

# ***A Verse-by-Verse Study of***

## **John 1:19-4:54**

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The original version of this paper has been modified to some extent (a rather limited extent) to produce this internet version of the paper. In October, 2012 I am splitting this paper into six parts and putting it in the proper format to put on several Christian article sites. I am making some improvements to this paper at this time, including correcting a few typographical errors, rewriting a few passages, adding a little content, and updating cross-references to my other writings.

**by Karl Kemp**  
**August 2005**

# CONTENTS

John 1:19-54.....	1
John Chapter 2.....	9
John Chapter 3.....	14
John Chapter 4.....	29

## **Other Verses, Topics that Are Discussed in this Paper**

Deuteronomy 18:15-19.....	1
Isaiah 40:3-5.....	1, 2
Malachi 3:1.....	2
Malachi 4:5, 6.....	1, 2
On water baptism, the new birth, and baptism in the Spirit.....	3, 4, 14-17

All Bible quotations in this paper were taken from the NASB (1995 edition), unless otherwise noted.

## JOHN 1:19-51

John 1:1-18, the super-important prologue for the Gospel of John, is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). I also have papers on John chapters 5-8; chapters 10-12 (with 9:35-41); chapters 13-17; and chapters 18-20 on my internet site. All of the papers are verse-by-verse studies. John 9:1-5 are discussed on pages 49-52 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

Now we'll start with John 1:19.

**This is the testimony of John [John the Baptist], when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem [John 1:28 shows where John the Baptist was when the priests and Levites came to question him.] to ask him, “Who are you?” (20) And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” [Compare John 1:7, 8, 15; 3:28-30; and Luke 3:15-17.] (21) They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” [Compare Matt. 16:14. In one sense John the Baptist was *Elijah*. (His ministry was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the coming of *Elijah the prophet* of Mal. 4:5, 6.) Jesus said so (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; and Mark 9:11-13).<sup>1</sup> The angel Gabriel told Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, that “[John] will go *as a forerunner* before Him [God the Son] in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children’ [“quoting” from Mal. 4:6], and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). God may not have revealed to John the Baptist that he was to fulfill the role of Elijah the prophet of Mal. 4:5, 6, or John may have denied that he was Elijah because the Jews were thinking in terms of the prophet of old coming back in the last days. John wasn't Elijah in that literal sense, but he came in the spirit and power of Elijah and partially fulfilled the prophecy regarding “Elijah the prophet” of Mal. 4:5, 6.] “**Are you the Prophet?**” [See Deut. 18:15-19; John 1:25; 6:14; and 7:40. I'll quote the paragraph that F. F. Bruce has regarding “the Prophet” here.<sup>2</sup> “These words of Moses [Deut. 18:15-19] were early understood to point to one particular prophet, a second Moses, who would exercise the full mediatorial function that Moses had exercised. ...at the end of the Pentateuch it is recorded that ‘there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face’ (Deut. 34:10). It came to be believed that the prophet like Moses would not be raised up until the end of the age. In some circles, especially among the Samaritans, the Messiah was envisaged in terms of this coming prophet....<sup>3</sup> ....”] **And he answered, “No.” (22) Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” (23) He said, “I****

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<sup>1</sup> See my paper that includes a verse-by-verse study of Malachi 2:17-4:6 on my internet site. For one thing, I deal there with the fact that the ministry of the two end-time prophets of Rev. 11:3-12 (or at least one of those prophets) will be required to exhaust the fulfillment of the prophecy of Mal. 4:5, 6 (and the prophecy of Isa. 40:3-5). That end-time ministry will take place just before the *second* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes to judge the world at the end of this age. John the Baptist's ministry helped prepare the way for the *first* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 48.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce has a footnote here, “See comments on John 4:19, 25 (pp. 108, 111). Compare the expectation of an end-time prophet in the Qumran text [Dead Sea Scrolls] quoted in n. 34.”

**am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as Isaiah the prophet said [in Isa. 40:3].”** [John’s call for repentance, his baptism of repentance, and his pointing people to the Lord Jesus Christ was designed to “make straight the way of the Lord” before the Lord comes to save and to judge; he thus partially fulfilled the prophecies of Isa. 40:3-5 and Mal. 4:5, 6. (See footnote 1.) See Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18. (Isaiah 40:3 is quoted in all three passages. Mark 1:2 also quotes from Mal. 3:1.<sup>4</sup> Luke 3:5, 6 go on to quote most of Isa. 40:4, 5 from the Septuagint version.)] **(24) Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.** [The NIV translates, “Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him.” I’ll quote part of what D. A. Carson says here.<sup>5</sup> “By far the best alternative is that of the NEB: ‘Some Pharisees who were in the deputation asked him.’ ”] **(25) They asked him, and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”** [See John 1:19-21.] **(26) John answered them saying, “I baptize in water** [a baptism in water tied to repentance (cf. Matt. 3:1-11; Mark 1:1-5; and Luke 3:1-14)], **but among you stands One whom you do not know** [referring, as the following words demonstrate, to the Lord Jesus Christ]. **(27) It is He who comes after me** [Christ came *after* John the Baptist in that John was born first by about six months (see Luke 1:5-57, especially verses 26, 36, 56, 57) and in that the ministry of John the Baptist began first, so he could help prepare the way for Christ Jesus through calling the people to repentance and pointing them to Him and His all-important ministry as Savior and Judge.], **the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie** [cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; and Luke 3:16].” **(28) These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.** [There is much uncertainty as to the location of this Bethany (clearly to be distinguished from the village of Bethany very near Jerusalem, where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived), but it was *beyond* (on the east side of) the Jordan River, near the river—John was baptizing in that river (cf. Matt. 3:6, 13; Mark 1:5, 9).] **(29) The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God** [cf. Isa. 53:7; John 1:36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; and 6:1] **who takes away the sin of the world!** [As Isa. 52:13-53:12, for example, show, Jesus took away the sin of the world (for all believers) by bearing our sins with the guilt (so we could be forgiven) and with our penalties (so we could get out from under those penalties, especially the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin [cf., e.g., Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:14-20; 2:24, 25; and 1 John 3:5]), not to mention being saved from the lake of fire. Furthermore, He opened the door to eternal glory for us.] **(30) This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me** [See John 1:15.]’ [See under John 1:27. Christ Jesus existed before John the Baptist in that He was God the Son, who always existed with God the Father and God the Spirit, and through whom all things that were created were created (see John 1:1-3).<sup>6</sup> See my papers *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son; Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?* and *More on the Trinity* on my internet site.] **(31) I did not recognize** [“know” NIV; NKJV] **Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel** [cf., e.g., John 1:6-8, 15, 26-36], **I came baptizing in water.”**

<sup>4</sup> Malachi 3:1 is an important prophetic verse dealing with the ministry of John the Baptist and the end-time prophets of Rev. 11:3-12. See the paper mentioned in footnote 1 on Mal. 3:1.

<sup>5</sup> *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), page 144.

<sup>6</sup> As I mentioned, John 1:1-18 are discussed in some detail in a paper on my internet site.

[John the Baptist undoubtedly knew a lot about Jesus (cf. Luke 1:39-80), but it wasn't confirmed to him that Jesus was the Christ, who would be anointed with the Spirit in a very special way and who would baptize in the Holy Spirit (see John 1:32, 33), and that He was the Son of God (see John 1:34), until He saw the Spirit descend on Jesus and remain on Him (see John 1:32-34; cf. Matt. 3:16, 17; Mark 1:10, 11; Luke 3:21, 22; and Acts 10:38). On the promised Christ/Messiah (the Anointed One), see, for example, Isa. 11:1-10; 42:1; and 61:1-3 with Luke 4:14-21. The word *Christ* comes from the Greek and means the Anointed One; *Messiah* comes from the Hebrew and means the Anointed One.] **(32) John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. [See under John 1:31.] (33) I did not recognize ["know" NKJV] Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him [See under verse 34.], this is the One who baptizes [or, immerses] in the Holy Spirit.'** [*Baptism/immersion in the Holy Spirit* is mentioned six other places in the New Testament (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16; and 1 Cor. 12:13). The first three references, and the fifth (Acts 11:16), all refer to these same words spoken by John the Baptist about Jesus Christ being the One who would baptize/immerse in the Holy Spirit, and Acts 1:5 is very similar. In Acts 1:4, 5 Jesus (after He was resurrected and shortly before He was taken up to heaven in a cloud forty days after His resurrection) told His disciples "to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' *He said*, 'you have heard from Me; (5) for John baptized with [in] water, but you will be baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit not many days from now [some ten days after His ascension, on the day of Pentecost]." In the Old Testament *the Father had promised* that the time would come that He would pour out the Holy Spirit on His people (cf., e.g., Isa. 32:15-18; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:14; and Joel 2:28, 29 with Acts 2:16-21). These Old Testament verses (with the exception of Joel 2:28, 29) put all the emphasis on the *life-giving* (which starts with the new birth), *sanctifying* (*making holy*) work of the Spirit.

It has been clear to me for a long time (since I made it a priority over a ten to fifteen year period to carefully search out the balanced truth of what the Bible has to say on this topic) that *baptism/immersion in the Spirit* (in all seven uses of these words in the New Testament) includes the new birth, the new-covenant sanctifying (making holy) work of the Spirit, and the new-covenant charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work. Pentecostals and charismatics typically define *baptism/immersion in the Spirit* as something that follows (as a second experience) the new birth by the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> However, for one thing, that viewpoint doesn't fit the context in which John the Baptist spoke these words (see Matt. 3:1-12, for example). He was speaking to people who were not born again and who desperately needed the *life-giving, sanctifying* work of the Spirit. That's what they needed to get ready for the day of judgment that John the Baptist warned about. All the emphasis of the context in which John the Baptist spoke these words about Christ Jesus baptizing/immersing in the Spirit, and the overall context in which the apostle John reported these words (here in John chapter 1), is on the new birth and the sanctifying work of the Spirit, not on anointing believers for the

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<sup>7</sup> Pentecostals and charismatics should be commended for insisting that the charismatic dimension of the work of the Spirit is available to believers today and for leading the way to enter that dimension of the Spirit's work in our generation. That dimension of His work is extremely important and we need all of the grace that He has made available to us. It is also true that many Christians in our day enter the charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work as a second experience.

charismatic dimension of His work (see, for example, Matt. 3:1-12; John 1:12, 13, 23, 29, 36; 3:3-8, 14-21).

The charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work in believers is included in what *baptism/immersion in the Spirit* means in the New Testament. Jesus Himself ministered in the charismatic dimension in a powerful way after He received/was anointed with the Spirit, and the book of Acts and 1 Corinthians chapter 12<sup>8</sup> and other passages put some emphasis on the fact that *baptism/immersion in the Spirit* includes the charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work. Christ Jesus (the God-man) was different than us in that He already had spiritual life and was perfectly holy and without sin before He received the Spirit. He didn't need to be born again by the Spirit or sanctified by the Spirit like we do.

I have discussed the important topic of *baptism/immersion in the Spirit* in some detail in my writings, aiming for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. See my paper *Charismatic Gifts and Charismatic Chaos*, dated May 2001 (pages 17-20), including the footnotes. (That paper isn't available on my internet site, but I could send you a copy of the paper.) I'll quote a paragraph from what I said there about other discussions on this topic in my earlier writings, "Start with the discussion of 1 Cor. 12:13 in my paper that includes verse-by-verse studies of 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 on my internet site, including the subsection titled, 'Further Discussion on the Meaning of the Words *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* in the New Testament.' In a footnote under 1 Cor. 12:13, I cited references to further discussions on this important topic from my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* (pages 125-139) and my *A Paper on Faith* (starting with Acts 15:1-11 near the end of the paper; read to the end of the paper). To get the full picture it will be necessary to read all three discussions. This topic is controversial; that makes it all the more important. We must seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. Most Christians assume what they believe is the balanced truth already (on all or most topics); but those holding differing viewpoints can't all be right. Very often we have part of the truth, not the whole truth/the balanced truth." How precious is the truth!]

**(34) I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.**" [On Christ's being the Son of God, compare, for example, John 1:34, 49; 3:16, 18; and 20:31. John the Baptist had seen the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus (cf. verse 33) right after he baptized Him in water (cf. Matt. 3:13-16; Mark 1:9, 10; and Luke 3:21, 22). John also undoubtedly heard the voice from God the Father out of heaven on that occasion testifying that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; and Luke 3:22). John the Baptist clearly understood that Jesus was much more than just a very special man (cf. John 1:15, 27, 29, 30). John had undoubtedly learned of the virgin birth from his parents (cf. Luke 1:26-56; in Luke 1:43 Elizabeth said, "And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?"). Mary and Elizabeth were related (Luke 1:36).]

**(35) Again the next day** [The NIV translates, "The next day John was there again...." This *next day* was the day after John proclaimed in the presence of Jesus that He was the Lamb of God, the Anointed One (as recorded in John 1:29-34). The day before that he had testified about Him, but Jesus wasn't there and John didn't identify Him (John 1:26, 27).] **John** [John the Baptist] **was standing with two of his disciples** [We know that Andrew, the brother of Peter was one of the two disciples (see verses 40, 41). There is widespread agreement that the other (unnamed) disciple mentioned here was John, the apostle who wrote this Gospel. (The other unnamed disciple here could have been James, John's brother.) John

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<sup>8</sup> *Baptism/immersion in the Spirit* is specifically mentioned in Acts 1:5; 11:16; and 1 Cor. 12:13.

never directly mentions himself (or his brother James) in this Gospel. (John is indirectly mentioned in John 13:23-27; 19:26, 27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24; and undoubtedly also 18:15-17.<sup>9</sup>) The detailed information in these verses (and throughout the Gospel of John in general) came from John's being an eyewitness; he was qualified to testify to the truthfulness of these things (see John 21:24, which is quoted in footnote 9.) **(36) and he [John the Baptist] looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (37) The two disciples heard him [John the Baptist] speak, and they followed Jesus.** [John the Baptist apparently made it clear that the two disciples should follow Jesus.] **(38) And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi [cf. John 1:49] (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" (39) He said to them, "Come, and you will see."** [Jesus encouraged them to follow Him.] **So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.** [In the margin the NASB has a note regarding the "tenth hour": "Perhaps 10 a.m. (Roman time)." The most common view is that this was the tenth hour after sunrise, about 4 p.m.<sup>10</sup> I prefer the viewpoint that John used the so called Roman time in this Gospel and that it was about 10 a.m. This viewpoint is quite relevant to the interpretation of John 19:14. See under John 4:6 and 4:52 in this paper and under John 19:14 in my paper on John chapters 18-20.

I'll quote part of what William Hendricksen says here<sup>11</sup> "... Does this mean... about 4 P.M.? This would be in accordance with the Jewish method of computing time, recognized in the Synoptics. But the same method was frequently used among the Romans. [The Romans]...also started from midnight and from noon, just as we do today. They employed the latter method in order to designate the hours of their *civil* day (e.g., in dating leases and contracts). However, contemporary records do not make clear just where the one method of figuring the hours ended and the other began. Usage probably differed in different regions. ... we believe (with A. Edersheim, A. T. Robertson, F. W. Grosheide, and many others) that much can be said in favor of [10 am]: (1) John is writing at the close of the first century. His readers are Christians from among the Gentiles (mostly). ... He *may have* used the Roman civil-day method. (2) In 20:19 the author *must* mean the Roman day. [Hendricksen's point here

<sup>9</sup> John 21:2 is something of an exception in that "the *sons* of Zebedee" (which would be John and James his brother) *are* directly mentioned. For one thing, John chapter 21 seems to have been added to John chapters 1-20. Also, it is clear that John did not write verse 24 of chapter 21, at least he didn't write the last words of that verse, "This is the disciple [John] who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

<sup>10</sup> I'll quote part of what Andreas J. Kostenberger says here (*John* [Baker, 2004], page 75). "The evangelist's reference to the 'tenth hour' is the first reference to time in this Gospel (later instances are 4:6, 52; 19:14). Clearly, by mentioning the time, the evangelist gives evidence of eyewitness testimony (e.g., Morris 1995: 138-39). Though it is sometimes argued that Roman reckoning of time commenced at midnight—so that 'tenth hour,' for example, would mean 'ten in the morning' (HCSB [Holman Christian Standard Bible]; NASB footnote)—the preponderance of evidence suggests that in the first century of Jesus' Palestine, time was counted from sunrise to sunset (i.e., from about 6 A.M. until about 6 P.M.; cf. John 11:9)." Kostenberger has a footnote here, "Carson (1991: 156-157) points out that the primary support for the Roman time-reckoning theory come from Pliny the Elder, who notes that Roman authorities (like Egyptian ones) counted the official civil day from midnight to midnight—for example, in cases of leases and other documents that expired at day's end. But Pliny himself says that 'common people everywhere' conceive of the day as running 'from dawn to dark' (*Natural History* 2.188). See also the discussion in Morris 1995: 138 n. 91."

<sup>11</sup> *Gospel of John* (Baker Book House, 1953), pages 104, 105.

that “as the Jews compute the days it was no longer the first day of the week” when Jesus appeared to His disciples, but John says (in John 20:19), “So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week....” Under John 20:19 (page 458) Hendricksen goes on to say, “But John, though a Jew, is writing much later than Matthew and Mark, and does not seem to concern himself with Jewish time reckoning.”] ... (3) The context would seem to favor this interpretation. We read, ‘They remained with him *that day*.’ Had it been 4 P.M., we would have expected, ‘They remained with him *that evening*.’ Cf. Luke 24:29. Also, if *the tenth hour* means 10 A.M., there is sufficient time *on that same day* for the search which resulted in the bringing in of two more disciples: Simon Peter and (in all probability) James. (See verses 41, 42).” [As Hendricksen continues with his reasons 4 and 5 he argues that the so-called Roman method fits the other three verses where the time is mentioned in the Gospel of John better, and especially for John 19:14.]

I’ll also quote part of what B. F. Westcott says regarding the time here.<sup>12</sup> “*The tenth hour, i.e. 10 a.m.* Compare John 4:6, note, and additional note on John chapter 19 [that deals with the time in John 1:39; 4:6, 52; and 19:14 (pages 324-326)]. An early hour seems to suit best the fulness of the day’s events: The conviction—the finding of Peter—the finding of James. ....”] **(40) One of the two who heard John [John the Baptist] speak and followed Him [Christ Jesus], was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.** [Compare Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; and Luke 5:1-11.<sup>13</sup> As I mentioned under verse 35, there is widespread agreement that the other disciple was John, the writer of this Gospel.] **(41) He [Andrew] found first his own brother Simon [The NIV translates, “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon....”] and said to him, “We have found the Messiah [from the Hebrew; it means the Anointed One; cf. Dan. 9:25]” (which translated means Christ [from the Greek; it means the Anointed One]).** [Evidently Simon Peter was a disciple of John the Baptist too (along with Andrew and the other disciple, apparently John). It is clear that Peter was in that vicinity at that time; he undoubtedly had come with the others to be with John the Baptist. Otherwise Andrew could not have found him and brought him to Jesus that same day.<sup>14</sup> Assuming the other disciple was John, it is probable that he also went and found his brother, James, and brought him to Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Apparently James was a disciple of John the Baptist too and was there in that vicinity. It is clear that these four men (Andrew, Peter, James, and John) had kindred hearts and did things together; they were in the fishing business together (see the references under verse 40), apparently they were disciples of John the Baptist together, and we know that they all became apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the listing of the twelve apostles in Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; and Acts 1:13 (eleven apostles are listed in Acts 1:13; Judas had fallen away), these four apostles are listed first.] **(42) He [Andrew] brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas<sup>16</sup> [cf. 1 Cor. 1:12;**

<sup>12</sup> *Gospel According to St. John* (Baker, 1980 reprint), page 49.

<sup>13</sup> These verses in the Synoptic Gospels speak of things that came to pass later than the things spoken of here in John chapter 1.

<sup>14</sup> Note that John 1:43 goes on to speak of things that happened the following day, even as verses 29-34 spoke of things that happened the preceding day.

<sup>15</sup> Some commentators believe the word *first* in verse 41 refers to the fact that Andrew found his brother first, and brought him to Jesus, which includes the idea that the other disciple also found his brother and brought him to Jesus.

<sup>16</sup> I’ll quote a few sentences from what D. A. Carson says here (*Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1991], page 156). “...*Cephas*: doubtless in Aramaic the expression was *kepa*, a word meaning ‘rock.’ The



3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; and 2:9, 11, 14]” (which is translated Peter [“I.e. Rock or stone” (margin of NASB). *Cephas* is from an Aramaic word meaning *rock*, and *Peter* from a Greek word meaning *rock*.]). **(43) The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.”** [It sounds like Jesus found Philip and called him to follow Him before He left that region to go back to Galilee. Apparently Philip was a disciple of John the Baptist too. As the next verse shows, he was from the same city (Bethsaida) as Andrew and Peter (and James and John). Philip also became one of the twelve apostles (cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; and Acts 1:13). He is listed fifth in each of these lists.] **(44) Now Philip** [cf. John 6:5, 7; 12:21, 22; and 14:8, 9] **was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter** [and of John and his brother James (cf. Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; and Luke 5:1-11; Luke 5:10 mentions that “James and John...were partners with Simon [Peter]”).] **(45) Philip found Nathanael** [Apparently Nathanael, who was from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2), also was a disciple of John the Baptist. He became one of the twelve apostles; there is widespread agreement that he is the one called Bartholomew<sup>17</sup> in Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; and Acts 1:13. Bartholomew is listed *sixth*, right after Philip, in the first three lists and *seventh* in the listing in Acts 1:13.] **and said to him, “We have found Him** [the Messiah/Christ (cf. verse 41)] **of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote** [cf. Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 5:46]—**Jesus of Nazareth** [cf. Matt. 2:23; Luke 1:26; 2:39; and John 1:46], **the son of Joseph** [Compare Matt. 1:16, 18-25; Luke 2:48; 3:23; 4:22; and John 6:42. John’s readers would have known that Joseph had not fathered Jesus in a physical sense (cf., e.g., Luke 1:26-56; John 1:1-18).].” **(46) Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”** [Compare John 7:41, 52. John’s readers (many/most of them) would have known that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (cf. Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-12; and Luke 2:1-20).] **Philip said to him, “Come and see.”** **(47) Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite** [cf. Rom. 9:4] **indeed, in whom there is no deceit** [“nothing false” NIV].” **(48) Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”** [By revealing these things concerning Nathanael, Jesus manifested supernatural knowledge. Apparently the Spirit revealed these things to Jesus, but it could have been an angel (cf. verse 51).] **(49) Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi** [cf. John 1:38], **you are the Son of God** [Compare, for example, John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:10. In John 1:34 John the Baptist testified that Jesus “is the Son of God.” At that early date Nathanael would not have known the fullness of what the words *Son of God* mean. It isn’t clear how much John the Baptist knew about the Person of Jesus Christ, but he knew a lot.<sup>18</sup> Israel didn’t realize that the Messiah was to be deity, and they didn’t believe in the Person of God the Son or in the Trinity.]; **you are the King of Israel** [cf. Matt. 2:2; 27:42; Mark 15:32; John 6:15; 12:13; and 18:33-37].” **(50) Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these** [cf., e.g., John 2:7-11, 23; 3:2; 20:30,

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terminal ‘s’ in ‘Cephas’ reflects an attempt to give the Aramaic word a Greek spelling (a pattern also adopted by Paul, e.g. 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:18). Because most of his readers cannot be expected to know any semitic language, John provides the translation, ‘Peter.’

<sup>17</sup> F. F. Bruce (*Gospel of John*, page 59) points out that *Bartholomew* (an Aramaic word) means “son of Tholomai or Ptolemy.”

<sup>18</sup> See under verse 34.

31; and 21:24, 25].” **(51) And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you** [The “you” in verse 50 is singular in the Greek (three times), referring to Nathaniel. Here in verse 51 the “you” is plural (twice), including the other disciples.] **will see the heavens opened** [cf. Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:21] **and the angels of God ascending and descending** [cf. Gen. 28:12] **on the Son of Man** [Compare Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 8:20; 9:6; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:41; 16:13, 27; 17:9; 19:28; 26:64; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8; 18:8; 21:36; John 3:13, 14; 6:27; 12:34; and Acts 7:56. As these references show, the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ is included in the title “Son of Man,” but the Son of Man also forgives sins, etc.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis is on this Person’s reigning at the Father’s right hand and coming with great glory to reign on the earth at the end of this age (His reign includes saving and judging). John 3:13 shows that He came from heaven (to become a man, the God-man); John 3:14 speaks of His atoning death.].” [The ascending and descending of the angels of God on the Son of Man includes the angels bringing (from God the Father) supernatural knowledge and miraculous works. On God the Father and God the Son, see my articles *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son; Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?; and More on the Trinity* on my internet site]

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<sup>19</sup> On the *Son of Man* see under John 5:27 in my paper on John chapters 5-8.

## JOHN CHAPTER 2

**On the third day** [Apparently the third day was counted from the day Jesus called Philip and Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus; it seems that Nathanael came to Jesus the same day that Philip was called (see John 1:43-51).<sup>20</sup> Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee (John 21:2).] **there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee** [Some believe Cana was located some four miles northeast of Nazareth, but the most common view is that it was located some nine miles north of Nazareth.], **and the mother of Jesus was there; (2) and both Jesus and His disciples** [It isn't clear how many disciples were with Jesus at that wedding, which was very early in the ministry of Jesus. It could have included Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, who were specifically mentioned in John 1:35-51, and John and his brother James.] **were invited to the wedding. (3) When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."** [Many commentators point out that running out of wine at a wedding in that society was considered a big deal.] **(4) And Jesus said to her, "Woman** [John 19:26 demonstrates that there was no disrespect intended in addressing Mary as "Woman" (cf. Matt. 15:28; Luke 13:12; John 4:21; and 8:10).], **what does that have to do with us?** ["What does your concern have to do with Me?" NKJV; "why do you involve me?" NIV. In the margin the NASB has, "Lit *what to Me and to you* (a Hebrew idiom)." I'll quote what David J. Ellis says here.<sup>21</sup> "(Greek *ti emoi kai soi*): This is a translation of an idiom, both in classical Greek and Hebrew, meaning, 'leave me to follow my own course.' No one has any *right* of access to the Lord in this manner (cf. Mark 1:24; Matt. 8:29)."

There is widespread agreement that these words contain a mild rebuke and forcefully make the point that Jesus must be led by His Father, not by Mary, and especially when it involved manifesting His first sign/miracle (cf. John 2:11) and beginning His public messianic ministry (His ministry as the Messiah/Christ/the Anointed One). When Jesus was twelve He informed His parents that "[He] must be about [His] Father's business" (Luke 2:49 NKJV); how much more so now (His being about thirty) at the time He is about ready to begin His public messianic ministry? **My hour has not yet come.**<sup>22</sup> [His hour to publicly begin His messianic ministry had not fully arrived,<sup>22</sup> but it was on the verge of breaking forth at that moment. Jesus had already been baptized by John the Baptist and received the all-important Holy Spirit; the Father had testified of Him audibly from heaven; John the Baptist had testified of Him (see Matt. 3:1-17; Mark 1:7-11; Luke 3:16-22; and John 1:26-36), and He had victoriously completed His forty-day temptation in the wilderness.<sup>23</sup> Jesus had already manifested miraculous insight

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<sup>20</sup> Based on what John said in 1:43-51, we don't know for sure when or where Jesus was when Phillip brought Nathanael to Him.

<sup>21</sup> *New Layman's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1979), page 1304.

<sup>22</sup> Compare John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20. When Jesus spoke of His time/hour not having yet come in those verses, He was speaking of the time/hour of His crucifixion and glorification.

<sup>23</sup> John (the writer of the Gospel) didn't mention that the Father spoke audibly from heaven regarding His beloved Son. Furthermore, he didn't mention the forty-day temptation of Jesus that followed His receiving the Spirit that is spoken of in Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; and Luke 4:1-13. John, who wrote his Gospel late (probably about AD 85-90), apparently wrote from the point of view that Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the so-called Synoptic Gospels) had been widely distributed and were known to most of his readers, so he didn't have to repeat everything they had reported.

(apparently by the Spirit) regarding Nathanael (John 1:47, 48), and He had just told Nathanael that “[the disciples] will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51). It is also significant that Jesus had begun to gather disciples to Himself.

Christ Jesus manifested His glory through the miracle at Cana (John 2:11), but the *hour* of His spectacular public manifestation did not take place until a short while afterwards when He went to Jerusalem for Passover (see John 2:13-3:2). That manifestation included His cleansing the temple (John 2:14-22) and the working of many miracles (John 2:23; 3:2; and 4:45). Why did Jesus work that miracle when He had just told Mary that His hour had not yet come? I assume the Father directed Him to go ahead and work that miracle (see, for example, John 5:19, 30; 6:38; and 8:28, 29). The Father probably even instructed Him how to do it.] **(5) His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”** [After what Jesus had just told His mother, I assume that He indicated to her, one way or another, that He would meet the need for more wine, but it was now clearly understood that He was being led by the Father (not by His earthly mother), as He must be.<sup>24</sup>] **(6) Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification** [I’ll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here,<sup>25</sup> “[The stone jars] stood there to supply water for rinsing the guest’s hands and for washing the various vessels required for the feast, in accordance with the old-established tradition mentioned in Mark 7:3f.”], **containing twenty or thirty gallons each.** **(7) Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim.** [That yielded a total of 120 to 180 gallons of water that Jesus turned into high-quality wine.] **(8) And He said to them, “Draw *some* out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it to him.** **(9) When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine** [cf. John 4:46], **and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew** [Presumably it wasn’t long before the other people at the wedding (and many other people who weren’t at the wedding) learned the source of this better wine. John only mentioned the effect this sign had on the disciples (John 2:11), but it surely effected quite a few others in a positive way.]), **the headwaiter called the bridegroom, (10) and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when *the people* have drunk freely, *then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.*” (11) This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.** [There is widespread agreement that this was Jesus’ first miraculous sign. It manifested *His glory* (cf. John 1:14). Many Jews saw Jesus’ miracles but didn’t see them as *signs* that demonstrated who He was, the Christ of God and the only Savior from sin. As I mentioned, Jesus manifested many more miraculous signs several days later at Jerusalem at the Passover (John 2:23; 3:2; 4:45), and His messianic ministry was packed with miraculous signs (cf., e.g., John 20:30, 31; 21:24, 25).] **(12) After this He went down to Capernaum** [This was a city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee was some 700 feet below sea level. The name means “village of Nahum.” Matthew 4:12, 13 indicate that Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum *after* John the Baptist was arrested. John hadn’t been arrested yet at this

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<sup>24</sup> It is quite possible that this particular miracle would not have taken place if Mary had not interceded. God takes the requests of His people (that includes us) into account in His governance of the universe.

<sup>25</sup> *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 70.

time (see John 3:22-24).], **He and His mother and His brothers** [Mark 6:3 shows that Jesus had four brothers and some sisters. There is no good reason to doubt that these were children of Joseph and Mary, all born after Jesus was born (cf. Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7).] **and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. (13) The Passover of the Jews was near** [See John 2:23. The Passovers mentioned in the Gospel of John help give some chronological perspective to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two subsequent Passovers are mentioned in this Gospel, the next being in John 6:4, and the last being the occasion of His crucifixion (cf. John 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; and 18:28). Based on this information, we can say that His ministry lasted at least two years if we start counting at that first Passover. (His being baptized in water and His being anointed with the Spirit, His forty-day temptation, His calling some disciples, His first sign at the wedding at Cana, and His going down to Capernaum with His mother and brothers and staying there a few days all preceded that first Passover.) Jesus probably was crucified in AD 30. Some say AD 33. Many scholars assume that there was another Passover that wasn't specifically mentioned by John and that Jesus' ministry lasted an extra year.<sup>26</sup>], **and Jesus went up** [Jerusalem is some three thousand feet above sea level.] **to Jerusalem. (14) And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables (15) And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; (16) and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business ["into a market" NIV]."** [Those selling animals for use in the sacrificial offerings and the money changers<sup>27</sup> were conducting their business in the outer court of the temple at that time. (At other times they were located on the Mount of Olives, near the temple.) Apparently Jesus didn't object to their providing these services, but He certainly objected to where they were providing them (selling animals in the outer court and changing money would have led to a noisy, unclean, irreverent, improper environment in the house of prayer and worship). He apparently also objected to the way they were conducting their business (things like overcharging and other ungodly practices). Matthew 21:13 says, "And He said to them, 'It is written, "MY HOUSE WILL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER"; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN ' " [quoting from Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11]. Mark 11:16 says, "and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple."

Matthew 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15-18; and Luke 19:45, 46 speak of Jesus cleansing the temple a few years later at the time of Passover, a few days before He was crucified, on the day after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Mark 11:11 informs us that after Jesus'

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<sup>26</sup> Some speculate that the "feast of the Jews" mentioned in John 5:1 was another Passover. The NASB, for example, refers to John 5:1 in the margin here at John 2:13. Jesus' ministry may have lasted three years (apparently it was either *two* or *three* years, if we start counting at the Passover mentioned in John 2:13), but it is doubtful that the feast mentioned in John 5:1 was a Passover. It is common for Christian scholars to say that Jesus ministry started when He was anointed with the Spirit (right after He was baptized in water by John the Baptist) and that His ministry lasted some two and one-half years or three and one-half years. I haven't spent enough time on this question to have much of an opinion as to whether Jesus' ministry lasted *two* or *three* years after that first Passover when Jesus cleansed the temple, etc., but if we limit ourselves to the obvious information contained in the Gospel of John it would be *two* years.

<sup>27</sup> For one thing, the money changers enabled the Jewish males over twenty to convert their coins to the Tyrian (from Tyre) coinage that was required (because of the high silver content of those coins) to pay the annual half-shekel tax for the maintenance of the temple (cf. Ex. 30:11-16).

triumphal entry, He went into the temple and looked around at everything. He undoubtedly headed for the temple the next morning knowing that He must cleanse it.

This first cleansing of the temple reported in John 2:14-17 (in combination with the signs that followed [see John 2:23]) can be considered the initial public manifestation of Jesus as the promised Messiah. Some few days earlier Jesus had said (at the wedding in Cana of Galilee), “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4); now His hour had come. It was appropriate that His ministry begin in Jerusalem and at the temple (cf., e.g., Mal. 3:1<sup>28</sup>), and all the more so at a time the city was filled with worshippers (at Passover).]

**(17) His disciples remembered that it was written, “ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME** [quoting from Psalm 69:9.<sup>29</sup> For one thing, this cleansing of the temple stirred up substantial opposition from some of the religious authorities in Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup>],” **(18) The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things** [cf. Matt. 12:38-45; 16:1-4; Mark 8:11, 12; Luke 11:16; John 6:30; and 1 Cor. 1:22]?” **(19) Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”** [Compare Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; and Acts 6:14. As John 2:21, 22 show, Jesus was speaking of His being raised up (resurrected) on the third day. His resurrection (two or three years later) certainly served to demonstrate His authority to cleanse the temple and to do a lot of other things, including judge the world (including all mankind, along with the devil and his evil hosts) at the end of this age.] **(20) The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”** [“The reconstruction of the temple...was begun by Herod the Great early in 19 BC. The main part of the work was completed and consecrated in ten years, but other parts were still being carried out; in fact, the finishing touches were not put to the whole enterprise until AD 63, only seven years before its destruction. The forty-six years...are reckoned from the beginning of the reconstruction.”<sup>31</sup> “Forty-six years brings us to AD 27/28.”<sup>32</sup>] **(21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body** [cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19]. **(22) So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this** [cf. Luke 24:6-8; John 12:16; and 14:26]; **and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken** [cf. Psalm 16:10; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; John 20:9; and Acts 13:30-37]. **(23) Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover** [cf. John 2:13], **during the feast, many believed in His name** [To believe in His name (cf. John 1:12) in the full sense includes believing in Him,

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<sup>28</sup> Malachi 3:1 prophesies (in part) of the ministry of John the Baptist, who would prepare/clear the way for the Lord’s coming (cf. John 1:6-8, 15, 19-37). Then it says, “And the Lord [speaking of God the Son/the Messiah] who you seek will suddenly come to His temple.” Malachi 3:1 is discussed in some detail in my paper that includes Mal. 2:17-4:16 on my internet site.

<sup>29</sup> I’ll quote a paragraph from what William Hendricksen says here (*Gospel of John* [Baker, 1953], page 123). “Now, in expressing this thought use is made of Ps. 69, which is one of six Psalms most often referred to in the New Testament (the others being Pss. 2, 22, 89, 110, and 118). Other echoes of various passages of this Psalm are heard in Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 15:25; 19:28; Rom. 11:9, 10; 15:3; Heb. 11:26; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 16:1; 17:8; 20:12, 15; and 21:27. While some of these are quotations, others are allusions, references more or less indirect. Jesus himself ([John] 15:25) cites Ps. 69:4, ‘They hated me without a cause,’ and refers it to his own experience. In fulfilment of Ps. 69:21 he uttered the word from the cross, ‘I thirst.’ ”

<sup>30</sup> For one thing, Jesus was challenging their leadership for allowing those selling animals and the money changers to function as they were in the temple. Also, apparently some of the authorities were benefiting financially by allowing those practices in the temple.

<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John*, page 76.

<sup>32</sup> D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, page 184.

believing all that is revealed about Him, and believing all that He says.], **observing His signs which He was doing.** [It's somewhat surprising that John doesn't give any more information about these miraculous signs (cf. John 20:30, 31; 21:25). They were quite important, being the first miracles that Jesus worked in Jerusalem, after He was anointed by the Spirit (cf. John 1:33; 2:11). Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not mention Jesus' early ministry in Jerusalem, His early ministry in Judea (John 3:22-4:3), or His successful ministry among the Samaritans (John 4:3-42). Thank God for the Gospel of John (and for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke)!

As the following verses show, Jesus wasn't always impressed when people "believed in His name" after "observing the signs He was doing" (or for other reasons). The faith of many was very shallow; some of them weren't true believers, and some of them never became true believers. Some didn't become disciples; others became disciples but didn't continue with Christ (cf., e.g., John 6:60-66; 8:31-36; and Matt. 13:1-23). Many saw the miraculous signs, but they didn't get the message of the signs; the signs were intended to point people to Christ and to the salvation that only He can give (cf., e.g., John 6:26). Jesus said that people should believe in Him because of the works (signs) that He did, works that the Father had given Him to do, works that had been prophesied in the Old Testament (cf. John 5:36; 10:37, 38; and 14:11), but He clearly required something more than a shallow, superficial, temporary faith—He required repentance and a total, abiding faith-commitment from the heart.] **(24) But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, (25) and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man** [cf., e.g., John 6:64; Acts 1:24; and 15:8]. [The way these two verses are worded we could understand John to say that Jesus knew that *none* of these Jews who believed in His name would press on to really become true *believers/disciples*. It seems much more likely, however, that Jesus knew that *some/many* of them were in that category. Such people were contrasted with Jesus' disciples, who *were* believers (cf., e.g., John 2:11). Apparently Jesus could have said to this group that believed in His name after seeing the signs that He did what He said to another group of Jews on a later occasion that had *come to believe in Him* (John 8:30). John 8:31, 32 record what He said to them, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."

The next verse (John 3:1) and the following verses go on to speak of Nicodemus. As 3:2 shows he is an example of a Jew who had been convinced by the signs that Jesus was a man of God. John 19:29 seems sufficient to show that Nicodemus did press on to become a true Christian.]

## JOHN CHAPTER 3

**Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus** [cf. John 7:50-52; 19:39], **a ruler of the Jews** [There is widespread agreement that the words “a ruler of the Jews” mean that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin (cf. John 7:45-52, 26; Luke 23:13).]; **(2) this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do** [see John 2:11, but especially 2:23] **unless God is with him** [cf., e.g., John 9:33; 10:38; 14:10, 11; Acts 2:22; and 10:38].” [Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee, undoubtedly came *by night* because he didn’t want it known that he had come to Jesus (he could have gotten into trouble with some of the rulers of the Jews, for one thing), but he clearly had a positive interest in Jesus, and John 19:39, 40 show that he eventually demonstrated his commitment to Christ by being directly involved in His burial. Some Pharisees accused Jesus of doing supernatural works by the power of Satan (Matt. 9:32-34; 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; and Luke 11:14-26).] **(3) Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again** [or “born from above (from God/heaven)”] **he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** [These words were undoubtedly more dramatic and challenging than anything Nicodemus expected to hear from Jesus. Jesus spoke of the need for people—very much including “righteous” Jews and the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews—to repent and be born again/born from above if they want to have a place in God’s never-ending kingdom. Jesus speaks more of this all-important birth as He continues. This birth wasn’t available until after Jesus had overthrown sin, Satan, and death (spiritual death and physical death) through His all-important atoning death and resurrection. Nicodemus must understand that this new birth comes only through repentance (see under verse 5; cf., e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; and Luke 13:1-5) and submission (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ and the One who sent Him. The only way to be born again/from above is through submission to and union with Christ Jesus (by grace through faith).

The apostle John has already spoken of the new birth/birth from above in this Gospel: See John 1:12, 13, 33 (as we discussed under John 1:33, baptism in the Spirit includes the new birth/birth from above), and this glorious birth (and eternal life) is spoken of further as John continues (John 3:5-8, 15, 16, 36; cf. 4:10-15, 23, 24, 36; 5:21-29; 6:33-58, 63; 7:37-39; 8:12, 51; 10:10; 11:25-27; 14:19, 20; 17:2, 3; and 20:31) and other places in the New Testament (cf. James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23-25; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; and 5:1, 4, 18).

I don’t believe there is a substantial difference between *seeing* the kingdom of God (here in verse 3) and *entering* that kingdom in verse 5. Only those who *enter* the kingdom through being born again/from above can *see* the kingdom. *Seeing* the kingdom includes participating in the kingdom.

The kingdom of God comes in two stages. When we are born again/from above by the Holy Spirit through Christ Jesus (when we become Christians), we *enter* the kingdom (cf., e.g., Matt. 11:11, 12; Luke 9:27; Rom. 14:17; and Col. 1:13), but only the *first/preliminary* stage of the kingdom. When Christ returns we will enter the kingdom in its fully glorified dimension (cf., e.g., Luke 19:11-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 15:50-57; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 4:18; James 2:5; Rev 11:15-18; and 12:10). The Bible also speaks, on



occasion, of our entering that future, fully glorified dimension of the kingdom by a *birth* into the fullness of eternal life (cf. Rev. 12: 5 with Psalm 2:7; Isa. 66:7, 8; Mic. 5:3; and Rom. 8:29<sup>33</sup>). The second line of John 3:6, “and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” seems to focus on the birth into the fullness of eternal life at the end of this age (see under John 3:6).] **(4) Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”** [Nicodemus’ answer missed the mark: Jesus was speaking of a *spiritual* birth by the Spirit (from God/heaven).] **(5) Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water** [I believe (in agreement with a large number of commentators) that the words *of water* refer to water baptism, which was quite prominent in that setting. John the Baptist was baptizing in water—even Jesus was baptized by him—and Jesus (through His disciples) was on the verge of baptizing in water (see John 1:25-34; 3:22-26; and 4:1, 2). The baptism in water of John 3:5 is a baptism of *repentance* and *faith* (if it isn’t a baptism preceded and accompanied by true repentance and faith it isn’t a valid baptism), and (typically in the New Testament) it is a preliminary step to being born of (receiving, being baptized in) the Spirit (cf., e.g., Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21, 22<sup>34</sup>; Ezek. 36:25-27; Acts 2:38, 39; 8:14-17; 19:5, 6; and Titus 3:5, 6).<sup>35</sup> I am not suggesting that people cannot be born of the Spirit before, or apart from, water baptism, but I am saying that in the typical New Testament pattern water baptism precedes being born of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> These verses and the birth into the fullness of eternal life are discussed in some detail in my book, *The Mid-Week Rapture*. Start with Rev. 12:5 on page 314. These verses are also discussed to some extent in my series titled *Twenty-Four Articles on The Mid-Week Rapture* on my internet site. That series serves as a good introduction for my book.

<sup>34</sup> The first three references refer to Jesus’ being baptized in water and then (shortly afterward) receiving the Spirit. This sequence established a pattern. Jesus wasn’t spiritually dead, so He didn’t need to be born again as we do, but He did need to receive the Spirit in order to become the Anointed One/the Christ/the Messiah.

<sup>35</sup> There is room for exceptions to this sequence (baptism in water *before* the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit comes), as Acts 10:44-48 demonstrate, but it is easy to see why God gave the Spirit to those Gentile believers *before* they were baptized in water. If God had not demonstrated His acceptance of those Gentiles by giving them the Spirit, Peter would have been very reluctant to baptize them. He got in trouble with the Jews as it was (Acts 11:1-18). Acts 2:38, 39; Titus 3:5, 6; and other verses are discussed in the references mentioned in the first paragraph of the next footnote.

<sup>36</sup> See my discussion on water baptism under verse 29 of my paper on 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and the discussion in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* cited in that paper. WATER BAPTISM IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE OCCASION (ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT) TO COMPLETE THE TRANSACTIONS OF REPENTING AND BEING FORGIVEN/WASHING AWAY SINS (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16); OF BECOMING UNITED WITH CHRIST AND APPROPRIATING HIS ATONING DEATH AS OUR DEATH, SINCE HE DIED IN OUR PLACE (cf. Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3); and OF DYING TO THE OLD MAN AND BURYING THE OLD MAN (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:11, 12).

After being baptized in water (in the typical New Testament pattern), it is time to be baptized in/to receive the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit (cf., e.g., Acts 2:38, 39; 19:5, 6). I have spent a lot of time seeking God for the *balanced* truth of what the Bible teaches about water baptism and baptism in the Spirit (and many other topics). We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. The more we hold the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, the more God can bless us and use us, and the more Christians can unite around God’s Word. I should mention that the problems we have with water baptism are not the most important problems we need to deal with in the body of Christ in our day.

Many Christian groups have formed their viewpoint on water baptism (to some extent) in reaction to what other groups were doing (like the Baptist reaction against the view of baptismal regeneration, including the baptizing of infants, and the fact that many baptized “Christians” didn’t believe the gospel);

It should be obvious that it is the Spirit (not water baptism) that gives Christians spiritual life (starting with the new birth/birth from above) through Christ Jesus. Why did Jesus include “of water” here in verse 5? For one thing, Christian water baptism *is* important; baptizing in water, including the baptizing of John the Baptist, came from God; it is something He said to do—that makes it important! The New Testament doesn’t speak of water baptism as something optional. It is quite possible (even probable) that Jesus included this reference to water baptism when speaking with Nicodemus because he was a Pharisee, and the Pharisees rejected the baptism of John the Baptist (Luke 7:30).

By mentioning the need to be “born of water and the Spirit” here, Jesus put some emphasis on the need to be baptized in water, with the emphasis on genuine repentance and submission in faith to God, His Messiah, and His new-covenant plan of salvation. First came the baptism of John the Baptist, but before long it would be Christian baptism. John’s baptism was transitional between the time of the old and new covenants. The baptizing that Jesus was doing (through His disciples; John 3:22; 4:1, 2) before the new covenant was ratified through His atoning death was also transitional. John the Baptist called people to a baptism of repentance and pointed them to Christ Jesus; Jesus (through His disciples) began to baptize His disciples in water (a baptism that included repentance); and before long (after Jesus’ atoning death, His resurrection, and His pouring forth the promised gift of the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost), Christian water baptism in the full new-covenant sense would be practiced. Believers couldn’t be born of the Spirit before the Spirit was given, starting on the day of Pentecost.] **and the Spirit** [Being *born of the Spirit* (the Holy Spirit) yields the first stage of the birth (the new birth/birth from above) spoken of in verse 3. We have a *spirit* before we are born again/from above, but *we* are *spiritually* dead, which means that we don’t have a life-flowing relationship with God by His *Spirit*. God (the triune God) is the only source of life (spiritual life and physical

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the Baptist viewpoint, which is followed by large numbers of Pentecostals, charismatics, and others, is that believers are forgiven, born of the Spirit, etc. and then baptized in water). Reacting against viewpoints out of balance very often leads to being out of balance in the other direction.

What about the Baptist viewpoint? Most of the Christians I have fellowshiped with hold that viewpoint, that our sins have been taken away; we have been born again; etc.; now we will be baptized in water in obedience to God’s Word. I held that viewpoint until I spent some time studying what the New Testament has to say on the topic. I am confident that we can be solid, born-again Christians and hold the Baptist viewpoint on water baptism. For one thing, God has been very generous with us in many ways, even if we didn’t fully line up with the Bible in every area. I am also confident that it will work for good if we switch to a viewpoint that doesn’t teach that essentially everything is done before we are baptized in water.

What I am saying about water baptism here I am saying for one primary reason: The New Testament seems to me to be quite clear in its teaching on water baptism (as I mentioned above). I haven’t had some special revelation or some special experience, and I don’t owe loyalty to any particular viewpoint. I simply want to please God and be a blessing to the body of Christ by teaching the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

On *baptism in the Spirit*, start with pages 17-20 (including the footnotes) in my paper, *Charismatic Gifts and Charismatic Chaos*, dated May 2001. That paper is not available on the internet, but I could send you a copy. I dealt with that topic rather extensively in my verse-by-verse study of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 that is available on my internet site (see under verse 13 and at the end of the study of that chapter. The lengthy study at the end of the study of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 deals with the topic of water baptism too, including some important quotations.

life) and everything else that is good (e.g., truth, righteousness, holiness, light, divine order, and health). Mankind died spiritually when Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (cf., e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:1-19; Rom. 5:12-21; Eph. 2:1-5; and Col. 2:13).] **he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** [We cannot enter the kingdom of God (or *see* the kingdom of God) until we are born again/from above, because God's kingdom is a kingdom of life, righteousness, holiness, light, divine order, etc. God (through Christ and by the Holy Spirit) must transfer us out of the kingdom of sin, death, darkness, and Satan and into His kingdom (cf., e.g., Col. 1:13).] **(6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** [First I'll mention and briefly discuss the popular (but wrong) view regarding the meaning of the second half of this verse, the interpretation that you most often hear from pastors and other Christians. (You almost never hear this wrong view from Christian scholars, the ones writing the commentaries, etc.) That wrong view understands these words to mean that the *Spirit gives birth to our spirit* (that it is our spirit that is born again). For one thing, the New Testament speaks of our being born again, not just our spirits. And it isn't true, as you frequently hear it said, that after we are born again, our spirits are perfect and if we sin our perfect spirits aren't involved. 2 Corinthians 7:1, by itself should suffice to show that that view is wrong, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh AND SPIRIT [my emphasis], perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Our spirits are not automatically made perfect, or kept perfect, because we have been born again. See pages 181, 182 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ*. See my paper titled, *Some Things We Should Know about the Meaning of the Words 'Spirit' and 'Soul'* on this Christian article site.

What Jesus was saying in the first half of this verse is that *man in the flesh* (man having a spirit, soul, and body, but being in spiritual death, separated from God, and *without the Holy Spirit*) can only give birth to *man in the flesh* (man having a spirit, soul, and body, but being in spiritual death, separated from God, and *without the Spirit*). In the second half of this verse, He was saying that it is *only that which is born of the Spirit that becomes spirit*, using the word *spirit* here of that which can *see* and *enter* the *spiritual* kingdom of God. I'll quote the NAB translation for this verse, "Flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit." The NIV has, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

When we become Christians and are born of the Spirit (born again/from above), we become *spirit* in the sense spoken of in the second half of verse 6 (but we become *spirit* only in a preliminary sense), and we are able to enter the first stage of the kingdom of God that I mentioned above. But, as I mentioned, these words in the second half of verse 6 seem to focus on the end of this age when we will be enabled to enter the kingdom in its fully glorified sense. Then we will have a body (we won't be disembodied *spirits*), but it will be a *spiritual* body, which means that it will be a body designed for life in the heavenly, glorified dimension.<sup>37</sup> The apostle Paul speaks of this *spiritual* body in 1 Cor. 15:43-57. The unusual use of the adjective *spiritual* (Greek *pneumatikos, e, on*) in 1 Cor. 15:44, 46 is comparable with the unusual use of the noun *spirit* (Greek *pneuma*) here at the end of John 3:6.

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<sup>37</sup> We will have a real body, but it will not consist of the physical elements of this present world; it will consist of the elements of the dimension of heaven.

Nicodemus could/should have known something about this birth from heaven (cf. John 3:10). For one thing, God’s spokesmen in the Old Testament had frequently prophesied of the time that God would pour forth His *life-giving*, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit (cf., e.g., Isa. 32:15-18; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29; and Joel 2:28, 29).] **(7) Do not be amazed that I said to you** [“You” is singular in the Greek, referring to Nicodemus.], **‘You** [This “you” is plural in the Greek, not being limited to Nicodemus; it applies to every person who wants to have a place in God’s kingdom.] **must be born again** [or, “born from above”].’ **(8) The wind blows where it wishes and you** [This “you” is singular.] **hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”** [Compare Psalm 135:7; Eccl. 11:5; and Ezek. 37:1-14. To appreciate what Jesus was saying here it is necessary to know that the Greek noun behind “wind” is *pneuma*, which is the noun translated “Spirit” here in verse 8 (and in verses 5, 6) and translated “spirit” in verse 6. I suppose Jesus’ main point here in verse 8 was that we are not able to fully explain or understand a birth that comes from heaven by the Spirit. We can, however, understand as much as we need to understand to be born of the Spirit. God always does what He has promised to do when we do what He requires of us (when we respond to His grace with repentance and faith). God gives birth/makes alive (and righteous and holy) by His Spirit those who repent and submit (in faith) to Christ and the gospel of salvation (cf., e.g., John 1:12, 13; 3:15-18, 36; 4:10-14, 23-26; and 5:24).] **(9) Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”** **(10) Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel** [Compare Luke 2:46; 5:17; and Acts 5:34. Nicodemus must have been one of the more respected teachers of Israel.] **and do not understand these things?** [See the last paragraph under verse 6.] **(11) Truly, truly, I say to you** [This “you” is singular in the Greek, referring to Nicodemus.], **we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen** [cf. John 3:12, 13, 31-36; 5:19, 20, 30; 8:26-29, 40; and 12:50], **and you** [This “you” is plural in the Greek.] **do not accept our testimony.** [There are quite a few different opinions regarding why Jesus used the plurals “we,” and “our” here. I prefer the view that He was referring to Himself and John the Baptist, referring to John’s testimony regarding Him (cf. John 1:6-8, 15, 19-37; and 3:25-30), which included his testimony that Jesus would baptize/immerse (His disciples) in the Holy Spirit (which includes the new birth/birth from above by the Spirit). John the Baptist testified based on what had been revealed to him (including what he learned from his parents) and having seen the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove and remain upon Him (cf. John 1:32-34); he also undoubtedly heard the Father audibly speak from heaven regarding His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (see Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:21, 22; cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-18). It is possible that Jesus was referring to Himself and His disciples (some of them could have been with Him on that occasion), but His disciples were quite limited in what they could testify about Jesus at that early date. Anyway, it’s clear that Jesus Himself was the One in the spotlight, and He switches to the singular “I” as He continues in verse 12.] **(12) If I told you** [All four uses of “you” in this verse are plural in the Greek.], **earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** [In this context the “earthly things” (things that take place on the earth) undoubtedly include the need to repent and be born of the Spirit (even though it is true, of course, that being born of the Spirit is a birth that comes from heaven). Jesus was certainly qualified to tell of

“heavenly things” in that He (God the Son) had come (been sent) from heaven. One of the things that Nicodemus most needed to learn was that Jesus was much more than just a *man* sent by God. He was the *God-man* (deity with God the Father and God the Spirit), and the Lamb of God, the only Savior from sin and death (spiritual and physical death). (On God the Father and God the Son, see my papers, *The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son; Who Do We Worship?; Who Do We Pray To?; and More on the Trinity* on my internet site.)

The fact that Jesus was God the Son, who had been sent from heaven by God the Father, was a super-important revelation and an essential part of the gospel of the new covenant, but it would have been extremely controversial, especially at first. For one thing, the Jews were not (and they still are not) expecting the Messiah/Christ to be deity (God the Son). (The Jews, like the Muslims, make no room for the Trinity; they believe that doctrine proves Christianity is not true.) John has already informed us that John the Baptist spoke of Christ in exalted terms that were fully compatible with His being deity with God the Father (and the Holy Spirit) and His coming from heaven.<sup>38</sup> The apostle John has already clearly spoken regarding the deity of Christ in John 1:1-18, but that information wasn't fully understood by Christ's disciples until after Jesus was resurrected and they had received the Spirit. They even doubted His resurrection until after He was resurrected (cf., e.g., John 20:8, 9.) **(13) No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven** [It is difficult to explain these words if John was quoting Jesus speaking to Nicodemus a few years before He *ascended into heaven*, but these words fit perfectly if the apostle John begins to comment here, speaking from the perspective that Jesus has already *ascended into heaven* when he writes his Gospel. I believe that the words of Jesus ended with verse 12 and that the apostle John is the one speaking (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) in verses 13-21. John wasn't trying to deceive; he expected his readers to understand that he stopped quoting Jesus at the end of verse 12. A large number of commentators (probably the majority) agree that Jesus didn't speak all the words contained in verses 10-21, but most such commentators believe that John stopped quoting Jesus at the end of verse 15, not at the end of verse 12.<sup>39</sup>

Jesus spoke much of His all-important ascension into heaven and the fact that after that ascension He would send the all-important life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit to them and that He (from heaven) would work for them, and through them (see, for example, John 13:1, 3, 31-36; 14:1-6, 12-14, 18-23, 26-28; 15:1-11, 16, 26; 16:5-28;

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<sup>38</sup> John the Baptist said, for example, that Christ existed before him, even though he was born before Christ (1:30), that He was “the Son of God” (1:34), that He would baptize in the Holy Spirit (1:33); and that He would judge the world (Matt. 3:11, 12).

<sup>39</sup> I would have the closing quotation mark at the end of verse 12. The quotation marks in the NASB continue from verse 10 through 21; so too for the NIV; NKJV; and although the KJV doesn't use quotation marks, my red-letter edition of the KJV shows the words of Jesus continuing through verse 21. The Greek, however, didn't include quotation marks, and it seems that it was a mistake to extend this quotation through verse 21. We must understand, of course, that if John the apostle was speaking (starting with verse 13), what he said he got from Jesus either directly or indirectly; it is significant that he was chosen by God to write this Gospel and was anointed by the Spirit of God for the task.

The commentary by George R. Beasley-Murray is the only one I have that takes a clear stand for the viewpoint that Jesus' words stopped with verse 12. Raymond E. Brown in his commentary on John mentions Schnackenburg, Tillman, and Belser as other commentators who take this viewpoint.

and 17:1-26<sup>40</sup>). God the Son had to descend from heaven (cf. John 3:31; 6:38, 42; and 8:23) to become a man (the God-man); to live a sinless life; to minister as the Christ and call and prepare His disciples (especially the apostles); to die on the cross (thereby solving the sin, spiritual death, and Satan problem once for all); but He also had to go back to heaven and continue His work (very much including His receiving from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and then pouring forth the Holy Spirit [cf., e.g., Acts 2:33]) or new-covenant salvation wouldn't have become a reality.]: **the Son of Man.** [On the "Son of Man" see under John 1:51. The NKJV has some added words here, "who is in heaven." and the KJV has "which is in heaven." These words probably were included in John's original manuscript.<sup>41</sup> It is easy to see how these words were problematic for those Christians who thought that Jesus Himself spoke these words: He wasn't in heaven when He spoke to Nicodemus.] **(14) As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness** [I'll quote Num. 21:4-9, "Then they set out from Mount Hor [where Aaron died and was buried] by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. (5) The people spoke against God and Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food [the manna].' [The fact that this rebellion took place very near the end of the forty-year wilderness wanderings made this rebellion all the more sinful.] (6) The LORD [Yahweh] sent fiery serpents ["venomous snakes" NIV] among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. (7) So the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.' And Moses interceded for the people. (8) Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.' (9) And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."], **even so must the Son of Man be lifted up**<sup>42</sup> [God had Moses lift up a bronze serpent<sup>43</sup> on a standard

<sup>40</sup> John chapters 13-17 are discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site. Those chapters all deal with things spoken the last night Jesus was with His apostles, before He was crucified.

<sup>41</sup> The United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament* (fourth revised edition) gives a B rating to the shorter reading, which means that from the Committee's point of view "the [shorter] text is almost certain." I'll quote what Bruce M. Metzger says here in *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament* (second edition), which is a companion volume to the *Greek New Testament*. I believe the "minority" view that Metzger mentions is the correct view; the majority isn't always right! "On the one hand, a minority of the Committee preferred the [longer] reading...arguing that (1) if the short reading, supported almost exclusively by Egyptian witnesses [Greek manuscripts that originated in Egypt], were original, there is no discernable motive that would have prompted copyists to add the words ["who is in heaven," more literally from the Greek, "the one being in heaven"], resulting in a most difficult saying...[This is a weighty point!]; and (2) the diversity of readings [speaking of other minor variations in the readings of the Greek manuscripts] implies that the expression ["the Son of Man who is in heaven"], having been found objectionable [These words would have been found objectionable by those thinking that Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus *before* He went back to heaven.] or superfluous in the context, was modified either omitting the participial clause [which was translated "who is in heaven" by the NKJV], or by altering it so as to avoid suggesting that the Son of Man was at that moment in heaven.

On the other hand, the majority of the Committee, impressed by the quality of the external attestation supporting the shorter reading [We have already been informed that the shorter reading "was supported almost exclusively by Egyptian witnesses.," regarded the words ["who is in heaven"] as an interpretative gloss, reflecting later Christological development."

<sup>42</sup> The Greek here could be translated, "even so it was necessary for the Son of man to be lifted up." Regarding the translation "it was necessary," compare, for example, John 20:9.

so that those who were bitten by the venomous serpents could look and be saved from dying physically. God *lifted up* His unique Son, the Lamb of God, on the cross, and then He *lifted Him up* (the victorious God-man) to His right hand, so that all who repent and submit (in faith) to Christ and the gospel of salvation could be saved from spiritual death and bondage to sin (and from the other penalties for sin).

Jesus was *lifted up* on the cross (cf. John 8:28; 12:31-34; 18:31, 32; and 19:17-37), bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties, so that we (all believers) could be saved from our sins with the guilt and penalties (very much including the penalty for Adam's transgression). Two of the major penalties that the Lamb of God bore for us were spiritual death (so that we could be born again/from above) and bondage to sin (so that we could be redeemed out of the kingdom of sin and death and be righteous and holy). (Spiritual death and bondage to sin for mankind originated with the transgression of Adam in the garden of Eden [cf., e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:1-24; and Rom. 5:12-21].) Jesus also bore hell for us on the cross (I didn't say He died spiritually), so we could escape that ultimate penalty for sin. We could not be born again/from above and have the eternal (heavenly) life that verses 15, 16 go on to speak of if the Son of Man had not been *lifted up on the cross* and then *lifted up* to heaven.<sup>44</sup>

After Jesus' mission on earth was accomplished, He was *lifted up* to heaven. His being lifted up to the Father's right hand was a necessary step in the outworking of God's new-covenant plan of salvation. (The Greek verb translated *lifted up* on the cross in John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32<sup>45</sup> was also used of Jesus' being *lifted up/exalted* to the right hand of God in Acts 2:33; 5:31.) After that exaltation, He received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and He poured forth the Spirit, the *life-giving* (who enables us to be born again/from above), *sanctifying* (who enables us to be righteous and holy), *charismatic gift-dispensing* Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:33). He also functions there at the Father's right hand as our great high priest (cf., e.g., Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16; and 5:5-10).]; **(15) so that whoever believes** [The Greek (a *present* participle) shows that the *believing* spoken of here is continuous action; we must continue to have faith in Christ in order to continue participating in eternal life/salvation. We must appropriate and cooperate with His saving grace on a continuous basis by faith, in accordance with the terms of the new covenant. In the Greek (unlike the English), the noun *faith* (*pistis*) and the verb *believe* (*pisteuo*) are very closely related; the verb was derived from the noun. *Believing* (or having *faith*), as the word is used here (and very often in the New Testament) includes a commitment from the heart to be faithful (by grace) to God the Father, to His Son, and to His gospel of

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<sup>43</sup> The *bronze serpent* represented (part of) the penalty for that particular sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, bore our sins with the guilt and the *penalties* on the cross. We must look to Him to be saved from death (both spiritual death and physical death) and from the bondage to sin that comes with spiritual death (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:12-21).

<sup>44</sup> We have eternal life from the time we are born again/from above (cf., e.g., John 5:24), but we will not be born into the fullness of eternal life until the end of this age (see above under John 3:3, 6). We must stay faithful (by grace) to Christ and the gospel until He returns, or until the end of our lives if that should come first.

<sup>45</sup> John 12:32 says, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." John 12:33 shows that Jesus' being lifted up from the earth includes His being *lifted up* on the cross, but it seems that what Jesus said about His being *lifted up* from the earth in John 12:32 also includes His being *lifted up* to heaven. Read John 12:32 in context with John 12:20-31. John chapter 12 is discussed verse-by-verse in my paper on John chapters 10-12 on my internet site.

new-covenant salvation.] **will in Him** [The NIV; KJV; NKJV and the note in the margin of the NASB translate “whoever believes in Him will have eternal life,” or the equivalent. I believe the NASB translation is correct. For one thing, the Greek preposition (*en*) translated “in” here is different than the preposition (*eis*) that John typically uses with the verb *believe*, including in John 3:16, 18, and 36, where it is translated “believe in.”<sup>46</sup> It is true, of course, that when John speaks of believing here, he is speaking of believing in Christ (the overall context establishes that point), but here, with the words “in Him,” John is making the important point that eternal life is found *in Him*, in union with Christ Jesus (cf. 1 John 5:11-13; John 1:4; and 14:6).<sup>47</sup>

Eternal life has become available through God the Son’s descending from heaven to become the God-man and His being lifted up on the cross and then being lifted up to the Father’s right hand after defeating sin, spiritual death, and Satan, and having earned the right to save with a very full salvation those who become united with Him through faith. We are *in Him* (God the Son, the God-man, the Lamb of God, the One with all authority in heaven and on earth) from the time we become united with Him through the (indwelling) Holy Spirit by faith. *In Him* we (all believers) will ultimately be exalted to a place far above what Adam had before the fall (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44-54). This isn’t at all surprising once we understand who Christ Jesus is and what He has done for us.] **have eternal life.** [See above under verses 14, 15. We have eternal life from the time we are born again/from above by the Spirit through the birth spoken of in John 3:3, 5] **(16) For God so loved the world** [God the Father manifested His love for the world by sending His Son, the Lamb of God, to bear the sins of all mankind and then calling mankind to repent and submit to Him, His Son, and His plan of salvation in faith (cf., e.g., Acts 17:30, 31; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; and 1 John 2:2). God, in love, took the initiative in our salvation (e.g., Rom. 5:6-8), but we must respond to His love and grace with faith to be saved. We are saved one-hundred percent by grace; the fact that we must respond to His grace with faith doesn’t detract from the fact that we are saved one-hundred percent by grace. We are not earning salvation by faith; we are receiving, appropriating, and cooperating with His grace by faith, in accordance with the terms of the new covenant. See my *A Paper on Faith* on my internet site.], **that He gave His only begotten Son** [As I discussed in some detail under John 1:14, 18 in my paper on John 1:1-18 on my internet site, I believe we should translate “His unique Son,” or the equivalent. In the margin the NASB has, “Or *unique*, only one of His kind.” The NIV translates, “his one and only son.”], **that whoever believes** [The Greek behind these three words is exactly the same as the Greek behind “so that whoever believes” in verse 15.] **in** [The Greek preposition *eis* was translated “in.”] **Him** [Compare John 3:16, 18, 36; 6:40; and 11:25, 26, for example; these verses all use “eis.”] **shall not perish, but have eternal life.** [To *perish* is to miss having eternal life. The only alternative to having eternal life is having eternal death, the second death of Rev. 20:14, 15, the eternal lake of fire. *Perishing* doesn’t mean annihilation.] **(17) For God did not send the Son into the world** [cf., e.g., John 3:34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 38, 57; 8:42; and 20:21] **to judge** [I would translate “to

<sup>46</sup> I’ll quote what the BAGD *Greek-English Lexicon* (third edition) says (under *pisteuo* regarding the meaning here in John 3:15 (page 817). “...in John 3:15 the best reading is [“in (*en*) Him”] and is probably to be construed with [the verb “has,” not with the verb *pisteuo* (in John *pisteuo* usually takes the preposition *eis* when expressing the object of belief, as in 3:16).”

<sup>47</sup> The triune God is the only source of eternal/heavenly life, truth, righteousness, holiness and everything else that is good.



condemn” with the NIV, KJV, and NKJV.] **the world, but that the world might be saved through Him** [Compare Luke 19:10; John 12:47; and 1 John 4:14.]. **(18) He who believes in [eis] Him is not judged** [I would translate “is not condemned” with the NIV; KJV; and NKJV. He who believes in Him is not condemned because, as Jesus says in John 5:24, the new-covenant believer already “has eternal life [Born-again believers already participate in (the first stage/installment) of eternal life.], and does not come into judgment [I would translate “into condemnation,” with the KJV.<sup>48</sup>], but has [already] passed out of death into life.” Believers have their final judgment when they submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith and become born again/from above Christians. The only way Christians can change that final judgment (not a good idea!) is for them to cease being committed in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and the new covenant.<sup>49</sup>

As John 3:18 continues it shows that the people who reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel have already had their final judgment too, and they have already been condemned. Such persons can reverse that condemnation by repenting and submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ and the new covenant in faith at a later time. It must be understood that we (mankind) were spiritually dead sinners before Jesus came, not ready to stand before Him in judgment (cf., e.g., John 8:21, 24; Rom. 1:18-3:30 [especially note Rom. 3:9]; and Eph. 2:1-3).]; **he who does not believe has been judged already** [I would translate “has been condemned already,” or the equivalent. The NIV has, “stands condemned already,” and the KJV; NKJV have, “is condemned already.” If we reject God’s *one* plan of *salvation*, we are choosing His *condemnation*.], **because he has not believed in [eis] the name of the only begotten** [I would translate “unique,” or the equivalent, instead of “only begotten”; see under John 3:16.] **Son of God.** [To believe in the name of the unique Son of God is to believe in Him and all that the Bible reveals about Him and the salvation that God has made available in Him (and only in Him).] **(19)** [John 3:19-21 give much insight as to why some people submit to Christ in faith while others reject Him.<sup>50</sup> In John 6:45 Jesus said, “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.”<sup>51</sup> In John 7:17 He said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching [Jesus’ teaching], whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.” In John 18:37 He said, “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” In John 10:16, Jesus (referring to elect Gentiles) said, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”] **This is the judgment** [I would translate “condemnation” with the KJV; NKJV.], **that the Light has come into the world** [These words speak of God the Son’s coming into the world to be born of the virgin and become the God-man (cf. John 1:1-18; 8:12; 9:5; and

<sup>48</sup> The NIV has, “will not be condemned”; the NKJV has, “shall not come into judgment.”

<sup>49</sup> Being new-covenant believers includes living in line with the requirements of the new covenant (by God’s enabling grace). I believe the New Testament makes it quite clear that Christians can lose their salvation, not that it is the will of God for us to fall away or that He is trying to get rid of us—quite the contrary—and His grace is more than sufficient to keep us. See my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?*

<sup>50</sup> Four of the commentators that I found helpful on John 3:19-21 are F. Godet, E. W. Hengstenberg, H. A. W. Meyer, and A. Plummer, not that I agree with everything they say under these verses.

<sup>51</sup> John 6:45 in its context applies especially to the Jews of Jesus’ day. The Jews who had truly submitted to God and His word and truly learned from Him were ready to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and new-covenant salvation when they became available. The Gentiles of Jesus day hadn’t had nearly the same opportunity to learn from God, but some of them (like Cornelius) had learned a lot about Him through the Jews, and they were ready for the good news of full salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

12:46). Rejecting Him results in *condemnation* (cf. John 3:18): He is the (only) way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Him (John 14:6); He is the only One who can save us from being condemned for our sins (and to make us righteous and holy)! As John continues he shows that many reject Christ (and are condemned) because they love the darkness and the evil works of darkness (what you love shows where your heart is; likewise, what you say and do show where your heart is; faith without works of righteousness is dead—it isn't real faith) and, significantly and sadly, they have no desire to change/be changed. Many people who are in great bondage to sin can be saved because they have a desire (at least they eventually come to have a desire) to change. Loving the darkness and the works of darkness (which aligns one with the devil) is the opposite of loving God and His righteousness., **and men** [but not all men] **loved the darkness rather than the Light** [The triune God, very much including God the Son, the *Light*, is the only source of *light*, which includes truth and righteousness. The *darkness* is the opposite of the *Light/light*; it includes the lie (the devil “is a liar and the father of lies” [John 8:44]) and unrighteousness (sin); the devil's kingdom/world is a kingdom of *darkness* and *evil works* (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:13).], **for their deeds** [works] **were evil**. [Compare John 7:7; Eph. 5:11. When He, the One through whom all things (including all beings) were created (cf. John 1:3, 10, 11), came to live among men, they rejected Him (John 1:11), but not all men (John 1:12).<sup>52</sup> Those who love the darkness cannot love the Light, not unless they begin to respond to the Light, who can change their hearts.

Some of the people who eventually submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and become born-again/from above Christians were sold out to sin and the kingdom of darkness before they become Christians, but that type of people aren't included in John 3:21 (which is quoted on the next page). That verse speaks only of people coming to the Light who were already *practicing the truth* (which includes living in righteousness) and who acknowledge that their good works have been wrought in God (they don't claim that their good works are their own, or that they have earned salvation by their works). In John 3:21 John must have been thinking (at least for the most part) of the “righteous” *Jews* of his generation.<sup>53</sup> I put the word *righteous* in quotation marks to make the important point that these people still needed to repent and be saved through the Lamb of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:9).

“Righteous” Jews were typically quick to submit to God's call to repent through John the Baptist and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Those “righteous” Jews were people of faith. They had faith in God and His Word, and they understood that the people of God were required to put Him first and to live in accordance with His will, which is contained in His laws. People can't be “righteous” before God apart from faith; through faith they learned what He required of them and they appropriated the grace that He made available to them. The *Jews*, unlike the Gentiles, had a covenant with God. Through that covenant they knew a lot about God and righteousness, and they were

<sup>52</sup> John 1:1-18 are discussed in some detail in a paper on my internet site.

<sup>53</sup> Many of the disciples of John the Baptist, very much including the ones who became apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, were “righteous” Jews (cf. John 1:35-51). Also consider the parents of John the Baptist (Luke 1:6), or Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38), or Simeon (Luke 2:25-35), or Anna (Luke 2:36-38), and there were many others. Apparently Nicodemus was in this category to some extent.

recipients of grace, but grace on a level far below what is provided in the new covenant in the blood of Christ.

The gospel of new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus was very good news for the “righteous” believers in Israel; in some ways it was even better news for those in bondage to sin (whether Jews of Gentiles) who wanted (or, in some cases, who eventually were brought to the place where they wanted) to change/be changed (cf., e.g., Luke 7:36-50; 8:2 [with John 20:11-18]).<sup>54</sup> **(20) For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.** [See under verse 19.] **(21) But he who practices** [or, “the one doing”] **the truth** [On Christians *practicing/doing the truth* compare 1 John 1:6. Practicing/doing the *truth* of God includes practicing/doing (on a continuous basis) His *righteousness* and *holiness*: In Eph. 4:24 the apostle Paul speaks of “the righteousness and holiness of the truth.”] **comes to the Light, so that his deeds** [or, “works”] **may be manifested as having been wrought in God.** [See under verse 19, including the footnotes.] **(22) After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea** [“went out into the Judean countryside” NIV], **and there He was spending time with them and baptizing** [see John 4:1, 2]. **(23) John** [John the Baptist] **also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized—(24) for John had not yet been thrown into prison.** [Why did the apostle John bother to mention that John the Baptist had not yet been thrown into prison, where he was eventually killed by Herod Antipas, at the instigation of his “wife,” Herodias (cf. Matt. 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; and Luke 3:19, 20)? It was obvious that John the Baptist had not yet been thrown into prison if he was still baptizing, etc. Apparently John the apostle was interacting with the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), as he so often did, which were written long before his Gospel was written. For one thing, the Synoptic Gospels skipped mentioning that Jesus ministered for a while in Judea, in the days *before* John the Baptist was thrown into prison. (It isn’t an error to skip mentioning things that take place; no historical account includes all the details. Thank God that He gave us the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John!)

Mark (in Mark 1:9-13), for example, mentions Jesus’ being baptized by John and His forty-day temptation in the wilderness, then (in 1:14, 15) he says, “Now after John had been taken in custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’ ” (Also see Matt. 3:13-4:12; Luke 3:21-4:15.) The apostle John wanted to inform his readers, for one thing, that Jesus (with His disciples) ministered for a while in Jerusalem, which included cleansing the temple and working many miracles, and in Judea before He went north into Galilee. (This is very important information, information not contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke, and see footnote 55.) He also informed us that Jesus (and His disciples) made two trips to Galilee before John the Baptist was thrown into prison (John 1:43-2:12; 4:1-54); these trips were not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels.] **(25) Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification** [“over the matter of ceremonial washing” NIV; the

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<sup>54</sup> For such people the gospel was exactly what they desperately needed and wanted. Christ Jesus and new-covenant salvation (which includes God’s giving His life-giving, sanctifying Spirit to dwell in each Christian) is God’s only answer to the sin/spiritual death problem. He forgives us and makes us righteous and holy by imparting His righteousness and holiness and enabling us to live in accordance with His commandments.

Greek noun (*katharismos*) used here was also used in John 2:6, translated “purification” by the NASB]. [In this context (verses 22-26), this “discussion...about purification” apparently involved the *baptisms* (in water) of Jesus and John the Baptist.] **(26) And they** [John the Baptist’s disciples] **came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan** [cf. John 1:28], **to whom you have testified** [They were referring to Jesus, to whom John the Baptist had testified (cf. John 1:6-8, 15, 19-36).], **behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.”** [Jesus Himself wasn’t baptizing in water, but His disciples were (John 4:1, 2).<sup>55</sup> John’s disciples were concerned that more people were now coming to Jesus (to hear from Him, to be healed by Him [cf. John 2:23, 3:2], to be baptized in water as disciples, etc.) than were coming to John the Baptist (cf. John 4:1). The answer of John the Baptist contained in verses 27-30 seems perfect.<sup>56</sup>] **(27) John** [John the Baptist] **answered and said, “A man** [Jesus was a “man,” but He was much more than just a man; He was God the Son, who became the God-man; John the Baptist had quite a bit of insight regarding His being more than just a man (see John 1:6-8, 15, 26-36; 3:28-30).] **can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven** [cf. 1 Cor. 4:7; Heb. 5:1-10]. [John the Baptist clearly understood that Jesus Christ was far above him, and he was fully comfortable with that fact; he wasn’t competing with Jesus, or jealous of Him; he knew that he had been sent to testify of Christ and to point people to Him; John’s will was to see the will of God come to pass. Apparently John even knew that his own salvation depended on Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., John 1:29, 36; Luke 1:77<sup>57</sup>).] **(28) You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’** [cf. John 1:20] **but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him** [cf. John 1:6-8, 15, 23, 26-36].’ **(29) He who has the bride is the bridegroom** [cf. Matt. 9:15; 25:1-13]; **but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. (30) He must increase, but I must decrease.** [Christ is the *bridegroom*. The *bride* of Christ is the Christian church. (Taken in the fullest sense the *bride* equals true Israel in her entirety, which includes all the believers from Old Testament days and all true Christians.) John the Baptist calls himself the “friend of the bridegroom,” who rejoices greatly in the bridegroom and His increase/success.] **(31)** [As I mentioned in footnote 56, I believe John the apostle stopped quoting John the

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<sup>55</sup> This (John 3:22-26; 4:1, 2) is the only place in the Bible that mentions that Jesus (through His disciples) baptized in water in the days when He ministered on the earth, before His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. (We are indebted to John the apostle for *this* information too.) We don’t have any details regarding this baptism, but it wasn’t Christian baptism in the full sense—Jesus hadn’t yet died, bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties, or been resurrected, or been taken up into heaven, or received the promised life-giving, sanctifying Spirit to pour out on those who believe in Him. That earlier baptism certainly emphasized repentance (as did the baptism of John) and it certainly involved submission (in faith) to Christ to the extent the gospel of salvation had been revealed at that early time. At the time Jesus was crucified, the apostles still didn’t fully understand His resurrection, His deity, etc.

<sup>56</sup> It seems that John’s quotation of John the Baptist continues only through verse 30, and that after verse 30 John the apostle speaks to the end of chapter 3 and on into chapter 4. The NASB; NIV; and NKJV continue the quotation marks to the end of chapter 3. Most of the commentaries I have looked at prefer the viewpoint that the quotation of John the Baptist stops at verse 30. The NIV has a footnote, “Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 30.”

<sup>57</sup> The words of Luke 1:77 were part of a prophecy given by John the Baptist’s father regarding God’s salvation through Christ Jesus, including the fact that John the Baptist would go before the Lord to prepare His way.

Baptist at the end of verse 30 and that he begins to speak here, even as he stopped quoting Jesus at the end of verse 12 and began to speak in verse 13.] **He who comes from above** [cf. John 3:13; 8:23] **is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth.** [“He who is “of/from the earth” includes all mankind, including Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47) and John the Baptist.] **He who comes from heaven** [cf. John 3:13] **is above all.** [God the Son, who became the God-man, Christ Jesus, *came from above* (which is the same as His *coming from heaven*), having been sent by the Father (cf., e.g., John 3:17, 34). He “is above all” (which includes His having all authority in heaven and on earth—He has all authority everywhere with God the Father) in that He is deity, being God the Son, through whom all things (including all beings) were created. It is also true (and quite important) that He (the God-man) has all authority in heaven and on earth *now* on the basis of His having overthrown sin, Satan, and spiritual death through His mission accomplished in His incarnation, sinless life, atoning death and resurrection (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; and Phil. 2:6-11). He earned the right to save all believers and to remove (by judgment) the devil and all who continue to follow him.] **(32) What He** [God the Son, the God-man] **has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.** [As John 3:11-13 show, Christ Jesus was able to testify to *heavenly* things along with *earthly* things, but most people did not receive His testimony. Verse 33 (and other verses) shows that some throughout this age do receive His testimony (cf., e.g., John 1:11, 12).] **(33) He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this that God is true** [“has certified that God is true” NKJV; “has certified that God is truthful” NIV]. [Those who receive Christ Jesus and His testimony are receiving God the Father, who sent Him (cf., e.g., John 13:20), and they are demonstrating that “God [the Father] is true,” because they are accepting as *true* (and as super-important) the things that Jesus says, *which He received from the One who sent Him*. In the next verse John goes on to state that Christ Jesus spoke words that came from God the Father.] **(34) For He** [Christ Jesus] **whom God has sent speaks the words of God** [cf., e.g., John 7:16; 14:10, 24]; **for He gives the Spirit without measure.** [God the Father gave the Spirit to Jesus *without measure*. This great anointing confirmed that Jesus was the Christ, that He had been sent from God on a very special mission, and that He spoke the words of God. Christians receive the Spirit *by measure*, which enables each Christian to make their individual contribution to the outworking of God’s plan of salvation for the glory of God and the good of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:7 says, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift [Christ, the Head of the church, determines the *measure* given to each Christian].” The apostle Paul also speaks of this *measure* given to each Christian in Rom. 12:3.<sup>58</sup>] **(35) The Father loves the Son** [cf., e.g., John 5:20; 15:9; 17:23, 24, 26<sup>59</sup>] **and has given all things into His hand.** [See under verse 31.] **(36) He who believes in** [Greek *eis*. The Greek has the present participle for the verb *believe* with the definite article, as in John 3:15, 16; the present tense communicates the idea of continuous action; we come into union with Christ and we stay in union with Christ through

<sup>58</sup> Romans 12:3 is discussed in some detail (in context with all of Rom. 12:1-8) in my *A Paper on Faith* on my internet site.

<sup>59</sup> The Greek verb *phileo* was used in John 5:20 (“For the Father loves the Son”); the Greek verb *agapao* was used here in John 3:35 and in the other verses just cited. These Greek verbs are equivalent in meaning in these verses.

believing (having faith) in Him.] **the Son has eternal life** [See under John 3:3-8, 14-18]; **but he who does not obey the Son will not see life** [On *seeing life*, compare *seeing the kingdom of God* in John 3:3. To *see life* includes experiencing/participating in *life* as born-again/from above Christians. In John 8:51 Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.”], **but the wrath of God abides on him**. [Believing (having faith) in the Son includes committing oneself (from the heart) to the Son and the gospel of new-covenant salvation; it includes *obeying* the Son. Those who do not *obey* the Son are not *believers*. They forfeit the eternal life that people can find only in the Son (cf. John 3:15). As John 3:18 says, those who reject Christ Jesus “have been condemned already.” Most of the “wrath of God” is reserved for the end of this age. The ultimate wrath of God is the eternal lake of fire. Being saved from the never-ending wrath of God is a big part of what salvation in Christ is all about (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; and 5:9).

Many Christians in our day talk so much about the unconditional love of God that they haven't left room for the wrath of God that the Bible, very much including the New Testament, speaks so much about.]

## JOHN CHAPTER 4

**Therefore when the Lord [Christ Jesus] knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John [cf. John 3:22-30] (2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples [cf. John 2:2, 22] were), (3) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.** [This is the second trip north into Galilee mentioned in the Gospel of John after Jesus was baptized in water, received the Spirit, and began to gather disciples to Himself (cf. John 1:43-2:12).] **(4) And He had to pass through Samaria.** [I'll quote a sentence from what D. A. Carson says here, "Josephus...provides ample assurance not only that the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans was strong, but also that Jews passing from Judea to Galilee or back nevertheless preferred the shorter route through Samaria (*Antiquities* xx. 118; *Bel.* ii. 232; *Vita* 269). ...."<sup>60</sup> Carson points out that the alternative to passing through Samaria when traveling from Judea to Galilee was to cross to the east side of the Jordan River, travel north, then cross to the west side of the Jordan River.] **(5) So He came to a city of Samaria** [I'll also quote several sentences from what D. A. Carson says here, "... [After the Assyrians overthrew the northern kingdom of Israel] in 722-721 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Kings 17-18). After the exile [to Babylon by the Babylonians] Jews returning to their homeland...viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements (Neh. 13; cf. *Jos., Ant.* xi 297-347, esp. 340). About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim; toward the end of the second century BC [the Jews destroyed this temple]. This combination of events fueled religious and theological animosities. Certainly by the first century the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage based on the Pentateuch (they did not accept the other books of the Hebrew Bible as canonical), continuing to focus their worship not on Jerusalem and its temple but on Mount Gerizim. A small number of Samaritans survives to this day."<sup>61</sup>] **called Sychar** [I'll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here. "[Sychar] is commonly identified with the modern village of Askar, on the slope of Mount Ebal, a mile or two north-east of Nablus and about half-a-mile north of Jacob's well."<sup>62</sup>], **near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph** [cf. Gen. 33:19; Josh. 24:32]; **(6) and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.** [In the margin the NASB has a note, "Perhaps 6 p.m. Roman time or noon Jewish time." The most common view is that the "sixth hour" means *noon*, but some commentators favor 6 p.m., and I prefer that viewpoint.<sup>63</sup>] **(7) There came a**

<sup>60</sup> *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1992), page 216.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, page 216.

<sup>62</sup> *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 101.

<sup>63</sup> Those commentators include A. T. Robertson; W. Hendricksen, B. F. Westcott, E. A. Blum (in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*), and E. G. Dobson (in *Liberty Bible Commentary*). The *sixth* hour in John 19:14 (when Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified) fits 6 a.m. much better than noon (cf. Matt. 27:45, 46; Mark 15:25, 33, 34, 37; and Luke 23:44; these times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are "Jewish time," measured from the rising of the sun), but these times were rough approximations. See under John 1:39; 4:52 in this paper, and see under John 18:28; 19:14 in my paper on John chapters 18-20 on my internet site. W. Hendricksen, A. T. Robertson, B. F. Westcott (and others) favor the so-called "Roman time" in John 1:39; 4:6, 52; and 19:14.

woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” (8) For His disciples had gone away into the city [John 4:5 shows what city John was speaking of (cf. John 4:39).] to buy food. (9) Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. [Compare Matt. 10:5, 6; Luke 9:51-56; and John 8:48. Some commentators opt for the translation given in the margin of the NIV, “Jews do not use dishes Samaritans have used” (or an equivalent translation) instead of “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”]) (10) Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink’ [The *gift of God* was new-covenant salvation through and in the Messiah/Christ, the very one who had asked her for a drink and who was now speaking with her.], you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water [cf. Psalm 36:8, 9; Isa. 55:1; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; John 4:14; 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; and 22:1, 2, 17].” [Jesus made it clear to this Samaritan woman as He continued that she could be saved by (through/in) Him. The *living water* refers to the life (the eternal life) of God that she could have—even though she wasn’t a Jew—starting with the new birth/birth from above by the Spirit (cf., e.g., John 1:12, 13, 33; 3:3-8, 16-18, 36).] (11) She said to Him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep [The well there today, which is widely accepted as being the well to which Jesus came, is a little more than 100 feet deep.]; where then do you get that living water? [The Samaritan woman would realize before long that Jesus wasn’t speaking of *living water* that would come from “Jacob’s well” (John 4:6) or any other literal well.] (12) You are not greater than our father Jacob [Jacob (also called *Israel*) was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. “Josephus tells us that the Samaritans claimed to be descended from Joseph, through Ephraim and Manassah (*Ant. xi, 341*).”<sup>64</sup>], are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” [This was a fair question based on what Jesus had said to the woman. Jesus, in His response, affirmed that He was much greater than Jacob.] (13) Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water [the water in Jacob’s well, or any other physical water] will thirst again; (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst [cf. John 6:35; 7:37-39]; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well [cf. Isa. 12:3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” NIV] of water springing up to eternal life.” [See under verse 10. The Holy Spirit’s dwelling in born again/from above Christians provides a constant supply of the life (eternal life) of God (as we walk by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis [cf. Gal. 5:16]). As we have discussed (see under John 3:3, 5), Christians participate in the eternal life of God from the time of the new birth/birth from above, but we must wait for the end of this age to participate in (to be born into) the fullness of eternal life (when we will be glorified).] (15) The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” [It seems that the woman was still thinking of physical water.] (16) He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.” (17) The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; (18) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” [We don’t know the details regarding why the woman had had five husbands, but it is clear that

<sup>64</sup> Leon Morris, *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1971), page 262.



she wasn't married to the man that she was living with at that time.] **(19) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.** [Jesus was a *prophet* (cf. Matt. 13:57; 21:11; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:44; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; Acts 3:22, 23; and 7:37), but He was a whole lot more than just a prophet.] **(20) Our fathers** [She means the *fathers* of the Samaritans, which they claimed included Jacob (cf. John 4:12).] **worshiped in this mountain** [Jacob's well was very close to Mount Gerizim and to Mount Ebal (cf. Deut. 11:29; Josh. 8:33), but Mount Gerizim was the mountain where the Samaritans worshipped (and a small remnant of them still worship there today).<sup>65</sup>], **and you people** [referring to the Jews] **say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**" [The Jews were right on this point (as far as the old-covenant days were concerned); Jerusalem was where God had Solomon build the temple, for one thing. Note that in verse 22 Jesus says that the Jews, not the Samaritans, were right regarding salvation in general.] **(21) Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain [Mount Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem will you** [This *you* is plural in the Greek, referring to the Samaritans, not that all of them would submit to Christ and new-covenant salvation.] **worship the Father.** [Jesus was speaking of the hour (time) of salvation that could not begin in a full sense until after the Lamb of God had been slain and the Spirit given (starting on the day of Pentecost); see verses 23, 24.<sup>66</sup> (The Samaritans could have salvation and begin to worship God the Father in a preliminary, very real sense from the time they submitted in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, even before they were born of the Spirit.) Once the Lamb had been slain and the new covenant ratified in His precious blood, the sacrifice of animals for sin offerings in the temple at Jerusalem (and the need to worship God in the temple at Jerusalem) was set aside to make room for the far-superior salvation of the new-covenant. ] **(22) You** [This *you* is also plural in the Greek (and the following *you* in this verse), referring to the Samaritans.] **worship what you do not know; we [the Jews] worship what we know, for salvation is from [or "of" with the KJV; NKJV] the Jews.** [Salvation comes from God (is of God), but He chose to bring salvation to pass through Israel; through that people He gave us the Old Testament, the Messiah, the apostles, the New Testament, etc.] **(23) But an hour is coming, and now is** [Although Jesus said the hour (time) *now is*, the hour of which He was speaking could not come in a full sense until He had been crucified and the Spirit given (starting on the day of Pentecost).<sup>67</sup> Believers could not worship the Father in (the) Spirit (verses 23, 24) before the Spirit was given (starting on the day of Pentecost).

I'll quote [John 5:25](#), and then [16:32](#); the first verse uses identical wording in the Greek for the words "an hour is coming and now is" here in John 4:23, and the second verse is similar. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead [the spiritually dead] will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." The dead could hear the voice of the Son of God at that time (at the time Jesus spoke these words), and they could respond to His words with faith, but they could not be born

<sup>65</sup> A. T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament* [Broadman Press, 1932], page 65) points out that "the Samaritans held that Abraham offered up Isaac on Gerizim."

<sup>66</sup> We cannot worship God in the *fullest* sense until after we are glorified and fully dwell in His presence.

<sup>67</sup> In one sense (a preliminary sense) the hour had come in that Christ Jesus had come and was proclaiming the good news of salvation. See under verse 21. What Jesus was speaking of here will not come to pass in the ultimate sense until after we are glorified and fully caught up into the dimension of God.

again/from above and *live* (with the eternal life of God) until after Jesus had been crucified and the Spirit given (starting on the day of Pentecost). “Behold an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” What Jesus meant (in John 16:32) was that the hour had *almost* come—it was super imminent. Later that evening His disciples would be scattered and leave Him alone. John 16:32 confirms that these words of Jesus at the beginning of verse 23 need not be interpreted to mean that the hour had fully come for these things to come to pass, but only that they were very close at hand.], **when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit** [I would translate “in the Spirit.”<sup>68</sup> I believe Jesus was speaking of our being enabled to worship in (and by) the indwelling (Holy) Spirit after we are born again/from above through new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus.<sup>69</sup> Being born of the Spirit takes worship to a whole new level, to a higher dimension—to the dimension of God, “who is Spirit” (John 4:24).] **and truth** [or, “and in *the* truth.” It is obvious that we must worship the God of truth in *truth*. The *truth* centers in Christ Jesus, who is the *truth* (John 14:6). It obviously wasn’t acceptable for the Samaritans to continue to try to worship God with all their wrong ideas about Him and His salvation (cf. verse 22). The Jews also needed to change what they believed to one degree or another; they (with all true Christians) had to believe the full gospel of new-covenant salvation through and in Christ Jesus. To believe (have faith in) the truth includes living in line with the truth (by the grace of God in Christ). The truth includes God’s righteousness and holiness: I’ll quote Eph. 4:24, “and put on the new self [man], which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”]; **for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. (24) God is spirit** [I would translate “God is Spirit” with Beasley-Murray, R. E. Brown, the NAB, the margin of the NASB, the Phillips’ translation, and others; the NKJV has, “God *is* Spirit.”<sup>70</sup> The NKJV put the verb “is” in italics because the Greek text doesn’t have a verb here. The Greek doesn’t require a verb here (but a Greek verb often is included in such uses), but the English does require a verb here.

Jesus wasn’t equating “God” with the (Holy) Spirit here, though it is true, of course, that the Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Trinity. Believing Israelites in Old Testament days and disciples of Jesus in the days before the new birth/birth from above

<sup>68</sup>Whether we translate “in spirit,” “in Spirit” (with the NAB; and R. E. Brown, and others), or “in *the* Spirit” (which I prefer) here in verse 23 and toward the end of the next verse (verse 24), or not, we must recognize (I believe) that Jesus was speaking of new-covenant worship (by/in the Spirit) of born again/from above (by the Spirit) believers. George R. Beasley-Murray (*John*, page 57) translates “in the Spirit” here and in verse 24.

<sup>69</sup>I’ll quote a small part of what D. A. Carson says under John 4:23, 24 (*Gospel According to John*, page 225). “...unless they are born of the Spirit, they cannot see the kingdom of God [cf. John 3:3, 5], they cannot worship God truly. This provision of the Spirit is made possible by the work of him who is the truth (14:6), and who by his glorification by way of the cross pours out the Spirit, who is called the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). ... [Our worship] must be ‘in spirit and truth’...made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit....” I’ll quote a sentence from what J. H. Bernard says under verse 23 (*Gospel According to St. John* [T&T Clark, 1999 reprint], page 150). “The *gift* of the Spirit is a necessary preliminary to spiritual worship.” And I’ll quote part of what Beasley-Murray says here (*John*, page 62). “Since the kingdom of God is the age of the Spirit’s outpouring, true worshippers will worship the Father in virtue of the life, freedom, and power bestowed by the Spirit....” Quite a few other commentators hold this same viewpoint.

<sup>70</sup>Some translate “God is [or, *is*] a Spirit,” including the KJV, *Amplified Bible*, and the older (1977) edition of the NASB in the margin.

became available could worship God on one level, but to worship Him on an adequate level requires His worshippers to be on the same wavelength (living in His dimension, having been born of and indwelt by the Holy Spirit). After we are glorified at the end of this age, we will be able to worship Him on the highest level, when we will be fully living in His presence.], **and those who worship Him must worship in spirit** [**“in the Spirit”**] **and truth** [or **“and the truth”**].” (25) **The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah** [cf. John 1:41] **is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.”** [This woman may have already been considering the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah. When He went on to say that He was the Messiah in the next verse, she clearly believed Him, at least she believed Him at some level (cf. John 4:28-30, 39-42). Her heart was open to Jesus; the Spirit of God had undoubtedly been dealing with her (and with many of the Samaritans).

I’ll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here.<sup>71</sup> “The place occupied in much Jewish expectation by the messiah of David’s line was occupied in Samaritan expectation by the great prophet of the future, the one foretold by Moses in Deut. 18:15.”] (26) **Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”** (27) **At this point His disciples came** [cf. John 4:8], **and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman,**<sup>72</sup> **yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why do You speak with her?”** (28) **So the woman left her waterpot** [For one thing, she planned to return to Jesus, but her actions show that she was much more concerned with Christ Jesus and with encouraging her neighbors to go to Him than with her waterpot, or with physical water.], **and went into the city and said to the men,** (29) **“Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done** [cf. John 4:17-19]; **this is not the Christ, is it?”** (30) **They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.** (31) **Meanwhile the disciples** [cf., e.g., John 1:35-51; 2:2, 12; 3:22; and 4:2] **were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi** [cf., e.g., John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; and 6:25], **eat.”** [This was a reasonable request in that the disciples had just returned after going into the city to buy food (John 4:8).] (32) **But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about** [see verse 34].” (33) **So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?”** [The NRSV translates, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?”] (34) **Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.** [Compare, for example, Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:2-4; John 5:30, 36; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4; and 19:28, 30. Jesus (being a man with a physical body; the God-man) needed to eat physical food to live, but His primary food (that which sustained and satisfied Him in His heart and caused Him to rejoice) was to always do the will of Him who sent Him and to accomplish the work assigned Him. At that moment Jesus was consumed with the response He had just received from the Samaritan woman and with harvesting many Samaritans into God’s kingdom. He knew that at that moment many of the Samaritans “were coming to Him” with open hearts (see verse 35).

<sup>71</sup> *Gospel of John*, page 111.

<sup>72</sup> “The disciples were shocked, not because Jesus was talking with *the* woman (KJV)—a Samaritan—but with *a* woman! That is characteristic of attitudes to women reflected in Jewish rabbinical writings. Billerbeck cites, among other extraordinary examples, ‘Abot 2 (1d): ‘One should not talk with a woman on the street, not even with his own wife, and certainly not with somebody’s else’s wife, because of the gossip of men,’ and *Qidd.* 70a: ‘It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting’ (*Kommentar* 2:438)” (Beasley-Murray, *John*, page 62).

In that situation, where Jesus had to choose between eating physical food and ministering to lost, hungry, receptive souls, there was no contest—the physical food would have to wait. One primary reason that Jesus spoke these words, along with the words that follow in verses 35-38, was to stir up His disciples to join Him in His excitement and in fulfilling *their* assigned ministries.] **(35) Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white [“ripe” NIV] for harvest.** [Apparently the idea here was that the disciples would have estimated that it would be about four months before the grain in the fields around them would be ready for harvesting/reaping. But Jesus called their attention to the large number of Samaritans who were headed their way and informed His disciples that those fields of men were ripe and ready (and desperately needing) to be harvested/reaped. In that setting Jesus was especially concerned with those particular Samaritans, but there were many other fields of men that were ripe to be harvested into God’s kingdom (cf. Matt. 9:37, 38; Luke 10:2).] **(36) Already** [The word *already* could be included at the end of verse 35 instead at the beginning of verse 36, and I somewhat prefer that other reading. The KJV has, “for they are white already to harvest” at the end of verse 35, and the NKJV has “for they are already white for harvest.” Verse 36 would then start with “He.” Whether the “already” is taken with the end of verse 35 or the beginning of verse 36, it is clear that Jesus was exhorting His disciples to get ready to harvest/reap *now*.] **he who reaps is receiving** [I would translate “receives” (with the NKJV), instead of “receiving.”] **wages** [The Greek noun (*misthos*) translated wages here could also be translated “reward.” These words at the beginning of verse 36 probably included the exhortation that it was necessary for the disciples to get busy doing the harvesting/reaping that they were commissioned to do, so (for one reason) they could receive their wages/reward. It was to be understood, of course, that it was a great privilege to be called to work for God (by His grace) and to “[gather] fruit for eternal life.” Besides that, God always takes care of those who faithfully work for Him and meets their needs (including their need for physical *food*), but the emphasis here is on the spiritual *food* (blessings, rejoicing, etc.) they receive, like the *food* Jesus just mentioned in verses 32, 34. It is to be understood, of course, that those who work for God “gathering fruit for eternal life” will inherit eternal life themselves and be rewarded for their faithful labor (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:17).] **and is gathering fruit** [cf. Rom. 1:13] **for life eternal** [Those being harvested/reaped were entering into salvation in Christ Jesus, which includes eternal life (cf., e.g., John 3:15, 16, 36; 4:10-14; 5:24; and Rom. 6:22, 23). They were entering the kingdom of God in a preliminary stage. As we have discussed in some detail, the new birth/birth by the Spirit was not available until after Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and ascended, and the fullness of eternal life will not be available until the end of this age, when we will be born into the fullness of eternal life/glorified.]; **so that he who sows** [“the sower” NIV; “the one sowing”] **and he who reaps** [“the reaper” NIV; “the one reaping”] **may rejoice together.** [Jesus was the one sowing here (cf., e.g., Matt. 13:1-30; Mark 4:1-20); at least He was the primary one sowing (see John 4:38). Those sowing seeds can’t rejoice in the fullest sense until after the seeds they have planted bring forth a harvest. The whole purpose of planting seeds and watching over the plants is to bring forth a harvest. Jesus’ disciples were commissioned to reap (see verse 38).] **(37) For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’** [Jesus sowed;

the disciples reaped. It isn't spelled out exactly what the disciples did in their reaping in Samaria, but it undoubtedly included ministering to individuals (as required) and it could have included baptizing in water (cf. John 3:22-26; 4:1, 2). By most definitions of reaping, Jesus did much reaping too.] **(38) I sent you to reap** [Jesus *sent* these disciples in the sense that He *commissioned* them to reap, and to do other things.<sup>73</sup> For one thing, the disciples were in school, so to speak; some of them were being prepared for very significant ministries, including the ministry of the twelve apostles and the ministry of the seventy disciples that Jesus sent out to minister (Luke 10:1-20). Here in John chapter 4 we are reading about things that took place quite early in the ministry of Jesus. Many more disciples would be added, and some "disciples" would stop following Him too, and, significantly, it would be quite a while yet before Jesus would choose the twelve apostles and send them out to minister (Matt. 10:1-42; Mark 3:13-19; and Luke 6:12-16). When the twelve apostles were sent out to minister they did a lot of sowing too, and especially after the crucifixion, resurrection, and Pentecost.] **that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.**" [It would probably be better to translate something like "you have entered into the benefits of their labor."<sup>74</sup> The point is that after others had done most of the work the disciples had the enviable task of reaping the harvest. In this immediate context those who had labored clearly included Jesus, and it probably included the Samaritan woman, who testified to her countrymen about Jesus.<sup>75</sup> Her testimony played an important role in the conversion of many Samaritans (cf. John 4:28-30, 39-42). In a fuller sense we could include John the Baptist. In a fuller sense yet we could include Abraham, Jacob, etc., and Moses and the old-covenant prophets. In a fuller sense yet we could include all the righteous people of God who had ever lived, whose input affected the final harvest, very much including all the intercessory prayer. Consider, for example, the parents of John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph, and Simeon and Anna the prophetess, who served night and day with fastings and prayer, who are all mentioned in Luke chapters 1, 2. The triune God (and His grace) was behind all this labor of sowing, and He must receive all the glory, but He has chosen to use His people in the outworking of His plan of salvation.] **(39) From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him** [We need not (and probably should not) infer that all who "believed in Him" (see verses 39-42) pressed on to become born again/from above Christians (cf., e.g., John 2:23-25; 8:31).] **because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done** [cf. verses 16-18]."**(40) So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. (41) Many more believed because of His word; (42) and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."** [Hearing Him (and being

<sup>73</sup> R. C. H. Lenski (*St. John's Gospel*, page 337) translates "I myself did commission you to reap..." Apparently Jesus had commissioned His disciples to reap before they came to this city in Samaria (cf. John 3:22-26; 4:1, 2).

<sup>74</sup> The NEB has, "and you have come in for the harvest of their toil"; the NIV has, "and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

<sup>75</sup> I'll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce (*Gospel of John*, page 114) says under verses 35-38. "Jesus himself was the sower; now his disciples had an opportunity to share his joy by helping to reap the harvest which had sprung from his conversation with the woman and her witness to the other Samaritans."

in His presence and seeing Him), as He stayed with them for two days, would have greatly increased their knowledge and appreciation of Christ and of God’s plan of salvation, which would have enhanced their faith.] **(43) After the two days** [cf. John 4:40] **He went forth from there into Galilee** [cf. John 4:1-4]. **(44) For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country** [cf. Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; and Luke 4:24]. **(45) So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.** [Apparently the idea here in verses 43-45 is that (one reason) Jesus manifested Himself with miracles, etc. in Jerusalem at the Passover feast (John 2:13-3:2) *before* going to His own country (Galilee) to minister was because He knew that He wouldn’t be received as a prophet (and more than a prophet) in Galilee if they had not “seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they [the Galileans] also went to the feast.”<sup>76</sup> Most of the people of His hometown (Nazareth) rejected Him anyway (cf. Matt. 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6; and especially Luke 4:14-30).] **(46) Therefore [or “Then”] He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine** [cf. John 2:1-11]. **And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.** [On Capernaum, compare John 2:12; Luke 4:23. This royal official was living at Capernaum; he was undoubtedly under Herod Antipas (a son of Herod the Great), who was the tetrarch over Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39.] **(47) When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee** [cf. John 4:3, 4, 43-45], **he went to Him** [at Cana] **and was imploring Him to come down** [to Capernaum. Capernaum was on the

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<sup>76</sup> I’ll quote part of what F. Godet (*Gospel of John*, page 443) says here. “*Meyer* seems to us quite near the truth, when he explains: Jesus, knowing well that a prophet is not honored in his own country, began by making Himself honored *outside of it*, at Jerusalem (ver. 45); and thus it was that He returned to Galilee with a reputation as a prophet, which opened for Him access to the hearts in His own country. *Reuss* is disposed to hold the same relation of thought: ‘In order to be received in Galilee, He had been obliged first to make Himself acknowledged outside of it.’

The complete explanation of this obscure passage follows, as in so many cases, from the relation of the fourth Gospel to the Synoptics [the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke]. The latter make the Galilean ministry begin immediately after [Christ’s] baptism. But John reminds us here, at the time of Jesus’ settlement in Galilee, that Jesus had followed a course quite different from that which the earlier narratives seemed to attribute to Him. [Matthew, Mark, and Luke skipped mentioning Jesus’ early ministry in Jerusalem and Judea, leaving a wrong impression and an incomplete picture. No historical account includes all the details. Thank God for giving us the Gospel of John too! We need all four Gospels! For another very important example of where John addresses a wrong impression left by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, see the introduction to John chapters 13-17 in my paper on those chapters on my internet site.] The Lord knew that the place where a prophet has lived is the one where, as a rule, he has most difficulty in finding recognition. [More importantly, Jesus was undoubtedly led by the Father to conduct His ministry as He did.] He began, therefore, by working for quite a long time...and it was only after this that He came in the strict sense to begin His ministry in Galilee, that ministry with which the narrative of the other Gospels opens. The meaning, therefore, is: It was then, and only then (not immediately after the [His] baptism [and forty day temptation in the wilderness]), that He commenced the Galilean work with which every one is acquainted [through the Synoptic Gospels]. ....”

I’ll also quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski (*St. John’s Gospel*, pages 345, 346) says here. “Since a prophet is not esteemed in his own land, Jesus now, after winning his esteem in another land, comes back to his own and finds that esteem awaiting him. ... In a simple way John thus again supplements the synoptists. They skip the eight to nine months of Jesus’ work in Judea, taking us at once from the baptism and the temptation of Jesus into his Galilean work (Matt. 4:12 [with 3:13-4:11]; Mark 1:14 [with 1:9-13]; Luke 4:14 [with 3:21, 22; 4:1-13]). John reports that all these important months, spent in Judea, intervened. ....”

northwestern edge of the Sea of Galilee, which was about 700 feet *below* sea level.] **and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.** [This “royal official” had been in Jerusalem when Jesus worked His miracles there (cf. John 2:23; 3:2; 4:45) or had at least learned of those miracles.] **(48) So Jesus said to him, “Unless you *people*** [The “you” is plural in the Greek; apparently Jesus intended these words for the Jews in general. It seems rather clear that this royal official was a Jew (cf. Matt. 12:38-45; John 2:18; 6:30, 31; and 1 Cor. 1:22). There were many exceptions to this general statement, and this royal official was (at least to some extent) one of those exceptions. Verse 50 informs us that he believed the word that Jesus told him, that He had already healed his son, and verse 53 indicates that he (along with his household) became a believer.] **see signs and wonders, you *simply* will not believe.”** [And, more importantly, their *believing* (faith), like the Gentiles, was often extremely shallow and superficial—many who “believed” weren’t true believers and didn’t become His disciples (cf. John 2:23-25; 8:31, 32; and the parable of the Sower in Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25). Many such “believers” were quick to abandon Christ. True believers/disciples have a heart devoted to God the Father, to His Son, and to His word. Acceptable believing (saving faith) includes making Christ (and God the Father) and His word top priority (making Him Lord), trusting Him, and obeying Him (by His grace). Being a believer means a whole lot more than giving mental assent to correct doctrine or having an emotional experience.

To believe that God exists isn’t nearly enough to constitute a person a believer or a disciple; the demons believe He exists (cf. James 2:19). Nor is it adequate to believe based *only* on signs and wonders. For one thing, the devil and his followers can (to the extent God permits) work signs and wonders too (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:8-12; and Rev. 13:13-15). One reason God gives *signs* is to point people to spiritual reality, to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, for example, but many don’t see the miracle(s) as *signs* (cf., e.g., John 6:26).

It is interesting to note that John did not mention any signs and wonders taking place in Samaria (John 4:4-42), except for the fact that Jesus revealed supernatural knowledge to the Samaritan woman regarding her past life. John 4:41, 42 say, “many more [Samaritans] believed in Him because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.’”

This royal official had too much confidence in Jesus and was far too motivated by his son’s need for healing to be put off by these words of Jesus that were something less than encouraging (cf., e.g., Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). Jesus dealt with this man in a way that led him and his household to become true believers (verse 53).] **(49) The royal official said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” (50) Jesus said to him, “Go; your son lives.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off.** [The fact that the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him showed that his faith in Christ was beyond the superficial; for one thing, he believed that his son had been healed before he was informed (the following day) by his slaves/servants that his son had been healed (cf. Matt. 8:5-13).] **(51) As he was now going down [to Capernaum], his slaves [“servants” NIV] met him, saying that his son was living. (52) So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour [In the margin the NASB says, “Perhaps 7 p.m.**

Roman time or 1 p.m. Jewish time.”<sup>77</sup>] **the fever left him.” (53) So the father knew that *it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son lives”*; and he himself believed and his whole household** [cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31-34]. [As I mentioned, I believe we are to understand that this man’s faith (and the faith of at least some of the people in his whole household) was beyond the superficial—he probably pressed on to become a born-again/from above disciple of Christ.] **(54) This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.** [The first sign that Jesus performed was when He turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). John emphasized the point that these two miracles were the only ones that Jesus had worked in Galilee up until that time, which is tied (to some extent at least) to his correcting the wrong impression left by the Synoptic Gospels regarding the early months of Jesus’ ministry after He was baptized in water, received the Spirit, and was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matt. 4:1). (See under John 4:45, including the footnote.)]

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<sup>77</sup> See under John 1:39; 4:6 in this paper. I prefer 7 p.m. (the seventh hour after noon). If it had been 1 p.m. it is much more likely that the man would have gone back home the day that Jesus told him that his son “lives” (Note that his slaves informed the royal official that his son began to get better “yesterday at the seventh hour”); he certainly would have been motivated to get home as soon as possible. I’ll quote part of what William Hendricksen (*Gospel of John*, page 183) says here. “... Although the distance between Cana and Capernaum is only sixteen miles [I have also seen 18 miles, 20 miles, and a few other numbers], much of this is hilly country, so that not much less than seven hours is required to cover it.” Apparently Hendricksen was assuming that this man was walking; he could have been riding a horse, etc. It is quite possible that the man didn’t want to travel after dark so he waited until the next morning to start the trip.