

Verse-by-Verse Studies of John Chapters 18-20

This paper was modified slightly in November 2012 when I worked on it to split the paper into six parts and put it in the proper format to put on several Christian article sites. I corrected a few typographical errors and made a few minor improvements

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CONTENTS

John Chapter 18.....	1
John Chapter 19.....	16
John Chapter 20.....	28

Some Other Verses and Topics that Are Discussed in this Paper

Acts 13:30-37.....	29-30
Discussion Regarding the Approximate Time that Jesus Was Delivered to Pilate and that Pilate Handed Him over to be Crucified and the Approximate Times that He Was Crucified and He Died.....	6-12
Discussion Regarding the Location where Jesus Was Crucified and where He Was Buried.....	17-21, 27
Discussion Regarding Crucifixion.....	20-22
Was the Sister of Mary (the mother of Jesus), Who Was Standing by the Cross with Mary and other Women (John 19:23), the Mother of the Apostles James and John?.....	23
Was the Resurrected Christ Untouchable when He Appeared First to Mary Magdalene?.....	31-32
Did the Disciples Receive the Spirit when Jesus Appeared to Them on The Evening of the Day of His Resurrection?.....	33-35

JOHN CHAPTER 18

[On Jesus' going to the garden of Gethsemane with His apostles (after the Lord's Supper) to pray (and then to be arrested), see Matt. 26:30-46; Mark 14:26-42; and Luke 22:39-46. The apostle John doesn't mention Jesus' important prayers in the garden or His interactions with Peter, James, and John in the garden. He undoubtedly took it for granted that his readers knew those details from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which were written long before he wrote his Gospel.¹] **When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth** [The Greek could be translated "He went out" with the NKJV. "He went out" could refer to His *going out* of the upper room where they ate the Lord's Supper, or it could refer to His *going out* of the city to cross the ravine of the Kidron.² This detail doesn't affect the interpretation of John chapter 18.] **with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron** ["Kidron Valley" NIV; cf. 2 Sam. 15:23; 1 Kings 2:27; 15:13; 2 Kings 23:4, 6, 12; 2 Chron. 15:16; 29:16; 30:14; and Jer. 31:40. The ravine, which was dry most of the year, emptied into the Dead Sea.], **where there was a garden** [The garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 16:36; Mark 14:32), which was on the lower slopes of the western side of the Mount of Olives (cf. Mark 14:26; Luke 22:39), *Gethsemane* means oil-press (for olives).], **in which He entered with His disciples. (2) Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples** [cf. Luke 22:39]. [On Jesus' arrest, see Matt. 26:47-57; Mark 14:43-53; and Luke 22:47-54]. **(3) Judas then, having received the Roman cohort** [Greek *speira*. I'll quote part of what Leon Morris says here.³ "A cohort was the tenth part of a legion and thus normally comprised 600 men (though in practice the number varied a good deal).⁴ It was commanded by a *chiliarchos* (cf. v. 12). [This Greek noun is used in John 18:12, translated "commander" by the NASB. *Chiliarchos* was formed from a Greek word

¹ I'll quote part of what F. Godet says as an introduction to John 18:1-19:42, "The Passion" (*Gospel of John* [Zondervan, 1969 reprint], pages 348, 349). "The intention of the evangelist...is certainly not to give a narration as complete as possible of the Passion, as if no narrative of this event existed side by side with his own. ... We are convinced that...the choice of materials is frequently determined by the intention of completing the accounts already current in the church. Thus, when John relates the examination of Jesus in the house of Annas, which the Synoptics [Matthew, Mark, and Luke] omit, and omits the appearance before the Sanhedrin, which the first writers relate with detail, this intention seems evident. It will appear also from a multitude of other examples. But, on the other hand, the narrative of John has presented, up to this point, a too serious meditative character and too profound elaboration to allow the possibility of holding that...it is not governed by any higher thought [than giving information the other Gospels had omitted]. Godet goes on speak of the "three primary elements" of John's Gospel, which are the *revelation of Jesus* (the glorious Son of God and the Christ) and the resultant *faith* or *unbelief* (Godet refers to his Vol. 1, page 228f.).

² As we discussed under John 14:31 (in my paper on John chapters 13-17), Jesus could have left the upper room before He spoke the words of John chapters 15-17. In the last words of John 14:31, Jesus said, "Get up, let us go from here."

³ *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1971), page 741.

⁴ I'll quote two sentences from what J. Carl Laney says here (*John* [Moody Press, 1992], page 317). "The Roman prefects [like Pilate] of Judea had six cohorts at their command. Five were stationed in Caesarea and one in Jerusalem, probably at the fortress of Antonia [at the northwest corner of the temple]." Additional Roman soldiers were sent to Jerusalem for the feasts to maintain order, when large numbers of Jews would go to Jerusalem.

meaning a *thousand* and a Greek word for *leader*.⁵] John will not of course mean that 600 or so soldiers took part in the arrest [It is quite possible that a large number of Roman soldiers were sent to arrest Jesus. As Morris goes on to say, “they may have feared a riot.” The Jewish authorities were determined to arrest Jesus this time (cf. John 7:32, 45-47). Note that Jesus was taken to the *Jewish* leaders after He was arrested.] but that the ‘cohort’ performed the task, *i.e.*, a detachment was sent. Some point out that *speira* was used on occasion of a maniple, which was one third of a cohort, *i.e.*, 200 men. But even this is rather large. John is surely not saying that the whole *speira* was present, but rather using a form of speech like our ‘the police came to arrest the man.’ Yet we must bear in mind that the Romans could use surprisingly large numbers of soldiers where one prisoner was in question (Acts 23:23), and that here they may well have feared a riot.”] **and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees** [Undoubtedly the *officers* were temple guards/police, who were Levites (cf. John 7:32, 45, 46).], **came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.** **(4) So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him** [Compare John 6:64; 12:23-33; and 13:1, 11. John emphasizes throughout his Gospel that Jesus was always in control. He could have escaped at any time, but He voluntarily laid down His life to save us (and to overthrow the devil’s kingdom).], **went forth and said to them, “Whom do you seek** [This question (and the same question in verse 7) helped prepare the way for Jesus to let His disciples escape. He (not His disciples) was the One they were sent to arrest (see verse 8).]?” **(5) They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.”** [Compare Matt. 2:23; Mark 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Luke 24:19; John 1:45; 18:7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; and 22:8. Jesus was called a *Nazarene* because He came (in one sense) from *Nazareth* (cf. Matt. 2:23).] **He said to them, “I am He.”** [The Greek behind “I am *He*” here and in verses 6, 8 is *ego eimi*, which sometimes connotes deity; clearly something special was taking place here; note what happened (in verse 6) when Jesus spoke these words. On the meaning of *ego eimi*, see under John 8:28 in my paper on John chapters 5-8.] **And Judas also, who was betraying Him** [cf. verse 2], **was standing with them.** [He was standing on the wrong side now.] **(6) So when He said to them, “I am He”** [See under verse 5.] **they drew back and fell to the ground.** [It seems that something supernatural took place here. Apparently God manifested His power (one way or another) over those who came to arrest Jesus to make it clear that He could easily stop them from arresting Him if He so chose—God was in control, not them. It was important for them (and us) to know that the only reason they could arrest Jesus and crucify Him was because it was the will of God. Compare, for example, Matt. 26:53, 54; John 10:17, 18; and 19:11.] **(7) Therefore He again asked them** [See verse 4.], **“Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene** [See verse 5.]” **(8) Jesus answered, “I told you that I am He** [See verses 5, 6.]; **so if you seek Me, let these** [the disciples who were with Jesus⁶] **go their way** [It was time for Jesus to die, not His disciples. They (especially the apostles) had the assignment to establish the

⁵ See the “Greek Dictionary” in the back of the *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* for the NASB (Foundation Publications) under *chiliarchos* (#5506 on page 1577).

⁶ It seems clear that it was only the twelve apostles (which became eleven when Judas left to betray Jesus) who ate the Lord’s Supper with Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:17; and Luke 22:14), but it seems that at least one other disciple was there with Jesus when He was arrested (see Mark 14:51, 52). There is widespread agreement that that other disciple was Mark, the one who wrote the Gospel of Mark (cf. Acts 12:12). And other disciples could have been there too. For one thing, John has already informed us in John 18:2 that Jesus often met in the garden with His disciples.

new-covenant church on the solid foundation of the Word of God, which has been recorded for us in the New Testament, and to take the gospel to Israel and to the world.],” **(9) to fulfill the word which He spoke, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one.”** [In John 17:12 Jesus spoke of His keeping His disciples and not losing them in a spiritual sense. Here the issue was His keeping them from being arrested, etc., and apparently it was understood that they were not yet ready for the test of being arrested with Him. I’ll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here.⁷ “The Evangelist’s thought moves on two levels, and in the Lord’s intervention to save his disciples from physical harm he sees a parable of his saving them from eternal death.”] **(10) Simon Peter then, having a sword** [cf. Luke 22:36, 38, 49, 50], **drew it and struck the high priest’s slave** [It isn’t clear whether this slave belonged to the “high priest” Annas or Caiaphas (see John 18:12-26), but I prefer Annas. Caiaphas was the official high priest at that time, and he was called “high priest” in John 18:13, 24, but Annas, who had been the high priest earlier, and who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, was apparently the one called “high priest” in John 18:19, 22.⁸ Annas clearly had a lot of authority and influence.⁹ Jesus was taken to Annas first, who questioned Him (John 18:13) and then “sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest” (John 18:24). Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not mention that Jesus was questioned by Annas, but they gave some details regarding Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. John didn’t give any of those details, undoubtedly because he knew that that information had already been widely distributed through the Synoptic Gospels.], **and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus.** [See Matt. 26:50-54; Mark 14:46, 47; and Luke 22:49-51. The accounts in the Synoptic Gospels didn’t mention that it was Simon Peter who struck the high priest’s slave with the sword and cut off his right ear. And John was the only one to mention the name of the high priest’s slave.¹⁰ Luke (the physician) is the only one

⁷ *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 342.

⁸ It is interesting that Luke 3:2 speaks of “the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” and that Acts 4:6 speaks of “Annas the high priest” at a time when Caiaphas was the official high priest. One factor that complicated the issue was that according to the Mosaic Law the high priest was a lifetime appointment (one high priest at a time), but the Romans took it upon themselves to appoint (or to depose) the high priest for Israel at their will. Apparently Annas was also the one called “high priest” in John 18:15, 16. Annas had been the high priest from AD 6-15. Annas was the “high priest” in the spotlight in verses 13-24, and Jesus was taken to him first (verse 13). These verses seem to favor the idea that Malchus was a slave of Annas, but that point isn’t clear. Quite a few commentators speculate that Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same palace. “It is not unlikely that the house of Caiaphas shared the same courtyard...(Donald A. Carson, *Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1991], page 582).

I’ll quote a few sentences from what William Hendricksen says regarding Annas here (*Gospel of John* [Baker, 1954], page 387). “In the four New Testament references to Annas *he is twice called high priest*, and this name is applied to him even though it was well known to the inspired author that he was no longer the *actual* high priest. Note: [Hendricksen quotes the relevant part of Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6]. The only other New Testament references to Annas are right in this chapter: John 18:13, 24. John, who probably assumes that the readers have read the earlier Gospels...takes for granted that they know that Annas *was still* called high priest.”

⁹ Five of Annas’ sons became high priest after him, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was high priest then; Caiaphas was high priest from AD 18-36. Annas’ son Eleazar was high priest AD 16-17; his son Jonathan AD 36-37; Theophilus AD 37-41; Matthias AD 42; Annas AD 61; and his grandson Matthias (son of Theophilus) was high priest AD 65-66. I took the names and years for Annas’ sons and grandson from Stanley D. Toussaint in his article on Acts in *Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament* (SP Publications, 1983), page 362.

¹⁰ John 18:15, 16 show that John was known by the high priest.

who mentioned that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him. We need all four Gospels to get the full picture.] **(11) So Jesus said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me [See Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Mark 14:36, 39, 41; Luke 22:42; cf. Matt. 20:22, 23.], shall I not drink it [Jesus was totally committed to do the Father's will at all times, including His going to the cross.]?” (12) So the Roman cohort and the commander [see under verse 3] and the officers of the Jews [see verse 3], arrested Jesus and bound Him, (13) and led Him to Annas [cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:19, 24; and Acts 4:6] first [As John 18:19-24 show, Annas sent Jesus on to Caiaphas after questioning Him.]; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas [cf. Matt. 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:14, 24, 2; and Acts 4:6], who was high priest that year. [See under verse 10. Annas had been the high priest from AD 6-15. Caiaphas was the high priest from AD 18-36. Jesus was probably crucified in AD 30¹¹; some say AD 33.] (14) Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people [see John 11:50]. (15) Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. [There is widespread agreement that the other disciple was the apostle John. As it so often was the case throughout the Gospel of John, John could give a detailed eyewitness account of what happened because he was there.] Now that disciple was known to the high priest [See under verse 10. I assume that the high priest referred to here was Annas (see John 18:24), but if John was known to Annas he was probably also known to Caiaphas.], and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest [It is much easier to understand Matt. 26:3, 57, 58, 69 with John 18:15-18, 25 if this “court” was located in the palace in which both Annas and Caiaphas lived. Because John was known at the home of the high priest, he was granted entrance into the court, but (as verse 16 shows) Peter was not known and John had to speak to the doorkeeper to gain entrance for him.], (16) but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. [See under verse 15. Compare Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54; and Luke 22:54, 55.] (17) Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” [On Peter's threefold denial of the Lord Jesus, see Matt. 26:33-35, 69-75; Mark 14:29-31, 66-72; Luke 22:31-34, 55-62; and John 18:17, 25-27. This was his *first* denial.] (18) Now the slaves [“servants” NIV; cf. John 18:10, 17, 26] and the officers [cf. John 18:3, 12] were standing there having made a charcoal fire [I'll quote a footnote that Leon Morris has here.¹² “John alone speaks of a charcoal fire. He uses *anthrakia* again in 21:9, the only places in the New Testament where the word is found. In both it is a mark of his fondness for exact detail.”], for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself [cf. Mark 14:54, 67; Luke 22:55; and John 18:25]. (19) The high priest [Some disagree, but it seems rather clear that this “high priest” was Annas (see verse 24, and see under verses 10-15, including the footnotes).] then questioned Jesus about His disciples [With this line of questioning, Annas was probably mostly concerned with the number of Jesus' disciples and their capacity to stir up trouble.], and about His teaching. [As I mentioned, this was a preliminary phase of Jesus' “trial,” a phase that wasn't mentioned by Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Annas was looking for**

¹¹ See the last footnote under John 12:2 in my paper on John chapters 10-12.

¹² *Gospel According to John*, page 754.

anything they could use against Jesus. They were mostly concerned with His being a supposed heretic, blasphemer, and sinner, but they were also very interested in charges against Jesus that would be relevant to the Romans (cf. John 11:47, 48). During the time Annas was questioning Jesus, Caiaphas was probably busy trying to gather the members of the Sanhedrin, for one thing (cf. Matt. 26:57, 59; Mark 14:53, 55).

The Jewish leaders were in a hurry to complete their official condemnation of Jesus. The Sabbath was coming, and it was a special Sabbath in that it coincided with Passover that year; the Sabbath would start at sundown Friday; and they wanted to have Jesus crucified and taken down from the cross before the Sabbath started (see John 19:31-33). Furthermore, and probably more importantly, the Jewish leaders realized that if they could get Jesus crucified *very early* Friday morning there was less chance that His followers would be able to stir up trouble and try to set Him free (cf. Matt. 26:5).

Most of Jesus' "trial" was completed that night, but Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin very early Friday morning officially condemned Jesus to death (see Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1¹³; and Luke 22:66-71) before they took Him to Pilate as early that morning as they possibly could. As we'll discuss under verse 28, they could have taken Jesus to Pilate not long after 5 a.m., about an hour before the sun rose above the horizon that fateful morning.] **(20) Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world [cf., e.g., John 7:26; 8:26]; I always taught in synagogues [cf., e.g., Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mark 1:39; 6:2; Luke 4:15, 44; 6:6; and John 6:59] and in the temple [cf., e.g., Matt. 26:55; John 7:14, 28], where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. (21) Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said." (22) When He had said this, one of the officers [cf. John 18:3; Acts 23:2] standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" (23) Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" (24) So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. [See under verses 10-14, 19, and see Matt. 26:57-27:1; Mark 14:53-15:1; and Luke 22:54-71.] (25) Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. [See verses 17, 18.] So they said to him, "You are not also *one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."* [This was Peter's *second* denial (of three denials).] (26) One of the slaves ["servants" NIV] of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off [See verse 10.], said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" (27) Peter then denied it again [This was Peter's *third* denial.], and immediately a rooster crowed. [See John 13:38; cf. Matt. 26:34; Mark 14:30; and Luke 22:34.] (28) Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium ["I.e. governor's official residence" (margin of NASB); cf. Matt. 27:27; Mark 15:16; John 18:33; 19:9; and Acts 23:35. They took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor (cf. Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; and Luke 23:1), hoping that he would crucify Jesus without delay.], and it was early [The Greek behind "early" is the adverb *proi* (on this adverb see footnote 13; we will discuss this adverb further as we continue). The Jewish leaders were in a hurry to take Jesus to Pilate so that He could be executed as early as possible; they did not want to leave His body on the cross on the Sabbath, for one thing, and all the more so in that the Sabbath coincided with the Passover meal that**

¹³ Mark 15:1 starts "Early in the morning" NASB; the NIV has, "Very early in the morning"; the NKJV has, "Immediately, in the morning." The Greek has the adverb *euthus*, which means *immediately, at once* and the adverb *proi*, which means *early morning, morning*.

year. Another key reason they wanted to have Jesus crucified early (very early) was that there was less chance that His followers would be able to stir up trouble (if they were so inclined) and perhaps try to set Him free.]; **and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium** [I'll quote part of what Donald A. Carson says here.¹⁴ "They led Jesus to the *praitorion* (Greek transliteration from the Latin *praetorium*), which denotes the headquarters of the commanding officer of a Roman military camp, or the headquarters of a Roman military governor (as Pilate was). Pilate's normal headquarters was in Caesarea, in the palace Herod the Great had built for himself; but he and his predecessors and successors made it a point to be in Jerusalem on the high feasts, to be available to quell any untoward disturbance. While in Jerusalem, his abode became his Jerusalem *praetorium*. Archaeologists differ as to whether this headquarters was Herod's palace on the western wall, or the Fortress of Antonia (named after Mark Antony) north-west of the temple complex and connected by steps to the temple's outer court (cf. Acts 21:35, 40)." Carson goes on to mention that the Fortress is "the traditional site, and marks the beginning of the Via Dolorosa that winds its course to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre."] **so that they would not be defiled** [cf. John 11:55; Acts 11:3], **but might eat the Passover.** [Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not mention the detail that the Jewish leaders would not enter the Praetorium and that Pilate came out to them.

It is significant that John informs us here that the Jews had not yet eaten the Passover Friday morning (also see John 13:1; 19:14, 31, 42). As I discussed on pages 1, 2 of my paper on John chapter 13-17, Matthew, Mark, and Luke apparently give the (wrong) impression that Jesus and His apostles ate the Passover meal with the rest of the Jews on Thursday evening. He certainly ate what could be called a Passover meal with His apostles, but (apparently) that meal took place (on Thursday evening) a day before the Jews ate the Passover meal (on Friday evening). It would have been appropriate, of course, for Jesus to eat the Passover meal with the rest of the Jews, but it was much more appropriate, it seems to me, for Him (the Lamb of God) to die when the Passover lambs were being slain. It is significant that there is no mention of a Passover lamb in any of the Gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper (except for the true Lamb Himself).

It is interesting that the Jewish religious leaders (speaking of the majority) were concerned lest they be defiled by entering the Praetorium (and that they not leave Jesus' body on the cross on that special Passover Sabbath), but that they were so blind to the infinitely more important fact that they had rejected their Messiah (God the Son) and had come to Pilate to demand His (expedient) death (see John 11:47-53; cf. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). "Religion" (including *religious* Christianity; religion in the flesh) so often gets it wrong, seriously wrong, as they major in the minors and often end up attacking those who believe the truth and live for God in His righteousness, manifesting their great righteous indignation.

Discussion Regarding the Approximate Times that Jesus Was
Delivered to Pilate and that Pilate Handed Him Over to be Crucified and the
Approximate Times that He Was Crucified and He Died

Let's start with the words "and it was early" here in John 18:28, at which time the Jewish rulers brought Jesus to Pilate. As John 20:1 shows, the Greek adverb (*proi*) translated *early* here and in John 20:1 can be used of a time that it is *very early* in the morning, even when it is still dark. Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1; and Luke 22:66 inform

¹⁴ *Gospel According to John*, pages 587, 588.

us that the morning had already come when the Jewish rulers officially condemned Jesus. I assume that it was very early in the morning, probably about an hour before sunrise.¹⁵ I get the impression that the apostle John, who was an eyewitness of much that took place from the time that Jesus was arrested in the garden until the time He died on the cross,¹⁶ wanted to correct a wrong impression left by the Synoptic Gospels (as he

¹⁵ The Roman authorities started their days very early, and this was a very special day. The Jewish rulers had undoubtedly informed Pilate that they would bring Jesus to him very early. As we learned in John 18:3, 12 (an important fact that was not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels), Roman soldiers (who were under the authority of Pilate) were involved in the arrest of Jesus in the garden. The Jewish rulers had undoubtedly warned Pilate that this was a very volatile and dangerous situation. This could easily turn into a massive riot. Jesus was a very dangerous man who proclaimed Himself King of the Jews, and He had a large number of followers (many were undoubtedly fanatics), as proved by the very large turnout and the events that transpired when He came to Jerusalem a few days earlier riding on a donkey (see John 11:47-53; 12:12-19).

The sun begins to give its light long before sunrise (when the sun becomes visible on the horizon in the east). I'll cite a few relevant numbers from an article on the internet titled "Dawn" (en.wikipedia.org). "Astronomical dawn is the time at which the sun is 18 degrees below the horizon in the morning. Astronomical dawn is that point in time at which the sun starts lightening the sky. Prior to this time, the sky is completely dark." At least there isn't any light coming *from the sun* before that time. Eighteen degrees equates with 1 hour and 12 minutes on the clock. "Nautical dawn is the time at which the sun is 12 degrees below the horizon in the morning. Nautical dawn is defined as that time at which there is just enough sunlight for objects to be distinguishable." Twelve degrees equates with 48 minutes on the clock. And "civil dawn is the time at which the sun is 6 degrees below the horizon in the morning. Civil dawn is defined as that time at which there is enough light for objects to be distinguishable and that outdoor activities can commence." Six degrees equates with 24 minutes on the clock. It is quite conceivable that the Jewish rulers officially condemned Jesus to death an hour or so before sunrise (about 5 a.m.) that fateful morning, and then they rushed Him to Pilate, arriving perhaps a few minutes after 5 a.m. The Jewish leaders were much more interested in getting rid of Jesus than making sure that they did everything exactly by the book; there were extenuating circumstances—it was expedient.

I'll quote a sentence from what Donald A. Carson says under John 18:28 (*Gospel According to John*, page 588). Carson speaks of the viewpoint that *proi* is used here of "Jesus [being] brought to Pilate before 6 a.m. He says of this viewpoint that "In itself this is unsurprising: as we have noted, many Roman officials began the day very early in the morning and finished their day's labours by 10.00 or 11.00 a.m. (cf. Sherwin-White [*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1963)], page 45). Carson prefers the viewpoint that the Sanhedrin met after sunrise, before they took Jesus to Pilate. I'll include a short excerpt from what George R. Beasley Murray says under John 18:28 (*John* [Word Books, 1987], page 327). "Pilate, as all Roman governors, will have begun his day very early, as judged by modern customs, and will have concluded it at a fairly early hour. (Sherwin-White illustrates: 'The emperor Vespasian was at his official duties even before the hour of dawn, and the elder Pliny, most industrious of Roman officials, had completed his working day, when Prefect of the Fleet, by the end of the fourth or fifth hour [in the morning]. . . ." F. F. Bruce comments that a Roman official "liked to begin his work at dawn and get it over as early as possible in the day" (*Gospel of John*, page 349). "Dawn" comes with the beginning of light from the sun, long before sunrise.

¹⁶ John undoubtedly was a more effective witness of those overall events than any other person could have been. God enabled him to be an eyewitness of much that happened. Consider, for example, that John was there when Jesus was arrested (John 18:1-12); that he (unlike the other disciples, with the partial exception of Peter) followed Jesus after he was arrested and had access to the high priest's palace. He probably also followed when Jesus was sent on to Caiaphas (John 18:12-24) and when Jesus was taken to Pilate very early Friday morning, and we know he was there, very close to Jesus, at the cross (John 19:26, 27). John clearly knew some details regarding what happened when Jesus stood before Annas (John 18:19-24), and, significantly, he knew many details regarding Pilate's conversations with Jesus. John may have learned some of those details from Jesus after His resurrection, and he may have learned some of this information by revelation from God. John was handpicked and fully prepared to write his Gospel

often does in his Gospel): Apparently he wanted to make it known that Jesus was taken to Pilate *very early* and then handed over by Pilate to be crucified quite early (perhaps something like 6:30 to 7:00 a.m.), quite a bit earlier than we would have thought if we were limited to the information in the Synoptic Gospels. We need all four Gospels to get the full picture. John doesn't tell us at what hour Jesus' crucifixion began, but based on what he says in John 19:14, He could have been crucified more than an hour before the (very approximate) time given in Mark 15:25 (the third hour, 9 a.m.).¹⁷ The fact that the hours relating to Jesus' crucifixion given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the (apparently) round numbers of the *third*, *sixth*, and *ninth* hours (their third hour is the middle of the morning; their sixth hour is the middle of the day, at noon; and their ninth hour is the middle of the afternoon) fits the idea that these times apparently are very approximate times (see Matt. 27:45, 46; Mark 15:25, 33, 34; and Luke 23:44).

John 19:14 is very important here. That verse informs us that "it was about the sixth hour" when Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified" (see John 19:14-16). The most common view is that the *sixth hour* means noon here, but I strongly favor the view (a view held by many) that John meant about six in the morning (about six hours after midnight; about the time the sun rose that day, about 6 a.m.; a.m., by the way comes from the Latin, *ante meridiem*, which means *before noon*; p.m. is from the Latin, *post meridiem*, which means *after noon*).¹⁸ Apparently John was trying

(and, thank God, his three epistles and the book of Revelation; the first epistle of John is extremely important and it seems to me that the book of Revelation is more important than that).

¹⁷ It's possible that Jesus was crucified as late as 9 a.m., but I believe it is much more probable that the Roman soldiers took Jesus to the site of His crucifixion and nailed Him to the cross within an hour or so after Pilate handed Him over to them. Pilate could have turned Jesus over to the soldiers as early as 6 a.m. (based on John 19:14), but I assume it was more likely something like 6:30 to 7:00 a.m.

¹⁸ If John used what some have called the "Roman method," the time was counted from midnight (or from noon, where applicable). There are three other verses where John mentioned the hour in his Gospel, John 1:39; 4:6, 52. I prefer the viewpoint that John used that method in all four verses. (See on those other three verses in my paper on John 1:19-4:54.) It is clear that the Roman civil day began at midnight (I'll say more on this as we continue), but it is also clear that the Romans (like the Jews) very often counted the hours from sunrise and sunset.

Why would the apostle John use a different method of measuring the time than Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Apparently he knew that that method would be better understood by most of his intended readers.

It is *extremely difficult* for me to imagine that it could have been as late as noon when Pilate finally handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified, and, more importantly, Mark 15:25 says, "it was the third hour when they crucified Him." Everyone agrees that the *third hour* in Mark 15:25 means about 9 a.m. And Mark 15:33 says, "When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour [when Jesus died (see Mark 15:33-37)]." Everyone agrees that the *sixth hour* in Mark 15:33 means about noon and that the *ninth hour* means about three in the afternoon. Also, Matthew 27:45, 46 say, "from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice 'Eli Eli, Lama Sabachthani?' [and died shortly thereafter (see Matt. 27:45-50)]." And Luke 22:44, 45 say, "It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured...[and then Jesus died (see Luke 22:44-46)]." Undoubtedly these hours given in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very approximate times (it seems they could easily be off an hour or so from the exact time), but it is *extremely difficult* to try to harmonize these numbers with John 19:14 if John was saying that Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified at noon.

One thing (of several things) that made the ancient measuring of time complicated and inaccurate was the fact that, for those who counted the hours from sunrise and sunset, the hours varied in length as the two twelve hour periods that ran from sunrise to sunset and from sunset to sunrise varied in length. (In our day every hour is 60 minutes long; but for those who measured the time from sunrise and sunset, the hours varied in length.) At the summer solstice (which is on or about June 21 in the northern hemisphere),

to make the point that Jesus final “trial” before the Sanhedrin and then his “trial” before Pilate took place *very early* that morning. As discussed in this paper, I believe John’s

the longest day in Jerusalem (from sunrise to sunset) is about 14 hours and 13 minutes; at the winter solstice (which is on or about December 21) the shortest day is about 10 hours and 4 minutes. That’s quite a difference! (I took these numbers from data given at timeanddate.com for Jerusalem for 2005; the time of sunrise and sunset for a particular date are essentially constant from year to year.) As the time from sunrise to sunset got longer (and the time from sunset to sunrise got shorter), the length of the hours during the daytime had to get longer to yield twelve hours (those hours from sunrise to sunset for the longest day of the year in Jerusalem were about 71 of our minutes long; from sunset to sunrise that day the hours were about 49 minutes long; that’s quite a difference!), and as the time from sunrise to sunset got shorter (and the time from sunset to sunrise got longer), the length of the hours during the daytime had to get shorter to yield twelve hours (those hours from sunrise to sunset for the shortest day of the year were about 50 of our minutes long; from sunset to sunrise that day the hours were about 70 of our minutes long; again, that’s quite a difference!). (If you counted the time from the middle of the night to the middle of the day, or from the middle of the day to the middle of the night, however, it would always yield twelve of our sixty-minute hours every day of the year.) The only two days in the year where the two twelve hours periods (from sunrise to sunset and sunset to sunrise) were of equal length (and their hours were the same as our hours, which are always sixty minutes) was at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes when the time from sunrise to sunset exactly equals the time from sunset to sunrise both in the northern hemisphere and in the southern hemisphere. (The vernal [spring] equinox comes for the northern hemisphere on March 20 in 2005 [and on that date or very close to that date in other years] and the autumnal equinox on September 22 in 2005 [and on that date or very close to that date in other years].)

I’ll quote a sentence from page 5 of the 7 page article on the internet titled “Roman Dates” (www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Egypt/ptolemies/chron/roman/chron...). “According to our literary sources, the Roman day began at midnight, although in the few horoscopes from Egypt that give Roman dates the start of the day is set at sunset, in the Greek fashion.” I’ll also include a few excerpts from the seven page article on the internet titled “Roman Time Keeping” (www.beaglesoft.com/timehistoryroman.) The Roman day “was divided into twenty-four hours which were reckoned to begin, not as with the Babylonians, at sunrise, nor, as among the Greeks, at sunset, but as is still the case with us, at midnight” (page 2). On page 5 the article speaks of “the civil day, whose twenty-four hours reckoned from midnight” and of “the twenty-four hours of the natural day which was officially divided into two groups of twelve hours each, twelve of the day and twelve of the night.” The article points out that water-clocks were readily available in New Testament days. They were calibrated to the sun-dials, but they worked when the sun wasn’t shining, including at night.

I’ll include a few more facts from this article, facts that are interesting but not so directly relevant to this paper. “...it was not until the beginning of the First Punic War in 264 B.C. that the ‘hours’ and *horologium* (sun-dial...) of the Greeks were introduced into the city [of Rome]” (page 2). “At the end of the fourth century B.C. they were still content to divide the day into two parts, before midday and after [a.m. and p.m.]. Naturally the important thing was then to note the moment when the sun crossed the meridian [at noon]. One of the consul’s subordinates was...to keep a lookout for it and to announce it to the people busy in the Forum, as well as to the lawyers who, if their pleadings were to be valid, must present themselves before the tribunal before midday. ...” (page 2). “The seven day week did not become part of Roman life until late in their history (321 AD).”

I found another interesting web site (timeanddate.com/worldclock/astronomy). It gives (for one thing) the times of the sunrise and sunset for many cities for every day of the year for many different years, including, significantly, Jerusalem for AD 30. I was especially interested in the date of April 7 for that year because that is the most widely accepted date for the crucifixion of Jesus. According to the information on that web site (which seems to be quite accurate), the sun rose at 5:43 a.m. (based on our modern counting of the time) on that fateful day and it set at 6:21 p.m. (The times would be essentially the same for AD 28-33, or other years, including 2005. However, when the standard time zones were adopted in 1918, the clocks were turned back twenty one minutes in Jerusalem, so you have to add twenty one minutes to calculate the times in Jerusalem before 1918, as compared with the time there now. And you have to subtract an hour during those times of the year when Daylight Savings Time is in effect now.)

about 6 probably was more accurately something like 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. Quite a few things took place between the time the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate and the time that Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

Those things (the things recorded in John 18:28-19:16) would have taken quite a bit of time, and we must add the additional time it took for Jesus to be sent to Herod Antipas (an incident that John didn't mention) that took place in the midst of this "trial," before Pilate had Jesus scourged and then handed Him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified (see Luke 23:6-12). An hour and a half or so seems like a fair estimate for the time that transpired from the time Jesus was brought to Pilate (John 18:28) to the time he was handed over to be crucified (John 19:14-16).

Admittedly, it isn't easy to synchronize all of this information. If Jesus was brought to Pilate not long after 5 a.m. (5 a.m. would be about an hour before sunrise, but there would be some light coming from the sun), which is quite possible, it seems unlikely that Pilate could have handed Jesus over to be crucified by 6 a.m. But then John said *about 6 a.m.*, and apparently it was more like 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. As I mentioned, time measurements in the ancient world did not have anything near the precision of our modern time measurements.¹⁹ And different people measured the time different ways; it was far from being uniform. I don't have any problem harmonizing all this information if John meant *about 6 a.m.*, but I have a very big problem if he meant *about noon*.

I'll quote part of what William Hendricksen says at John 18:28.²⁰ "From three o'clock until day break Jesus must have been held in imprisonment.²¹ Then, at that very early hour (see Mark 15:1) the Sanhedrin was convened. The intention was to *rush* Jesus off to Pilate, before the multitudes in Jerusalem would be aware of what was going on. Besides, *everything* must be over before sabbath! [The sabbath would begin at sunset Friday.] The dawn-session—a few minutes sufficed!—was probably held to give a semblance of legality to the corrupt proceedings that had marked the night session. ... The earliness of the hour is emphasized. This should be borne in mind. If that is not done, John 19:14 will present an insuperable difficulty."

I'll also quote part of what Hendricksen says under John 19:14.²² He is commenting on the *sixth hour*, at which time Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. "...John doesn't say *six o'clock* but *about six o'clock*. Let us suppose that it was actually half past six. ... It is difficult for us to understand how the trial before Pilate (in reality the Pilate-Herod-Pilate trial) was so speedy, how everything transpired so rapidly. On the other hand, does it not seem probable that the Sanhedrin had been doing all in its power to *rush* Pilate to a decision? [It is also obvious that Pilate did not fully cooperate with them by rushing to a decision, including the fact that he sent Jesus to Herod Antipas.] Is it not true that this august body had been rushing the case from the very moment when Jesus was captured? The morning meeting of the Sanhedrin may have been *very* early, indeed! It may have only taken a few minutes. After all, everyone knew in advance what was going to be decided. Their real decision had been agreed on long before."

¹⁹ I'll quote a sentence from what Leon Morris says under John 19:14 (*Gospel of John*, page 801). "People of antiquity did not have clocks or watches, and the reckoning of time was always very approximate."

²⁰ *Gospel of John* (Baker, 1953), pages 400, 401.

²¹ On page 394 Hendricksen speaks of the trial that took place earlier that morning before Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin. [See Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54-65; John 18:24.] He says that that trial "must have ended about (or shortly before) 3 A.M., Friday."

²² *Gospel of John*, page 421.

Brooke Foss Westcott has a “Note on St. John’s Reckoning of Hours” included with his discussion of John chapter 19.²³ Westcott first comments on each of the other three verses in the Gospel of John (John 1:39; 4:6, 52) where definite hours are mentioned. He argues that each of these verses (very much including John 19:14) makes better sense if John’s hours were counted from midnight (and or noon where applicable) instead of sunset. I think he probably is right regarding all four verses. I’ll quote part of what he says regarding John 19:14 in his note. “...it is admitted that the date of noon [which would result if John’s sixth hour was counted from sunrise] cannot be brought into harmony with the dates [hours] of St. Mark (15:25). But if we suppose that the time approximately described was about 6.30 a.m. [if John’s sixth hour was counted from midnight] it is not difficult to fit in all the events of the trial...” [As I have mentioned, I believe 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. is a reasonable estimate. On pages 263, 264 Westcott gives his estimates for the approximate times for “the formal sentence of the Sanhedrin” and for “the examination before Herod” as 5:00 and 5:30 a.m., which sounds reasonable to me. He estimated the approximate time that Jesus was examined by Annas as 2:00 a.m.]

So far then the examination of the passages themselves is decidedly favourable to the supposition that the modern Western reckoning of the hours is followed by St. John. ... It must, however, be admitted that this mode of reckoning hours was unusual in ancient times. The Romans...and Greeks, no less than the Jews, reckoned their *hours* from sunrise. But the Romans reckoned their civil *days* from midnight (Aul. Gell. III.2; cf. Matt. 27:19, ‘this day,’²⁴) and not from sunrise, or from sunset.... And there are also traces of reckoning the hours from midnight in Asia Minor. Polycarp is said (*Mart. Pol.* c. 21) to have been martyred at Smyrna ‘at the eighth hour.’ This, from the circumstances, must have been 8 a.m. Pionius again is said to have been martyred (at Smyrna also) at ‘the tenth hour,’ which can hardly have been 4 p.m., since such exhibitions usually took place before noon.”

I’ll quote a sentence from what J. Carl Laney says under John 18:28.²⁵ “It was ‘early’ (*proi*) in the morning when Jesus was brought before Pilate. It must have been quite early because Jesus’ trial before Pilate was finished by [about] 6:00 A.M. (cf. John 19:14).”

I’ll quote part of a sentence from what Alfred Plummer says under John 18:28.²⁶ “...and as Pilate had probably been informed that an important case was to be brought before him, delay in which might cause serious disturbance, there was nothing improbable in his being ready to open his court between 4.0 and 5.0 A.M.”

I’ll quote part of what Ben Witherington says regarding John 19:14.²⁷ “Verse 14 tells us that this transpired about the sixth hour on the day of the Preparation for the Passover. If this is reckoned according to Jewish ways of counting, the hour would be noon. However, it is possible, indeed likely, in view of the provenance and primary audience of this Gospel that a Roman form of reckoning is being used, in which case the sixth hour is near dawn, at six in the morning. The Romans were known for dealing with such matters first thing in the morning, and Pilate is likely to have followed the same practice.” Witherington has a footnote here, “What may be significant is that this particular Roman form of recognition was used in official documents and for legal purposes. We have seen the interest of this evangelist throughout in

²³ *Gospel According to St. John* (Eerdmans, 1954 reprint), pages 324-326.

²⁴ I’ll quote Matt.27:19, “While he [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.” Westcott’s point (I think) is that the Greek literally says “today,” instead of “last night,” which fits the idea that the *day* Pilate’s wife was speaking of began at midnight, not at sunrise.

²⁵ *John* (Moody Press, 1992), page 327.

²⁶ *Gospel According to John* (Baker, 1981 reprint), page 315.

²⁷ *John’s Wisdom* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), pages 294, 400.

presenting the story of Jesus as 'Jesus on trial' and there is a certain fitness to have it close with a sort of time marker used in Roman legal proceedings."

I'll quote what C. K. Barrett says regarding "it was early" of John 18:28.²⁸ "The last two watches of the night [of the four night watches] (on the Roman reckoning) were *alectorophonia* [cockcrow, which ran from midnight to 3 a.m.] and *proi* [early morning, which ran from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.]. Cockcrow was now past, and early morning (before 6 a.m.) had arrived." 6 a.m. corresponded with the sunrise (that is, the time when the sun first became visible in the morning), and 6 p.m. corresponded with the sunset. I'll quote two sentences that deal with the night watches, "The periods into which the time between sunset and sunrise was divided. They are so called because watchmen relieved each other at each of these periods" (www.christiananswers.net.)]

(29) Therefore [since the Jewish leaders who brought Jesus to Pilate would not go in to the Praetorium, where Pilate was] **Pilate**²⁹ **went out to them** [cf. John 18:38; 19:4] **and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"** [On Jesus' "trial" before Pilate (including Pilate's sending Jesus to Herod, "tetrarch of Galilee" [Luke 3:1]), see John 18:29-19:16; Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 15:2-15; and Luke 23:2-25.] **(30) They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."** [Pilate's question apparently surprised the Jewish leaders. They were apparently hoping that Pilate would rubber-stamp their judgment that Jesus must die and get on with the crucifixion.³⁰ Their answer to Pilate suggests some displeasure. It seems that Pilate was quite displeased with them too. It seems that, for one thing, Pilate was able to discern that the Jewish leaders were giving him something of a snow job and that their charges against Jesus were mostly of a Jewish religious nature (or of a personal nature [cf. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10]) and that Jesus wasn't a wild-eyed fanatic planning to start attacking people, including the Romans.³¹ "...it is

²⁸ *Gospel According to St. John* (Westminster Press, 1978), page 531.

²⁹ I'll quote part of what William Hendricksen says regarding Pilate (*Gospel of John*, page 404). "Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor of the southern half of Palestine. ... He was the 'governor' in the sense of being *procurator*, ruling over an imperial province, and as such directly responsible to the emperor. Although he had been endowed with civil, criminal, and military jurisdiction, he was under the authority of the legate of Syria."

³⁰ I'll quote part of what Donald A. Carson says under verse 29 (*Gospel According to John*, page 590). "The fact that Roman troops were used at the arrest (vv. 3, 12) proves that the Jewish authorities had communicated something of this case to Pilate in advance; the sparring that follows in the wake of his question confirms the point. They had expected Pilate to confirm their judgment and order the death sentence by crucifixion; instead, he orders a fresh hearing in his presence."

³¹ The relationship between the Jewish leaders and Pilate was not on friendly terms to begin with, and Pilate may have had some extra displeasure because he had been urged to hold this "trial" somewhat earlier than what would have been normal, and now he could see that their charges were not valid. It became obvious they were pressuring Pilate (and the Romans were proud of their "fair" judicial systems) to condemn Jesus on charges that were not valid according to Roman law. Pilate made it quite clear before this "trial" was over that Jesus was innocent. He, nevertheless, went ahead and turned Jesus over to Roman soldiers to be crucified. For one thing, it is clear that Pilate knew that there could be a riot, which could get him in trouble with the Roman emperor, and that the Jewish leaders probably could stir up trouble for him with the emperor (cf. Matt. 27:23-25; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:23; and John 19:12, 13)—he took the easy (but wrong, very wrong) way out. Pilate may also have been perturbed that the Jewish leaders would not enter the Praetorium (and especially if he learned at the last minute that they would not enter the Praetorium), which tended to force him to go out to them.

possible that when Pilate first saw Jesus he suspected that the Jews had misled him.”³²] **(31) So Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.” The Jews said to him, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death** [The Jewish religious leaders had already formally judged Jesus to be a blasphemer worthy of death (according to their law) and determined that He must be put to death. But the Romans hadn’t given them the authority to put people to death. This didn’t mean that they never put anyone to death on their own (cf., e.g., Acts 7:54-8:1; they would have killed Jesus before now if *God* had permitted [cf., e.g., John 5:18; 7:1, 19; 8:37, 40; 10:31-39; 11:50-53 [cf. Luke 4:28-30]). God did not allow the Jews to kill Jesus, because, for one thing, if they would have killed Him they would have done it by stoning (or mob violence, or throwing Him off a cliff, etc.), but (as verse 32 shows) it had already been predetermined that He would die by crucifixion. It had also been predetermined that He would die on Passover, that very Passover. God is in control!],” **(32) to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.** [See under verse 31, and see Matt. 20:19; 26:2; Mark 10:33, 34; Luke 18:32, 33; John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 33; Psalm 22:16; and Zech. 12:10.] **(33) Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium** [“Pilate then went back inside the palace” NIV], **and summoned Jesus and said to Him** [Jesus had already been taken into the Praetorium, but the Jews who had brought Him to Pilate did not enter the Praetorium so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover (verse 28). Pilate had gone out to them (verse 29); now he came back into the Praetorium, summoned Jesus and said the following words to Him:], **“Are You the King of the Jews?”** [The Jewish leaders had informed Pilate that Jesus claimed to be Christ, a (the) King (see Luke 23:2, 14, 15; John 19:12, 21; cf. Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 12:15; 19:12, 14, 19, 21). Luke 23:2, 14, 15 and John 19:12 show that Jesus’ accusers were putting the emphasis on His being King *in a political sense*, claiming that He was a threat to the authority of the Roman empire. Pilate wasn’t concerned with their Jewish religious charges against Jesus, but he had to seriously consider their charge that He was a rebel against Caesar and Rome.

Jesus went on in verses 36, 37 to acknowledge to Pilate that He was a (the) King, but that His kingdom was not of this world. His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that originates in heaven (cf., e.g., Luke 17:21; John 6:15), but the time will come (at the time of His second coming) when He will become King of this world in every sense, and He will reign on the earth, which includes His works of saving and judging (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:23-25; Rev. 11:15-18).

I’ll quote part of what Andreas J. Kostenberger says regarding Pilate’s question to Jesus regarding whether He was “King of the Jews.”³³ “The title is also applied to Herod the Great (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.10.2§311). Pilate’s question seeks to determine whether or not Jesus constituted a political threat to Roman imperial power (Bammel 1984: 417-19). His gubernatorial tenure was punctuated by outbursts of ethnic nationalism that rendered him ever more alert to potential sources of trouble, especially since Judea was ‘infested with brigands’ (*Ant.* 20.9.5 §215) and ‘anyone might make himself king as head of a band of rebels’ (*Ant.* 17.10.8 §285 (Jensen 1941: esp. 261-62).” **(34) Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”** [See under verse 33.] **(35)**

³² J. N. Sanders and B.A. Mastin, *Gospel According to John* (Hendrickson, 1988 reprint), page 395.

³³ *John* (Baker, 2004), page 527.

Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?” (36) Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” [See under verse 33.] **(37) Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say *correctly* that I am a king.** [Compare Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; and Luke 23:3.] **For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world** [The Son of God came *into the world* from heaven (cf., e.g., John 1:1-18; 3:11-21).], **to testify to the truth.** [Compare John 1:14; 3:32; 4:24; 8:14; and 14:6. Jesus was speaking here of foundational *truths*, like the existence of God, the God of creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Bible, the God who sent His Son to be Savior, Lord, and Judge. God’s truth includes His righteousness and holiness (see Eph. 4:24). For Pilate (or anyone else) to be open to truth necessarily includes a willingness to repent and to submit to God and His truth, righteousness, and holiness and to come into divine order (by God’s saving grace in Christ), doing things His way from the heart. People will be judged based on their response to God and His truth.] **Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice** [cf. John 8:43-47; 10:26, 27; and 1 John 4:6].” **(38) Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”** [If Pilate didn’t go any further than giving that trite answer to what Jesus said, he showed that he was not “of the truth,” that he was not seeking the truth, and that he would not, therefore, find the truth. God’s people must make it top priority to find the truth of God, the balanced truth, and to live the truth of God. There was a time when most of us were not pursuing the truth of God, but the time came, when (after we were confronted with the truth of God) we repented and submitted to Him and His truth.] **And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews** [Verse 29 shows that Pilate had gone out to the Jews earlier and had then gone back into the Praetorium to interrogate Jesus.] **and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him.** [Compare Matt. 27:18, 23, 24; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:4, 14, 22; and 19:4, 6. I’ll quote Luke 23:13, 14, “Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him’ ” and Matt. 27:18, “For he [Pilate] knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.”] **(39) But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”** [Compare Matt. 27:15-21; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:17-25; and Acts 3:13-15. It is clear that Pilate hoped that many in the crowd of Jews would choose to release Jesus,³⁴ but Mark 15:11 shows that “the chief priests stirred up the crowd *to ask* him [Pilate] to release Barabbas for them instead.”] **(40) So they cried out again** [“They shouted back” NIV], **saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas.”** [Compare Matt. 27:20, 21, 26; Mark 15:11, 15; and Luke 23:18, 24, 25.] **Now Barabbas was a robber** [“Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion” NIV]. [Compare Matt. 27:16; Mark 15:7; and Luke 23:19, 25. I’ll quote a few sentences from what F. F. Bruce says here.³⁵ “...when

³⁴ The record shows that Pilate knew that Jesus was not guilty of the charges brought against Him, but he knew that the Jews (especially the Jewish rulers) might be able to stir up trouble for him with Caesar (cf. John 19:12); those things happened on occasion, and a few years later (in AD 36) Pilate was recalled to Rome to answer for the use of excessive force against some Samaritans. Matthew 27:24 mentions that “a riot was starting” (cf. Luke 23:23).

³⁵ *Gospel of John* (Eerdmans, 1983), page 356.

John says that 'Barabbas was a bandit' (Greek *lestes*, 'brigand'), he uses the term almost certainly to denote (as Josephus habitually does) a Zealot insurgent. In Mark 15:27 (cf. Matt. 27:38) the same word is used of the two men who were crucified along with Jesus. Our interpretation of the word as used by John here is confirmed by the more circumstantial statement in Mark 15:7, that Barabbas was 'among the rebels in prison, those who had committed murder in the insurrection.' (We have no further account of this particular 'insurrection,' but the reference is probably to some recent outbreak of militant resistance against the Roman occupation.)"

JOHN CHAPTER 19

Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him [“Or *had Him scourged* (margin of NASB); “had him flogged” NIV. See Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; cf. Luke 23:16.]. **(2) And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him** [See Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20.]; **(3) and they began to come up to Him and say, “Hail, King of the Jews!”** [See Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:18.] **and to give Him slaps in the face** [“And they struck him in the face” NIV. Compare Matt. 27:30; Mark 15:19; and John 18:22.]. **(4) Pilate came out again** [Pilate came out of the Praetorium again to speak with the Jews (cf. John 18:29, 33, 38).] **and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.”** [Compare Matt. 27:18, 19, 23-25; Mark 15:10, 14; Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 20, 22; and John 18:38; 19:6.] **(5) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe** [cf. John 19:2]. **Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!”** [Pilate undoubtedly hoped that that awesome, terribly ugly scene (after Jesus had been scourged, beaten, mocked, and wearing a crown of thorns and the purple robe would cause the crowd to take pity on Jesus and say *enough!* The purple robe would have hidden most of the bloody wounds caused by the scourging, but it would be obvious that Jesus had suffered greatly. Verse 6 shows that when the chief priests and officers saw Jesus they cried out for Him to be crucified.

I’ll quote what Alfred Plummer says regarding the words “Behold the Man!”³⁶ “In pity rather than contempt. Pilate appeals to their humanity: surely the most bitter among them will now be satisfied, or at least the more compassionate will control the rest. No one can think that this Man is dangerous, or needs further punishment. When this appeal fails, Pilate’s pity turns to bitterness (v. 14 [cf. v. 6]).”

I’ll quote part of what Donald A. Carson says under verses 4, 5.³⁷ “... He delivers his verdict (cf. 18:38), and then dramatically presents Jesus – a sorry sight, swollen, bruised, bleeding from those cruel and ridiculous thorns. ... In his dramatic utterance *Here is the man!* (in Latin, *Ecce homo!*), Pilate is speaking with dripping irony: here is the man you find so dangerous and threatening: can you not see that he is harmless and somewhat ridiculous? If the governor is mocking Jesus [The whole situation was loudly mocking Jesus, the rejected, severely beaten, King of the Jews, with His crown and robe. But God was in control (as He always is), and everything worked together for good.], he is ridiculing the Jewish authorities with no less venom. But the Evangelist records the event with still deeper irony: here indeed is the Man, the Word made flesh (1:14).”

I’ll quote part of what George R. Beasley-Murray says under verses 4, 5.³⁸ “His statement on bringing out Jesus, ‘that you may know that I find no ground of complaint against him,’ and his cry, ‘Look the Man!’ must be to demonstrate the harmlessness of Jesus. Dressed in his wretched clothes that made him look more like a clown than a king, bleeding profusely, in pain and with bruised face through the additional beatings, Jesus must have looked a shocking sight, enough to horrify any who knew him. Yet, as with his description of the mockery of the soldiers, the evangelist will have wished his readers to recognize that the pathetic figure on whom the Jews are bidden to gaze is the Man sent from God, who, in that state of humiliation

³⁶ *Gospel According to St. John* (Baker, 1981 reprint), page 323.

³⁷ *Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), page 598.

³⁸ *John* (Word, Incorporated, 1987), page 337.

and woe, was in the process of bringing the kingdom of heaven for all humankind [for all who would repent and receive God’s saving grace in Christ], including those thirsting for his blood and those who were shedding it.”] **(6) So when the chief priests** [On the “chief priests,” see under John 11:47, including the footnote, in my paper on John chapter 10-12.] **and the officers** [Compare John 7:32, 45, 46; 18:3, 12, 18; and Matt. 26:58. The officers were temple police (Levites).] **saw Him, they cried out saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him** [cf. John 18:38; 19:4].” **(7) The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”** [See Matt. 26:63-66; cf. John 5:18; 10:30-36. It is true, of course, that Jesus did make Himself out to be the Son of God—He was the Son of God!] **(8) Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid** [Pilate had some reason to fear a riot started by those who wanted to crucify Jesus, and he had much reason to fear that the Jewish leaders would stir up serious trouble for him with Caesar (see below). Pilate also had some reason to fear a riot started by the followers of Jesus and/or that His followers might stir up trouble for him with Caesar for condemning Jesus, who (according to the verdict of Pilate) should not be crucified based on Roman law. But here in verse 8 John was referring to Pilate’s fear that Jesus might be divine (in a pagan sense) and that he might get in big trouble with the gods. For one thing, he had already greatly mistreated Jesus by having Him scourged, etc.³⁹]; **(9) and he entered into the Praetorium again** [cf. John 18:33] **and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?”** [Pilate already knew that Jesus was from Galilee (cf. Luke 23 5-7). Here, as we discussed under verse 8, Pilate was asking about Jesus’ origin, was He something more than just a

³⁹ I’ll quote part of what F. Godet says here (*Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 [Zondervan, 1969 reprint], page 375). “The words of the Jews produced on Pilate an effect which they did not expect. They confirmed a dreadful presentiment which was more and more forming itself within him. He had heard of the miracles of Jesus, of His elevated and mysterious character, of His teachings and His conduct; he had just received from his wife a strange message [Matt. 27:19]; Jesus Himself was producing an impression on him such as he had never received from any man; he asks himself if all this is not explained by this title Son of God! What if this extraordinary man were really a divine being who had appeared on the earth? The truth presents itself to his mind naturally under the form of heathen superstitions and mythological recollections. We know, indeed, how sudden is the passing from skepticism to the most superstitious fears. ... [this idea] becomes the subject of his new conversation with Jesus [in verses 9-11].”

I’ll quote what William Hendricksen says under verses 8, 9 (*Gospel of John*, pages 417, 418). “Pilate was more afraid than ever. This new fear was caused not so much by the dogged determination of the Jews to have things their own way as by the new item of information which he had received just now. What! This mysterious prisoner a son of the gods? Was that, perhaps, the reason why Pilate’s wife had endured such agonies when she dreamed about him? See Matt. 27:19.

So, shaken to the bottom of his soul by these superstitious uncertainties, the judge, with Jesus, re-enters the residence. ‘Where are you from?’ he asks anxiously. He received no answer, and he *deserved* none. Surely, a man who was so utterly corrupt that he had ordered Jesus to be scourged almost to death, even though he knew (and declared again and again) that this prisoner was innocent, was not worthy of a reply. Besides, if Pilate had paid more attention to the words of Jesus spoken previously (18:36, 37), he could have discovered the answer to his question!”

I’ll quote part of what Leon Morris says under verses 8, 9 (*Gospel According to John*, page 795). “Pilate was evidently superstitious. He can scarcely be called a religious man, but the news that his prisoner had made divine claims scared the governor. He had possibly been affected by a message from his wife about a dream she had had (Matt. 26:19). And every Roman of that day knew of stories of the gods or their offspring appearing in human guise. He had plainly been impressed by Jesus as he talked with Him. Now that he hears of the possibility of the supernatural he is profoundly affected.”

human being (cf. Acts 14:11-18; 28:6?) **But Jesus gave him no answer.** [Compare Isa. 53:7; Matt. 26:63 (before Caiaphas and the rulers of the Jews); 27:12, 14 (before Pilate and the rulers of the Jews); Mark 14:60, 61 (before Caiaphas and the rulers of the Jews); 15:5 (before Pilate and the rulers of the Jews); Luke 23:9 (before Herod); John 19:9, 10 (before Pilate). In a very real sense Jesus had already told Pilate where He was from. He had told him that He had a kingdom, but not a kingdom of this world (John 18:36), and that He was a King, and for that purpose He had been born and had come into the world (John 18:37). He had come into the world from heaven. Pilate wasn't interested in pursuing those details, but (as John 18:38 shows), Pilate knew that Jesus wasn't guilty of the charges that He was plotting to overthrow the Roman kingdom, including Judea, which was part of the Roman empire. Jesus wasn't interested in discussing Roman/pagan religious superstitions with Pilate. John 18:36-38 demonstrate that Pilate was not really seeking the truth.] **(10) So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"** [We must remember, of course, that Jesus knew that it was the Father's will for Him to be crucified.] **(11) Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above** [This statement is true regarding all authority that men or Satan and his hosts exercise (cf., e.g., Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6; Dan. 2:21; 4:17; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Cor. 10:13); God is God, and He limits what the devil, evil angels, demons, and evil men are permitted to do.]; **for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."** [The Jewish leaders took the initiative in arresting Jesus and delivering Him to Pilate. The same Greek verb for *deliver* (*paradidomi*) was used in John 18:30, 35, but there the verb was plural. Here in John 19:11 the participle that was formed from this Greek verb is singular. Apparently Jesus singled out Caiaphas, who was *the high priest* at that time, but there was plenty of guilt on the part of other Jewish leaders, including Annas (cf. John 18:13-24). Caiaphas took a leading role in delivering Jesus to be crucified (cf. John 11:47-53; 18:24, 28; Matt. 26:57-68; and Mark 14:53-65). Caiaphas (and the Jewish leaders) had the greater guilt, but Pilate (as this verse confirms) was guilty too.

The ultimate reason that Jesus was crucified was that it was the plan of God the Father and Jesus voluntarily submitted to that plan (cf. e.g., John 3:13-21; 10:11-18; 12:23-33; Acts 2:22, 23; 3:13-20), but that fact didn't take away the sin of those who delivered Jesus to Pilate, demanding that He be crucified. Compare Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21; and Luke 22:22, verses that speak of Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

It is interesting to note that Jesus was the real Judge here. He was judging the Jewish leaders and Pilate.] **(12) As a result of this Pilate made efforts** [*Lit. was seeking*] **to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."** [See under John 18:33; 19:8. This verse shows that Pilate made further efforts to release Jesus, but that the Jews were unwilling to back down from their vehement demand that Jesus be crucified. The Jews forced the issue with Pilate, making it clear that they were fully ready to accuse him to Caesar (the Roman emperor, Tiberius) if he refused to deal with this enemy of the Roman empire who "makes Himself out to be a king [thereby opposing] Caesar." Pilate knew that the Jewish leaders would probably be able to convince Caesar that he was unfaithful to Rome for not crucifying Jesus and that it

could easily result in his own execution.⁴⁰ Verse 15 shows that the Jews were so stirred up against Jesus that they even made the amazing statement that they had no king but Caesar.] **(13) Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat [cf. Matt. 27:19] at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew** [“I.e. *Jewish Aramaic*” (margin of NASB); cf. John 5:2; 19:17, 20], **Gabbatha.** [Pilate sat down on the judgment seat to render his final judgment and turn Jesus over to be crucified (cf. Matt. 27:24-26; Mark 15:11-15; and Luke 23:21-25).] **(14) Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover [cf. John 18:28; 19:31, 42]; it was about the sixth hour.** [“Perhaps 6 a.m.” (margin of NASB). See the detailed discussion under John 18:28. I believe (in agreement with the suggestion in the margin of the NASB) that John reckoned the hours from midnight (or, when applicable, from noon) in his Gospel. Apparently the *sixth hour* in the morning began about the time of sunrise (at the time the sun rose above the horizon). As I mentioned under John 18:28, I believe John’s *about the sixth hour* was probably something like 6:30 to 7:00 a.m.] **And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!”** [See John 19:12 and the references cited there, and see John 19:15, 19, 21. It seems clear that Pilate spoke these words (and the words of verse 15) mostly to antagonize the Jews. Notice the Jew’s negative response to the inscription that Pilate had written on the cross, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (see John 19:19-22).] **(15) So they cried out, “Away with Him away with Him [cf. Luke 23:18] crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”** [As I mentioned, this was an amazing statement for the chief priests to make. For one thing, they believed that God was the King of Israel, and they believed that the Messiah, when He came

⁴⁰ I’ll quote part of what F. Godet says here (*Gospel of John*, page 377, 378). “[The Jewish leaders] had prepared a weapon which they had resolved not to use except in the last extremity; so ignoble was it in their view both for him who was its object and for those who employed it. It was that of personal intimidation. The reigning emperor, Tiberius, was the most suspicious of despots. The accusation of high treason was always well received by this tyrant. ... The most unpardonable offence was that of having suffered his [Tiberius’s] authority to be imperiled. Such is the danger which the Jews call up before the dismayed view of Pilate. This equivocal term *King of the Jews*, with the political coloring which it could not fail to have in the eyes of Tiberius, would infallibly make Pilate appear as an unfaithful administrator, who had attempted to screen from punishment an enemy of the imperial authority; and his trial would be a short matter; this Pilate knew well.” I’ll also quote a sentence from Godet that deals with verse 15, “They [the Jews] who cherished only one thought—the overthrow of the throne of the Caesars by the Messiah—suffer themselves to be carried away by hatred of Jesus so far as to cry out before the representative of the emperor: ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ ”

I’ll quote part of what Donald A. Carson says under verse 12 (*Gospel According to John*, pages 602, 603). “Pilate had ample reason to fear the implicit threat. Tiberius Caesar was known to be quick to entertain suspicions against his subordinates, and swift to exact ruthless punishment.... On earlier occasions the Jewish authorities had communicated their displeasure with Pilate to the Emperor; Pilate had no reason to think they would refrain from doing so in this case. What defense could he possibly give to a somewhat paranoid ruler, against the charge that he had failed to convict and execute a man arraigned on well-substantiated charges of sedition – brought up on charges put forward by the Sanhedrin, no less, the highest [Jewish] court in the land and known to be less than enthusiastic about the Emperor’s rule? ... The verse is saturated with irony. In order to execute Jesus, the Jewish authorities make themselves out to be more loyal subjects of Caesar than the hated Roman official Pilate is.”

I’ll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski says under verse 12 (*St. John’s Gospel* [Augsburg, 1943], page 1269). “Pilate is crushed. The very thought that Caesar may get to hear what these Jews now shout into his ears completely unmans him. He sees ruin opening at his feet like a gulf—his position, his liberty, his very life are at stake. He faces the alternative: either he sacrifices Jesus or he sacrifices himself.”

(even today the Jews don't believe that Messiah has come yet) would reign as a king. They were goaded into this statement by Pilate's repeated attempts to release Jesus and then his mocking them by calling Jesus *their* King in verses 14, 15, when they had just so strongly denounced Him as a blasphemer who needed to be put to death—He certainly was not their King! See under verse 14. Jesus was/is the King, the King of Israel, the King of true Israel, the King of all men, and the King of this world—for one thing, all beings (angels and men) and things were created by Him and for Him (cf. John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16, 17), but neither the Jewish rulers nor Pilate believed it. Jesus kingship will be manifested before all when He returns to begin to fully reign on the earth (reigning includes judging).] **(16) So he [Pilate] then handed Him over to them** [or, “for them”] **to be crucified** [or, “that He might be crucified”]. [Compare Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:25; Acts 2:23; and 3:15. It seems clear (in context with verse 15) that “them” here in verse 16 refers to the chief priests and other Jews who were clamoring for Jesus to be crucified. Luke 23:25 says, “he [Pilate] delivered Jesus to their will.” (Luke 23:13-25 show that “their” refers to the “chief priests and rulers and the people” [Luke 23:13].) “Then at last, to satisfy them, he handed Jesus over to be crucified” NEB. It is also clear that Pilate handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to crucify Him. John 19:23 says, “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus....” “They,” the first word of the following verse (John 19:17) undoubtedly refers to the Roman soldiers.

I'll quote a sentence from what Merrill C. Tenney says under verse 17.⁴¹ “Under Pilate's orders, Jesus was turned over to the execution squad, which normally consisted of four legionnaires and a centurion.” (On the four Roman soldiers, see verse 23; on the centurion, see Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39; and Luke 23:47.) **(17) They [the Roman soldiers] took Jesus, therefore, and He went out** [Jesus went out of the city, outside the city wall (cf. Heb. 13:12).], **bearing His own cross** [The most common view in the commentaries is that Jesus just bore the cross-member (the horizontal beam) of the cross, and that the vertical beam would have been left at the place of execution, probably being permanently fastened in a vertical position. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; and Luke 23:26 speak of the Roman soldiers pressing into service Simon of Cyrene, a “passer-by coming from the country” (Mark 15:21), to carry Jesus' cross. Apparently Jesus carried His cross for a while, but eventually He gave out physically because of the extreme trauma He had endured, very much including the Roman scourging, which in itself could, and sometimes did, kill people.], **to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew** [“I.e. Jewish Aramaic” (margin of NASB)], **Golgotha** [Compare Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22 (“they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull”); and Luke 23:33.⁴²]. **(18) There they crucified Him**

⁴¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 (Zondervan, 1981), page 180.

⁴² “‘Golgotha’ is *gulgolta*, the Aramaic word for ‘the skull,’ with the second *l* assimilated to the following *t* ([The word “Hebrew”] in this Gospel, as in verse 13, includes Aramaic; the Hebrew form of the word is *gulgoleth*). The familiar designation ‘Calvary’ is derived from Latin *calvaria* (‘skull’) and has come into Western European languages from the use of the Latin word in the Vulgate text of all four passion narratives. The origin of the name ‘Skull-place’ remains a matter of conjecture. As for its actual location, it lay outside the city wall [at that time], presumably outside the second north wall (the third north wall, farther to the north, was not begun until about twelve years later, under Herod Agrippa I). If the praetorium of the trial narrative is to be identified with the Antonio fortress, then the present Via Dolorosa probably marks the route of the cross with substantial accuracy, although it runs several feet above the first-century level. Until a few years ago it was uncertain whether the traditional site of

[Mark 15:25 says, “It was the third hour when they crucified Him.” Essentially everyone agrees that the third hour means 9 a.m., but it seems clear that Mark’s *third* hour, *sixth* hour (Mark 15:33), and *ninth* hour (Mark 15:34) are very rough approximations of the time. Jesus could have been (and probably was) crucified more than an hour before 9 a.m. (see under John 18:28; 19:14).

I’ll quote part of what J. Carl Laney says regarding crucifixion.⁴³ “Crucifixion was not a Roman invention. The Assyrians, Phoenicians, and Persians all practiced crucifixion during the first millennium B.C.⁴⁴ And although the traditional method of execution among Jews was stoning (Deut. 21:21), the Hasmonean tyrant Alexander Jannaeus used this dreadful punishment on his own Jewish kinsmen (Josephus *Jewish Wars* 1.97). The Romans adopted

Golgotha, covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was outside the line of the second north wall or not; that it actually was outside was indicated by excavations conducted in 1963 and later in the Muristan area, to the south of the site” (F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John* [Eerdmans, 1983], page 367).

“*Golgotha* is an English transliteration of the Greek, itself a transliteration of the Aramaic.... . *The place of the skull* probably derived its name from its appearance, though this is uncertain. The site is in doubt. Gordon’s Calvary is not an option. [Carson has a footnote, “Cf. Andre Parrot, *Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (tr. E. Hudson; SCM, 1957), pp. 59-65.)] The most likely site is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, just outside the northern wall, and not far from the road (Matt. 27:39; John 19:20).” (D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, pages 609, 610). I don’t know enough about the topic to agree with Carson that “Gordon’s Calvary is not [even] an option.” He may be right. Most of the commentators and other scholars (including archaeologists) that I have read agree that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the most likely site for the crucifixion and burial of the Lamb of God.

“The actual location of Golgotha is a matter of debate. When [the Roman emperor] Hadrian reconstructed Jerusalem after the Second Revolt [which was led by Bar Kochba (many, including Rabbi Akiba, thought he was the Messiah)] as Aelia Capitolina (A.D. 135), Christianity was considered a Jewish sect, and its holy sites were treated accordingly. Hadrian had a Roman temple built over the crucifixion site. This temple enabled Helena, Constantine’s mother, to identify the place of the crucifixion and tomb of Jesus when she came to Jerusalem in A.D. 326. Hadrian’s temple was removed and a magnificent basilica built in its place (A.D. 336)....” Laney says Gordon’s “arguments are unconvincing” (J. Carl Laney, *John*, pages 345, 346).

“Golgotha (19:17) was undoubtedly near the site of the Holy Sepulchre.... The traditional Protestant ‘Garden Tomb’ is a substantially later site and cannot represent the site of Jesus’ burial [Keener has a footnote, “Tomb architecture changed radically after Jerusalem’s fall (Goodenough, *Symbols*, 1:84-89; Brown, *Death*, 938-39).”]; by contrast, the Catholic Holy Sepulchre and tombs in its vicinity date to the right period. [Keener has a footnote, “On the latter, see Brown, *John*, 2:899; idem, *Death*, 1279-83; cf. Blinzler, *Trial*, 215-52; Smith, ‘Tomb’; Ross, ‘Church’; Riesner, ‘Golgotha.’ ”] The tradition of the latter vicinity is as early as the second century (when Hadrian erected a pagan temple there; he defiled many Jewish holy sites in this manner) and probably earlier. Good evidence exists, in fact, that this site dates to within the first two decades after the resurrection. This is because (1) Christian tradition is unanimous that Jesus was buried outside the city walls and no one would make up a site inside (cf. Heb 13:12; John 19:41); (2) Jewish custom made it common knowledge that burials would be outside the city walls; (3) the traditional vicinity of the Holy Sepulchre is *inside* Jerusalem’s walls; (4) Agrippa I expanded the wall of Jerusalem sometime in the 40s C.E. [AD]” (Craig S. Keener, *Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 [Hendrickson Publishers, 2003], pages 1134, 1135).

I’ll quote part of what George R. Beasley-Murray says here (*John* [Word Inc., 1987], page 318). “The hillock behind the bus station in Jerusalem, Gordon’s Calvary, is undoubtedly reminiscent of a skull in shape, but the traditional site of Golgotha in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is favored by recent archaeologists (see, e.g., J. Jeremias, *Golgotha* [...1926]; A. Parrot, *Golgotha et Saint-Sepulchre* [...1955]; K. M. Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem* [...1974] 226-34, 261-67; J. Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament* [...1978] 156-68 [with bibliography]).”

⁴³ *John* (Moody Press, 1992), page 344.

⁴⁴ “Vassilios Tzaferis, ‘Crucifixion: The Archeological Evidence,’ *Biblical Archaeology Review* (January-February 1985): 48.”

crucifixion as the official punishment for non-Romans, particularly slaves. Crucifixion was later used by the Roman army to execute rebels. During the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Roman troops crucified as many as five hundred Jews a day for several months (Josephus *Jewish Wars* 5.449-52). ... Death by crucifixion was in every sense *excruciating*, a term derived from the Latin *excruatus*, meaning 'from the cross.' Although a crucified victim suffered terrible thirst and physical exhaustion, death usually came as a result of asphyxiation."

I'll quote part of what Leon Morris says here.⁴⁵ "Popular piety, both Protestant and Catholic, has often tended to make a great deal of the sufferings of Jesus, to reflect on what was done and to dwell on the anguish He suffered. None of the Gospels does this. The Evangelists record the fact [that He was crucified] and let it go at that. The death of Jesus for men was their [the Gospel writers] concern."⁴⁶ They make no attempt to play on the heartstrings of their readers." We must make sure that our religious thinking and activities go beyond the emotional level and the flesh; our faith and worship must be based on the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches and must be in/by the Holy Spirit.], **and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between** [Compare Matt. 27:38, 44; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32, 33, 39-43; and John 19:32. "John gives us no details of the two men who were crucified with Jesus. Mark and Matthew call them 'bandits' (Greek *lestes*) using the same word John uses of Barabbas (18:40); they were probably freedom fighters of his company."⁴⁷ See under John 18:40.]. **(19) Pilate also wrote an inscription** ["Pilate had a notice prepared" NIV] **and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."** [Compare Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; and Luke 23:38. Pilate was taunting the Jews with this inscription (cf. John 19:14, 15, 21, 22).] **(20) Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew** ["Jewish Aramaic" (margin of NASB)], **Latin and in Greek.** ["Aramaic...was the language in common use in Judea; Latin was the official language of the army; and Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Empire, and well known in Galilee."⁴⁸] **(21) So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.' "** **(22) Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."** **(23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic** ["Greek *khiton* [*chiton*], the garment worn next to the skin" (margin of NASB)]; **now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece.** ["Jesus' simple wardrobe was composed of five items: a turban or headdress; an outer robe; a sash or girdle, the folds of which would provide pockets; sandals; and a fairly long tunic, woven in one piece, that was an undergarment."⁴⁹ "...the tunic was normally 'a long, tight-fitting shirt made of two pieces of cloth sewn together,' typically sleeveless, whether of 'wool, linen or leather.' A seamless tunic, which would fit the neck more closely and generally have short sleeves, was of special value."⁵⁰] **(24) So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be"; this was**

⁴⁵ *Gospel According to John*, pages 805, 806.

⁴⁶ Morris has a footnote, "Cf. Morgan [G. Campbell Morgan *The Gospel According to John*, 1951]: 'It may be a challengeable opinion, but I think the Church of God has suffered more than it knows by pictures of the crucifying of Jesus; and sometimes by very honest and well-intentioned sermons, trying to describe the matter on the physical side. I am not denying the tragedy and the pain of it physically, but the physical suffering of Jesus was nothing compared to the deeper fact of the Cross.' "

⁴⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John*, page 368.

⁴⁸ D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, page 610.

⁴⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, page 181.

⁵⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Gospel of John*, Vol. 2, page 1140.

to fulfill the Scripture [cf. John 19:28, 36, 37]: **“THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS** [Psalm 22:18].” [Compare Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; and Luke 23:34.] **(25) Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.** [Compare Matt. 27:55, 56; Mark 15: 40, 41; Luke 23:49; and 24:10. Apparently *four* women are listed here.⁵¹ We don’t have enough information to be dogmatic, but apparently “His mother’s sister” refers to “the mother of the sons of Zebedee [the apostles James and John (cf. Matt. 20:20-23)]” of Matt. 27:56; her name may well have been “Salome” (see Mark 15:40; 16:1). If this view is correct it could help explain why James and (especially) John, were especially close to Jesus, in that they would have been cousins. It could also help explain Jesus’ entrusting His mother to the care of John. The fact that John didn’t mention the name of his mother (assuming that “His mother’s sister” here in John 19:25 refers to John’s mother) would fit with the fact that John doesn’t mention his name or his brother’s name in his Gospel.

Apparently “Mary the wife of Clopas” is to be equated with “Mary the mother of James and Joseph” of Matt. 27:56 and “Mary the mother of James the Less [“Literally, *little* (either in age or stature)” margin of NASB] and Joseph” of Mark 15:40 (cf. Mark 16:1). F. F. Bruce points out in a footnote that “Joseph (Mark 15:40) is simply one of the Hellenized forms of Joseph (Matt. 27:56)...”

On Mary Magdalene,⁵² cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2; and John 20:1, 18.

I’ll quote part of what Merrill C. Tenney says here.⁵³ “Four women are mentioned here: Mary, the wife of Clopas; Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and his mother’s sister, who was presumably Salome, the mother of James and John (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark...15:40). The identity of Mary of Clopas is uncertain. She may have been the wife or daughter of Clopas. If she were the former, a question arises whether Clopas and Alphaeus, who was the father of James the younger (Mark 3:18) were identical. Most of these women were related in some way to the Twelve and were among Jesus’ most loyal followers. Mary of Magdala appears in Luke’s list of those who helped support Jesus by their contributions (Luke 8:2).” **(26) When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved** [That disciple was John, the apostle who wrote this Gospel (cf. John 13:23; 20: 2; 21:7, 20).] **standing nearby** [Apparently Mary and John were standing quite close to Jesus.], **He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”** **(27) Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”** **From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.** [Jesus (Mary’s firstborn son [Luke 2:7]) commissioned John to take Mary into his household and look after her needs. Undoubtedly Joseph, her husband, had already passed away.] **(28) After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished** [“that all was now completed” NIV; it could also be translated “that all things had already [or, “now”] been finished”; verse 30 uses the same Greek verb (*teleo*) in exactly the same form (perfect, indicative, passive, 3rd person, singular—*tetelestai*) as the verb that is translated “had...been accomplished” here in verse 28. Apparently the idea is that all things *except one* had already been accomplished, and that Jesus proceeds to

⁵¹ Many scholars point out that it is unlikely that “His mother’s sister” and “Mary the wife of Clopas” refer to the same person. For one thing, the two sisters would both be called “Mary.”

⁵² D. A. Carson points out that “Mary Magdalene” means “Mary of Magdala, a village on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee two or three miles north of Tiberius.”

⁵³ *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, page 182.

accomplish that one last thing (as reported at the end of verse 28 and in verse 29) before He died.] **to fulfill** [The Greek behind “to fulfill” here is a form of the Greek verb *teleo*, the Greek verb used earlier in this verse (and in verse 30). A different Greek verb (*pleroo*) would typically be used for *fulfilling* the Scripture (cf. John 19:24, 36, 37; *pleroo* is used in John 19:24, 36). The verb here could be translated “to complete/finish” instead of “to fulfill”; the Scripture was completed/finished in the sense that the relevant prophecies in the Scriptures would now have been completed/finished.⁵⁴] **the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty [cf. Psalms 22:15; 69:21].” (29) A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop** [Many commentators make the point that typically Roman crosses were not very high. The feet of the one being crucified were typically not far off the ground. Apparently the soldiers used a *stalk* of hyssop about one and one-half feet long.] **and brought it up to His mouth [cf. Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36]. (30) Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!”** [On the Greek verb used here (*teleō*), see under verse 28. Jesus’ atoning work as the Lamb of God was completed/finished with His all-important atoning death. For one very significant thing, He earned the right to save (with a very full salvation) all who repent and submit to the gospel of the new covenant in faith. And His death stripped sin, spiritual death, and Satan of their authority and made it certain that all the enemies of God (including physical death) will be removed from His kingdom forever at the proper time. Although Jesus’ work was not completed with His all-important atoning death, the glorious results I just mentioned are sure to come to pass, because (for one thing) they all flow from this all-important atoning death. Jesus must yet be raised from the dead, be taken to the right hand of God the Father, begin to function as our great high-priest throughout this age, and then return to the earth to save His people and judge the world, etc.] **And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit** [Compare Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; and Luke 23:46. John’s account of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion emphasizes throughout, very much including these last words, that Jesus was in full control until the end.]. **(31) Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day [cf. Ex. 12:15, 16]), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.** [This was the “day of preparation” for the Sabbath (the Sabbath would have begun at sunset that Friday [that Good Friday]), and this was a very special Sabbath that year (it “was a high day”) because Passover happened to fall on the Sabbath that year (the Jews were to eat the Passover meal that Friday evening). See John 18:28; 19:14, 42. The Jewish rulers (in their religious zeal) wouldn’t have wanted the crucified men (or their dead bodies) to remain on the crosses until sundown any day (cf. Deut. 21:23; Josh. 8:29; 10:26, 27), and more so for a Sabbath, and more so yet for a special Sabbath. They understood that if the Roman soldiers broke the legs of those being crucified it would cause them to die very soon. For one thing, after their legs were broken (which was a very traumatic event in itself, as they smashed/shattered the bones in the legs with a heavy hammer) they could not push up with their legs, which helped

⁵⁴ “The question, indeed, is not of the *fulfilment* of this special prophecy [where Jesus said He was thirsty and was given the sour wine to drink], but of the *completing* of the fulfilment of the Scripture prophecies in general” (F. Godet, *Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 [Zondervan, 1969 reprint], page 389).

them breathe.⁵⁵] **(32) So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him** [cf. John 19:18]; **(33) but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.** [John explains (in verse 36) why it was necessary prophetically that the soldiers not break the legs (or any other bones) of Jesus. As it turned out, the reason the Roman soldiers did not attempt to break Jesus' legs was that they could see that He was dead already. Apparently the Roman soldier's motivation to pierce Jesus' side with a spear (verse 34) was to confirm that He was dead, but (apparently) John sees important symbols in the flow of blood and water (see under verse 34). Pilate was surprised that Jesus was dead already.⁵⁶ We must take into account, for one thing, that Jesus' crucifixion (which involved His voluntary all-important atoning death) was very far from being an ordinary Roman crucifixion.] **(34) But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear,⁵⁷ and immediately blood and water came out.** [Apparently John would have us see the flow of blood as representative of the all-important atoning blood given for the salvation of the world (for all believers). And (apparently) he would have us see in the flow of water from Jesus' side a symbol of the cleansing, life-giving water associated with new covenant salvation (cf., e.g., Isa. 44:3-5; Ezek. 34:26; 36:25-27; John 3:5; 4:10, 11, 14; and 7:37-39).] **(35) And he** [John the apostle] **who has seen has testified** [cf., e.g., Luke 24:44-48; John 15:27; 21:24; and Rev. 22:20], **and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe** [cf. John 20:30, 31; 21:24]. [The apostle John (the one chosen to write this Gospel and the three epistles of John and the book of Revelation) was a very important eyewitness of much that took place from the time that Jesus' ministry began to the time of His resurrection and subsequent ascension from the Mount of Olives, very much including much that took place from the time Jesus was arrested in the garden until after He died on the cross. We can and we must have confidence that our faith regarding the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and God's new-covenant plan of salvation is based on the truth. God has given us His Word and His Spirit to confirm the truthfulness of the gospel and the reality of new-covenant salvation in the shed blood of the Lamb of God. Furthermore, the more we live in the light of the gospel, by the grace of God in Christ through faith, the more the truthfulness of the gospel is confirmed to our hearts and manifested in our lives.] **(36) For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture** [cf. John 19:24, 28], **“NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.”** [See Ex. 12:46; 9:12; cf. Psalm

⁵⁵ “The normal Roman practice was to leave crucified men and women on the cross until they died—and this could take days—and then leave their rotting bodies for the vultures. If there were some reason to hasten their deaths, the soldiers would smash the legs of the victim with an iron mallet (a practice called, in Latin, *crurifragium*). Quite apart from the shock and additional loss of blood, this step prevented the victim from pushing with his legs to keep his chest cavity open. Strength in the arms was soon insufficient, and asphyxia followed” (D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, page 622). “In order to hasten death, the victims' legs (and sometimes other bones) would be smashed with an iron mallet, a practice called *crurifragium* (‘breaking of the shinbone’). . . . (Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, pages 552, 553). B. F. Westcott (*Gospel According to John*, page 314) mentions that Roman crucifixion was abolished by “the first Christian emperor Constantine (Lipsius, III. 14).”

⁵⁶ “Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead” (Mark 15:44 NIV).

⁵⁷ “Roman soldiers used primarily two kinds of weapons: a short sword for close combat and a lance or javelin for attacks from a distance. The lance... was about three and a half feet long and was made up of an iron point or spearhead... joined to a shaft of light wood...” (Andreas A. Kostenberger, *John*, page 552).

34:20. The first two references (from the book of Exodus) deal with God's instructions to Israel regarding the Passover lambs. They were instructed that not a bone of the Passover lambs was to be broken. What do the Passover lambs have to do with Jesus? For one very important thing, He was crucified/sacrificed (in the plan of God) on the very day the Passover lambs were being slain in the temple. The Passover lambs (and all the sacrifices prescribed under the old covenant, very much including the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement) prefigured (they were types of) the one all-important sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We can also undoubtedly say that those old-covenant sacrifices were effective (to the extent they were effective) through the coming sacrifice of Christ Jesus, which was predestined by God the Father before the world was created.

The old-covenant sacrifices were effective to do what they were designed to do, but they could not dethrone sin, spiritual death, or Satan. Before the world was created (cf. 1 Pet. 1:20) God had already planned to sacrifice His beloved Son to dethrone sin, spiritual death, and Satan and to save us (all believers) with a very full salvation, a salvation that includes eventually being glorified and reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. During this present age we have the victory over spiritual death in that we have been born again by the Spirit of life and walk in/by/after the Spirit, and we have the victory over sin in that we have been forgiven and are enabled to receive and walk in the very righteousness and holiness of God by the grace of God through faith. We also have the victory over Satan—we have the authority (for one thing) to keep him from having any place in us (cf., e.g., Eph. 4:27).] **(37) And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED** [see Zech. 12:10; cf. Psalm 22:16].” **(38)** [See Matt. 27:57-61; Mark 15:43-47; and Luke 23:50-56.] **After these things Joseph of Arimathea** [“Arimathea was about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem.”⁵⁸], **being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews** [cf. John 12:42], **asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission.** [Joseph of Arimathea is not mentioned by name in the New Testament except in connection with the burial of Jesus (where he is mentioned by all four Gospel writers), but (apparently) he is included among those mentioned in John 12:42, 43 (“Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him* for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God”); cf. John 12:11. He was a ruler of the Jews, a prominent member of the Council/Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50) and a rich man (Matt. 27:57). Clearly he was a disciple of Jesus to some extent. Luke 23:50 mentions that he was “a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action [cf. John 7:50, 51])...who was waiting for the kingdom of God” (cf. Luke 23:43). And taking this controversial step of acquiring the body of Jesus and burying it, which could have cost him everything the world has to offer, probably demonstrates that he was solidly on the way to becoming a fully committed Christian.] **So he came and took away His body. (39) Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night** [see John 3:1-12], **also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.** [“about seventy-five pounds” NIV. “The mixture of spices brought by Nicodemus, one hundred *litrai*...was a little less than the *seventy-five pounds* specified by the NIV – 65.45 pounds, to be more precise.... Mention of so large

⁵⁸ Edwin A. Blum, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament (SP Publications, Inc., 1983), page 341.

an amount is neither an error nor an exaggeration.... The Jews turned [myrrh] into a powdered form, and mixed it with aloes, a powder of aromatic sandalwood. The mixture provided a pleasant fragrance in a variety of circumstances (e.g. Psalm 45:8; Prov. 7:17; Song of Solomon 4:14). Used in connection with burial, its purpose was...to stifle the smell of putrefaction."⁵⁹

"... Spices were generally imported and were very expensive. Myrrh is a gum exuded by a tree that grows in Arabia and is prized for its perfume. It was one of the gifts of the wise men to Jesus (Matt. 2:11). Aloes are derived from the pulp in the leaves of a plant that belongs to the lily family. The spice is fragrant and bitter to the taste. Used with myrrh, it acts as a drying agent; and the fragrance would counteract the odor of decaying flesh. The quantity...revealed both Nicodemus's wealth and his appreciation of Jesus."⁶⁰

John was the only Gospel writer to mention Nicodemus at the burial of Jesus, or at all (also see John 7:50-52). Apparently Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (both rulers of the Jews) had talked with each other about trying to bury Jesus' body before Joseph approached Pilate to request permission to take His body away.] **(40) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings** [cf. Matt. 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 24:12; and John 20:5, 7] **with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. (41) Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden** [cf. John 20:15] **a new tomb** [Matt. 27:60 shows that this was Joseph's "own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock." Compare Isa. 53:9.] **in which no one had yet been laid** [cf. Luke 23:53]. [On the location of Calvary and the garden tomb, see footnote 42. I'll quote a paragraph from D. A. Carson regarding the location of this garden tomb.⁶¹ "The site is almost certainly not the 'garden tomb' to which tourists are directed (though that is the sort of appearance the genuine tomb doubtless had in the first century), but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine tore down the temple of Venus erected there by Hadrian after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 135, and built in its stead the Church of the Resurrection, now replaced by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (which goes back to Crusading times)." And I'll quote a sentence from what F. F. Bruce says here.⁶² "The site now called the Garden Tomb probably presents the visitor with a general picture of what the original site looked like in AD 30 even if the tomb seen there is of a style two or three centuries later than that date." Raymond E. Brown points out that "In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre...the site of the tomb is only about 125 feet from Calvary."⁶³] **(42) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation** [cf. John 19:14, 31], **since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.** [They had to finish burying Jesus' body before sunset or they would have violated the Mosaic Law by working on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 23:54). That is at least one reason they decided to use Joseph's tomb, because it was close at hand.]

⁵⁹ D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, pages 629, 630.

⁶⁰ Merrill C. Tenney, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, page 186.

⁶¹ *Gospel According to John*, page 631.

⁶² *Gospel of John*, page 380.

⁶³ *Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, page 905.

JOHN CHAPTER 20

[See Matt. 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; and Luke 24:1-12.] **Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene** [On Mary Magdalene, see under John 19:25 and see John 20:11-18. Matthew, Mark, and Luke show that other women came to the tomb early that Sunday morning besides Mary Magdalene (also note “we” in John 20:2).] **came early to the tomb, while it was still dark** [Jesus died Friday afternoon, about 3 p.m. He was raised from the dead (on the third day) very early Sunday morning, while it was still dark. As these verses show, Jesus had been resurrected before Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.], **and saw the stone** [cf. Matt. 27:60, 66; 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3, 4; and Luke 24:2] **already taken away from the tomb.** [Mary Magdalene was thinking in terms of Jesus’ body having been taken away (see verses 2, 13, 15); she was not thinking that maybe He had been resurrected. She was not thinking of His resurrection even after she looked into the tomb (at some time after the apostles Peter and John had entered the tomb and left) and “saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying” (verse 12), who went on to ask her (in verse 13), “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” John makes it clear that the disciples, including him, were not expecting Christ’s resurrection (at least not before the resurrection at the end of this age).] **(2) So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved** [the apostle John (cf. John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20)], **and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him** [cf. John 20:13, 15].” **(3) So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb** [cf. Luke 24:12]. **(4) The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first** [The apostle John outran the apostle Peter, and he got to the tomb first, and as verse 5 shows, he stooped and looked into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings (with which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped Jesus’ body [John 19:40]), but he did not go into the tomb.]; **(5) and stooping** [“He bent over” NIV] **and looking in** [Verse 11 says Mary Magdalene “stooped and looked into the tomb.” Apparently the doorway into the tomb wasn’t very high. The top of the doorway must have been substantially lower than the eye level of both John and Mary Magdalene, so they had to bend over to see inside the tomb. I’ll quote a sentence from what Andreas J. Kostenberger says regarding the probable height of the entrance to the tomb.⁶⁴ “This opening was usually no higher than a yard, so that people had to bend down to crawl in (20:5).”], **he saw the linen wrappings** [The Greek behind the “linen wrappings” is a plural form of the noun *othonion*, as in John 19:40; 20:7; and Luke 24:12.] **lying there; but he did not go in.** [Apparently John didn’t go into the tomb at first because he was caught up in the awe of the moment. He saw enough by stooping and looking into the tomb to know that the body of Jesus wasn’t there; he saw the linen wrappings.] **(6) And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, (7) and the face-cloth** [cf. John 11:44] **which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. (8) So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.** [See under verse 5. Somewhat surprisingly, because Jesus had told

⁶⁴ *John*, page 562.

the apostles more than once that He would be killed and would rise from the dead on the third day, which turned out to be very early Sunday morning; the message that Jesus would be raised from the dead on the third day had not registered with the apostles.⁶⁵ See verse 9. This verse (verse 8) shows that when John entered the tomb, after Peter had entered, “he saw and believed.” John was at least on the verge of believing in the resurrection of Jesus on the third day before he entered the tomb. (On believing in the resurrection, see verses 25, 27, and 29.) Verses 6, 7 show what he saw: he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*, and the face-cloth which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings. It was obvious, for one thing, that Jesus’ enemies had not stolen His body. His enemies would not have removed His grave clothes, and they certainly would not have taken the time to roll up (or, fold up cf. NIV) the face cloth. Apparently Jesus’ resurrected, glorified body passed through the linen cloths with which He was wrapped.] **(9) For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.** [See under verse 8, including the footnote. I’ll quote John 2:19-22, “Jesus answered them [the Jews], ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ... (21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (22) So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken to them.” Also see Luke 24:25-27, 36-49. I’ll quote Luke 24:44-46, “Now He [the resurrected Christ] said to them [His disciples], ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you [before His crucifixion], that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer [including *suffer death*] and rise again from the dead the third day....”

See Acts 2:22-36 [The apostle Peter’s words (spoken on the day of Pentecost) showed that Psalm 16:8-11 (which Peter quoted in Acts 2:25-28) prophesied of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that He would not undergo decay.]; Acts 13:26-37. I’ll quote what the apostle Paul said in Acts 13:30-37, “But God [God the Father] raised Him from the dead; (31) and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him out of Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. [See 1 Cor. 15:3-9.] (32) And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, (33) that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children [I prefer a translation like “that God has fulfilled this *promise* to us their children.” The NIV has, “he has fulfilled for us, their children”⁶⁶] in that He raised up Jesus [Paul meant that God had *raised up Jesus from the*

⁶⁵ See Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; Matt. 17:9, 23; 20:19; and 26:32. I’ll quote Mark 9:31, 32, “For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, ‘The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.’ (32) But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.” And I’ll quote Luke 18:31-34, “Then He took the twelve aside and said to them ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. (32) For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, (33) and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him, and the third day He will rise again.’ But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.”

⁶⁶ The United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition) includes the word translated “their” with the word translated “children,” but they include the Greek word in a bracket, which means that “the enclosed word....may be regarded as part of the text, but that in the present state of New Testament textual scholarship this cannot be taken as completely certain.”

dead. The Greek verb (*anistemi*) used here⁶⁷ is used of being raised from the dead in Acts 2:24, 32; 13:34 and quite a few other verses in the New Testament. A different verb was used for Jesus' being raised from the dead in Acts 13:30, but with the same meaning.], as it is also written in the second Psalm [Psalm 2:7], 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' [Paul interpreted these words TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU of Christ's being resurrected and *born into the fullness of eternal life* with a glorified body. He was "the firstborn from the dead" (see Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; cf. Rom. 8:29). Having been glorified and taken up to the right hand of God the Father, He was able to usher believers into new-covenant salvation, very much including His pouring forth the promised life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost (cf., e.g., Acts 2:33).] (34) As for the fact that He was raised from the dead, no longer to return to decay [The Bible mentions several people who were raised from the dead, including Lazarus, but they were not raised with glorified bodies, and they eventually died again to undergo physical decay.], He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID [cf. Isa. 55:3].' (35) Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU [God the Father] WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY [Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27].' (36) For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay: (37) but He whom God raised from the dead did not undergo decay."

One reason it was totally necessary for Jesus to be raised from dead was that He had conquered death in His atoning death (cf. Rom. 4:25⁶⁸).] **(10) So the disciples** [Peter and John] **went away again to their own homes** [cf. Luke 24:12]. **(11) But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping** [Apparently Mary Magdalene followed Peter and John back to the tomb. Verses 11-15 show that Mary was still not thinking in terms of Jesus' resurrection; she was still thinking that someone had taken His body from the tomb (cf. verse 2).]; **and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb** [cf. verse 5]; **(12) and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.** [Compare Matt. 28:2-7; Mark 16:5; and Luke 24:3-7.] **(13) And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."** [Compare verses 2, 15. I'll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski says here.⁶⁹ "The question as to why she is sobbing intends to call her to herself, to give her pause. It breathes friendly sympathy, and it intimates that no cause for her sobbing really exists. Indeed, why does she weep?—when we should all have had cause to weep to all eternity if what she wept for had been given her, the dead body of her Lord! Why does she weep?—when the empty tomb, the shining angels, the way in which the linen lay, which fact so impressed Peter and John, are trying their best to call to her mind her own Lord's words that on the third day he would rise again! But we are often like her, grieving where no real cause for grief exists if only we would heed God and his Word which opens to us such fulness of joy. O these blinding tears that dim both eyes and hearts!"] **(14) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus** [cf. Matt. 28:9; Mark 16:9] **standing there and did not know that it was Jesus** [cf. Mark 16:12; Luke 24:15-35; John 21:4]. **(15) Jesus said to her, "Woman** [cf. John 2:4; 19:26; 20:13], **why are you weeping** [cf. verses 11, 13]? **Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have**

⁶⁷ Actually Paul used an aorist participle of this Greek verb here.

⁶⁸ On Rom. 4:25 see pages 87-89 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

⁶⁹ *St. John's Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), pages 1351, 1352.

carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away [cf. verses 2, 13].” (16) **Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew** [“I.e. Jewish Aramaic” (margin of NASB); cf. John 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; Acts 21:40; and Rev. 9:11; 16:16], **“Rabboni!** [cf. Mark 10:51; Matt. 23:8]” (which means, **Teacher**). (17) **Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren** [On being His *brethren*, compare, for example Matt. 25:40; 28:10; and Heb. 2:11, 12. The disciples were adopted into the family of God through union with the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death and resurrection. They were to become His *brethren* in a much fuller sense shortly thereafter, when they were born again/from above through receiving the outpoured Spirit (starting on the day of Pentecost). And we (all believers) will become His brethren in a much fuller sense yet when we are glorified and born into the fullness of eternal life at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Col. 1:18, 27; Titus 3:7; and Rev. 12:5). From that time on we will be “conformed to the image of [God the Father’s Son],” and His unique Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, “will be the firstborn among many brethren” (see Rom. 8:29). From that time we will reign with Him (and we will worship Him with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit). In Christ we are taken to a place much higher than what Adam had before the fall.] **and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’**” [It wasn’t that Jesus was untouchable at that time, as some say (see Matt. 28:9; cf. Luke 24:39-43).⁷⁰ The primary message that Jesus was communicating to Mary Magdalene with His words, “Stop clinging to Me,” was that He had not come back to stay with His disciples in a physical sense (as Mary was undoubtedly thinking⁷¹), but that (as He goes on to say) He must ascend to God the Father, where He will function as our great high priest until it is time for Him to return at the end of this age. On the last night Jesus had spent with His apostles (see John chapters 13-17), He had told them that He was going to the Father (cf., e.g., John 13:33; 14:2, 3, 26; 16:5, 7, 28; 17:5, 13); but also that He would come back and stay with them—that He would not leave them as orphans (see, for example, John 14:16-19). But, as I discussed under John 14:18, 19 in my paper on John chapters 13-17, Jesus was speaking of His being with them throughout this age in the sense that He would come to them and stay with them through the coming of the outpoured Holy Spirit, starting on the Day of Pentecost. Mary could not cling to Him now because He was not here to stay.⁷² Besides that, as this verse (John 20:17) shows, Jesus told Mary to go tell His

⁷⁰ See the discussion of John 20:11-18 in my paper on John chapters 13-17, under John 16:16. For one thing, I discuss there the translation of the KJV, “Touch Me not” of John 20:17.

⁷¹ I can picture Mary Magdalene thinking something like, “You have come back, and I’ll never let go of You again!”

⁷² As it turned out, Jesus didn’t go back to the Father until after forty days (cf., e.g., Acts 1:2, 3, 9-11 with Luke 24:50, 51).

I’ll quote part of what F. Godet says here (*Gospel of John*, Vol. 2 [Zondervan reprint, 1969], page 418). “ ‘Clasp not my feet; I have not come to renew the old earthly relations. The true *seeing again* which I have promised you is not this. To return in a real and permanent [age-long] way, it must be that I shall have first ascended. That time has not yet come.’ ... Instead of enjoying this moment of possession, therefore, as if Jesus were really restored to her, Mary must rise and go to tell the disciples what is taking place. ... ‘But go’ is opposed to the act of staying to enjoy.”

I’ll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski says here (*St. John’s Gospel*, 1943), page 1360). “As Mary recognizes Jesus, the first impulse of her heart is to seize hold of him whom she had lost and feared not to find again. Here he is, not dead, but marvelously alive again! All her loss is turned into sudden

disciples that He was ascending to the Father (to His Father and their/our Father and His God and their/our God).] **(18) Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord [Mary Magdalene was privileged to be the first person to see the resurrected Christ (cf. Mark 16:9).],” and that He had said these things to her** [cf. Mark 16:10; Luke 24:10, 23]. **(19) So** [“Then” KJV, NKJV] **when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week** [This was Sunday evening. Jesus had been resurrected early Sunday morning, on the third day (He was crucified on Friday).], **and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews** [Compare John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; and 19:38. The Jewish leaders had powerfully manifested their hatred for Jesus by planning and then clamoring for His crucifixion a couple of days earlier. His disciples understood that the Jewish leaders’ hatred for Jesus could lead to substantial trouble for them. Furthermore, the reality of Christ’s resurrection had not sunk in yet, at least not for most of the disciples (cf. Mark 16:9-14; Luke 24:36-43; and John 20:20, 24, 25).], **Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you** [cf. John 14:27; 20:21, 26].” **(20) And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands⁷³ and His side** [Showing them His hands and His side (Luke 24:39 mentions that Jesus also showed them His feet) confirmed that He was Jesus, their Master, who had been crucified a couple of days earlier, and that He was more than a spirit (cf. Luke 24:36-43). He had been resurrected bodily; His resurrected body could be touched, and He could eat (cf. Luke 24:41-43). But His resurrected body was not at all limited to the physical dimension: His resurrection body could pass through grave clothes; He could appear in a closed room (or disappear) as He willed (cf. John 20:19, 26); etc.

Adam’s physical body (even before the fall) was created of the elements of this world for life in this temporary physical world. Jesus’ resurrection body (and our glorified resurrection bodies) were designed for life in the glorified, heavenly dimension (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42-57). I don’t believe we have enough information to understand all the details, but it is clear that Jesus had not yet entered His fully glorified state at that time (cf. Acts 1:2, 9-11, 33).] **The disciples** [The ten apostles, excluding Thomas, were there. Luke 24:36-43 (with Luke 24:13-35) indicate that other disciples were there too.] **then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (21) So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you** [cf. verse 19]; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”** [Compare John 15:16-16:4; 17:18. I’ll quote John 17:18, “As You [Father] sent Me into the world, I have also sent them into the world.” In John 20:21-23 the Lord Jesus Christ, on the evening of the day of His resurrection, commissioned His disciples to take the gospel of new-

possession. She clasps him as her own, never to lose him again. The old days that were before the tragedy on Golgotha have now returned, and she intends that they shall now stay, stay forever.” I’ll also quote two sentences from what Lenski says (page 1363) regarding Mary Madgalene’s demeanor as she came announcing to the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had said these things to her (see verse 18), “This is a changed Mary. The fear, the grief, the tears all gone—radiant with superlative joy she sails, like a vessel laden with precious freight, into the place where the disciples are gathered.”

⁷³ I’ll quote what Craig S. Keener says regarding “hands” here (*Bible Background Commentary – New Testament* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 317). “ ‘Hands’ includes one’s wrists, which was where the spikes would have been driven; a nail through the palm would not have secured the person in place on the cross, since the victims weight would have ripped the hand open.” D. A. Carson (*Gospel According to John*, page 656) points out that “both the Hebrew word for hand (*yad*) and the Greek word (*cheir*) can include the wrist and forearm.”

covenant salvation to the world (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:44-49⁷⁴; and Acts 1:8⁷⁵). As verse 23 shows, the Christian church, which was built on the foundational ministry of the twelve (cf. Acts 1:26) apostles, was given the authority to forgive. They were given the authority to say to those who submitted to the gospel in faith (those who met the terms for conversion set down in the new covenant) that *God* forgave their sins.⁷⁶

When Christians tell those who submit to the gospel in faith that they are forgiven, they are speaking for God, who is the One who must forgive. God confirms and backs up the words of forgiveness spoken by His representatives, since He commissioned and sent them to offer and to declare this forgiveness. God (unlike His disciples) knows the hearts of all people, and He knows whether faith is genuine, or not. They are not forgiven if their repentance and faith are not genuine. It should also be said that there are times when God enables His disciples, and especially His ministers, starting with the apostles, to know the hearts of people (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 8:9-24). This ability comes, in large part, through receiving the Holy Spirit (mentioned in verse 22). The words and actions of prospective converts (and of those who have already become Christians) often make it easy to discern that their hearts are not right with God.] **(22) And when He had said this, He breathed on them** [The KJV; NKJV have the word *them* in italics; this word is not included in the Greek.] **and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.** [Many believe the disciples received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them.⁷⁷ It has seemed clear to me for a long time that the disciples did *not* receive the Holy Spirit at that time. For one thing, Jesus couldn’t give the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit until after He had been crucified, resurrected, and been (taken up in glory). I’ll read John 7:37-39,⁷⁸ “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. (38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.” ’ (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Jesus didn’t receive the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit from the Father to give to His disciples until after He had been taken up in glory forty days after His resurrection, and He didn’t pour forth the Spirit until ten days after His ascension, on the day of Pentecost (see Acts

⁷⁴ I’ll quote Luke 24:46, 47, “and He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’”

⁷⁵ Acts 1:8 refers to the time after Jesus has been taken up in glory and the Holy Spirit has been poured out on them, starting on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-33).

⁷⁶ See Matt. 18:15-18, which is an important cross-reference regarding the church’s authority to forgive or to retain sin, but the context is different there, for one thing, in that those verses dealt only with the sin of those who were already disciples of Christ. For another thing, Jesus spoke those words to the disciples in the days before He had died for their sins and before the Holy Spirit was given to them. However, what Jesus said in Matt. 18:15-18 is applicable to the church of our day. With those verses, as with John 20:23, it must be understood that God backs up the decision of the church only to the extent that the church gets it right. To get it right Christians must be led by the Word of God and by Spirit of God; our motives must be right; and we must come to know the true facts (the balanced truth).

⁷⁷ Some say that they received the Spirit in His fullness when Jesus breathed on them, but the majority say that they received the Spirit in part, as a down-payment of what they would receive on the day of Pentecost (many equate this down-payment with the new birth).

⁷⁸ Also see John 14:17. John 7:37-39 are discussed in my paper on John chapters 5-8.

2:33).⁷⁹ I'll quote Acts 2:33. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

What the *Father had promised* in the Old Testament (cf., e.g., Isa. 32:15-18; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-32 [cf. Acts 2:16-21]) and through John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ was that He would pour out His Spirit on His people, that He would baptize/immerse them in His Spirit, that He would give them (and they would receive) the new-covenant gift of the Holy Spirit (see, for example Acts 1:4-8; 2:33, 38, 39; 10:44-47; and 11:15-18). The promised outpouring of the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit includes the new birth; the being made *righteous* and *holy* by the *Righteous* and *Holy* Spirit; and the widespread distribution of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. I have discussed these things in some detail. Start with the discussion of John 1:33, which speaks of Jesus baptizing in the Holy Spirit, in my paper on John 1:19-4:54. Other references are cited there.

Even though Jesus did not impart the promised Spirit to His disciples when He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," His breathing on them and His words were obviously significant: His breathing on them was symbolic of His pouring out the Spirit on them and their receiving the life-giving, sanctifying, gift-dispensing Spirit, starting on the day of Pentecost. And, significantly, His breathing on them was more than symbolism. It was *prophetic* and *preparatory* for His imparting and their receiving the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

There is absolutely no evidence that the disciples actually received the Spirit or that they were born again when Jesus breathed on them, or that they began to minister before they actually received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This is very significant. For one example, Thomas wasn't there when Jesus breathed on His disciples that Sunday evening. When the disciples spoke with Thomas afterward they told him that they had seen the Lord, but they didn't tell him that they had received the promised

⁷⁹ "Then 'He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.' That, of course, was a prophetic breathing, symbolic and suggestive. They did not receive the Holy Spirit then. Did He not tell them in the course of these days that they were to wait until they received the Spirit? [See Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8.] ..." (G. Campbell Morgan, *Gospel According to John*, sixth edition (Revell, no date given), page 320).

"... Is it the gift of the Spirit that is being imparted even as Jesus speaks, or is it the gift of the Spirit that has long been promised and that is now imminent? In short, are there contextual reasons for thinking that this is a symbolic act that anticipates the future imminent bestowal? ... There is too slight a demonstration within the Gospel of John that this alleged bestowal of the Spirit made the slightest bit of difference in the lives of Jesus' followers. ... The episode in 20:22, which most will agree is in some sense symbolic, is best understood as symbolic of the enduement *that is still to come*. ... Jesus' 'exhalation' and command *Receive the Holy Spirit* are best understood as a kind of acted parable pointing forward to the full enduement still to come (though in the past for John's readers). ..." (D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, pages 653, 655).

"Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' The present reference represents a symbolic promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit, not the actual giving of it fifty days later at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2; see Carson 1991: 649-55; cf. Witherington 1995: 340-41). Otherwise, it is hard to see how John would not be found to stand in actual conflict with Luke's Pentecost narrative in Acts 2, not to mention his own disclaimers earlier in the narrative that the Spirit would be given only subsequent to Jesus' glorification which entailed His return to the Father. The disciples' behavior subsequent to the present incident would also be rather puzzling had they already received the Spirit. ..." (Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, pages 574, 575).

new-covenant Spirit (see John 20:24, 25), which would have been a very big deal if they had actually received the Spirit. Furthermore, when Jesus came to the disciples a week later and Thomas was there, He didn't give Thomas the Spirit (see John 20:26-29). It wasn't quite time for that yet. John chapter 21 confirms that the apostles were not born again (transformed) yet and did not begin to minister in the days before Pentecost. Further confirmation comes from Acts 1:15-26, where we see how the eleven apostles picked a replacement for Judas, who had fallen away from being one of the twelve. They *drew lots* to choose between Matthias and Joseph, hardly a new-covenant way for apostles to be led by God.] **(23) If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins have been forgiven*** [This verb "have been forgiven" and the verb "they have been retained" are *passive* verbs in the Greek; God is the One who forgives.⁸⁰] **them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.**" [See under verse 21, including the footnotes.] **(24) But Thomas** [cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; John 11:16; 14:5; 20:26-28; and Acts 1:13], **one of the twelve, called Didymus** ["I.e. the Twin" (margin of NASB); cf. John 11:16; 21:2], **was not with them when Jesus came.** [See under verse 22.] **(25) So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails** [cf. John 20:20], **and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side** [where Jesus was pierced with the Roman spear (John 19:34)], **I will not believe.**" [This unbelief is a little hard to explain. For one thing, Thomas knew that the other disciples were reliable witnesses. I suppose he was so caught up in the cloud of gloom and discouragement that had descended on him with the arrest and crucifixion of His Master that he didn't allow himself to fully take their words seriously. If it were true, Thomas said, he would have to see Jesus for himself and verify that it really is Him and that He has been raised from the dead.⁸¹ As verses 26-28 show, Thomas was quick to set aside his unbelief and acknowledge and worship the resurrected Christ with the memorable words, "my Lord and my God!" when Jesus appeared to him a week later. And (apparently) Thomas didn't need to verify that it was Jesus by putting his finger into the place of the nails or putting his hand into His side.] **(26) After eight days** ["Or *A week later*" (margin of NASB); "A week later" NIV] **His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut** [When Jesus came to them a week later, His disciples were inside again, behind the shut doors, as in verse 19.], **and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you** [See verses 19, 21. Jesus knew what Thomas had said.]. **(27) Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side** [see verse 25]; **and do not be unbelieving** [see verse 25], **but believing."** [As the next verse shows, Thomas

⁸⁰ "The two passives – 'they are remitted' and 'they are retained' – imply divine agency: the preachers' role is declaratory, but it is God who effectively remits or retains. The servants of Christ are given no authority independent of his, nor is any assurance of infallibility given to them' (F. F. Bruce, *Gospel of John*, page 392).

"God does not forgive men's sins because we decide to do so nor withhold forgiveness because we will not grant it. We announce it; we do not create it. This is the essence of salvation. And all who proclaim the gospel are in effect forgiving or not forgiving sins, depending on whether the hearer accepts or rejects Jesus as the Sin-Bearer" (Merrill C. Tenney, *Expositor's Bible Commentary – New Testament*, Vol. 9, page 193).

⁸¹ "Thomas, however, remained stubborn. He was a very devoted disciple. He was also very despondent. Hence, for him the universe collapsed when Jesus was crucified. ..." (William Hendriksen, *Gospel of John*, page 463).

quickly set aside his unbelief regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and he worshipped Him.] **(28) Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”** [Thomas was right to call Jesus God, God the Son (cf., e.g., John 1:1-4; Rev. 22:12, 13). Thomas was not, of course, denying the existence of God the Father, the One who sent His Son and the One at whose right hand Jesus now sits, or the existence of God the Holy Spirit. See my papers, *More on the Trinity; Who Do We Pray To?; Who Do We Worship?; and The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son*; they are all located on my internet site.] **(29) Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed?”** [“Because you have seen Me, you have believed” (NIV); The KJV; NKJV are the equivalent of the NIV.] **Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.** [Thomas now believed, but it would have been better if he (and at least most of the other disciples [cf. John 20:8]) had believed in Christ’s resurrection before seeing the resurrected Christ.⁸² Jesus’ last words in this verse, which could be translated “Blessed are the ones not having seen but having believed,” contain a very important principle regarding faith/believing. From that time on, most of the people who became Christians through faith in the gospel of the incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended Son of God would have to believe without seeing the resurrected Christ, including most of the Christians who have ever read the Gospel of John. We must have faith in (believe) the Word of God, which is backed up by the infinite integrity, authority, and power of God. We must walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). The apostles had some excuse for not believing in the resurrection before seeing the resurrected Christ, in that they were living in a time of great transition, at the very beginning of the Christian era, before the gospel had been fully revealed (but Jesus had told them on numerous occasions that He would be raised from the dead on the third day), and before the full outpouring of new-covenant salvation.] **(30) Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book** [Compare John 21:25. Apparently the apostle John was speaking of the *many other signs* that Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples both *before* and *after* His resurrection (but before His ascension). His resurrection (and then His ascension and His pouring forth the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost) were super-spectacular *signs*.]; **(31) but these** [referring to the signs that John recorded in this Gospel (cf., e.g., John 2:11, 23; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; and 12:18, 37).] **have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God** [Christians must believe more than the facts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, of course, but these facts are of key importance. And it must also be understood that *believing the gospel* includes *obedience to the gospel*. Faith without obedience (by grace through faith) is dead; that is, it isn’t real (saving) faith (cf. James 2:14-26).]; **and that believing you may have life in His name.** [Partaking of the very life of God in union with the Lord Jesus Christ through the indwelling Spirit of life is a big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about. This (eternal) life starts with the new birth that Jesus spoke about in John 3:3-8 (cf., e.g., John 1:12, 13; 3:15, 16, 36; 4:13, 14; 5:21-29; 6:33, 35, 40, 47-51, 54, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25, 26; 12:25, 50; 14:6; and 17:2, 3).]

⁸² Thomas’ unbelief was somewhat more serious than the other apostles in that he did not accept their testimony that they had seen the resurrected Christ.

A Few Comments Regarding John Chapter 21

The apostle John may have decided (been led by God) to add chapter 21, which contains important information that isn't revealed elsewhere in the New Testament, after apparently concluding his Gospel with the last two verses of chapter 20. Chapter 21 can be considered an appendix to the Gospel of John. As F. F. Bruce points out,⁸³ "there is no evidence that the work [the Gospel of John] ever circulated without this chapter." Apparently John wrote chapter 21, with the exception of verses 24, 25. It is clear that John did not write the last words of verse 24, "and we know that his [the apostle John's] testimony is true."

⁸³ *Gospel of John*, page 398.