

VCBC SLG—The Gospel of John
Lesson #6

A Recap of the last three chapters

Chapter 7: At the last and the greatest day of the Feast, just as the priest pours down the “living water” of Israel’s past, present and future blessings, Jesus declares that He is the True Living Water that runs unto eternity—many, including the temple guard fell the joy and believed in Him.

Chapter 8: At the day or evening after the end of the Feast, just as all the bright lights that burnt throughout the seven nights of the Feast were gone; Jesus declared that He is the Light of the world. While some believed, the Pharisees remained defiant and still sought to challenge Jesus’ authority (to such claims), ending in Jesus’ rebuke of them being the children of the devil and not Abraham, and His even more powerful declaration that “Before Abraham was born, I AM.”

Chapter 9: while still in Jerusalem, Jesus healed the man who was born blind, leading to the powerful testimony by this blind man through whose mouth all the challenges by the Pharisees about where Jesus has come from and Who He is are soundly defeated!

Chapter 8:

Jesus’ Emphasis on “He is from above” (8: 13-29)

The Pharisees remained defiant, especially when so many believed Jesus and He delivered once again a most powerful message:

13 The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

- **14 Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.**
- **15 You judge by flesh (*sarx*); I judge no one (*either not as you judge based on flesh, or not at this point yet*). 16 But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I with the Father, who sent me.**
- **17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. 18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”**
- [*Explicitly claiming once again He is not mere man, but the Son of God sent by YHWH, His Father*]

19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” (*I.e. show us!*)

- **“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”**
- **(20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.)**
- **21 Once more Jesus said to them,**
- **“I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”**
- **(22 This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’”)**

- 23 But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.
- 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I AM (no “he”), you will indeed die in your sins.”

25 “Who are you?” they asked. (*Seeking to clarify is Jesus really claimed to be the I AM?*)

- “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied.
- 26 “I have much to say in judgment of you. But He who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

(27 *They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.*)

- 28 So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up [*perhaps, simply translate as hanged*] the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM (no “he”) and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.
- 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” 30 Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

So, in defending the authority of His testimony, Jesus once again declares His relationship with Father God, in that

- He is not testifying alone, He is with His Father (v.16)
- They cannot go where He will going, since they did not know Him or the Father (vv.19, 21)
- In fact, they will die in their sins by not believing in Him, the I AM
- Jesus’ testimonies are from what He heard and taught by the Father (vv. 26, 28, 29)
- They will know He is I AM when they hanged Him

Jesus’ Clearest Assertion of Him being the I AM (8: 31-58)

The lead-in: Truth will set us free:

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

- Free from what? A very important point that He will bring out below.
- Maybe Jesus would elaborate but before he could do so, “they” were quick to deny that they were slaves, in spite of being ruled by the Romans!

33 They (*from the context and content, I believe that “they” were not part of those who believed*) answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone.

How can you say that we shall be set free?”

- They understood being free as opposite of being slaves
- The people of the world still would not see themselves as needing to be freed!

34 Jesus replied,

- “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.
- 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- Jesus clearly points out
 - being free means freedom from sins, and
 - Only the “Truth” can set us free
 - And the “Son” is the “Truth”.

37 I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

- Again, Jesus reiterated His relationship with the Father, but also used this to point out their core problem—their reliance on being physical descendants of Abraham which does not make them the spiritual offspring of Abraham but their hatred toward Him makes them offspring of another father!

39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered.

“If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus,

- **“then you would do what Abraham did.**
- **40 As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me,**
 - **a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.**
 - **Abraham did not do such things.**
- **41 You are doing the works of your own father.”**

[Indeed, Abraham’s life was marked by instant obedience to God and His messengers---what a far cry their actions are now!]

“We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”

- It appears that they’re rather touchy, not wanting to be likened to, perhaps, Ishmael, and so, they were quick to add that they were really God’s children!

42 Jesus said to them,

- **“If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me.**
- **43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 you belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**
- **45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! 46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?**
- **47 Whoever belongs to God hears what God says.**
- **The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”**

Jesus chose the opportunity to reiterate that He has come from God and God has sent Him

- And that their unbelief proves that they do not belong to God, but the devil!

48 The Jews answered him,

- **“Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”**

49 “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus,

- **“but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.**
- **50 I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.**
- **51 Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”**

52 At this they exclaimed,

“Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

54 Jesus replied,

- **“If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing.**
- **My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.**
- **55 Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word.**
- **56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”**

Jesus makes extremely clear in here that

- Their unbelief (in Him) means death!
- His Father is God (the One they claimed as their God!) and that
- His coming on earth was witnessed by Abraham!

57 “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

58 “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” 59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds

- This is the clearest statement by Jesus of who He is
- And the people understood it very well
- And so they wanted to kill Him—as He, in their opinion, had committed blasphemy!

A word about: “The truth will set you free”

- We know that Jesus would declare He is the Truth in chapter 14
- But the admonition here to those who had just believed in Him was
- “If you hold to (or remain in) my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
 - Yes, if you can remain in my teaching, i.e. able to withstand temptations and persecution for my sake—these are the tests of true disciples
 - Then you are set free your former father, the devil, and no longer be slaves to sin.
 - As opposed to Oprah admirably understanding of being on the side of “truth” (truth that is unrelated to Jesus) and was set free from her own fear (which has nothing to do with her own sin).

Chapter 9—Powerful Testimony by the Blind (Brief summary)

- Through the powerful testimony of this blind man who was born blind, John uses his words to clearly respond to the challenge of the Pharisees in chapter 8 concerning both
- Where Jesus came from and
- Who He is.

- a. Immediately after being healed—when asked by the Pharisees who rejected Jesus being from God because He healed on Sabbath:

“The man replied, ‘He is a prophet.’” (9:17)

- b. When the Pharisees insisted that Jesus was a sinner,

“He replied, ‘Whether He is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know, I was blind and now I see!’” (9:25)

c. When the Pharisees insisted that they did not know where Jesus came from
“The man answered, ‘Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’” (9: 30-33)

d. When Jesus met him again and asked,
“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”
36 “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”
37 Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”
38 Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. (9: 35-37)

Through these words from the mouth of the healed blind man, John basically shuts the mouth of all those who doubt Who Jesus is and where He has come from.

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Chapter 10:

- Geographically should belong to the last three chapters in that it brings Jesus back to the other side of Jordan where He met John the Baptist
- The narratives here also continue with the theme of where He comes from with an even greater emphasis on **“I and the Father are one”** (10:30)
- Since the theme of the narratives are the same, John chooses to combine the current discourse after the Feast of the Tabernacle (with Jesus likely having left Jerusalem since it was not safe for Him to stay) with another discourse some three months later at the Feast of Dedication (10: 22-39)

Chapter 11:

- The raising of Lazarus, is perhaps, the greatest sign that both caused many to believe in Jesus and certainly led directly to His arrest in Jerusalem (11: 45ff)
- Through this miraculous sign, it powerfully demonstrates Jesus’ power as God in giving life with the famous declaration that **“I AM the Resurrection and the Life”** (11:25)

Chapter 12

- This begins the final week (Passion Week) of Christ on earth, with His entrance into Jerusalem—the narratives are already covered by the Synoptic Gospels, except John’s emphasis of the trustworthiness of Jesus testimony continues with the mention of the Father’s voice from heaven in the process plus Jesus’ clear emphasis also of who He is—**“When he (the one who believes in me) looks at me, he sees the one who sent me!”** (12:45)

Chapter 10:

10: 1-21— I AM the Gate; I AM the Good Shepherd

- While these two “I AM”s stand out to most readers when it comes to chapter 10, it is in fact a part of the discourse of Jesus with the Pharisees who challenged Jesus as having broken the Sabbath law by healing the born-blind, which ends with the comment by John in 10:21
- **“But others said, ‘These are not the sayings of a man possessed by demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”**

Both Gate and Shepherd

“Very truly I tell you, he who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” 6 *Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.*

7 Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I AM the gate for the sheep. 8 All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus continues to teach the Jews in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacle was over

- -Here, He contrasts Himself with “all who have come before” Him
- i.e. all self-proclaimed Messiahs before Him
- using an analogy or parable that they knew too well—the sheep and the sheep gate
- since it is a parable or analogy, one should not seek to interpret every detail except what Jesus has made relevant which would include
 - Those who did not come through Him—are thieves and robbers
 - Who have come to harm the sheep—to steal, kill and destroy
 - But parable changes quickly from the “Gate” to the “Shepherd”
 - Whose voice the sheep listen to
 - Who knows the sheep by name (as even today’s shepherd would)
 - Who will lead ahead of the sheep and the sheep would follow
 - Those who enter through the sheep pen through Him will be saved unto life, even abundant life (the implication is eternal life as the rest of the discourse testifies. See v.28))

The Emphasis is clear;

- No one can be saved except through believing in Him
- He is both the Gate and the Shepherd!

Now, the teaching is focused on Him being the “GOOD” Shepherd:

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it

down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Jesus’ emphasis on being the Good Shepherd serves to bring out

- (1) His intimate relationship with the sheep He loves—they “know” one another (v.14)
 - Same relationship He has with His Father (v.15)
- (2) Has sheep outside “this” sheep pen (the Gentiles)
 - One flock, One Shepherd (v.16)
- (3) He will lay down His life for the sheep (v.11)
 - The reason why His Father loves Him (vv. 17-18))
 - He will “take up” His life again (vv. `17-18)
 - As much as it is a “command” from the Father
 - He does so of His own accord! (v.18)

19 The Jews who heard these words were again divided. 20 Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”

21 But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

10: 22-42—I and the Father are One

John now brings the open back and forth verbal arguments about Who Jesus is among the Jews (especially the Pharisees) to a close with the following narrative that John structures it to dovetail the conversations prompted by the healing of the born-blind in Jerusalem, although there should be a three-month gap between the events.

Part of the reason, John puts them together as a continuous discourse is likely because of the analogy of sheep by Jesus here as well.

22 Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. 24 The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

25 Jesus answered,

- **“I did tell you, but you do not believe.**
 - **The works (*likely referring to the miracles*) I do in my Father’s name testify about me,**
 - **26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.**
- **27 My sheep**
 - **listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.**
 - **28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.**
 - **29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.**
- **30 I and the Father are one.”**

As much as Jesus constantly declares to be

- The Son of Man (of Daniel)
- The Son of God
- The “I AM”
- They appear to be more interested in (or solely interested in) if He is the “Messiah”?
- But Jesus’ reply still focuses on
 - God is His Father, and
 - He is His Son, and
 - That He comes to give them eternal life

Presumably, this is not what they are interested in

- It appears that if Jesus says He is the Messiah, they will believe and follow Him
- But as it is, Jesus does not only focus on His claim as the Son of God
- But that “He and the Father” are ONE!
 - Should it not be greater news to them?
 - And yet...

31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

33 “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods” [Ps. 82:6]? 35 If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside— 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? (*thereby distinguishing Himself from these “sons of God”*) Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? 37 Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

40 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, 41 and many people came to him. They said, “Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.” 42 And in that place many believed in Jesus.

John opens his gospel with John Baptist as the key witness to Who Jesus is, followed by Jesus’ own testimonies through the performance of many miraculous signs, powerful teachings and arguments (proofs through Scriptures) with the religious leaders, especially with the Pharisees in Jerusalem, and now closes his narratives of these heated exchanges with these verdicts

- The Jews refuse to accept Him as the Son of God in spite of all these,
- Jesus never wavers a moment about who He is being the Son of God
- But repeats umpteen times that they will die in their sins,
- But by believing in Him, they will not perish but have eternal life
- And foretelling that His salvation will come as He would be lifted up (or hanged— see the crowd’s understanding in 12:34)) and rise again, and in the process
- Asserts that He is the Great I AM—
 - He and the Father are One, and now

- “The Father is in me, and I in the Father”
- And many of those who have come to believe in Him believe because of John the Baptist’s testimony!

Chapter 11—I AM the Resurrection and the Life

11: 1-16—the intentional delay

11: 17-44—I AM the Resurrection and the Life—the Raising of Lazarus

11: 45-57—The Sanhedrin plotted to take Jesus’ life

11: 1-16—The Intentional Delay

“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

- Bethany was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem (v.18)—presumably, Jesus was still staying in “the other side of Jordan”—10:40
- John is referring to an incident that he would relate in the next chapter, but assuming that his readers are familiar with the story

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” (Bethany is part of Judea)

- John wants us to know that Jesus did love the whole family and
- So His delay was not meant to cause the family grief, but for God’s glory
 - God and His purpose, always come first

8 “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.”

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

12 His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

- The trip to Bethany was obviously for Lazarus’ sake, but not just for his sake, that’s why Jesus said, “Let’s go back to Judea”, and not “Let’s go to wake up Lazarus”
- The walking in the daytime: Jesus Himself is the light, so that daytime-walking is meant for the disciples
 - The implication appears to be

- When you are with me, you will not stumble
- It is when I am gone, you will stumble
- So worry not about what the Jews would do to me
- While I am still on earth, I have work to do and
- At this moment, it is the waking of Lazarus
- Thomas’s reaction is cynical one
 - Implying Jesus’ move was not the wisest, but
 - Just the same, he was willing to go along!

11: 17-44—I AM the Resurrection and the Life—the Raising of Lazarus

“17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

- The delay meant that
 - Lazarus would be quite dead, for sure, and that
 - Mourners would all have arrived, since the Jewish custom was and still is to bury the dead on the same day, i.e. within 24 hours Deut. (21:23)

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

- Martha’s faith
 - First she did believe Jesus would definitely have healed Lazarus
 - But what does v.22 mean?
 - V.24 indicates that she did not believe Jesus will raise Lazarus now
 - And thought Jesus was comforting her with the “general resurrection” at the Last Day
 - So, v.22 likely means that
 - Though Jesus chose not to come early that did not mean that it was because Jesus did not have the power to heal!

[So, 22 “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” (i.e. minus raising the dead)]

25 Jesus said to her, “I AM the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

Jesus’ surprising reply:

- The “I AM” is unmistakable (**Prologue**—the Word was God; 1:1)
- “Resurrection”—sure, it will definitely happen at the Last Day, but even now!
- “Life”—because I am the Life (**Prologue**—in Him was Life, 1:4)
- The Result: those who believe will never die
 - As we have come to understand through rest of Scriptures

- We who believe will not face the 2nd death, and
- All believing dead will be resurrected bodily (I Corinthians 15), joining Christ in defeating even physical death
- With some believers who live at the time of Jesus' return will not see even the 1st death (I Thessalonians 4:17)

Martha's reply:

- In contrast to the unbelieving crowd of 10: 24 who asked, **“If you are the Christ, tell us plainly”**, through the mouth of Martha, the Apostle John makes plain that the crowd should have believed as Martha did :
- **“I believe that you are the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”**
- And that, Martha so said even before Lazarus was raised from the dead!

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled (stirred). 34 “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

40 Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.

Worth noting:

- The crowd recognized how much Jesus loved the family
 - His being moved and stirred—body language too, no doubt
 - He wept—Jesus is fully human—If it were not for their sake to know who He is, He would have come early to spare them the pain and sorrow!

- The way the resurrected Lazarus came out, versus the way the linen was folded in Jesus's empty tomb (20:7) powerfully conveys the resurrected, everlasting life of our Lord—the one we can also look forward to!

11: 45-57—The Sanhedrin plotted to take Jesus' life

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. **46** But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. **48** If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.” (*I thought they also looked forward to the Messiah overturning the Romans?—How deadly is the power of jealousy!*)

49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! **50** You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” **51** He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, **52** and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. **53** So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

54 Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim (likely a small town 12 miles north of Jerusalem), where he stayed with his disciples. **55** When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. **56** They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?” **57** But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Chapter 12—The Beginning of the End (of Jesus' earthly ministry—the Passion Week)

- With chapters 13-17 focusing on a more personal discourse by Jesus with His inner circle of disciples (in the Upper Room), the teaching to the crowd in open will find its end in this chapter, as far as John's narratives of the testimonies by Jesus are concerned.

12: 1-11—The Anointing of Jesus by Mary

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. **2** Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. **3** Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, **5** “Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.” **6** He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of

the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. **10** So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, **11** for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

This account has already been covered by the Synoptic in Mt. 26: 6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Lk. 7: 37-39, but John chooses to supplement with his emphasis on this event being right after the raising of Lazarus, with the following unique features

- The one anointing Jesus was none other than Mary, the sister of Lazarus;
- The intentional anointing by Mary (saved for) was meant for His burial, meaning of all people, it seems that only Mary believed and took to heart the words of Jesus about His death;
- The one who criticized Mary was really Judas (though led others to agree with him), and that he was a thief all along; and
- Many had come to see for themselves that Lazarus had indeed been raised from the dead, thus coming to believe in Jesus
- The determination by the priests to kill even Lazarus, in John’s narrative, only served to prove that the miracle was real!

Note: Both Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts only name Simon the leper as the one opening his home and a certain woman poured ointment on Jesus, John now chooses to name the woman as Mary. Other the other hand, Luke’s account, though of a similar event was definitely a different occasion,—the home, the host, the woman and the timing, all pointed to a different incident!

12: 12-19—The Lowly Entrance into Jerusalem

12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. **13** They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!*[Save us!]*” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” [Ps. 118: 25, 26—precede by the famous words: “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”] “Blessed is the king of Israel!”

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

15 “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey’s colt.”

[Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”]

16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

There is no doubt that the rabbis understood Zechariah 9:9 refers to their Messiah, but how did they reconcile their idea of their triumphant Messiah of Daniel with this lowly Messiah riding on a colt? Lightfoot has this insight to share with us from the Talmud, as he expounds on the

entrance of Christ into Jerusalem:

“This triumph of Christ completes a double prophecy: 1. This prophecy of Zechariah here mentioned. 2. The taking to themselves the Paschal lamb, for this was the very day on which it was to be taken, according to the command of the law, Exod. Xii. 3; ‘In the tenth day of the month, they shall take to them every man a lamb.’

It scarce appears to the Talmudists, how those words of Daniel concerning the Messiah, that ‘he comes with the clouds of heaven,’ are consistent with these words of Zechariah, that ‘he comes sitting upon an ass.’ ‘If (say they) the Israelites be good, then he shall come with the clouds of heaven; but if not good, then riding upon an ass.’

Thou art much mistaken O Jews: for he comes ‘in the clouds of heaven,’ as judge and revenger, because you are evil and very wicked; but sitting upon an ass, not because you are, but because he is good...King Sapore said to Samuel (?), ‘You say your Messiah will come upon an ass, I will send him a brave horse.’ He answers him, ‘You have not a horse with a hundred spots as is his ass.’ In the greatest humility of the Messiah they dream of grandeur even in his very ass.” (Commentary on the NT from the Talmud and Hebraica, Vol. 2, 270-271)

In other words, the rabbis still could not come to grips with the fact that the power of their Messiah is fully revealed in His lowliness. No wonder they rejected the crucified Christ!

17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

Note; such an exciting atmosphere only served to cause delusions in the mind of the disciples, causing them to drop their guard against the drastic turn of events that followed suit, hence (perhaps) the lengthy discourse by Jesus in the Upper Room.

12: 20-36—The Father’s Testimony

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

27 “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!”

Prompted by the visit of the Greeks, the Lord Jesus saw His hour of death drawing near, to the point He seemed to be speaking to Himself in v. 27, ““Now my heart is troubled and what shall I

say? “ With these few words, we gain insight into the struggle of the Son of God. Allow me to share with you Lenski’s thoughts in this respect:

“In the request of the Greeks Jesus sees His own death standing before Him. While He calls it a glorification of the Son of man, in particular as regards the glorious fruit that will result, nevertheless, this impending death stirs the soul of Jesus to its very depth. ‘Now my soul has been troubled. And what shall I say? Father, deliver me out of this hour? But no - for this reason I came into this hour’. Jesus is not addressing the disciples and the bystanders. This is a monolog, uttered before a higher presence; yet uttered audibly for those at hand to hear. They are granted a glimpse into what transpires in the soul of Jesus. (It) reveals what Jesus feels in His human soul as the death shadow begins actually to envelop Him. The perfect tense is intensive...for the agitation that is now upon Jesus reaches back, although its present intensity leads Him now to reveal it.

Not by any means coldly, indifferently, or without feeling is Jesus going into His death. He was perfectly aware of all that His death entailed. His was not to be a death like that of the Christian for whom the terrors of death have been removed by the cancellation of sin and guilt; nor like the death of the unbeliever who is blind or realizes only in part what awaits him. Jesus was to die with all the world’s sin and guilt upon Him. The curse and damnation of that guilt was to strike Him and to crush out His life. All the dreadfulness of this impending death was fully revealed to Him; He saw all that was awaiting Him.

Moreover, He was going into His death voluntarily. No power compelled Him save His own will, which was one with that of His Father. He was free even now to withdraw from that death. But since the hour has come, the act of sacrifice is about to begin, the frightfulness, the utter horror, the inconceivable dreadfulness of death came over the soul of Jesus. All that was human in Him recoiled from the rending ordeal, just as our body, to use a weak comparison, shrinks from some painful contact and quivers when it begins yet submits and endures, no matter what the pain, held to the agony by the power of the will. The sinless, holy Jesus, God’s only-begotten Son, was to stoop beneath the damning guilt of the world and by His own death as a man to expiate that guilt. Thus was His soul shaken in this hour.” (Lenski, John, 868-9)

What a Savior we have in Jesus Christ!

“Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up[*hanged*] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” (Obviously, they understood being lifted up meant He would not “remain”)

35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. 36 Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When He had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Here: one more time, John illustrates that as Jesus has insisted, the Father was testifying for Him and His testimony there is true!

12: 37-50—Jesus’ (final) public Testimony about Himself

37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

**“Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”**

39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

**40 “He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn—and I would heal them.”[i]**

41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

If we measure the success of Jesus’ ministry by immediate results, we have to say that He was a failure because even with His sinless life, His powerful message and after He “had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they (the Jews) still would not believe in Him” (Jn. 12:37). Even among the small group of followers, one of them betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, and the remainder fled in the face of persecution.

However, John is quick to tell us that, in the midst of such apparent failures, “Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue” (Jn. 12:42). I did not take it as a totally negative statement, although John also adds that, “for they loved praise from men more than praise from God” (Jn. 12:43).

The truth of the matter is the seed planted by the Lord, through His sinless life, His powerful message and His many miraculous signs, have eventually born fruit in that those who believed in Him, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, woke up from their fear and openly acknowledged Him after His death, and many more did so after His resurrection. It was a matter of timing — God’s timing!

This is an important reminder to all of us that we should not measure success in God’s ministry by immediate results, and should firmly believe in the living power of the seed of the gospel, and that our labor in the Lord will not be in vain. If we remain faithful to our charge, it is also a matter of timing — God’s timing — that the seed we plant will bear fruit for the sake of God’s Kingdom

44 Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. 45 The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

47 “If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

So, with these final words preached by Jesus in the open, John reiterates that

- **Who Jesus is: we look at Him, we see the Father**
- **Believe in Him, we will be saved unto eternal life**
- **Reject Him, we will be judged and condemned at the Last Day**
- **He is thus, “the true light of the world” (Prologue 1:9)**

End of the First 12 Chapters

As we come to the end of the first 12 chapters of John’s Gospel, you will have noticed that it contains, so far, very little ethical teachings like the Sermon on the Mount as the Synoptic Gospels do, and definitely no spiritual growth teachings that, by that time, many epistles have covered. The very main focus is obvious—to use the many testimonies of eye-witnesses to affirm and prove Who Jesus is beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The next six chapters, on the other hands, would focus on Jesus last words to His own inner circle of disciples during and after the Last Supper, leading up to His arrest on Thursday night (which would be the beginning of Friday according to the Jewish calendar), tried by Pontius Pilate in the early morning of Friday, and immediately crucified on the same day with His body taken down right before the beginning of Sabbath).