and 20:30, 31.] **(32) The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests⁸³ and the Pharisees sent officers**

divinely appointed time for his public manifestation came. But (said they) this man obviously has not remained hidden until now; every one knows where he comes from. . . .to them he was ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ But the evangelist has in mind a profounder answer to the question whence Jesus came – an answer which comes to expression in Jesus’ next words.”

I'll also quote part of what D. A. Carson says here (*Gospel According to John*, pages 317, 318). “. . .the Jerusalemites hold the view . . .that the Messiah would be born of flesh and blood yet would be totally unknown until he appeared to effect Israel's redemption. . . . With such expectations, there could be none of this ‘perhaps he is, perhaps he isn't’ speculation. As far as they were concerned, they know where Jesus came from; he sprang from Nazareth . . .and he had been engaged in an itinerant ministry for some time. . . .”

⁸⁰ These words could also be taken as a question, and some, including F. F. Bruce, take it that way. The RSV has “You know me, and you know where I am from?”

⁸¹ *Gospel According to St. John* (T&T Clark, 1999 reprint), page 274. Bernard comments that “*kai* [which is often translated “and”] is used for *kaitoi* as it is in v. 30 below, in accordance with an idiom frequent in John (see on 1:10).”

⁸² The same Greek prepositional phrase that is used here (*ap' emautou*) is used in John 8:42, where it is translated “[I have not even come] on my own initiative” by the NASB. This prepositional phrase is also used in John 5:30; 8:28 and translated “on my own initiative” by the NASB.

⁸³ Compare, for example, Matt. 16:21; 20:18; 21:15, 23; John 7:45; 11:47, 57; 12:10; 18:3, 35; 19:6, 15, 21. I'll quote what Andreas J. Kostenberger says regarding the *chief priests* (*John* [Baker, 2004], page 237). “Then the chief priests (Sadducees) and Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him (cf. 5:18; 7:30). Though technically there was only one ‘chief priest’ at any given time (cf. 11:49, 51; 18:13), there were others who had formerly held this office and who apparently retained the title. . . . Annas in particular, the patriarch of his family, skillfully controlled matters through his relations. Alternately, ‘chief priests’ may

["temple guards" NIV. See verses 45, 46.] **to seize Him. (33) Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.** [Compare John 12:35; 13:1, 33; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28. Jesus spoke those words at the Feast of Tabernacles; it would be about six months until the final Passover, when the Lamb of God would be slain. On the third day He would be raised from the dead and (after forty days) He would go back to the Father, leaving from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:1-11).] **(34) You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."** [Compare John 7:36; 8:21; 13:33, 36; and 14:2, 3. He was going back to the Father, back to the One who sent Him to the earth. Jesus said that He (through salvation by, and through, Him, by faith) is the only way to the Father and His eternal kingdom (cf., e.g., John 14:6).] **(35) The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks** ["where our people live scattered among the Greeks" NIV.], **and teach the Greeks** [cf. John 12:20-24], **is He?** [In one sense (through His apostles and other Christians) Jesus did go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks (and the Jews). The apostle Paul started his apostolic ministry by going to the Jews scattered/dispersed throughout the Roman empire. He (the apostle to the Gentiles) also ministered extensively to Greeks/Gentiles, starting with the God-fearing Gentiles who came to the synagogues (cf. Acts 17:4; 18:4). The word *Greeks* here refers to Gentiles, as it often does in the New Testament (cf., e.g., Rom. 1:16; 2:9-16; and 3:9). The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *hellēn*) lists John 7:35 under the heading "in the broadest sense, all persons who came under the influence of Greek, as distinguished from Israel's culture" and under the subheading "gentile, polytheist, Greco-Roman."] **(36) What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"** [See John 7:34. His opponents would not be able to find Jesus after He died and went back to the Father. (His opponents who repented and sought for Him in faith would be able to find Him.) During the forty days from His resurrection to His ascension He appeared, on occasion, to His disciples, but He certainly wasn't to be found by His opponents.] **(37) Now on the last day** [Compare Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; and Neh. 8:18. It isn't clear whether this refers to the seventh day of the feast, or the eighth day. It is probably significant that part of the ritual for this feast (the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles) involved a priest pouring out water (water which had just been drawn from the pool of Siloam⁸⁴) at the sacrificial altar in the temple—this was done on each of the (first) seven days of the feast.⁸⁵], **the great day of**

not refer to present and past high priests but to principal priests, that is, higher temple officials including, besides the high priest himself, the captain of the temple, the temple overseer, and the treasurers (Schurer 1973-79: 2.275-308; Jeremias 1969: 160-81)."

⁸⁴ Raymond E. Brown (*Gospel According to John I-IX*, page 327) says that the "procession went down to the fountain of Gihon on the southeast side of the temple hill, the fountain which supplied the waters to the pool of Siloam."

⁸⁵ I'll quote part of what George R. Beasley-Murray says on pages 113, 114 (*John* [Word, Inc., 1987]). He is quite sure that the words of Jesus in John 7:37-39 build on the "rite of water drawing" that took place at the feast. He mentions that "in *Sukk.* 5.1 it is stated, 'He who has not seen the joy of the water-drawing has not seen joy in his whole lifetime'" and that the priests and worshippers went from the temple to the pool of Siloam "at the break of day." On their return, as they were approaching the inner court of the temple, "the *shophar* (trumpet) was sounded three times—joyous blasts which were explicitly related to Isa. 12:3, 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.' The priests bearing the water then processed around the altar, watched by the pilgrims, while the temple choir sang the Hallel

the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [Compare Isa. 12:3 (“Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation”); Isa. 55:1 (“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost”); Rev. 22:17 (“... And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost”).] **(38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ ”** [Compare Isa. 44:3; 58:11 (“... And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail”); John 4:10-15 (I’ll quote 4:15, “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life”); and John 6:35 (“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst’ ”). I’ll quote a few sentences from what Leon Morris says as an introduction to John 7:37-39.⁸⁶ “It is...significant that the words of Isaiah are associated with these ceremonies, ‘with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation’ (Isa. 12:3).⁸⁷ The Jerusalem Talmud connects the ceremonies and this scripture with the Holy Spirit: ‘Why is the name of it called, The drawing of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: ‘With joy shall ye drew water out

(i.e., Psalms 113-118). [Herman Ridderbos (*Gospel of John* [Eerdmans, 1997], page 272) says that the procession around the altar was “repeated six times on the seventh day of the feast,” and Raymond E. Brown (*Gospel According to John I-XII*, page 327) also mentions that “on the seventh day there was a sevenfold circumambulation of the altar.”] When the opening words of Psalm 118 were reached, ‘Give thanks to the Lord,’ every man and boy shook the *lulab* (a bunch of willow and myrtle tied with palm) with his right hand and held aloft citrus fruit in his left hand (a sign of the harvest gathered in), and the cry ‘Give thanks to the Lord’ was repeated three times. The same thing happened at the cry ‘O Lord save us!’ of Ps. 118:25. ...the water was offered to God in connection with the daily drink-offering (of wine). ...they were poured out as offerings to God.

... Since the festival was essentially bound up with the agricultural year [The Feast of Tabernacles came at the end of the agricultural year (our September/October)], prayer for the sending of rain... was a prime factor in the performance of this rite. Since Tabernacles was also a celebration of the blessings of God upon Israel during the nation’s forty years sojourn in the wilderness, the water-drawing served as a reminder of the water that came from the rock smitten by Moses...(Ex. 17:1-6 [; Num. 20:11]. ...the rite was also linked with the anticipation of the abundant gift of living water flowing from Jerusalem when the kingdom comes (with Isa. 12:3, cf. esp. Ezek 47:1-12 and Zech. 14:8, both passages being read during the festival). The associations of the ceremony with the salvation of God, past, present, and future were accordingly evident to the people at the festival.”

I’ll also quote part of what R. H. Lightfoot says regarding this feast (*St. John’s Gospel* [Oxford Paperbacks, 1960], page 182). “The festival was regarded as a foreshadowing of the day of the Lord, or the messianic age, since popular sentiment connected it not only with the harvest and vintage now completed, but with a future, very different harvest, that of the final ingathering or harvest of the nations in the days of the Messiah. It was believed that in face of a combined and final onslaught of the nations of the world upon Jerusalem Yahweh would at length Himself intervene on behalf of His people [In many such Old Testament prophecies it is the Messiah (who we know to be God the Son, the God-man) who overthrows God’s enemies] and usher in that perfect era to which all Jews looked forward. On its arrival the majority in all nations would undergo terrible penalties, but a remnant would become faithful to Judaism and would join at Jerusalem in the celebration of the festival.” Lightfoot goes on to mention that much of this was prophesied in Zechariah chapter 14. Many other Old Testament prophecies speak of these eschatological happenings.

⁸⁶ *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1971), pages 420, 421.

⁸⁷ Morris has a footnote here, “So Rabbi Ena (*Sukk.* 48b). Some say that the words were sung during the procession.”

of the wells of salvation.’⁸⁸] **(39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive** [cf. Isa. 32:15-18; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29; John 1:33; 3:3-8; 4:14, 23, 24; 6:63; 14:16, 17; 16:7; 20:22; Acts 1:4, 5, 8; 2:1-4, 16-18, 33, 38-40]; **for the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.** [Jesus’ resurrection was the first stage of His glorification, but He was not glorified in the sense spoken of here until He was *taken up in glory* to the right hand of God the Father (cf., e.g., John 17:5; 1 Tim. 3:16 [“Taken up in glory”]). Jesus didn’t have the Spirit (the life-giving, sanctifying, charismatic-gift-dispensing Spirit of *promise* [the pouring out of the Spirit was *promised* in the Old Testament]) to give until He was taken up in glory (see Acts 2:33). See under John 1:33 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54.] **(40) Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, “This certainly is the Prophet.”** [On “the Prophet” compare John 6:14; see under John 1:21 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54. I’ll quote two sentences from what Andreas Kostenberger says here.⁸⁹ “The prophet’ refers to ‘the prophet like Moses’ (Deut. 18:15-18...). In first-century thinking, the Prophet and the Christ were often viewed as two separate personages (cf. John 1:21).” And I’ll quote a few sentences from what Gerald L. Boschert says under verses 40-43.⁹⁰ “...theories concerning the coming messianic figures were both varied and unclear, a situation that generated confusing expectations. ... The Qumran community [who gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls] sought to clarify the situation for itself by distinguishing the roles of the prophet and two messiahs (a priestly one, the Messiah of Aaron, and a Davidic one, the Messiah of Israel; cf. 1 QS 9:11).”] **(41) Others were saying, “This is the Christ [the Messiah/the Anointed One].”** [See under verse 40.] **Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee [cf. John 7:52], is He? (42) Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”** [Jesus Christ (the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord of King David [cf. Psalm 110:1]) *was* of the lineage of David, and He *was* born in Bethlehem (cf. 1 Sam. 20:6; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3, 4; Isa. 9:6, 7; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 1:1-2:6; Luke 1:26-33, 69; 2:1-38; and 3:23-31).] **(43) So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. (44) Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.** [Compare John 7:30, 31; 9:16; and 10:19-21.] **(45) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?”** [See John 7:32.] **(46) The officers answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”** [Compare Matt. 7:28, 29; 13:54; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 6:2, 3; 11:18; and Luke 4:32. It is interesting that the officers did not offer an excuse for their failure to bring Jesus, an excuse like they were afraid they would have started a riot. I’ll quote a few sentences from what Andreas J. Kostenberger says here.⁹¹ “The guards were chosen from the Levites. They were religiously trained and therefore not merely ‘brutal thugs.’ In the fulfillment of their duties they would have heard many teachers in the temple courts. Even as biblical nonexperts, they recognize that Jesus’ teaching is unique.”] **(47) The Pharisees then answered them, “You have not also been led astray, have you? [Compare John 7:12.] (48) No one of the rulers [“The rulers” included Pharisees (cf., e.g., John 3:1).] or Pharisees [cf. John 7:32, 45, 47] has**

⁸⁸ Morris has a footnote, “J *Sukk.* 5:1 (cited from A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship*, Oxford, 1960, p. 2).”

⁸⁹ *John* (Baker, 2004), page 241.

⁹⁰ *John 1:1-11* (Broadman & Holman, 2002), page 292.

⁹¹ *John*, page 242, 243.

believed in Him, has he? [Apparently John wants us to understand that Nicodemus, who was a ruler and a Pharisee, believed in Him (at least he believed on one level, even if he didn't publicly acknowledge that he was a believer; Nicodemus undoubtedly knew that his words in behalf of Jesus in verse 51 would not be well received), and he wasn't the only ruler who did believe (see under John 7:50, and see John 12:42, 43).] **(49) But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed** [cf. Deut. 27:26; 28:15].” **(50) Nicodemus (he who came to Him before** [See John 3:1-12. Some six months after the events of John chapter 7, Nicodemus demonstrated that He was a believer by being directly involved with the burial of Jesus (John 19:38-42). At the time of the events of John chapter 7, Nicodemus was a “believer” already, but not openly for fear of the Jews (cf., e.g., John 9:22; 12:42, 43; and 19:38, 39).], **being one of them** [being “one of the rulers” of the Jews and a “Pharisee” (cf. John 3:1))] **said to them, (51) “Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?”** [Compare Deut. 1:16, 17; 17:4, 6; 19:15; and Prov. 18:13.] **(52) They answered him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”** [Compare John 1:46; 7:41. Many commentators point out that the prophet Jonah (and perhaps other prophets too) was from there (cf. 2 Kings 14:25).] **(53) [Everyone went to his home.** [The NASB has a marginal note here, “Later mss. [biblical manuscripts] add the story of the adulterous woman, numbering it as John 7:53-8:11,” and it puts these words in brackets, which means (according to a note in the front of the NASB) that “these words probably [were] not in the original writings.” The NIV has this note: “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11.” I agree with the widespread viewpoint that the words of John 7:53-8:11 represent important historical truth that has been preserved for us, but that they apparently were not part of the original Gospel written by the apostle John. The following excerpts will help the reader understand this issue.

I'll quote a paragraph from what R. V. G. Tasker says here.⁹² “Scholars are agreed that this section did not originally form part of St. John's Gospel, though it records a genuine incident in the life of Jesus. Not only does the overwhelming majority of ancient Greek MSS [manuscripts] omit it at this point, but many of the later MSS which include it here mark it with asterisks.... One group of MSS, moreover, inserts it after Luke 21:38; one MS has it after John 7:36; and a few others after John 21:24. ... [Tasker also mentions] the large number of variant readings which are found in this short section. Apart from numerous minor changes the following explanatory additions found in the text followed by AV [KJV] are omitted in most ancient authorities: *as though he heard them not* [These words are in italics in the KJV that I am using.] (verse 6); *being convicted by their own conscience*, and *even unto the last* [The KJV that I am using has, “being convicted by *their own* conscience” and “*even* unto the last”] (verse 9); *and saw none but the woman*, and *those thine accusers* [The KJV that I am using has, “and saw none but the woman” and “those thine accusers” (verse 10); while some later MSS add at the end of verse 8, ‘the sins of each of them.’ All this suggests that the story was constantly repeated verbally and that varied versions of it were current. In its present position it clearly interrupts the discourse at the festival of Tabernacles; and it contains phrases, such as ‘the scribes and Pharisees,’ which occur nowhere else in this Gospel. The general style is more Lucan than Johannine.”

⁹² *Gospel According to St. John* (Eerdmans, 1960), page 110.

I'll also quote part of what Merrill C. Tenney says here.⁹³ "[This narrative] is absent from most of the oldest copies of the Gospel that precede the sixth century and from the works of the earliest commentators. To say that it does not belong to the Gospel is not identical with rejecting it as unhistorical. Its coherence and spirit show that it was preserved from a very early time, and it accords well with the known character of Jesus. It may be accepted as historical truth; but based on the information we now have, it was probably not a part of the original text.

The words [of John 7:53] 'Then each went to his own home' show that the following account must have been related to some longer narrative of which it was a part." The words of John 7:53 and of John 8:1 don't fit well with the preceding verses, and John 7:53-8:11 seem to interrupt John's account of things that took place at that Feast of Tabernacles. John 8:12 seems to continue that account.

The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition) includes John 7:53-8:11 in double brackets, which "indicate that the enclosed passages, which are usually rather extensive, are known not to be a part of the tradition. They are included with the text in this way because of their antiquity and the position they have traditionally enjoyed in the church (e.g. John 7:53-8:11)." They assign an A rating to the omission of these verses, which indicates that, from their point of view, the omission is certain.

I'll quote part of what Bruce M. Metzger says in *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edition, which is a companion volume to the Greek New Testament cited in the preceding paragraph. He has over two pages of comments dealing with the basis for concluding that these verses were not part of John's Gospel as it was originally written. "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming. It is absent from such early and diverse manuscripts as [and he goes on for most of the paragraph citing manuscripts]. No Greek Church Father prior to Euthymius...(twelfth century) comments on the passage, and [he] declares that the accurate copies of the Gospel do not contain it.

When one adds to this impressive and diversified list of external evidence the consideration that the style and vocabulary of the pericope differ noticeably from the rest of the Fourth Gospel (see any critical commentary), and that it interrupts the sequence of 7:52 and 8:12ff., the case against its being of Johannine authorship appears to be conclusive.

At the same time the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity. It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places. Most copyists apparently thought that it would interrupt John's narrative least if it were inserted after 7:52.... Others place it after 7:36...or after 7:44...or after 21:25...or after Luke 21:38.... Significantly enough, in many of the witnesses that contain the passage it is marked with asterisks or obeli, indicating that, though the scribes included the account, they were aware that it lacked satisfactory credentials. ...

Although the committee was unanimous that the pericope was originally no part of the Fourth Gospel, in deference to the evident antiquity of the passage a majority decided to print it, enclosed within double brackets, at its traditional place following John 7:52."

⁹³ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 (Zondervan, 1981), page 89.

JOHN CHAPTER 8

[See under John 7:53.] **But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.** [As several commentators have pointed out, these words (along with the first words of verse 2) fit well with the events of the last week of Jesus' life (that started with Palm Sunday) that led to the cross (see Luke 21:37, 38; cf. Mark 11:19).] **(2) Early in the morning** ["At dawn" NIV] **He came again into the temple** [cf. Luke 21:38], **and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them** [cf. Matt. 26:55; John 8:20]. **(3) The scribes** ["The teachers of the law" NIV] **and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court** [It would be better to translate "set her in the midst" with the KJV; NKJV, or the equivalent. The words "in the court" were not included in the Greek.], **(4) they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. (5) Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women** [Compare Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22. Both of these verses mention that the man and the woman should be put to death.]; **what then do You say?"** [The following verse shows that the primary motive of these "scribes and Pharisees" was to establish "grounds for accusing [Jesus]." They weren't really concerned with justice here. For one thing, they didn't bring the man who was involved in this adultery (it is possible that he had escaped), and it is quite possible (even probable) that some of her accusers were guilty of the same sin. I'll quote what the apostle Paul said in Rom. 2:22a, "You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?" Paul was speaking to the Jews of his generation, and he was inferring that the answer to his question was *yes*. It was understood that many of the people of Israel were guilty of the sin of adultery, including some of the religious leaders. "Adultery is a crime which the Talmud brings home to the three most illustrious Rabbins, Akiba, Mehir, and Eleazar."⁹⁴ Also, see the next paragraph.

I'll quote part of a footnote by Leon Morris,⁹⁵ "According to I. Abrahams the death penalty for adultery 'can never have been frequently enforced' (*Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospel*, I, Cambridge, 1917, p. 73). It was apparently much more usual for the husband to divorce his erring wife and receive compensation from the man. Abrahams speaks also of 'the great prevalence of adultery' (*Ibid.*, page 74)... The Mishna tractate *Sotah* seems to take it for granted that the punishment for adultery would be divorce, and it does not look for the death penalty. For example, it provides that an adulteress is forbidden both to her husband and to her paramour (*Sot.* 5:1), which means that neither party was executed." **(6) They were saying this, testing Him** ["They were using this question as a trap" NIV; cf. Matt. 19:3; 22:15-22, 35; Mark 10:2; 12:15. The KJV translates "tempting [Him]."], **so that they might have grounds for accusing Him.** [Compare Mark 3:2. These "scribes and Pharisees" were undoubtedly hoping that Jesus would manifest compassion for the woman in a way that would make Him guilty (from their point of view) of breaking the Mosaic Law.⁹⁶] **But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.** [We are

⁹⁴ F. Godet, *Epistle to the Romans* (Zondervan, 1969 reprint), page 129.

⁹⁵ *Gospel According to John*, page 887.

⁹⁶ His opponents may have also considered the possibility of getting Jesus in trouble with the Roman authorities if it appeared He was (in some way) behind the stoning of this woman, since the Romans did not permit the Jews to put people to death (see John 18:31). This didn't mean, of course, that the Jews always yielded to this mandate of the Romans (cf., e.g., Acts 7:54-8:1).

not told what Jesus wrote on the ground here, or later (in verse 8). My first thought was that in an extremely tense situation like this one, Jesus probably wrote something that would be directly relevant to the situation, something that would help convict His opponents of their own sinfulness (cf., e.g., John 8:21, 24, 31-47; and Luke 13:1-5), including their hypocrisy. He could have started writing the ten commandments (or one, or some, of the ten commandments), or a list of sins He knew that His opponents and the woman's accusers were guilty of, for example. (Some have even suggested that He wrote their names along with their sins. That would have gotten their attention!) Such writing would fit well with His words in verse 7, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her," and many commentators hold this viewpoint.

After further thought I have to doubt the idea that Jesus wrote something relevant to this situation. It is possible that He did, of course, but it seems likely that this account would have told us what He wrote if this took place. I prefer the idea that Jesus treated their devious *test* question with contempt by ignoring them and disregarding their question, as He stooped down and started to write on the ground. Quite a few commentators opt for this viewpoint, and the additional words at the end of this verse contained in the KJV; NKJV fits this viewpoint, "as though He did not hear." (The KJV has these words in italics.) I'll quote a sentence from what J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin say regarding this viewpoint,⁹⁷ "A more common conclusion, found in the addition of the words 'taking no notice' (Greek *me prospoioumenos*) by some MSS (E G H K) at the end of verse 6, is that Jesus' action 'was simply a studied refusal to pronounce judgement.' "

I'll quote part of what G. Campbell Morgan says here.⁹⁸ "What did He do? He stooped down and wrote. No, I cannot tell you what He wrote. I have often wondered, and read the legends, and they are all suggestive. What He wrote we do not know, but the attitude was everything. It was the attitude of attention to something else, and refusal to satisfy His questioners. It was the attitude of dismissal."

Anyway, we know that Jesus' words (of verse 7b), whether He wrote anything relevant to that situation, or not, sufficed to convince every one of her accusers (and His opponents) that *they* didn't have the right to cast a stone at the woman who had been caught in adultery. Jesus forced them to see that it wasn't appropriate for those who are sinning themselves to cast the first stone at the sinful woman. They needed to judge themselves before they judged her with the death penalty.] **(7) But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up [cf. John 8:10], and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the* first to throw a stone at her."** [Compare Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 2:1-3.⁹⁹ It is important to see that Jesus did not come to judge at His first coming (cf. John 3:17; 8:15; and Luke 12:14) but that (as many verses show) He will judge at His second coming (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:29-51). At His first coming, He called people to repent and to submit (in faith) to the gospel of God's (new-covenant) plan of salvation so they could get ready for the day of judgment, and He initiated that salvation through His incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, resurrection, ascension, and His pouring forth the gift of the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost.] **(8) Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground [cf. verse 6]. (9) When they heard it [They heard what Jesus said in verse 7. (It is possible that**

⁹⁷ *Gospel According to St. John* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), page 465. Their quotation is from C. K. Barrett's commentary (*Gospel According to St. John*) under this verse.

⁹⁸ *Gospel According to John* (Fleming H. Revell, no date given), page 148.

⁹⁹ Rom. 2:1-16 are discussed in my paper, *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*.

they also *heard*, so to speak, what Jesus wrote on the ground; see under verse 6). What they heard was sufficient to convict all of them that it would not be proper for *them* to stone this woman who had sinned.], **they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones** [The “older ones” would (for the most part) have been the leaders. Jesus’ opponents and the woman’s accusers realized that He had escaped their trap (as He had, for example, in Matt. 22:15-22). Jesus didn’t challenge the requirement of the Mosaic Law (which they hoped He would do)—He just challenged *their* right to stone this woman taken in adultery. They were convicted of their sinfulness to the extent that they realized they had no right to be the first to cast a stone at the woman. Too bad that they (at least most of them) were not convicted of their sinfulness to the extent that they repented and submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. (Hopefully some of those men did eventually repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.) I’ll quote a sentence from what Edward G. Dobson says under verses 9-11,¹⁰⁰ “They left, probably not out of conviction, but rather they had been defeated in their attempt to trap the Son of God.”], **and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.** [It is more important here than it was in verse 3 that we translate something like “where she was, in the midst,” or the equivalent (without the words “in the court,” which are not included in the Greek). The same Greek prepositional phrase that was used in verse 3, *en mesō*, is used here. The KJV; NKJV have, “and the woman standing in the midst.” Apparently it was only the accusers who left one by one, leaving the woman with Jesus and the people who had been listening to Him teach before they were interrupted by “the scribes and the Pharisees” (verses 2, 3).¹⁰¹] **(10) Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” (11) She said, “No one, Lord [“sir” NIV].” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”** [See John 5:14. The fact that Jesus didn’t condemn this woman (to death) for this sin of adultery did not mean that she was forgiven, but hopefully she was. It depended on whether she responded (with repentance and faith) to what Jesus said to her (He may have said more to her than what is recorded here)—her being saved, or lost, depended on whether she pressed on to become a Christian. She didn’t come to Jesus looking for salvation, and we aren’t informed of any response she made to Jesus. Hopefully she repented and pressed on (in faith) to become a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:31-36) and then (when the new birth became available) to become a born-again Christian.

If the heart of this woman was open to God at all, she would have been so overwhelmed by this experience and her encounter with Jesus that she would have been motivated to learn of Him and submit to Him and His words, including His words to her, “From now on sin no more.” If she took those words to heart, she would have been compelled to follow the One who could enable her to fulfill that command. Those same words, “From now on sin no more,” apply to all Christians, and that is good news—God enables us (by grace/the Spirit through faith) to do what He requires/commands us to do. Of course being forgiven is an important part of the gospel too.

¹⁰⁰ *Liberty Bible Commentary*, New Testament (Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982), page 230.

¹⁰¹ “The word *alone* implies only the departure of the accusers” (F. Godet, *Gospel of John*, page 89). “When Jesus straightened up, the accusers were gone” (J. Carl Laney, *John*, page 157).

I'll quote part of what F. Godet says here.¹⁰² "We must not see in the words of Jesus: *I do not condemn thee*, a declaration of pardon similar to that which He addresses to the penitent sinful woman in Luke 7:48, 50. Bengel rightly remarks that Jesus does not say: 'Go in peace: thy sins are forgiven thee.' For the sinful woman who is in question here did not come to Jesus by reason of any movement of repentance and faith. By not condemning her, Jesus simply grants her the opportunity for repenting and believing. ... And by saying to her: *Sin no more*, He indicated to her the path on which alone she can really lay hold upon salvation.

Thus vanish all the moral difficulties and all the historical improbabilities which Hengstenberg and others claim that they find in this story. ... This incident is in every point worthy of the wisdom, holiness and goodness of Him to whom it is attributed. ... He awakened in His adversaries the consciousness of their own sinfulness, and He made this woman understand how she must use the opportunity of grace which is accorded to her."

I'll quote part of what J. Carl Laney says here.¹⁰³ "Jesus' words 'Then neither do I condemn you' have often been [misunderstood and] misapplied. They have been used to justify leniency in criminal cases, to oppose capital punishment, to argue against church discipline, and to relax moral standards. Jesus intended none of these things."

I'll quote part of what Joseph H. Mayfield says here.¹⁰⁴ "There is no indication here that mercy extended is license to sin! ... Rather the Christ of the Cross makes it possible for men to abstain from the sins which He commands men to forsake. For this woman there was now an open door. 'His final word is neither of condemnation nor of forgiveness, but a charge to forsake her former way of life.'¹⁰⁵ In the final analysis of the account, it is clear that the Law is seen as inadequate for the needs of either the woman or her accusers." We need the new covenant!

And I'll quote part of what J. H. Bernard says here.¹⁰⁶ "The verbal similarity of these words ["I do not condemn you"] to the words ["I pass judgment on no one" NIV] of [John] 8:15...may have suggested the position which the interpolated section occupies in the received text...at the beginning of chapter 8. ... Jesus does not say here that He does not pass judgment, even in His own mind, upon the woman's conduct, but that He does not condemn her judicially...(cf. Luke 12:14). Still less does His reply convey *forgiveness*; the woman who was forgiven in Luke 7:48 was a penitent, but there is no hint of penitence in this case [at least her penitence isn't mentioned]." **(12) Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world [Compare Psalm 27:1; Isa. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3, 19-22; John 1:4, 9; 3:19-21; 9:5; 12:35, 36; and Rev. 21:23, 24. The *light* of God includes His truth, righteousness, and holiness. The *darkness* includes the lie (absence of the truth) and all sin (absence of righteousness and holiness); Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness (cf. Col. 1:13; Eph. 6:12).]; he who follows Me [Following Jesus includes submitting to Him and His word in faith, which includes living in righteousness and holiness in obedience to Him and His word (by His grace).] will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life [cf., e.g., Matt. 5:14-16; John 1:4; Eph. 5:8-14; and 1 John 1:5-7; the Greek behind the word *life* here is *zōē*]."** [Apparently John (starting here with John 8:12 in our Bibles) is continuing to report what Jesus said and regarding His interaction with the Jews (including the Pharisees; cf. John 7:32; 8:13) in the temple on

¹⁰² *Gospel of John*, page 89.

¹⁰³ *John*, page 157.

¹⁰⁴ *Beacon Bible Commentary* (Beacon Hill Press, 1965), page 104.

¹⁰⁵ Quoting from R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, page 348.

¹⁰⁶ *Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. 2 (T&T Clark, 1999 reprint), page 721.

the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. John 7:37),¹⁰⁷ but it is possible that these words were spoken later, on the next day, for example. John 8:20 shows that Jesus was in the temple when He spoke these words, as He was in John 7:14-39.

We have already discussed the fact that what Jesus said about coming to Him to drink of the living water in John 7:37-39 undoubtedly built on the ceremony of pouring out water (that had just been drawn from the pool of Siloam) at the sacrificial altar in the temple at the time of the morning offerings on each of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is also probable that what Jesus said here in 8:12 about His being the “Light of the world” built (to some extent) on the ceremony of the lighting of giant candelabras/lamps at the Feast of Tabernacles.¹⁰⁸ Most commentators believe that what Jesus said here built on that ceremony.] **(13) So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself** [When it came to topics like who Jesus was and where He came from, Jesus was the Person (He was the God-man) most qualified to testify. John the Baptist (and those like him) could (and did) also testify to these things to the extent God had revealed these things to them (cf., e.g., John 1:6-8, 15, 26-36). Joseph and Mary could attest to the fact that Jesus had been born of God through a virgin, for example.]; **Your testimony is not true** [The NASB has a marginal note, “Or *valid*,” and the NIV translates, “is not valid.” So too in verse 14.]” [See under John 5:31 in this paper. What Jesus (God the Son, the God-man, who was/is “the way, and the truth, and the life” [John 14:6]) testified about Himself (and everything else that He ever said) *was true* (see the next verse; cf., e.g., John 1:14). The Pharisees were wrong, not Jesus. Jesus responded to their charge against Him in the following verses (verses 14-19). One of the primary things that Jesus went on to say was that God the Father also testifies to what

¹⁰⁷ I’ll quote part of what D. A. Carson says here (*Gospel According to John*, page 337). Carson is assuming that John’s Gospel did not include 7:53-8:11, and he points out that John didn’t report anything that Jesus said (or did) in 7:40-52. “...8:12 follows nicely from 7:37-39. [Jesus speaks in 7:37-39 and He speaks again in 8:12.] That is what is indicated by the word *again* (*palin*, which is the first word in the Greek text of 8:12): *again* he spoke to the people, still in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles.”

¹⁰⁸ I’ll quote part of what Alfred Edersheim says regarding this ceremony (*The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as they Were at the Time of Christ* [Eerdmans, 1972 reprint], pages 283-285). “At the close of the first day of the feast the worshippers descended to the Court of the Women [in the temple], where great preparations had been made. Four [giant] golden candelabras were there, each with four golden bowls, and against them rested four ladders; and four youths of priestly descent held, each a pitcher of oil... from which they filled each bowl. [J. Carl Laney (*John*, page 158) mentions that “According to the Talmud, these candlesticks were 50 cubits (75 feet) high.” F. Godet (*Gospel of John*, page 90) mentions that “the celebrated *Maimonides* affirms that this ceremony occurred on every evening of the feast.... But the Talmud speaks of it only on occasion of the first evening.”] The old, worn breaches and girdles of the priests served for wicks to these lamps. There was not a court in Jerusalem that was not lit up by the light.... The ‘Chasidim’ [the Pious] and ‘the men of Deed’ danced before the people with flaming torches in their hands, and sang before them hymns and songs of praise; and the Levites, with harps, and lutes, and cymbals, and trumpets, and instruments of music without number....

It seems clear that this illumination of the Temple was regarded as forming part of, and having the same symbolical meaning as, ‘the pouring out of water.’ The light shining out of the Temple into the darkness around, and lighting up every court in Jerusalem, must have been intended as a symbol not only of the Shechinah which once filled the Temple, but of that ‘great light’ which ‘the people that walked in darkness’ were to see, and which was to shine ‘upon them that dwell in the land of the shadow of death.’ (Isa. 9:2) ... At any rate, it seems most probable that Jesus had referred to this ceremony in the words spoken by Him in the Temple at that very Feast of Tabernacles: ‘I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ ”

He testifies about Himself. When God the Father testifies to something it is settled! So too for God the Son!] **(14) Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.** [Jesus knew that He was God the Son, who had been sent from heaven (cf. John 1:1-18; 3:11, 13; and 8:23, 29, 42), and He knew that He was going back to heaven after He completed His all-important mission (cf., e.g., John 8:21; 13:1, 3; 14:2, 3, 28; 16:5, 28; and 17:5). As Jesus said here, the Pharisees didn’t know where He came from or where He was going—they wouldn’t accept the truth.] **(15) You judge according to the flesh** [“I.e. by a carnal standard” (margin of NASB). Compare John 7:24. Jesus’ opponents judged Him according to the flesh (and their judgments and their walk in general were according to the flesh). They were spiritually dead (without the Spirit) and did not know God the Father (cf., e.g., verse 19); they *very wrongly* judged Jesus to be just a man (a man born of Joseph and Mary) who claimed far too much for Himself, which was blasphemous.]; **I am not judging anyone.** [As we discussed under verse 7, most of Jesus’ work of judging is reserved for His second coming.] **(16) But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent me.** [Compare John 5:19-30; 6:38; and 7:16, 18, 28, 29, 33.] **(17) Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true.** [Compare Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; and Heb. 10:28.] **(18) I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”** [See John 5:31-47 in this paper.] **(19) So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father** [cf. John 7:28; 8:55; and 16:3]; **if you knew Me, you would know My Father also** [cf. John 14:7, 9].” [It is also true that if they had known God the Father, He would have led them to the knowledge of His unique Son (the God-man; Messiah/Christ). I’ll quote a sentence from what Henry Alford says here.¹⁰⁹ “Augustine and others imagine that the Jews thought of a *human Father*, in thus speaking.” This idea seems to be confirmed by verse 27.] **(20) These words He spoke in the treasury** [“He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put” NIV. Compare Mark 12:41, 43; Luke 21:1. I’ll quote part of what Gary M. Burge says here.¹¹⁰ “This interchange takes place in the ‘temple area near the place where the offerings were put’ (8:20a [NIV]), that is, in the Court of Women. There were thirteen money chests built in the shape of a *shofar* (a ram’s horn....) in this court, each indicating how the money was to be spent (*m. Shekalim* 2:1; 6:1, 5).¹¹¹ In Mark 12:41-44 these are the receptacles that the widow used to deposit two small copper coins.”], **as He taught in the temple** [cf. John 7:14]; **and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come** [cf., e.g., John 7:30, 32, 44, 45]. **(21) Then He said again to them, “I go away** [Jesus was going back to the Father, after perfectly accomplishing His all-important atoning death and being resurrected.], **and you will seek Me** [cf. John 7:34; 13:33], **and will die in your sin** [See under John 15:22 in my paper on John chapters 13-17. See verse 24; cf. Ezek. 3:18. They will die in their sin(s) (note the plural “sins” in verse 24) because they are rejecting the Messiah, the One sent to save His people from their sin(s) (cf., e.g., Matt.

¹⁰⁹ *New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 2 (Baker, 1983 reprint), page 539.

¹¹⁰ *John* (Zondervan, 2000), page 257.

¹¹¹ “Each of the thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles had inscriptions indicating the intended use of the various offerings: ‘gold for the mercy seat,’ frankincense,’ ‘bird offerings,’ ‘wood,’ ‘freewill offerings,’ and so on (*m. Seqal.* 6.5) (Andreas J. Kostenberger [*John*, page 257]).”

1:21; John 1:29; and 3:14-18), the *only* Savior from sin(s) (cf., e.g., John 14:6; Acts 4:12). It is clear that those who “will die in [their] sin” will not “seek [Him]” in repentance and faith after He has gone away: Those who seek Him in repentance and faith will find Him, and they will find salvation from sin(s) through and in Him—they will *not* die in their sin(s).

Many commentators believe that the *sin* spoken of here is the sin of not believing in Christ Jesus. Rejecting Christ and not believing in Him is the ultimate sin. (Pride and unbelief are at the root of sin.) How can God forgive the sin of rejecting His Son and His *only* plan of salvation from sin? We condemn ourselves to die in our sin(s) if we reject the only One who can save us from our sin(s), and we show where our hearts are if we reject the Savior from sin(s) and remain in our sin(s) (cf., e.g., John 3:16-21). I agree with Alfred Plummer, “The singular [the word *sin* is singular in the Greek here in verse 21, but not in verse 24] means ‘state of sin.’ ”¹¹²]; **where I am going you cannot come.**” [In John 13:33 Jesus told His disciples that He would be with them a little while longer; they would seek for Him, but where He was going they could not come. Their case, however, was totally different than the people Jesus addressed here in verse 21. The separation from His disciples was only temporary. Before long they would be with Him in glory, because they had become His disciples and He had saved them from their sin(s). Jesus’ call to repent and become His disciples was rejected by many of the Jews, including many of the Jews who heard Jesus that day, but some in the audience did “believe” in Him (cf. John 8:30). Hopefully, some of the Jews who opposed Christ Jesus that day later repented and submitted (in faith) to Him and to God’s new-covenant plan of salvation (cf., e.g., Acts 2:14-42; 3:11-4:4).] **(22) So the Jews** [cf. John 1:19; 2:18, 20; 5:10, 15-18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11, 13, 15, 35; 8:48, 52, 57-59; 9:18, 22; and 10:24, 31, 33] **were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”** [Compare John 7:35. The Jews were on the right wavelength here, but He would not kill Himself—the Jews would turn Him over to the Romans and demand that He be crucified. He voluntarily submitted to His all-important atoning death (cf., e.g., John 10:11-18).] **(23) And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world** [The primary problem was that they were rejecting the only One who could raise them from being part of this fallen world to have a place in the kingdom of God and His Christ. That kingdom is here now in a preliminary form.], **I am not of this world.** [Compare John 3:13, 31; 8:14, 15; 17:5, 14, 16; and 1 John 4:4-6. What Jesus said about Himself here (and often) was a lot more than they were willing to accept; they made it clear that they considered such statements to be blasphemous.] **(24) Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins** [see John 8:21]; **for unless you believe that I am He** [Compare Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; John 4:26; 8:28, 58; and 13:19. The NASB has a marginal note here, “Most authorities associate this with Ex. 3:14, *I AM WHO*¹¹³ *I AM.*” See the discussion under John 13:19, including the footnote, in my paper on John chapters 13-17. Jesus was saying that unless they believe that He is who He claims to be, which includes believing that He came from above (being God the Son) to become the promised Messiah/Christ, they cannot be saved from their sins (that is, they will die in their sin/sins; cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5).] **you will die in your sins.” (25) So they were saying**

¹¹² *Gospel According to John* (Baker, 1981 reprint), page 189.

¹¹³ I would translate *BECAUSE*, or *FOR*, instead of *WHO*.

to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you from the beginning? [In the margin the NASB has a note, “Or *That which I have been saying to you from the beginning.*”¹¹⁴ Jesus was undoubtedly speaking of the *beginning* of His ministry in Jerusalem that started some one and one-half to two and one-half years earlier (cf. John 2:13-25; 15:27).¹¹⁵ There is widespread agreement that Jesus spoke these words in the temple at Jerusalem (at the time of the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles [cf. John 7:2, 37]) some six months before He was crucified at Passover.] **(26) I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you** [They thought they were *judging* Jesus, but He was the real *Judge*, as it would eventually be demonstrated.], **but He who sent Me** [On His being sent by the Father, see verses 16, 18.] **is true** [“is reliable” NIV; cf. John 3:33; 7:28]; **and the things which I heard from Him** [cf., e.g., John 5:30; 8:28, 38, 40; 12:49; and 15:15], **these I speak to the world.”** [Since the One who sent Him is *true*, we can (and we must) know that the things Jesus speaks to the world that He has heard from the Father are *true/the truth*.] **(27) They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. (28) So** [The Greek *oun* could also be translated “then” here, instead of “so” (or “therefore).” The KJV; NKJV have “then.” The NASB (and NKJV) translates *oun* “then” at the beginning of verse 21.] **Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man** [Jesus was *lifted up* on the cross, which led to His being *lifted up* to the Father’s right hand (cf. John 3:14; 12:32, 33).], **then you will know that I am He** [On “I am *He*,” see under verse 24, including the cross-reference to the discussion of John 13:19.] **and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me** [cf. John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 12:49; and 14:10]. [Subsequent events demonstrate that the idea wasn’t that Jesus would be crucified (and go back to the Father) and then all the Jews would immediately know that He was who He claimed to be (the Messiah/Christ who came/was sent from heaven) and that everything that He had said (and done) was from God the Father. But His crucifixion was a super-important aspect of God’s plan of salvation, and it set in motion a chain of events that would eventually prove to all mankind who He was. Many Jews (and Gentiles) would be saved (with full new-covenant salvation) through His atoning death and His pouring forth the promised Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost. And those who rejected Him and His salvation would ultimately be forced to admit that He was God the Son, the Messiah/Christ, the Saviour and the Judge, when He judges them (cf., e.g., Phil. 2:9-11).] **(29) And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone** [cf. John 16:32], **for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him** [cf., e.g., John 4:34; 15:10].” **(30) As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.** [Compare John 2:23-25; 7:31, 40, 41; 10:42; 11:45; and 12:11, 42, 43. What Jesus went on to say in the next two verses (cf. John 2:23-25; 6:60, 64, 66) made it clear that

¹¹⁴ The Greek can be translated other ways too, as the discussions in the commentaries and some other Bible translations demonstrate, but I believe either translation given by the NASB (including the one in the margin) communicates the right idea. The translations of the NIV, KJV, NKJV are essentially the same as the NASB. One problem is that the Greek doesn’t have the preposition *from* before the words translated *the beginning*; note that the NASB has *from* in italics. The Greek just has the two words translated *the beginning* in the *accusative* case. I believe, however, that the translation *from the beginning* effectively communicates what the Greek says here. On page 217 of *A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament* (Baker, 1958), A. T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis provide an example (Luke 15:29) that seems to effectively illustrate the use of the *accusative* case for “extent of time” here in John 8:25.

¹¹⁵ See under John 5:1 in this paper, and see under John 2:13 in my paper on John 1:19-4:54.

much of this *believing* was on a shallow level—they had not become disciples (true believers), and they would not become true disciples if they did not press on to learn and to do the truth (by grace through faith.) **(31) So** [Greek *oun*; see under verse 28; the KJV; NKJV translate “then” here in verse 31; the NIV leaves *oun* untranslated here.] **Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him** [see verse 30], **“If you continue in My word** [cf. John 15:7; 2 John 1:9], **then you are truly disciples of Mine** [We cannot become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (true Christians) if we are not committed to learn and to live in line with the covenant that God has given us, to learn and to do what He requires of us (by grace through faith).¹¹⁶ I’ll quote Matt. 28:18-20, “And Jesus came up and spoke to them [to the apostles, after His resurrection], saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ ”]; **(32) and you will know the truth** [Compare John 1:14, 17; 14:6; and 18:37. The *truth* we must know centers in the gospel of full salvation through and in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the *truth*.], **and the truth will make you free** [cf. John 8:34, 36 (In John 8:34 Jesus spoke of our being a slaves of sin; in 8:36 He spoke of His making us free.); Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1, 13-17; James 2:8-12; and 1 Pet. 2:16].” [If we know the truth of the gospel and walk in line with that truth (by grace through faith), with the emphasis on our living in the righteousness and holiness of God, in accordance with His will, we will be free from sin and spiritual death, and we will be ready to stand before God and to inherit eternal glory at the end of this age. Before becoming Christians we were in bondage to sin and spiritual death (cf., e.g., John 8:21, 24, 34; Rom. 3:9; 6:17-23 (with Rom. 6:1-14); 8:1-14; and Eph. 2:1-3).] **(33) They answered Him** [It is important to discern *who* answered/responded to Jesus here. Your first thought would probably be that it was the “believers” mentioned in verse 30, to whom Jesus spoke in verses 31, 32.¹¹⁷ However, what these Jews went on to say to Jesus (starting in verse 33) and, more importantly, what Jesus went on to say to them as these verses continue to the end of this chapter, indicate that opponents of Jesus (not believers) were responding to Him here.¹¹⁸ In verse 37 (and in verse 40; cf. verses 44, 59) Jesus said they *sought to*

¹¹⁶ It is very important that prospective converts (including people answering altar calls) be informed of these things. Becoming true Christians involves a whole lot more than getting stirred up emotionally at an evangelistic service and praying the so-called *sinner’s prayer*. Such people are often left with the very wrong impression that they have arrived and that God will take care of the details from now on. Praying the sinner’s prayer can be a good beginning, but we must *continue* in God’s word to the end (by grace through faith). Saving faith includes an attitude of the heart where we put God and His word first place in our hearts and lives (we make Him Lord), where we make righteousness and holiness top priority (by His grace), in accordance with His word, and where we trust and obey Him.

¹¹⁷ Some think that the believers of verse 30 are different than the believers of verse 31. I don’t agree.

¹¹⁸ Many (even most) commentators believe that it *was* the ones who had “believed” that responded to Jesus in verse 33. R. C. H. Lenski is *not* one of those commentators. I’ll quote part of what he says here (*St. John’s Gospel* [Augsburg, 1943], pages 632, 633). “Those who assume that the believing Jews here speak against Jesus must assume also (and some actually do) that, believing in one instant, they lose their faith in the next and in a moment become more vicious than ever. . . . If the believing Jews could thus pass over into passionate unbelief because of one simple word of Jesus [referring to what He said in John 8:31, 32. It is important to see that what Jesus had already said in 8:21, 24 was much harder to accept than what He said here in verses 31, 32.], he certainly made a mistake when he held out to them the sweet prospect of spiritual liberty. Had he here lost his power to see what is in men’s hearts (2:25)?” (this footnote continues on the next page)

kill Him, and in verses 45, 46 He said that they *did not believe* in Him. At the end of the chapter they even picked up stones to throw at Jesus (to kill Him).

What Jesus said to the “believers” in verses 31, 32 was undoubtedly spoken in the presence of a much larger audience in the temple (the “believers” would have been a minority), an audience that included many strong opponents of Jesus, opponents who are mentioned in John 8:13-30, 33-59 (and often in the Gospel of John). His opponents in the audience realized that what Jesus said to the Jewish “believers” in verse 32 about their need to become His disciples to be set free would undoubtedly apply to them too, words which made them indignant. They must respond to His false words, they thought. His opponents rejected Jesus and His words in general.], **“We are Abraham’s descendants [cf. Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8; John 8:37, 39, 53, 56; Rom. 9:7, 8; and Gal. 3:29] and have never yet been enslaved to anyone [It might be better to take the Greek *oudeni* as neuter (instead of masculine) and translate *anything*, instead of *anyone*. See the following discussion on the meaning of these words.]; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’”** [Apparently those Jews were thinking of their religious/spiritual freedom, being “Abraham’s descendants” and the privileged people of God by covenant.¹¹⁹ For one thing, what Jesus had said in verses 31, 32 fit the idea of

I’ll also quote part of what J. H. Bernard says here (*Gospel According to John*, Vol. 2 [T&T Clark, 1999 reprint], page 306). “Those who made the answer which follows were not the Jews who ‘believed Him’ (v. 31), but the Jewish objectors, with whom throughout the rest of this chapter Jesus is engaged in controversy. He could not have charged ‘the Jews who believed Him’ with seeking His life (vv. 37, 39).”

¹¹⁹ The Jews certainly could not claim that they had never been in bondage to other nations. Even then they were under the heel of the Romans, and before that they were subject to the Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and others. The Jews could have legitimately claimed that most of them had never literally been slaves, but it doesn’t seem that that idea was an issue in verses 31-33. For one thing, it was understood that Jesus was *not* addressing His words in verses 31, 32 to those who were literal slaves.

I’ll quote part of what Gerald L. Boschert says here (*John 1-11* [Broadman & Holman, 2002], pages 303, 304). “... It was... a religious statement rooted in their conviction that they were the spiritual children of God... the Pharisees did not regard political liberty as the test of freedom. Being sons of God, a holy people, God’s possessions, according to Deut. 14:1, 2, was for them the test of being free.”

I’ll quote a sentence from what R. H. Lightfoot says here (*St. John’s Gospel* [Oxford reprint, 1966], page 192). “Rightly understood, there is no reference here, on either side [what Jesus said in verses 31, 32 or what His hearers said in verse 33], to political freedom or bondage, but only to a freedom dependent on man’s relation to God.” Gary M. Burge (*John* [Zondervan, 2000], page 260) says, “... Jesus’ audience is likely referring to spiritual or inward freedom.”

I’ll quote part of what William Hendriksen says here (*Gospel of John* [Baker, 1953], page 53). “Their line of reasoning is on this order: heathen are in bondage; they serve idols; but surely we are not in bondage. We are no heathens; we are not even Samaritans (cf. 8:48). How, then, is it that Jesus can say, ‘You will become free?’”

I’ll quote part of what Herman Ridderbos says here (*Gospel of John* [Eerdmans, 1997], page 309). “Their protest... arose from a sense of spiritual superiority as children of Abraham chosen by God out of all the nations, and thus a sense of being exempt from any servant relationship to others (cf. Matt. 3:9; Rom. 2:17-20). They rightly sensed that, by the way Jesus made their freedom contingent on faith in him, he was calling into question this inalienable privilege.”

I’ll also quote part of what R. V. G. Tasker says here (*Gospel According to St. John* [Eerdmans, 1960], pages 117, 118). “It is apparent in this section that what prevents men and women from making the personal surrender to Christ, which is the essence of true belief, is their exclusive and intense reliance on other things, and a failure to understand that those other things are blinding them to the truth about themselves. It may be reliance on ancestry, or national privileges and traditions; it may be a blind trust in the rites and ceremonies of religion, or a slavish obedience to some external law or rule of life—but the

religious/spiritual freedom from bondage. They were not in bondage to the darkness and depravity of the idolatry and false religions of the Gentiles. They were, however (as Jesus made it clear in the following verses; also compare, for example, verses 21, 24; Luke 13:1-5) in bondage to sin (and spiritual death) and in desperate need of the salvation that they could receive only through the Lord Jesus Christ.¹²⁰ Even the most godly believers under the old covenant (and His opponents were *not* in that category) still needed the full, new-covenant salvation that had been promised/prophesied in the Old Testament (cf., e.g., Jer. 31:31-34 with Heb. 8:1-13; 10:11-18¹²¹).

Leon Morris (page 457) points out that people typically don't realize that they are in bondage to sin; they tend to "rest in some fancied position of privilege, national, social, or religious" and he comments that "these Jews, proud of their religion, did not even know their need to be free." **(34) Jesus answered them, "Truly [Amen], truly [amen] I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.** [Compare, for example, Acts 2:40; Rom. 6:6, 7, 12-14, 16-23; Gal. 1:4; and 2 Pet. 2:19.] **(35) The slave does not remain in the house** [I assume that Jesus was speaking of the *house* of God here (referring to God's family), but it is possible that He was speaking of a *house* (family) on the earth.] **forever; the son** ["the Son" KJV; "a son" NKJV; NIV. The Greek has the definite article with the word for Son/son here, and I believe it is better to translate "the Son," referring to Christ. It is clear that verse 36 goes on to speak of "the Son," referring to Christ. The NASB; NIV; KJV; and NKJV all have "the Son" in verse 36. The only way Jews (or Gentiles) can become *sons/children of God* in the full sense is through Jesus Christ, *the unique Son of God* (see verses 31, 32, 36); only He can *make them free* (verse 36) and ready to stand before God at the end of this age; through Him they are born again/from above (cf., e.g., John 1:12, 13; 3:3-8). Through Christ Jesus, the Son, they become born-again sons of God and part of the house/family of God.

It is understood that those who are *slaves of sin* and not sons (whether Jews or Gentiles) do not have a real place or inheritance in God's kingdom/household/true Israel—they are not true sons of Abraham, the believer (cf. Gal. 3:29).¹²² As verses 56-58 show, Abraham (unlike the Jewish opponents of Jesus, who were descendants of Abraham only in a physical, fleshly sense) rejoiced in the Lord Jesus Christ.] **does remain forever.** [Compare Gen. 21:10; 1 Chron. 17:11-15; Gal. 4:30; and Heb. 3:6. In the natural world the slaves were the property of the house (family) that owned them; they didn't have a place in, or inheritance rights, in the house. The house was passed on to the children, not the slaves.] **(36) So if the Son makes you free** ["So if the Son

result is always the same, a failure to grasp the truth about themselves. Man's greatest need, it has well been said, is to know what *is* his greatest need."

¹²⁰ Most of Jesus' opponents would have admitted that they were *not* living without sin (cf., e.g., John 8:7-11), but they believed that their covenant with God (which included their having the truth of God's word and the temple with the sacrificial offerings) compensated for their sin. (They had some truth, but they desperately needed the promised new-covenant salvation that Jesus came to give.) They (like many "Christians" today) didn't begin to understand the seriousness of their sin problem. They were not prepared to accept what Jesus told them regarding their sinful status before God (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5; John 8:21, 24, 34-36; and Rom. 2:1-3:26).

¹²¹ On these verses, see pages 156-163 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

¹²² "Sin ruptures a relationship with God. The 'son' who is secure and permanent is likely Jesus himself" (Gary Burge, *John*, page 261). In a footnote Burge says, "Greek reads 'the son,' not as in NIV, 'a son.' Throughout this Gospel 'the son' refers to Jesus. In the Johannine literature, Christians are described as 'children' of God."

makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:32). See under verse 35.], **you will be free indeed.** [Salvation in Christ includes forgiveness of sins, but the greater emphasis is placed on the fact that we are *set free from sin and spiritual death*, born again, and enabled (and required) to live in the righteousness and holiness of God. We are set free from (redeemed out of) the kingdom of sin, darkness, Satan, and death through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death. See my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atoning Death.*] **(37) I know that you are Abraham’s descendants** [See John 8:33. The unbelieving Jewish opponents of Jesus (at least those who continued in that state) were descendants of Abraham only in an external, physical sense.]; **yet you seek to kill Me** [cf. John 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25; and 8:40, 44, 59], **because My word has no place in you.** [They rejected Him and His word in their hearts (cf., e.g., John 8:13, 19, 21).] **(38) I speak the things which I have seen with My Father** [“Or *in the presence of*” (margin of NASB); “in the Father’s presence” NIV; “with My Father” KJV; NKJV; the Greek preposition *para* with the dative case can be translated “with,” or “in the presence of.” Compare, for example, John 5:28; 12:49; and 14:10.]; **therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.**” [Jesus goes on to tell His opponents that their father is the devil (verses 40-44). They were children of the devil doing the works of the devil (cf. 1 John 3:8, 10, 12; we’ll discuss these verses later).] **(39) They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”** [See John 8:33, 37. As I mentioned, Jesus’ opponents were children of Abraham in an external, physical sense only. They were not believers like Abraham. They (at least most of them) were not part the elect of God, who will submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith (cf. John 6:35-51). They thought they were prime examples of the people of God’s Israel, but Jesus, who knows what He is talking about, said they weren’t.] **Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds [or “works”] of Abraham.** [“ ‘If you were Abraham’s children,’ said Jesus, ‘then you would do the things Abraham did’ ” NIV. Abraham was a man of faith (he had faith in God and His word), and his works (attitudes, priorities, life, actions) manifested his faith (cf., e.g., James 2:14-26). Abraham, unlike Jesus’ Jewish opponents, who were seeking to kill Him (verse 40), rejoiced in the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 56)—he certainly didn’t want to kill Him.] **(40) But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me** [cf. John 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25; and 8:37, 44, 59], **a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God** [See John 8:26, 28, 38.]; **this Abraham did not do. (41) You are doing the deeds [works] of your father.**” [For one thing, as Jesus goes on to say in verse 44, their father, the devil, “was a murderer from the beginning.” They were the devil’s children in a spiritual (actually unspiritual), moral (actually immoral), family sense; they had the same desires he had (verse 44), and they acted like him. It can also be said that he was the spirit working *in* them (see Eph. 2:2) and *through* them (they were doing his works). This means a lot more than that the devil’s children *imitate* him. They were not, however, created by, or born of, the devil. (For more on this important topic, see under verse 44.)] **They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God** [cf. Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; and Jer. 31:9].” [Their claim was that they were *legitimate* children of God—He was their Father; they were His people (and they were *legitimate* children of Abraham; He was their father). The truth was that they were not of God (cf. John 8:42, 44, 47); they did not really know Him or love Him (cf., e.g., John 8:19, 55; 5:38, 42; and 7:28)—they proved this, for one thing, by rejecting

(and wanting to kill) His unique Son and salvation from sin through Him.] **(42) Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me** [As it was, they hated Him like their father (the devil) hated Him.], **for I proceeded forth and have come from God** [cf., e.g., John 8:16, 18, 23, 26-29; 13:3; 15:23; and 16:28, 30], **for I have not even come on My own initiative** [see under John 7:28], **but He sent Me** [see under John 8:16]. [It isn’t possible to love God the Father and reject (not love) His unique Son, who is like Him in every way: He was sent by Him; He is deity with Him; His coming was prophesied in some detail in the Old Testament; He speaks the words of the Father and does the works of the Father that He was sent to do. Rejecting Him and His salvation showed all too clearly where the hearts of His opponents were. For one thing, those who love God and truly want to do His will will know that Jesus and His teaching came from the Father (John 7:17; cf. John 3:19-21).] **(43) Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.** [His opponents did not know God or love God and they were not open to His word (His word of truth)—they were living in a different dimension (the kingdom of darkness and lies); they were of a different family; their father, as the next verse shows, was the devil. This doesn’t mean that they were all demon possessed, but their hearts were in tune with the devil and his thoughts—they were greatly influenced by him (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:1-3), and they (at least most of them) were not open to change (to repent).] **(44) You are of your father the devil** [They were part of his family; they had his nature; they had his evil desires; they did his evil works.], **and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer** [“Man-slayer/killer”; Greek *anthrōpoktonos*. “Old and rare word...from *anthrōpos*, man, and *kteinō*, to kill. In N.T. only here and 1 John 3:15.”¹²³] **from the beginning** [I’ll quote 1 John 3:8, 10, 12¹²⁴: “the one who practices [who is doing sin] sin is of the devil¹²⁵; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (10) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (12) not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds [works] were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.”

¹²³ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 5 (Broadman, 1932), page 154. The Greek noun *anthrōpos* is used of Jesus in verse 40, translated “man.” Jesus was a man, but He was a whole lot more than just a man; He was the God-man, deity with God the Father. The fact that Jesus called Satan a *man-killer* here helps demonstrate that He was *not* speaking of sins that Satan committed before *man* was created.

¹²⁴ 1 John 2:28-3:12 are discussed verse-by-verse on pages 208-213 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

¹²⁵ I’ll quote part of what A. E. Brooke says on the meaning of these words, “He whose whole course of action is the expression of ‘sin,’ belongs to the Devil, from whom the life which animates him is derived...” (*Johannine Epistles* [T&T Clark, 1980 reprint], page 88). I should point out that most children of the devil do not appear to be sinning *all the time*, and that includes Jesus’ opponents spoken of in John chapter 8—the *whole course of their action was not an expression of sin* (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 11:13-15). The devil can use religious people (and not just religious people) more if they have a facade of righteousness.

I’ll also quote part of what Brooke says under 1 John 3:12 (on page 92). “Every man must draw his life and power from one source or the other. His deeds show to whom he belongs and has attached himself. The writer never denies the individual freedom of choice. He only traces back...to their ultimate spiritual sources.”

The high-level angelic being (apparently a cherub) who became Satan/the devil was created good, like everything else that God ever created (cf. Gen. 1:31), but the time came that he initiated an angelic rebellion against God (through pride); it is clear that he had already fallen before he tempted Eve in the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:1-15; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-17; 1 Tim. 3:6; and Rev. 12:4, 7-10).¹²⁶ The words “he was a murderer [man-slayer/killer] from the beginning” (John 8:44) apparently refer to the time (the time very early in the history of man) that Cain murdered his brother (Gen. 4:1-10)—the devil was working through Cain; it can be said that Cain was doing a work of the devil—all sins can be considered works of the devil.¹²⁷ That murder was the first

¹²⁶ Genesis chapter 3 and Ezekiel 28:1-19 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper on Genesis chapters 1-3. Revelation chapter 12 is discussed verse-by-verse in my book *The Mid-Week Rapture*. I cited Rev. 12:4, 7-10 here mostly because of the first sentence of Rev. 12:4, “And his [the devil’s] tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.” Satan and these “stars” (*evil angels*; cf. Rev. 12:4 with 12:7-9) will not be cast down to the earth until Christ returns in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week, but this verse gives us the important information that *a third* of the angels followed the devil in his rebellion against God. Much of the devil’s work (very much including his work in and through men) is carried out through evil angels and demons.

¹²⁷ The devil was a man-killer (John 8:44) in his heart before it manifested itself in Cain’s hatred for and murder of his brother. (Satan undoubtedly hated man from the time of man’s creation, and especially from the time that he was informed that he would eventually be defeated and overthrown by man.) It must be understood, of course, that although the sins of man can be considered works of the devil (and that he is working in them and through them), *we* are responsible for *our* sins. On judgment day we will not be able to use the excuse that the devil did it, or that he made us do it. For one thing, Adam and Eve had a free will before the fall (they were not spiritually dead; they were not in bondage to sin or Satan); after the fall we still have some freedom of the will; we have some capacity to respond to God, His word, and His grace. Note that 1 John 3:12 speaks of *Cain’s* works being evil. Cain was responsible for his works; he will have to answer to God for his works.

1 John 3:8, 12 (like John 8:39-47) inform us that Cain (and all men who are characterized by sin) was *of the evil one/the devil*. He was a *child of the devil* (1 John 3:10). Cain, unlike Abel (cf. Heb. 11:4), did not have faith in God; his heart was with the devil; he was aligned with the devil; he listened to the devil; he yielded to the devil; he let the devil work through him and use him. God’s people have no right to listen to the devil. For one thing, his lies typically go against God and His word. God’s people must not relate to the devil in any way; they must resist him, his lies, his influences.

Most commentators believe that what Jesus said about the devil’s *being a murderer (man-killer) from the beginning* (John 8:44) refers to his *murdering* mankind (when he enticed Adam and Eve to sin in the beginning) in Genesis chapter 3. I rather strongly prefer the view that Jesus was referring to the murder of Abel (and all subsequent murders) in John 8:44. (His murder was the first of very many literal man-killings throughout the history of man.) Cain’s murder of Abel (as the devil was working through him; as Cain did a work of the devil; cf. 1 John 3:12 with 3:8, 10) was a much more effective foreshadowing of Jesus’ Jewish opponents murdering Him (as they were doing a work of the devil [cf. John 8:40, 41, 44]) than the devil’s “murder” of the human race.

It is true, of course, that the devil was behind the death of Adam and Eve (and their offspring). He lied to Eve (cf. Gen. 3:3-6; John 8:44) and tempted Adam and Eve to do what God had commanded them not to do. God had made it clear to Adam that if man ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). When they ate of the forbidden fruit, they died spiritually, and the physical death process was initiated. The devil hated God, and he was envious of what man had with God. In Gen. 3:15 the devil learned that he would eventually be totally defeated (destroyed) by man, the seed of the woman. (That prophecy is fulfilled especially through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a man, but who is much more than just a man. That prophecy undoubtedly greatly enhanced the devil’s hatred of man, especially those men who had a heart for God and were motivated to live for Him.) Cain was jealous of the fact that God had accepted Abel’s offering (and Abel himself), but not his offering (Gen. 4:2-8). God doesn’t accept offerings from rebels, and Cain certainly proved he was a rebel. For one thing, rather than repent when

in a very long line of murders, murders that are still going on today, but they won't go on forever. It should be obvious that Christians shouldn't have any *works of the devil*, which includes all sin (cf., e.g., Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Acts 13:8-10; 26:18; Eph. 4:27; 1 Tim. 5:15; and 2 Tim. 2:26).

The words "the devil has sinned from the beginning" of 1 John 3:8 (cf. "he was a murderer from the beginning" John 8:44) should apparently also be explained of the works of the devil done through men (as they yield to him and his spirit works in them [cf. Eph. 2:2]) that started *in the beginning* (very early in the history of man) when Eve listened to the lies of the devil and Adam and Eve joined the devil in his rebellion against God and began to sin.¹²⁸ He began to sin through them; they began to do his works.

When the apostle John said in 1 John 3:8 that the Son of God came "to destroy the works of the devil," his primary point (in that context) was that Christians are enabled (and required) to stop doing the works of the devil; that is, to stop sinning.¹²⁹ Isn't that good news? The fact that Christians are enabled and required to stop sinning is a dominant theme of 1 John.¹³⁰ When Christ's works of saving and judging are finished,

God warned him, he killed his brother (Gen. 4:5-8). Cain also hated Abel for being different (for having faith and being righteous).

It could be said that the devil murdered Adam and Eve in that he tempted them (he gave them the poison that killed them, so to speak), but it is much more in line with the Bible's overall teaching to say that *God judged* Adam and Eve for their sin with the *death penalty* that He had promised. God is *The Judge!* He is the One with the authority to put to death and to make alive (cf., e.g., 1 Sam. 2:6; John 5:21-30; Rev. 19:20, 21; and 20:9-15). *God* judged Adam and Eve because of *their sin*, for which they were responsible (they had no right to listen to, yield to, and follow the devil, and especially when it involved rebelling against God and His word). God was the One who drove Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, in which they had enjoyed a life-flowing relationship with Him, and He stationed the cherubim to guard the way back into the garden/His presence (Gen. 3:24). God was the One who *condemned* mankind to death (spiritual and physical death) because of Adam's sin (see Rom. 5:12-21). Mankind was sold into spiritual death and bondage to sin (cf. Rom. 7:14) by Adam's rebellion. Creation was (temporarily) subjected to futility (by God) because of Adam's sin (see Rom. 8:20). Much of Romans chapters 5-8 are discussed verse-by-verse in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Romans 8:16-23 are discussed in my paper dated July 2000.

I'll quote a sentence from what Rudolph Schnackenberg says under 1 John 3:12 (*Johannine Epistles* [Crossroad, 1992], page 179). "This interpretation of Cain's deed as the work of the devil in a human act is in agreement with the judgment passed on Judas in the Gospel of John (cf. John 13:2, 27 [cf. Luke 22:3])."

¹²⁸ The devil was a sinner from the time of his initial rebellion against God (which clearly took place before he tempted Eve in the garden of Eden), but he could not sin through men or be a man-killer until after man was created.

¹²⁹ See pages 210-213 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. I'll quote a small part of what F. F. Bruce says under 1 John 3:7, 8 (*Epistles of John* [Eerdmans, 1970], page 91). "... The very purpose of the Son of God's appearance on earth was 'to destroy the works of the devil' Chief of the devil's works is sin, which the Son of God came to take away (cf. verse 5)."

I'll also quote part of what Donald W. Burdick says under 1 John 3:8 (*Letters of John the Apostle* [Moody Press, 1985], page 243). "The devil's works are all the sinful attitudes and activities of which he is the source, whether directly or indirectly. Everything that the devil has done was potentially destroyed at the cross and will be destroyed in actuality at the final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). However, in this context destroying the works of the devil is parallel to taking away sins (see on 3:5). That is to say that Christ is here and now destroying or removing sins. He came to give believers victory over sin, and thus to destroy the sins that otherwise would fill people's lives."

¹³⁰ See pages 200-213 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

there won't be any more works of the devil (any more sinning) by anyone in God's kingdom—the devil and all who continue to follow him will have been removed and will have no place in God's kingdom. During this present age Christians are enabled to walk in victory over sin; in the future age we will be glorified and the tempter won't even be there.

When born-again, new-covenant believers do righteous works their works are, in a very real sense, the works of God by His grace/Spirit (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:29; 3:5-12; and Gal. 5:16, 22-25). God must receive all the glory for our righteousness, because it came from Him (at a high cost to Him in the incarnation and atoning death of His Son) by grace through faith.), **and [the devil] does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature for he is a liar and the father of lies.**¹³¹ [Whenever the devil commits any sin (including lying), he acts from his own fallen, corrupt, sinful, rebellious nature, for he is a sinner and the father of sins and sinners. Compare Matt. 12:34; 1 John 3:8, 10, 12] **(45) But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.** [The children of the father of lies/liars are not interested in the truth, but God's sheep respond to the truth (cf., e.g., John 7:17; 10:3, 4, 14, 16, 26, 27). I'll quote 1 John 4:5, 6, "They [the Gnostic heretics] are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Those who are not of God are of the "spirit of error"; they demonstrate what kingdom they are of in that they listen to the heretics who are of the world and do not listen to those who speak the truth of God, like the apostle John. And I'll quote John 18:37, "Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly *that* I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'" **(46) Which one of you convicts Me of sin?** [Compare 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; and 1 John 3:5. Jesus' opponents charged Him with a lot of sin, even the sin of blasphemy, but they could not convict Him of sin before the ultimate Judge, because none of their charges were valid. Subsequent events, including His glorification, proved Jesus' righteousness (cf., e.g., John 16:10; Acts 3:13-16).] **If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?** [Jesus has already answered this question for His opponents (see verses 41-45; also see verse 47; John 3:19-21). The children of the father of lies are oriented and motivated to believe the lie, not the truth (which includes God's righteousness and holiness [cf. Eph. 4:24]).] **(47) He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them* because you are not of God.**" [See under verses 41-46; cf. 1 John 4:6.] **(48) The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan [cf. Matt. 10:5; Luke 9:51-56; 10:33; 17:16; John 4:3-42; and Acts 8:4-25] and have a demon [see John 7:20; 8:52; 10:20; and Matt. 11:18; cf. Matt. 9:34; Mark 3:22; and Luke 11:15]?"** [To call Jesus a Samaritan was intended as a serious insult. To say He had a demon was a greater insult. Jesus'

¹³¹ The KJV; NKJV translation is more literal from the Greek, "and the father of it." In the margin the NASB has a note, "Lit. *it*," instead of "lies." The translation "it" assumes that the Greek pronoun *autou* is neuter in gender and refers to the word "lie." The NIV also makes this assumption with its translation "father of lies." This Greek pronoun (*autou*) could also be understood as masculine gender. Then it would refer back to the word "liar" instead of "lie." I agree with the NASB, KJV; NKJV; NIV that it is probably better to understand the Greek pronoun to be neuter here, and that what John was saying is that the devil is the father of *lies*, but it is also true that he is the father of *liars*.

opponents were convinced that He was evil.] **(49) Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.** [As we have seen, the primary problem was that His opponents didn’t really know, love, or honor the Father (though they thought they did). They proved that by rejecting and dishonoring the One He had sent, His unique Son, the God-man, the One like Him, the Messiah, the only One who could save them from their sin(s).] **(50) But I do not seek My glory** [cf. John 5:41, 44; 7:18; and 8:54]; **there is One who seeks and judges.** [Jesus, unlike His Jewish opponents, sought only the glory that came from the Father, not the “glory” that comes from men. The words “there is One who seeks” refers to God the Father—He *seeks the glory of His Unique Son* (see verse 54). The translation of the NIV seems to communicate the right idea for the second half of this verse: “there is one who seeks it [seeks for Jesus Christ to be glorified], and he is the judge.”] **(51) Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word** [cf. John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:7, 10, 14; 17:6; and 1 John 2:5] **he will never see death** [that is, he will never die; “he will never taste of death” (John 8:52)].” [See verse 52; cf. Luke 2:26; John 5:24; 6:47, 50; and 11:26. Those who submit to Christ Jesus and His word (in faith) are born again and maintain a life-flowing relationship with Him by grace through faith (faith includes obedience to Him and His word) will never die *spiritually*. If they die *physically* they go to heaven (a place permeated with the *life* of God) in a preliminary sense (before the resurrection of the body), and at that the end of this age they will be resurrected (with a glorified body) and born into the fullness of eternal life.] **(52) The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon** [cf. John 8:48]. **Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death** [that is, he will never die; “he will never see death” (John 8:51); cf. Matt. 16:28; Heb. 2:9].” [See under verse 51. As it so often happened, the Jews thought that Jesus was speaking in a literal sense (of not dying *physically*), but He was speaking in a *spiritual* sense. The reason born-again believers will never taste of spiritual death is because Jesus took our place (bearing our sins as the Lamb of God); He bore our sins with the guilt and the penalties. He died (physically) as the Lamb of God. In His atoning death He also bore the penalty of spiritual death for us, so we could be saved from that awesome penalty.¹³² Bondage to sin comes with spiritual death (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:21; Eph. 2:1-5), but “if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36; see John 8:31-36).] **(53) Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham** [Compare John 4:12; 8:33, 37, 39. The Gospel of John (and the entire New Testament) makes it very clear that, *Yes!*, the Lord Jesus Christ was far above (much greater than) Abraham, or any other man, or the cherubim, archangels, etc. They were all created (along with every other being or thing that was ever created) by, through, and for God the Son (cf., e.g., John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16; and Heb. 1:1-3).], **who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”** [Jesus had just said (in verse 51) that those who (submit to Him in faith and) keep His word will never see death (never die). But surely the fact that Abraham and the prophets died proves that He is wrong? Not at all! Jesus was speaking of born-

¹³² I didn’t say that Jesus (the eternal Son of God, who became the God-man) died spiritually. It’s a serious error to say that He died spiritually, or that His nature changed, or that He needed to be born again like we do. He never sinned, and He never ceased being deity with the Father. He was separated in some ways from God the Father by our sins in His atoning death (cf. Psalm 22:1; Matt. 27:46; and Mark 15:34), but He never ceased being deity with the Father. He couldn’t be deity and be spiritually dead. See my paper, *Did Jesus Die Spiritually?* on my internet site.

again *new-covenant* believers not dying *spiritually*. One primary problem that Jesus' opponents had was that they totally rejected what He said when He told them who He was. We see that fact repeatedly demonstrated throughout the Gospel of John, and in other parts of the New Testament. When He told them who He was, they accused Him of blasphemy, having a demon, etc.] **(54) Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing** [See John 8:50. God the Father must glorify Him, and, as Jesus went on to say later in verse 54, the Father did glorify Him: He glorified Him by the works He gave Him to do; He glorified Him by speaking audibly from heaven on several occasions, etc., but most of that glorifying takes place after His atoning death (cf. John 7:39; 13:31, 32; 16:14; 17:1, 5), and most of the public manifestation of that glory is reserved for the end of this age, and afterwards (cf., e.g., Matt. 16:27; 25:31; 26:64; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 21:22, 23; and 22:1, 3).]; **it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; (55) and you have not come to know Him** [cf. John 7:28; 8:19; 15:21; and 16:3], **but I know Him** [cf. Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 7:29; and 17:25]; **and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you** [cf. John 8:43-45; they were not speaking the truth, for one thing, when they claimed that they were the people of God (they said, "He is our God" (verse 54).)], **but I do know Him and keep His word** [cf., e.g., John 15:10]. **(56) Your father Abraham** [cf. John 8:33, 37, 39] **rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.**" [I'll quote Heb. 11:13, "All these [referring to Abraham, Sarah and the others who were mentioned in the preceding verses of Hebrews chapter 11 (and many others not mentioned there)] died in faith, without receiving the promises [They had received the promises, but *the things promised* (including new-covenant salvation and eternal glory) were not yet available when they died; they could not receive these things until after Christ Jesus had conquered sin, Satan, and death (see Heb. 11:39, 40¹³³).], but having seen them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth [They knew that this wasn't their real home. They were looking forward to their eternal home in glory (cf., e.g., Heb. 11:10, 13-16)]."

The words "Abraham rejoiced to see My day" apparently refer to his rejoicing when God revealed to him something of His glorious plans regarding the Lord Jesus Christ and His works. As the rest of the verse says, when Abraham saw it (apparently referring to his seeing it by revelation when he still lived on the earth) *he was glad*.¹³⁴ Jesus' Jewish opponents, in stark contrast with the rejoicing/gladness of Abraham, the one they claimed as their father (he was their father after the flesh), did everything but rejoice/be glad when they saw the Lord Jesus Christ in Person (not in a vision/by revelation) and heard His words and saw something of His works. They rejected Him! They hated Him! They wanted to kill Him!¹³⁵

¹³³ These verses are discussed on pages 166, 167 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

¹³⁴ The last words of verse 56, which is four words in the Greek, could be translated, "he both saw it and he was glad." The Greek has *kai...kai*, which is sometimes translated *both...and*.

¹³⁵ I'll quote part of what R. V. G. Tasker says under this verse (*Gospel According to St. John* [Eerdmans, 1960], page 122. "The Greek does not mean 'rejoiced in the hope of seeing My day' when it actually came [Quite a few commentators understand these words that way; the NIV translates "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day..."; in the margin the NASB has "Lit. *in order that he might see*."], and when Abraham would be in the abode of the blessed; but 'rejoiced in that he actually saw' it [by revelation] while he was still on earth. There was a rabbinic tradition that when God

It was a big deal that Abraham saw *Jesus' day*. If Jesus' Jewish opponents would have accepted that one fact as true they would have repented and submitted to Him as Messiah. His opponents wouldn't have objected to the idea that Abraham had received a revelation regarding the Messiah and his work, but they were not about ready to accept the idea that Abraham had seen *Jesus* as the Messiah.] **(57) So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old** [Jesus would have been about thirty-five when He was crucified (cf. Luke 3:23); He was probably crucified in AD 30.], **and have You seen Abraham?"** [Abraham lived some two thousand years before Jesus Christ was born. For the record, Jesus didn't say (in verse 56) that He had seen Abraham, but that Abraham had rejoiced to see His day. But *He had seen Abraham* (cf., e.g., what Jesus said in verse 58).] **(58) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly** [I'll quote a sentence from what Gary M. Burge says here, "Truly, truly [Greek *amen, amen*] I say to you, a phrase Jesus uses some twenty times in the Gospel (see comment on 1:51)."¹³⁶], **I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."** [In that God the Son was deity with God the Father (and God the Spirit) (cf., e.g., John 1:1-4), He always existed. On the significant words "I am," which undoubtedly build on the divine name of Ex. 3:14, see under John 8:24.] **(59) Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him** [See John 10:31; 11:8; cf., e.g., John 5:18; 7:1, 19, 25; 8:37, 40. Jesus' Jewish opponents were sure that He was claiming far too much for Himself; they were sure He was blaspheming (cf., e.g., John 5:18; 10:33; and 19:7). They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah (cf., e.g., John 7:47-52; 9:16, 22), and the Jews in general did not (and they still do not today) understand that the Messiah was to be deity/God the Son.], **but Jesus hid Himself** [cf., e.g., Luke 4:30; John 5:13; and 10:39; Jesus' hiding Himself could have had a supernatural component; it was necessary for Him to be crucified (not stoned), and at the right time, at Passover.] **and went out of the temple.**

established His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:9ff), the latter received a vision of the messianic age."

I'll quote two sentences from what Raymond E. Brown says regarding the meaning of the words "...he saw it" (*Gospel According to John I-XII* [Doubleday, 1966], page 359). "Up to the time of Maldonatus (16th century) exegetes were almost unanimous in assuming that this referred to a vision that took place during Abraham's life. More recently, however, the interpretation has gained ground that John means that after Abraham died, he saw Jesus' day." I believe the idea that Abraham saw Jesus' day after he (Abraham) died is reasonable (cf., e.g., Matt. 17:3; 22:31, 32; and Luke 16:22-31), but I don't believe that was what Jesus was speaking of here in John 8:56.

¹³⁶ *John* (Zondervan, 2000), page 263. I'll quote Burge's comment on John 1:51 (pages 78, 79). "John 1:51 introduces Jesus' first use of the '*amen, amen*' formula (obscured in the NIV's 'I tell you the truth'). Literally Jesus says, 'Truly [*amen*], truly [*amen*] I say to you....' In the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark, and Luke] *amen* [actually *amēn*] occurs only once when the expression is used [that is, in the Synoptic Gospels the word *amen* is not doubled], but it is characteristically doubled [*amen, amen*] throughout the fourth Gospel (used twenty-five times). The word is a Hebrew or Aramaic idiom that implies certainty or confirmation and generally was appended to corporate prayers (1 Cor. 14:16; cf. Psalm 41:13). Jesus uses it to *introduce* sayings that for him are solemn or significant; no genuine parallels from Judaism have been found. This is Jesus' unique Aramaic teaching style, embedded in the Greek Gospel story."

I'll also quote part of what G. B. Funderburk says in the article on "amen" in the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (1975), page 127. "'Amen' in both Greek and English is a transliteration from the Hebrew, while the same spelling is also retained in Latin and German. In fact, it is probably the most universal of all words, with only 'ma' for mother a close second. The Hebrew means 'to make firm,' to 'found, to prop up, to build'; hence 'support,' 'confirm, so be it.' In addition, the Greek usage may more clearly be defined as *truly, verily, indeed*, 'so be it,' or 'may it be fulfilled.'"

May God's will be fully accomplished through this paper and His people be edified!

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