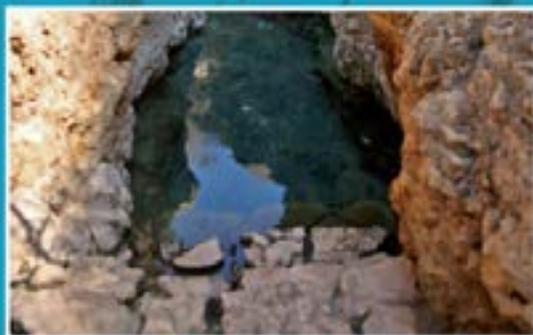


An Explanation of
**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO JOHN**



BEHOLD, YOUR GOD

BEHOLD
SERIES
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The Gospel According to John

The Gospel According to John

Behold, Your God

Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel according to Matthew
Mk – Gospel according to Mark
Lk – Gospel according to Luke
Jn – Gospel according to John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Gospel According to John

Introduction

If we describe a person, we can do so from different angles. For example, we can highlight someone as the father of a family. In addition, a description of the same person is possible as a colleague in a company or as a neighbor. In this way we see how four evangelists – under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – report the life of the Lord Jesus during His stay on earth. In the four biographies we have in the Bible, the Gospel according to Matthew declares the Lord Jesus as King, Mark presents Him as Servant, Luke describes Him as true Man and finally John writes about Him as the eternal Son of God.

The purpose of this Gospel is to look at the Lord Jesus as God the Son. For this reason, the call: “Here is your God” or “Behold your God” (Isa 40:9) has been chosen as the subtitle for this book. On the one hand we read that no one has ever seen or can see God (Jn 1:18a; 1Tim 6:16). On the other hand, of the Lord Jesus to be the only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father is said that He has declared Him (Jn 1:18b; 14:9). That is magisterially described in this Gospel.

One of the correctors gave his impression of this Gospel as follows when he submitted his last corrections:

‘We are dealing with a limited bed of the stream, but the stream itself is not limited. And that is a happy thought. ... It was a great privilege to be able to read and contemplate this Gospel so intensively. I just feel like I understand it even less now than I did before. For it is so wonderfully rich. Thankfully, it’s enough to believe in His Name and having life thereby.’

Ger de Koning

Middelburg, November 2009, new version 2016, translation February 2021

The special character of the Gospel according to John

The Gospel according to John has a special character that has affected everyone who has paid some attention to it, even though it has not always

been clearly understood why. It not only impresses the thoughts, but it attracts the heart in a unique way. The reason is that this Gospel presents the Person of the Son of God as having become so humble that He can say: "Give Me a drink" (Jn 4:7).

This Gospel is clearly distinguished from the other three Gospels. In the other Gospels we find valuable details of the Savior's life on earth, such as His patience and His grace. He is the perfect expression of good amidst evil. His wonders are all but the curse of the fig tree, wonders of goodness, manifestations of Divine power revealed in goodness. We also see more and more clearly how He Who in this impressive way reveals God in goodness and grace, is rejected.

John shows Him to us in a quite different way. He introduces us to a Divine Person, God revealed in the world. This Divine Person is eternal life in Whom this becomes visible and with Whom the world and His own, i.e. Israel, have no connection from the beginning. This Gospel is not about the needs of the sinner, but about the desires of the heart of God as Father to have children with Him in the Father's house.

In addition, except in a few places, this Gospel is not about heaven. It is nearly always about grace and truth in the Son here on earth. Therefore, in addition to the desire of the Father's heart to have children with Him in the Father's house, we can also notice in this Gospel His desire to share the blessing of the Father's house with His children right now.

Purpose of the Gospel according to John

John writes his Gospel to disprove the influence of the so-called 'gnostics' (literally 'knowing ones'). These people deny all certain knowledge about God and Divine things. They also deny both the actual Divinity and the actual Humanity of the Son. The purpose of the Gospel is expressed by John in John 20 (Jn 20:30-31) and connects to that.

Because of the noticeably increasing influence of islam on Christians, this Gospel is also relevant in that respect. I read the following in the monthly magazine 'de Oogst' of April 2008:

'To sell out the divinity of Christ for the sake of a good relationship with Islam testifies to the erosion and decline of Christianity. ... Recently, a Wil-

low Creek researcher wrote that he expected a great deal of blessing from the increasing cooperation between Christianity and islam; Christians and muslims should form an ever greater unity. After all, they are both people of the Book, they worship the same prophets together, they agree on many religious matters, such as prayer, sexuality, sin and family. And also on a social level there are many similarities between Christians and muslims. They will become allies in the cultural struggle of the coming years.'

Fortunately, this Gospel is still in God's Word and we can still read it and arm ourselves against the devil's wiles.

The writer John

Although John does not mention his name anywhere, he does speak of himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved", that is, he was loved by the Lord (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20).

John 1

Jn 1:1-2 | The Word

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

John begins his Gospel by presenting the Lord Jesus as “the Word,” the Logos. That is: just as words express thoughts, so is He the perfect expression of Who God is. That is why we do not have a genealogy of Him here, as we do in the Gospel according to Matthew – because of His kingship – and in the Gospel according to Luke – to show that also as Man He is the Son of God. In the Gospel according to Mark we don’t find a genealogy of Him either. There the reason is that for a Servant it is not important what His genealogy is. In the Gospel according to John it is impossible to think of a genealogy, for how could that be with the eternal Word, Who is the eternal Son?

John first establishes the eternal existence of the Word. The words “in the beginning” refer back to everything that has a beginning, and then establish that the Word “was”. It therefore looks back beyond the first words of the Bible, where we read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). However far we can think back, wherever we can think back at the beginning of something, we see that the Word “was” there, that It existed. The Word Itself is without a beginning. It is eternal. The second thing John says is that the Word was “with God”. That clearly indicates that the Word is a Person, that the Word had and has a personal existence. Third, John mentions that the Word was also God Himself.

These three features of the Word form the starting point of his Gospel. In order to understand the representation of the Son in this Gospel, these three features must be known and accepted by faith without reservation. John describes Him in his Gospel as the eternal Son Who is truly God Himself. To underline the three features, John says concisely once more: “This was in [the] beginning with God”, with God as the Eternal One. The Word was and is as Person as eternal as God.

Jn 1:3-5 | The Creator and the Light of men.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The eternal Word, Who is Himself without a beginning – He “was” – has given a beginning to all things. Here we come to the first verse of Genesis 1 (Gen 1:1). The Word came not into being Himself, but is the origin of all things (Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:2,10). All things have a beginning, “came into being”, and that beginning is due to “Him”, which is He Who is the Word.

To avoid any escape from this fact, the second part of verse 3 repeats the first part, but in a negative representation of the facts. It is the foolishness of the evolution theory –falsely called “knowledge” (1Tim 6:20) – to try and explain the origin of all things *without Him*. But the heavens are telling of His glory (Psa 19:2) and He can be understood through His works (Rom 1:19-20).

Here we see the utter distinction between everything that has *come into being* and the Lord Jesus. If anything has come into being or has been made, it is not the Word, for everything that has come into being is made by the Word.

This does not mean that He also created evil. God is good and everything that comes out of Him has that character. In Him there is no darkness at all (1Jn 1:5). Nothing can come out of Him that is contrary to Who He is. To assume that He also created evil limits His goodness. He did create beings, angels and men, who were and are capable of doing evil, but He did not create evil itself.

The whole creation was created *by* Him, but *in* Him was life. He is the source of life (Psa 36:9). He didn’t receive life from somewhere, but it sprang from Him as the origin. Therefore He is connected with a special part of His creation: men (Heb 2:16; Pro 8:31; Lk 2:14).

All the words used by John under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are short and simple, but clearly possess Divine fullness and meaning. They are like

the sword of the cherubim guarding the tree of life (Gen 3:24). That sword turns in all directions to keep Him, as He is, unblemished in our minds.

The life He reveals is also “the Light of men”. It is in this light that the believer walks. Light reveals everything. By coming into the light man can receive life. If a person has light, he only has it in the Word that is life.

When life, that is the Lord Jesus, is revealed on earth, the Light shines in the darkness. When God created the light in the darkness in the beginning, and the light shone in the darkness, the darkness disappeared (Gen 1:3). When life is revealed and the light shines, the darkness does not disappear. There is no other light for men than “life”.

God dwells in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen or can see (1Tim 6:16), but in the Word the light shines in the darkness. It shines, not ‘shone’, for it still shines, but the darkness has not understood it, that is, it is a given fact, that it is unchanging.

In summary, in verses 1-5 we have the testimony of the Spirit concerning the Word. We see it first in relation to God, then in relation to creation and finally in relation to man.

Jn 1:6-9 | A Witness of the Light

6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but [he came] to testify about the Light. 9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

In His goodness God sends one to draw attention to the light. This He does in John. That there must be a witness to testify of the light also shows how men lived in utter darkness and blindness. If it is dark and light is switched on, then it is seen by all who have their eyes open.

Light needs no testimony. It is present and it is seen. For people who are spiritually in darkness, it is necessary that light is pointed to as present. The purpose of John’s mission is to be a witness to the light so that people will believe. The testimony is addressed to “all”, not just to Israel. It is about personal faith in the Son. If someone has no faith, he does not see the light, though it shines as brightly as can be.

John is only an instrument. He does not focus attention on himself, but on the Lord Jesus, the Light. As said, the light is not limited to Israel. It comes “into the world”, just as the sun does not shine only for a particular people. It comes into the world, but it enlightens every man individually. Christ places each person personally in the light. Every man is revealed by Him in what he is, whether it is Peter or Herod, or Nathanael or Caiaphas.

Jn 1:10-13 | The Reception of the Word

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, [even] to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He entered His own creation. But the world did not know its Creator when He was present, that much it was estranged from Him by sin. There was a special company in the world, in the midst of whom He wanted to dwell. That was His own people, Israel. However, they did not receive Him. It doesn't say here, as it is said of the world, that they didn't know Him. Not being accepted by His own means that they rejected Him, not that they did not accept Him through unfamiliarity or ignorance.

Then we see that a completely new company is formed, consisting of those who did accept Him. If the world does not know Him and His people do not receive Him, it opens the way for the revelation of something new. People are separated from the world and brought into a new and previously unknown relationship with God. They are no better or less evil than others. The great thing that distinguishes them is that those who form this new company are born of God. They have seen and judged themselves in the light of the Word and they have accepted Him.

At the same time God has worked the new life in them. Only those who have accepted Him He has given the right to enter into the position of children. This is not merely an external position of honor, but the sharing of life and of a connection of life. They are born of God and therefore possess the nature of God and are children of God. By the way, the Lord Jesus is

never called 'child of God'. He is the unique, eternal Son, while as Man He is also the Son of God (Lk 1:35). This great privilege to become a child of God is for everyone who believes in His Name. His Name is the basis of faith. His Name is also the content of the Word, in Whom all is manifested what God is.

This new relationship is not based on anything of man. Every human source is excluded:

1. "Not of blood" means that no one becomes a child of God through family ties, through natural kinship. No one becomes a child of God because his parents are.
2. "Nor of the will of the flesh" means that it cannot be obtained by one's own effort.
3. "Nor of the will of man" means that it cannot be obtained by the effort of others, as if it could be given by a man to someone, for example by baptism. Someone becomes a child of God exclusively by being born of God.

The new life is the life of God and God lets us share in it, He gives it. He begot a new generation. That new generation consists of ordinary people and that they also remain, but they are born again spiritually. They are truly born of God and thereby they have become partakers of the Divine nature, because their new life is the life of God (2Pet 1:4).

Jn 1:14-18 | The Word Became Flesh

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [Him].

Verses 1-2 tell what He *was* eternally, verse 14 tells what He *became* in time. He became Man and came to dwell among us. The word 'dwell' is actually 'tabernacled' meaning 'living in a tent'. The eternal Son became flesh, be-

came Man, in order to dwell among men, just as God used to dwell in the tabernacle with His people and went up with them (Exo 25:8).

By becoming Man, He was able to show us all His glories from the preceding verses. His glory is seen by “all who have received Him”. This glory we see is not that of Mount Sinai, of majesty and righteousness. It is a glory that fits the intimate relationship of love that exists from all eternity between the Father and Him Who is the only begotten Son of the Father.

To see this is a great wonder. When by grace the eyes are opened for it, we see how full of grace and truth He is. Grace is love in the midst of evil, while at the same time being exalted above it. In Christ, grace has come in the midst of evil to overcome evil through good.

Inseparable from grace is truth. Grace without truth is not grace. Grace brings the truth, but at the same time makes it possible for a person to endure the truth if he is thereby revealed and condemned as a sinner. Therefore the order is: first grace, then truth.

God did not fail to give through John also a testimony of His Son as the One Who is full of grace and truth. In each main section of this chapter we have a testimony of John. Previously, it is regarding the Light (verses 6-8), here it is regarding His presentation to the world and later regarding His performance in the world (verses 19-36). John, the greatest born of women (Lk 7:28), gives testimony of Him at every level. The Lord Jesus is God even though He comes after John. He is the Giver Who gives to all, without distinction, out of an inexhaustible fullness. There is no blessing outside of Him, and as a result, there is no lack for anyone who possesses Him.

We did not receive truth upon truth – the truth is simple and puts everything in its place – but what we needed: grace upon grace, one grace after another, God’s favor, abundant. Here we may think of an accumulation of Divine blessings that are the fruits of His love.

These things are in complete contrast to the law. The law was given by Moses. Moses is the mediator through whom God gave the law. The law says what man is supposed to be, but not what man is. The truth does. The law cannot set man free and cannot reveal God. The law neither gives life nor reveals an object. That is because sin has already come into the world through Adam and the flesh has made the law powerless. This is

not because of the law, but because of man, through which he falls outside of all God's blessing.

But now through Jesus Christ a complete and glorious change has been made. Here, then, is finally the Name of Him in Whom all the preceding glories are found, and Who is the expression of them: Jesus Christ.

Grace and truth form a unity. That is why it says that grace and truth (not: subsist, but) subsists (Darby Translation) through Him. Grace and truth, which is full in Him (verse 14), has received its full expression in Him. It does not say that grace and truth was *given* by Him, as the law was given by Moses. The Lord Jesus is not a mediator, one through whom God gives grace and truth. He has shown grace and truth from His own glory.

If He had not come, we would never have come to know grace and truth. He shows the grace of God and the truth of God to lost people, that they may be partakers of all that God has in His heart and has revealed in Christ. If Christ had not come, we could only have had a limited impression of God, either from nature or from the law. Both expressions would keep us at a distance and finally condemn us if the Son had not come.

Now that He has come, He has revealed God in a way that is beyond all things. He has revealed God as Father. He did so out of the intimacy that He Himself possessed and never left. The word "bosom" refers to the closest connection and the deepest confidentiality. It is the place where the Son eternally *is*, from which He never left and where He also was when He was on earth as Man.

That is why He and He alone could and can explain God. Not only was the full blessing to be revealed that came through Jesus Christ, and through His redemption is the possession of all who share in it, but God Himself was to be revealed. That is what Jesus Christ did, the Revealer and revelation of God and of all things, for He is the truth. He could do that because He is the Son in the bosom of the Father.

Jn 1:19-21 | John Testifies Who He Is Not

19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "What then?

*Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

John's testimony was powerful. It set people in motion. Through John, God worked in the minds of men a general expectation of the Messiah. John was the independent witness preserved by God until the right time to testify of His Son.

In this Gospel, the Jews have been opponents of the Lord from the beginning and therefore also of John. It is clear from verse 24 that these are Pharisees. They send priests and Levites, people who serve in the temple, so deeply religious people, to John to ask him who he is. It is not a sincere question, but a question inspired by fear for their position.

John knows the background of their question. They want to know if he is the Christ. Therefore he doesn't speak about himself, but about Christ and says that he is not. If they had known his lineage, they would have known that he could never be the Messiah. For he descended from Levi, while the Christ had to come from Judah.

The leaders are partly satisfied, but not yet completely. Fortunately, he is not the Christ, but then who is he? They ask him if then he is Elijah. His clear answer is that he is not.

His denial seems in contrast to what the Lord says of him in Matthew 17 (Mt 17:11-12). The key is in Matthew 11. There the Lord says of John the baptist: "And if you are willing to accept [it], John himself is Elijah who was to come" (Mt 11:14). This means that Elijah came in John, but only for those who wanted to accept what he came for. If the eyes are blind to the Messiah, they are also blind to His predecessor. That is why John tells these people that he is not, because they do not want to receive Christ.

Then as far as they can see there is one possibility left for them and that is that John is the promised prophet (Deu 18:15-19). John's answers are getting shorter and shorter. To the last question he gives the shortest answer: "No." It doesn't make sense to explain his answer.

Jn 1:22-24 | John's Testimony About Himself

22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A

VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said." 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

Now they know who John is not, but then who is he? That is what they would like to know. To go back and say that they do not know who John is, who has such a great influence among the people, that is not acceptable. So they go on asking who he is. John answers their question with a quote from the prophet Isaiah. They undoubtedly know that quote, but its meaning does not penetrate them.

The quote shows that the Christ is *Yahweh* and that John is no more than a voice. John the evangelist emphasizes that the people who question John the baptist have been sent "from the Pharisees". The Pharisees are the great adversaries of the Lord. People sent "from the Pharisees" are completely alien to those born of God. 'From the Pharisees' or 'from God', that determines the difference in the appreciation of Christ.

Jn 1:25-28 | Testimony About the Lord Jesus

25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, [but] among you stands One whom you do not know. 27 [It is] He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The interrogators ignore John's answer that he is the voice of one crying and points to Christ. They are concentrating exclusively on his baptism. How can he baptize if he does not have some official status? His denial that he is the Christ was already a great relief. His denial that he is Elijah means to them that he is not the forerunner who immediately precedes the kingdom in power and majesty over the earth (Mal 4:5). And if he is not the prophet who is foretold, what does his baptism mean?

Their question gives John the opportunity to make clear the difference between him and Christ. He himself baptizes with water as the symbol of repentance and forgiveness of sins. However, the baptism with which he baptizes does not stand alone. With his baptism he points to Him Who is

in the midst of them, but Who they do not know. John tells them how far Christ is exalted above him in glory. He does not even feel worthy to untie the thong of the sandal of the Lord Jesus.

This testimony is given by John in Bethany, beyond the Jordan. It is not Bethany where Lazarus and Martha and Mary live, because that is near Jerusalem. Bethany means 'house of misery'. This place here is closely connected to the Jordan and baptism. The Jordan speaks of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and baptism speaks of His death. By connecting Bethany with this, we may think that escaping from the misery to which sin has brought a man, is only possible through the death and resurrection of Christ. The Pharisees did not find themselves miserable and therefore had no part in Christ.

Jn 1:29-34 | The Lamb of God Is the Son of God

*29 The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' 31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." 32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

The next day, after his testimony to the priests and Levites about himself and Christ, John sees the Lord Jesus coming to him. In the previous testimony he spoke about Him in connection with the Jewish expectation of the Messiah. Now he gives a testimony that surpasses everything else. In it he says, in fact: 'Here is the one, sufficient and non-repeatable Sacrifice of eternal value.'

His statement relates to the death of Christ and all its consequences. The work of taking away sin must be done, and here is He Who will do it. Based on His work as the Lamb of God, the gospel can be preached, sins can be forgiven, His kingdom can be established, creation can be delivered

from the curse, Israel can be blessed, and finally there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Then the perfect result will be seen of what John says here of the Lamb of God as the One Who takes away the sin of the world.

Mind you, it does not say that the Lamb of God takes away the sins (plural) of the world. It is not about sinful deeds, but about sin as power. The Lord Jesus is the Lamb Who takes away sin as power. The Jews were familiar with the lamb from the sacrificial service. The lamb was used for the daily morning and evening burnt offering and the annual Passover. All these sacrifices are fulfilled in Christ. He takes away the sin of the world so that there will be an eternity that cannot possibly be corrupted by sin. In that eternity God will be all in all (1Cor 15:28).

When John points to the Lord Jesus and testifies of Him what He does, he again gives testimony of His personal dignity. In time He comes after John, but as far as His Person is concerned, He is before John. He is God the Son of eternity.

John was not familiar with Christ. God had given him his own service and field of action in view of the coming of His Son. He had to prepare the people for His coming. Therefore he had come to baptize with water. He called people to be baptized under a preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins, so that they would also accept Him when He revealed Himself to Israel.

John testifies how at the baptism of the Lord Jesus he saw the Spirit descending upon Him as a dove from heaven. He says that the Spirit remained upon Him. The Spirit did not come upon Him to depart again. No, the Spirit has found complete rest in this Man. The Spirit could descend upon Him without the prior application of blood, as is the case with us. We see this in the pictures of the Old Testament, where first blood is applied and then oil (Lev 14:14-17).

Once again John declares that he did not recognize Him, but that God told him by what he could recognize Him. He declares once more that his service consisted of baptizing with water. He had not devised that service himself, but that service was commissioned to him by God. Through that service he had to prepare the way for Him Who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

This indicates the service of the Lord, which will be nothing but a blessing. He takes away the sin of the world and instead fills the world with His blessing through the Holy Spirit. This can be seen in miniature in anyone who now believes that the Lord Jesus died for his sins and receives the Holy Spirit on that basis (Eph 1:13).

The fact that the Lord Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit is proof that He is God. No one can baptize with the Holy Spirit except God. The Holy Spirit is a Person in the Godhead, and here is a Man Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Then that Man can be none other than the Son of God.

Therefore, John comes to that conclusion. After seeing the Spirit descending upon Christ, he can testify that “this is the Son of God”. As the eternal Son, the Lord Jesus is the true God, one with the Father and the Spirit. John does not mention the testimony of the Father from heaven, for he relies on what God personally told him about His Son and what he saw when the Spirit descended upon Him. Therefore he can testify that “this is the Son of God”.

Jn 1:35-37 | Behold, the Lamb of God

*35 Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and *said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

After the testimony of the Lord as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, John is back at the Jordan the next day. Two of his disciples stand with him. Then John sees the Lord Jesus walking there. The Lord does not come to him, but shows Himself there.

When John sees Him, he is immediately full of admiration for that Person. He says: “Behold, the Lamb of God.” In verse 29 he added what this Lamb will do. Here he is full of the Lamb Himself. That Person has taken up his whole heart. This testimony of John from a heart full of the Person of Christ has a consequence that we do not see in his previous testimony.

The two disciples who are with John hear John speak and also become full of Christ. Through the testimony of John, they look away from him and are seized by the glory of the Lord Jesus. Any service before God is only good if the servant detaches the hearers from himself as human servant

and leads them to Christ. Such a servant is John. His two disciples leave him and follow the Lord.

To “follow” presupposes that we are not in the rest of God. We follow the Lamb on earth in the midst of circumstances where sin has not yet been taken away (Rev 14:4). In the Garden of Eden, Paradise, where sin was not, there was no need to follow. In heaven there will be no following either. There we will find joy and rest in the place where we are. Following the Lamb is an activity we can only do as long as we are on earth.

Jn 1:38-39 | What Do You Seek?

*38 And Jesus turned and saw them following, and *said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?” 39 He *said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.*

The Lord notices that the two disciples are following Him. He turns around and asks them a question. His question is not, “*Who* do you seek?” but, “*What* do you seek?” In doing so, He asks for the motive they have to follow Him. The answer is wonderful. They would like to know where He is staying. They call Him “Rabbi”, a word of which John the evangelist gives the translation: “Teacher.” In this way they take the place of disciples in relation to Him. They want to learn from Him, their Teacher.

The Lord answers that they should come with Him and that they will then see where He is staying. He does not give an address, but a mark (cf. Lk 22:7-13; Song 1:7-8). It’s a residence where it is about Him. There they stay with Him that day. John even notes the hour of the day when this takes place.

It is remarkable that John, who after all writes about the eternal Son Who stands outside of time, has so much eye for times when the eternal Son does something. We have seen this before on both occasions where he speaks of “the next day” (verses 29,35). It emphasizes the presence of God the Son in the world of men. He participates in their circumstances, while He Personally is the Eternal One.

Jn 1:40-42 | Andrew Brings Peter to the Lord

*40 One of the two who heard John [speak] and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He *found first his own brother Simon and *said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).*

Andrew was a disciple of John the baptist, but through the testimony of John he went after the Lord. As a further description of Andrew, the evangelist tells us that he is "Simon Peter's brother". Andrew is so full of the Lord that he cannot keep it to himself. He has to talk about it with others. It is a general characteristic of someone who has found and follows Christ, that he seeks others to speak about Him.

Andrew starts at home. The first person he meets is his own brother Simon. It says so emphatically: "His own brother." If anyone has come to know the Lord Jesus as His Savior, his first concern will be for His own family, that they too may come to know Him (cf. Lk 8:39).

Andrew gives a brief but powerful testimony of his 'Finding'. There is no uncertainty, but he testifies with certainty that he has found the Messiah, to which John again adds the translation. Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah. Both names mean 'Anointed'.

The Lord Jesus as Messiah is mainly spoken of in connection with Israel. As Christ, He is since His ascension especially connected with the counsels of God for the church (Acts 2:36; Eph 1:3). We see this clearly, for example, in Ephesians 1 where we find the highest blessings that are the part of the believer who belongs to the church. Several times we read there the expression "in Christ" to indicate how those blessings have become the part of the believer.

The testimony of Andrew is not only a personal testimony. He says: "We have found the Messiah." It is a testimony that is shared by others and therefore increases in strength. Andrew is a true evangelist. He testifies of Christ and leads his brother to Him. The Lord Jesus is the center around Whom people are gathered. Peter is not won over to the Lord by a wonder or by an impressive and convincing speech, but by a simple and real testimony of his brother.

When Peter comes to the Lord, the Lord sees him. With His all-pervading eyes He sees through Peter completely. He knows who Peter is and knows his origins and his future. He knows his name is Simon and what his father's name is. The Lord then gives him a new name. That proves His authority over Simon. Only persons who are above others can give or change names (cf. Gen 2:19; Dan 1:7).

The Lord calls Simon "Cephas", to which John again gives the translation. Cephas is the Aramaic word for "stone". Furthermore John will call him Peter, the Greek word for "stone". This name the Lord gives him indicates the service of Peter. Peter will be a stone in the building that God will build for His own honor and for the honor of His Son. That building is the church. In his first letter Peter speaks about the believers as living stones that will be built up as a spiritual house (1Pet 2:4-5).

Jn 1:43-44 | The Lord Jesus Finds Philip

*43 The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He *found Philip. And Jesus *said to him, "Follow Me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.*

Another day later, the Lord purposes to go into Galilee. Then He finds Philip. Here the initiative comes from the Lord. Andrew could testify that they had found Him, here the Lord finds someone. He is looking for people who want to follow Him. That is what He says to Philip who becomes a disciple of Him. John mentions that Philip comes from Bethsaida, the same city where Andrew and Peter come from.

Jn 1:45-49 | Philip Brings Nathanael to the Lord.

*45 Philip *found Nathanael and *said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and [also] the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip *said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and *said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael *said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I*

saw you.” 49 Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

Philip, too, cannot remain silent about his ‘Finding’. He finds Nathanael to whom he testifies that he has found “Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph”. He too speaks in plural: “We have found Him.” He supports his testimony and its certainty, by referring to what Moses wrote about Him, as well as the prophets (Deu 18:18; Isa 7:14; 9:6; Lk 24:27). Philip knows and believes the Scriptures and therefore sees them fulfilled when he meets Christ. Therefore, there is no doubt with him that this humble Man from Nazareth known as “Jesus, the Son of Joseph” is the promised Messiah.

The testimony of Philip does not have an immediate result. According to Nathanael, nothing good can come from Nazareth and certainly the Messiah cannot come from there. Philip has to deal with prejudices with Nathanael. If he had said that he had found the Christ, the Son of David, of Bethlehem, the reaction would have been different. This is how Nathanael expected Him. Prejudice is not a small impediment. We must learn that someone is not simply won over to the Lord. Nor should we be discouraged by prejudices that others have about Him. Philip is not going to reason, but suggests to Nathanael to come along and see Him for himself.

Then Nathanael goes with him to see Who He may be, but discovers that the Lord has seen him before. Everywhere in this Gospel the Lord Jesus is God. He sees what Nathanael is thinking about. Like many others, Nathanael will have been impressed by the preaching of John. It must have made him think that the coming of the Messiah could be very close.

The Lord knows Nathanael as a sincere Jew who looked forward to His coming. That is why He can speak to him in this way. Nathanael is surprised that He speaks to him in this way. His question “how do You know me?” makes it clear that he does not yet know Who he has in front of him. The Lord convinces Nathanael by telling him that He had already seen him before Philip called him and also saw the place where he was. While Nathanael thought that no one saw him, the Lord saw him there, under the fig tree. And while he sat there, the Lord also saw the reflections of his heart.

The fact that the Lord mentions the fig tree is not without meaning. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. In Nathanael we can therefore see a picture of the believing remnant that to Christ is the true Israel. There is no deceit in it, but the true Israel knows Him and looks forward to Him. The true Israel shows the characteristics of the Messiah of Whom it is said: “Nor was there any deceit in His mouth” (Isa 53:9).

After these words, Nathanael is convinced in his heart and conscience that He is the Son of God, God’s chosen King. After the initial hesitation when Philip called him, there is now a spontaneous confession. The confession of Nathanael is the confession of every God-fearing Jew. It is the confession that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God as Man on earth, but limited to Israel.

Jn 1:50-51 | Greater Things

*50 Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” 51 And He *said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*

The Lord reminds Nathanael that his faith is based on his Jewish expectations. These expectations find their ground in Psalm 2, where is spoken of God’s King for His people (Psa 2:6-7). This is already a great blessing, but the blessing will become even greater. The Lord promises him that he will see greater things than the things that are connected with Israel. With a double “truly” and an emphatic “I say to you” Christ tells what the greater things are, that Nathanael will see. He will see things that are in connection with a heaven that is open above Him as “the Son of Man”. Those things we find in Psalm 8, where we see that God has set the Son of Man over all the works of His hands (Psa 8:4-9).

The title “Son of Man” is the title of the Lord Jesus indicating, on the one hand, His rejection – see Matthew 8 (Mt 8:20), where this title appears for the first time in the New Testament – and, on the other hand, His future glory. That glory is not only connected with Israel, but with His dominion over all creation (Heb 2:5-8).

Here the Lord presents Himself to Nathanael as the Son of Man on earth. We see that the angels of God first ascend, that is to say, He sends them from earth to heaven, and then they descend again from heaven. Heaven is open, for wherever Christ is, heaven is open and He is the object of an opened heaven (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:21; Acts 7:56; Rev 19:11). Now that He is in heaven, heaven is opened for the believer.

The Lord tells Nathanael that he will see this. We may know that what will be visible reality for everyone in the future is already true for faith now because it is connected with His Person. In Him everything will be fulfilled. He, the eternal Son, as the Son of Man on earth will be the center of the universe in the realm of peace (Eph 1:10). Faith already sees this. The earth shall be united with heaven; the Son of Man shall reign over heaven and earth; and His servants, the angels, shall maintain the connection between earth and heaven (cf. Gen 28:12).

John 2

Jn 2:1 | A Wedding on the Third Day

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;

John, the author of this Gospel, here speaks of “the third day”. By this he can mean the third day after the Lord’s coming to Galilee or also the third day after the Lord’s conversation with Nathanael at the end of the previous chapter. Earlier he spoke several times about “the next day” (Jn 1:29,35,43). The fact that John speaks about this each time not only has a historical meaning, but above all a prophetic meaning. In these days that follow one another, we can see an order of successive periods, each with a special characteristic. In each of these periods the Lord Jesus is central, but each time He is seen in a different relationship and glory.

The first time there is talk of “the next day” (Jn 1:29) this day is preceded by a day That day can be called the first day, a day that is dominated by the preaching of John (Jn 1:19-28). Also, something precedes that first day and that is what is written in the first part of John 1 (Jn 1:1-18). That part is a general introduction to the whole Gospel. It is about the Word that is eternal and has become flesh and thus entered the world, connecting eternity with time and life on earth. As soon as that is the case, the testimony of John the baptist sounds. John the baptist is bound to the Old Testament, but his coming closes that period (Mt 11:13). It is about Him Who comes after him.

He points to Him “the next day” (Jn 1:29) as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world and testifies of Him that He is the Son of God (Jn 1:29-34). That is a stand-alone testimony about the Person and work of Christ, the results of which extend to all eternity.

The subsequent “next day” (Jn 1:35) Christ becomes the point of attraction for believers (Jn 1:35-42). We can relate this to the time in which we live and in which the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, forms the church and

connects her to Himself. This may be experienced when believers gather around Him (Mt 18:20).

On yet another "next day" (Jn 1:43) we hear the testimony of Nathanael. In this testimony, Nathanael confesses that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel. Thus Nathanael, as a God-fearing Israelite, got to know Him from Psalm 2 (Psa 2:6-7). Nathanael is a picture of the believing remnant of Israel that will acknowledge Him as Son of God and King of Israel. This will happen when He returns to His people Israel after the period of the church to fulfill the long-promised blessing for that people.

Then and finally, John 2 speaks of "the third day" (Jn 2:1). The third day in scripture often speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and thus the introduction of a new order of affairs. Here we see Christ in the realm of peace, where He brings blessing and joy to His people and through them to the whole earth. That is why John, in connection with the "third day", speaks of a wedding. It is an illustration of the "greater things" which the Lord has spoken of in the last verse of the previous chapter (Jn 1:50-51).

The fact that it is a blessing in which the people of Israel will also participate can be seen from the mention that "the mother of Jesus" was also there. For Christ was born of Israel (Rom 9:4-5). Besides the general blessing for the whole earth there is also a special blessing for Israel. That blessing can only come when this people, i.e. a believing remnant, will have converted to Him. In connection with that conversion there is also talk of a "third day" (Hos 6:1-2).

Jn 2:2-5 | No Wine

2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

As we see in the other Gospels, the Lord Jesus is regularly invited somewhere and often accepts the invitation. Here He is invited to the wedding together with the disciples He gathered around Himself in the previous chapter. Here we find a nice clue for all weddings of believers. Marriage is

a matter instituted by God (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:4-5; Eph 5:30-32) which only then comes to its full value and unfolding when there is a wedding, i.e. when it is celebrated in the presence of the Lord Jesus and the believers. It is an acknowledgment of His institution of marriage and a request for His blessing on it.

By the way, it seems that the Lord has been invited here, but that He has not been particularly noticed. He is One of the other guests and that is a place that does not suit Him. Where He is, He should be given first place.

At some point there is a lack of wine. This is a disaster for a wedding, because it means the end of the joy of which the wine is a picture (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15). The mother of the Lord Jesus notices this and reports it to her Son. She knows that He can provide for that need.

The Lord reprimands His mother with an answer that shows that she wants Him to act prematurely. Possibly her mother's feelings also play a role, which argues that this is a good opportunity for her Son to make Himself known. He does not, however, let Himself be guided by natural inclinations, which, incidentally, are good and appropriate. He is God Who knows perfectly what is the right time to act in all matters.

He reprimands His mother in an appropriate manner. She must wait for the hour or the moment He determines. In this way He indicates that the hour of His glorification has not come yet. First will come the hour in which He will surrender Himself to suffer and die (Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:27). Only after this the hour of His glorification will come (Jn 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

We see in His reprimand of Mary a clear proof of how misplaced the veneration of Mary is. She too was a fallible person, no matter how privileged she was to be the mother of the Lord Jesus. She needed the redemption He brought about on the cross just like any other human being.

Mary did not resist the reprimand of her Son. She understood it and accepted it as justified. This can be seen from her words to the servants. Her confidence in Him remained unshaken. She knows that He will give outcome, but in His time. That is why she instructs the servants to do everything He says.

These are the last words we have from Mary in the Bible. Every word of the sentence “whatever He says to you, do it” can be emphasized.

1. ‘Whatever’ means: whatever it may be.
2. ‘He’ is the Lord Jesus, the Commander, Who speaks.
3. ‘Says’ refers to the words He speaks.
4. ‘To you’ is everyone who is addressed personally.
5. ‘Do’ is to execute what He says.
6. ‘It’ or ‘that’ should be done and not anything else; not acting as one sees fit.

Jn 2:6-10 | The Lord Turns Water Into Wine

6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, “Draw [some] out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it [to him]. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, 10 and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when [the people] have drunk freely, [then he serves] the poorer [wine; but] you have kept the good wine until now.”

There are six stone waterpots. They have been placed there so that the guests can comply with the Jewish rules for purification. The contents of the waterpots vary from two to three gallons, or two or three times thirty-nine liters. The Lord gives the order to fill the waterpots with water. It seems that they are empty.

This symbolically shows that according to the Jewish practice of purification no purity is to be expected toward God. The Lord in other Gospels strongly condemns the outer purity pursued by the Jewish purification practices (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-16). People who adhere to an outward ritual make themselves important. They lack true joy because there is no fellowship with Christ. Only He can change those hollow, dead rituals by the water He gives and which He turns into wine.

The Lord's command is obeyed and the waterpots are filled to the brim with water. It is good to respond to the Lord's command with the utmost obedience. Then the blessing is also greatest. We can also see that He always gives commands that people can fulfill, and that He then does what people cannot do. In the same way He commands people to remove the stone lying against the tomb of Lazarus, after which He calls Lazarus to life (Jn 11:39,43).

After the waterpots have been filled with water, He says to draw out of the waterpots and bring it to the headwaiter. This man is responsible for the progress of the feast. He is therefore in a pickle about the situation and is most interested in a solution. They bring what they have drawn out from the waterpots to the headwaiter. Then it turns out that the Lord has turned the water into wine. He has done so without any special word or action.

It is a beautiful picture of how joy enters a person's life. First, a man must be purified by the Word of God – of which the water is a picture (Jn 13:5-11; 15:3; Eph 5:26). This happens when he sees himself as a sinner in the light of God's Word, confesses his sins, and believes in the Savior Jesus Christ. The result is joy. This will also happen with the recreation of heaven and earth for the realm of peace. When purified by judgment, general joy can come on earth.

The headwaiter tastes the water that the servants bring him. He does not taste water, but wine. When the servants draw out the water from the waterpots, it is still water, but when the headwaiter tastes it, he tastes wine. Christ, by His power, has created a wonder that no one has seen happening, but the results of which are enjoyed by those who taste it.

After His Divine omniscience with Nathanael (Jn 1:49), the Lord here shows His Divine omnipotence. Anyone can 'taste' His omnipotence, but only those who 'do whatever He says you to do' can see Who is behind these acts of omnipotence. The headwaiter does not know where the wine comes from. He only enjoys the result. The servants however do know where the wine comes from. After all, they filled the waterpots with water and then draw some out. But they don't know how the water turned into wine.

The headwaiter does not ask the servants how they got this good wine, but calls the bridegroom. He concludes without further investigation that the bridegroom is responsible for this state of affairs. He does not think of a wonder and certainly not of the Lord Jesus, but has his own natural explanation. This is how unbelieving people react to everything they experience. They see creation, but the Son of God is denied as the origin.

The Lord's actions are not like those of humans. People first want the good, and when they have exhausted their possibilities for the good, they go to a lesser quality. With Him it is the other way around. He keeps the good for later. For faith that is a great encouragement. The believer may know that there is fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord (Psa 16:11). Christ Himself went a way of suffering, seeing the joy He would enjoy at the end of that way (Heb 12:2). It is also a great encouragement for people in deep misery. The Lord brings every person who calls to Him from the depths to the greatest height.

Jn 2:11 | The Beginning of the Signs

11 This beginning of [His] signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

In this first sign the glory of the Lord Jesus is revealed in grace. In Him the glory of God who had to withdraw from Israel, from His temple, because of the sins of His people (Eze 11:23), returns. That glory had returned to heaven. Now God's glory has returned to earth in the Person of the Son.

This first sign contains an important lesson about the revelation of His glory that we must learn in order to truly see and enjoy His glory. Indeed, in this first of His signs it becomes clear that there can only be lasting joy (wine) if this joy is based on purification (water).

Through this sign the disciples are confirmed in their growing faith. Mary expected the Lord to do a wonder. And what He did was a wonder, yet John does not call it that. He does not want to emphasize the performance of wonders, but the *meaning* of this special event. John is inspired by the Spirit to present the special acts as signs that make clear the purpose of the coming of the Lord Jesus. That purpose is to bring people into the joy of

His kingdom and even higher, into the joy of fellowship with the Father and with Himself (Jn 15:11; 17:13; 1Jn 1:4).

After this first sign of turning water into wine, John included more signs of the Lord in his Gospel: three healings (Jn 4:53-54; 5:9; 9:6-7), a resurrection from the dead (Jn 11:42-43), a feeding (Jn 6:1-15) and a fish catch (Jn 21:6). The Lord has done more than John mentions, but the signs John mentions serve the special purpose that the reader of his Gospel will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that whoever believes has life in His Name (Jn 20:30-31).

Jn 2:12-17 | Cleansing the Temple

12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and [His] brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. 13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated [at their tables]. 15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove [them] all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."

After the Lord has revealed His glory in Cana, He goes down to Capernaum. He takes the initiative, He leads the way, while His mother, His brothers and His disciples go with Him. Joseph is missing. The last time he is mentioned is when the Lord Jesus is twelve years old (Lk 2:48). No doubt he died before the Lord's public appearance. The brothers of the Lord do not yet believe in Him at this time (Jn 7:5). Later they have come to faith (Acts 1:14).

The Lord goes up to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover. This is the first Passover that is mentioned during His life on earth (Jn 6:4; 11:55). It is significant that John speaks of "the Passover of the Jews". This means that God's Spirit does not see it here as "the LORD's Passover" as it was originally intended (Exo 12:11; Lev 23:5). The Jews have made it a feast of their own (cf. Jn 5:1; 7:2). They take no account of God's righteous and holy

demands and His purpose with this feast. The true Passover, Christ (1Cor 5:7), is present and they reject Him. How, then, can they celebrate a feast that is pleasing to God?

On the occasion of the feast many Jews came to Jerusalem from all over the land. Those who came from far away did not bring sacrificial animals. God has arranged it so that such Israelites can take money and buy sacrificial animals in Jerusalem (Deu 14:24-26). It is not about such a situation when the Lord finds the vendors of sacrificial animals and the money changers in the temple. The people who sit there to sell are people who are out to make as much profit as possible. They do not count with God, they only think of themselves. This evokes indignation on the part of the Lord, which leads Him to cleanse the temple with a hand-made scourge made of cords.

This cleansing of the temple takes place before the Lord begins His public performance. In the other Gospels, another cleansing of the temple takes place at the end of His life on earth (Mt 21:12; Mk 11:15; Lk 19:45). The fact that John mentions the cleansing of the temple as early as the beginning of His performance is proof that He begins where the other evangelists end. The other Gospels work toward the rejection of the Lord by the people and vice versa also toward the rejection of Israel by the Lord. In this Gospel, Christ is rejected from the beginning and the people are also rejected by Him (Jn 1:11).

We see in this action of the Lord a foreshadowing of *Yahweh* – that is the Lord Jesus – Who suddenly comes to His temple to judge (Mal 3:1). Bringing blessing and joy through repentance, as we see in the previous history, is preceded by a purification in judgment. We see this in the cleansing of the temple. In this center of religious life, it becomes clear how necessary cleansing is.

The same we find for example in the roman-catholic relics. They can be bought by ‘the believers’. Also in protestantism that trade exists. More and more people work with candles and pictures. Reproductions of nails with which the Lord Jesus would have been crucified are also a popular article. Roman-catholicism is not only a religious power but also an economic power. The Lord Jesus will judge both powers (Rev 17:16; 18:1-3).

Yet the Lord still calls the temple “the house of My Father”. Not that God still lives there. His glory has left the temple (Eze 10:18; 11:23) and neither is the ark in it. This temple was built by Herod, without a commission from God. Yet, when the Son of God enters the temple and as long as He is there, God’s glory is there, and the temple is His Father’s house.

He commands all those who have made His Father’s house a place of business to pick up their belongings and take them away. He acts as the Lord with Divine rights. Through His action the disciples are reminded of a quotation from Psalm 69 (Psa 69:9a). Him Who openly identifies Himself with the interests of His Father and His house has been spoken of by the Spirit of prophecy. That comes to mind for the disciples. How good it is to know God’s Word so that the Spirit may remind us of it in certain circumstances to our encouragement.

Jn 2:18-22 | Question about the Sign of His Authority

18 The Jews then said to Him, “What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?” 19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20 The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” 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.

The Jews react very differently from the disciples to whom the Spirit can remind the Word. He cannot do this with the Jews because they reject the Son. They ask Him to show them a sign as proof that He has authority for this action. Jews are always looking for signs (1Cor 1:22-23). In the Gospels they always ask for it (Mt 12:39-40; 16:4). But he who is blind to the greatest sign, that is He Himself, cannot be convinced by any other sign.

Yet He gives a sign. The sign He points out to them has to do with His body. He indicates to the Jews that they will break off His body, kill it. However, that is not His end. The Lord says He will rise again after three days. He speaks here of the power He has to rise from the dead Himself (Jn 10:17).

The Jews do not understand what He is talking about. They think that He is talking about the temple of Herod, which took forty-six years to build. As unbelievers, they cannot understand that either (1Cor 2:14).

John explains to us as his readers that the Lord Jesus spoke of His body as a temple (cf. 1Cor 6:19). Even the disciples did not understand the full meaning of His words until after His resurrection. Then they also give powerful testimony of His resurrection (Acts 2:24-32). His resurrection proves that He is God's Son with power (Rom 1:4).

Jn 2:23-25 | Jesus Himself Knows What Is in Man

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Here we come to a new part of the Gospel, which deals with man and the condition he is in. In the first part of this chapter (verses 1-12) the *joy* of the kingdom is presented in the change from water to wine. In the second part of the chapter (verses 13-17) the *power* of the kingdom is represented in the cleansing of the temple, after which the *right* of the Lord to the kingdom is established in verses 18-22.

Now it has yet to be determined who can enter the kingdom with Him. The Jews take it for granted that they will enter the kingdom. But the Lord Himself does not entrust Himself to them. Therefore, in John 3, follows what is necessary to enter.

During the Passover, the Lord Jesus, *Yahweh* and Messiah, is in the city that God has chosen. The Passover is the feast that shows the most of God's mercy toward His people. The many lambs slaughtered on that day should have reminded the Jews that God is a righteous Judge Who must judge the sinner unless he hides behind the blood of the Passover Lamb. Now the Lamb of God stands before them, but they do not acknowledge Him. What they do see, however, is that He does many signs. That leads many to believe in His Name.

As far as external circumstances are concerned, everything seems to be ready for Christ to be accepted by His people. After all, there are many who believe in His Name. Belief here, however, is not the inner conviction of the truth of God that leads to submission to God. These people's belief is their judgment of what gives them satisfaction, of what they experience as pleasant. Their belief is based on what they see. They conclude that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah, but they do not submit to God and do not accept His testimony. Man sits on the throne and judges. Their judgment stems from their affections.

What makes us feel happy, we easily believe. But we resist and reject what makes us nothing and condemns us. As long as Jesus can be seen as the improver of mankind and the circumstances in which man lives, there is the quickest and warmest welcome. He then complements a deficiency in and of man. Man has a lot of good things, but is still missing something for optimal happiness. If Jesus wants to provide this, man can maintain himself and even shine. But how will he receive what makes him nothing, what condemns him spiritually, what gives him the serious warning of eternal judgment and the lake of fire? He hates that, and also the Person about Whom God is concerned.

Christ entrusts Himself only to those who have a broken and contrite heart (Psa 51:17) and bow in the dust before God with confession of sins. Then there is repentance that has been worked by the grace of God. It is sobering to read that the Lord does not entrust Himself to people who do believe in Him. The cause is that we are dealing with Someone Who has become flesh, but Who is also the omniscient God and the Judge of the living and the dead. He knows all men perfectly. No one can pretend anything to Him. He is not led by outward things.

He knows the value of their belief and that there is no sense of sin before God or recognition of the need for remorse and repentance. No one needs to tell Him anything about man's condition. He knows perfectly what is present in man, what drives man. The reason He does not entrust Himself to them lies in man's incorrigible wickedness and his failure to see it. In this Gospel, the Son of God establishes man's incorrigible depravity from the very beginning, for God is not in his thoughts, but his own self is central.

John 3

Jn 3:1-2 | Nightly Visit

*1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;
2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*

At the end of the previous chapter, we read that the Lord Jesus knows what is in man and therefore He does not entrust Himself to them. Now a man comes to Him. It's not just anyone. It's a man of the Pharisees. His name is mentioned, Nicodemus, and also his function, he is a ruler of the Jews. So he is a deeply religious man who is also held in high esteem by the people. The Lord calls him “the teacher of Israel” (verse 10).

Nicodemus, like his colleagues, has seen the signs that the Lord has done. With him, it has awakened a longing for the Lord Jesus that has brought him closer to God inwardly and makes him seek Him. He is such a single person in the crowd who feels the need to get to know Christ better. That is why he goes to Him for a personal meeting.

As an orthodox and also a religious, distinguished Jew, Nicodemus should have gone to the temple and do so by day. However, he doesn't go to the temple but to the Lord and he does so by night. Whoever has been touched in his conscience and shows interest in Christ, like Nicodemus, immediately feels that the world will be against him. That is why he comes by night. He is afraid of the world because he knows that he is dealing with God and also knows that the world is resisting God.

Nicodemus addresses the Lord Jesus as “Rabbi”, which means “Teacher” (Jn 1:38). This is the title with which scribes are addressed by their disciples. He acknowledges Him as a Teacher. He then declares that he and his colleagues – he speaks of “we” – know that Christ has come from God as a Teacher. The signs they have seen of Him cannot be denied. Like his colleagues, Nicodemus is convinced that He is a special Teacher. Yet he is

still far away from the true knowledge of Him. He speaks of the Lord as One of Whom it can be said that God is *with* Him, as if He were a prophet. Yet his interest is not based on a purely intellectual conviction. There is a deeper interest in him, worked by the Holy Spirit. He is not yet aware of this, but it drives him to the Lord. However, he only sees Him as a Teacher and also that God is with Him. In doing so he thinks he is paying a great tribute to Him; however, it falls completely short with regard to His Person.

By the way, it is beautiful to see that Christ is always available to anyone who sincerely seeks – and Nicodemus is such a person – even though it is in the night. He does not blame Nicodemus for seeking Him at this time.

The conversation that develops between the Lord and Nicodemus is one of the several personal conversations of the Lord Jesus that John mentions in his Gospel. For us this is an important indication to have an eye for the individual.

Jn 3:3 | Born Again

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Lord does not respond to the tribute of Nicodemus and his fellow Pharisees, but tells him what is necessary to really get to know Him. Nicodemus does not need an education from Him as a Teacher, but a completely new nature. This goes much further than being convinced in conscience. Nicodemus does not yet know himself as completely depraved and spiritually dead in sin. He needs to be made alive and not a new idea that can enrich his life.

God does not teach and improve human nature. Man needs to be renewed in the origin of his nature. Without that renewal he cannot see the kingdom of God. That kingdom of God stands here before Nicodemus. It is present and visible in the Son of the carpenter (cf. Lk 17:21). To see and acknowledge that inwardly, one has to be born again, that is to receive new life in a completely new way and from a completely new source.

The statement that a new birth is necessary is introduced by the Lord with “truly, truly” (Greek: “amen, amen”). This double “truly” occurs 25 times in this Gospel. The Lord hereby declares the absolutely certain truth of what He is going to say, whereas He underlines the importance of it once more by adding “I say to you”.

This makes it clear how important the content is of what He is saying here. It is indeed of immeasurable importance. It is the only way to see anything of God’s kingdom. He who has not been born again will see nothing of it, even though he is still so well versed in the Scriptures and even though he has such a high religious function as Nicodemus.

Jn 3:4 | Questions About the New Birth

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

That Nicodemus sees no more than the natural course of events is evident from his reaction to the Lord’s words. He presupposes something that is in fact impossible, but which also shows that he does not understand what the Lord means by a new birth from a totally new source.

The reason for this is that Nicodemus does not yet recognize himself as a sinner. Otherwise he would have understood that even if it were possible for a human being to be born a second time from his mother’s womb, it would still be flesh born from flesh. No clean thing can ever come out of an unclean being (Job 14:4; Psa 51:5). Man would still be blind and unable to see the kingdom of God and therefore be as far away from it as ever.

Jn 3:5-8 | Born of Water and the Spirit

5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Again the Lord introduces His answer with the impressive “truly, truly, [amen, amen] I say to you” to underline again the importance of the words

He then speaks. He points out that in order to be born again two things are absolutely necessary: water and the Spirit. He does not say “of water and of the Spirit”, but He uses the word “of” only once. By saying it this way, water and the Spirit are intimately linked. They cannot be separated, but work together inseparably.

“Water” is sometimes thought of as baptismal water, but that cannot possibly be the case. If it were baptismal water, someone who has not been baptized would not be able to enter the kingdom. This would mean that the criminal on the cross who repented could not enter the kingdom, because he died unbaptized. However, the Lord assured him that he would be in Paradise with Him (Lk 23:43).

On the other hand, someone baptized would receive a new nature by baptism. This in turn would mean that only those who have been baptized would enter the kingdom and also that he who was baptized could never be lost, for he would have received eternal life through baptism. Both teachings are obviously follies. In addition, baptism with water nowhere speaks of giving life, but of death (Rom 6:3-4).

So what does the water represent? Water represents the Word of God in its cleansing power (Psa 119:9; Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26). The Lord Jesus speaks here of water as a picture of the cleansing power of the Word of God applied in the power of the Spirit.

If an unbelieving person reads or hears the Word of God, the Word will judge his whole life. He will see himself as a sinner. At the same time as he acknowledges this, the Word and the Spirit work new life in him. Through this new life he will receive new thoughts and affections. The nature of the Spirit is received and becomes active. Such a person is a new creation (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

The Lord establishes in verse 6 that flesh always remains flesh and that what is born of the Spirit is partaker of the nature of the Spirit. Each of these two natures bears fruit according to its nature (cf. Gen 1:12). Thus He underlines what He has just said about being born of a new source, of the Spirit of God. The water is not mentioned in verse 6, because it concerns the characteristic work of the Spirit. The Word without the Spirit does not

work a new life, for it is the Spirit Who makes alive and gives the life of Christ.

Another thing that is important to realize well is the fact that the two natures, flesh and Spirit, remain completely separate. There is no way they can be brought into harmony with each other. There is constant enmity between them (Gal 5:17). The 'flesh' can never be transformed into the 'Spirit'.

The Lord mildly reproaches Nicodemus that he should not have been surprised at what He said. He establishes a general truth. The word "you" in the sentence "you must be born again" is plural. This "be born again" applies to him personally as well as to the Jew and all people in general.

Nicodemus, as "the teacher of Israel" (verse 10), could have known from Ezekiel 36 what the Lord speaks about (Eze 36:24-32). This is about a profound cleansing of Israel that the people will undergo at the beginning of the realm of peace. Yet the meaning of that word has passed Nicodemus by because he does not consider it as applicable to himself. That heathens have to become clean, he can understand that, but he himself, as a Jew ...?

Like the wind, the Spirit is invisible ("wind" and "spirit" are the same word in Greek). The origin of the wind and where it goes remains unknown to us (Job 38:24), but we can perceive its working (Psa 29:5; 107:25; 1Kgs 19:11). So it is with the Spirit. When the Spirit, through the Word, works the new birth in someone, no one knows how it went. Like the wind, the Spirit cannot be controlled or directed by us.

What is possible, however, is that we perceive His workings. In this way His work becomes visible in someone who has been born again because from his new birth he loves the Lord Jesus, he speaks about Him with love and does His will. This applies to "everyone who is born of the Spirit". Therefore, it applies not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles.

Jn 3:9 | How Can These Things Be?

| 9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

Again Nicodemus reacts from a human perspective to the Lord's teaching. He asks how these things can be. Yet the question he asks makes it clear

that there is a growing awareness that the Lord Jesus is telling him the truth. He feels that the Lord can provide for the true needs of his soul. Furthermore, in this section we hear nothing more from the mouth of Nicodemus.

Jn 3:10-12 | The Earthly and the Heavenly Things

9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. 12 If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

The Lord begins the answer to Nicodemus' question again with a mild reproach. He points out to Nicodemus that he could have known what He meant if he had read the prophets correctly. Nicodemus knows the prophets, but not their real meaning because his thinking is directed toward the glory of Israel and not toward the glory of the Messiah. As 'the teacher of Israel' he should have known what the Lord means. After all, he will have had sections like Isaiah 44 and 55 and the aforementioned Ezekiel 36 often enough for his attention (Isa 44:3; 55:1; Eze 36:24-32). Yet because he was not born again, he has never understood its true meaning.

After this mild reproach, the Lord does not close the discussion, but continues His teaching and even extends it to the heavenly things. For the third time He uses the double "truly" followed by "I say to you" to emphasize the importance of His teaching. He assures Nicodemus that He does not talk about unfamiliar things. He is perfectly able to speak about the things He has just said because He has seen what He is testifying of. Only God can say that He 'knows' what He is talking about. With Him it is perfect 'knowing'. He possesses the perfect knowledge of the essence of all things.

The Lord Jesus knows what is in man, for He knows what is in man (Jn 2:25). He knows what is in God, for He knows God because He is God. He makes God known (Jn 17:6,26). The Lord speaks in the 'We'-form because He testifies together with the Holy Spirit. He and the Holy Spirit are Divine Persons Who have perfect knowledge of all things. Like the Son, the Holy Spirit also knows perfectly what is in man and what is in God. He

is perfectly familiar with this. No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God (1Cor 2:11).

For a man to be able to share and know the things of God, he must first be born again and receive the Spirit. Through the new birth he is able to understand the things of God. The natural, unborn man does not accept the things of God because they are spiritually appraised (1Cor 2:14). He cannot even accept those things because he has no part in the life that is needed to do so.

The Lord has spoken about the earthly things, that is, things that the prophet Ezekiel has communicated and that are necessary for the earthly blessings in the realm of peace. The new birth is an earthly matter that is necessary to enter the earthly realm of peace. And Nicodemus does not even understand this. So how then would he understand anything if the Lord is going to speak about heavenly things?

For the kingdom of God has not only earthly but also heavenly aspects (Heb 12:22-24; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20). The heavenly things will be fully revealed by the Spirit after Christ has shed His blood and ascended into heaven. In the Son of God Who is speaking here with Nicodemus, these heavenly things are present in perfection. Only Nicodemus does not (yet) have an eye for them.

Jn 3:13 | The Son of Man Who Is in heaven

13 No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man [Darby Translation adds: who is in heaven].

No one can speak of the heavenly things better than the Son. As He speaks here, no prophet has ever been able to speak of himself. Prophets were mediators used by God to speak to people. The Son is not a mediator through Whom God speaks, but He is God Himself (Heb 1:1). As He speaks with Nicodemus on earth, He is present in heaven. Therefore, He speaks on earth about things He sees in heaven simultaneously. People can ascend into heaven, angels can descend from heaven, but they change places. Only the Son of Man remains where He was before because He is also the only begotten Son of God. He is the answer to the challenging questions of Agur in Proverbs 30 (Pro 30:4).

The Lord Jesus never ceases to be God. Therefore, while He is on earth talking to Nicodemus, He can say that He is in heaven at the same time. We have also read of Him that He declares the Father on earth as the Son Who *is* in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1:18). However, He says that as the Son of Man! This means that we cannot separate His being God from His being Man. He is one Person. As the Son of Man, He is therefore the perfectly reliable Proclaimer of heavenly things. Only He Who is in heaven can communicate heavenly things to us. The question is whether my heart is ready to accept these heavenly things.

Jn 3:14-17 | God So Loved the World

14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

Once the Lord has mentioned the heavenly things, He gives additional teaching. In order to understand the heavenly things, the new birth is in fact not enough. The new birth is necessary, but it is connected to earthly things. The new birth enables to know things on earth in the way that God looks at and judges them. To know and enjoy the heavenly things more is needed. For this we need to know the meaning of the cross.

To illustrate His teaching about the cross the Lord Jesus refers to what Moses did with the serpent in the wilderness. This is an example of what will happen to Him as the Son of Man. Lifting up the serpent in the wilderness looked forward to lifting up the Son of Man on the cross.

Moses made the bronze serpent in the image of the fiery serpents (Num 21:9). These fiery serpents were the plague from which the people died. Moses lifted up the image of the serpent he made of bronze so that everyone could look at it wherever he was in the camp. Whoever did was healed. This required the acknowledgment of being bitten and being certain of dying, and the faith that only one look at the lifted-up serpent would give life. Nothing else would free them from the effects of the plague, however

cleverly conceived. Moses thus made the plague a symbol of salvation, and that salvation was obtained only by simply looking at that symbol. Looking at it meant the acknowledgment of being bitten by the serpent, resulting in death.

This is an example of what God did to His Son, the Son of Man. In Him God has sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh (Rom 8:3). When the Son of Man was lifted up on the cross, He was made sin by God. The Son of God was rejected by His people and lifted up on the cross (Jn 8:28).

God, in His unfathomable wisdom, used man's greatest crime, the culmination of his sins, to fulfill His plans by making His Son sin. Sin could not be removed in any other way. Sin could only be removed through God's judgment of Him Who alone was able to bear the judgment on sin. And it had to be a Man, the Son of Man, so that it could be satisfactory for men.

This work had to be done *for or on behalf of us*, for the purpose of the gift of eternal life, while the new birth, of which the Lord spoke to Nicodemus, is a work that is happening *within us*. Both for the work *within us* and for the work *for us*, He used the word "must" (verses 7,14), for both were necessary if we were to enter into a blessed connection with God.

The glorious result is for everyone who believes. It is about faith in Him. The believer looks away from himself and looks at the Lord Jesus. Just as the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent only had to look at the lifted up serpent to be saved, now a person only has to look at the Christ lifted up on the cross in order not to perish. On the cross God made Christ to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Cor 5:21).

Through faith in the Crucified we acknowledge the rightness and righteousness of God's judgment for us, but also that this judgment has already been exercised. As a result, we no longer look at ourselves, but at Him Who bore the judgment on our behalf. We shall not perish because He, when made sin, bore the judgment. That is the parallel with the bronze serpent.

The Lord goes beyond this comparison with the bronze serpent. It is not only that we shall not perish and do not come into judgment, but there is

also a tremendous positive result of Christ's work on the cross. We see that positive result in what we have received as a result of that work which is "eternal life".

Eternal life is not life that lasts forever, because then the unbelievers would have that too. Eternal life is life that is eternal in itself, it is life without beginning and without end. Eternal life has been revealed to us in the Lord Jesus. He Himself is eternal life (1Jn 5:20). However, it is not only revealed in Him, but it is given to us.

It is a gift beyond our comprehension that comes from the love of God. The giving of eternal life is directly connected to the love of God through the word "for" in verse 16. Christ's work on the cross originated in the love of God. And when God reveals His love, He withholds nothing.

He gave His Son to save the lost who were in the power of sin (Rom 8:3). They were bitten by the serpent, which is the devil (Rev 12:9). The Lord Jesus, the only begotten Son, was made sin and punished with God's righteous judgment. As a result, the ruling power that worked in our old life has been condemned.

However, a believer may look at the lifted up Son of Man and be relieved as to the problem of sin, but may not be at peace with God. This is the case if he continues to see God as a Judge Whom he fears, but Who fortunately can no longer harm him because Christ stands between him and God. To take that fear away, the Lord Jesus now reveals that it all comes from the love of God. God is not Someone to be afraid of, but Someone Who has shown all His love for the world by surrendering the Dearest He had.

When it comes to the love of God, it cannot be limited to Israel, but goes out to the entire world. Everything in this Gospel crosses the borders of Israel. God's love cannot be limited. The greatness of God's love is seen in the giving of His "only begotten Son". That Name indicates the highest and unique place the Son has in the love of God Who gave the Son.

Anyone who accepts this gift of God in faith knowing that he shall otherwise perish, receives eternal life as a special gift. This eternal life includes two great things: it is the Lord Jesus Himself (1Jn 5:20) and it is knowing the Father and the Son of the Father, Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3).

Faith in the Lord Jesus opens a glory to everyone who believes that no believer in the Old Testament has ever heard of. This couldn't be, because then the Son was not yet given by God. Now that He has given His only begotten Son and His Son has glorified Him in His way and work on earth, it is God's joy to let all who believe in His only begotten Son share in all that is of the Son in the most glorious way imaginable.

When God has thus revealed His love, the objects of His grace through the work of His Son are no longer limited to the borders of Israel. If God reveals Himself in His Son as a Savior-God, it befits His love that the good news is sent to the world as a whole. He did not send His Son as a Judge, but as a Savior.

Jn 3:18-21 | Believing or Not Believing in the Son

18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

He who accepts the Lord Jesus in faith as Savior is not judged and is no longer an object of judgment. The Person of the Son of God is the great test for all. It is poignant that judgment is attached to not believing "in the name of the only begotten Son of God". This emphasizes the rejection of the One Who is the unique Son of God to Whom all His pleasure is directed. He who despises that, sins against his life.

The law is not the great test for man. The law did make man acquainted with God's holy demands. Thus man's sin has become manifest because he has not fulfilled God's holy demands. As a result, judgment must come, without there being a way out. The law has only judgment (Gal 3:10). The Son offers that way out.

Man is no longer judged by the law that was given to Israel, but by the light that has come into the world. The light reveals everything, not only

who man is, but also Who God is. It is no longer a question of keeping the law, but of seeing oneself in the light and believing in the Son of God.

The presence of light shows the utter depravity of man, who consciously rejects light in favor of darkness. This is because his deeds are evil and he does not want to give them up. It is therefore not only about unbelief. His deeds are the great blockade to believe. That is why the sinner is judged before the great white throne according to his deeds (Rev 20:12), not because of his unbelief. People don't want to believe because they do evil things and like to do them.

When the light comes that exposes these deeds, these people resist. They don't want to stop doing evil at all. Their hatred of the light becomes public. They don't want to come to the light, because that would mean that they would have to stop doing evil things and evil deeds. They choose to stay in the darkness in order to continue doing evil. That's why they reject the light. How can such people be fit to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col 1:12)?

Doing the truth is the opposite of doing evil. He who does the truth comes to the light. Truth and light belong together. Nothing is hidden in the truth, everything takes place in the light. He who does the truth shows that he lives out of God. His life gives testimony that God is the source of his deeds. His life has nothing that is done secretly.

Jn 3:22-26 | The Disciples of John

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and [people] were coming and were being baptized— 24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

After the impressive teaching about the new birth and eternal life, we follow the Lord with His disciples to the land of Judea. He stops there

with His disciples, while people come to Him to be baptized. He does not baptize Himself, but has His disciples do so (Jn 4:1-2).

While He receives people who want to be baptized, John is also busy baptizing people. John does this in a place where there is a lot of water, an indication that baptism was not by sprinkling, but by immersion, because a lot of water is needed for that. John the evangelist mentions in between that John the baptist had not yet been thrown into prison. This statement shows that the above happened before the Lord Jesus began His public service work. The Lord began it when John was thrown into prison (Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:20).

While John is busy baptizing people, some of his disciples have a discussion with a Jew about purification. Both the disciples of John and the Jews were still bound by the religious statutes belonging to the life of the people under the law. Then there are always disputes about the correct interpretation of certain acts. Here it is about a purification ritual.

No details are given, but we know how attached the Pharisees were to their traditions in this matter (Mt 15:2-3; Mk 7:3-4; Lk 11:38-39). Later, the Pharisees will want to entice the Lord into such disputes again and again. People who attach great importance to traditions and rituals always defend these things with a battle of words. Because the disciples of John are not free from this either, they let themselves be tempted to do so. The Lord has never had a battle of words. He spoke the truth.

After the discussion about the difference of opinion about purification, there are disciples of John who observe another difference. They see the Lord at work and how all people are coming to Him. They address John as their “rabbi” and tell him what they have seen.

They refer to the Lord Jesus as “He who was with you” and “to whom you have testified”. They have no enmity against Him, but are ignorant of Him. They do not see Him as the Lamb of God and the Son of God, even though John clearly spoke about Him that way (Jn 1:29,34). It seems as if they see the Lord as a competitor of their master. In any case, they do not know what to think of Him and His actions. In their thinking John still occupies too great a place, so that they have no eye for the glory of the Son of God.

Jn 3:27-30 | Difference Between Christ and John

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

John gives testimony of the impossibility of receiving the truth about Christ from themselves. In order to gain insight into Who the Lord Jesus is, the eyes must be opened from heaven, which is by God. It is impossible for a man to accept this without a revelation from God. After all, there is no one who seeks God (Rom 3:11). John points out to his disciples that they themselves have heard what he has said that he is not the Christ and that they, in turn, bear witness to what John has said about himself.

His disciples also know that he was sent out ahead of the Christ. John did not claim anything of Christ for himself in any way. He knows his place in relation to Him. Every true servant will know that he is only a messenger and that the purpose of his mission is to point to the Lord Jesus (Acts 26:16-17). No one can preach without being sent (Rom 10:15).

After testifying about himself in connection with Christ, John then speaks about his personal relationship to Him and the joy he finds in it. He speaks of Him as "the bridegroom". He also mentions the bride, without saying who that is. Here too John the baptist takes the right place. He knows that he is not in that intimate relationship with Christ as the bride.

Although he does not count himself as belonging to the bride, he also has a special relationship with the Bridegroom: that of a friend. He is the friend of the Bridegroom who rejoices in everything the Bridegroom says (Rev 19:7). When Simeon had the Lord Jesus in his arms, he could say that he could go in peace because his eyes had seen the salvation in Him Whom he had in his arms (Lk 2:28-32). In the same way, John can say that his joy is fulfilled now that he has heard the voice of the Bridegroom.

With that full joy in his heart, John expresses the desire that the Lord Jesus should increase, but that he should decrease. He speaks these words about himself and at the same time says this to his disciples. Also for them the

Lord Jesus must increase and he, John, decrease. This is the answer to the question about the difference between the Lord and him with which they came to him (verse 26). Thus every servant must step down so that in the hearts of those he serves all place and glory will be given to Christ.

Jn 3:31-34 | From Above and Above All

31 *“He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33 He who has received His testimony has set his seal to [this], that God is true. 34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.*

In verse 30 it is about *practice*, in verse 31 it is about *position*. Only of the Lord Jesus it can be said that He comes from above. He comes from above and is above all. Even though He humbled Himself so much, He always takes the first place in all things (Col 1:18).

For John and for every person applies that he is from the earth and speaks of the earth. Every human being is a creature and as such originates from the earth and therefore cannot but speak about things from an earthly point of view. A revelation from God to his heart is needed to get an eye for what is from above and for Him Who is from above and above all. He who comes from above comes from heaven.

John says twice that the Lord Jesus is above all. He is far above all what is on earth. On earth He testifies what He has seen and heard in heaven. Heaven is the dwelling place of God. The Lord Jesus testifies of God as His Father, but His testimony is not accepted by anyone. It becomes clear that man can have nothing to do with heaven. There is nothing of God and the Father in heaven that the Son has not seen and heard. He can testify of heavenly, eternal, Divine things, but because of the sin in which man is, man cannot receive this testimony.

If anyone has received His testimony, he has put the seal on the fact that God is true. For God has revealed it to him, and he has believed it. This is the essential character of living faith. This faith is not based on reason (Jn 2:23), but on a conviction worked in heart and conscience by God’s Spirit.

The Son is sent by God and He speaks the words of God. Whoever receives the spoken testimony of the Son also receives the words of God.

In all that Christ has spoken, the full power of the Holy Spirit is present without restriction. With Him there is no impediment to the Spirit making all things known from God. Also, in order to accept what He has spoken, God does not give His Spirit in a limited way, but in His fullness. We as believers have not received a little of the Spirit, but the Person of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). The fact that we often still only understand a little of the words of the Lord Jesus is due to the fact that we still expect so much from our flesh.

Jn 3:35-36 | The Father Loves the Son

35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

With all the glory already witnessed of the Son, He is, above all, the object of the Father's love. The Father has made the Son, because of His love for Him, the Possessor of all things. In His love for His Son, the Father has given Him all things into His hand to bless and control all these things with His hand. As the Son of the Father, He is the Heir of all things. This goes far beyond what He is as the Messiah and has in connection with Israel.

After the relationship of love between the Father and the Son, the relationship of each person to the Son is presented. The relationship to the Son determines everything and forever. Whoever believes in the Son already now receives the blessing of eternal life and shares in everything that belongs to the Son. But he who rejects Him has no part in anything except the wrath of God.

The cause through which one will not see life and through which the wrath of God remains upon him, is not obeying the Son. Not obeying the Son means that someone has not listened to the Word that the Son has spoken and has not bowed down in reverence to Him.

Not obeying the Son has two consequences. The one consequence is missing out on the life that such a person will never partake of until eternity.

The other consequence is the eternal partaking of God's wrath, which abides on him without ever ending.

The fact that someone *will not see* life precludes by definition universal reconciliation. This fixed fact leaves no room for the false teaching that all who are lost in one way or another will eventually see life at some point. That the wrath of God *abides* on someone means that he who is lost continues to exist as a person. It means the impossibility of annihilation of the soul of the unbeliever.

John 4

Jn 4:1-4 | From Judea via Samaria to Galilee

1 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), 3 He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. 4 And He had to pass through Samaria.

It says so humanly that “the Lord”, Who is the Omniscient, “knew”, in the sense of came to know. It is as if it is told to Him or that He hears it being told somewhere. In this we see His truly being Man in the foreground, yet He is the eternal God Who knows everything. This is the wonder of His Person that we cannot fathom. He learns that the Pharisees have heard that He makes and baptizes more disciples than John. ‘Making disciples’ is done by baptizing (Mt 28:19). The Pharisees also came to John’s baptism. They were not baptized by him, but denounced by him (Mt 3:7).

John was already a threat to their position, but now they hear that the Lord is attracting even more people. As a result, they feel even more threatened. Their hatred of Him becomes manifest because they practice evil things that He brings to light. They do not want to be exposed by Him (Jn 3:20). In order to withdraw Himself from their hatred for the moment, the Lord leaves Judea, where the Pharisees are strongly represented.

John the evangelist mentions in an interlude that the Lord Himself does not baptize, but that His disciples do. His disciples cannot but baptize into a living Messiah. He Himself knows that He must first suffer and die as the Son of Man and therefore He does not baptize.

He leaves Judea and returns to Galilee. His coming to Galilee is the moment when in the other Gospels His public service begins, through which in Galilee “a great light” is seen (Mt 4:12-17). His way to Galilee leads through Samaria. He had to go through there. It is a Divine ‘had to’, for this is how His Father determines His way. As true Man He opened His ear to the Father that morning (Isa 50:4), by which He knows that in Samaria He will meet a weary woman. God wants to use that encounter to

have a testimony among the nations that His Son is the Savior of the world (verse 42).

Jn 4:5-6 | By Jacob's Well

*5 So He *came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

The Lord comes to Sychar. John reminds us that this city is near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. This tells us about the relationship between Jacob and his son Joseph. We know that Joseph was the son of his father Jacob's love. Jacob had already given Joseph on one occasion a varicolored tunic as an expression of his love for him (Gen 37:3). He had also given Joseph a piece of land that he had bought from the sons of Hamor (Gen 33:19; Jos 24:32). In the relationship of love between Jacob and Joseph and its manifestations, we have a wonderful picture of the Father's love for the Son. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand (Jn 3:35).

Near Sychar is the well of Jacob. It is the well for the weary and thirsty pilgrim. The Lord Jesus is weary from His journey and sits down by the well as a weary Traveler. John again has an eye for detail and mentions that it is about the sixth hour.

We see how the Son of God shares in the general suffering of mankind when He sits there, tired from the journey, by the well to rest. He is content with that. He seeks nothing but to do the will of His Father, Who has led Him there. In what follows, we have a beautiful sequence of features or attributes of the Savior that all become visible in their full glory and splendor. Everything He says reveals His perfect Godhead. We see in Him that God is light and that God is love. From what He needs, it is clear that He is perfectly Man.

Jn 4:7-9 | An Encounter at the Well

*7 There *came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus *said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9*

*Therefore the Samaritan woman *said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*

While the Lord is sitting there, resting, a woman of Samaria comes to draw water from the well. We become witnesses to an extraordinarily meaningful encounter of a lonely, poor, sinful woman with the Judge of the Living and the Dead.

He opens the conversation with the question whether she wants to give Him, the eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, a drink. As Man, He depends on this woman for a sip of water. He Who has provided food and drink for an entire nation in a wilderness for forty years, He Who has turned water into wine and feeds a hungry crowd, asks someone else for a drink. He utters no command, but He takes the place of a humble Questioner toward a woman who lives in sin. Thus the Lord begins the conversation with this woman He knows through and through. He knows how to approach her in order to finally give her the full blessing He has for her.

This encounter has been meticulously prepared by God. When the Son of God and the woman meet, no one is present. The disciples had to leave and make room for her. They know nothing of this grace. The woman too comes to the well alone. She is not with the other women. In her solitude, she meets the Savior of the world through the wonderful guidance of God Who brought her there. What a meeting! Two lonely people meet each other. But Who was lonelier than He? The conversation is between Him and her personally, without possible interference or distraction from others.

The Samaritan woman is most astonished by the Lord's question. She sees that He is a Jew. She knows that in the eyes of the Jews she is 'only' a Samaritan woman and therefore has no significance. The contempt of Jews for Samaritans is great, so great, in fact, that Jews completely ignore the Samaritans. Jews are acting as if they don't exist. There is no relationship whatsoever with them. That is why she is amazed at how it is possible that He, Who is for her at the moment no more than "a Jew", is asking her for a drink.

Jn 4:10-15 | The Gift of God

*10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She *said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." 15 The woman *said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."*

In His respond, the Lord tells the woman about God Who has a gift. He says it in a way that awakens in her a longing for that gift. The Son does not present God as One Who demands, but as a Giver. If she knew the gift of God, which is eternal life in Him Who now speaks to her, she would reverse the roles. She would have asked Him a drink and He would have given her living water. God is the source of living water (Jer 2:13; Zec 14:8) and as God the Son He now offers that living water to men.

With this offer He wants to provide for her spiritual need, her spiritual thirst. He is able to quench that thirst. To this end He points to Himself as the Humble One Who is also the Son of the Father, yet Who has bowed down so deeply that He can ask a sinful woman for water. This is how close God has come to man in His Son, in Him Who is the true God and eternal life. With the words "who it is who says to you" He points to Himself as the weary and thirsty Man Who asks her for a sip of water and Who at the same time is the eternal Son of God. He is truly the gift of God to men.

Can God reveal more clearly that He is a Giver? The fact that she has no idea at this time doesn't change the fact of that great gift of God. If she had any notion of it, she would have asked living water from Him. It is the question of the life-giving Word of God that presents God to the hearts of those who long for this living water. If we have that desire, it becomes active in our heart and connects us to the Lord Jesus and all that is to be found in Him.

The woman, like Nicodemus in the previous chapter, can only think on a natural level. Consequently, she limits the Lord's words to the human resources on which she would depend to receive that living water. She asks Him where He can get the living water from. And is He perhaps greater than that which is of old, that has always met the needs, previously met the needs of Jacob and his family and possessions, and now meets her needs as well?

When there is no awareness of the glory of Christ, tradition is always an obstacle to accepting what comes from God. A great name and great gifts and a long tradition, blind us to God's work in Christ. As a result, the true Great is not recognized in His greatness.

The Lord is in the process of breaking through her traditions. He first points her to the water of the well. That water refreshes for a certain period of time, but after that there is thirst and the need to drink again. Water from a natural well quenches thirst for a while, but not forever. This is how God has ordained it for the creature. This is different for those who are given to drink from the Holy Spirit. That is what Christ then speaks about with regard to the water He offers. The water He gives not only delivers from restless search for peace, but gives so much more. That water is a source of joy that someone receives in his innermost being and that he will never lose.

There is even more connected to it. That well in a person is connected to eternal life. By this the Lord refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit which He gives in the believer to become a fresh well of Divine joy in his innermost being (Jn 7:39). In John 3, the gift is the only begotten Son Whom God has given to the world (Jn 3:16). Here the gift is the Holy Spirit Whom God gives us through His Son enabling us to enjoy all that has been given to us in the Son.

All that God has given us can be summed up in: "Eternal life." Eternal life has two aspects. It is both the Lord Jesus Himself (1Jn 5:20) and knowing the Father and the Son, which is also called eternal life (Jn 17:3). Possessing such a well that enables us to enjoy eternal life leads to lasting fulfillment. Where that well is present, there will be no need for anything else forever. These are the wonderful things associated with the gift of God.

The woman has already understood so many of the Lord's words that she yearns to possess what He speaks of. Yet she still connects it with the natural well, where she will no longer have to go in order to quench her natural thirst.

Jn 4:16-19 | Conscience in the light

*16 He *said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus *said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman *said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.*

Before the Lord can give her the water which will become a well of water in her, her conscience must first be brought into God's light. She must first be convinced of her sins. In view of this, He says that she must go and call her husband. However, He says not only "go", but also "and come here". His goodness is not limited by her sinful life. On the contrary, His goodness is proven by it.

By His question, the woman is discovered to herself. When she says "I have no husband", it is not an excuse, but an acknowledgment that she lives in sin by living together unmarried. The Lord confirms that her answer is correct. In the remainder of His response He speaks just a few words, but these words bring her into God's light. However, she is not consumed by that light, but introduced into grace.

He demonstrates to her that to Him her history is an open book. The truth does not spare her and opens her sin to God and to her own conscience. She acknowledges this as the light of God. The woman acknowledges that the Lord's words are not of human wisdom, but of God's power. That is what a prophet does and what Christ as Prophet does here. A prophet speaks the words of God whereby the listener enters the presence of God and is discovered to himself (cf. 1Cor 14:24-25).

To the woman, the Lord was first only "a Jew" (verse 9), now He is already "a prophet" and soon she will confess Him as "the Christ" (verse 29). Thus we see how her faith rapidly progresses through the gracious work of Christ in her soul. It is grace that does not hide her sin from her and

makes her realize that God knows everything. And yet, He Who knows everything is there without disturbing her. Her sin is before God, but God does not judge her. What a wonderful encounter is this between a heart burdened by sins and God, an encounter brought about by Christ. Grace inspires confidence.

Jn 4:20-22 | The Place of Worship

*20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you [people] say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.*

Now the woman is aware that she is in God's light, she speaks about worship, about honoring God. A heart that is convinced of its sins and convinced of God's grace for sinners, starts to desire to worship God. This is what we witness in the woman. She expresses her longing for worship and at the same time her difficulty how and where to do it by indicating two places of worship.

The woman speaks about "our fathers" who "worshiped in this mountain". For her, worship has always been connected to a long tradition. It is the same for countless Christians today. They come together in a church or a building because their parents and grandparents did the same. They have never wondered what the woman begins to wonder: What is the true place of worship?

The woman also knows that for "you", that is the Jews, Jerusalem is the place of worship. Now she wants to know from the Lord Jesus which of the two is the true place of worship. He answers her question, putting faith in Him first. This is shown by the fact that He begins His teaching about worship by saying "woman, believe Me". He makes it clear to her, that for faith, Jerusalem and Samaria as places of worship will both disappear entirely. Now that the Father is revealed in and by the Son, worship is no longer connected with any particular place on earth.

Although both Jerusalem and Samaria will disappear, they are not equal places of worship. The woman and all Samaritans have a worship that

is not focused on the true God. They do not know what they worship. God has not committed Himself to them and has not revealed Himself to them as *Yahweh*. Their worship is directed to an unknown god, a product of their own religious imagination. For the Jews, “we”, it is true that they do know what they worship. To them God has revealed Himself and also said where and how He wants to be worshiped.

To the Samaritan woman the Lord therefore maintains Jewish worship. At that time this is still God’s chosen service because out of them is the salvation that is in the Christ (Rom 9:4-5). The Samaritans are imitators and hostile to God, otherwise they would have submitted to God’s ways and Word.

The Lord speaks of “what”, not ‘who’ is worshiped. Although God has revealed Himself in Judaism, this announcement is still only partial. The whole service is arranged in such a manner that someone who has no faith in God can also participate in it. In addition, God lived in darkness, behind the veil, and the common people were not allowed to approach Him. That is why worship is a ‘what’, meeting a precept, without necessarily having an inner relationship with God. When Christ died, that changed. Then God came out and revealed Himself through the Spirit as Father in the Son. Christians therefore know ‘Who’ they worship and not just ‘what’.

Jn 4:23-24 | The Father Seeks Worshipers

23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Here we have the first unfolding of Christian worship ever given by God to a human being. This worship goes beyond both Samaritan and Jewish worship. In Christian worship, the Father is worshiped, and it is no longer the worship of *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, or the Almighty, as the patriarchs knew Him. It is also no longer about mandatory worship as a demand of God (Deu 6:13). God is entitled to the worship of every human being on earth, and He has demanded that worship of man at all times. Even when

the church is raptured and there will be a great tribulation on earth, the command sounds: "Worship Him" (Rev 14:7).

God does not demand worship of the church, because when the Son came to earth, God revealed Himself as a Giver. Thus, the Son of God comes to sinful people whom we see represented in this Samaritan woman. The Lord Jesus has revealed God, as He, the Son, knows Him. He has revealed the Father in the fullness of love and fellowship. The Son will also bring His own who are in the world into a conscious relationship with His Father as children of that Father (Jn 20:17) because they are born of God (Jn 1:12-13).

In this light both Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem disappear. The worship on Mount Gerizim was nothing but a self-willed religion; the worship in Jerusalem was merely the test and proof of man's incompetence under the law to meet God. Christian worship is based on the possession of eternal life in the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit as the power to worship (cf. Phil 3:3).

From now on, national religion is a deception, it is merely an attempt to bring to life what has disappeared when it comes to acknowledgment from God's side. From now on the Father is seeking persons who worship Him as Father. For that purpose, those persons have to know Him as Father, which is only possible if they have accepted the Son.

We see here the great desire of the Father that is revealed by the Son. The entire work of the Son is aimed at bringing about that worship. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that the Father seeks anything else, although it is also important, for example, that we bear witness to the Lord Jesus. However, we may consider whether we give this desire of the Father the highest priority in our life.

The Lord adds another thing. The Father is seeking worshipers, but then it is also important to know how He wants us to worship Him. That is why the Son says that we must remember that God is spirit. He speaks about the 'Father' when it comes to blessings and about 'God' when it comes to responsibility. Therefore, when it comes to the way of worship, it is about responsibility and that is why He speaks about 'God' and 'must'.

Worship of the Father must be done “in spirit”, that is in a spiritual way, guided by the Holy Spirit and not in an Old Testament, earthly, tangible way. The worship to which the Lord Jesus refers here is not an appearance that requires special clothing or sacred buildings or certain visible actions. It is about the heart and not about the eyes or the hands. Everything that is external only has the effect of diverting attention from Him, Who is represented to faith by the Holy Spirit.

It is also important that the worship of the Father is done in “truth”, i.e., in accordance with the truth which the Lord Jesus has revealed about the Father. Christian worship is focused on the Father and the Son of the Father. Only true believers can “worship in spirit and truth”.

Jn 4:25-27 | Christ Makes Himself Known

*25 The woman *said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” 26 Jesus *said to her, “I who speak to you am [He].” 27 At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why do You speak with her?”*

What the Lord Jesus said about worship is far beyond the woman’s thinking. Yet she does not turn away from Him, but asks Him about the Messiah. That, in any case, is the thought that comes to her because of what He has said. She touches the core; she is at the source.

When the woman expresses her longing for the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord can reveal Himself to her. He has achieved His purpose with her. A poor Samaritan sinner accepts the Messiah of Israel Whom the priests and Pharisees rejected from among the people. Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ – or the Messiah – is born of God (1Jn 5:1). That is what she believes. Her heart has been touched and her conscience has been reached. The grace and truth that came to her in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17) are now everything to her.

At that moment, the disciples come back. Now they could because the Lord has come to His purpose with the woman. Yet the woman has not gone when the disciples return. The Lord wants them to see what He has

been doing during their absence. The disciples are amazed that He speaks with a woman. It was not common for a man to speak with a woman alone.

Like the woman, the disciples have not yet understood much of the grace and truth that are present in Christ and His search for those who are open to it. Had they known what the woman was seeking and what He said to her, they would have wondered even more. Not only did He speak to her, but He also revealed to her what she was seeking and showed her in Himself that He is all she needs. Above all, He fulfilled His own desire to acquaint this woman with 'the gift of God'.

The disciples still have much to learn. They do feel that something special has happened, because they don't ask the woman what she does seek nor do they ask the Lord why He does speak with her.

Jn 4:28-30 | The Testimony of the Woman

*28 So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and *said to the men,
29 "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I [have] done; this is not
the Christ, is it?" 30 They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.*

The woman is not leaving the Lord, but her waterpot. The waterpot is the symbol of her daily toil. She leaves it behind. She is completely seized by the new Object that has been revealed to her heart: Christ. A new world has opened up for her with new affections, new obligations, but also with a new power that lifts her up above her earthly toil. Christ has seized her heart and given her the strength to bear witness of Him.

She wants to tell the people in the city about this special encounter that has made everything in her life different. She is delivered from her sins and has a wonderful future. As long as she lives, she may get to know more and more of the Father through the Son and worship Him for that.

She speaks without any hesitation about Christ as the One Who revealed her sins to her, but also delivered her from them. To her He is still "a man", but yet at the same time also "the Christ". She is so absorbed in her new Object that she becomes a preacher without thinking about it. She proclaims Christ from the fullness of her heart and in utter simplicity.

Her testimony has a great effect. All those who see and hear her and who have known her must have noticed the great change that has taken place in her. Such an enthusiastic and personal testimony has great power because it is not only about feelings, but also touches the conscience. Her testimony is the beginning of a revival in the city. All go out of the city and come to the Savior. With Lot, the result of his bearing witness was quite different. When he bore witness to what had been made known to him, he was laughed at (Gen 19:14).

Jn 4:31-34 | The Food of the Lord

*31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him [anything] to eat, did he?" 34 Jesus *said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.*

In their concern for their Master, the disciples mean well when they tell Him to eat something. They are back with the food they bought (verse 8). However well-intentioned, again the disciples show that they do not know the Lord much better and do not know much more about Him than the woman. Like the woman, they can only think about physical needs while the Lord is busy with the spiritual needs of the woman.

Then He speaks to them about a kind of food that He has to eat and that they don't know. That food is doing the will of the Father (verse 34). His love for the Father leads Him thereto. That is the food that gives strength to those who are weary and increases the strength of him who has no strength (Isa 40:29-31). Christ has lived and worked out of the power of that food and therein He is an example to us as well.

The disciples do not understand the scope of the Lord's words. They still can only think of earthly wells when it comes to meeting earthly needs. A heavenly well and especially the Father to fulfill spiritual needs is still beyond their understanding. They do not yet know the Father and are not yet fully focused on doing the will of the Father, whereas the Lord Jesus does know the Father and is fully focused on doing His will.

Then the Lord reveals what His food consists of, which gives Him the power. As obedient, dependent Man, He gets His strength from doing the will of the Father Whom He presents here as the One Who sent Him to accomplish His work. Accomplishing His work is to make His Father's Name known and to glorify Him (Jn 17:4).

Jn 4:35-38 | The Harvest and the Sower and the Reaper

35 Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and [then] comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this [case] the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

The Father has sent Him into a world that is under judgment, for man's sin is clear. Yet at the same time the offer of God's grace can become all the more evident in that situation. The gospel comes where man's total depravity is unmistakable and therefore is crossing all borders.

The Lord connects with His example a saying familiar to them regarding the harvest. They can see from the wheat in the field how long it still takes before the harvest comes. The Lord then applies this to the proclamation of the gospel. He tells them to put their eyes up and look on the fields full of people. They will see that the time to reap has already come and therefore they have to work by preaching the gospel and bringing in the harvest.

The Lord encourages them to do this work of reaping by offering the prospect of reward. He also speaks about collecting fruit for eternal life because everyone who believes receives eternal life. What a great motive to work for the Lord Jesus! On top of that there is the great joy for both the sower who started the work and the reaper who was allowed to finish the work.

The Lord does not speak here about the work of sowing – as He does, for example, in Matthew 13 (Mt 13:3) – but only about reaping. He puts the result in the foreground. In connection with the glorification of the Father's Name, reaping is the characteristic work. There is a difference in activity, but both sowing and reaping are necessary for the desired and full result.

Everyone has his own position in the work of the Lord just as everyone has in the church as the body of Christ (1Cor 12:14). Although He also speaks of sowing, the characteristic work of the apostles is that of reaping.

He fully acknowledges the faithful service of His workers in earlier days. These are the prophets who spoke through the Spirit of Christ about the Savior and the sufferings of Christ and the glories thereafter (1Pet 1:10-12). What they have sown has not been in vain. The time to reap has waited, but has come with the coming of the Son of God. Someone who may bring people to the Lord is given the opportunity to do so because multiple people before him have already told them about Him. He may then give the final push, speaking the liberating word that under the gracious action of God's Spirit brings someone to surrender to the Lord Jesus.

Jn 4:39-42 | The Savior of the World

39 From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I [have] done." 40 So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

It is wonderful to see how God has blessed the simple testimony of the woman. Many come to faith in the Lord Jesus through her testimony. And what did her testimony consist of? Of nothing but acknowledging that her conscience has been brought into the light. She has learned to see herself as a sinner in God's light. That light did not consume her, for it came to her in Him Who at the same time revealed to her the love of the Father. Her honest testimony is good proof that the heart hides nothing and knows how to appreciate grace. This is opposite to using grace as a cover for sin (Jude 1:4).

Through the word of the woman's testimony, the Samaritans are attracted to the grace and truth revealed in Christ. They go to Him and ask Him to stay with them. This is always the result of a true work of the Spirit in heart and conscience. Someone who is convinced of it will always desire the

Lord Jesus to stay with him, even if he does not yet fully know Who He is (Lk 24:29). It may also be that someone who is convinced by Christ has the wish to accompany Him (Lk 8:38). This reflects the same desire.

The reaction of the Lord to such desires depends on the work He wants the newly converted to do. In this case, He responds to their request by staying with them for another two days. Those must have been wonderful days, with a lot of teaching about the Father. The result of His stay is an increase of people who believe in Him. He is believed for His word, without asking for a sign. Initially He is recognized by some as a Prophet (verse 16-19,29), next He is recognized by many as “the Savior of the world”.

He is the Savior, not only for the Jews, but for the world (1Jn 4:14). The Samaritans who come to faith in Him are proof of this. They have heard Him and are convinced by His word inwardly that He has also come to save them.

When the word of Christ is believed, there is a connection between the heart and Him. He reveals Himself by what He says. That was the case then and it is no different now. Here the word of Christ receives its full value while faith gets its blessed result in the acknowledgment of Who He really is.

Jn 4:43-45 | The Lord Goes Into Galilee

43 After the two days He went forth from there into Galilee. 44 For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 45 So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.

When the two days are over, the Lord leaves the area of Samaria to take again His place among the despised and humble in Galilee. According to the prophecy of Isaiah this is the area of His service (Isa 9:1-2). He may be the Savior of the world, but He does not forget His people Israel. In the son of the royal official we see a picture of this (verses 46-54). After the two days of testimony in the world, in which we can see a picture of the present time in which the Lord Jesus is revealed as Savior of the world and a people of worshipers of the Father is formed, He picks up the thread with His people Israel again.

On the one hand He fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah by living in Galilee. On the other hand He left Judea because they do not want Him there. There He is not given the honor that is due to Him. Now He did not come to claim that honor, therefore He left Judea. He did not come to seek His own honor, but the honor of Him Who sent Him.

In Galilee He does get honor. They love to receive Him. This has not to do with the faith in His words, as with the Samaritans, but with what they have seen of Him in Jerusalem. There they have seen how He has been working in grace and has healed people.

Jn 4:46-54 | The Son of a Royal Official Healed

*46 Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring [Him] to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. 48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you [people] see signs and wonders, you [simply] will not believe." 49 The royal official *said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus *said to him, "Go; your son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started off. 51 As he was now going down, [his] slaves met him, saying that his son was living. 52 So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. Then they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 So the father knew that [it was] at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and he himself believed and his whole household. 54 This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.*

Again the Lord comes to Cana in Galilee. As a reminder, John adds that this is the place where He had made the water (for purification) wine (of joy). There is no more joy in that place, as death threatens to enter. There is a royal official in Capernaum, someone from the court of Herod, whose son is sick. It is a disease that will lead to death if no wonder of God happens.

At this moment, the Lord visits Cana again. Again He is in time to show the glory of the Father. Besides purification and joy He also brings life and healing. The royal official shows faith in Christ from Whom he hears that He has come to Galilee. His fame has hastened ahead of Him.

The royal official comes from Capernaum to Cana and goes to the Lord Jesus. He asks Him to come with him. He makes his need known to Him. It is about his son who is so sick, that he is about to die. Therefore his request is if He wants to heal him. While the royal official believes in the healing power of Christ, his faith is limited. He believes that the Lord should go to his son, as if He can only heal his son through His personal presence. But presence or absence is of no relevance to the Son of God. These are only circumstances and He, Who is God, is above them.

He points out to the royal official the nature of his faith which requires signs and wonders. It is the typical characteristic of a Jewish faith that believes only when it sees proof. The faith of a heathen chief was greater (Lk 7:7). Although the words of the Lord reveal the weakness of the royal official's faith, his weak faith persists. He is not discouraged and implores Him to come with him before his child dies.

A trial of faith by the Lord is aimed at making the wonder greater. Through his persevering faith, the royal official gets more than he asks and hopes for. He gets a direct hearing. Through his perseverance he shows the characteristics of real faith. He takes God at His Word, without signs, wonders and feelings. He no longer insists that the Lord must come with him, but he goes away in faith.

The Lord is so oncoming that the man does not even have to wait until he is at home to see with his own eyes the result of the word of Christ and to see his faith confirmed in it. While he is on his way, his slaves meet him with the message that his child is alive. They use the same words as Christ by talking about 'living', without having heard Him say those words. They have seen the effect of Christ's word at the moment He spoke it, when they saw that life flowed back into the mortally sick child.

The slaves confirmed to the royal official what the Lord had said. The royal official wants to know at what time his son began to get better. In the absence of their lord, the slaves will have paid even more attention to the condition of the child, so that they can tell him the right moment of the beginning of the healing. It indicates a good relationship between the royal official and his slaves. The father also knows what time it was when the Lord spoke the words to him that his son lived.

The words of the Lord are life. In Him is life and He reveals it on the basis of faith. The result is life not only for the child, but also for the royal official and his whole household, because all come to faith in the Son of God.

This wonder is indicated by John as the second sign of the Lord Jesus. In the first sign joy is central. In this second sign life is central. Without life that He gives, there can be no joy.

John 5

Jn 5:1-4 | Bethesda

1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep [gate] a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. 3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, <waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.>

The next three chapters, John 5-7, belong together. They all start with a history. Each history illustrates a truth about which the Lord Jesus teaches further in that chapter. In John 5 it concerns a lame man who illustrates the powerlessness of Israel under the law. About this man and the wonder of his healing we only read in this Gospel. In the teaching that the Lord connects to it we see that He is the Son of God who not only gives strength, but life as well. In John 6, He speaks of Himself as the bread that has descended from heaven after satisfying a crowd with bread. That bread is the flesh of the Son of Man that is eaten to get eternal life. In John 7 we see Him at the Feast of Booths, to which He attaches teaching about the Holy Spirit. In everything we see the glory of His Person.

Again the Lord goes up to Jerusalem. In this Gospel we often see Him in Jerusalem, while the other evangelists follow Him especially in His service in Galilee. He goes to Jerusalem on the occasion of “a feast of the Jews” which in all probability is the Passover. If so, there are four Passover feasts in this Gospel (Jn 2:23; 5:1; 6:4; 11:55). The first Passover, in John 2:23, was before the Lord began His public service. The three following Passover feasts make it clear that the Lord performed His public service in Israel for three years.

John points to a special location in Jerusalem: a pool near one of the porticoes of the wall around Jerusalem, the sheep gate. He also gives it its Hebrew nickname, which reads “Bethesda”. When Nehemiah starts re-

pairing the wall around Jerusalem, he begins with the Sheep Gate (Neh 3:1). This repair work is done by the priests. Through this gate the sheep were brought into the city to be sacrificed in the temple.

Because of this we are immediately reminded of the most important thing of city and temple which is to worship God. Restoration of the wall is first of all necessary for the progress of the priestly service. Only of this gate is said in Nehemiah 3 that they consecrated it, i.e. separated it especially for God and dedicated it to Him.

However, John does not draw attention to the sheep entering through the gate, but to a pool nicknamed Bethesda, which means 'house of mercy' or 'house of grace'. John also mentions that there are five porticoes. The number five indicates responsibility. Israel has failed in its responsibility to obey the law, and as a result, the five porticoes are full of a crowd of sick people suffering from all kinds of ailments. The sheep for the sacrificial service brought into Jerusalem by a celebrating crowd have given way to distress and misery. This is the result of the unfaithfulness of the people.

Yet there remains a glimmer of hope for the crowd of the sick. No matter how much the people have deviated from God and with that have taken on the plagues of all kinds, as God has said, God has shown His mercy again at certain times. From time to time God sends an angel to stir up the water. He who first descends into it then becomes healthy, no matter what sickness he had. However, it is only mercy to someone and not general healing for everyone.

Jn 5:5-9 | The Lord Heals a Sick Man.

*5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying [there], and knew that he had already been a long time [in that condition], He *said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus *said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." 9 Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and [began] to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.*

Among the many sick is a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. This man is a picture of the Jews under the law. After all, Israel was given the law two years after their exodus from Egypt, and after that, for thirty-eight years, they wandered through the wilderness as a people under the law. It has become clear that they didn't keep the law, because many fell in the wilderness, although God also showed His grace. By their disobedience to the law, the people have forfeited all rights to blessing. In his own strength, man can never come into possession of the forfeited blessings. What applies to Israel as a people applies to every person as a sinner (Rom 5:6-10).

Then the Lord Jesus appears. Without the man having asked for it, He comes to him. He knows the man's past and knows that he has been ill for a long time. The Lord asks him if he wishes to get well. Of course He knows that, but He wants to hear it from the man's mouth. After His meetings with Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman in John 4 we see here another example of how the Lord approaches the individual and how close He therefore comes to him or her.

The man tells how utterly hopeless his situation is. There is no man who cares about him. Everyone has enough to do with himself and his own misery. Nor does he himself have the strength to be the first to reach the water when it is stirred up. He is a paragon of misery and despair, without any hope. The nature of his illness makes it absolutely impossible for him to benefit from the occasionally offered means of healing, because for that he needs strength. In the man's condition we see the characteristics both of sin and of the law.

The man wants to, but is not able to, because he does not have the strength for it. He is the illustration of a truth which is extensively dealt with in the letter to the Romans, namely the misery caused by the law to people who do want to live to God's honor, but discover that there is no power within them to do so (Rom 7:24). The solution to that misery is to renounce oneself and look to the Lord Jesus (Rom 7:25) and to what God has done in Him (Rom 8:3). "The Law was given through Moses", but "grace and truth was realized through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). The man is going to experience this when he is healed by the Lord.

Then the Lord speaks the liberating word with in it the power to obey it and experience its blessing. As with the son of the royal official in the previous chapter, the word of the Lord is a word of Spirit and life. The word of the Lord is full of life and power. When He speaks a word, always something happens. One single word of Him puts aside thirty-eight years of illness forever and undoes its consequences. The man becomes healthy.

The Lord not only heals, but also gives the man the strength to take up what he has been lying on, and he actually does that. The pallet that has carried him all this time, he now takes under his arm and he walks away. On the word of the Lord there is an immediate result. As already indicated, this is a wonderful illustration of the power of the Son of God Who does what is impossible for the law because of the powerlessness of the flesh (Rom 8:3).

In this third sign we see that healing cannot be found on the basis of the law, but only in Him Who is full of grace and truth. The teaching that the Lord connects to this event in the course of this chapter goes much deeper. He makes Himself known as the Son of God Who brings the dead to life. Reason for this is the comment that the Jews have on this healing.

Jn 5:10-13 | The Jews and the Cured Man

10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." 11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up [your pallet] and walk?'" 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in [that] place.

It is the Sabbath when the Lord heals the man. The first time there is mention of the Sabbath in the Word of God, without mentioning that name, is at creation (Gen 2:2). There we see the basic meaning. It is the rest of God after He created the first creation. The sin of man put an end to that rest (verse 17). The Jews do not realize this. They can only think in the line of the law and the tradition. They want to rest in their God-given ordinances, which they do not keep, but which they still hold on to.

They do not see how hopelessly they are condemned by God's ordinances, but instead boast of them. They have no sense of grace, as people who use the law as the norm for their own life and the life of others always lack the sense of grace. It is the harshness of people who have no idea of their own inability to keep the law. Otherwise they would rejoice that a human being has become healthy and have seen the Sabbath as a day of God's grace. But they have made the Sabbath a yoke. This can only lead to a conflict with the Lord Jesus.

Every time the Sabbath is mentioned in connection with Christ, He deprives the Sabbath of the meaning the Jews gave it (Mt 12:1-13; Mk 1:21-31; 2:23-28; 3:2-6; Lk 4:31-37; 6:1-11; 13:10-16; 14:1-6; Jn 5:1-18; 7:22-23; 9:14-16). It seems that He deliberately performs so many healings on the Sabbath to make it clear that the condition to keep it is lacking. By acting on the Sabbath, He shows that the whole system of which the Sabbath is the main characteristic, the system of the law, has been set aside by Him.

The man does not allow to be bound by these Jews for a walk under the law. He keeps the word of the Lord and appeals to it. Because He has said it, it is good. For us as well, this is the only right reaction to legislative thinking of ourselves or others. The answer of the man is at the same time a rejection of the self-satisfied observance of the Sabbath by the Jews which reveals that they are turning against their Messiah.

The reaction of the Jews to the answer of the man shows their contempt for the Lord. They speak with contempt of "the man", even though they probably knew Who that "man" was, for the Lord had already done many signs in Jerusalem. Because of his powerlessness the cured man has not yet been able to meet Him, bound as he was to his place at the pool. The Lord had not revealed Himself to him either, as He had done with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:26). He deals with every human being differently because He takes a different path with every human being whom He connects to Himself.

The Lord Himself has left because He does not want publicity for Himself. He has not called the man as one of His disciples who follow Him on His way.

Jn 5:14-18 | No Rest for the Father and His Son

*14 Afterward Jesus *found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."
15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." 18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*

With the making well of the man the work of the Lord is not yet finished. He still wants to point out something important to the man for the rest of his life. He does not do that immediately, but some time later. For that He seeks the man again. Again the initiative comes from Him.

He finds him in the temple. There the man undoubtedly wanted to thank God for his healing. It is also the appropriate place for further education. Because no matter how great it is to be healed by the Lord Jesus, the underlying problem was still there. That problem is a certain sin that was committed by the man which gave him this disease. He must judge that sin and never allow it into his life again. For that the Lord will also give him the strength if he remains dependent on Him.

By what the Lord says to the man, it becomes clear to him Who made him well. That is what he is going to tell the Jews, because they wanted to know Who made him well. The man seems to act unsuspectingly, out of love for the Lord Jesus, for others to get to know Him as well. He has no suspicion of their enmity. This innocence is beautiful and worthy of imitation.

Through the testimony of the man the Jews get the certainty of what they already suspect. Now they have the evidence in their hands as a weapon to persecute the Lord. We do not read that the Jews said anything to Him, but that they are persecuting Him for what He did on the Sabbath. Yet we read that He answers them. That is because He knows perfectly what is in man. He knows their murderousness because of His mercifulness granted on the Sabbath.

His answer is overwhelming and profound. For faith there is great glory in it, but to unbelief it provides an extra argument to hate Him. He speaks about His fellowship with the Father in the work He and the Father have done so far. What do the Jews know about fellowship with the Father? What do they know about the desires of the Father? He knows the Father and knows that the Father cannot rest in sin, nor can He. It is a wonder of grace that He did not come to judge, but to work.

The works He does are not works of judgment. His works of judgment will surely come on those who stubbornly refuse to acknowledge their sins and who will complete the measure of their sin by rejecting Him. It is not that far yet. He is still busy making His Father known in love and grace. As the Son He has perfect, uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and works together with the Father.

The Jews draw the right conclusion from what He says as far as His being equal to God is concerned. Only the Lord Jesus does not *make* Himself equal with God, He *is* equal with God, for He is God (Jn 1:1). Instead of acknowledging that truth, it only increases their murderousness.

Although Christ has taken a subordinate place by coming to earth as a dependent and obedient Man, it is important to hold on to the fact that He never ceases to be the eternal Son of God. As the eternal Son, He never has a subordinate place in relation to the Father, but is one with the Father (Jn 10:30).

What the Lord says here is considered worse by the Jews than what He has done. Like the breaking of the Sabbath, also this statement leads to an outburst of the depraved mind of the Jews.

Jn 5:19-21 | The Works of the Father and the Son

19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless [it is] something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. 20 For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and [the Father] will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. 21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

Precisely His perfect unity with His Father, precisely His being equal with God, means that the Lord Jesus as the Son can do nothing unless He sees the Father doing something. He doesn't do anything independent of the Father because He is completely one with the Father. He acts from the perfect unity with the Father. It is the proof of His unlimited Godhead and not of subordination, let alone incompetence.

The fact that He cannot do anything without seeing the Father doing something means that there can in no way be a will separate from the will of the Father. The perfect unity in works is shown not only by the fact that the Son does what the Father does, but also by the fact that He does it in the same manner. What perfect fellowship with the Father and what personal glory of the Son radiate from these words!

The Son's action in perfect unity with the Father finds its basis in the Father's love for the Son. Earlier John the evangelist testified of the Father's love for the Son (Jn 3:35). Now we hear the Son Himself say it. Nothing is hidden in that love, but everything is perfectly transparent. That the Son's actions are so perfectly in accordance with the will of the Father is because the Father shows the Son everything He Himself does.

If we may see a distinction between the three Divine Persons, we can say that the Father makes the plans, that the Son carries them out, and that the Son does so by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although there is nothing the Father does that the Son does not know, we see here that the Father shows the Son what He does. This is a presentation of matters that makes us understand slightly the relationships in the Godhead, although its inner being will always remain unfathomable to us creatures. This does not prevent faith from accepting these things, but is precisely a reason to worship the Father and the Son.

The Father's love for the Son will lead the Father to show the Son greater works than the healing of the lame man. The healing of the lame man is done by the Son because the Father has shown Him that. The greater work is to raise the dead and make them alive. One of those greater works we see in the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11. What the Jews will see of this will lead them to marvel, but not to faith.

Only the Father can raise the dead and give them life as well as the Son, because the Son is God. He is God the Son. Please note that this does not mean that the Father *through* the Son, as an instrument, gives life. No, the Son Himself does that. The Son is the Giver of life and gives life according to His sovereign will, whereby His will is in full harmony with the will of the Father. That He has a sovereign will is further proof that He is God.

Raising the dead and giving them life are two different aspects of the same event. To be raised is about a change in our position. We change territory. When Christ was raised from the dead, He also entered a different realm. He no longer had to deal with the domain with which He had to deal with before His death and resurrection, but with the world of the resurrection, the world of the Father. Giving life is about a change in our condition. We were dead and have received new life. The latter is especially the work the Son did for us when we came to faith in Him.

Jn 5:22-27 | Judgment and Life Given to the Son

22 For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is [the] Son of Man.

There is something that not the Father, but the Son does. He does it alone, not together with the Father. That concerns the execution of judgment. He does not do this independently of the Father, because the Father has given it to Him. We can say that in this the Son acts *for* or *on behalf of* the Father. The Son gives life together with the Father and He judges alone. The Son is the Creator and He has the right to judge what He has created and what has rebelled against Him.

The judgment given by the Father to the Son is done with an explicit purpose. The Father wants His Son to be honored by all people. For this the Son has authority to give life as well as to judge. Honoring the Father is impossible without honoring the Son. Many people talk about God the Father, but they do not intend to bow down before the Son. The Father takes no honor from such people.

To come to a true honoring of the Son and thereby of the Father, the condition is to hear the word of the Lord Jesus, the Son, and to believe that the Father has sent Him. Hearing and accepting the word of the Son and believing in the Father as the One Who sent Him are inextricably linked. We believe in the Father through the word of the Son (cf. 1Pet 1:21).

There is a triple result connected to this for the believer:

1. He is given eternal life and thus complete peace for his conscience.
2. This means that he is completely freed from judgment. Not only does it bypass him, but he does not enter it at all.
3. He has passed from death into the realm of life filled with the light of the knowledge of the Father. As a result, he has not only received new inner life, but he has also entered an area characterized by life, where everything speaks of life as opposed to the world in which he used to live and where everything speaks of death.

This triple result is the part of all the dead who have heard the voice of the Son of God and therefore received life. By these dead, the Lord means the spiritually dead (Eph 2:1). Every human being is dead, until the moment he is born of God. This new birth, this partaking of the life the Son gives, takes place by listening to the voice of the Son of God.

The 'hour' of speaking of the Lord Jesus whereby someone who listens to Him is given new life began when He was on earth and this hour still continues. Over the centuries, the Son's voice has sounded in the hearts of countless people, bringing life because they have heard that voice and listened to it. He who hears will live. This is still true today.

The Son as Man has been given by the Father as the source of eternal life for man. As the eternal Son, He gives life to whom He wills, and as Man

in humiliation, the Father has given Him to have life in Himself. What He possesses as Divine Person, He has received as Man from the Father.

Life is from eternity in Him (Jn 1:4) and related to His eternal existence as God. If He had not come as Man, we would never have been able to receive that life. Now we hear the Son say that the Father gave life to the Son as Man. Therefore He can give this life to people. Again, this is proof that the Lord Jesus did not cease to be God when He came into the flesh. He became Man in order to be able to share with people what He possessed as God, while He remained God. All those who believe, possess the life that comes from Him and He can pass it on to others, because also as Man He possesses the life according to His Being.

Then the Lord Jesus again returns to the authority He was given to execute judgment. In verse 22 we see that He has the right to judge because He is the Creator. But here, in verse 27, we read that He also has the authority to execute judgment because He is Man. He is the perfect Man Who glorified God in everything and therefore obtained the authority to execute judgment. It is not the Father Who became Man and was rejected, but the Son became Man and was rejected as the Son of Man. Therefore He is given the authority to judge as the Son of Man. He will execute this authority by first removing all evil and next in governing the world in right and righteousness.

Jn 5:28-30 | The Future Judgment

28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good [deeds] to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil [deeds] to a resurrection of judgment. 30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

The Lord sees in their minds their marvel about what He is saying. It doesn't have to be all that marvelous. From the Old Testament they may know that God has given the control of creation to a Son of Man (Psa 8:5-7; Dan 7:13-14). But the authority of the Lord goes further. His overall authority over all things He also executes over the dead in the tombs.

The Lord also spoke of an 'hour' in verse 25. With that He means the present period, which He indicates by saying that it is 'now'. The hour of which He speaks here, in verse 28, is a future hour. It is not the hour of giving life, but of the resurrection of the corporeal dead from the tombs. In the first 'now' His voice sounds amidst the spiritually dead, and only those who believe hear His voice. In the second 'now' all those in the tombs hear His voice and without exception they will all rise from the tombs.

However, there is a distinction between those who rise. Those who have heard His voice in the hour of verse 25 stand up to live. They had the strength, the capacity, to do good because they possessed the life of the Son of God. That life manifested itself in doing good. The second group consists of those who did evil because they refused the life of the Son of God. Without that life only evil is done.

It is important to understand that there is no such thing as a general resurrection of believers and non-believers simultaneously. There are two resurrections. There is a resurrection of the living and a resurrection of the dead. Between the resurrection of the living and the resurrection of the dead there is a period of thousand years. This is evident from Revelation 20, which speaks of "the first resurrection", indicating the resurrection of all believers (Rev 20:4-6).

That 'first resurrection' has several phases:

1. Christ, Who is to take first place in all things, is the First Who is resurrected (1Cor 15:20,23).
2. When He returns, the resurrection of those who believe takes place.

His return for the believers also takes place in phases.

1. First He comes in the air and then catch up all the believers from Adam until that moment to Himself (1Thes 4:14-18). He takes them all to heaven.
2. Shortly thereafter He comes to earth and raises up all the believers who died in the time between the being caught up of the Old and New Testament believers and His coming to earth (Rev 20:4-5).

In what the Lord says here, He does not speak about the time between the various resurrections. What matters to Him is to indicate the totally

different relationship of the two groups with respect to Him as the Son of God and the Son of Man.

After emphasizing His authority to execute the judgment as given to Him by the Father, he immediately points out again that He does not execute it independently from the Father. When He says that He cannot do anything of Himself, it means again that He is acting in perfect agreement with the Father. That is why it is a perfect judgment. His personal will is always perfectly attuned to the will of the Father.

As Man on earth He has taken place before the Father every morning as a disciple and the Father has opened His ear (Isa 50:4). Therefore His judgment is righteous. He did not let himself be deceived by anything because He did not seek His own will, but the will of the Father. He describes His Father as “Him who sent Me”, which points to the mission He received from the Father as well as to doing the will of the Father.

Jn 5:31-32 | Testimonies About the Lord Jesus

31 *“If I [alone] testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.*

Precisely doing the will of the One Who sent Him makes the Lord Jesus say that He does not want to testify about Himself. He, as Man, occupies a position on earth that is dependent on the Father. When He says that His testimony is not true, He says this as a concession to the Jews who follow the law, which states that the testimony of *one* person is not valid (Deu 19:15). It is not about the *reliability* or the truth of the testimony, because everything the Lord says about Himself is perfectly reliable and the truth. It is about its *acceptability*.

He wants to do everything he can to convince the Jews that He is what they deny: the Son of God. He points to “another who testifies of Me”, which is the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:13). The testimony of the Holy Spirit is a fourfold testimony that the Lord Jesus presents to the Jews in the following verses. It is the testimony of

1. John (verses 33-35),

2. the works of the Lord Himself (verse 36),
3. the Father (verses 37-38) and
4. the Scriptures (verse 39).

Jn 5:33-35 | First Testimony: of John

33 You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. 34 But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

John is the first of the four witnesses the Lord gives to testify of Him. They themselves had sent priests and Levites to John to hear from him whether he was the Christ (Jn 1:19-28). From them, they heard John's testimony concerning Him, but they did not believe. As God the Son, He does not need the testimony of the man John. Never does God depend on a man's testimony to prove Himself. But in referring to the testimony of John, the Lord meets them as much as possible.

As a human being there has been no clearer witness than John. As a "burning" lamp, John was a *fiery* witness. It points to his inner drive. As a "shining" lamp, John *radiated* the truth. It points to what people saw and heard of him. His performance caused a stir and the Jews rejoiced for a while because they felt it pointed to something special. But they did not submit to the message of repentance that John preached. That is why it was only a temporary experience and they are now revealing themselves as opponents of Him Whom John pointed out.

John was a lamp. He brought light and warmth as a weak forerunner of Him Who shines like the sun. Once the sun shines, he does not need a lamp to shine on him. The Lord Jesus shines for them like the sun in his power (cf. Mal 4:2).

Jn 5:36 | Second Testimony: the Works

36 But the testimony which I have is greater than [the testimony of] John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

Then the Lord speaks of a second testimony. These are the works that He does and that He has received from the Father to accomplish them. The works are, as it were, the rays of the sun that the sun emits as proof that he shines. His works are a more powerful testimony than John's preaching, for these works are undeniably Divine. They prove that He comes from the Father. They are works that prove that grace and truth have appeared in Him from God.

Jn 5:37-38 | Third Testimony: the Father

37 And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. 38 You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

The third testimony the Lord Jesus points to is the testimony the Father has given of Him. This happened at His baptism (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). The Jews also missed this testimony because they were looking for something that appealed to their natural senses. As a result, they were deaf to the voice of the Father and blind to the form of the Son in Whom the Father manifests Himself. They heard the voice of the Father, but did not understand its meaning.

They see the Son, but are blind to His glory because of the humble form He has taken (Isa 53:2). For faith He possesses the glory of an Only Begotten of the Father, but they do not believe in Him Who was sent by the Father. He was sent by the Father, but they reject Him. Therefore, the word of the Father that He spoke about the Son does not dwell in them. It bounces off a hardened conscience that has closed itself off to faith. They do not *want* to believe.

Jn 5:39-40 | Fourth Testimony: the Scriptures

39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

As the fourth and final testimony, the Lord Jesus points to the Scriptures. The Scriptures give an ongoing testimony of Christ. When people are led to Christ through the searching of the Scriptures, they have eternal life. The

Scriptures do not give eternal life separate from Him. This is evidenced by these Jews who search the Scriptures.

They search the Scriptures not to discover Christ in them, but to see how they can earn eternal life. They read the Scriptures only with their minds, while their conscience is not shined by the light of God, as is the case with so many unbelieving theologians today. They read the Scriptures, but they do not want to come to the Son. It is a matter of their corrupt will, for it is not to deny Who He is.

Jn 5:41-44 | Glory From Men

41 I do not receive glory from men; 42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the [one and] only God?

The Lord Jesus knows on what conditions they would accept Him. If only He would caress their glory, if only He would fulfill their human, carnal expectations, they would honor Him. But He does not seek glory from men. He Who knows He has been sent by the Father does not want glory from men. Glory from men is what the world is all about. Not only does He not seek it, but He does not desire it at all, not even if it were offered to Him.

The difference between what He seeks and what these Jews seek is the love of God. They lack the love of God and He is full of it. They do not have the love of God in themselves, because they are full of self-love. Therefore there is no place for the love of God in them. Those who do have this love in themselves only seek the honor of God. He lets himself be guided by that love, a love that flows back to its source. His coming in the Name of His Father means that He seeks to glorify Him, His Father. This is completely strange to them, they have no connection whatsoever with it and therefore they reject Him.

The Lord Jesus then says that this mind and attitude of them toward Him opens the way for the coming of another who will come in his own name. By this He means the antichrist. They will accept him. In the antichrist the

self-glorification of man finds its climax. This most wicked and lawless of all men who have ever lived, declares himself to be God (2Thes 2:4).

The antichrist forms a complete contrast with Christ Who never sought or seeks His own honor, but with Whom it has always been and always will be about the Name of His Father. In Him God comes too close and therefore they reject Him. The search for people's honor is opposite to the search for the honor that comes from the only God Who came in Christ. The search for the glorification of man prevents them from believing. As long as someone still has expectations of man and as long as he still boasts in something of man, it is impossible for him to come to faith. The tribute to a human being, blocks faith in Christ as the Only One in Whom God has come to man.

If the honor of Christ is sought as the Son Who came from God, it is no longer about the honor of people, but rather life is lived out of faith. To boast in men is also a danger for believers. Paul warns against this (1Cor 3:21).

Jn 5:45-47 | The Writings of Moses

45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

They must not think that the Lord Jesus will accuse them before the Father. He can leave that to Moses. In their blindness they believe that in Moses they have everything that supports them in their rejection of the Son. Precisely his testimony will prove fatal to them. Already in the first books of the Bible, written by Moses, it appears that Christ is the main theme. Rejecting the first books of the Bible means rejecting the speaking of the Son of God. Whoever believes in Moses must also believe in the Son, otherwise it is self-deception and hypocrisy.

Conversely, whoever does not believe the writings of Moses cannot believe in Christ. If the love of God is in us and the glory of man means nothing to us, we will accept and believe the Scriptures and by faith they will lead us to Christ.

It may seem that the Lord Jesus takes the written Word higher than His spoken words, but there is no difference in level. As far as authority is concerned, of course, they are on an equal level. The difference is that the written words are a fixed testimony about Him and therefore the necessary condition for believing His spoken words.

John 6

Jn 6:1-4 | Back in Galilee

1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

The previous chapter shows the Lord Jesus as the Son of God Who gives life and will judge as the Son of Man. In this chapter we see Him as the humble Son of Man Who gives His life in order to give life to the world and after that is glorified. The reason of the Lord's teaching about His humiliation is the feeding of the five thousand.

John does not describe many events of Christ's life. The few times that he does, we often find at the beginning of a chapter as the reason for a lecture, an explanation of which that event is an illustration. In John 5 it is the story of the lame, in John 6 it is the feeding of five thousand men, in John 7 it is the Feast of Booths and His presence or absence thereon, in John 8 the adulteress who is brought to Him and in John 9-10 the born blind who is given sight by Him.

In verse 1 the Lord goes to the other side of the sea of Galilee, or of Tiberias. This sea is in the east of Galilee, in the north of Israel. The Lord has often sailed over this sea. He taught the crowds on the shore from a boat, silenced storms there and walked across it. It is a familiar journey. Many follow Him. He has become known by the signs He has done to the sick and which the crowd had seen. That is why they want to follow Him and later even take Him away by force to make Him king (verse 15).

The seeing of signs does not work conversion. Yet the Lord does not reject them. Through the wonder of the multiplication of the loaves, He wants to teach them about Him. Before that time, when they have come ashore, He sits down on the mountain together with His disciples. He does not yet

avoid the multitude, but takes a place where they can all easily see and hear Him.

John does not often speak about the disciples. Here we have one of those rare occasions. The disciples as well as we are here taught by the Lord. John also tells us what time of the year it is. It is around the Passover. If we assume that the feast mentioned in John 5 (Jn 5:1) means the Passover, he speaks about the Passover for the third time. In that case a year has passed since the previous chapter, without John mentioning specific words or deeds of the Lord Jesus. From the other Gospels we know that at that time the Lord was rejected in Nazareth, sent out the twelve and that John the baptist was killed.

John the evangelist mentions the Passover and calls it a “feast of the Jews”. He portrays the background for the feeding of the five thousand men and the subsequent teaching. In that teaching the Lord tells us that only eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood gives part with Him. This means that He will surrender His life into death and that thus the Passover will have its fulfillment and will have come to an end as a feast of remembrance. As a remembrance feast of the redemption from Egypt, it had already lost its meaning because the people as a whole had deviated from God.

Jn 6:5-9 | Philip Put to the Test

*5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, *said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?” 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.” 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, *said to Him, 9 “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”*

The Lord does not get tired to convince His people by blessings that show the goodness of God, in order for them to return to Him. The feeding occurs in all four Gospels, but only here there are no introductory circumstances. The emphasis is entirely on the glory of the Son that fills the whole scene. Everything is in His hand. We see His Godhead because “He Himself knew

what He was intending to do”, and we see His dependent Humanity as He gives thanks for the food (verse 11).

He takes the initiative by asking Philip where they will buy bread to feed them all. With His question, He wants to put him to the test. He wants to see how much Philip has already understood of His glory and power. As the eternal God He knows that, but He wants to bring him to an answer that will show Philip himself, how he judges a situation, whereby it comes down to faith in Him. We sometimes hear the Lord asking us such questions as well. How do we react to situations where it comes down to faith in Him?

To Him that situation poses no problem, because in His Divine omniscience He knows what He will do (cf. Jn 2:24-25; 13:3; 18:4) and that He has the power to do so. Philip’s answer shows that he judges the situation according to human standards and that he is not above the crowd in his assessment of Christ. He looks, so to speak, into the purse, sees what is in it and says that this is insufficient. As if the Lord did not know that.

Then one of the other disciples comes to the Lord. It is Andrew, the brother of Peter. Just as he brought Peter to the Lord (Jn 1:42), so now he brings a boy with five barley loaves and two fish to Him. Andrew is someone who brings others to the Lord Jesus. That is a beautiful characteristic. Also Andrew compares what they need with what they possess, without taking into account the Lord and His power (cf. Num 11:22). That is why, according to him, the breads of the little boy are not enough.

But this is exactly what the Son wants to use to do His work. He could have done it with much less or even made loaves of stone to satisfy the crowd. In His grace, however, He uses what we give Him, even though we do not believe that it is of some value in the light of what is needed.

It is remarkable that of the four descriptions of this feeding, only John mentions that they are barley loaves. This is reminiscent of the first fruits, which are made of barley. The barley is the first fruit of the land brought to *Yahweh* (Lev 23:10; Exo 9:31; Rth 1:22; 2:23). The first sheaf speaks of the resurrection, about which Christ speaks several times in this chapter. He Who went into death is also the resurrected Christ. We can therefore view this chapter in particular as a ‘resurrection chapter’.

Jn 6:10-13 | The Multiplication of the Loaves

*10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 When they were filled, He *said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.*

The Lord uses the disciples to bring peace and order to the crowd. This is possible because the place has a lot of grass. He has consciously chosen that place and thus led the crowd that has followed Him, to, as it were, green pastures. They all sit on the soft grass. John mentions the number of men. Men are the power of the nation, but they are completely dependent on the provisions of the Lord Jesus.

Before the Lord in His Divine omnipotence distributes the loaves and the fish among those who sit there, He first gives thanks. He always does everything in connection with His Father. The work of multiplication is a work that He has seen the Father do and therefore He does it (Jn 5:19). It is characteristic of this Gospel that we read that the Lord Jesus Himself distributes the loaves and the fish, while we know from the other Gospels that He used His disciples for that. Here He is the Son of God Who uses His power for the benefit of people and gives blessing. The blessing is abundant and everyone gets as much as he wants. There is no limit to His giving. It is up to us to make the best use of it.

The Lord has multiplied so much that there is a leftover. That appears when all are filled. The leftover is not a mistake, but a proof of the abundance of His benefits. With Him, abundance is never waste. The leftover may not be lost and must therefore be collected. What has been left by those who have eaten is good for filling twelve hand baskets. It is possible that each of the disciples received a basket with fragments. The number twelve is reminiscent of the whole nation. The leftover indicates a supply for others yet to come, not so much for Israel alone, but for the whole world, for He is the Savior of the world.

Jn 6:14-15 | The People Want to Make Him King

14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

The wonder of the feeding is again called a sign by John. It is the fourth sign mentioned of the Lord. This sign was done in front of a large crowd. They are so impressed that they come to the correct conclusion that He is the Prophet Who would come into the world (Deu 18:15,18; Psa 132:15; cf. Jn 4:19; 7:40; 9:17). They even want to make Him king.

The Lord Jesus certainly fulfills the conditions attached to kingship. He has just proven that. He has provided for their temporal needs and that is the reason why they want to make Him king. They do want Him as their political leader. In this the crowd lets itself be guided by the devil. They want Him, like the devil at the temptation in the wilderness suggested to Him (Mt 4:8-9), to take dominion without having to die. What matters is that He meets their national pride.

The Lord knows that the people do not meet the conditions to enter His kingdom. He also does not take glory from people, as He has said in the previous chapter (Jn 5:41). That is why He avoids them. He will not and cannot be made their King by them, because their motives are no good. They see in Him a benefactor, but not the necessary Savior, as the Samaritan woman has come to know Him.

He goes away from them and again takes the mountain as a refuge. He first went there with His disciples (verse 3), but now He goes by Himself alone. In this we can see a picture of the place He has taken in heaven, where He is now to intercede for His own as Advocate and High Priest. And they need that, as we see in what happens to the disciples during His absence.

Jn 6:16-21 | The Lord Jesus Walks on the Sea

16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17 and after getting into a boat, they [started to] cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea [began] to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. 19 Then, when they had rowed

*about three or four miles, they *saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. 20 But He *said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*

While the Lord is still on the mountain, His disciples go down to the sea. They get into a boat to go to Capernaum. It is toward evening when they leave and night falls. It says so remarkably that "Jesus had not yet come to them". They must have looked forward to Him, but yet they left without Him.

The journey across the sea becomes more and more difficult. Apart from the fact that it is night, there is a strong wind so that the sea begins to be stirred up. When they have rowed about three or four miles they see the Lord walking on the sea and approaching the boat. Instead of recognizing Him and being happy to see Him, they become afraid. They cannot get used to the special ways in which the Son always reveals Himself. At the feeding, they only considered their natural resources and their inadequacy to provide a crowd with food. They did not think of Him and His power that is above those natural resources.

They are experiencing difficulties caused by natural elements. Confronted with their strength, they feel powerless. When the Lord appears to their aid, they do not recognize Him as the One Who is above the natural elements and consequently also above their difficulties. He walks over them, He rules over them. They see Him and His authority over it and yet they become afraid because their mind cannot explain this. Their faith is not yet fully focused on Him.

But He knows them. He knows how they feel and speaks the reassuring words: "It is I; do not be afraid." What a wonderful Savior He is, Who thus takes away the unbelief and the fear of His disciples!

After these words, they are willing to receive Him into the boat. They are convinced that it is Him. Their fear is gone and their trust in Him completely restored. The moment they are willing to receive Him into the boat, it comes ashore. The trials of the sea are over. Peace has come.

It is striking that there is no command from the Lord to calm the sea and the wind. Here His presence is sufficient. He does not even have to come

aboard to save them. The desire to receive Him into the boat is already enough to get ashore, in the picture: to reach salvation. It is a beautiful scene that perfectly matches this Gospel in which Christ is presented as God the Son.

Better than acknowledging Him as King, like in previous history, it is to acknowledge Him as Lord above all circumstances as well as the power of the enemy. He did not demonstrate this to the crowd, but He shows it to His disciples and to us. He is above all trials and tribulations and leads us through them.

Jn 6:22-25 | The Crowd Seeks and Finds the Lord

22 The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but [that] His disciples had gone away alone. 23 There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

The crowd watched everything that happened, as far as they could see. They did not see the events that happened at sea in which the Lord revealed Himself to His disciples in a special way. In their natural thinking there is no place for that either. What they did see, however, was that the small boat in which the disciples went, had left without Him having embarked. They are emphatically seeking the Lord Jesus. Did He board another boat then? After all, they were close to the place where He performed that wonderful wonder, which gave them all so much to eat.

They also noticed how the Lord first gave thanks and only then distributed the bread. John mentions again emphatically that they ate of the bread after the Lord had given thanks. By doing so he emphasizes the fact that the Lord does everything in dependence of His Father. The place of the wonder has become an empty place after the departure of Christ. Thus, they leave that place because to them it is about being with Him.

Their research shows that He did not board any of the other boats either. Neither are His disciples to be found there. Because they want to be with Him anyway, they board boats themselves. So they come to Capernaum to seek Him there. There they find Him, on the other side of the sea.

They are curious as to when He arrived there, because after having checked all possibilities, it remains a mystery how He could have come there. This wonder reveals the true motive of their search for Him. They are driven by curiosity and to profit even more from Him, after they had eaten the loaves in that way. But the Lord does not satisfy their curiosity.

Jn 6:26-29 | Working for the Food That Endures

26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Instead of answering their curious questions, the Lord exposes their hearts. He confronts them with their selfishness. He knows what is in man (Jn 2:23-25). With yet another double "truly" followed by an emphatic "I say to you", He establishes the important truth that they have learned nothing from the signs, but that they are only interested in satisfying their temporal needs.

They have seen the signs, but missed their meaning. It does not occur to them to believe in Him as the Son of God and thereby receive eternal life. They do not see that the sign reveals His glory. They explain the sign according to their own liking because they only seek the temporary satisfaction of earthly prosperity. They pay no attention to putting their relationship with God in order. And yet, in all things, the Lord shows His connection with God and His mission through the Father as the source of His actions. However, they can only think of a life here and now and how to enjoy it as optimally as possible in a selfish way.

The Lord points out to them that they should not be concerned primarily with earthly and therefore by definition perishable food, but with food which has an eternal and solid value. As the Son of Man He is able to provide that. With this He indicates that it is no longer about what the *Messiah* can give to His earthly people. He points to Himself as the Son of Man and as the One on Whom the Father, God, has set His seal.

The fact that He is sealed by the Father means that the Father has designated Him as the One with Whom eternal life can be obtained. What He on behalf of the Father, Who is God, offers as food, is eternal life, real and unadulterated. It cannot be obtained from anyone but the Son of Man. The Father has sealed Him with the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Mt 3:16; cf. Eph 1:13). Only from the Son they can receive the food that endures to eternal life.

The crowd answers with a question. They want to know what they have to do in order to work the works of God. They can only think in terms of doing something themselves, while ignoring the great problem of their sins. They don't realize that they are sinners, and therefore deny their sins. They also deny His glory and majesty. It is reminiscent of the way of Cain who also thought he was pleasing to God by offering a sacrifice that was the result of his own hard work, but which God did not regard (Gen 4:3,5). The same can be seen in professing Christianity which has opened itself so much to influences from Judaism and heathenism.

Because the thinking of the crowd is only about their own well-being, they misunderstand the words of the Lord. By works for the food that endures to eternal life, the Lord does not mean delivering a performance, but opening oneself up to a work of God in them. The Son is the object of faith. The Father has sealed Him and only the Father can accept Him as the foundation on which the sinner can approach God. And if it is based on faith, it is open to both Jew and Gentile. Faith is the work of God and excludes the work of man.

Jn 6:30-33 | The Bread Out of Heaven

30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in

the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

That the crowd asks for a sign is once again proof of their unbelief. As if the Lord has not yet given enough signs. And they themselves have just seen a great sign in the multiplication of the loaves. It seems that the sign He has given through the feeding has not convinced them of His mission. For them, the bread He gave did not come out of heaven, but from the earth, and the fish from the sea. No, but the manna that their fathers had eaten in the wilderness, that bread, they say, came from heaven.

It is as if they were saying that the sign that *Yahweh* did in the wilderness (Exo 16:15) was far greater than that of the Lord Jesus. After all, *Yahweh* provided food for a nation of millions for forty years. They even quote a word from the Old Testament, showing that the manna is called "bread out of heaven" (Neh 9:15; Psa 78:24; 105:40). If He, Jesus, would do such a thing, they would believe Him.

By reminding the Lord of this word from the Old Testament, they make a distinction that is not there for faith. Jesus is the Same as *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. They also forget that the people in the wilderness finally did not believe these wonders and sinned against Him (Psa 78:32), just as they also forget how Israel later despised the manna (Num 21:5).

The Lord reprimands them, once again with that emphatic, double "truly", followed by the powerful and authoritative "I say to you". He first points out that it was not Moses who gave them the bread out of heaven. Perhaps in verse 31 they mean that Moses gave them the bread out of heaven and that they did not even attribute the giving of manna to *Yahweh*. It is very short-sighted to attribute the wonder of manna to Moses.

The Lord does not elaborate on that. It is about the 'kind' of bread. The bread of which they say *Yahweh* or Moses gave it, is bread that the people needed time after time. In addition, it could not have prevented them from dying after all (verse 49). Therefore, the Lord proceeds directly from Moses and the bread that came out of heaven in his days, to the true bread

that the Father gives out of heaven. He wants them to realize that the true life of the Father comes out of heaven and that this is now given to them, not to their fathers.

Next, He points out that the bread out of heaven is a Person, “He”, Who descends from heaven and gives life not only to a certain people, but to the world. The Lord speaks of “the bread of God” meaning Divine bread, bread that comes from God to serve as food for those to whom He gives it. It is spiritual bread, bread that must be eaten in a spiritual way. Because He gives this bread, there is life in it for those who take it. In this bread the true life for the world can be found. It is offered to everyone, indiscriminately.

Linked to ‘the bread of God’ is also the thought that God feeds Himself with the Lord Jesus. Of course this is not in the same way as people do, but as the joy for His heart (see Leviticus 21, where some translations speak of the ‘bread of the LORD (*Yahweh*)’, Lev 21:21-22). What is joy for the heart of God, He gives to the world as life.

Jn 6:34-36 | I Am the Bread of Life

34 Then they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread.” 35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

The crowd reacts like the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob (Jn 4:15). Just like she only thought of natural water, so does the crowd only think of natural, material bread, similar to the manna. If it would fall from heaven, as it did then, they would not have to buy it. They ignore the history of unbelief of the nation. The only thing that matters to them is the direct, easy and free-of-charge satisfaction of their natural needs.

Then the Lord forthrightly says that He is the bread of life as well as how someone can partake of it. Actually they can get it on their terms: directly, easily and free of charge. All they have to do is come to Him and believe in Him. If they do that, they will never be hungry or thirsty again.

In this Gospel, the Lord uses the expression “I am” seven times followed by a different addition. Here He uses this expression the first time. The addition is

1. "the bread of life". The other additions are
2. "the Light of the world" (Jn 8:12);
3. "the door of the sheep" (Jn 10:7);
4. "the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11);
5. "the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25);
6. "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6);
7. "the true vine" (Jn 15:1).

The words "I am" have a great connotation. To pronounce these words is to pronounce His Name (Exo 3:14). By pronouncing them, the crowd that comes to take Him captive falls to the ground (Jn 18:5-6).

On His invitation to come to Him the Lord immediately adds that He knows in His Divine omniscience what they are like. He has also told them that. They have seen Him, but they do not believe in Him. They reject Him because He does not respond to their natural desires. He asks them to do things they do not want to do, such as bowing before His majesty and confessing their sins in the light of His majesty. They have no eye for His glory. And yet He is so remarkably loving in His approach to them!

Jn 6:37-40 | The Will of the Father

37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

The Lord has spoken about believing in Him and coming to Him never to be hungry or thirsty again. The emphasis is on man's responsibility. Man must believe and come. The other side, the side of God, is that He works in sinners that they go to the Lord Jesus. Those who are given to the Son by the Father come to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord mentions both sides here. On the one side there is the work of the Father: He gives to the Son. On the other side there is the sinner who must come: Who comes to Me. Both sides are true. Every sinner that comes is because He has been given by the Father and therefore is accepted by the Lord Jesus and not cast out. Because of these words, every sinner going to Him may be sure that he is accepted by Him.

These words express great assurance and they are an encouragement to those who tend to be unsteady. Whoever comes to Him, whatever his background, is accepted by Him. Whoever once has come will acknowledge that everything is the work of the Father and that the Lord Jesus has accepted him because the Father has given him to Him.

This work can take place in this manner because the Son has descended from heaven with the express purpose of not doing His will on earth, but that of the Father Who sent Him. The Father can therefore work in the sinner, because His Son has done His will on earth. As a result, the Son can accept that sinner as a gift from the Father. The sinner therefore has the assurance of his salvation in complete accordance with the will of God which has been completely fulfilled by the Son. This assurance is independent of his feelings.

Apart from receiving sinners given to Him by the Father, the Father also wants the Son to protect and secure everything He has given Him. Just as the Son has not lost anything of the bread (verse 12), the Son will ensure that nothing is lost of what the Father has given Him. Even if death would assert its claims against those who have been given to Him by the Father, that does not mean loss of what the Son has been given. "All" (verse 39, the whole) and "everyone" (verse 40, the individual) are perfectly safe with the Son, even if death intervenes. Indeed, the Son has the power to raise up (verses 39,40,44,54). This power to awaken also indicates that the fullness of eternal life will only be truly enjoyed in the resurrection.

The Son is completely focused on the will of the Father. He is completely aware of that will. The will of the Father is about His Son and all those whom the Father connects to Him. That connection only comes about when someone beholds the Son and believes in Him. People who believe in the Lord Jesus have seen something, or better: Someone. They believe

because they have seen the Son, their eyes have been opened to the beauty and glory of the Son. They are attracted to Who He is. Such a person is given eternal life. The guarantee that an eternal connection has been established is proven when the Son will soon show His power by raising up the deceased believers.

Jn 6:41-46 | The Father Teaches About the Son

41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

This is the time when the Jews are making themselves heard again. They have listened and heard that He says of Himself that He is the bread that has come down out of heaven. That is why they grumble about Him. Now that they notice that the Lord means Himself with the bread of life, the longing for bread has disappeared and they stumble over Him (cf. Rom 9:32).

They only know the earthly circumstances, but misjudge them. He is not the Son of Joseph, but of Mary. Therefore they are on a totally wrong basis to be able to judge Him. Unbelief always leads to wrong conclusions and remains blind to the truth. Because they blindly stare at His natural origins, they cannot understand His words about having come down out of heaven. To them He is Someone from below and therefore He cannot possibly have come from above. They do not understand that He is the Man from heaven (1Cor 15:47).

As so often, the grumbling of the Jews is again reason for the Lord to tell more important things. He reproaches them for grumbling among themselves. Grumbling about the truth makes no sense at all. It keeps the

grumbler out of the truth and is also to the ruin of those who hear this grumbling.

The Lord clearly declares that only those who are drawn by the Father come to Him. He mentions the Name of the Father and He calls Him the One Who sent Him. This indicates both the special relationship between the Son and the Father as well as the special commission of the Father to the Son. Only those who believe in Him see this. Unbelief leads away from Him, whereas the Father brings to Him. The latter is a work of grace which rules out everything that belongs to man, his value, his work, his will.

It takes a merciful activity of the Father to go to the Son. That is not what the Gospel preaches to people who yearn for salvation. To them the Lord Jesus says: "Come to me" (Mt 11:28). He does not say that to those who grumble about Him. To them He says that they cannot come. They have an attitude that makes it impossible to invite them. The final blessing in the resurrection on the last day is not for them.

As additional proof that it is impossible to believe if one is not taught by the Father, the Lord cites something the prophets have written (Isa 54:13). It has already been made clear by the prophets that a new situation can only be understood by those who have been taught by God as disciples. Equally, a person can only come to the Son if he is taught by the Father. All true teaching concerning the Son comes from God the Father. A religion that does not lead to the Son is not from God. A person only gains insight into what the Lord says if God gives him insight. Anyone who has received instruction from the Father about the Person of the Son comes to the Son. Whoever is in distress about his sins and goes to God is directed by Him to the Son.

We see a picture of this in the history of the famine in Egypt in the days when Joseph was viceroy of Egypt (Gen 41:55). People come to Pharaoh in their need (there a picture of God), but Pharaoh sends them to Joseph (a picture of the Lord Jesus). The Father gives teachings concerning the Son, while it is also true that the Father is known only by the Son (Jn 14:9), for only the Son has seen the Father (Exo 33:20; 1Tim 6:16).

So there is a clear interaction between the Father and the Son. No one comes to the Son except he who has heard and accepted the teaching of

the Father. And no one knows the Father except the Son, for the Son has seen the Father and has come to earth to make Him known. The Jews have therefore never seen the Father because they have never seen the Son with and in faith. They see in Him no more than a Man of Whom they know the parents and relatives.

Jn 6:47-51 | The Living Bread

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

After the Lord Jesus has presented His perfect unity with the Father and the complete harmony between Him and the Father in Their actions, He again speaks about the core of eternal life which is: faith in Him. Again He emphasizes with a double "truly" followed by an authoritative "I say to you" the truth of faith in Him as the only possibility to receive eternal life. He is the Giver of eternal life. It is inextricably linked to faith in Him.

By speaking of Himself as the bread of life He points to Himself as the Source of life and as the Giver of life. Bread is there to be eaten. By eating, a person identifies himself with what he eats. Whoever nourishes himself with the Lord Jesus, that is who accepts Him in faith, receives life, eternal life.

His Person as the bread of life is different from the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness. The contrast between the true bread, Himself, and the manna, is that eating the manna did not save from death. They ate of it every day, but in the end they all died. The only thing that keeps a man from death is eating Him as the bread that has come down out of heaven.

In verses 50-58 the Lord Jesus speaks seven times about eating Him or His flesh as the living bread and three times about drinking His blood. This is clear and simple imagery. What we eat and drink is fully absorbed by our body and forms us. It becomes a part of us and can no longer be taken away from us. In contrast to the manna, eating from Him means that one

will not die, for then one is “born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable” (1Pet 1:23). Eating Him means receiving eternal life. It is by becoming Man that the Lord Jesus has become the bread that has come down out of heaven. This enables everyone who wants to, to eat Him. Whoever does so, will live eternally.

To illustrate this further, the Lord then speaks about His flesh as the bread. His coming as the bread to give life is not enough. Before anyone will really be able to feed on Him, He will have to render His flesh, that is His body, in death. Only as the dead Christ He can give life. Here He already indicates that He will give His flesh, which will happen on the cross. With this He points to His atoning death. This does not only mean life for Israel, but for the entire world.

So it is about faith in His coming in the flesh on earth to be able to die (Heb 2:14; 1Jn 4:2-3). The denial that He came in the flesh is an antichristian heresy (2Jn 1:7). The origin of this heresy proves the importance of the Son’s coming in the flesh. Otherwise the devil would not do his utmost to attack that truth.

Jn 6:52-59 | Eating His Flesh and Drinking His blood

52 Then the Jews [began] to argue with one another, saying, “How can this man give us [His] flesh to eat?” 53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.” 59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

The Jews grumbled among themselves about earlier words. About the words concerning the eating of His flesh they argue with one another. Every truth about Him gives the enemy more reason to reveal opposition, while it strengthens the chosen ones more in their faith in Him. The dispute

in question is how He gives them His flesh to eat. They don't understand any of this. They look for an explanation and engage in a vigorous debate about it with each other.

With yet another double and therefore emphatically "truly" and an authoritative "I say to you" the Lord speaks about eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood as the only and exclusive condition to get life. The Father gives the Son as the true bread and the Son gives Himself to die. As a result, His flesh can be eaten, and His blood can be drunk. The Lord does not say 'he who eats Me', but He speaks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. With this He presents His death.

Faith finds atonement with respect to sins and fellowship with God as a result of that atonement. It is about fully empathizing with the thought of the reality of His death. Before God, we must identify ourselves with His death and share in His death through faith, otherwise we have no life in us.

It means that I must be aware that the death of the Lord Jesus was a condition for me to be reconciled with God and thereby receive eternal life. The only way I can do that is when I see that I am a sinner who cannot exist before God and to whom God can only give righteous judgment. Then I also see that Christ has undergone that judgment for me on the cross. When I realize that, in a spiritual sense I eat His flesh and drink His blood.

This is a one-time eating and drinking in order to receive life, i.e. eating and drinking as a convinced sinner. This is not about the Lord's Supper at all and certainly not about the falsification of it which is called 'eucharist'. The Supper is about eating in remembrance of the Lord (1Cor 11:24-25), but here it is about eating Himself in order to receive eternal life. It is utmost folly to link the obtaining of eternal life to taking part in the Supper. The Lord uses the eating and drinking as a picture for believing in Him as the dead Lord in order to receive eternal life. Eating and drinking means spiritually nourishing oneself with a dead Christ, that is believing in His substitutionary death and His resurrection.

Whoever once received life through faith in Him – that is what the Lord says in verse 53 – needs to constantly eat His flesh and drink His blood. That is what the Lord says in verse 54. The footnote in the Dutch TE-

LOS-translation at verse 53 says the following about these two aspects of eating and drinking:

In verse 53 'eat' and 'drink' are in Greek in the aorist so that they refer to an event that takes place once; in verse 54 and verses 56-58 they are in the praesens, so that they refer to events that are still going on. [End of footnote]

[Explanation of the terms 'aorist' and 'praesens': 'aorist' and 'praesens' are Greek forms of tense which also indicate how the act is presented, namely as a once-only and thus closed (aorist) or as a repeated fact (praesens)].

Continuous or repeated eating and drinking is necessary because life is in Him. This eating and drinking will continue until the resurrection, to which the Lord points by speaking of raising up on the last day. Always, for all eternity, we will be aware that we owe everything to Him Who died for us and rose from death. For the believer, His flesh is the true food and His blood is the true drink. Every believer will experience and enjoy the truth of this inwardly. This applies both to the one-time (spiritual) eating when someone comes to faith and to the daily (spiritual) eating and drinking of the believer.

The result of this eating and drinking is the closest fellowship. It is not only assurance, but Christ is the home for the believer and Christ lives in him. The believer has a continuous fellowship with Christ, which he maintains by feeding with Him every day.

The Lord Jesus compares the intimacy of the fellowship the believer has with Him through eating His flesh and drinking His blood with His own fellowship with the Father. His fellowship with the Father is the perfect example of fellowship. Just as He depends on the Father in everything, so does the believer depend on Him.

The Lord calls His Father "the living Father" to indicate that He shares life with the Father and that everything to live on is received from the Father. It was the living Father Who sent Him. Thus the life of the Father that is in Him has become visible on earth. The believer who eats the Son also lives according to that glorious model. By eating the Son, the life of the Son becomes visible in the believer. Outside of the Son there is no life possible. A believer also has no life to live than only in fellowship with the Son.

In verse 58 the Lord summarizes His teaching. When He says “this is the bread which came down out of heaven”, He points with the word “this” not only to Himself but to the whole teaching that is connected with the bread. He is the bread that has come down out of heaven. He spoke about this in verses 32-33,38,50-51. This is different from the manna the fathers ate, for they died in spite of eating the manna (verses 32,49). From Him and everything He has said about Himself, such as His death, everyone must eat in order to live eternally (verses 35,40,50-51,53-57).

The Lord said these things in the synagogue in Capernaum. The synagogue is the learning house for the Jew. Capernaum is the town where He lived (Mt 4:13; 9:1).

Jn 6:60-66 | A Hard Word for Unbelief

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard [this] said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble? 62 [What] then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.” 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

The Lord’s teaching reveals what lives in the hearts of His disciples. Many of them oppose His radical words. There is a serious form of unbelief here, this time not among the Jews but among many of His disciples. What is the “difficult statement” to them? That He has said to them that they have no life in themselves unless they eat in the manner He has indicated (verse 53).

They are not free from their national religious feelings which, because of what He has said, are condemned to their roots. This is unbearable for them. In the same way, there are people today who want to accept a kind of ‘Jesus’ that is to their taste, but do not need to know anything about a

Jesus Who had to suffer and die for them in order to give them life. It is obvious to them that they have life because they are the people chosen by God, aren't they?

The Lord knows what resistance His words have aroused among the mass of His disciples. In a questioning form, He tells them that they are stumbling over His words, that His words are a stumbling block to follow Him. They cannot bear His teaching about His coming down and dying. In Him God has come to earth, God revealed in the flesh to be able to die. They already reject that simple truth and do not want to believe it. How, then, will they react when they see the Son of Man, a Man, going to heaven, to the place where He was before? He testifies here of Himself that He was with God even before He became Man. He is God and Man in one Person.

In fact, they will see as much of it as of the reality of His death. Both His cross and His ascension are beyond their field of vision, limited as that remains to a reigning Messiah. They cannot understand it either because the Spirit did not give them life. And the Spirit cannot give them life because they resist the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

With the introduction of the Holy Spirit the Lord concludes His teaching of this chapter. Nothing of the flesh is of any use to understand the things He has spoken. The flesh is utterly incapable to make any contribution to the knowledge of the truth He presents.

The Spirit alone can give life, for man is dead by nature. The Spirit is the active power of the triune God. The Father gives the bread, the Son is the bread and the Spirit works the life in those who eat this bread. Everything comes from God and nothing comes from man. The words spoken by the Lord can only be understood in a spiritual way. These words contain the life that becomes part of everyone who believes His words.

The Lord knows that there are some among His hearers who do not believe. This is yet another striking testimony that He has complete knowledge of all things. Not only does He know what people think and say, but He also knows "from the beginning" who will not believe and also who will betray Him (verse 71). Those who do believe do not need to boast about it, for it was the Father who gave it to them. It is the sovereign grace of God. If it depended on the flesh, no man would ever come to Christ.

Now the separation becomes visible between those who reject His words and those who accept His words. The separation arises when it comes to His death as a necessity to get life. People don't want to walk further with Him because He teaches them things they don't like, they don't like to hear, they ask too much of them, and cost them too much. It is the people who 'apologize' that they cannot accept the invitation to come to the meal because they feel they have more important things to do (Lk 14:16-24).

Jn 6:67-71 | The Confession of Peter

67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and [yet] one of you is a devil?" 71 Now He meant Judas [the son] of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

The twelve disciples stay with Him. The Lord puts their faith in Him to the test by asking them the challenging question of whether they maybe also want to go away. They see the many disciples leave. Are they not going to live a more pleasant life than they could expect? Shouldn't they join them? Surely there are only a few of them left, isn't it? Doesn't the majority see it right? Belonging to a minority always entails rejection and contempt.

The Lord knows the answer, but He wants to hear it from their own mouth. Then comes the wonderful answer of Peter. He wouldn't know any other person to whom to turn. Who else has words of eternal life? Only the Lord Jesus does. Peter is not interested in taking advantage of the signs the Lord does, but in the spiritual meaning of what He speaks. He is not concerned with literal bread, but with spiritual food.

Not only the words of eternal life are important, but also Who speaks them. He Who speaks them is that which He has been saying to them from the beginning (Jn 8:25). They have believed in Him as the Holy One of God, as the One Whom God has sanctified for Himself. If He is everything to God, with whom would a man rather be than with Him?

The Lord answers not only Peter, but all twelve disciples, for Peter has spoken on their behalf. What Peter said does not apply to all twelve. Certainly,

He has chosen all twelve of them to be with Him on earth and to follow Him on His walk through the land, to serve Him and to learn from Him (Lk 6:13). The election the Lord is talking about here is not the eternal election for heaven, but the election to be with Him on earth. Unfortunately, not all twelve have faith in Him being the Holy One of God. The Lord calls one of them "a devil" because that one has entered into the service of the devil.

He knows who that devil is. He did not accidentally choose Judas as one of the twelve. Nor did he choose him to make him a traitor, as if Judas had no other choice. Judas has had enough chances to repent, but he didn't want to.

After many disciples have left and a small company remains that remains faithful to Him, we would humanly speaking have rather postponed the veiled 'unmasking' of Judas for a moment. It may give the impression that the Lord is spoiling the good atmosphere that has been created by speaking of one of his disciples as 'a devil'. Once again it proves that He is the Holy One of God. He is focused only on His God and not on man.

John 7

Jn 7:1-2 | The Upcoming Feast of Booths

1 After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. 2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

In John 5 we see the Lord Jesus as the Son of God Who gives life with unlimited authority to whom He wants. Because He is the Son of Man, He judges all. The emphasis is on what He is, not on the position He holds. In John 6 we talk about the same Son, but there He is presented as the One Who came down out of heaven. In His humiliation He is the object of faith and then the Son of Man Who dies and then ascends to where He was before. In John 7, Christ is presented as not yet revealed to the world. Once He takes His glorious position in heaven, the Holy Spirit will come down to earth in His place to dwell in the believer.

After the healing of the lame in Judea in John 5, the Lord went to Galilee and there performed the wonder of the feeding (John 6). He walks there in love seeking people to prove that love to them. He doesn't want to walk around in Judea because that is not the will of His Father. He never let Himself be led by how people treated Him. His will and that of the Father are equal. Therefore, we read that He did not want to walk in Judea. Yet the reason given is not the will of the Father, but that the Jews wanted to kill Him.

We see here that the evil attitude of the Jews is incorporated in the will of the Father. The will of the Father does not undo man's wickedness, but the will of the Father is above it and He uses that wickedness to carry out His plans. Jews are the Judeans and especially the spiritual leaders. Wherever man's wickedness prevents the Son from proving His mercy, grace finds new areas for it. He will be in that area for a certain time, because He will only go to Judea again when the time determined by the Father has come.

The time of the events of John 7 is the time of the Feast of Booths. John 6 has the Passover as its starting point (Jn 6:4) and His death as subject.

Here the Feast of Booths is central, a picture of the feast of joy in response to all God's blessings in the fruits of the land in the realm of peace. This is connected to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).

Because of the sins of the people, the time of the fulfillment of this feast for the people has not yet come. Therefore, just like the Passover, the feast is called a "feast of the Jews".

Jn 7:3-9 | The Unbelief of the Brothers of the Lord

*3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be [known] publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him. 6 So Jesus *said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. 8 Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." 9 Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.*

The brothers of the Lord want Him to return to Judea. They know that He has disciples there who can then see His works. That will increase His popularity which will reflect on them. They reason only from their own perspective, without any understanding of Who He really is, Who has deigned to be born into their family. They seek honor from the world, because they want to make a name for themselves by what He does.

What they propose shows what they themselves would have done if they were in His place. Their proposal comes from seeking their own honor, as is common in the world. They have no idea of what really drives the Lord. They find it strange that He remains hidden, while He, so they believe, wants to be known publicly.

The reason for their attitude and proposal is that they do not believe in Him. To them He is no more than a Brother with special gifts. They do want piggybacking on the prestige He receives through His signs, but keep far away from Him as soon as His rejection comes in sight.

Later His brothers will believe in Him. After all, they will be there when the disciples are together in the upper room after His ascension devoting

themselves to prayer and to choose an apostle in the place of Judas (Acts 1:14).

The Lord does not let Himself be led by the vision of His brothers. As always, He remains in perfect dependence on His Father. He lets Himself be led by Him and not by people, not by His enemies and not by His family. It is not yet the time to make Himself known publicly to the world. He must first suffer. He does have a message for His brothers. He holds out to them that they live in and for the world and therefore their time to show themselves to it is now.

Perhaps the Lord also alludes to the momentary nature of their life and that they should prepare to meet God (Amos 4:12). People of the world do not bother about God's time, but rather take time into their own hands. Because they live in and for the world, the world regards them as part of itself and therefore cannot hate them. They love the world and the world loves them because they contribute to preserving and cultivating the world.

This is different with the Lord Jesus. The world does hate Him because He reveals the world in its true character. He comes from another world, that of the Father and life. He came into this world to give it the life that belongs to the world from which He came and to which He still belongs. Because this life is the light of men (Jn 1:4), He exposes the evil of the world in the light. The Lord and His brothers belong to different worlds.

He tells them to go to the feast because for that is where they belong. It is a feast of the Jews, the most deadly opponents of the Lord. It is a feast of the world in which the greatness of man is celebrated. That is what the brothers are looking for and that is why they belong at the feast.

Once again the Lord says that His time is not yet fulfilled, because His path is determined by the Father. He cannot go with them to a feast that has no place for Him unless it is the place that man thinks He should take. So He stays in Galilee.

Jn 7:10-13 | The Lord Goes up to the Feast

10 But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. 11 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" 12 There was much grumbling among

the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." 13 Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

When the time of the Father, or 'My time' (verse 8), has come, the Lord goes up to the feast, clearly separated from His brothers and with entirely different motives. He goes in accordance with what He has said to His brothers that the time of making Himself known publicly has not yet come (verse 6). That is why He goes, but as if, in secret. He does not go to satisfy human curiosity or desires. The way He goes to the feast is a type of the place He occupies now and also of the place we occupy. He is now hidden in God and our lives are with Him hidden in God (Col 3:3).

The Jews assume that He must also be somewhere at the feast. These declared opponents of the Lord, who are always out to get rid of Him, do not seek Him to honor Him, but to see if there is an opportunity to seize Him. Their question "where is He?" shows how occupied their minds are with Him. He is the great danger of undermining their position.

Not only the Jews are busy with Him in their deliberations. The crowds also talk about Him. It does happen in the form of grumbling and not out loud. Nor does it happen out of a deep inner need for a personal encounter with Him. They talk about Him as a phenomenon you can discuss, but that does not affect their conscience. While the leaders want to kill Him, the crowds are indifferent.

The grumbling about the Lord and not speaking openly about Him is because the crowds are afraid of the Jews, the spiritual leaders. If you said anything about Christ that the Jews did not like, you fell into disgrace with them. Their spies were everywhere. You could easily be betrayed. Here we see how great an influence the Jews have among the people.

Jn 7:14-18 | Teaching in the Temple

14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and [began to] teach. 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or

[whether] I speak from Myself. 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Then comes the time for the Lord Jesus to go up into the temple, not to make Himself known publicly, but to teach. The feast is half over by now. What an empty feast it has been so far if He Who ought to be the center of it, is not present in the temple. He now comes to the temple, even though the people do not realize that He is *Yahweh* Himself, to Whom they owe all blessings. However, their gratitude does not go out to Him. That is why it is rightly said that it is a feast of the Jews (verse 2). *Yahweh* and the gratitude toward Him are not central because it is *their* feast. What is central is what *they* have performed.

As soon as the Lord begins to speak, the power of His words is felt immediately. For them it is incomprehensible that someone can be so learned without Him having received any recognized training with the religious leaders or with a special rabbi. Likewise, for many Christians today it is only possible to say something about God and the Bible if one is a recognized theologian who has studied theology at a recognized and respected university or college.

In response to the astonishment of the Jews, the Lord answers that He does not preach His own teaching, but that what He teaches comes from His Sender. He emphasizes that His teaching is inseparable from His Father, making it perfectly clear at the same time that His teaching is completely separate from any human teaching. Only if someone is willing to do the will of God he will have the appropriate mind to recognize the correctness of His teaching.

The inability of the Jews and of every human being to understand what the Lord says is rooted in the heart of the questioner. One can only recognize that His teaching is from God if he is willing to obey the content of it.

This applies to the entire Word of God. This is a principle of extreme importance. The spiritual growth of the believer depends on this principle. Spiritual growth is not an intellectual matter, but a matter of heart and conscience. If the words spoken originate from man himself, if man is their source, the purpose of the words can only be one's own glory. Man is only

focused on himself. Where the glory of God is not sought and maintained, there can be no solid guarantee of truth.

Only when a person is focused on God and seeks His glory he is true and speaks truth. In such a person there is no unrighteousness, there is nothing that does injustice to God or any person, but he gives the true place to all and everything. This is true in perfection for the Lord Jesus. It also applies to us to the extent that we truly seek the glory of Him Who sent us into the world, just as He was sent into the world by the Father (Jn 20:21).

Jn 7:19-24 | The Lord Applies His Teaching

19 "Did not Moses give you the Law, and [yet] none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" 20 The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" 21 Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on [the] Sabbath you circumcise a man. 23 If a man receives circumcision on [the] Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on [the] Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

To demonstrate that teaching is only understood when it is put into practice, the Lord points to the law. Moses gave them the law containing the commandments of God. But none of them carries out the law. This makes it clear that they do not understand the law. Instead, they abuse the law for their own glory. Thus, the Jews boast that they have received the law and therefore feel superior to other people. The Pharisees among them even curse the crowd which does not know the Law (verse 49).

That man seeks his own glory is most evident from the abuse of the law for that purpose. The Lord exposes this abuse. They boast of the law, but no one obeys it. They have their mouth full of the law, but how is their walk? The result of their boasting is that they seek to kill the Son of God! He knows their murderousness. They cannot bear that God comes so close to them and exposes their sinful state.

The crowd that hears the Lord accusing the Jews of wanting to kill Him is not aware of what He sees in the hearts of the leaders. The crowd is

not walking around with plans to kill Him. That is why they react highly surprised to the Lord's statements. That they, too, have no notion at all of Who He is, is evident from the fact that they attribute the origin of His statements to a demon. That is why they will later be receptive to the whisperings of the leaders and call for His death.

The Lord knows that they have marveled at the work He has done in healing the lame (Jn 5:15-16). That has been an impressive work of which the impression still lingers. It is still in their minds, although it has been more than a year. The healing then caused fuss because He performed that wonder on the Sabbath. He is again referring to it to further make clear how they deal with the law and how that is diametrically opposed to His actions in grace.

Again he refers to Moses in whom they boast so much. Moses gave them circumcision (Lev 12:3). The Lord adds that Moses included circumcision in the law, but that the circumcision already existed as an institution before the law even existed. God had already given Abraham the commandment of circumcision (Gen 17:10-13). In any case, the Jews to whom the Lord addresses Himself, adhere so strictly to what Moses said, that they carry out the commandment of circumcision, even if it must be done on the Sabbath.

He reproaches them for being angry with Him because He made an entire man well on the Sabbath, while they carry out circumcision in order not to break the law of Moses. For them, the commandment of circumcision outweighs the Sabbath commandment. So they themselves make an exception. He wants them to realize how great the difference is between keeping a commandment of the law concerning a small part of a person and showing grace to a whole person.

They judge according to the perceptible, to the controllable, and thus come to an unrighteous judgment. This judging by appearance is also a great danger for the believer. Even a man of God like Samuel was guilty of this and God had to reproach him (1Sam 16:7).

The Lord urges them to make a righteous judgment. In order to make a righteous judgment, His teaching is necessary, which however, they do not want. With His references to the law, He breaks through their foolish legislative reasoning.

Jn 7:25-30 | Opinions of Men

25 So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? 26 Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? 27 However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." 28 Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. 29 I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." 30 So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

After the Jews and the crowd, some people of Jerusalem are a third group that speaks out about the Lord Jesus. They are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, while the Jews come from the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem and the crowd has come from all over Israel on the occasion of the Passover. The Jerusalem people are more familiar with Christ. They also know the murder plans of the Jewish leaders. Astonished, they wonder if it is not He Whom the rulers are trying to kill. But He speaks publicly, without anything done to Him. According to them, this could indicate that the leaders have recognized Him as the Christ after all. Could their superiors have changed their minds? That consideration brings them into doubt.

Their rulers are important to them, but they also have their own thoughts about the Lord Jesus. They know that He comes from Nazareth. They will also know from the Scriptures that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem according to the prophecy in Micah 5 (Mic 5:2). But it is unknown to them, when He would come and they believe that no one knows where He would come from once He came. It's just reflections, without a real desire to know the truth about Christ.

The human side of Christ is obvious to them. They know that He comes from Nazareth. The Lord connects to that when He says that they know Him. But with respect to His Godhead they are completely blind. That is because they do not know Him Who sent Him. He did not come of His own initiative, but was sent by Him Who is true. That is why everything

the Lord Jesus does and speaks is in truth and exposes all enmity and ignorance of all who hear and see Him.

The Lord says that He knows the Father as He knew Him from eternity. He went out from Him, which means that He was always with Him. Also the Father is active in the coming of the Son, for He has sent Him. The Son knows the Father because He is always with Him and He knows His will in His mission.

His words about His Father make them furious. They want to seize Him. Yet they do not. Only when His hour is come, will they be able to seize Him. Only then will the Father allow it, in view of the fulfillment of His plans. Nor can it be done other than only at His hour.

Jn 7:31-36 | Where I Am, You Cannot Come

31 But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" 32 The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. 33 Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. 34 You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come." 35 The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? 36 What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"

The words of the Lord impress many in the crowd. The things they have seen of Him and what they hear from Him now lead them to believe in Him. It is not a belief in Who He really is, but a belief based on reason. It does not come from a convinced conscience. The many in the crowd who believe only believe because of the signs He has done. They believe because of what they have seen. One can see this from their statements about Him, which show that they are weighing things up. They would not know what more signs the Christ, when He came, would do than this Jesus did. In their opinion, He is the best choice for the moment.

Although the crowd does not speak openly, the muttering of the crowd in favor of the Lord reaches the ears of the chief priests and Pharisees. They think it is time to intervene and seize Him. They send their servants to seize Him. The Lord Who knows this perfectly does not let Himself be influenced by their hostile action, but continues His teaching. As everywhere and ever in this Gospel, it is not His enemies who determine the course of events, it is He Himself Who does so.

He speaks calmly about the little time He will still be with them and that He will then go to the Father. He does not say a word about His rejection by them, although that too is true. He knows what people will do with Him, but He looks to His Father. All is in His hand. He will still be with them for a little time, for He will not yet establish the kingdom, but will be rejected.

When He has gone to the Father, unbelief will seek Him, but never find Him. What does the world know about heaven and the Father? He explicitly mentions that they cannot go there. He knows that they don't even want that. There is nothing so terrible for a rebellious, hardened sinner than to come into the light, in the presence of God.

When the Lord says here, "where I am, you cannot come", it is yet another powerful proof against the erroneous teaching of universal reconciliation. There is no way that unbelief can come where the Lord Jesus is. Nor does the Lord speak of 'not coming where He is for a while', as if that might happen later on. An unbeliever will never at any time in eternity come to where the Son is. In order to come to Him a new birth is necessary and that new birth can only be obtained by conversion during life on earth. Only on earth is it possible to receive forgiveness of sins and not later at any time in the realm of death (Mt 9:6).

The Jews do not know how to deal with this word. He has spoken about the fact that He has come from God and that He is returning there. As always, unbelief does not look any further than the horizon. They can only deduce from His words that He will leave the land and go outside of Israel to the Jews in the dispersion. They cannot find the dispersed ones and so they believe He will become untraceable too. Their own suggestion does not satisfy them. They are left with the question what the meaning of His

words is. The Lord does not elaborate further because they are not open to His teaching about the Father.

Jn 7:37-39 | The Promise of the Holy Spirit

37 Now on the last day, the great [day] of the feast, Jesus stood 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.

The last, the great day of the feast is the eighth day (Lev 23:36). The Feast of Booths is the only feast with such a day. On that great day, the Lord Jesus speaks with a loud voice about the Holy Spirit.

It is remarkable that in connection with the Feast of Booths the Holy Spirit is spoken about. We would rather expect this in connection with the Feast of Weeks, i.e. Pentecost, which is also among the feasts instituted by *Yahweh* (Lev 23:15; Deu 16:9-10; see also Acts 2:1). But neither the Passover nor the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost has an eighth day and what this day represents is precisely what characterizes this Gospel according to John.

The eighth day speaks of a new beginning after a completely closed period of seven days, a beginning without an end. In the cycles of feasts, the Feast of Booths points forward to the period of the realm of peace in which God fulfills all His promises to Israel and God's blessing through Israel for all creation. That blessing will be heralded by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all mankind (Joel 2:28). All those who enter the realm of peace are born again of water and Spirit (Jn 3:5) and the Holy Spirit will come upon them as the source of refreshment.

By speaking of "the last day" of the Feast of Booths, the coming of the Holy Spirit is connected to the realm of peace, because that is what the Feast of Booths refers to. By speaking of "the great day" the focus is turned on the period after the realm of peace, eternity, which is also called "the day of God" and "the day of eternity" (2Pet 3:12,18). That is the eighth day, the day that refers to the time after the realm of peace, which is eternity.

After the realm of peace a new beginning comes, a new heaven and a new earth that have nothing to do with the old world. That is why it is completely in accordance with this Gospel, which speaks so uniquely of the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son. What He, Who is the eternal Son, brings, comes from eternity and leads to eternity. That is why it is so appropriate that He speaks of the Holy Spirit on the last day of the Feast of Booths, the eighth day.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on earth, a completely new period has begun, which will never come to an end. Everyone who now receives the Holy Spirit has been brought into a new and never-ending position (eighth day). Whoever has received the Holy Spirit has received the first fruit of what is present everywhere and enjoyed in eternity.

Today there is already a new family on earth that is connected to Him in heaven through the Spirit. That family belongs where He already is. The believers are still *in*, but no longer *of* the world. They no longer belong to the first creation, but to the new world that the Lord Jesus created. While they wait for the revelation of the Son of Man, they have the Spirit Who helps them on earth and Who shows the glory of the Lord Jesus that He now has.

The Lord Jesus is offering these great blessings here to anyone who is in need, who is thirsty. It also only provides for one's own need. People are not invited to drink for others, but for themselves. That is the starting point to teach others afterward (verse 38). The condition for partaking of its faith in Him. Faith is faith in a Person, in Christ, and that faith in Him is closely related to Scripture and the living water spoken of in Scripture.

In Scripture we can read about living water in, for example, Ezekiel 47 (Eze 47:1-9) where it is mentioned in view of the millennial realm of peace. Here the Lord says that this living water will flow from the innermost being of him who believes. What in the realm of peace will be a refreshment for creation, is from the believer a refreshment for others in the present time and will soon be on the new earth for its inhabitants.

The Holy Spirit wants to use the believer as someone from whom blessing for his environment comes forth. That blessing is to show Who the Lord Jesus is, because that is what the Holy Spirit does (Jn 16:14). That by living

water the Holy Spirit is meant is not a fabrication of people, but is clearly stated here by God's Word itself. The Holy Spirit will come in those who will believe in the Lord Jesus (Eph 1:13).

The Spirit has been active on earth since creation (Gen 1:2), but He did not yet live on earth. He could only come to live on earth after the Lord Jesus had returned to heaven after completing the work the Father had given Him to do. As dwelling places of the Spirit, the body of the individual believer and the church as a whole are mentioned (1Cor 6:19; 3:16; Eph 2:22). The purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit on earth is to be a Witness of the glorified Lord in heaven. So, the Lord Jesus had to be glorified first.

The meaning of the sentence "the Spirit was not yet" is not that the Spirit did not yet exist. The Spirit is God and has no beginning, never came into being. He is the eternal Spirit (Heb 9:14). The point is that He did not yet *dwell* on earth. He has dwelled on earth since the day of Pentecost.

Jn 7:40-44 | Division Because of the Lord

40 [Some] of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." 41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" 43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. 44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

The words of the Lord impressed some of the crowd. They do sense that these are not words of an ordinary person. He must be the Prophet promised by God and announced by Moses (Deu 18:15; Acts 3:22). For others this does not go far enough. They judge that He has to be the Christ. But this is how people separate what God has joined together. After all, the Lord Jesus is both the Prophet and the Christ. The Samaritan woman came to this conviction (Jn 4:19,29).

These are all guesses that are undone by others, because they argue that the Christ cannot come from Galilee, which is where the Lord Jesus comes from. They know only too well what is written of the Christ, from whom He descends (2Sam 7:12-16; Psa 89:4-5) and where He will come from (Mic

5:2). What they do not know is that He precisely meets that. The result of all those opinions is that a division occurs. Nobody is convinced of the truth, uncertainty rules.

Apart from arguments full of opinions with a little bit of truth here and there, but without *the* truth, there are also people who want to seize Him. However, they are stopped by the invisible power of God. God's time has not yet come, therefore it is not possible to seize Him.

Jn 7:45-49 | Testimony of the Officers

45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" 46 The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." 47 The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? 48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? 49 But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

The officers who had been sent to seize Him return to their masters unsuccessfully. They are amazed that they come back empty-handed. They ask why. The officers may be ignorant, but their feelings are not yet completely numbed. By the words of Christ they have experienced a power that far surpasses the power of any human being. A mortal cannot speak like that.

Instead of bringing the Lord Jesus to the rulers they bring to them a testimony of His words, incidentally without accepting Him. In their blind hatred, the Pharisees accuse their officers of being led astray. Surely they can verify that they are dealing with a deceiver, because surely none of the rulers believes in Him, can't they? How can they be so foolish as to believe in Him!

It is in people's blood to hide behind what religious leaders say. The religious leaders themselves use this argument to keep the masses stupid and dependent on them. For them, the crowd consists of stupid, ignorant people. This is how they talk about the laity, common people, who had not studied the law. Those who are the shepherds of the crowd curse the crowd for it. It shows what kind of shepherds they are. They are false shepherds who are out for their own benefit only (Eze 34:1-6). Such shepherds

curse the sheep and abandon them. The Lord Jesus later calls them hired hands (Jn 10:12).

Jn 7:50-53 | Testimony of Nicodemus

*50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) *said to them, 51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" 52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." 53 <Everyone went to his home.*

Then Nicodemus lets his voice be heard. We met him in John 3, where he came to the Lord Jesus at night. He is the exception to the defamatory expressions of the Pharisees. Nicodemus is not quite at the side of the Lord yet, but he is on his way to the light. He stands up for Him by appealing to the law.

He thinks that, before they accuse Him, they should first hear from Him and know what He is doing. He has to be able to justify Himself and get a fair trial, doesn't He? Nicodemus gets blamed and silenced. His colleagues despise his words and reproachingly enquire if he also comes from Galilee. They advise him to investigate whether there is any mention of a prophet from Galilee.

With all his prestige of 'the teacher of Israel' (Jn 3:10) Nicodemus is not taken seriously now and experiences resistance from his colleagues. While they would otherwise have praised him for his knowledge of the Scriptures, they now despise him for standing up for the Lord Jesus.

Incidentally, with their remark that no prophet arises from Galilee, they betray their own ignorance. There are prophets from Galilee, such as Elijah and Jonah.

After this conversation, the council is dissolved and everyone goes to his home. The domestic atmosphere, in which someone can be so quite different, will not change their murderous feelings.

John 8

Introduction

With John 8 a new part of this Gospel begins, a second main part. After the introduction in John 1-2, the first main part contains John 3-7. The key word of that part is *life*. John 8-12 form the second main part with *light* as the key word. The third main part we have in John 13-17. The keyword of that part is *love*. These three key words – life, light and love – have been brought tangibly into this world by the Son of God and form an enormous contrast with all that is going on in this world.

He came out of the world of life into the world of death, out of the world of light into the world of darkness and out of the world of love into the world of hate. The clash of these two worlds dominate all chapters. Each time we see how incompatible the two worlds are, which is particularly evident in the enmity of the religious leaders. This enmity leads to a complete rejection of Him Who was sent into the world by the Father. In John 8 it is evident from the rejection of the *words* of the Son, and in John 9 it is evident from the rejection of His *works*. Both His words and His works are the two great testimonies that declare His origin (Jn 15:22-24).

Jn 8:1-2 | The Lord Jesus Teaches in the Temple

1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and [began] to teach them.

While everyone goes to his home (Jn 7:53) the Lord Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to spend the night there (Lk 21:37). The Mount of Olives is, so to speak, His “home”. It is the place where He seeks fellowship with His Father. Later He will go there to supplicate His Father in Gethsemane concerning the cup (Lk 22:39). Again later, after His resurrection, He will return to the Father from there (Acts 1:9,12). When in the future He returns from heaven, the Mount of Olives will be the place where He descends to visit earth again, but then in power and majesty (Acts 1:11; Zec 14:4).

After spending the night in fellowship with the Father, the Lord continues early in the morning doing the work He has seen the Father do. Again he enters the temple. There He is the point of attraction for all the people. When they come to Him, He sits down and teaches them about the Father. In His service to the people He is tireless (cf. Lk 21:37-38).

Jn 8:3-6 | A Woman Caught in Adultery Brought to the Lord

*3 The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center [of the court], 4 they *said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.*

Likewise, the leaders are tireless in their efforts to silence the Lord Jesus. Like the people, they come to Him, not to learn, but to set a trap for Him. As always, they are completely blind to the glory of the Son and His omniscience. They bring a woman with them and bring her to Him. The woman has been caught committing adultery and they want Him to act as Judge. John notices that they place her in the center. They place sin, as it were, in the center.

Their depravity is apparent not only from their evil intent, but also from the way in which they accuse the woman. They speak about sin without any disgust. For them it is 'a case' with which they want to embarrass Christ. They save Him the trouble of finding out whether their accusation is correct, because the woman has been caught red-handed. Possibly her husband came home when she was in bed with another man. It is also possible that the spies of the leaders have reported her.

The prosecutors know the law. They know what the law of Moses says about such cases (Lev 20:10; Deu 17:7). They can apply the right article of the law. Then why ask Christ? Because they do see and hear grace and truth in Jesus Christ, but refuse to accept it, because they do not want to see that they are sinners. They no longer want to hear His preaching, and His influence on the crowd is an eyesore to them. They want to get rid of Him.

Now they think to have put Him with their question in a situation where any answer that He would give them would lead them to expose Him as a deceiver. If He condemns her, He is not a Savior. After all, the law can condemn as well. If He sets her free, He disregards and rejects the law. The trap is cleverly conceived and cunningly set up. But what does the cleverness of man mean in the presence of God Who searches the heart?

The Lord does not respond directly to their attempt to test Him. That is not because He wants to gain time, but because He wants the full importance of the situation to pervade them. Because of this they will, once He answers, no longer have any possibility to evade what He is telling them. He is perfectly Master of the situation.

He stoops down and writes with His finger on the ground. It is the same finger that wrote the commandments on the tablets of the law with the judgment of Israel (Exo 31:18). It is also the same finger that wrote the judgment of Belsazar on the wall (Dan 5:5). In both cases the finger of God wrote, for it was this finger, indelibly, the inflexible justice on a stone ground. We do not know what the Lord is writing here on the ground in the dust. It has been suggested that He may have written the names of those who did not want Him (Jer 17:13).

As a result of His stooped posture we can make two applications. On the one hand, He wants to teach the leaders that such an event can only be treated properly in a humble mind, willing to make themselves one with such evil. On the other hand, He wants to teach the woman that He does not stand upright to throw stones at her, but that He, as the Humble One, stoops down to serve her by convincing her of her sin.

Jn 8:7-9 | The Hearts of the Accusers Revealed

7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him [be the] first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they [began] to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center [of the court].

The persistent incorrigibility of the depraved prosecutors comes to full maturity when the Lord does not answer for a while. They persist in asking Him for the answer to their question to be Judge. Then His time has come to answer. He straightens up. Now that is a great moment. We see His power and His rights here, but yet He does not make use of them. When God straightens up, it's impressive. Several times we read of His straightening up or arising to judge His enemies (Psa 68:1; Isa 14:22; 33:10).

As impressive as His straightening up is what He says. He does not give a legal answer, but a moral answer, which is more like a question. By that answer everyone present is placed in God's light. In that light every sin is revealed, not only the sin of adultery. With his question He turns the spotlight of truth on the hypocrites. His light shines and reveals every heart. He is the Only One among that company Who is without sin. He is therefore the Only One Who could throw a stone at her. He does not, for it is not the hour of judgment, but of grace.

After He has straightened up and spoken justice, He stoops down again and continues writing on the ground. He takes the lowest position, while He is the greatest and most glorious of all. Again He gives His opponents the opportunity to draw their conclusions, but now after He has given them a sensitive, profound lesson. His answer embarrasses them, while they have been out to embarrass Him. This is worked out by the power of His word that placed them in the light. Who can stand in His presence without being convicted of guilt?

Remarkably, the older ones are the first to go home. They have done the most sins and this they cannot hide in His presence. Even those who have sinned less badly or not so much, leave. Opposite Him Who sees right through them, they can't maintain anything of their evil motives to test Him. They all drip off. This leaves no one left but the Lord alone, with the woman standing in the center.

Jn 8:10-11 | The Lord and the Adulterous Woman

10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.">

Again the Lord straightens up, this time to raise two questions for the woman. He asks where her accusers are and if there is no one who has condemned her. The woman does not answer the question where her accusers are. They all left, but she is not alone. She is still standing in the presence of Him Who knows everything. With the words “no one, Lord” she does answer the second question. This is the only word we hear from the woman, but it is enough to show that she has faith in Him.

Then the Lord speaks the liberating word that He does not condemn her either. By adding: “Go. From now on sin no more”, He makes it clear that He does not take sin lightly. He does not pretend that she has not sinned. She has committed a grave sin, for which she was rightly accused. She did not bring anything in her defense. Neither could she because she was caught red-handed. The Lord can say that He does not condemn her because He will bear the judgment of that sin for the woman. His task to her is to start a new life now, for which He will give her the life and strength.

Jn 8:12-14 | The Light of the World

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

13 So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.” 14 Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.”

The Lord has shown with the history of the woman that He is the light of the world. Through His word He placed all in the light and all have left. But the Pharisees have returned. He speaks to them again and speaks about Himself as “the Light of the world” (verse 12; Jn 1:4-5,9). This statement is the key to the rest of the chapter. He is going to explain what that means.

That He speaks of Himself as the light of the *world* indicates that His glory exceeds the borders of *Israel*. In fact, His rejection by the Jews is the reason for God to make Him a light for the nations (Isa 49:6). It also means that anyone who follows Him no longer walks in the darkness, but that such a person has the “Light of life”. For such a person, the darkness no longer

has a hold, nor does the darkness hold terror for such a person. Those who follow Him follow the life that is light.

The Lord Jesus reveals life and that revealed life casts light on all other lives. All those other lives become revealed as darkness and are on their way to darkness. Only following Him leads to the path of light and to the light. The testimony of the Lord leads to yet another manifestation of enmity in the Pharisees, as we always find in this Gospel.

The Lord has endured the hostility, or contradiction, of sinners in general, but of these religious leaders in particular (Heb 12:3). They feel that they have no part in any blessing of which He speaks and they even do not want to have any part in it. They think they have an argument for rejecting His testimony by saying that He is testifying of Himself and therefore His testimony cannot be true.

If we look at what the Lord Jesus said in John 5 (Jn 5:31), it seems that they are right to make this remark. But the background is different. There it is about His dependence on the Father and that is why He says that He does not testify of Himself. Here it is about His own glory and His connection with the Father. Here He gives His testimony as the Omniscient.

These people are completely ignorant of the Father and the Son. They do not think about heaven and lack the ability to judge Him correctly. On the contrary, the Son has the constant awareness of the truth of His own Person and of His mission by the Father. His testimony is inseparable from that of the Father.

They do not know where He comes from. Earlier the Lord said that they knew where He came from (Jn 7:28). There He meant that they knew that He came from Nazareth. But His pre-existence in heaven and His place with the Father is completely unknown to them.

Jn 8:15-20 | His Testimony and That of the Father

15 You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone [in it], but I and the Father

who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." 19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

The cause of their unfamiliarity with His true origin is that they can only judge things in a carnal, natural way (Jn 7:24). Their own self is the source of their judgment. Then a person does not look beyond what he can perceive. He has no understanding for what lies beyond his horizon. Christ, Who is God over all, blessed forever (Rom 9:5), and Who has perfect knowledge of all things, is not judging anyone, but serves all. He is not judging anyone, for that is not the command with which the Father has sent Him into the world.

The fact that He is not judging anyone does not mean that He would not be able to do so. He has a perfect, infallible judgment over all things. His judgment is perfectly true, without any uncertainty. That is because He is not alone. He judges because the Father has given Him all judgment (Jn 5:22). That not the Father, but He judges, does not mean that He exercises the judgment independently of the Father. The Father Who sent Him is in complete agreement with the judgment He exercises.

In order to underline His words in a way that matches their knowledge of the law, the Lord again refers to their law given by Him and to which they appeal. Therein it is written that the testimony can only be accepted as truth if there are two people who bear the same witness (Deu 17:6; 19:15). The Lord responds to what He Himself has written in the law. Does the law require the testimony of two people? Well, then He can say that He speaks in accordance with the law in His testimony about Himself. He and the Father bear witness concerning His Person.

The Lord always refers to the Father as the One Who sent Him. He always shows that as the eternal Son He is perfectly one with the Father and also that as the Son of Man He testifies of the Father on earth in perfect de-

pendence on the Father and declares the Father. In turn, the Father bears witness to the Son (Jn 5:37; 1Jn 5:9; Mt 3:17).

This word about His Father makes them challenge Him to tell them where His Father is. In order to convince them, He must show them His Father, with the undertone that of course He will never be able to do so. But he who is blind to the Son does not see the Father either, for the Father is known only through the Son (Jn 14:9). They understand that He speaks of God as His Father, but in their unbelief and bias they reject any thought of it. They see this as blasphemy. Their question stems from contempt.

The Lord answers that they know neither Him nor the Father and that knowing the Father is inseparable from knowing Him. Because they reject Him, they cannot know the Father either. The Son is the only and exclusive possibility to know the Father (1Jn 2:23; 4:15). Without Him that is completely impossible.

These particularly important words that reveal so much about the glory of His Person are spoken by the Lord in the treasury. His words in which He reveals His glory for to those who believe can be compared to the opening of a treasury or treasure room. Only faith sees its value.

The Lord teaches in the temple, where religious leaders pretend to stand up for the right of God, while seeking only their own honor. His teaching is most offensive to them. How much they had wanted to seize Him. But no matter how great their hatred and murderousness, they are powerless until the moment determined by God has come.

This may also be an encouragement to us. People can't do anything to us unless God allows it because it fits into His plans. Our times are in His hand (Psa 31:15) and not in the hands of people.

Jn 8:21-24 | He Who Does Not Believe Dies in His Sins

21 Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." 22 So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going,

you cannot come'?" 23 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins."

In spite of all their attempts to seize Him, the Lord continues to speak to them. He knows that they will only be given the opportunity to seize Him when the time has come according to the Father's plan. Then He will give Himself into their hands as well. Now He still speaks to them to testify of His Father and to denounce their evil. He tells them that He is returning, back to the Father. That this will happen through their wicked actions, is not an issue in this Gospel. All initiative lies with Him.

Once He will have left, they will seek Him. He will have disappeared inexplicably. They will seek Him as they sought Him after the wonder of the loaves (Jn 6:24), but without faith and driven by purely human motives. They will seek Him as Messiah, but won't find Him because He doesn't meet their expectations. Therefore, they will die in their sin, for there is no life outside of Him. Their death will eternally separate them from Him.

Where He will go, they cannot come because of their persistent unbelief and they will never come once they die in their sins. He goes to heaven, to His Father, but they have their interests on earth and have no interest whatsoever in heaven or His Father.

Again the Jews speculate about the meaning of the Lord's saying that He is going somewhere they cannot go (Jn 7:34-36). This time they suggest the possibility that He might then commit suicide. Behind His words, man's foolishness seeks all possible absurd explanations that are all equally far from the truth. Any such explanation shows the utter darkness of their thinking. There is not the slightest bit of truth in it.

The Lord responds to their foolish assumption by pointing to the source where they reason from and the source where He speaks from. They are from below, that is to say, they belong to below and have no connection with heaven. Because they are from below, they belong to the world and think like the world, they carry the character of the world and breathe the atmosphere of the world. They have no part in and understanding of what is from above. He is from above (Jn 3:31), He belongs to heaven and to the

Father, where He came from. He has no connection whatsoever with the world (Jn 17:14).

Because of that radical separation that exists between them and Him, both in origin and in character, and therefore have no part in Him in any way, they will die in their sins. Believing in His Person as the 'I am', as it literally says, is the only way to change their destiny and the destiny of every human being. The 'I am' is *Yahweh* (Exo 3:14) and that He is. He is the Son of God, God revealed in the flesh. 'I am' refers to His eternal nature as the Son of God. He is the true God. This statement does not allow mixing with anything else. It is either for or against Him. He who believes in Him as the 'I am' has life. He who does not believe in Him, dies in his sins, because outside Him there is no salvation.

Jn 8:25-30 | Jesus Is All That He Has Been Saying

25 So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you [from] the beginning? [Footnote, or: That which I have been saying to you from the beginning.] 26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [He], and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." 30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

The Jews continue to respond with counter-questions that all demonstrate their unbelief. They ask Him Who He thinks He is by speaking such presumptuous words. The Lord continues to respond to their questions and gives testimony of Who He is with great power. To faith, His answers increasingly reveal His glory. So here as well.

Every attack of the devil reveals, on the one hand, man's incorrigible evil, but on the other hand it gives the Lord Jesus the opportunity to show more and more of His glory. It is like a diamond, the brilliance of which is all the more striking when placed on a black background.

Once again, his answer to the question “Who are You?” gives such a brilliant impression of His glory. He is not only the way and the life, but also the truth. He does not only do what He says, but He *is* what He says. He Himself is the *logos*, He not only speaks about God, but He Who speaks, is God Himself. All His speaking reveals His inner being, that is, His speaking reveals Who God is. It is the expression of His perfect Person. That is why no man has ever said that and no man can ever say that. Only He can say this.

Everything He says is perfect truth. What He says makes perfectly clear Who He Himself is, Who God is and who man should be before God. Good and evil only become known through Him. And Him the Jews reject. By doing so they are deprived of the truth. Because of the perfect knowledge He has of His opponents, He could speak a lot about them and judge them. All His speaking and judging would perfectly reveal who they are, but the time of that speaking and judging is yet to come. That is not the purpose for which He has come into the world.

Sent by the Father, He has now come to earth to speak to the world what He has heard from the Father. He knows Him as the One Who is true and He reveals Him as the One Who is true. In this way He reveals everything in its true character. The purpose the Father has with that – and the Son is in perfect agreement with that purpose, and He serves that purpose – is to bring people to the heart of the Father. That is only possible through the Son. Unbelief is blind to the true meaning of His mission because it does not recognize Him as the Son of the Father.

The Lord knows that they do not comprehend that He has told them that of the Father. He points ahead to a time when they will know Who He is, namely when they will have lifted up Him, the Son of Man, on the cross. That act, through which they make their rejection of Him complete, will in the future be the cause of their acknowledgment that He is the ‘I am’. When the Lord Jesus returns in glory, every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him (Rev 1:7; Zec 12:10-14). Then they will stand face to face with Him Whom they now reject.

In that meeting, their whole history will pass them by as in a flash. They will acknowledge that He had once come to earth as the 'I am', while at the same time He said nothing on His own initiative, but spoke everything as the Father had taught Him.

In the spirit the Lord places Himself behind the cross, as if His work on the cross had already taken place. Here He can show the results of it. He does this for example also in John 17 (Jn 17:4). However, at the moment the Lord Jesus says these things, the cross is still before Him and the work has yet to be accomplished. In accomplishing that work He knows that the Father Who sent Him is with Him.

Even though the leaders still so oppose Him, even though the crowd does not understand Who He is and seek Him out of self-interest, even though He is still so wrongly judged by the Jews, He knows that the Father has not left Him alone. He also knows that the Father is not with Him out of pity for the opposition He is experiencing. The Father rejoices in being with His Son because His Son always does the things that are pleasing to Him. The Father joyfully connects Himself to the Son in His way on earth. The Father has also testified of that joy several times (Mt 3:17; 17:5).

What He has said does not fail to touch many others who are not hostile to Him. They believe in Him. By His speaking, they feel that He is a special Person. However, this does not necessarily mean that always conversions and subsequent following Him is connected to that. It is the same as the other times we read about this (Jn 2:23; 7:31). We can see this when He then gives the conditions for discipleship.

Jn 8:31-36 | To Be Free Indeed

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, [then] you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

He holds it up to the Jews who believe in Him that true disciples show their faith by continuing in His word. True faith is manifested by continuing in the word of Christ. It is not something that can be done in one's own power. Someone who believes continues in His word, feeds on it, listens to it, is obedient to it. Someone who simply says that he believes can perhaps keep the appearance of continuing in His word for a while, but there comes a moment when he will show himself in his true unconverted nature by clearly distancing himself from the word of the Lord.

Continuing in the Lord's word results in the truth being known and to be made free from any bondage to any sin. Truth does not lead to slavery, as the law does, but to freedom. The law makes it clear to man that he is a sinner, and does so by imposing on him a yoke that he cannot bear and, as a result, condemns him. Also the truth of the word of Christ makes it clear to man that he is a sinner, but that word also gives the solution in Christ. He has borne the curse and judgment associated with the law for everyone who believes in Him (Gal 3:13). That truth makes free indeed.

Once again the Jews show their utter blindness by interpreting the words of the Lord in a literal sense. They protest against the idea that they should be set free, because that would mean they are slaves. Such a thought they throw far from them. They think only of an outward freedom and claim that as Abraham's descendants they have never served anyone. Have they forgotten that at the moment they say this they are subject to the Romans? Have they also forgotten how they were often subjected to heathen rulers in the past? Every submission to powers that God brought upon them was because of their sins.

They became so accustomed to it that they forgot that they are in slavery. Even less are they aware of the yoke of sin under which they are. So blinded and hardened they have become. The same thinking can be found in Christians who believe that through baptism – which, in their (wrong) opinion, took the place of circumcision – they have been incorporated into the descendancy of Abraham and therefore automatically partake of Abraham's blessing.

The answer of the Lord leaves no room for misunderstanding. He again begins His answer with a double "truly" and an authoritative "I say to

you". Then He says that every person who has sin as the practice of his life is a slave of sin. They are people who are characterized by sin, not believers who fall into sin through inattention (Gal 6:1). Every person who does not believe in Him is a slave of sin.

The Jews are not only slaves of sin, but they are also in bondage under the law (Gal 4:3). They are Jews under the law and as such they are now slaves in the house, that is the house of Israel. They will be sent away from there by the judgment that God will bring on them by the Romans.

For slaves there is no permanent place in the house of Israel, being a house in which God dwells. The Son has inalienable rights. He belongs in the house and will remain there forever, as will all those who have been made free by Him. He is not just a 'son', He is *the* Son. Not only is He free as Son, but He makes free. He grants to everyone He frees the same characteristic of freedom as the freedom that is His own as the Son. He frees from sin, death and law. That is to be free indeed. This freedom is only given to a person when He believes in the Lord Jesus.

Jn 8:37-47 | Abraham's Descendants, but of the Devil

*37 I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak the things which I have seen with [My] Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from [your] father." 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus *said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40 But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? [It is] because you cannot hear My word. 44 You are of [your] father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [nature], for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not*

believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear [them], because you are not of God."

When they have said that they are Abraham's descendants (verse 33), the Lord knows and acknowledges that. He knows that, as far as their physical ancestry is concerned, they are descendants of Abraham. But that does not mean that they also possess the faith of Abraham. They demonstrate the opposite, for they are trying to kill Him. That is because His word is not accepted by them. Whoever closes himself off to the word of the Lord, becomes a murderer of the Lord. Therefore, they prove that they are not descendants of Abraham in a spiritual sense.

The Son speaks what He has seen with His Father, and His words are spirit and life (Jn 6:63). They also speak what they have heard from their father. Later the Lord will tell what He means by that. First He points out that everyone speaks according to the source with which he is connected and that the words that everyone speaks bear the hallmark of that. But they persistently maintain that they are descended from Abraham, he is their father.

The Lord holds out to them that they would do the works of Abraham if they were true children of Abraham, i.e. they would act according to the faith of Abraham. A child acts according to the nature of his father. Physically they are descendants, but they are not children, because they do not act according to the faith of Abraham, they do not have Abraham's nature of faith. Their behavior demonstrates something completely different. Abraham believed in Him, but they are trying to kill Him. And why are they trying to kill Him? Because He spoke the truth to them and that even as Man.

The Lord Jesus presents Himself here in the most humble way imaginable. He does not even ask that they believe in Him as the Son of God, but says that He has spoken the truth to them as "a man". But they completely shut themselves off from the truth, no matter how it comes to them. Abraham did not do that. Abraham never rebelled against God.

Then the Lord says that they do the works of their true, that is their spiritual father. They respond to this with a comment that may contain a blasphemy regarding His birth. When they say "we were not born of fornication"

– with the emphasis on “we” – they may mean that the Lord was born of fornication. After all, Joseph and Mary were not married when He was born, were they? There are other slanderous things that have been said in the course of church history about His supernatural birth. In any case, they were not born that way. It may also be that they interpreted His words as an accusation of idolatry, that they had idols as a father and worshiped idols and thus committed spiritual fornication.

In any case, they totally reject the Lord’s accusation that they have another father than God. They have one Father and that is God. More and more the Lord makes it clear how completely alien they are to a true connection with God. The more they boast about it and claim that connection, the more His words reveal their true condition.

Their increasing resistance gives the Lord the opportunity to expose their enmity and hatred completely in the light. If God were truly their Father, they would love Him, the Son, for He has gone out and come from God, and yet they reject Him. This clearly proves that God is not their Father. They are also blind to the perfect connection between the Son and the Father which is evidenced by the unity of action of the Father and the Son. The Son did not come on His own initiative, without consultation with the Father, but the Father sent Him. It is impossible to know God as Father and at the same time reject the Son.

What the Lord says in verse 42 is also a clear statement regarding the so-called fatherhood of God as Father of all people. God is not the Father of all people; He is only the Father of those who have the Son as their life. They know Him and love Him.

The opponents of the Lord do not understand what He is saying because they are spiritually deaf to His words. He speaks in their national language, but they do not understand the meaning of the words He uses to express His thoughts, which are the same as God’s thoughts. His word is the revelation of His Person. His word shows Who He is, but they are both blind and deaf. Everything He says reveals Who He is, but they shut themselves off from Him and therefore they do not understand what He is saying.

Then the Lord Jesus says in plain language that the devil is their father, that they originate from him and that as true children of that father they do his desires. As children of the devil they reveal the character traits of the devil. The desires of the devil match the nature of the devil. The devil has three characteristics: murder and corruption, with corruption having two aspects, namely covetousness and lie. His children standing here in front of the Lord Jesus reveal these characteristics. They want to kill Him because they are driven by their own covetousness and they use lies as a weapon to get rid of Him.

The devil is not only alien to life, in the sense that he has no life, but he is also out to take life away from every human being. That is his character right from the beginning of his existence as devil. He seeks to kill every human being. At the same time he is completely alien to the truth, he has no part in it. There is not a shred of truth in him. His nature is that of a liar. The only thing he can do is lie. When he claims something that resembles truth, it still comes from the lie, not from God and is meant to spread the lie. He is the source of the lie.

These people to whom the Lord speaks here have the devil for their father. The Jews would rather believe the lie than the truth. By the way, this applies to all people. The Lord does not speak so much of a choice for the lie because they do not want to believe the truth, although that also is the case. He says that they do not believe Him *because* He is telling the truth.

Everything He says is the truth and absolutely free from any lie. His speaking of the truth reveals them as children of the devil. His speaking of the truth is diametrically opposed to their speaking of the lie and doing the desires of their father, the devil.

He alone can say, without any boasting: "Which one of you convicts Me of sin?" Never has any man been able to say that, be it the greatest sinner or the greatest apostle. Here two worlds stand opposite each other. He is telling the truth, He cannot do otherwise, for there is no sin in Him (1Jn 3:5). So why don't they believe? The Lord Himself gives the answer. Only he who is of God hears the words God speaks. They do not hear because they are not of God.

Jn 8:48-55 | The Father Glorifies the Son

48 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." 52 The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets [also]; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' 53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out [to be]?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

The Jews dare to utter the greatest blasphemy, that He has a demon. They do so because the Lord Jesus does not acknowledge them as of God, as God's people. That is the greatest insult to them. Their reaction is extraordinarily vehement, as is always the case when a man is confronted with the falsehood of his religion, a religion that gives him all his importance. We have nothing else to expect. The disciple is like the Master.

How admirable is the reaction of the Lord after such a gross insult. It is an example for us, how we can react when such things are attributed to us. The Lord answers calmly that He has no demon, but that He honors the Father and that He Himself is dishonored by them because of that fact. He does not defend Himself, but surrenders everything to the Father. He is content to serve and is capable and ready to save.

This attitude clearly shows that He is not seeking His own glory, but the glory of the Father. Because He does so, He knows that the Father seeks His glory and will in His time make His judgment of His Son public. How completely different that judgment about Him will turn out to be compared to the judgment His opponents are now making about Him. In view of that time, the Lord expresses once more the great assurance that he who keeps His word will not taste of death for all eternity.

He again prefaces its great significance with the double and therefore emphatically “truly”, followed by the authoritative “I say to you”. He explicitly presents the greatness of the blessing that belongs to faith in Him in contrast to the darkness and death that belong to His adversaries.

To the Jews, this special assurance is also nothing more than the affirmation of their prejudices. They are now completely convinced that He has a demon. How can He speak of “never taste of death” when all those great men from their ancestry have died, like Abraham and all the prophets? How could His word preserve from death?

What He has now said is, in their eyes, the pinnacle of contempt. Does He imagine Himself to be greater than Abraham? That is what His words lead them to believe. Their conclusion is correct, but in their blind unbelief they give that conclusion a false explanation. By pointing to the death of Abraham and the prophets, they think they have incontrovertible proof that His words have come to a dead end. They ask Him the challenging question which is full of unbelief: “Whom do You make Yourself out [to be]?”

The Lord continues to answer. It is not about Him wanting to convince them, because they do not want to be convinced. His concern is that He bears witness to His Father and how the Father judges everything. The judgment of people is of no significance to Him. Whether they want to make him King or kill Him is of no importance to Him. He does not seek the glorification of Himself in any way. He only seeks the Father’s judgment.

He knows that the Father finds joy in the way He bears witness to Him and that the Father glorifies Him for that. He Whom they call their God, but with Whom they have no living relationship, is the One Who seeks the honor of the Son. They may call God ‘our’ God, but they do not know Him. The Son does know Him because He has come from Him.

The Lord adapts Himself to their use of speech when He suggests the possibility that He would be equal to them, a liar, if He said He did not know Him. To Him applies the opposite of what applies to them. They say they know God and they lie. He would be lying if He said He did not know God. It is one or the other. If we know God and in spite of that say we don’t know Him, we are also liars. That the Lord knows Him is apparent from

keeping His word. For us, too, we can say that we know the Father, but that this is only evidenced by keeping His word.

Jn 8:56-59 | Before Abraham Was Born, I Am

*56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw [it] and was glad."
57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.*

Then the Lord answers the question of whether He would perhaps be greater than Abraham. He speaks of "your father Abraham" because they boasted of being descendants of him. But how completely different did Abraham react to Him than they do now. Abraham rejoiced at what he saw of the Lord Jesus. Obviously, this 'seeing' is a seeing in faith and not in seeing as the Jews saw Him now, but therefore no less real.

Abraham has seen the day of the Lord Jesus in faith. On what occasion or occasions that was, the Lord does not disclose. We know some of the events in Abraham's life to which He may refer. We know that Abraham had such great faith in God that he believed in Him as the God of the resurrection. We read about the joy of Abraham when Isaac (meaning laughter) is born from the dead womb of Sarah (Gen 21:3,6) through which the son of promise is as it were brought to life from the dead (Rom 4:17-21). In that laughter he has seen beyond the child in his arms: he has seen the Son in Whom God's promises are all yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

Another joy that Abraham undoubtedly enjoyed is when God gives Isaac back from the dead, as it were, after laying him on the altar (Gen 22:12; Heb 11:19). This joy also extended to the resurrection of the Son from the dead. And did Abraham not look forward in faith to the city that has the foundations, of which God is Architect and Builder (Heb 11:10)?

"My day" is the day of the appearance of Christ in glory that Abraham anticipated in faith, and that day rejoiced him. Abraham foresaw in faith the day of the revelation of the Son into the world and the establishment of His kingdom.

All of this goes far beyond the comprehension of the Jews. They understand nothing of it. They take everything in a limited, literal sense, because there is no faith with them. They react with the insulting remark as to how He, Whom they estimate to be less than fifty years old, could have seen Abraham who lived many centuries ago?

By the way, this estimation of the Lord's age could mean that the Lord looked older than He was. He was thirty-two or thirty-three years old, but the many sufferings He had come into contact with must have marked Him. It shows that He, Who is truly and eternally God the Son, is also truly Man.

In His answer He again gives a brilliant indication of His glorious, eternal, Divine Person. He does not say "before Abraham was born, I was", but "before Abraham was born, I am". When the Lord says "I am", that again is the designation of His eternal Godhead as the "I am", the eternal Being, the ever Existing. Abraham had a beginning. The Lord Jesus, God the Son, has no beginning. Everything has a beginning through Him.

Then the measure for the Jews is full and the conversation is over. They are so angry now that they can no longer hold back. They no longer have any words, only aggression seeking a way out by taking stones to throw at Him. But the Lord hides from them and leaves the temple.

This order is remarkable. It does not say that He leaves the temple and then hides. The Lord radiates peace. It is also not plausible that the Lord hid Himself in some corner of the temple. It is more likely that He makes Himself invisible to His opponents or strikes them with blindness (cf. Gen 19:11; 2Kgs 6:18). Previously, the Lord also prevented His opponents from killing Him by showing His Divine power (cf. Lk 4:29-30). In this way He withdraws from His enemies, to continue the way the Father wants Him to go.

John 9

Jn 9:1-5 | The Lord Sees a Man Blind From Birth

1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "[It was] neither [that] this man sinned, nor his parents; but [it was] so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

John focuses our attention on another event in the Lord's life: the healing of a man born blind. This history is an illustration of what the Lord said in John 8 about the light. In the healing of a man born blind we see how he comes to the light, both physically and spiritually. The Lord opens his physical eyes and the eyes of his heart. That testimony is rejected. The Jews reject the man born blind because they reject the Lord Jesus.

We read that the Lord passes by and then sees a man who is blind from birth. In a spiritual sense that is the condition of every human being and therefore we can make a broad application of this history. The Lord follows the way the Father wants Him to go. At the same time that is the path in which all initiative comes from Him. No human being has any influence on that. On that pathway He sees this man who is blind from birth and whom He wants to turn into one of His sheep. That subject is discussed extensively in John 10, which as far as its content is concerned is directly linked to John 9.

Here we see how everything originates from the Lord. There is no call for help from the blind man. The Lord acts out of pure grace. The disciples also see the man, probably because the Lord draws their attention to him and tells them that this man is born blind. They respond with a question about the cause of his blindness. Their question demonstrates how Jewish they still think.

They know from the law that God visits the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation (Exo 20:5). Their question also reveals how little

they are aware of Him Who is present in grace. The disciples start from the idea of a direct government of God, in which God immediately punishes evil and rewards good. But the time of a direct government with such an intervention of God has not yet come. We find this wrong way of concluding among the friends of Job as well. They see the misery that has come over Job and conclude that he must have sinned very badly, for otherwise God would not punish him so severely.

The Lord's answer makes it clear that there is a form of suffering that does not mean punishment or retribution, but serves a higher purpose, namely, to display the works of God (cf. Jn 11:4). In order to display the works of God, the Son was sent by the Father. These works must be done as long as it is day, that is, as long as He is on earth. As long as He is on earth, the light shines on earth. Once night has come, that is, when He has been rejected, those works will no longer be possible.

No one can take over that work that He does. There will be great works of faith, but no longer in the power and perfection that characterize His works. Since His rejection, it is night in the world (Rom 13:12). The believers are not of the night (1Thes 5:5). Yet they are in the night of the world, but they belong to the day (1Thes 5:8). As long as He is on earth, it is day because He is the light of the world. The darkness is not yet total. We are also lights in the world (Phil 2:15), but we are not the sun, and our shining is a shining in the night. He works while it is day.

Jn 9:6-7 | Healing the Man Blind From Birth

6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came [back] seeing.

After the Lord showed the principles of day and night, He sets to work to heal the blind man. He spits on the ground, makes clay of the spittle and applies it the eyes of the blind man. The clay, which is earth mixed with His spittle, is a picture of God's Son Who has become Man (earth), but Who is at the same time internally, in essence, the almighty God (spittle).

Spittle reminds us of defamation and humiliation, but this is the spittle of the living Lord. It gives the earth living power.

By applying the clay to the eyes of the blind man it seems as if his blindness only gets worse. The question is how we look at Him. Those who do so in unbelief cannot possibly assume that this Man is the Son of God. However, when God's Spirit acts on someone through the Word, the eyes are opened and the truth of His Person becomes public and recognized.

The Lord then sends the blind man to the pool of Siloam. John gives the translation of the name Siloam. Siloam means 'sent'. There is a reason for that. It shows that the man has to do more than just go to a literal pool. He also has to believe in Him Who is the Sent One. Although the man has never seen the Lord Jesus, he obeys the voice that speaks to him. That voice must have touched him in the heart and given him the confidence that here Someone speaks Who can truly heal him. That is why he goes to the pool and washes.

The result is immediate because he comes back seeing. If we apply it spiritually, we see that with the cleansing water of the Word of God, he washes his blind eyes and becomes seeing. Together with his natural eyes, his spiritual eyes also are opened. Then the inner light, his insight into Him Who is the Son of God, increases rapidly. Like the healing of the lame in John 5, this healing also takes place entirely outside the religious elite of the established customary religion.

Jn 9:8-12 | The Testimony to the Neighbors

*8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" 9 Others were saying, "This is he," [still] others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." 10 So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is He?" He *said, "I do not know."*

In the part of verses 8-34 we don't hear anything more about the Lord Jesus. This means that He is no longer directly, personally involved. It

is however all about Him. Although He is not physically present, He is present in the work He has done. That work becomes the touchstone for everyone who comes into contact with it. His work cannot be denied. It requires consent. Whoever does not want that, must consciously deny that work.

The work the Lord has done on the born blind man becomes the subject of conversation and heated discussion and finally leads to the putting out of the born blind man. In his putting out we see how the *works* of the Lord Jesus are rejected by the religious leaders, as was already shown in John 8 when they rejected His *words*.

The healing of the born blind man cannot remain hidden. For those who know him, the healing is clearly perceptible. The first to notice the change are the neighbors. They cannot hide their amazement. He used to be a beggar, that is, until the moment of his healing. That is how they knew him. Now he walks freely. He no longer has to hold up his hand for alms. Others who apparently did not know him that well, see a resemblance, but nothing more. They probably passed by him many times, but never really paid attention to him.

The fact that the eyes of the blind man have been opened has given him a different appearance. Eyes that lack light are dull and dead. When the light enters, it changes someone completely. The blind person has changed from a needy person, who cannot go his own way without help, into a person who knows where he is going, taking firm steps. But no matter what people say, the fact of healing is undeniable. God has ensured that there are many witnesses. Finally, the man himself speaks and says it is really him. It is the small beginning of a growing and deepening testimony that the man gives of the Lord Jesus. Growing takes place against oppression and resistance.

Then people want to know how his eyes are opened. This must have happened in a wondrous way because there is no human explanation to give. The man gives a simple and clear testimony. He mentions exactly what "the man who is called Jesus" did to him and told him. Did he have to do something difficult? Not at all. "So" – a word that indicates that it is quite simple, but also very logical – he simply did what the Lord said. And here

is the result: he can see again. At this moment, the Lord Jesus is no more than “the man who is called Jesus”, but we see him grow in his knowledge of Him in the course of this chapter.

While the opponents try to discredit Christ, their slander causes the man to grow in his testimony of the Lord. This is the evidence of new life. People want to know Who He is Who opened his eyes. He gives an honest answer to that question. He knows what has happened to him and he testifies to that, but where the Benefactor is now, he does not know.

The Lord has withdrawn and left the man to his own deliberations and his surroundings to prepare him for what is to come, allowing the man to get to know Him better. The process the man has to go through, is a process which will detach him from the religious system which leaves people blind to the glory of the Son of God.

Jn 9:13-17 | The Pharisees Question the Man

*13 They *brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, “He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others were saying, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And there was a division among them. 17 So they *said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?” And he said, “He is a prophet.”*

Because people don't trust the matter, they take the man to the Pharisees. They are the religious leaders. If there is anything that reminds one of a supernatural intervention, they must be able to judge from which source that phenomenon originates.

John prepares us for the reaction of the Pharisees by mentioning that it was a Sabbath on the day that the Lord made the clay and opened the eyes of the born blind man. At the request of the Pharisees, the man again gives a simple testimony of what the Lord has done to him. It is all quite common. The wonder is great, but the actions are visible. The Lord did not perform any special acts, nor did he ask the man to perform spectacular

acts. The Pharisees do not even listen to the man. They immediately and without excuse judge that “this man” is not from God. The standard of their assessment is also simple: He does not keep the Sabbath.

Men of law judge others or their work only on the basis of established rules. That is easy to handle, you can stop thinking about it. Men of law are recognizable by applying rules to others, without keeping them themselves (Mt 23:4). They shut themselves off from the grace of God that transcends the rules.

There are also Pharisees who do not go that far in their judgment. They use their common sense and notice that a sinful person cannot perform such signs. They see a sign in the healing of the born blind man. And that is what it is. Opinions about the Lord Jesus are divided, as is the case today with people who have an opinion about Him, but refuse to bow down before Him as the Son of God.

God uses their rebellion against God to make the man testify more and more clearly about Who the Lord is. They turn once again to the healed blind man and ask for his opinion about Christ. After all, his eyes are opened, so he is best able to say Who He is Who did this.

Some of the Pharisees have said of the Lord that He is “not from God” (verse 16). The man confesses exactly the opposite and testifies of Him that He is a Prophet, that is, Someone Who actually is from God. After acknowledging His power in opening his eyes, the man now confesses that the Lord Jesus knows the thoughts of God. Through their enmity he will grow even further in the knowledge of the Lord.

Jn 9:18-23 | The Parents of the Man Are Questioned

18 The Jews then did not believe [it] of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, 19 and questioned them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?” 20 His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.” 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed

Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23 For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

The Jews are looking for ways to deny the wonder that cannot be denied. They do not believe that the man has been blind. It must all be based on suggestion. They call the man's parents to ask them. The Jews want to know from the parents whether it is really their son, of whom they say he was born blind. If so, they should explain how he can see now.

The man's parents declare that it is really their son as well as that he was born blind. That should dispel all doubt about the person of the born blind man. However, the parents cannot say anything about how he sees now. Nor can they say anything about who did it. If the Jews want to know, they have to ask their son themselves. He is no longer a child, but a grown man. They are no longer responsible for him to answer questions about him. He is independent and can tell exactly what happened to him.

Of course, his parents have also heard how their son sees now and Who did that. But they do not join their son's testimony because they are afraid of the Jews. They have heard what the Jews will do to someone who confesses the Lord as the Christ. They do not want to suffer that fate. What their son confesses, is up to him, but they do not want to be put out of the synagogue. They want to remain part of the protective, safety-giving religious system, even though it is ruled by fear.

They do sense that the Man Who healed their son is more than a human being, just as the Jews do, but do not want to acknowledge it. Therefore they resort to an excuse. They leave the responsibility to testify about the Lord Jesus with their son. If the Jews want to know, they must ask their son, who is able to speak for himself. He can make his own choice which is not their choice.

John 9:24-27 | Questioning the Man Again

24 So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." 25 He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already and you

did not listen; why do you want to hear [it] again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

The healed blind man is called a second time. They want to intimidate him by instructing him to give glory to God for his healing and not the Man Who did it, because of Him they know that He is a sinner. So they want to separate his healing from the Lord Jesus, despite the fact that the healing beyond any doubt was done by Him. It is also beyond any doubt that only God has been able to do that healing, so the conclusion must be that He is God.

In their command the folly of unbelief is expressed which at the same time is a fatal sin. For it is impossible to honor God without honoring the Son (Jn 5:23), as people have so often done and continue to do so. What the Jews say out loud here, that Christ is a sinner, is said by everyone who sees Him just as man and does not confess and honor Him as the eternal Son of God.

The man is not impressed by their intimidation. He doesn't know much about the Lord Jesus yet, but that He would be a sinner doesn't enter his mind. He still speaks in veiled terms, as if he were wondering what happened. The one thing he does know is that he was blind and can see now. By its simplicity, this testimony has a great power. Nothing can be said against it. No sensible argument can be made against the logic of a perfectly established fact. Someone who has just been converted does not know much yet, but of the little that he knows, he can testify with certainty. Any attempt to defuse that is destined to fail.

The Jews cannot deny it either, but do not give up. They have to find out if perhaps there are weak points in Jesus' actions and ask questions about them again. Did He do special deeds or speak words they could use to get hold of Him? They keep asking. Totally unintentionally they give the man the opportunity to give an increasingly clear testimony.

We see that the man has no fear of them at all, as is the case with his parents. Uninhibited, he answers them and even reprimands them. He has already told them how everything went, hasn't he? But they didn't listen. Why do they want to hear it again now? Or do they perhaps also want to

become His disciples? He knows that they don't want to, but their insistent asking for the known way brings him to this ironically meant question.

This also shows that he knows no fear of them and does not seek any connection with them in any way. He has had a life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus and realizes that these people want nothing to do with Him. His meeting with Him and their rejection of Him places them in two totally different worlds that have nothing in common.

Jn 9:28-34 | Put Out

28 They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and [yet] He opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

The hatred of the religious leaders erupts through what they see as the man's defiant and brutal words. This is the limit. Become a disciple of Him? Never! They revile the man for being a disciple of Him.

The testimony of the man was not vague. He has constantly testified of the Lord Jesus in simplicity and clarity, without knowing much about Him. He knows only "one thing" (verse 25) and that is enough to testify of Him. And that testimony has been heard. Only it is rejected. He may be a disciple of Him, but they are disciples of Moses.

They boast on knowing that God spoke to Moses, but they are blind to the fact that Moses spoke about Christ. They don't know where "He is from". It is a culpable ignorance because they do not want to believe in Him. So much is clear now after the sign of the healing of the born blind man and his abundant testimony and the many other signs of the Lord Jesus.

The reason for this is that they do not want to abdicate from their throne in order to let Him take place on it. To bow before Him is unthinkable

because they are after their own honor and the honor of people. Every interference in their own interests is answered by them with hatred, rejection and murderousness. The Lord Jesus is the greatest threat to their position of prestige that they want to hold on to at any price.

The ignorance of the religious leaders surprises the man. How on earth is it possible that they do not know where He comes from? Surely they also see what happened to his eyes and that this cannot be the devil's work? The man then gives a beautiful testimony of Christ. He speaks in plural: "We know." It is a knowledge of all Jews. They all acknowledge that God does not hear sinners (1Sam 8:18; Psa 66:18; Isa 1:15; Eze 8:18), but that He only hears someone who is God-fearing and does His will (Psa 34:15; Pro 15:29). The Lord Jesus is the perfect God-fearing One and always fulfills God's will. He is therefore heard by God (Jn 11:41-42).

It is also a general principle for us. What the man says is of great practical significance for our prayer life and the hearing of our prayers (cf. Jam 5:16b).

The man points out that it is an unprecedented wonder in history. It has never happened before. Surely this wonder can only have been performed by Someone Who is God-fearing and does God's will, isn't it? It can't be otherwise or "this man" must be from God. If it were not, He could do nothing at all. Not only would He not have been able to heal him, but He would not have been able to perform other wonders either. The conclusion is clear: He must be from God.

They can't do anything against the man's simple arguments. There is nothing left for them to do but call him a sinner and an ignorant man and put him out. How dare such a layman, such an illiterate, such an ignorant, such a man born in sin teach them – them, the scholars, the knowing, the theologians. Get out! They put him out, out of Judaism, for the sake of truth. This system has no place for him. He is expelled, he becomes a pariah in Israel. He has nowhere left to go.

But where does the man end up? Out, but in the arms of the Lord Jesus Who will never cast out His own (Jn 6:37). The man experiences what applies to the Lord from the beginning of the Gospel (Jn 1:11; 15:18). What the enemies do is what the Lord calls in the next chapter the calling and even

the putting forth of His own sheep from the fold. The enemies become the means to lead out and put forth the sheep.

Jn 9:35-38 | Faith and Worship

35 Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you." 38 And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

After the entire process through which the born blind man has gone and what the religious leaders have finally done with him, the Lord Jesus appears again. He hears what has happened to the born blind man and finds him. The Lord has allowed everything that took place to free the man from all religious forms, so that He can get the place in this man's life that is rightfully His and through which the man becomes truly happy.

The Lord gives him further teaching. He asks him if he believes in the Son of Man. This is remarkable. The Lord does not ask him if he believes in the Son of God (although in other translations it is said). It is about taking the place of rejection and that is connected to His title of Son of Man. The Lord wants to persuade men to believe in Him in this way.

The man wants to be taught and asks Who the Son of Man is, that he may believe in Him. He has already been put out of the Jewish system as a result of his testimony of the Lord as his Benefactor. Now his heart has yet to be connected with Him as the rejected One. His longing for this is expressed in his question of Who He is.

Then the Lord reveals Himself to him. He points to Himself not only standing before the man and him having seen Him, but more so to His words. He Who talks with him, Who addresses the words of eternal life to him, Who makes Himself known through His words, He is the One. Then the man confesses with conviction his faith in the Lord Jesus and comes to full surrender to Him what he expresses by worshiping Him. Worship is only due to God and Christ, Who is God. Thus the man confesses Him as the Son of God (cf. Mt 2:2,11).

Here we see the final step in God's merciful dealings with the man to bring him to the full knowledge of His Son. It is no longer thankfulness for what has happened to him, but thankfulness for Who Christ is. That opens the door to the blessings unfolded by the Lord Jesus in the next chapter.

Jn 9:39-41 | The Lord Jesus Speaks to the Pharisees

39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." 40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

The Lord continues to speak to the man about the purpose of His coming into the world. He does so especially in view of the Pharisees who are there too. He has come for judgment into the world. That is not to judge in the sense of condemning, but to judge all things, to put all things and people into the light. Where He comes, everything is seen as it really is. In His presence no deception is possible. Those who are blind and aware of it are made seeing by Him. Those who say they see turn out to be blind when they come into contact with Him.

The Pharisees who hear what He says ask Him if they are perhaps blind too. They understand that He means a spiritual blindness, but they ask the question without their conscience being touched and with great indignation in their voices. How dare He say such a thing!

In His answer the Lord no longer speaks in general terms, as in verse 39, but He speaks directly to the Pharisees. They ask Him and He answers them. If they would be blind, that is, if they would be aware that they have no sight on God, then there was hope for them that their eyes would be opened. It would mean the confession of their sins, opening the door for their sins to be taken away and they would no longer have sin. The man who has been blind can see now, not only physically, but also spiritually. He has come to repentance and been delivered from his sins.

Because the Pharisees say they see, they show that they do not have an eye for their blindness. That is why there is no hope for them. As long as they

think there is nothing wrong with them, they remain in their sin and under the judgment that rests upon it.

John 10

Jn 10:1-2 | The Shepherd of the Sheep

1 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.*

This chapter connects directly to the previous one. The born blind man who has been healed by the Lord and therefore can see, has been put out by the leaders of the people. In the chapter that we now have before us, we will see what that means and what the consequences are. Here the Lord Jesus continues His discourse to the Pharisees, which He started at the end of the previous chapter (Jn 9:39-41). By putting out the born blind man, they have disqualified themselves as God’s appointed leaders. In the picture of a fold with sheep, the Lord holds out to them the consequences of this in the picture of the fold of the sheep. Of the fold He is the door and of the sheep He is the Shepherd.

He again begins His important teaching on this subject with a twofold and therefore emphatically “truly”, followed by the authoritative “I say to you”. He first presents the situation that applies to Israel and the false leaders. The fold is the religious system established by Moses. A fold reminds one of an enclosed space in which the sheep can stay safely. The law of Moses functioned as a fence through which the Jews were separated from the Gentiles (Eph 2:14).

In the fold there is an opening, a door to enter by it. The door presents the proper way indicated by God to enter the fold of Israel in order to be a shepherd for the people that are seen as His flock (Isa 40:11). People have entered the fold in another way than by the door. They have climbed in from a different side. Those are the thieves and the robbers who rob God’s people. They are men who claim authority over God’s people, without God having given it to them. We can think of people like Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:36-37). They are people who set themselves up as leaders, but who turn out to be deceivers. We can also include Pharisees

and other religious persons who claim the leadership of God's people for themselves.

The Lord warns of such people and says that they are wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). They feed themselves instead of the sheep (Eze 34:2). The God-given shepherd is the shepherd who enters by the door. God has revealed through the prophets how the Messiah enters as a Shepherd, for instance that He would be born in Bethlehem of a virgin (Isa 7:14; Mic 5:2). The Lord Jesus answers to that. Also, through His works, He answers to what God has said of the Messiah. He would heal the blind and make the deaf hear (Isa 35:5-6). God also gave His testimony about Him from heaven when He pointed to Him as His beloved Son (Mt 3:17).

He entered by the door, that is, He passed through the testing of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. As a result, it has been established that He fulfills all those prophecies and it has become clear that He is the Shepherd God gives to His people. The moment He enters by the door is when He is baptized by John. By doing so, He joins those who, confessing their sins before God, take their place as a repentant remnant. He identifies Himself with them. To them He is the Shepherd God gives to His people.

Speaking of a shepherd, the Lord is consistent with an imagery that is well-known in the Old Testament (Psa 23:1-6; 80:1; Zec 11:11). Ezekiel 34 is especially about the false shepherds (Eze 34:1-10). Opposite to that, He speaks here of Himself as the good Shepherd (verse 11). He does so in connection with giving His life for the sheep.

He is also "the great Shepherd" of the sheep (Heb 13:20) and "the Chief Shepherd" (1Pet 5:4). We can say that He proved Himself as the good Shepherd in the past when He gave His life. We also see that in the present time He is the great Shepherd Who cares for His sheep. As far as the future is concerned, we see Him as the Chief Shepherd Who will appear with reward for those who have cared for His sheep in the present age in imitation of Him.

Jn 10:3-5 | The Shepherd and the Sheep

3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he puts forth all his own, he

goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

God, as the Doorkeeper, has opened the door to Him because He has recognized Him as His Shepherd. Once the Shepherd is in the fold, He speaks to all the sheep. He has come to His own, but His own have not accepted Him (Jn 1:11). They hear His voice, but they do not listen. Yet among all the sheep of Israel there are sheep who do listen to Him. They are called "his own sheep" in distinction of the sheep as a whole. The healed born blind man from the previous chapter is one of "his own sheep". So there is a distinction between 'the sheep' and 'His own sheep'.

And then we read something remarkable, something we would not expect and what His disciples did not expect either. He comes in, not to improve the fold, not to lead all the sheep out, but to lead 'His own sheep' out of the Jewish fold and lead them outside, outside the Jewish fold. In this way He makes a separation between sheep who do not know Him and sheep who do know Him. This distinction and separation has become necessary because Israel as a people has rejected Him.

After having made this distinction, the Lord Jesus is only concerned with His own sheep as the only object for His heart and with the love He personally has for each of His own sheep. God commands Him to pasture these sheep, of whom God says they are sheep doomed to slaughter (Zec 11:4,7). To fulfill that command, the Shepherd takes these sheep doomed to slaughter from the fold of Israel to make them into something new. We see this happening in Acts (Acts 2:40-41). Further on in this chapter (verse 16) the Lord elaborates on this.

The sheep He leads out, He calls by name. Thus He calls the names of Simon (Jn 1:42), of Lazarus (Jn 11:43), of Philip (Jn 14:9), of Mary (Jn 20:16). He knows each of His sheep personally, He has a personal relationship with each sheep.

An additional aspect in the leading out from the Jewish fold is that this leading out means the judgment of Judaism. To those who do not belong to His own sheep and who will later say to Him that they were His sheep after all, He will say that He never knew them (Mt 7:23).

His own sheep are not all willing to follow Him. Insistence is also needed. In order to lead them out, He sometimes has to put them forth. To do so, the Lord uses the enmity of the false leaders, as we have seen with the born blind man.

The Shepherd leads them out in freedom and not into a new fold. On that path to and in freedom He leads the sheep and they follow Him because there is a personal relationship with the Shepherd. They also know His voice which gives them the confidence that they follow the right Person. Just as He is occupied exclusively with His own sheep, they know only His voice and no other voice.

A sheep is a compliant animal, but only of its own Shepherd Whose voice it knows. That one voice is recognized by the sheep. All other voices they do not know. When another voice calls them, they will flee, precisely because it is an unknown voice and not the familiar voice of the shepherd. The voice reveals who speaks. If it is not the voice of the good Shepherd, it is the voice of a stranger. Whatever other voice it is, it is enough to know that it is not the voice of the shepherd. The voice of the good shepherd gives confidence; from every other voice they flee.

Jn 10:6 | Figure of Speech

6 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

The Pharisees are blind as ever and do not understand anything about it. They don't want to understand it either because they hate Him. What He speaks to them, they do not know because they do not know Him. What He speaks, He is. Because they do not want to know Him, they remain blind to the meaning of what He speaks. If they knew Him, they would also understand His words.

This is the ailment of many who have a title in theology. Such people think they see, but they are blind, because they deny Him the honor to which He is entitled. The Lord speaks figure of speech or in parables to conceal their true meaning from unbelief, while the true disciples are allowed know the meaning (Mt 13:13-15).

Jn 10:7-9 | I Am the Door

7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

The Lord continues His figure of speech and also adds an explanation. Just as He began the figure of speech with the double and therefore emphatically "truly", followed by the authoritative "I say to you" (verse 1), so He also begins the sequel with it. He presents Himself as "the door". He is not the door of Israel, but of the sheep. There is no other door, no other way for the sheep to enter the place of blessing. That blessing is the blessing found in Christendom, which is on a totally different basis than everything connected with Judaism.

The Lord speaks of the many presumptuous people who have risen among the people. Those persons are thieves and robbers. They have robbed the people and they have robbed God by pursuing only their own interests at the expense of His people. The sheep have not listened to them, which means that there is no bond of trust between the sheep and them.

From verse 7 onward the Lord speaks about "the sheep" who have already been led out and are His own sheep. In verse 9 He points once more to Himself as the door, this time not with regard to the sheep, but to present the blessings that every sheep, that is every human being (Eze 34:31) receives who enters the area of blessing through Him. Those blessings are threefold: "to be saved", "to go in and out" and "to find pasture".

The first blessing is "to be saved". The necessary work for this, His death and His resurrection, still had to be done, but the Lord already points out the result. "To go in and out" is an expression that indicates freedom (Acts 9:28). In Judaism there is no free access to God. Nor are the Jews free to go out to the nations to tell them about God. Now however there is boldness for both activities (Heb 10:19; Acts 8:4). The third blessing, "to find pasture", indicates the spiritual food that the good Shepherd offers them, as opposed to the false shepherds who only feed themselves, pasture themselves, and trample the remaining (Eze 34:18).

Jn 10:10-15 | I Am the Good Shepherd

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have [it] abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters [them]. 13 [He flees] because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The Lord points out the great contrast between the thief and the good shepherd. A thief comes sneakily and unexpectedly and without pity. He exploits the sheep, and more than that. He comes not only to steal, but also to kill, and even to erase every trace of his crime by destroying. He gives nothing, but takes everything, including life and its remainders.

How completely different is the Lord Jesus. He did not come to take something, but to give something: life, and not just life, but life in abundance. He gives life in its richest and most abundant form, that is eternal life. To be able to give it He not only risked His life, but He actually gave it. Thus He has proven to be the good Shepherd.

The good thing about that Shepherd is not that He leads His sheep out and gives them eternal life, but that He lays down His life for them in death. The glorious consequence of this is that He leads His sheep out and gives them eternal life. His sheep are so dear to Him that He wanted to lay down His life to be able to give them life in abundance. To lay down His life here is a completely voluntary act of Himself as the highest proof of His love for the sheep. Likewise He lets His disciples go free when they come to take Him prisoner (Jn 18:8).

What a contrast this acting presents compared to the acting of a hired hand. The hired hand represents another aspect of a false shepherd in addition to what the Lord has already said about the thief and the robber. The hired hand need not necessarily be depraved like the thief or the robber. However, his interest is not primarily in the sheep, but in money. That is why a hired hand flees as soon as danger threatens. He doesn't think about the

sheep, they are not close to his heart. He is only concerned for his own life. He has no connection whatsoever with the sheep.

With the good shepherd this is quite the opposite. The Lord Jesus is the good Shepherd and He has a close bond with the sheep. He knows them, they are His, He pays attention to them and takes care of them. The mutual knowledge of the shepherd and the sheep is based on the close bond that exists between the shepherd and the sheep. This Shepherd knows exactly what the needs of each sheep are. Because there is a relationship, the sheep that belong to Him also know Him. They know Who He is Who cares for them.

The mutual knowledge between the Father and the Son is the norm for the knowledge that exists between the Shepherd and His sheep. The knowledge between the Father and the Son is perfect. So it is with the knowledge between the Lord Jesus and His own. The Son is the object of the Father's heart. In the same way the sheep are the object of His heart. The mutual knowledge is there because the sheep have the same life as the good Shepherd. To make that possible the Lord Jesus has laid down His life for the sheep.

Jn 10:16 | One flock, One Shepherd

16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock [with] one shepherd.

So far the Lord Jesus has spoken about sheep from Israel with a split between sheep who have no relationship with Him, who reject Him, and sheep He calls His own, the believing remnant from Israel. He has spoken about laying down His life for the sheep of Israel who belong to Him being the foundation of the mutual knowledge. Following this, He speaks about "other sheep", a third group of sheep. With these other sheep He means the sheep from the nations.

His death cannot be limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The great appreciation of His death by the Father is the reason for the formation of a special flock, of which He is the Shepherd. That flock will consist of 'His own sheep' that He has led out of the fold of Israel and sheep that are not from that fold. He is about to add sheep that have been outside

Israel's fold until now. These are, as said, the sheep from the nations. Here with the Lord indicates the calling of a group from the Gentiles. We see the beginning of this in the book of Acts with examples like the eunuch from Ethiopia (Acts 8:27-39) and the Roman centurion Cornelius and his friends (Acts 10:24,44-48).

The Lord does not bring all those sheep as one flock into a new fold with Him as the one Shepherd. Nor does He make one flock of them, while He places them in several folds. In the latter case it would seem as if the division would be a good thing, possibly even meant. Unfortunately, this is what we see in professing Christianity in the countless groups and denominations. No, there is no fold anymore.

The characteristic of the church, seen as one flock with one Shepherd, is unity in freedom. Judaism kept the sheep together by physical restrictions, by laws and commandments. The new unity is held together by the personal appearance and attraction of the Shepherd. This is the essence of Christendom. This required not only the death, but also the resurrection, as the following verse shows.

Jn 10:17-18 | To Lay Down Life and to Take It up Again

17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

The Lord mentions the laying down of His life as the reason of the Father's love for Him. The Father always loves the Son (Jn 3:35). But here, in laying down His life, He gives the Father, as it were, a new reason to love Him. Never before has the Son laid down His life. Now He will do so. He does it for His sheep, but above all out of love for His Father, for He has given Him the commandment to do so.

To lay down His life out of love for his sheep as an expression of His love for the Father, gives the Father an extra reason to love Him. And He does not only lay down His life, but He also takes it again. Both laying down and taking life again can only be done by a Divine Person. He is "declared

to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).

In other Gospels, the Lord tells His disciples what people will do to Him and that they will kill Him (Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33; Lk 9:22,44; 18:31-32). In this Gospel He says that both His death and His resurrection are His own work. People can only treat Him this way because He allows it to happen, while He Himself lays down His life and takes it again. Here we see His Godhead. We also see His Manhood because He does both according to the commandment of His Father. What He does, He does not do outside of the Father, but for Him.

Jn 10:19-21 | Again Division

19 A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. 20 Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” 21 Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”

The Jews are again divided about the Lord, this time because of His words (Jn 7:43; 9:16). This misunderstanding is not because of His words, but because of their mindset. Christ is the test for every person who hears His word. Many judge what He says as gibberish that He utters under the influence of a demon. Classifying His lofty words this way does indicate the distance between these listeners and Christ. There is a complete separation. By their reaction they prove themselves to be completely in the power of the devil.

They not only come to this slanderous conclusion themselves, but they also want to forbid every bystander to listen further to Him. There are also some who do not go that far in their rejection. They do not understand His words either, but they do not ascribe them to a demon. In the wonder of opening the eyes of the blind man they see proof that He does not speak His words through a demon. For them it is obvious that a demon does not do such a thing.

Jn 10:22-26 | Why the Jews Do Not Believe

22 At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 The

Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

The Feast of the Dedication of the temple is not a feast prescribed by *Yahweh* to His people anywhere in the Old Testament. It is a human institution in remembrance of a renewed dedication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee in the year 164 BC, after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. This feast is celebrated two months after the Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths is celebrated in autumn and the Feast of the Dedication is in winter. The fact that it is mentioned here that it is winter is not meant just to inform us about the time of year. Much more, the reference to winter is of symbolic significance to indicate how cold the hearts of God's people and especially the religious leaders are.

The Lord is not there to celebrate this feast. He does not submit Himself to traditions of people. He still walks freely, despite all the attempts of the religious leaders to eliminate Him. He stands in the portico of Solomon reminding us of the glory days of Israel and also of the great wisdom that Solomon possessed. In spite of his great wisdom, those days of glory did not last long. That was because Solomon, and the people with him, became unfaithful to *Yahweh*. Now here is Someone Who is greater than Solomon and Who cannot be unfaithful.

While the Lord walks there, the Jews approach Him again. They gather around Him and ask Him now to say plainly if He is the Christ. They pretend that He is always keeping them in suspense about it. As if He hasn't been clear enough yet. They are not really curious about it, but they want to hear words that give them a weapon to denounce Him, both to the people and to the Romans.

The Lord simply reminds them that He has given abundant testimony of Who He is. We heard that in John 5, 7 and 8, but they did not believe His *words*. His *works* in John 5, 6 and 9 bear the same character as His words. All His works come from the Father and testify of Who He is, but they have not believed His works either.

He says unequivocally that their unbelief is the great obstacle. His testimonies in words and works are powerful enough, but they do not hear or see them. That is because there is no connection with Him, they still belong to the fold of Israel and not to His sheep. He does not only tell the truth about Himself but also about them. He clearly tells them where they stand.

Jn 10:27-30 | The Protection of the Sheep

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given [them] to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch [them] out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

In the face of the unbelief of the Jews that makes them not His sheep, the Lord gives three characteristics of those He calls "My sheep". First of all, they hear the voice of the Shepherd. This hearing is the recognition of His voice through which they remain with Him.

The second is not that they know Him, but that He knows them. That He knows them is more than that they know Him (cf. Gal 4:9a). Their knowledge of Him is always limited, but His knowledge of them is perfect and in perfect love. He knows them with all their thoughts and feelings, their words and ways, their dangers and difficulties, their past, present and future.

The third is that they follow Him. Faith is alive and practical. It also means that He goes out ahead of them, He Who knows them and also knows the circumstances they have to go through. That is a great safety and security. He gives them eternal life, that is His life, that is Himself as eternal life (1Jn 5:20). The life He gives cannot perish. It cannot be corrupted and overthrown by an inner weakness. Also from the outside, there is no power that can ruin this life, for what power would there be that could snatch them out of the hand of Him Who has all the power in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18)?

His protection goes beyond that. He speaks of the Father's love for them, for the sheep have been given to Him by the Father. This does not mean that the Father no longer possesses them, but that the Father has placed

them in the care of the Son. Could there be a power imaginable that could snatch out of that mighty hand what the Father has given to the Son, but over which He still holds His protective hand outstretched? He is greater than any power (Exo 18:11; 2Chr 2:5; Psa 135:5; cf. 1Jn 4:4).

The Lord Jesus finishes the assurance of the sheep in His hand and in that of the Father by pointing out that He and the Father are one. Separately they are both omnipotent and no power is able to snatch His own out of the hand of either the Son or the Father. If the Lord therefore points to the unity of the Father and the Son, that is an abundant declaration of assurance and security.

The Son's saying this is also the highest declaration of holy love and unlimited power. No one can speak of this except He Who is the Son. He speaks of the mysteries of the Godhead with the intimate familiarity inherent to the only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father. They are one, that is not as Person, for they are two Persons, but one in their Divine nature or being. Those Who are one like that are also one in the fellowship of Divine love and protection for the sheep.

Jn 10:31-36 | The Jews Want to Stone the Lord

31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" 33 The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out [to be] God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? 35 If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36 do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

The Jews have asked if He is the Christ (verse 24). They have received an answer that goes far beyond that. Their response shows the absolute darkness of their heart filled with hatred. Their answer to what the Lord has told them is to pick up stones to stone Him. There is nothing that makes satan so furious as the perfect revelation of the goodness of God in the Son.

He finds appropriate instruments in man's own will and pride to express his hatred.

The Lord answers their hatred by asking them in perfect calmness a realistic question. He has shown so many good works from His Father. Can they also say for which of these good works they want to stone Him? By the way, he does not say "for which of these works do you *want* to stone Me", but "for which of them are you stoning Me". In their heart they have already stoned him.

The Jews reply by saying that they are not stoning Him for a good work, but for blasphemy. By doing so, they testify of His works that they are good. But their obscured hearts do not want to accept that He has spoken the truth and do not want to acknowledge that His works are those from the Father. That is why they have to accuse Him of blasphemy.

He indeed is a Man, they are right. But He did not *make* Himself God, for He *is* God of eternity so here they are not right. He humbled Himself to become Man in order to show God's love to people in His many good works and to be their Savior. The Lord also deals with this blasphemy. He continues to bear witness to His glory, not for the sake of Himself, but for the honor of the Father.

He refers to a word from their law in which it is written of certain people that they are 'gods' (Psa 82:6). This is about judges in Israel, men with a certain responsibility, yet ordinary mortals. These judges speak justice on behalf of God and should therefore be recognized as 'gods' in their jurisdiction (cf. Exo 7:1). In the judge the members of God's people deal with God. They are not Divine persons, but they have received Divine authority. God's Word therefore speaks of ordinary mortal people as 'gods'.

The word of God *came* to these 'gods', while it only applies to them in view of their position among the people. For the Lord Jesus, this word applies in the most literal way. By His nature He is the eternal Son, and by His birth from the Holy Spirit He has also been God's Son since His coming to earth as Man (Lk 1:35).

In between, the Lord points to the unity of the Word of God by speaking about 'the Scripture'. He also speaks of its indissolubility, by which He indicates its unchanging and enduring character for all times. It cannot

be said: 'Yes, it is in the Bible, but it is in the Old Testament and that is no longer applicable now.' In doing so, he makes it clear how the Old Testament statements were in full force even at that time and how they will always remain so. When Scripture speaks in this way about mortal people, do they want to accuse Him of blasphemy when He, Who Himself is the Incarnate Word of God, declares Himself to be God's Son?

The Lord appeals to their reason, to their logic. Judges on earth were sanctified by God, that is separate, to represent Him in a certain way. Now comes the Son Who has been sanctified by the Father in a special way to declare Him. For that purpose, the Father sent Him from heaven into the world. As such, he knows the Father and as Son He fulfills the commandment of the Father. He comes with Divine authority *and* in a known relationship with His Father. He has come into the world as Man, while that relationship is unchanging. How could He stop being the Son of the Father? How can they reasonably accuse Him of blasphemy when He merely points out that He is the Son of God?

Jn 10:37-39 | The Works Speak for Themselves

37 If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." 39 Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

That He is God's Son is evident from His works. If He wouldn't do those works, they wouldn't have to believe in Him. However, He does them. And even though He does them and they don't believe Him, then let the works speak for themselves. Let them forget Him and look at the works. Those works would undeniably lead them to the Father and to Him at the same time. They could come to no other conclusion than that the Father is in Him and He is in the Father.

By this way of reasoning the Lord does not weaken the dignity of His Person or the truth of His words. What He wants is to act on their consciences with what is undeniable: the character of His works that bear the testimony of Divine love and power. His works give testimony to His glory.

Again, hatred is the answer to the magnificent unfolding of the glories of the Lord Jesus. Their unbelief hardens more and more after each unfolding of His glory. They are seeking to seize Him again, but His time has not yet come. Before the appointed time, no power can seize Him.

Jn 10:40-42 | Again Beyond the Jordan

40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 Many believed in Him there.

His way leads him beyond the Jordan. He comes to the place where John first baptized and gave testimony of Him as the Lamb of God. The Lord stays there for a while. At that place many come to Him. It is a place with the memory of the preaching of John. His voice still sounds there as it were. After more than three years, the truth of John's testimony is confirmed by all who are still coming to the Lord today. They remember what John said about Him at the Jordan.

In the midst of the ruins of Israel, John did not work with signs as a testimony. Doing signs is also not proof of being sent. Signs mark the beginning of a dispensation. John performed at the end of a dispensation. His action marked the end of the era of the law and the prophets (Mt 11:13). He preached about the coming Christ and that was much better than doing signs and wonders.

We too are at the end of a dispensation. Instead of longing for wonders, we should be like John giving a faithful testimony about Him Whom we expect. When the Lord Jesus comes, there will be signs and wonders again. It may be our desire that others can say of us what many here say of John: everything he or she said of Him was true. Would not that be a great praise for us?

Just as the hatred of the Jewish leaders becomes manifest after everything the Lord Jesus said, we also see time after time that there are many who believe in Him (Jn 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 11:45; 12:11,42). His grace attracts many who recognize in Him the truth of John's testimony. However, it is high-

ly questionable whether a life renewing work has also taken place in the hearts and consciences.

John 11

Introduction

The Lord is rejected in both His words (John 8) and His works (John 9). He then separated from the unbelieving mass of the people's sheep a remnant for Himself as His own sheep (John 10). He even spoke on top of that about other sheep who will form one flock with His own sheep of which He will be the Shepherd. This also means putting aside His people, His own, to whom He has come, but by whom He has not been accepted.

Before the Lord as a consequence retreats with His disciples into the upper room (John 13), God will give a new, complete and final testimony to the Lord Jesus in John 11-12. This testimony concerns His Divine Sonhood which is manifested in the power of the resurrection (John 11) and is about Him as the Son of David and as the Son of Man (John 12). These three testimonies are given publicly and close to Jerusalem.

Jn 11:1-3 | Lazarus Is Sick

1 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 So the sisters sent [word] to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

John 11, like John 9, begins by presenting a situation where we see the consequences of sin. Sickness is a consequence of sin, but the consequences here are more serious. Here it is not just sickness, but sickness that results in death. Unlike the blind man, the sick man is a friend of the Savior. It is also known where he lives. He lives in Bethany which is further referred to as "the village of Mary and her sister Martha". This does not mean that they are in authority there, but that it is a village on which they place a special shine through their love for the Lord. He likes to come there.

John already mentions in a parentheses the special act of Mary to Christ that only takes place in the next chapter. Who has never heard of it? Her

deed will be proclaimed all over the world. It concerns the brother of this special woman.

The sisters know Whom to go to with their sorrows. They know the Lord and His power to heal. They turn to Him with the message that their brother is sick. How beautifully they express their message. In the first place they do not address Him as 'Jesus', but as 'Lord'. In the second place they speak to Him from the knowledge they have of His love for their brother. They do not mention a name and do not say 'Lazarus is sick', nor 'he, whom we love so much, is sick', but 'he whom You love is sick'.

Nor do they decide for the Lord that He must come quickly or that He, where He is, must speak a word of power so that their brother may become healthy. Possibly that is locked up in the word "behold" they use. To Him Lazarus is visible and He is present with him. He is the Omnipresent. They do not claim healing, but simply place their need before the Lord in the awareness of His love for their brother. They leave it up to Him how He will respond to this. This shows their great trust in Him.

Jn 11:4-6 | The Lord Explains the Reason for the Sickness

4 But when Jesus heard [this], He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days [longer] in the place where He was.

When the Lord has heard the message, He speaks in complete calmness and certainty about the purpose of this sickness. He places the sickness before God and not before death. This sickness, He says, will serve for the glory of God and for the glorification of the Son of God. This is not done by healing Lazarus, but by raising him from the dead. The resurrection unfolds the glory of God in its highest way, more than anything else and with the goal that the Son of God is glorified by it. Through Him, and in this way, the law of the wages of sin is overruled. He shows that death has no power over sheep that belong to Him (Jn 10:28-29; Rom 8:37-38).

Before the Lord acts, John speaks of the Lord's love for the sisters and their brother. The fact that He does not yet act immediately is therefore not a lack of His love for them. This becomes even more clear when we

see that John uses the word for Godly love for the love of the Lord Jesus toward this family, while the sisters spoke to Him about His friendly love for Lazarus.

Furthermore, it is beautiful to see how God's Spirit leads John to mention the objects of the Lord's love separately. It is striking that Martha is mentioned here by name as loved by Him and even before her sister Mary. It also emphasizes His special love for Martha, when we might think that He did not love her as much as He loved Mary (Lk 10:38-42). The Savior is never limited in His love by prejudices that we have so often.

When He hears of the illness of Lazarus, He does not immediately go there. Someone else who had love for a sick person and had the power to heal would have acted immediately. But the Son seeks the glory of God. However, that is never at the expense of love for man. He knows what He is going to do. We must learn to trust that, especially when things seem to become irreparable.

By staying where He is for two days, the sickness is given time to lead to death and the body to undergo decay. A delay seems to make things worse, but in God's hand a delay is an opportunity for a greater unfolding of His glory (cf. Lk 8:40-56). The 'why' of this delay can be found in verse 4.

The Lord could also have spoken a word, as in the case of the son of the royal official (Jn 4:50) and the slave of the centurion (cf. Lk 7:7-10), but He does not. It is striking to see how He, in the humility of an obedient Servant, allows evil to run its course until the will of His Father calls Him to deal with the power of satan.

Jn 11:7-10 | The Lord Wants to Go to Judea Again

*7 Then after this He *said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples *said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

After two days, the moment comes when the Lord tells His disciples that they will go to Judea again. He does not say anything about His purpose

to go there, but mentions the area to test His disciples and teach them new lessons.

The disciples know the enmity that the people in that area have against the Lord. They remember all too well how the Jews recently tried to stone Him (Jn 8:59; 10:31). After all, He had left – in their eyes perhaps fled – to escape His murderers. Is it not a challenge of fate, then, to visit that area again? They are unaware that as long as it is not yet the Father's time His enemies can do nothing to Him.

The Lord responds to their questioning with important teaching about going the way that is clear. A way is clear once the Father has made it known. If it is the will of the Father, it is day. The known will of God and His Word are the light of day. Christ lived on earth from His relationship with the Father and the knowledge of His will. He therefore always walked in full daylight and never stumbled.

This is also true for us. If we follow Christ Who lived as an Example for us on earth and Who is the light of the world for us, we will not stumble, i.e. we will not make wrong decisions. If we go our way without knowing the will of the Father from the Word of God, we will walk in the night. Then we will certainly stumble, because there will be no light in us from a relationship with the Father which would show us the way to go.

Jn 11:11-16 | The Purpose of the Journey

*11 This He said, and after that He *said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." 12 The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. 14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." 16 Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to [his] fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."*

After the important teaching about going the way of the Father, the Lord tells His disciples why He is going to Judea again. He does this in a way that again invites the disciples to respond. He talks about the fact that Lazarus, "our friend", has fallen asleep, but that He goes to him to awaken

him out of sleep. Except once in Matthew 26 and once in Luke 12, the Lord Jesus uses the word “friend” or “friends” for His disciples only in this Gospel (Mt 26:50; Lk 12:4; Jn 11:11; 15:13-15).

What He tells His disciples about what He is going to do with Lazarus, is again misunderstood by them, as their reaction shows. Like the sisters, they address Him with “Lord”. Then they tell Him their vision on the matter. They conclude from His words that the prospects for healing are favorable because Lazarus is asleep. If he sleeps, he will recover. Again, their remark shows how much they view this situation from a human point of view only.

The fact that He said that this sickness serves the glory of God and of the Son of God has not reached them. But the Lord has spoken about death and not about the literal sleep, as they believe. To Him, the death of the believer is also no more than sleep. In His omnipotence He can awaken someone from sleep as well as from death.

To remove any doubt from the disciples about how Lazarus’ condition actually is, the Lord tells them in plain language that Lazarus is dead. He also says that He is glad for their sakes that He was not with Lazarus during his sickness. If He had been there, Lazarus would not have died, because where He is, death can never assert its power. Where He is, death must give way.

If He had been there, they would not have been able to see His glorious power in the resurrection that they will now see in a special way. That is why they will believe. It is not about them coming to faith in Him, because they really believe in Him. It is about them believing in Him as the Son of God by witnessing His power over death.

Then the Lord says: “Let us go to him.” To Him Lazarus is still present and to be visited even though he has died. He is going to meet him. By this the Lord does not mean what David once said in view of the son he had conceived in fornication with Bathsheba who had died. David said that he would go to him, that is, at the time of his death, but that the boy would not return to him (2Sam 12:23). No, the Lord will meet Lazarus as a living one because He will raise him from the dead.

Thomas makes the decision to go with him. He urges his fellow disciples to do the same. What Thomas says shows his love for the Lord. For him it is certain that the Lord will have to pay with death for His journey to Judea. If that is so, then he is prepared to die with Him. At the same time Thomas shows that he has no understanding of what really drives the Lord, not only of the purpose of His mission, but also of the will and the way of the Father He is going. His statement also shows that he does not know himself. With all his sincerity he will, when it comes down to it, flee like all other disciples (Mt 26:56).

Jn 11:17-19 | The Lord Comes to Bethany

17 So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning [their] brother.

Not only did Lazarus die, but he has also already been in the tomb four days. John mentions this because this fact makes the sign of the resurrection of Lazarus even more impressive. With many signs additional information is given in order to be completely convincing. For example, we read about wine that is missing at a *wedding*, about food that is needed for *more than five thousand people*, about the lame one who has been ill for *thirty-eight years*, about a blind man who has been blind *from birth*.

The location of the village is mentioned as “near Jerusalem”. Bethany lies on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. God arranges all this because He wants to give a testimony of His Son in this area. The family of Bethany will have had many acquaintances in Jerusalem. As God-fearing Jews, they will also have often been in the temple and met many others there. Many have come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. Because of this many are present to witness the testimony that God is going to give of His Son.

Grieving over a deceased person is a natural reaction and appropriate for that circumstance (Acts 8:2; 9:39; cf. 2Chr 21:20). This reaction is different for believers than for unbelievers because unbelievers have no hope, while believers do (1Thes 4:13-14).

Jn 11:20-27 | Conversation of the Lord With Martha

*20 Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. 21 Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." 23 Jesus *said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha *said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, [even] He who comes into the world."*

When Martha hears that the Lord is coming, she goes to meet Him. She does not have the patience to wait for Him. Possibly this is because of her active character. Mary does not follow her in her going to the Lord, but stays at home. Mary is waiting for Him. She knows that He is coming and has everything in His hands which gives her peace.

When Martha has come to the Lord, she expresses her faith in His power that her brother would not have died if He had been present. Possibly there is some disappointment in her voice that He did not come immediately when they sent Him the message of Lazarus' sickness. Yet there is also faith in Martha that He is capable of wonders. However, she appears to think more about the future, the resurrection on the last day, than that He will still do a wonder to Lazarus now.

When she expresses her faith in Him as the Messiah Who receives from God everything He would ask of Him, it is an expression of the limited faith she has in Him. The Lord Jesus is not only the Messiah Who gets everything He desires from God. He is also God the Son Who will raise up Lazarus in His own power and thereby give a testimony concerning His Person that is greater than that of Messiah. She speaks of "God" and "ask", while He is the Son of God Who does not have to ask God because He is God the Son.

Nevertheless, the Lord does not rebuke Martha for her lacking honor to His Person. He follows His own course in the teaching He gives to her. He promises her that her brother will rise again. Martha answers in a way

which shows that she only sees the Messiah in the Lord Jesus. She knows that her brother will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. The certainty she expresses belongs to the faith of the Old Testament (Job 19:26; Psa 118:17; Dan 12:2). However, she does not realize that He is able to raise the dead now and that He will demonstrate this in just a few moments.

First the Lord continues His patient teaching to her about Himself. He gives her a glorious revelation in which He shows her that He is “the resurrection and the life”. As such, He is above death and is the life that cannot be affected by death. Even death has to give way to Him. Whoever believes in Him can die physically, but will live. Those who believe in Him have Him as their life (Jn 3:36). If such a person dies, then the life he has in the Son has not died, because this is eternal life.

When He says “I am the resurrection”, it means that there is no resurrection without Him. Even the unbelievers are resurrected by His power to be judged by Him. He is also “life” and that He is only for those who believe in Him. Whoever believes in Him receives life and possesses it for all eternity, even if he dies. He who lives physically and believes in the Son will not die for eternity, for he possesses the life of the Son of God through faith in Him. He who believes in the Son possesses life as resurrection life that has triumphed over death. For the believer, physical death is not dying, but sleeping, as the Lord said of Lazarus (verse 11).

The Lord asks Martha if she believes that. He asks her to agree with His words. She gives an affirmative answer, an answer that is certainly true, but does not entirely answer what He asks. Certainly, He is the Christ, the Son of God Who would come into the world. But what He said to her points to a greater glory. He has come to give eternal life to those who believe which extends far beyond the glory of His reign in the realm of peace. Because of His rejection, the establishment of that realm in which He will reign as the Christ and the Son of God has been postponed. His revelation as the Son of the Father, however, can be stopped by nothing, but is seen in an especial way in the greatest opposition or difficulty.

Jn 11:28-32 | Mary at the Feet of the Lord

28 *When she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister, saying secretly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”* 29 *And when she heard*

*it, she *got up quickly and was coming to Him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met Him. 31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and consoling her, when they saw that Mary got up quickly and went out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Martha seems to feel, as it were, that what the Lord has said is beyond her spiritual comprehension, but that Mary has a feeling for it. In His words she has heard things of which she feels that Mary may understand better than she does.

It is also as if the words of the Lord are a call to Mary to come. This is how Martha seems to have understood them, because without a special command from the Lord she is going to call her sister Mary secretly, i.e. without the others noticing. She does so with words that reveal Mary's special relationship with the Lord Jesus. He is the Teacher and has authority. He calls Mary to Himself.

Mary's heart and feet respond immediately, just as anyone who lives in fellowship with the Lord will respond immediately when He calls. It is as though she has been waiting for that. She is not concerned with her grief, but with Christ. What a wonderful attitude it is to be so waiting for Christ and receive a word or a command from Him and move once it comes.

The Lord has still not arrived in the village, but is still at the place where Martha met Him. There she has heard beautiful things from Him, in which Mary was not present. That does not mean that she has to miss it, because she will come to the same place and will see the reality of His revelation to Martha.

The Jews did not hear what Martha said to her sister, because she said it secretly. If the Lord has a word for a single person, it is meant only for that single person. Others do not hear it. Others see the effect of it. So here too. The Jews who are in the house with Mary and console her, see Mary's reaction to Martha's words. When they see Mary leaving, they go after her. They think she is going to the tomb to weep.

Mary, however, is not busy with a deceased Lazarus, although she is full of grief about her brother's death. She is busy with the Lord Jesus. She is not going to the place of death, but to the place of life, to Him Who is Life. She comes to the place where He is and sees Him. She speaks the same words as Martha, and in her confession of Christ she goes no further than Martha. She too believes that He could have prevented their brother from dying. But she utters those words as she lies at His feet, indicating how impressed she is by His glory. Further she says nothing and He says nothing to her either, contrary to what He did when He met Martha.

Between people who live in close fellowship with each other not many words are needed to understand each other. We always see Mary at the feet of the Lord. First for her education (Lk 10:39), then here where she brings her need to Him and finally to worship Him (Jn 12:3).

Jn 11:33-37 | Jesus Wept

*33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her [also] weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, 34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They *said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"*

Although the Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and although He knows that in a few moments He will raise Lazarus from the dead, He also has an eye for the sorrow that death brings. With Him it is more than just human compassion for the loss of a loved one, although it is also that. More than anyone else – and in fact, it is only the case with Him – He is indignant about the power of death. He fully senses the power of the enemy who exercises his authority through death, not only over Mary and the Jews, but over all human beings. His indignation concerns death. The words “deeply moved” means feeling or expressing a strong disapproval. Then, although He knows where Lazarus lies, He asks the way to the tomb. If the Lord Jesus asks questions, it is not because He needs information from us. With His questions He wants to reveal the hidden part of the heart of the one He asks His questions to. He invites us to tell Him everything.

We are allowed to take Him along to and in our grief. He wants to be there with us and go through it with us. His indignation about satan's power through sin does not negate His sympathy (cf. Mt 8:17). He never reveals only strength, nor is it only compassion. In His spirit He carries every case of sickness that He heals, whereas His power takes it away.

Here it is not about sickness, but about the even greater havoc death has wrought in a family He loves. That does not mean that He lets Himself be guided by His feelings. Feelings never have the upper hand with Him, as is often the case with us. Every feeling in Christ is perfect according to kind and measure, appropriate to every occasion. It is all perfect in God's eye. How precious that is for us as well. The Lord really sheds tears that express His inner feelings.

The Jews deduce from His tears that He is saddened by the loss of a loved one. Certainly, the Lord loved Lazarus. This is also witnessed several times (verses 3,5). But they have no awareness that He weeps for death as the terrible consequence of sin. What matters to Him is the cause of death. That He feels like no other.

Some others don't think the Lord's weeping is really justified. He could have prevented Lazarus from dying, couldn't He? Someone Who can open the eyes of the blind man could also have ensured that Lazarus would have recovered. In this way we can also reason when we wonder why the Lord heals the one, and the other He does not heal. Then it comes down to trusting Him in the way He goes with each of His sheep. We also know the answer from verse 4.

Jn 11:38-44 | The Lord Calls Lazarus to Come Forth

*38 So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, *came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus *said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, *said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been [dead] four days." 40 Jesus *said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."*

43 When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Lord does not appear as an unmoved great one with the self-assurance of an almighty at the tomb. When He gets there, He again is deeply moved within. He was that when He saw the effect of death's power in the sorrow of the sisters and the others (verse 33). Here He is in the direct presence of death itself.

The tomb is in a cave of which the opening is closed with a stone. The Lord commands the stone to be removed. He Himself could have removed the stone or by some wonder cause it to roll away. He does not do that. We always see that He never takes from people what they themselves can do. He always engages people when something has to happen that they can do themselves. He takes care of the impossible, that which people cannot do.

Martha thinks she has to remark that removing the stone paves the way for the stench of a decaying body. She thinks that the only consequence of the removing of the stone is that they are all again emphatically confronted with the deceased Lazarus in a very unpleasant way. She soon forgot what He said. The Lord lovingly reminds her of this and encourages her to believe. It is a lesson for us to heed the Word in faith. We will reap the fruit of such faith. That fruit is to see the glory of God.

People obey the Lord's command and remove the stone. Then He first raises His eyes and thanks His Father. He does not immediately call out Lazarus. First He shows His deep dependence on His Father in expressing His thanks to Him that He heard Him even before He called Lazarus to life.

The Lord expresses His complete trust in the Father as the One Who always hears Him. He does not do this for Himself, but for the sake of the crowd around Him. His great goal is always to bear witness to the Father Who sent Him and that they will believe in Him. In turn, the Father's purpose in doing so is to glorify His Son in it. He receives this glorification from the Father because He always does what is pleasing to Him.

After He has spoken to the Father in the presence of the crowd, He raises His voice and calls out Lazarus. The Lord Jesus 'cries out' several times in this Gospel. The first time it is a crying out to come to Him and believe in Him (Jn 7:37). That is the call of the gospel. The second time is here, a crying out to the dead. We can link this to the power of the Lord's voice to bring to life the spiritual dead (Jn 5:25). The third time is a final crying out to the people to believe in Him (Jn 12:44).

At the cry of command of the Lord, "the man who had died" comes forth. Lazarus is emphatically referred to as "the man who had died" in order to put all the emphasis on making a dead person alive. The dead person comes forth because he heard the voice of the Son of God (Jn 5:25). There Lazarus comes walking out of the tomb, while the wrapping and sweat cloth are still on him. Everything that reminds us of death is still with him, but he himself is alive.

Then the Lord says that Lazarus must be freed from his tomb cloth and sweat cloth. Again we see that He gives an order to others. He not only gives life, but He also gives freedom. From a spiritual point of view this liberation is the teaching from the Word of God that teachers give to the newly converted. In this way a person who has come to repentance learns to give up everything that belongs to his old life, what belongs to death, so that he can go his way in freedom for the Lord.

Jn 11:45-48 | Responses to the Resurrection

45 Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. 47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 If we let Him [go on] like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

Through Mary many have come into contact with Christ. It is beautiful when by our going to the Lord others come in contact with Him. Many of the Jews have seen what He has done and therefore believe in Him. As mentioned before, that does not necessarily mean that they acknowledge

Him as their Savior. The most obvious is that they are attracted to Him by the wonder as Someone Who can transform their earthly, bodily need into prosperity.

However, there are also Jews who go to the Pharisees to tell them what He has done. They have seen it too, but they don't want to believe that there is Someone at work here Who has their best interests at heart. They prefer to be appreciated by the Pharisees. The message of the witnesses sets the chief priests and Pharisees in motion. They convene a council to deliberate what they should do. They rightly conclude that the Lord does many signs. Only they do not want to accept them, because they see in these signs a great threat to their position of authority among the people.

Here we see that the question and remark of the rich man in Hades to send someone from the dead to his brothers and that they would then believe, is not justified and Abraham's answer is (Lk 16:30-31). Someone from the dead has come back into life here, but they don't believe. These people only care about maintaining their own place of honor and authority among the people.

They discuss that all of them would believe in Him if they let Him go on. That new Leader would then become the cause for the Romans to come to put an end to this gathering. In the first place that would result in them losing their place – by which they meant their position or perhaps also the temple from which they derived that position. The second consequence would be that they would lose their people. They talk about 'our' place and about 'our' people. There is no thought of God.

Jn 11:49-52 | The Prophecy of Caiaphas

49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

The president of the council is the high priest Caiaphas. It is his turn this year. The annual change of the high priesthood shows how much the priesthood has deviated from God's original purpose. While they deliberate, Caiaphas opens his mouth and makes a wise statement. He states that his fellow councilors talk out of ignorance. They should not launch wild thoughts about their fear of losing their place and their people. It is all much simpler: Jesus just has to die. If He dies, the problem is solved. Then they can keep their place and nothing will happen to the people.

The Spirit of God then notes that this 'cleverness' of the high priest is an unintentional but no less true prophecy about the death of Christ. The Spirit of God uses the mouth of Caiaphas to speak a prophecy. Similarly, the Spirit also used the mouth of an ungodly Balaam to speak the most beautiful prophecies about the people (Numbers 23-24). The Lord Jesus would indeed die for the people. Thus their thoughts of evil would be turned by God for the good of the people (Gen 50:20).

God's plans with the death of His Son go even further. He will not only die for the people, but through His death He will unite the children of God who are scattered abroad. The scattered children of God are others than the Jewish sheep (Jn 10:16). That unity has become a fact in the church of God in the New Testament.

Before the time of the church, which came into existence in Acts 2 (Acts 2:1-4), there was no unity of all believers around the world. The only unity there was, was that of Israel. This was a national unity. That does not mean that all in Israel were children of God. In addition, also outside of Israel were believers, but they were outside the blessings of God's people. They had never become one. This only happened when the Lord Jesus gave His life and He was glorified and then gave the Holy Spirit Who formed this unity. That unity is based on the death of Christ.

Jn 11:53-57 | The Arrest Warrant

53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. 54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. 55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and

many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

Knowing nothing of God's plans, the wicked leaders continue their deliberations. It is now decided: Jesus must be killed. This is what their efforts will be focused on from now on. It is the seventh and last time that this intention is mentioned.

The Lord is fully aware of their murderous plans and no longer walks freely among the Jews. He does not do this out of fear, but by order of the Father. At the time determined by the Father and not on the occasion deemed appropriate by His enemies, He will give Himself into their hands.

The Lord goes away from Jerusalem to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim. Wilderness indicates the deadness of the people. Ephraim means 'double fertility'. Where no fruit is to be expected from the people, the result of His work will have a double fruit, in which we can think of Israel and the church.

His disciples accompany Him in His stay in that place. Although His disciples are not the direct targets of the Pharisees' murder plans, they do share in the consequences it has for the Lord's way. It is nice to see that they remain faithful to Him in spite of everything, because they did not understand everything the Lord said and did, and the hatred that is provoked thereby.

The time is approaching to go back to Jerusalem. The reason to go there is the Passover, which is again called "the Passover of the Jews". Many from the country have already set out to be in Jerusalem in time to purify themselves. But what do outward purifying and an outward feast mean when He Who instituted this feast and should be the center of it, is rejected and hated, and even an arrest warrant has been issued against Him (verse 57)?

Just as in John 7 (Jn 7:11), people in Jerusalem are seeking for the Lord Jesus. Geographically they are in the right place, in the temple. There He has often taught. But the temple is empty. Therefore they are spiritually in the wrong place and remain in darkness about Who He is. They do discuss

it with one another and ask for each other's opinion, but it does not go further than curiosity. The heart does not really turn to Him.

The chief priests and Pharisees are spiritually much further distant from the Lord and live in even greater darkness. They are filled with only one thing and that is His death. They no longer try to seize Him with trickery through spies, but order His tracking (Lk 20:20). Whoever can provide any information about His whereabouts, is expected to report it immediately. They will then take the action they fervently desire, and seize Him.

John 12

Jn 12:1-2 | Back in Bethany

1 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining [at the table] with Him.

After His stay in the city of Ephraim (Jn 11:54), the Lord returns to Bethany. It is six days before the Passover. It does not add 'the feast of the Jews'. This time our attention is drawn to what this feast means to the Lord. At this feast He will surrender Himself in death as the true Passover Lamb.

On His way to Jerusalem He travels through Bethany, where He is the guest of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. The fact that Lazarus is present will have given a unique shine to this visit. This wonderful shine is further enhanced by the act Mary is about to perform on the Lord Jesus. Lazarus is mentioned as a special attendee, for the reason that he had died, but that Christ had raised him from the dead. The Life-giving and the one made alive belong together. Thus believers may always come together with Him Who has given them life i.e. who were made alive by Him.

A supper is made by Martha for the Lord and served by her. Serving Martha is mentioned here in an appreciative sense. She serves without commenting on the Lord Jesus and her sister (Lk 10:38-42). Lazarus is one of those reclining at the table with Him. Nowhere do we read of Lazarus that he spoke a word. He is a wonderful example of a true worshiper. Without words he enjoys the fellowship with his Lord with all his heart. In what a new way he will have looked at Him, full of gratitude and admiration.

Jn 12:3 | Mary Anoints the Lord Jesus

3 Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

After have heard some things about Lazarus and Martha, who both have their own place in this scene, our attention is turned to Mary. What she does, also without words, is special. She has had no special prophetic revelation. She acts according to the spiritual feeling of her heart that has found everything in the Christ of God, a heart that senses the danger of death He is in. Others may think of His wonders and that He would save Himself, like He did for example when they wanted to throw Him down the cliff in Nazareth (Lk 4:28-30), but Mary thinks of His death and His burial. With this in mind she anoints Him, her Lord.

For this purpose she uses a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard. Like David before, she doesn't want to offer an offering that doesn't cost her anything (2Sam 24:24). For her Lord only the best is enough. She stoops down and anoints His feet with the perfume. His feet speak of the fact that He, the Son of God, has come to earth, sent by the Father to explain Him. She wipes His feet with her hair. Her long hair is her honor (1Cor 11:15a). As it were, she puts her honor over the feet of the Lord to wipe them. The result is that her hair is anointed with the same precious perfume and spreads the same delicious fragrance.

Through her dedication, of which the long hair as a veil also speaks (1Cor 11:15b), the pleasant fragrance of the Lord Jesus is enjoyed by those around her. The entire house is filled with the fragrance of the perfume (cf. Song 1:12) so that all those present can enjoy it. If a believer worships Christ in the meeting by praising Him, others enjoy it.

Jn 12:4-6 | Judas Responds to the Act of Mary

*4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor [people]?" 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.*

Not all those present enjoy the act of Mary. There are some who cannot appreciate what she has done to the Lord. We know from other Gospels that the disciples criticize it. Here this criticism is expressed through Judas.

John calls him the man “who was intending to betray Him” so that the contrast with the act of Mary is presented in the strongest possible way.

The reason for the criticism of Judas concerns the amount Mary spent for her anointing. He knows how to estimate the amount. If we consider that a denarius is the salary for a day’s work (Mt 20:2), the perfume of Mary has cost an annual salary. We can convert this to today. As of January 1, 2008, the gross minimum daily wage for someone twenty-three years of age or older is €61,62, which is slightly more than €50,00 net. For convenience, we assume €50,00. This means that the perfume of Mary converted to today represents a value of €15.000,00. What a waste when you consider how much it could have helped the poor. At least that is how Judas makes it appear through his words.

The true reason is that he wanted to enrich himself with it. He is not interested in the poor. He only thinks about himself. Apart from Judas’ evil motives, there are also many Christians who reason like Judas. They say that a time of worship is a waste of time because the needs in the world are great. Bringing the gospel or helping people in need is much more important to them than worship.

Undeniably, the things mentioned are important things that need to be done. But when we say that such activities are more important than to worship the Son and the Father, we are saying that people are more important than God. Precisely in this Gospel, this one according to John, the Lord Jesus indicates what the Father seeks and that is: worshipers (Jn 4:23). Mary is such a person. The fact that the Father seeks them means that, irreverently, they are not for the taking, but that they are fairly rare (cf. Lk 17:12-18).

It is remarkable that the Lord has entrusted the care of the disciples’ finances to Judas. Couldn’t He better have entrusted this to Matthew? As a tax collector Matthew had learned to deal with money. Although a service for the Lord often fits in with what we do or have done in society, that is not standard procedure for the task the Lord gives His own. The fact that He gave Judas control of the finances does not mean that He did so because Judas was a thief. He put Judas to the test with it, just like He put Adam and Eve to the test and just like He often puts us to the test.

If He puts any human being to the test, it is not because He wants to know how he will react, but to persuade that person to show his dependence on Him in that. If man does that, he will accomplish his task for the glory of God. If man does not do that, he will fail to his own damage and disgrace.

Jn 12:7-8 | Reaction of the Lord

7 Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

The Lord rebukes Judas. He does not do this by exposing Judas' hypocrisy, but by expressing His appreciation for the act of Mary in contrast to the hypocritical behavior of Judas. He justifies her act, an act that should not have been stopped. What she did, He worked in grace in her heart because she sat at His feet to listen to His word (Lk 10:39).

To those who take that attitude toward Him, He can show what is in His mind through which spiritual feelings toward Him are formed. Someone who has been formed in this way knows what He is entitled to, without the need to explicitly make His will known.

By listening to Him, Mary has understood that her beloved Lord will die and be buried. He has said it repeatedly, but the disciples have not understood it. She did. She is therefore not at His tomb, like the other women who wanted to anoint Him, but will come too late because He has already risen. What the women intended to do out of love, but also in ignorance, Mary has already done here.

So very few people have felt anything of what awaited the Lord and what occupied Him. How rare believers still are who, through their close contact with His Word, know what He has accomplished through His death, burial, resurrection and glorification, and honor Him for that by dedicating their life to Him.

He further points out that they will always have the poor with them, while they will not always have Him with them. The poor would always be there and with that the opportunities to help them. He will soon leave them and then they will no longer be able to do to Him what was still possible now.

Mary understood that and showed it. She has set the priorities correctly. She has saved and spent her money on perfume for the Lord. She did not use the perfume for her brother's burial, but kept it for the Lord's burial. He should always and everywhere take the first place. The things that are done *to* Him are more important than the things that are done *for* Him.

Jn 12:9-11 | The Plan to Kill Lazarus

9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

The coming of the Lord in Bethany did not go unnoticed. The Jews sought Him (Jn 11:56) and now they found Him. By the way, they are not only curious about Him Whom they have heard so much about and seen so much of, but they are also curious to see Lazarus. What Jesus has done with him is of course spectacular. They want to marvel at it, as if it were a rare natural phenomenon. It is the kind of curiosity Herod also showed for the Lord (Lk 23:8). Again and again we see that the Jews want to see signs, but without a real desire to get to know Christ.

The religious leaders see a great danger in Lazarus. His resurrection is enormous propaganda for Christ. That is why Lazarus must also be killed. Just like Jesus, anyone who so clearly points to Him and His power must be put out of the way, their way. Every living witness is a thorn in the side of the enemy. Just by his living appearance, Lazarus is a great witness to Him. Without words he leads many to believe in Him. Just by seeing that he is alive, the Jews believe in Him Who has worked this.

Because this faith is based on a sign, the sign of the raising of Lazarus, we must fear that such faith is nothing more than faith in Someone Who does signs. What we can learn from it is that our testimony points to Him when our life testifies that we have new life. Then we do not always have to say something.

Jn 12:12-16 | The Entry Into Jerusalem

12 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and [began] to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT." 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

The next day the message came to the crowd that the Lord Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He is already in Bethany. That means that He will soon be in the city. The message of His coming causes a spontaneous reaction in the crowd. They have been so impressed by everything they have heard and what many have also seen of Him, that they are going to meet Him.

The homage that the Lord is prepared here is worked by the Spirit of God. God wants to give His Son a public token of honor before He withdraws from the public with His disciples. For this, God uses the general feeling of the crowd that sees Him as the promised Messiah.

By now we do know that the crowd has not come to repentance en masse, but that as far as they are concerned it is merely an outward impression of Him. They have seen how He has provided bread and healing. Their religious leaders have never done anything like this for them, but have only enriched themselves at their expense. That the spontaneous "hosanna" call is nothing more than an outward call is evident when, a few days later, we hear the same mass crying out for His crucifixion. Such is the variability of popular favor.

All this does not take away from the fact that God, through His Spirit, works in the crowd to give an open and massive testimony to His Son. They take branches from the palm trees which are a symbol of victory. Then they go to meet Him, speaking words from Psalm 118 (Psa 118:25-26). The word 'hosanna' is a Hebrew word and means 'save please'. Although this word originally meant a cry for help, it seems that it has become more and more

an expression of praise, according to Vine in his explanatory dictionary of Greek New Testament words. This is how it is used here by the crowd.

With the words of the psalm they confess that the Lord Jesus comes in the Name of *Yahweh*. With this song of praise they do not worship the glory of Christ at the height in which this Gospel presents us to Him. For in this Gospel he is seen as the Son sent by the Father and Who comes in the Name of the Father. Nevertheless, in this quote that the crowd speaks, we find a wonderful reference to this. To their praise they add that He is the King of Israel.

All together they express a full recognition of His dignity as the Messiah. It is also good to remember that the confession of the crowd, unfortunately, without coming from an inwardly convinced conscience, is a picture of the repentant remnant. What the crowd says emotionally is what the faithful remnant will say in true faith when the Lord comes back to actually reign as Messiah in the Name of *Yahweh* (Mt 23:39).

We do not hear a single word of appreciation or disapproval from the Lord. What we do see is that He sits down on a young donkey and does what is written about Him. Thus, we know that He accepts this testimony from the mouth of the crowd as the testimony that God has worked.

It says that He “found” the young donkey. In other Gospels we read that He sends His disciples to fetch the donkey and indicates exactly where to find it (Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-38). The fact that here it says that He finds it, fits again with this Gospel. As God the Son He does everything Himself.

With this act of the Lord the prophecy of Zechariah 9 is fulfilled (Zec 9:9). He is always busy fulfilling the will of His Father. He knows what is written about Him and knows what must be fulfilled at a certain time. He focuses on this (cf. Jn 19:28).

Although His disciples, who truly believe in Him, see these things, they have not fully understood the meaning of what is happening. They may have applauded, as did the crowd, because they believed that He was going to establish the kingdom after all (cf. Lk 19:11). How wrong they were too. They will understand the meaning of the event after the glorification

of the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit will come (Jn 7:39) and He will guide them into all the truth (Jn 16:13).

Jn 12:17-19 | The Crowd and the Pharisees

17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify [about Him]. 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

While the great crowd (verse 12) cheered Him on, there is another crowd that was with Him when He had raised Lazarus. That crowd bears witness to this great event. They have been particularly impressed by that sign. It is really unbelievable that they were able to see it with their own eyes.

It is indeed an enormous grace, although most of them unfortunately did not recognize it as such. What the Lord has done with Lazarus, He wants to do with every human being in a spiritual sense. Let us hope and pray that this wonder of making alive will still take place in the life of many.

The crowd that has been present at the resurrection of Lazarus is meeting the other crowd that has already joined the Lord. That must have been an impressive procession, all to Christ's honor, because of the sign He has done. The addition that it is because of the sign, shows that it is only about a spontaneous expression of feelings and not about an inner conversion.

We see here an expression of feelings as we often notice at mass meetings. There is hardly any room for individual experience of faith. The feelings are carried away by the great event. There is no chance of a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus.

The Pharisees look at it differently. They look at Him with sadness and grind their teeth in the face of that massive rush. It is completely out of control. They have to conclude that "the world" is following Him. Jews from all over the world have come to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:9-11) and there is also talk of non-Jews in verse 20. The leaders notice that they have lost their grip on the mass. How powerless an enemy of God is when God takes the feelings of the mass into His hands for a moment to make them applaud His Son.

Jn 12:20-22 | Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

*20 Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and [began to] ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip *came and *told Andrew; Andrew and Philip *came and *told Jesus.*

People from the surrounding nations also came to the feast to worship. These are not Jews, but Gentiles. They may be proselytes, i.e. Gentiles who have come to profess the Jewish religion. Perhaps they were only appealed by them, as we can assume with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27; cf. 1Kgs 10:1). In the crowd they have heard about Jesus and they long to see Him. This is a work of God's Spirit in their hearts.

Maybe they have a certain reluctance to go directly to Him and therefore first turn to Philip. It seems that Philip does not know what to do with this question, because he first consults with Andrew. Philip and Andrew have been together with the Lord from the very first hour (Jn 1:35-41,43-45). Then they go together to the Lord and tell Him that there are Greeks who would like to see Him.

Jn 12:23-26 | The Answer of the Lord

*23 And Jesus *answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

In response to the question of the Greeks through His two disciples, the Lord Jesus gives new and special education about Himself, His work and its results. In order to understand this education correctly, we must bear in mind that the Greeks represent all non-Jews. For this reason, the Lord Jesus does not speak of Himself, like before, as the Son of God Who raises the dead or makes alive, not as the Son of David, the promised Messiah, but as the Son of Man Who will be glorified. When He will be glorified as the Son of Man, He will be a blessing for all mankind, not just for the Jews. Then not only some Greeks will see Him, but the entire world (Rev 1:7).

Before that, He must first die and then rise from death and be glorified, first in heaven and later publicly on earth. The Greeks wish to see “Jesus”, which means that in Him they assume no more than a human being on earth and wish to see Him that way. However, it is impossible to really see “Jesus” as a Man in humiliation on earth if we have not first understood that He is the glorified Man in heaven. And this is only possible if we have seen that He has gone into death.

In view of this the Lord speaks of Himself as the grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die. That is the condition to partake of His glorification. He reintroduces that condition with the double “truly” and the authoritative “I say to you”. It is also of the utmost importance that He will die as the grain of wheat, because if He does not, there will be no fruit. Precisely by dying there will be rich fruit, as from a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies, an ear grows with many grains of wheat.

That His death is the only way to produce this fruit clearly shows the state of mankind. No fruit is to be expected of man because he lives in sin. Death alone is the answer to sin and only His death provides the way out for the sinner and turns him into ‘much fruit’ as result of Christ’s work. This fruit is the spiritual offspring resulting from His work (Isa 53:10-11; Heb 2:12-13).

Those who are fruit of His resurrection will follow Him in His life on earth. This means that a follower of the Lord Jesus will share in His suffering. This is not the suffering for the sake of the sins borne on the cross, but suffering that is inflicted on him by men because he follows Christ. It is no different with the servant than it is with the Master. What the Lord Jesus said about Himself, He applies to all who want to belong to Him.

Everyone who wants to belong to Him must die. This dying takes place when a person condemns himself. He abandons his own interests and acknowledges that the death of Christ has put an end to his own selfish life. Whoever hates his life in this world, demonstrates this by not living for himself. Those who do so save their lives until the moment that it will be fully enjoyed in eternal glory.

It is one of the few times that John presents eternal life as a prospect and not yet as the present part of the believer. A ‘lost’ life, a life that is ‘hated’,

is a life in which Christ is served and in which He is followed. Following Him leads someone, as it were, automatically to where He is, that is in the Father's house. There such a person awaits a special tribute: the Father will honor someone who serves the Son. Isn't that great?

Jn 12:27-30 | Glorification of the Name of the Father

27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 So the crowd [of people] who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

After this teaching in response to the question of the Greeks, the Lord speaks about the things that await Him. Where He will be, with His Father, is not His direct goal. He is fully aware of what will first happen to Him in the suffering that will come on Him. When He thinks about it, His soul becomes troubled, it moves Him. He does not think about the suffering that will be done to Him from the side of people, but what He will have to suffer from the side of God because of sin.

Will He therefore rather ask the Father to be saved from that hour? No, because He has the honor and glorification of the Father in mind and he knows that the love of the Father leads Him. After all, He has become the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29), because sin has dishonored His Father so immensely. His love for the Father brings Him to that hour of unprecedented need, so that God may be glorified in a sinful world by taking away sin and that sinners may be saved in a righteous way.

The Son addresses Himself to His Father and asks Him to glorify His Name as Father. For that purpose He came to earth in the first place. The answer comes immediately. The voice of the Father sounds from heaven. The Father has glorified His own Name in the raising of Lazarus – and also throughout the life of His Son. He will once again glorify His Father's

wonderful Name in the raising of His beloved Son (Rom 6:4) – and also through the work of His Son on the cross.

The voice of the Father is unrecognizable to unbelief. When the voice of the Father is heard by unbelievers, unbelief speculates about the sound. The crowd thinks they have heard the sound of thunder. By those who have no connection with God, the speaking of the Father is experienced as a thunderclap. Others go a step further and suppose that an angel has spoken to Him. In any case, they have heard a voice and even concluded that that voice addressed Him, without having understood anything of the words. Still, they too are far away from the truth.

The Lord declares that the voice was not meant for Him, but for them. It has been an additional testimony to the multitude of His connection with the Father if only they would have had ears to understand it.

Jn 12:31-34 | If I Am Lifted up From the Earth

31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

The Lord speaks of a new “now”. The previously used “now” refers to His coming into the world (Jn 5:25). The “now” the Lord uses here refers to the cross. If the Father has spoken of the glorification of His Name in connection with the resurrection of Christ, it means the judgment of the world and the ruler of the world. The resurrection of Christ is the proof that the Father no longer has any connection with the world and that He must deliver the world to judgment as incorrigibly evil.

This new “now” also has consequences for the devil. He will be cast out (cf. Lk 10:18; Rev 12:9; 20:3,10). Although it will take some time before this judgment is carried out, it is fixed by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. For the believer this means that because of his connection with Christ in the resurrection, he no longer belongs to the area of authority of the devil.

For all His own, Christ when He hangs on the cross becomes the point of attraction. There, on the cross, He draws His own from the present evil age to Himself (Gal 1:4). By pointing out the lifting up from the earth as the manner He will die, the Lord announces His death on the cross. Death on the cross is the only death that takes place by lifting up someone from the earth. In the same way, Scripture will be fulfilled that He will die on a tree (Deu 21:23; Gal 3:13). With this the Lord excludes that He would be killed by stoning, the usual way of execution among the Jews.

The crowd knows that He referred to Himself as Son of Man. That title is known to them from Daniel 7 (Dan 7:13). Now He speaks of His being lifted up. Perhaps they have understood that He spoke of the cross (Jn 8:28). They may also have thought of going to heaven because He spoke about that before (Jn 6:62). In any case, they know from the law that the Christ, once He is on earth, will always remain on His throne on earth (Psa 89:4,36; Isa 9:6-7; Dan 7:14). This does not involve a lifting up on the cross or a going to heaven. So could He be the Son of Man? And if He was not, then Who is He?

Their reasoning always leads them in the wrong direction, because they do not know – and do not want to know either – about a suffering Son of Man. That is because they forget what is written in Psalm 8 (Psa 8:5a). There it says that He is to be made “a little lower than the angels”, as the Darby Translation says in Psalm 8:5a. From Hebrews 2 we know that this is because of the suffering of death (Heb 2:9).

Jn 12:35-36 | Last Call to Believe in the Light

35 So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

Instead of answering their curious question, the Lord points out that they only have a short time left to escape darkness. Now He is still with them as the Light. Let them take refuge in Him and walk in the Light. Then the darkness of the night will not overtake them with the result that they will

become completely disoriented. In His Person they have the Light with them.

He summons them to believe in Him. Then they will become sons of Light, people who are characterized by light because they came forth from it (Lk 16:8; Eph 5:8; 1Thes 5:5). Then they will understand everything He has said and they themselves will spread light to others (Mt 5:14; Phil 2:15). After this invitation, the Lord withdraws from them and they can no longer find Him.

Jn 12:37-43 | The Unbelief of the People

37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, [yet] they were not believing in Him. 38 [This was] to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" 39 For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM." 41 These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. 42 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; 43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

Here it is clearly stated that all the signs of the Lord did not bring them to believe in Him (cf. Mt 11:20). This is not surprising, because it is foretold. The rejection of Him in spite of His many signs in their presence is a fulfillment of the word of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53:1). In his days Isaiah preached and spoke about the power of *Yahweh* for the benefit of His people. However, the people did not listen and rejected *Yahweh*. John now applies this word of Isaiah to the Lord Jesus, yes, he even says that this word of Isaiah now has its fulfillment.

With this quote John asks the Lord, as it were, in amazement, whether the preaching of God's prophets and those of the Lord Jesus in particular have had any result, despite the revelation of the power of Christ to His people. There is an answer to that question. This answer also comes from Isaiah.

Isaiah says that God has blinded the eyes of His people and hardened their hearts (Isa 6:9-10). This judgment of hardening is the result of their absolute refusal to obey God. They have rejected both Him and His word. This is how it was in the days of Isaiah and this is how it is with the Lord Jesus. The people do not *want* to believe.

Then, at a certain moment, God determines that the people can no longer believe. He seals their choice. This same word of Isaiah about hardening is also found when the people rejected the testimony of the glorified Christ (Acts 28:25-27). Thus we see that the triune God is rejected:

1. In Isaiah 6 it is *Yahweh* of hosts.
2. Here, in John 12, it concerns the Lord Jesus.
3. In Acts 28 it is about the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Following his quotation from Isaiah, John states that Isaiah, when he spoke of *Yahweh*, in fact spoke of the Lord Jesus. With this we have a clear and powerful proof that the Lord Jesus is the same as *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus is God and wherever God reveals Himself in the Old Testament, He does so in His Son. It cannot be said more clearly than John does here. What glory did Isaiah see? He saw “the King, the LORD [Hebrew: *Yahweh*] of hosts” (Isa 6:5). And John says here that Isaiah spoke of Him, that is of the Lord Jesus. What a wonderful testimony!

The judgment of hardening has come on the people as a whole. And it had to come, because although even many of the rulers believe in Him, they do so without really confessing Him. They do not confess Him according to the truth of His Person, because they only recognize in Him someone who does signs. They admire Him secretly, but do not confess Him openly because they are afraid of the Pharisees. If the Pharisees would sense an admiration for Him, they would be put out of the synagogue. And that they wouldn't risk. The real reason they do not openly confess Christ is that they are focused on the approval of men rather than on the approval of God. The approval of God is on the second plan, the approval of people on the first.

Jn 12:44-50 | Final Testimony

44 And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

46 I have come [as] Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment [as to] what to say and what to speak. 50 I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

As a final testimony, the Lord calls that believing in Him is not possible without believing in the Father. It is as it were a summary of His whole service in this Gospel in the midst of His people and the world. It is about His Sender. It is not possible to seek His honor and not the honor of God. Believing in Him means believing in Him Who sent Him. Believing in Him only for His signs is not a belief that gives eternal life. He who looks closely at Him, that is to say in faith, sees the Father Who sent Him. The Lord again places the greatest emphasis on His unity with His Father.

Once again He points to Himself as Light that has come into the world to save people from darkness. This is what happens to everyone who believes in Him. Whoever hears His words but ignores them will not immediately be judged by Him. That is not the purpose for which He came to earth. He did not come to judge, but to save the world (Jn 3:17). Will someone then be able to reject Him with impunity and pass by His word? No, such a person will certainly be judged at the last day.

The standard by which he will be judged is the word the Lord has spoken. It will be clearly stated in the light that such a person has heard the word of the Lord, but consciously disregarded it. It is the word, the 'logos', that He has spoken, not the words. By pointing at the 'logos' as the means by which He judges, He points at Himself. He is the 'logos', a word that indicates that He is what He speaks. The 'logos', that is the Son Who has revealed Himself through His word, judges man. The severity of the rejection of Him as the 'logos' is that with the word of the Son also the word of the Father Who sent Him is rejected. The Son, in His speaking and acting, is perfectly subject to His Father. He is so one with the Father that rejecting Him means rejecting the Father.

For the second time the Lord Jesus speaks here of a commandment that He has received from His Father. The first commandment the Father has given Him is to lay down His life and to take it again (Jn 10:17-18). This second commandment concerns everything the Father has told Him to say and to speak. He knows what He speaks about and what the words of the Father mean. He knows those words perfectly. There is nothing hidden to Him in what the Father has told Him to speak. He fully subscribes to those words. He does not pass them on mechanically, but with complete agreement and corresponding sentiments.

He knows that the commandment means eternal life for everyone who accepts it. That is why He has spoken everything in the way the Father has told Him in the personal conversation He has had with Him and has not chosen His own form of presentation. He has not gone beyond the words the Father has told Him. He has said exactly that and no more than that because only those words are perfectly attuned to the hearers.

John 13

Jn 13:1 | Endless Love

1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

The Lord has withdrawn with His disciples to be alone with them. He wants to open His heart to them and tell them Who His Father is for them. Now that He is about to leave them, He wants to tell them in various ways what their new position before God the Father and in the world is in contrast to their position in Israel. Therefore He has moved into the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. In that upper room He wants to celebrate the Passover with them.

In the other Gospels we read about the preparations for this and get to know the outer circumstances of the Passover (Lk 22:8-13). John does not occupy himself with that. He describes a different kind of preparation. He writes about the spirit or mind in which the Lord gathers His own to celebrate it. In a special way he gives us a taste of the atmosphere of Divine love in which this event takes place. This preparation is done by the Lord Himself. He does this in full awareness of the fact that His hour has come (Jn 12:23; 17:1; cf. Jn 2:4; 7:30; 8:20).

Christ is the only Man with Whom nothing ever happens unexpected. He knows everything perfectly in advance. That His hour has come means that He will die on the cross, rejected by men and forsaken by His God. Yet John does not speak about that. What John says about the end of Christ's life on earth fits his Gospel. John does not describe the wickedness of man or satan, nor God's wrath over sin, but tells us about the Son's departure from the world back to the Father. This is what preoccupies the Lord Jesus and what forms the background of the coming chapters.

It is all about the Father and what the Son's going to the Father means to His disciples as objects of His love. Everything is known and felt by Him in the presence of the Father. That is why His going to the Father out of

this world is directly connected with His love for His own who are in the world.

We have also read about “His own” in the beginning of this Gospel (Jn 1:11). There it is about His people Israel as His own, but that they, His people, did not receive Him. Now John speaks again about “His own”. That is not His people as a whole, but it is they from His people who have received Him. They are truly His, they belong to Him, they are His sheep.

To them, His departure to the Father means a great loss. How lonely they will feel in a hostile world. The Lord Jesus is aware of this and therefore He will leave them with an impressive proof of His love for them, a love that will be there to the end. The proof of that tremendous love certainly concerns His work on the cross. We can think of an infinite depth of love.

His love also extends lengthwise, into the future, for it is a love of which, no matter how far we look, the end cannot be seen. That is what John means when he writes about “loved them to the end”. If we can think of something having an end, His love goes beyond that. No matter how far we can look into the future, His love is there too. Whatever misery and sorrow we may experience, His love goes deeper. The measure of this love cannot be fathomed or measured. We can only experience and admire this love.

Jn 13:2-4 | Preparation for Washing of the Feet

*2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, [the son] of Simon, to betray Him, 3 [Jesus], knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.*

After the introductory words about His going to the Father and His love for His own, we now come to the scene of the washing of the feet during the Passover. But first John mentions what the devil managed to do in the heart of Judas. This shows us the great contrast between the Lord’s actions and those of Judas. The Lord acts by the Spirit of love for the Father and His own, while Judas has opened himself to the devil. The Lord Jesus gives Himself for others; Judas betrays the Lord out of his own interest.

When the supper has begun, the Lord gets up from supper to serve His own. While He gets up to do so, He is fully aware of His connection with His Father. As the Son of the Father, He knows that He has received all things into His hands, just as He knows that He will soon fall into the hands of depraved people. It is therefore impressive to realize that He Who gets up to serve the disciples is the eternal Son Who, as Man, receives all things from his Father's hands in order to share them with those who participate in His death and resurrection.

It is also noticeable that verse 3 speaks of both "the Father" and "God". When we read the name "Father" it is usually in connection with our privileges, with our blessings. When we read the name "God" it is usually in connection with our responsibility.

The Lord Jesus knows that He came from God. His purpose was to serve God on earth. He knows that He fulfilled that service perfectly to God's glory and thereby answered His responsibility entirely. That is why He can go back to God. This relationship of the Son to His Father and His God is the starting point for the washing of the feet. The Son wants us to share with Him what He received from the Father and what He did for God. For that we need the washing of our feet.

Fellowship with the Son in what the Father has given Him can only be possible if we are aware that that Father is also the holy God in Whose presence nothing can exist that has to do with sin. Nobody is more aware of that than the Son. He knows His Father and God in a perfect way, and He knows exactly how His Father and God values Him. Therefore, no one but He can do the cleansing of defilements which enables a person to partake with Him. That is why He gets up from supper and lays aside His garments. Symbolically He renounces all glory that His God and Father has given Him.

Then we read that He takes a towel. He does that with the very hands in which the Father has placed all things. He does not use His hands to exercise power, but to serve. He uses His hands to wash the feet of His disciples. Then He girds Himself with the towel He has taken. Girding points to serving (Lk 12:37; 17:8). By what He does to His disciples, He gives us an

unforgettable lesson in humility. It seems that Peter has understood that lesson (1Pet 5:5).

Jn 13:5 | The Washing of the Feet

*5 Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

When the Lord has prepared Himself for His servant work, He pours water into the basin and begins to wash the feet of the disciples and wipe them with the towel with which He has girded Himself. The washing of the feet by the Lord has a spiritual meaning. The Lord serves here as a Slave. When He became Man, He took the form of a Slave (Phil 2:7). He will never give up this position and service of Slave (Lk 12:37; Exo 21:5-6).

We might think that He stopped being a Slave when He entered glory. He shows us here that this is not the case. He begins a new service among His own that consists of removing the uncleanness they have acquired in their wanderings through the world. For this purification He uses the Word of God which is compared with water (Eph 5:26; Jn 15:3). When we read God's Word, it has the effect that our thoughts are cleansed. If we have things in our life that are wrong, He makes us aware through His Word. We can then confess that and remove it. That is the cleansing He works.

For this cleansing, the Lord uses water, not blood. It is about presenting the truth, that is, God's Word as that which cleanses. The blood has more the aspect of reconciliation. He uses the Word to cleanse those who are already reconciled by the blood. The blood cleanses in relation to God, the water cleanses in relation to the believer. The blood is applied just once. God always recognizes its value. The effect is eternal. The believer is sanctified by the blood once and for all (Heb 9:12; 10:14). The application of the blood never needs to be repeated, just as no one once born of God needs to be born of God again.

After the Lord has washed their feet, He wipes them with the towel with which He was girded. Wiping also has an important spiritual meaning. Wiping the feet means getting rid of the memory of the cleansing. When someone has been cleansed of a sin by the Lord through His Word, He does not come back to it. This is also important for believers among them-

selves. If a believer sins and someone else points this out to him and the sin is confessed, then that sin is gone. That sin may not be brought to mind as an accusation of the other again.

Jn 13:6-8 | Having Part With the Lord Jesus

*6 So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"
7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."
8 Peter *said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."*

When the Lord comes to Peter to wash his feet, Peter objects. He finds it inappropriate that the Lord is going to wash his feet. He is the Lord, isn't He? Then it cannot be so that He, the Lord, bows down before him. Peter reveals here a trait of character that many of us also have. Sometimes we refuse to perform this humble service ourselves, and sometimes we refuse such a service to be performed to us, but we will motivate our refusal in a different way than Peter does here. Such an attitude shows that we don't mind sin all that much. We must learn – and it must penetrate deeply to us by what the Lord is doing here – that the defilement we incur by our going through the world is so bad that nothing less than Christ in His humiliation can cleanse us from it.

The Lord answers Peter that he does not yet know what He is doing, but that he will understand it hereafter. By this he means that Peter will only fully understand the meaning when the Holy Spirit has come. It may also be possible that the Lord is pointing ahead of His statement after the foot washing. Another consideration is that Peter will understand the spiritual meaning once he is restored by the Lord after his denial of the Lord.

Peter is not very much impressed by the words of the Lord. He does not moderate his tone, but vigorously contradicts Him. He will never cooperate with what he considers to be too humiliating an act for the Lord. With similar powerful statements, Peter also said that the Lord would not suffer and die (Mt 16:21-23). He speaks without self-knowledge and without knowledge of the Lord. The Lord tells him the consequences if He does not wash him. Then He will have no part with Him.

The Lord does not say: ‘You have no part of Me’. Every believer has part of Him. The Lord spoke of “no part *with* Me”. This means that a believer has part with Him in all that is His part, that is all that the Father has given Him (verse 3). From eternity He always has everything in His hands as the eternal Son and the Creator. But He has become Man and now as Man He will possess what has always been His possession as the eternal Son. This has made it possible to share it with people. In this way we have received life from Him because He is life.

In order to have part with the Son in that which He has received as Man, it is necessary that the believer is cleansed of everything that defiles Him. We don’t even have to think about specific sins, although sins are of course an obstacle to fully enjoy with the Son what the Father has given Him. It’s about becoming defiled merely by the fact of our going through the world. It’s about a defilement which we cannot do anything about, but that is nevertheless there. The Lord Jesus washes the feet of the disciples because they have inevitably become dirty from walking through the streets of Jerusalem.

In the same way, we too become defiled spiritually when we go through the world. Unsolicited or unintentionally we see and hear things every day that defile our mind and can influence our thoughts. That makes their daily cleansing necessary (2Cor 7:1). We undergo this daily cleansing when we read God’s Word in prayer. Our mind and thoughts are washed clean by reading God’s Word. No believer can do without it. This service of cleansing is what the Lord Jesus does to us when we read His Word. He can also do this by someone we hear preaching or applying God’s Word in a meeting, or when someone comes to us and draws our attention to something in God’s Word.

Jn 13:9-11 | Completely Clean, but Not All of Them

9 Simon Peter **said to Him, “Lord, [then wash] not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”* 10 Jesus **said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all [of you].”* 11 *For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”*

When the Lord has told him this, Peter falls into the other extreme. He wants the Lord not only to wash his feet, but also his hands and his head. But that is not what is meant either. The Lord responds to Peter's exaggerated reaction by giving further important teaching, as He always does after statements or reactions that demonstrate how much His words are misunderstood. He is a Teacher full of patience.

He declares to Peter – and to us! – that there are two forms of washing. There is a one-time washing of the whole body. This is what happened during our conversion (1Cor 6:11; Tit 3:5). It is the one-time spiritual renewal through the Word and the working of the Spirit that is not repeated (Jn 3:3-6). It is the receiving of new life through which we have become children of God. Who once is a child of God, cannot become a child of God a second time. After that it is necessary to wash the feet regularly. This regular washing also takes place through the Word (Psa 119:9).

We have a picture of both forms of washing in what happened to the priests in the Old Testament. When a son of Aaron was ordained a priest, he was washed completely on that occasion (Lev 8:6). That act was not repeated. When the priest entered the sanctuary to serve, he had to wash his hands and feet from the laver (Exo 30:19). He had to do this every time he entered the sanctuary to serve.

This repeated act is what the Lord represents here in the foot washing. Only here it is not a matter of washing the hands, but of washing the feet, because the feet speak of walking and that affects our entire behavior. In the picture of the service in the tabernacle, we see that the washing of the feet is the preparation for entering the first part of the sanctuary, the holy place, in John 14-16, and entering the holy of holies in John 17.

In His teaching to the disciples, the Lord says that a person who is completely washed, is completely clean and needs only to have his feet washed. However, there is an exception among the disciples, someone to whom all this teaching about foot washing does not apply. There is one among them who is not completely clean because he is not completely washed, i.e. because he has not been converted and has no new life. The Lord knows that one exception and He also knows what is in the heart of that disciple. The heart of that disciple is not connected with His heart. There is no life

connection between Him and that disciple. Therefore, what He said does not apply to a man like Judas.

Jn 13:12-17 | Do as the Lord Did

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined [at the table] again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for [so] I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor [is] one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

The Lord has washed the feet of all disciples, including those of Judas. He has taken His garments again. Then He asks them whether they understand what He has done to them. From His question it appears that there is more connected to His deed than just making sure their feet are clean so that they can go to the table refreshed. By asking this question He wants to test their heart.

Without waiting for an answer, He is going to teach them, and us, about what He has done. He knows what they call Him and He is saying that they are right to do so. In the first place they call Him "Teacher", someone who teaches, and in the second place "Lord", someone who has authority over them. The order for them is that they first receive teaching and then start to obey. It is often the same with us. We first have to see the reasonableness or usefulness of something before we do what is said.

Based on their acknowledgment of Him as their Superior He teaches them more about what He has done. He tells them that what He has done to them, they now have to do to each other. When the Lord says that, He reverses their order and says that He is in the first place the Lord and in the second place the Teacher. This means that in the first place it comes down to obedience to Him as Lord and only then to accepting the teaching He gives about it. So, the first is mindset, the willingness to obey; then from that follows understanding of or gaining insight in what is being asked for.

Foot washing is an act of brotherly love. The love among each other will lead us to perform this service to each other, so that fellowship with the Lord can continue to be enjoyed. The teaching of the Lord has not been theoretical. He has given them an example (cf. 1Pet 2:21). The purpose is that they will start to do as He has done with them. They have not only seen Him do something while they were watching. No, they have experienced personally what the Lord has done.

After He has returned to heaven, He has continued that service. He is still cleansing us when we read His Word or are reminded of it by others. His example is meant to bring us to perform that deed and thus involve us in it.

With a double “truly” and an authoritative “I say to you” He points out that they cannot ignore His example, as if they would consider themselves too good for such service. He is the Lord and they are the slaves. He has done this humble work as the Lord. Then they should not consider themselves to be greater than He by saying ‘no’ when that service is asked of them to perform it to others. He sends them to do this; they are His envoys. He sends and is thus greater. As the Sender He has done this humble work, how much more they are obliged to do this work when He sends them to do it.

He also knows that ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ are two things. That is why He urges them to do what they know now. He does not do this with a threatening ‘woe to you, if you do not do these things’, but with an encouraging “blessed if you do them”. Applying the Word to our dealings cleanses from defilement. Consequently, we can remain in undisturbed fellowship with the Lord Jesus. True brotherly love will desire this for every brother and sister and consequently the service of foot washing will also be performed. And is that not a service that makes us happy?

What the Lord has done and taught His disciples can be summarized in three catchy words: humility, sanctification and happiness. These words at the same time indicate an order that we cannot turn around or leave out an element of. The path of sanctification and happiness begins and continues with humility. Humility leads to sanctification and sanctification leads to happiness. There is no happiness without humility and sanctification.

Jn 13:18-19 | Once Again the Traitor

18 I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but [it is] that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' 19 From now on I am telling you before [it] comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am [He].

Once again the Lord speaks about the exception among His disciples. Judas did not accidentally get into the number of the twelve. Choosing Judas as one of His apostles has been a deliberate choice of His. He chose him because Scripture spoke of a man like Judas (Psa 41:9). In that psalm it is about Ahithophel, the counselor of David, who became his traitor in the hour of great distress in which he found himself (2Sam 15:12; 16:21; 17:1,14,23). There is a clear parallel between Judas and Ahithophel, just as there is between the Lord Jesus and David.

It is particularly painful to be betrayed by someone with whom you have eaten your bread, which is a sign of close fellowship. Lifting the heel speaks of treacherously tripping an opponent. This is how Judas dealt with the Lord Jesus!

While the Scripture word expresses the sorrow that the Lord experiences from the act of Judas, there is also the complete submission to Scripture and thus the peace of acceptance. The importance of Scripture and the knowledge of it are enormous. They form the basis of all His speaking and acting. This is how it should be for us as well.

It does not mean that Judas has been chosen to betray the Lord. That is his own choice, for which he bears full responsibility. Here the Lord tells His disciples about the betrayal of Judas in order to strengthen their faith in His Person. Once what has been foretold takes place, it is proof that the prophet has spoken the truth. He is the promised Prophet (Deu 18:18-22).

Jn 13:20 | Receive Him Who Has Been Sent by the Son

20 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

In verse 16 the Lord spoke of those who are sent to wash the feet of others. He said that they should not feel too good to do this service. After all,

He, the Lord and the Teacher, has shown it to them and by doing so has given them an example. Now He speaks about those whose feet need to be washed. He makes it clear that it is not up to whom receives this service, to decide whether the person who comes pleases him or not. It is about accepting the service of foot washing.

Whoever comes to wash our feet is sent by the Lord and is to be received as such. Even if a Judas were to come to us, we would still have to receive him since he was sent by the Lord. Hence, we will receive the blessing, because by receiving such a person, we receive the Lord Jesus and the Father. Accepting this service will also mean that we will not share in the fate of Judas. The fate of Judas is not for those who receive the ones sent by the Lord.

Jn 13:21-30 | The Traitor Identified

*21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." 22 The disciples [began] looking at one another, at a loss [to know] of which one He was speaking. 23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 So Simon Peter *gestured to him, and *said to him, "Tell [us] who it is of whom He is speaking." 25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, *said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus then *answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He *took and *gave it to Judas, [the son] of Simon Iscariot. 27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus *said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 Now no one of those reclining [at the table] knew for what purpose He had said this to him. 29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. 30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.*

After the Lord has spoken about who He will send, He thinks of Judas and is deeply troubled. His becoming troubled in spirit is not caused by the thought of the betrayal that will take place and its consequences, but by the fact that it will be one of them, who has been in His company all the time. He makes His disciples, among whom Judas is still found, known what He is busy with in His spirit. Thereupon he makes a solemn declaration as

we see from the word "testified". The certainty and at the same time the seriousness of this word are further emphasized by the preceding double "truly" followed by the authoritative "I say to you".

The disciples look at one another in despair, wondering of whom He is speaking. This attitude shows that among the disciples there is no suspicion whatsoever toward Judas. To them, he seems to be a completely sincere person. Judas is a striking illustration of a false apostle about whom we read in 2 Corinthians 11 (2Cor 11:13-15). It shows that the Lord Jesus has never made any allusion that He distrusts Judas or dislikes him or has shown anything else that would make Him want to warn the other disciples about Judas. He has always given Judas His full trust.

Opposite the hypocrisy of Judas shines the deep and sincere love of the disciple who is in the immediate vicinity of the Lord Jesus. He is reclining on His bosom. This indicates intimacy (Jn 1:18). John does not mention the name of the disciple. However, there can be no doubt that he means himself when he writes about the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (Jn 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20,24). He calls himself that because he is aware that the Lord loves him.

The Lord certainly loved all disciples, but John is aware of this in a special way and cherished himself in that love. John did not take that place in order to receive messages for others, but intimacy with the Lord Jesus makes one familiar with His thoughts and enables him to serve others with them. Peter recognizes the place of intimacy that John takes. He did not occupy such a place himself because he still expected a lot from himself. But that did not prevent him from serving the Lord, and he did so. Nor is he jealous of John's place, but recognizes him in it by giving him a hint.

It is a good thing to ask believers of whom we know that they live close to the Lord and His Word what light they have received from Him on a particular matter. John does not think it is a stupid question and he does not say: 'Ask it yourself.' The disciples complement each other. Each receives from the Lord his own formation, place and service. It is good to have an eye for that and to accept and appreciate that of each other.

John then asks the question who it is. The Lord answers by referring to a symbolic act at the supper. He says it is him to whom He will give the

morsel after He has dipped it. Because He speaks emphatically about 'the' morsel and not about 'a' morsel, it is assumed that it refers to the act by which a host opens the supper. He takes 'the' morsel and gives it to the most important person at the table. It is a gesture of honor. With this gesture of honor, the Lord with love and grace makes another attempt to speak to the heart of Judas to bring him back from his pernicious path. But also this tribute is rejected by Judas.

Then all barriers are gone for satan to enter Judas. This rejection is the third and final step in the fall of Judas who first came under the power of money (Jn 12:6), which then made him an instrument of satan to betray the Lord for money (Jn 13:2), and here satan enters into him. The ruler of the demons takes the lead personally.

The Lord tells Judas to act quickly. Satan now gets the opportunity to do what he has always wanted to do because now it is God's time. Judas does not become evil just now. He was already evil because of his greed for money, to which he gave in at everyday temptations. The Lord completely knows the heart of Judas. That is why He tells him to do quickly what he has to do.

Still nobody suspects anything of what is going on in Judas. The Lord has given the disciples the clearest clue, but there is no mention in their agenda of a surrender of the Lord and His death. They simply do not take into account the fact of His surrender. Therefore, any reminder from Him in that direction passes them by. They find a practical explanation for His words. Judas just has to go and buy something, like he always did when something was needed. After all, he had the money box. Or he had to go and give something to the poor somewhere. Apparently the Lord gave the order for that more often.

Judas does not refuse the morsel. He knows that the Lord sees through him. After he has taken the morsel the Lord gave him, he immediately leaves the scene into the night. It is night around him, but even more it is night in his soul.

Jn 13:31-32 | The Glorification

*31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus *said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; 32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.*

When the traitor has left, the Lord Jesus is alone with His own and free to begin His farewell speech. He is able to open His heart without restraints. To be able to get to know God's thoughts or to carry them out, every obstacle must be removed. In His thoughts, the Lord Jesus moves to the cross, where He will be glorified as the Son of Man. He speaks as if it were happening at that moment, "now", after the traitor had left.

He can already see the full result before Him. The 'now' here is the 'now' of the cross. What the traitor is going to do and do quickly contributes to the glorification of the Son of Man. This glorification takes place in the death He will suffer on the cross. Glorification means the complete demonstration of all the glorious qualities of Him as the true Man Who has always perfectly obeyed His God in everything. This has been apparent throughout His entire life, but will find its culmination and crowning on the cross.

On the cross every Divine and human excellence of His Being has come to complete unfolding. Everything He is as Man Who lived for the glory of God has found its crowning on the cross. His devotion and surrender were manifested there at its highest. There we see a Man, as God meant a man to be. At the same time, God is glorified in Him, for every excellence of God has come to light in Him on the cross.

In the death of the Son of Man, the revelation of God is brought to a climax. God is perfectly justified in His Being, in His nature. His righteousness, His majesty, His love, His truth, they are all fulfilled on the cross as they are in Him. It is the glory of the Son of Man to glorify God's Name in the very place where the first man dishonored God.

God's answer to the glorification with which the Son of Man glorified Him is the glorification of the Son of Man. This glorification will certainly also come about when the Son of Man has received all things from God to rule over them in the realm of peace. But God will not wait that long. He will also "glorify Him immediately" in the resurrection.

He will glorify the Son of Man as Christ by taking Him into heaven because of His work on the cross and giving Him the place of glory and honor at His right hand (Acts 2:36b; Heb 2:9). This means that Christ, until He will be revealed in glory on earth, will be hidden in God as the Glorified (Col

3:3). God glorified Him, not by giving Him the throne of David, an earthly glory, but by placing Him on His own (God's) throne in heaven.

Jn 13:33-35 | The New Commandment of Love

33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'
34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The Lord speaks to His disciples as "little children". He does not say 'My' children. They are not. Nowhere are believers called 'children of the Lord Jesus'. He speaks to them as children of God. It is the name of sweet relationships and vulnerability. He will only be with them for a short time, because He will soon go to His Father. Just as He said to the Jews (Jn 7:34; 8:21), He now also says to His disciples that they cannot come there. This is because He will go to an entirely different domain beyond this world. It is in the sphere of resurrection.

The Lord's going to that new place is not without consequences for the relationships that exist on earth. The disciples cannot now follow Him to His new place. He wants to prepare them that they will not be able to follow Him for the time being. For the time they are still on earth, He points them to a new way of dealing with one another that is entirely appropriate to the atmosphere of the place where He is going. That new way is the love they will have among each other as children of God. The great characteristic of the family of God is love because God is love. While the Lord Jesus is surrounded by glory up there, the children of God on earth love each other.

When He will no longer be with them as the most important pillar against which they can lean and seek support in a hostile world, they must find this support among each other. They cannot support each other in their own strength, but in the efficacy of the new nature they have received from Him through faith in Him. That new nature is love. If they treat one another in this way, they will be known as disciples of Christ. What a testimony that will be!

This new duty, loving one another, results from a new relationship between Him Who is in heaven and those who are on earth. This will be a convincing proof to those around them that they are followers of Him. Their love among each other will bear witness to Him Who has shown this love perfectly in His life and in His death, and still does: an infallible love. Their love must be of His 'material' and after His model, so that this love will remain, even when He is gone.

This is not about the love for lost people, however important it may be, but about the selfless search for good for the brother and sister. It is about loving one another as disciples of Christ in accordance with His love. When He will have risen from the dead, these new connections will be established and become more and more visible.

What the Lord says here, He calls "a new commandment", because it is about the brother, not about our neighbor. The commandment to love one's neighbor belongs to the commandments of the Old Testament (Lev 19:18). These commandments are given in order to get life. The sinfulness of man has made this impossible.

The new thing about the commandment that the Lord gives is that He gives the life by which the disciples can love one another. The commandment is therefore a natural thing, we do it as a matter of course. It is a commandment that is true in Christ and has been realized by Him. And because He is our life, it is also true in us and can be fulfilled by us (1Jn 2:8). This cannot be said of the law.

Jn 13:36-38 | Peter's Denial Foretold

*36 Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." 37 Peter *said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." 38 Jesus *answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.*

What the Lord said about his going away raises the question with Peter as to where He is going. He asks Him about it. The Lord does not answer by mentioning the place where He is going, but by saying that Peter cannot follow Him there now. By this He means His inimitable work on the cross.

Once He has completed His work on the cross, it will be possible to follow Him. Peter will follow Him later as a martyr in martyrdom to get where He is.

Peter doesn't understand this either and he asks Him for it. He also adds that he is willing to follow the Lord even in death. Although Peter means well, it appears from his words that he doesn't realize what he is saying. He really loves the Lord, but he doesn't know himself well. If he had listened better, he would have accepted the Lord's words, even if he had not understood everything. Not listening well brings us a lot of loss and also a lot of pain. We often have to learn through painful experiences, which we could have avoided had only our heart been more subdued.

The Lord does not praise Peter for his love for Him, but tells him what he will come to. The seriousness of this prediction is again preceded by the double "truly" followed by the authoritative "I say to you". The three times repeated denial by Peter of his Master, prophesied by the Master, exalts the Master. He restores Peter in spite of his repeated denial by His marvelous grace. And what He is to Peter, He is no less to us.

John 14

Jn 14:1 | The Lord Jesus Object of Faith.

| 1 *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.*

The contrast between the subject or different subjects of this chapter and the last verses of the previous chapter is considerable. In those last verses the Lord Jesus foretold the denial by Peter. What Peter will do shows the impotence of the flesh to be faithful in any way, no matter how good the intentions.

Opposite to this failure of the flesh, the Lord gives seven consolations in this chapter for the weak faith of impotent disciples:

1. When He is no longer with the disciples, they can turn to Him in faith just as they believe in God (verse 1).
2. He goes to prepare a place for them in the Father’s house (verse 2).
3. He Himself will come back to pick them up to be where He is (verse 3).
4. Until then, they will receive the full revelation of the Father in Him (verses 4-12).
5. Until then, they will be His representatives in the world, where they may pray with the authority of His Name and therefore be answered (verses 13-14).
6. In that time the Holy Spirit will come to be with them as Comforter and Teacher (verses 15-26).
7. He gives them His peace (verses 27-31).

The Lord himself has been troubled several times by seeing sin in its consequences (Jn 11:33; 12:27; 13:21). Now He tells His disciples that their heart needs not be troubled, that is, not moved intensely. He knows what He will do and what the consequences of His work will be and that they will be allowed to share in it. He has said to them that He will depart from them. That will sadden them, but He wants to direct their heart permanently to Himself.

Although He will no longer be physically present with them, He will still be there in the same way as God is. They believe in Him, but they will have to believe in Him in a completely new way. Just as God has always been an object of faith without ever having been seen, He will also become an object of faith when they will no longer see Him. He will go away from them, but still He will be present, just as God is present. They will no longer see Him, but will continue to believe in Him and love Him (1Pet 1:8). With His going away, the era of faith will begin (Gal 2:20; 2Cor 5:7).

Jn 14:2-3 | The Father's House

2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, [there] you may be also.

The Lord Jesus tells His disciples that His going to the Father is for a purpose. That purpose is to prepare a place for them where the Father is, in order to be where He is. He tells them that He is going to "My Father's house". By this He does not mean the temple, which He also called "My Father's house" (Jn 2:16). The temple, however, has been defiled by the people. They have turned it into a place of business. That is why God had to reject that house.

The Lord speaks here about the house of the Father in heaven. He says that it is a house with "many dwelling places". And also the temple had multiple dwelling places. This is where the priests who served there lived (1Kgs 6:5; Eze 41:6; 42:1-13). This shows that the temple was not only a place for God, but also for the priests. These were dwelling places for just a small part of the people.

The house of the Father has no limitations. The Lord presents it in its glorious spaciousness. Not only the Father and the Son live there, but there is room for all of His own, without distinction. The fact that the Father's house has "dwelling places" shows the enduring stay of the believers in it. They do not just come there every now and then, but they are welcome to dwell there.

To underline the certainty of His words to the disciples, the Lord says that He would not have said so if it had not been true. He would not create hope if He were unable to fulfill that hope for His own. In order to provide them with that place He is already going there. It is necessary, because without His preparation they will not be able to get there.

In this Gospel, the Lord speaks about the future for His own in a quite different way than in the other Gospels. There He speaks about the future just before His being surrendered. There it always refers to the earth and His return to earth. He also speaks there about a reward for faithfulness during His absence. Of that we find nothing in this Gospel.

It is about the Father's house and not about crowns, cities or a place in the kingdom. There is also no distinction between a larger or a nicer room here. There are many dwelling places, there is a dwelling place for every believer. This is the result of the love of the Father and the Son, a love that can never ever disappoint.

The disciples have given up everything to be with the Messiah on earth and to receive everything from Him. Now He will leave them. Will they all lose that when He will leave? No, on the contrary. They will get much more. He will go away and prepare an even more profound relationship and a much more superior dwelling place where death has no access. In order to make that wonderful place accessible to them, He must go to the cross. Through His work on the cross and His resurrection He will open the Father's house for people who otherwise could never come there because of their sins.

Something else is also needed to prepare a place for people in the Father's house. No one has ever been in the Father's house. To open up the possibility for men to come there, it is necessary that He enters the Father's house as *Man*. Since His ascension there is a Man in the Father's house. The magnificent consequence of His presence there as Man is that this guarantees that men can enter the Father's house.

Once the Lord has prepared a place for His own, He can then make the promise that He will come back to receive them to Himself, so that they too may be where He is. The tremendous blessing of the Father's house is not just a beautiful dwelling place, but it is the place of which He says:

“Where I am.” It is also the great blessing of paradise where the fallen asleep believers are (Phil 1:23).

It is remarkable that the Lord does not speak of a certain time that would elapse between His going to prepare a place and His coming back to receive His own to Himself. He says it, as it were, in one breath, so without pause: “When I have gone and prepared your place, I will come back.”

In the same sense, Paul also spoke about the coming of the Lord when he says: “We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord” (1Thes 4:15). The fact that in the meantime almost two thousand years have passed without Him coming back has to do with His “patience toward you, not wishing for any to perish” (2Pet 3:9).

The moment will come when the believers enter there. This is not when a believer dies. In that case the angels will come and bring him into paradise (Lk 16:22). But here He promises that He will personally come to take up the believers and receive them to Himself (1Thes 4:14-18; 1Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:20-21), while the living unbelievers remain on earth and the unbelievers who have died will not rise from the dead, but will remain in the tomb.

Jn 14:4-7 | The Only Way to the Father

*4 And you know the way where I am going.” 5 Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” 6 Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. 7 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”*

The Lord has told them about the Father in all His teaching. After all, that is the purpose of His entire service. They know that He is going to the Father. They also know that both He and His work on the cross are the way to the Father. Although the disciples have heard all this teaching, they have not really understood it. The reason is that they still only think of an earthly Messiah and of a government in which they will participate. They don't think about the Lord Jesus' going to the Father at all.

That is why Thomas expresses the incomprehension present in all the disciples by asking Him what He means by 'knowing the way'. His question

gives the Lord the opportunity to unfold the truth. He does so in words that are so simple that a child can understand them, while at the same time they have a depth that no one can fathom.

He points to Himself as “the way and the truth and the life” in order to come to the Father. That He is “the way” means that people can only come to the Father through Him and His work on the cross. That He is “the truth” means that everything people want to know about the Father can only be found in Him. He is the only possible way for people to rejoice in the Father and have fellowship with the Father. That He is “the life” means that people must have Him as their life in order to be with the Father, because He has the life of the Father. He is the life because He is the Son. It is impossible to just have Him as the way and the truth, without also having Him as the life.

There is no other way to come to the Father and to know Him and enjoy fellowship with the Father than only through Him, the Son of the Father. Only He knows Him as His Father and only He can tell others about the Father and show them Who He is. That is exclusive. No prophet, no matter how great, has ever said or could say that. But it is open to everyone to get to know the Father through the Lord Jesus. Those who know the Son also know the Father. This means that the knowledge of the Father is inextricably linked to knowing the Son. The Son is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). Only in the Son the Father is known.

Jn 14:8-11 | He Who Sees the Son Sees the Father

*8 Philip *said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus *said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and [yet] you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how [can] you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.*

Now it is Philip’s turn to express his ignorance of the Lord Jesus. After all that the Lord has said and shown what so abundantly points to the

Father, Philip's request almost testifies of unbelief. Just like the question of Thomas, the question of Philip is the question of all. He speaks about "us". His question shows that in the Lord Jesus he sees only a Man and no more than a Man, although a special Man in Whom he sees much of God. His question also shows that he has not yet really discovered God in Him. He has not yet understood who He really is.

The ignorance of Philip is answered by the Lord with a stream of light for the confused disciples. He does not blame Philip that He has been with Him for so long and still has not seen anything of the Father. He only says that Philip does not know Him yet.

In saying this in this way, He says that it is that simple: Looking at Him and seeing Him is the same as seeing the Father. He who sees Him and still asks Him to show the Father, does not look properly or looks with different expectations. The Father cannot be seen in any other way than through the Son only. It is impossible to see anything of God outside of Him, "for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9).

It comes down to faith. Only faith discovers and sees that the Lord Jesus is in the Father and that the Father is in Him and that therefore there is complete unity between the Father and the Son. When the Lord says: "I am in the Father", it indicates His perfect equality with the Father in His Being and nature. When He says: "The Father is in Me", it indicates that the Father is revealed and presented in Him. The fact that He is Man does not in any way prevent or diminish His unity of being with the Father. His unity with the Father makes that the words He speaks are entirely those of the Father and likewise the works that arise out of His words. Words and works are a perfect unity with the Lord Jesus and the Father.

The Lord encourages His disciples to believe that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. If that is too difficult for them to believe, He offers them in His grace another opportunity to believe Him. They have seen His works, haven't they? He also pointed this out to the unbelieving Jews (Jn 10:37-38).

What the Jews reject should convince the disciples concerning His Person. After all, they are much more familiar with Him and His daily words and works than the Jews. Yet they understand little that these are words and

works for eternity. Because of their high earthly expectations of Him as the Messiah, they still have so little understanding of His greater glory as the Son of God Who is one with the Father and Who declares God as Father.

Jn 14:12-14 | Greater Works

12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater [works] than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do [it].

Now that the Lord has drawn attention to His works, He returns to the beginning of this chapter where He tells His disciples that He will be an object of faith (verse 1). He will leave them and no longer be visible to them. However, this will not affect His works. Those works will no longer be done by Him, but by them. There is even more. When He has gone to the Father, they will not only do the works He has done, but they will do “greater” works than He has done. This is all related to His going to the Father. They will do that “because” He goes to the Father. This particular result of His going to the Father is again preceded by the double and therefore powerful “truly” followed by the authoritative “I say to you”.

The greater works of which He speaks, are therefore in the first place connected with faith in Him Whom they will no longer see and in the second place with His going to the Father. As a result of His going to the Father, He will send the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit Who will come when He has gone, greater works will happen than during His presence on earth. To see some of those greater works we have to read the book of Acts. There we read about the conversion of three thousand people in one day (Acts 2:41). We do not read that such a thing ever happened during the Lord’s life on earth.

The works may be greater, but no one is equal to Him, let alone greater, in His Self-sacrificing love, dependence and obedience. He is and will remain the source of those greater works. He emphasizes this by speaking about praying in His Name. He gives the comforting promise that His going to the Father will in no way dry up the mighty stream of grace in which He has worked when He was on earth.

Whoever believes in Him will be able to do what He did and even greater things, but it will never become a demonstration of a man's power. Those greater works will always be the result of His will. It must therefore be sought in prayer. The disciples may count on a power that will not fail if it is sought in His Name.

This seeking of Him in prayer and counting on His power is the proof that the Lord Jesus is not just a special Man. If that were so, all the wonders He was accustomed to do would cease with His departure. The works that will happen on the basis of prayer to Him will be proof that He is God. His physical absence does not mean that He is less interested in their prayers nor that He has become powerless to work mightily through His disciples.

Above all, nothing will change His seeking the honor of His Father. In everything He will do on the basis of a prayer in His Name, He seeks the glorification of the Father, as He always did when He was on earth. He may not be on earth, but His activities in honor of the Father are unchanged and undiminished now that He is in heaven.

To pray in His Name is to pray with the authority of His Name. Just as the Father is glorified in the Son in His life and death, so the Father is now glorified in the believers who stand in His will and pray according to His will. In answering their prayers, the Lord Jesus continues to glorify the Father as the Son. That this is what it is all about when a prayer is answered, the Lord confirms by saying again that He will do what is prayed for in His Name. In this affirmation He makes it even more specific and at the same time more general by speaking of "anything", in the sense of "whatever".

Jn 14:15-19 | The Promise of the Helper

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 [that is] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, [but] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you [will] see Me; because I live, you will live also.

Immediately attached to praying in His Name and the answer to prayer is the keeping of His commandments out of love for Him. All is related to each other. The one results from the other. Obedience is a fruit of love, just as praying in His Name is a fruit of knowing Him and His will and trusting in Him. The manner in which the disciples can show their love and dedication to the Master is obedience.

The commandments of which the Lord speaks here do not refer to the commandments of the law of Sinai. While the commandments of the law of Sinai are aimed at *obtaining* life, keeping the commandments of the Lord Jesus is *proof* of the *possession* of new life. They are commandments that are kept out of love for Him. Obedience that comes from love results in great blessings.

The Lord Jesus promises that He will ask the Father for another Helper. This 'ask' is a confidential asking. It characterizes His relationship to the Father (the same in Jn 16:26; 17:9,15,20). It is not a begging prayer like the disciples do to the Father (Jn 15:16; 16:23-24,26). A helper – Greek: *parakletos* – is someone who is called in to help another, someone who takes up the cause of another and comes to his aid. Now that He is with them on earth, the Lord is that for His disciples.

In view of His ascension, He will see to it that His own will receive "another Helper". It is Someone other than the Lord Jesus, but Who will do the same work. Since the Lord is in heaven, the Holy Spirit performs this task on earth (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). This does not mean that Christ does not do this work anymore; on the contrary, He continues to do it while He is in heaven (1Jn 2:1).

An additional encouragement is that the Helper Christ gives to His own on earth will be with them forever. The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church as a whole and in the believer personally is a permanent, continuous and uninterrupted dwelling. It is therefore wrong to ask for a new pouring out of the Spirit.

With this promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to earth, the Lord points forward to the two great characteristics of Christendom:

1. *God dwells on earth* since the day of Pentecost and
2. since the ascension of the Lord Jesus there is a *Man in heaven*.

This is a reversal of what God meant with earth and heaven: the earth He has given to men, and heaven is His heaven, His dwelling place (Psa 115:16).

The believer on earth is connected with heaven by the dwelling of the Spirit in him. Heaven is where he belongs (Phil 3:20). The fact that the Lord Jesus is already there as Man is the guarantee that the believer will actually come there too. That is what the Lord also said in the beginning of this chapter (verse 3).

The Holy Spirit that the Father will give is the Spirit of truth. He bears witness to the truth, that is to say, He bears witness to the Lord Jesus Who is the truth. The Spirit reveals everything we need to know about God and what was revealed to us by the Son. The world has no part in this because it has no part in the Divine nature and does not walk in obedience. The world has even called the Spirit Beelzebul (Mt 12:24). It is impossible for the world to receive the Spirit of truth because it is blind to the Son and does not know Him. Believers do know Him through the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit will not, like the Lord Jesus, be with them for only a short time. He will not only be *with* them to guide them, as the Messiah has been with them, but He will also be *in* them. This will be a new, special, intimate presence of God in and with the believers. By sending the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus will show His care for His own. He will not leave them to their fate as helpless orphans. He will send the Holy Spirit and therein come to them Himself. This is a great comfort and encouragement. The Holy Spirit will always remind the disciples of Him and the presence of the Holy Spirit will let them sense the presence of the Lord Jesus.

By telling the disciples about His going away and that they will no longer have Him with them, He wants to free their minds from the expectation of a visible Messiah. No longer must they live in the expectation of a visible Messiah, seen by all eyes.

The Lord lifts their expectations to a higher level. He directs their eye of faith toward Himself in glory and reminds them that only there true life is found and that they partake of it with Him. Christ will be their life once He has risen from the dead. That life is therefore life in the power of the

resurrection. The believers will not only see Him, but live the same life. Our life is in everything the revelation of Him Who is our life (2Cor 4:11).

Jn 14:20-24 | The Unity of the Father and the Son

*20 In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) *said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.*

When the day or period has come that the Holy Spirit will be in them, they will understand through the Holy Spirit how much He and the Father are one and how much they are one with Him. The Holy Spirit not only gives them the knowledge but also the awareness of it. The words "you in Me" indicate the unity of the believer with the Lord Jesus of which the Holy Spirit is the power and the bond. We are in Him as Man Who Himself as the eternal Son is in the Father. Through our union with Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ flows into us. The fact that He is in us enables us to manifest Him and not ourselves.

By grace we may already know to be in the closest connection with Him Who is one with the Father. He is there in glory and yet also one with us here, just as we are with Him there. We know this through the Spirit Who is given to us. Everything is about what, Who and where Christ is. The glorious blessings that the Lord Jesus gives us here cannot but increase our love for Him.

In connection to that He points again to His commandments. As said, it is not about the law of Sinai. The law of Sinai contains God's commandments which He imposes on a human being in order to obtain life. Over the centuries this has proven to be an impossibility for man. Man has violated all the commandments and is therefore under curse and condemnation. One can only escape from this by acknowledging God's righteous judgment

and believing in the Son. Not only that there is no judgment anymore, but whoever believes in the Son receives eternal life from Him.

The commandments about which the Lord Jesus speaks here also are related to that eternal life. Whoever knows Him as his life and therefore has His commandments, should also keep them, that is to say, live according to them. A believer demonstrates his love for Christ by living according to the commandments of the new life. This means that Christ becomes visible in his life.

The consequence is – and it cannot be else – that such a person is also loved by the Father. After all, the Father is reminded of His Son's life. And how would He not love Him of whom He has testified several times: "This is My beloved Son"? Such a believer is also the subject of the Son's love, to whom He will show more of Himself. To have the commandments of the Son and to keep them leads to spiritual growth.

Judas, not Iscariot, not the Judas who will betray the Lord, is not yet free from his Jewish way of thinking. He sees no more than a public appearance of the Messiah, as proclaimed in the Old Testament. He cannot imagine a situation where the Messiah is seen by His disciples, but not by the world. And indeed, this is an inexplicable difficulty for anyone who only envisages the earthly glory of the Messiah. Judas asks the Lord for it.

The Lord does not give a direct answer to his question. Instead, His answer goes far beyond the thoughts of Judas and what relates to His earthly glory. For He speaks about making an abode with the believer. To get sight of that and to experience the blessing of it, it is a necessity to love Him, which becomes evident from keeping His word (verse 23).

This is another thing and goes beyond keeping His commandments (verse 21). His word (not: His words) is the entire truth brought by Him in words and deeds through which He has revealed Himself. His word represents Himself, He is the Word. Someone who loves Him will keep that word as fruit of that love. Just as in verse 21, the consequence here too is that the Father loves such a person. He who is so full of the Lord Jesus that he keeps His word, through which he identifies himself, as it were, with Him in all that He is, is also the object of the Father's love.

Then there is another glorious consequence which is that the Father and the Son, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit, make Their abode with such a person. Doesn't this far exceed sharing in the earthly glory of a visible Messiah on earth? And does it not also go beyond the Lord Jesus' disclosure to the believer who has and keeps His commandments (verse 21)? That the Father and the Son make their abode with the believer is the most intimate form of fellowship. It indicates that the Father and the Son have found complete rest with that believer because to that believer Christ is everything.

Without love for the Son, no one will keep His word. Someone may say that he loves the Lord Jesus, but if it turns out that he does not live in accordance with His word, what he says is not true. Not listening to the truth brought by Him, means, not listening to what the Father says. If His word is not kept, not only the Son is dishonored, but also the Father.

Jn 14:25-26 | The Spirit Teaches and Reminds

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

The Lord says that He has spoken these things to His disciples while He is with them. He does this to make a distinction from the time when He will no longer be here. So far they have not been able to grasp many things because the Holy Spirit is not here yet. Despite that absence, the blessing of His presence and His personal teaching is still very great. The blessing of His absence will be even greater with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord uses both the name "Helper" and the name "Holy Spirit". He speaks of "the Helper" to point the disciples to the support of the Spirit and the help they will need to follow the way He wants them to go. He speaks of "the Holy Spirit" to point out to His disciples the Divine teaching He will give. As an additional encouragement, He promises His disciples that the Father will send Him in His Name. There is an abundance of encouragement in the promise that He will send the Spirit.

When the Spirit has come, He will teach the disciples more abundantly than the Lord Jesus could do at that time. He will teach them "all things"

and not just “these things” from verse 25. He will bring to the remembrance of the disciples all the Lord Jesus said to them and also give them the ability to understand what He meant by that.

Jn 14:27 | Peace

27 Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

With all the wonderful previous promises, the Son’s promises have not yet come to an end. He also grants them peace and gives them His own peace. The first peace, the peace He “leaves” with them, is the peace He worked on the cross, the peace with God (Rom 5:1). That peace is, as it were, His legacy to them as their inalienable property. The second peace, “My peace”, is the peace He has had in His heart throughout His life on earth, the peace that comes from complete trust in the Father, whatever the circumstances. We can also experience that peace when we go our way with trust in the Father (cf. Phil 4:7).

Christ’s giving differs from the world’s giving. The world may give part of what it possesses, but it will never give all. However, what it gives, it has lost, it no longer possesses it. What Christ gives, He does not lose, but multiplies. He gives us His peace, His Father is our Father, His God is our God, He gives us His joy, He gives us the words the Father has given Him, He asks for us the glory the Father has given Him. The Father loves us with the love with which He loved Him.

All this he tells His disciples to encourage and reassure them because He is going to die. That is always on His mind. He knows that His death will make them sad and that the circumstances that will lead to His death can frighten them. Once again, He tells them that there is no need for their hearts to be troubled. In verse 1 He says this with the assurance of a glorious future as consolation. Here He connects it with the comfort of peace with which He will fill them during His absence. This peace will shut out fear.

Jn 14:28-29 | The Lord Goes Away to the Father

28 You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater

than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.

The Lord does not speak about His death but about His going away. He reminds them that He said that. He wants and needs to keep reminding us of certain statements that help us to regain sight of both the present situation and the future. He also reminds them that He will come to them again. His going away from them is therefore temporary. They may bear that in mind as well. He also appeals to their love for Him. If only they would consider what it means for *Him* to go to the Father. Then they would undoubtedly rejoice for Him.

There is another aspect to that joy. His going to the Father will result in the Holy Spirit coming. The Lord Jesus has announced His coming as an event that has great consequences for them and for His work on earth. And did He not say that He Himself will come to them when He will send the Spirit? He goes but returns to them in the Spirit. Isn't that a cause of joy? He does not only want to give peace, but also joy. This will be their part by the coming of the Holy Spirit. Something of it they already understood when the Lord went to heaven (Lk 24:52).

All this is connected with His glorifying the Father. That is always what He wants to do. When He says "the Father is greater than I", He says it from His humble position on earth. As God He is eternally one with the Father and equal to Him. But whatever His essential and personal glory is, He is aware that He is also Man on earth. As such He goes and comes back to catch them up.

What the Lord stated in this chapter is not yet fulfilled at that moment. First the work of redemption has yet to be accomplished. And to all that faith is connected, for it is not visible and tangible. If they will see the fulfillment, it will be a great encouragement for their faith.

Jn 14:30-31 | The Ruler of the World Is Coming

30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

The Lord has said most of what He had in His heart to His disciples. There is not much more to say, because the time is coming when “the ruler of the world” will have the opportunity to come to Him. Satan is the ruler of the world that rejected Him. By this rejection, the world proves to stand opposite to the Father and to be subject to satan. Satan will try to find an opening in the Lord Jesus through which he could lead Him to leave the path of obedience and tribute to His Father. All attempts will be unsuccessful. On the contrary, all satan’s attempts will only result in the glory and perfection of Christ shining all the more.

In Him satan has “nothing” because He has everything in the Father and His full love and obedience are directed toward the Father. Satan will find as much in Him as he did when he tempted Him in the wilderness to take Him off the path of obedience. Now he will come to Him with the horrors of the suffering that will be inflicted on Him by men. Satan cannot imagine anything else. The Lord rejects satan. He will look on the Father and say: “The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (Jn 18:11).

In this perfect surrender to the will of the Father lies for the world the perfect testimony of His love for the Father. He could have gone free after having served the Father perfectly. He had deserved life, which no man could say. But He does not want to go free precisely because He loves the Father (Exo 21:5). Because of this reason, eternal life has become our part.

When the Lord has discussed all this with His disciples, He tells them to get up and leave the upper room. Therefore, it seems that the conversations recorded in the following chapters no longer take place in the upper room, but on their way to Gethsemane.

John 15

Jn 15:1 | The True Vine

| 1 *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

While the Lord Jesus and His disciples have left the upper room and are on their way to the Mount of Olives, He continues teaching His disciples. In this chapter He speaks with them about what they will be when He will have gone away from them. It is noteworthy that in this chapter He is not interrupted by any of His disciples with a question or remark, as is the case in the previous and next chapter. He tells them that they will be a new testimony for God on earth.

To illustrate His teaching, He uses the picture of the vine. The picture of the vine is applied to Israel in the Old Testament (Isa 5:1-7; Eze 15:1-8). *Yahweh* removed a vine from Egypt and planted it (Psa 80:8). This is Israel according to the flesh, but that is not the *true* vine. Israel did not produce the fruit God expected. Instead, the people have produced stinking fruit and God has had to surrender it to judgment.

The Lord Jesus takes the place of Israel as a vine. He re-starts the history of Israel, but now with fruit for God and with blessing for others. He is the true, the genuine vine. He did bring God the fruit that God could have expected from Israel. Christ is the source of all true fruit for God on earth. He is not just a vine that bears fruit, while the other vines do not bear fruit. He is the true vine from which every branch can bear fruit.

The Father – and not *Yahweh*, or the Almighty – is the Vinedresser. This presumes a relationship that is beyond the one Israel knows. God is in a covenant relationship with Israel as a people. That is a quite different relationship than the one in which the believers relate to Him who form the family of God after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Jn 20:17,22). They may know Him as Father because the Lord Jesus is their life and therefore they are children of God.

Jn 15:2-5 | Pruning and Bearing Fruit

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every [branch] that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither [can] you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

The believers are compared to branches on a vine. The Father is presented as the Vinedresser Who takes the greatest care of the branches to ensure that they bear as much fruit as possible. He prunes and takes away everything that abuses the juices of the vine at the expense of the good fruit.

There may be things in the life of a believer that prevent his life from bearing full fruit for the Father. It doesn't always have to be explicit evil, but anything in our lives that reduce the quality of the fruit. Then the Father sets to work to get rid of everything that prevents from bearing the full fruit. What absorbs our life force and does not produce fruit, must be removed. He will do everything to increase and improve the fruit.

If branches do not bear fruit, it means that they have no life connection with the vine. Their connection is a pseudo connection. Judas was such a branch. His connection with Christ as the vine has been a pseudo connection.

The fruit the Father wants to cultivate within us is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). This fruit of the Spirit is the total mind of Christ. If this is present, it will certainly come to expression in deeds. The Lord speaks to His disciples as believers who are already clean. The cleansing by the Father only happens to those who are already clean. That cleanness has come about through the word that the Lord Jesus spoke to them and that worked in their hearts and consciences.

When the Lord speaks about this cleanness, Judas is no longer present and therefore He does not have to say "but not all" (Jn 13:10). The Word has cleansed their ways, it has judged their worldly thoughts, it has exposed their carnal desires. It has led them to self-judgment, repentance and faith. However, we not only need the Word to come to repentance and stand

clean before God. We need the cleansing power of the water of God's Word over and over again. Thus the Father cleanses us. He reveals through His Word what is to be removed from us.

To undergo the cleansing of the Father through the Word it is necessary to abide in Christ. When the Lord says "abide in Me", this is a command that can only be fulfilled by those who have life. To 'abide in Him' we do by maintaining a living connection with Him. The result of this will be that He abides in us. Not that someone who has repented and received Christ as His life can lose Him again. What matters is that the believer is aware that he is in Him and also that he knows that Christ as the life is in Him.

There is an intimate connection between the believer and Christ. Without it, there can be no fruit. No disciple has life in himself. Consequently, no disciple is able to bring forth fruit himself. It is only possible to produce fruit if there is a living connection with the vine. Only by abiding in Him there can be fruit.

Once again the Lord Jesus points to Himself as the vine and tells His disciples that they are the branches. It is important that we keep an eye on the correct relation. Only by abiding in Him and by His abiding in the believer there will be much fruit. Bearing fruit entirely depends on abiding in Him. Apart from Him it is impossible to bear fruit. Apart from Him, separated from Him, it is impossible to do anything to the honor of the Father. We totally depend on Him for all things.

Jn 15:6 | The Branch That Bears No Fruit

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

In verse 2 the Lord has already spoken about the branch that bears no fruit. Here He returns to this and says what the destiny of such a branch is. He speaks of 'anyone', not of 'you'. He knows that the eleven are in Him and are therefore clean and fruit-bearing branches. But if 'anyone', someone like Judas, does not abide in Christ as the only source of fruit, it will end fatally with him.

This is not about someone who is a member of the body of Christ. Whoever is a part of that body can never become detached from it. The vine and the

branches emphasize the connection of believers with Christ as a manifestation of the new life evidenced by bearing fruit. The condition for bearing fruit is the connection with the Lord Jesus as the source of one's life.

The Lord, however, speaks about the possibility that someone confesses by words and deeds to be connected with Him, but of whom it turns out after a while that it is only an outward confession. Letting go of Christ then not only means that the branch does not bear fruit, but that the branch withers and is thrown into the fire to be burned. It is not about suffering damage or loss of works and reward (1Cor 3:13), but about perishing (1Cor 9:27).

What the Lord says here of the branch that bears no fruit cannot possibly apply to a true believer. A true believer who does not bear fruit does not exist. Life may express itself very weakly, but if there is real life, it will express itself, small as it may be.

Jn 15:7-10 | Bearing Much Fruit

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and [so] prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

After the Lord's deeply serious words for one who only pretends to have a connection with Him, He presents to His disciples the way of full blessing and abundant fruit. All who abide in Him, that is, those who are in a life connection with Him, will automatically bring forth fruit. That fruit is the effect of their abiding in Him as well as the abiding of His words in them.

His disciples have heard His words, not as forgetful hearers (cf. Jam 1:25). They also accepted those words, so that they now abide in them and give direction to all their thoughts and actions. The Lord then directly encourages them to ask whatever they wish giving assurances that the sources of Divine power will work what they ask for. When our hearts are thus connected with Him, we will ask that which He loves to hear because it is completely according to His will (Jn 14:13). He does not think of Himself, but is focused on the glorification of the Father.

The more we pray according to His will, the more fruit we bear and the more the Father is glorified. Everything we ask, also with regard to our worries, will be fruit that glorifies the Father. This fruit also shows that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus. This is the second name the Lord uses to describe the believers in this chapter. He has already called them 'branches' and now He calls them 'disciples'. He will also call them 'friends', 'slaves' and 'witnesses'.

Disciples are followers, students. He can call us His disciples when we have learned from Him, as true followers, that our life, just as His, is all about bearing fruit for the Father. Bearing fruit is not an easy thing. It can only happen in the way of following the Lord Jesus.

Bearing fruit is a process we have to learn; we have to grow in it. Bearing fruit is a spiritual process of gaining insight into God's thoughts of how we can be pleasing to the Lord (2Pet 1:5-8). That is why we are in the training school of God as students. In that training school we have a Teacher Who not only *tells* us how to do it, but also through His fellowship with the Father *shows* us how to do it.

This brings us to the importance of the awareness of the love of the Lord Jesus. This awareness is an element of priceless value for the path the disciple has to take in order to bear much fruit. Therefore, it is the disciple's responsibility to remain in the love of the Lord Jesus. His love is an infallible source of comfort in the sometimes painful and disappointing course of earthly circumstances that are so contrary to Him. To abide in His love means to be constantly aware of that love, whatever the circumstances may be.

Perhaps it may seem that He does not love us, but we must hold on to the fact that He loves us with the same love with which the Father has loved Him in His life as Man on earth. It is about that love and not about the love of the eternal Father for the eternal Son. He is always aware of that love, even if it is not apparent from the situation in which He finds himself. It is not our human judgment that is the standard to define love, but the knowledge that He loves us.

For continuous awareness of His love it is necessary to keep His commandments. We can abide in His love if we are willing to do what He asks

of us. When we look at the fruits it brings, keeping His commandments can't be difficult. Just as the Lord Jesus is the perfect example of love, so is He in keeping the commandments. He abides in the love of the Father by keeping His commandments. He knows the Father's love of eternity, but now He knows that love in a new way by keeping the commandments of the Father as obedient Son.

The commandments of the Father are not the commandments of Sinai. The Lord Jesus is not just a Jew Who faithfully obeys the law. He is the Son Who fulfills the commandments of the Father. We have seen an example of these commandments in John 10 (Jn 10:17-18). There He speaks of the commandment He received from His Father to lay down His life and take it again. Such a commandment is nowhere to be found in the law of the Old Testament. Nowhere does the law ask a righteous man to lay down his life.

Only Someone Who is also God can lay down His life and take it again. Every wish of the Father is to Him a commandment. How does He know those wishes? Because he walks in fellowship with the Father. The same applies to us if we want to abide in His love. True discipleship is that we abide in the enjoyment of the love of Christ.

Jn 15:11 | Joy

11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and [that] your joy may be made full.

If the words of this chapter are read in a lawful way, there will only be sadness and we may even become depressed. If bearing fruit is understood as an achievement to be made, we feel how much we fall short. This leads us to the sighing of wanting, but not being able, as we see with the man described in Romans 7 (Rom 7:15-19).

When we understand the words of Christ as He meant them, we realize that they are expressly meant to give us His joy and make our joy full. The joy He has is the motive for us to walk as disciples in a life of fruitfulness. Bearing fruit is for the *Father*, but the joy of the Lord Jesus will be *our* part.

This is one of the glorious things He means when He speaks to Peter about having part *with* Him (Jn 13:8). Having part with Him here is "My joy",

just as the Lord also spoke about the having part in “My peace” (Jn 14:27) and “My love” (Jn 15:9) and as He will speak about “My glory” (Jn 17:24). He wants us to have part in His joy and that this joy will become complete (1Jn 1:4), i.e. come to adulthood. His joy is to be in the things of the Father. We are invited to grow toward that, that we too have nothing more than that. The joy of Him is to be in us. The perfect joy is when our joy merges with His joy.

Jn 15:12-17 | The Commandment to Love One Another

12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 This I command you, that you love one another.

With the commandment to love one another, the Lord returns to what He said earlier (Jn 13:34). Love must permeate all relationships between the members of God’s family. The disciples must love one another with a love that is beyond all the weaknesses of the other. The Lord turns the spotlight on this commandment as “My commandment” because it is the summary of all other commandments. It is not the moral obligation to love one’s fellow man, but the reciprocal love of Christians, the standard of which is His love for them. We see this in the newly converted Thessalonians (1Thes 4:9).

The commandment of love is the commandment of the Divine nature of which we have become partakers (2Pet 1:4) and through which everything may be done. It is a commandment for the believer, because in his heart the love of God is poured out. To such nature, which can do nothing but love, the Lord Jesus says that he must love. It is like saying to a fish: ‘You must swim.’ It cannot and will not do otherwise; when it swims, it is in its element.

For our love for one another the love of the Lord Jesus is the norm. He has proven His love by laying down His life for us. He did this because He considers us His friends. We could say that giving up one's life for *enemies* is an even greater proof of love, but that is not what this is about. The Lord calls His disciples His friends. Is there any greater proof of His love for those who are His friends than that He is laying down His life for them?

We, too, can provide no greater proof of our love for our friends, our brothers and sisters, than that we give our lives for them. We also ought to do this (1Jn 3:16). However, what is the value of this theory if in daily life we close our hearts to the needs and concerns of God's children? In his first letter John points to the practical expression of this love (1Jn 3:17). Christ does this by emphasizing obedience to Him. Love for Christ and obedience to Him always go hand in hand.

He calls us His friends, but that does not mean that we should treat Him as a buddy. We have to be aware that we are His disciples and that He is our Lord. Incessantly the relationship between privilege and responsibility is presented to us.

The Lord addresses His disciples here as privileged people whom He wants to tell what He is going to do. A master does not explain his plans to a slave, but to a friend. A slave must simply obey without asking for an explanation. His master owes him no accountability for any task whatsoever. In His friendship the Lord Jesus emphasizes that He calls us friends by giving us the reason why. We see that in His friendship He goes much further than just calling us to obedience. Friend means lover. He speaks to His disciples in their love for the Father, a love He also has.

The hallmark of true friendship is that you can tell each other everything. A good friend has no secrets. Christ therefore introduces us into the depths of His heart. With a friend you share the most intimate thoughts, just as God does not hide from Abraham what He is going to do, and Abraham is called a friend or a lover of God (Gen 18:17-19; 2Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jam 2:23). This is what Christ does here in relation to His disciples and even on a higher level.

As His friends, He has revealed to His disciples everything He has heard from His Father. What the Father has entrusted to Him, He has passed on

to them as His friends. This is a special proof of friendship. And to think that they did not choose Him to be His friends, but He chose them. It is a great privilege that we have been chosen. It is also a great responsibility that we are set to bear fruit.

In order to enjoy the privilege and fulfill the responsibility, the heart is directed from the privilege and the blessing to Him Who blesses. We may ask Him for anything that will lead to lasting fruit. It all originates from Him. Here, praying in the Name of the Lord Jesus is the praying of a heart that is made one with the Son and that prays in line with the Father's eternal counsels. Such prayer will definitely be answered.

The Lord concludes this part, which in verse 12 began with the commandment of loving one another, by again bringing up this commandment of loving one another in verse 17. Love for one another is the new and repeated commandment of Christ for His own (Jn 13:34). To love is the revelation of the Divine nature, as perfectly visible in Christ through the service of the Holy Spirit. It is the atmosphere in which the fruit can grow and blossom to the honor of the Father.

Jn 15:18-20 | The Disciples Hated by the World

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before [it hated] you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

While believers love one another, they find themselves in a world that hates them. Their love among themselves arouses the hate of the world. The world rejects the love of God wherever it appears. To love one another as Christians exposes us to the hate of the world that is governed by satan.

The love of the disciples among each other is in sharp contrast to the hate of the world. Love inside, hate outside, that is the position resulting from the rejection and death of the Lord Jesus. Yet we are able to turn that around. We can become cold and indifferent toward our brothers and sisters, while doing our best to assure ourselves of the love of the world.

Just like mutual love, hate is ignited from outside because we abide in the love of the Lord Jesus. This should not surprise us since this has also been Christ's part during His life on earth. The world hates us because of Him. What happens to us has first been His part. In its own way, the world loves those who belong to the world. At the same time, the world hates those who belong to Christ because they are no longer of the world.

It is not our faults that are the true cause of the world's hatred, but what the world recognizes in us of the grace and excellence of Christ. Grace reduces man to nothing and makes God and Christ everything. Grace does not spare sin but saves the sinner. These things are unbearable to the flesh, which is enmity against God (Rom 8:7). The hatred of the world is our part, and not only because we no longer belong to the world, but because He has chosen us.

The fact that we could only become partakers of Him through His election clearly reveals the character of the world. The world would never let us go if the Lord Jesus had not chosen us and called us by His power. That this evokes the hatred of the world is foreseen by the Lord. In this context, He reminds His disciples that He said that a slave is not greater than his Lord (Jn 13:16). This applies to serving the fellow believers, to which the Lord applies it in John 13 (Jn 13:15), but it also applies to the hatred and enmity they will experience in the world. The slave should not expect to remain free from what has happened to his Lord.

The connection of the disciples with Christ arouses hatred which manifests itself in persecution. The world experiences that connection when it hears the word that the disciples speak. If that is the word of Christ, it will reveal what is in the heart of the hearer. Whoever has accepted His word will also accept the word of the disciples. However, if His word is rejected the slave may not count on any other treatment. Christ is despised and rejected and likewise that will be the part of the slave. Both slaves and their word will be treated with contempt because it will bring God, His Person and His Word, too close to them.

Jn 15:21-25 | The Son Hated by the World

21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they

would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 But [they have done this] to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'

The expression of hatred by the world against the disciples finds its cause in the Name of Christ. They do not know what His Name means in all its glory in both blessing and judgment. This is due to their unfamiliarity with the Father as the One Who sent Him. They moderate that they honor the Father; but when Christ, the Son of the Father, declares Him, they reject Him. Thus they show that they do not know Him Who sent the Son. If the world only knew the least about Him, it would not reveal itself in this way. It demonstrates the total blindness concerning the Father. The world cannot but reveal itself in hostility.

The revelation of the Father in the Son has brought their sin to light. The words the Lord Jesus spoke to the world as the Son are the words of the Father. That is undeniable and yet they do so. The same goes for the works He has done. These too cannot be denied as works of the Father, but still they do. If He had not done all these things, they would not have been accused of the sin of rejection. However, now that it has become so obvious that the Son of the Father is among them as Man and they reject Him in spite of that, there is no excuse for their sin.

Never has any man and never has God spoken as in Christ (Heb 1:1). Prophets have spoken on behalf of God, but they were fallible men. After their testimony, weakness returned and they could even forget God. Now the Father has sent the Son, Who did not hold out the law to them, but spoke to them in love. He who rejects the law could do so with the excuse that he cannot keep it anyway. He who rejects love does so because he does not want it. The convincing proof of the world's sin is found in the rejection of Him Who is God in grace.

The deliberate rejection of Christ by the world, and especially by the religious leaders, is strikingly expressed in the parable of the unjust vine-growers. There we hear them say when the lord of the vineyard fi-

nally sends his beloved son: “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours” (Mk 12:6-7).

After this premeditated murder, the world as a whole is rejected. Therefore, we have nothing more to expect from the world as such. What someone does with the Son, he does with the Father. The fact that they do not bow down before the Son, but rebel against Him precisely because He is the Son, is proof of their hatred of the Father. They hate the Father as they hate the Son and that makes their sin inexcusable. The words and works of the Son are the words and works of the Father. To reject the Son is to reject the Father at the same time. Perfect balance between words and works is found in the Lord Jesus.

The Jews believe that they are connected with God while rejecting His Son in hatred. They appeal to the law for their behavior. But precisely the law to which they appeal and in which they boast, clearly speaks of the rejection of the Messiah. In fact, the law is fulfilled in the word that is written about Him and of which His lips now declare the fulfillment (Psa 69:4).

The fulfillment of this word is proof of the conscious rejection of Christ. There is no reason to hate Him. After all, He has always been among them in love and grace and goodness. Yet they have hated Him. It proves the evil of man’s heart as well as the truth of God’s Word.

Jn 15:26-27 | The Witnesses

26 *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, [that is] the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you [will] testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

After His rejection out of the world and His return to the Father, the world will not be without witnesses. New witnesses will come. To testify, you must have seen something, you must have witnessed something. The Lord Jesus has testified of the Father through His words and works that He has seen with His Father. That testimony has been rejected. Once He will be glorified, He will send another Witness: the Spirit of truth. The Spirit will complete the testimony. They have rejected the Son as being a Witness. This will not happen with the Spirit. He will be a permanent Witness. That is why it is so grave to sin against the Spirit or to reject the Spirit of grace.

Here the Son sends the Spirit to testify of Him. That is what proves the Godhead of the Son. Of course He does not send the Spirit independently from the Father. He sends the Spirit because of the Father. He also speaks about the fact that the Helper Himself will come. Again He speaks first about the Helper and then about the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:16). The Spirit is not only sent or given, but also comes Himself, for He is also God and comes from the Father.

Each of the three Persons of the Godhead always acts in perfect independence, but never separately from the other Divine Persons. Thereby the Son and the Spirit have both taken a position of dependence when They came to earth. The Son proceeded from the Father and so does the Spirit proceed from the Father. The Son has testified about the Father and the Spirit will testify about the Son. For His testimony about the Son, the Spirit will use the disciples and also others, such as Paul.

A distinction is made between the testimony of the disciples and that of the Spirit. The disciples testify of what they have seen from the beginning, which is from the beginning when they went with the Lord Jesus on earth (1Jn 1:1-3). They are also witnesses of His resurrection. We have their testimony in the Gospels and in the beginning of Acts. Later witnesses, like Paul, will speak through the Spirit of the glorified Christ. Of course, their testimony of Christ in humiliation on earth also requires the power of the Holy Spirit, but the nature of their testimony has to do with the Lord's life on earth before His death and His ascension.

Apart from their testimony, the Holy Spirit will also testify. He will testify of what He sees in heaven, while the disciples of Christ will testify of the time He was on earth.

John 16

Jn 16:1-4 | The Lord Predicts Persecutions

1 “These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 3 These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. 4 But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

In the previous chapter the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples about their testimony in the world and the hatred this will evoke. He did this to keep them from stumbling. To stumble means that the hate they will experience from the side of the world will go so far that they are in danger of giving up their confession and say farewell to faith in Him.

The Lord knows this danger and has beforehand warned His disciples to prepare themselves for it. The true disciple’s path shows the radical separation that exists between the world and those who belong to Christ. If then the hatred of the world will manifest itself, it will not surprise them.

He then points to a manifestation of hatred that is revealed particularly from the religious side. They will experience resistance and enmity from religious people with whom they, before believing in Christ, adhered to the same religion. By this the Lord does not just mean a false religion, some form of idolatry, but the religion originally given by Him Himself.

His people, however, turned away from the one, true God and became unfaithful to Him. What God had given for their good, they have appropriated for themselves. They have become proud of their religion. Therefore, God had to surrender His people to judgment. The dominion of the Romans is the result of this. The leaders are blind to this. Anything that calls them back to the one, true God, is met with great and bitter resistance, in which the leaders are at the forefront.

Therefore, the stumbling for which the Lord warns has to do with a falling back into that religion that is judged by God. We must realize that the believing heart of the pious Jew, like that of the disciples, does not count on grief and shame and bottomless hatred being part of those who follow the Messiah. Therefore, the Lord encourages them that persecution will serve to strengthen their faith and that the Holy Spirit will add His testimony to theirs.

The hatred will take terrifying proportions. The places where they used to confess and practice their religion will be closed to them. And it will not stop there. Any Jew will see them as an enemy of God and will try to kill them, even thinking that they are pleasing God. Saul of Tarsus is a clear example of this. He later speaks and writes about how diligent he was in persecuting the church (Acts 26:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6).

The Lord tells His disciples what causes the hatred of the Jews against them. It has to do with the Jews' view of God as a God Who is one (Deu 6:4). They held on to this as a tradition that lifted them up above the other nations. As a result, they remained unfamiliar with the Father and the Son. Thus, it was not just a theological matter, but their hatred toward the disciples also stemmed from the fact that their religion gave them a certain status. What God had given them, they had claimed for themselves. The law had made them important (Rom 2:17-20). They believed to possess the truth, but the truth had not taken possession of them.

Through the coming of the Son, the revelation of God in the flesh, their arrogance and pride was manifested and judged. Their depravity and resistance were revealed at the highest level by the Son of God. But under no circumstances do they want to accept His judgment, for they do not want to lose their position. Likewise it is with the enmity of the roman-catholic church. She claims to be the one true church and denies the work of the one Spirit and the one body.

The words of the Lord will be an encouragement once suffering comes over the disciples. He prepares them for that time to come, so that it does not come by surprise. In this way, everything He spoke before will be fulfilled, including His assistance and the promised blessings. He did not have to speak about this when He was still with them, because then He

protected them. It was not necessary for Him to say this earlier, because He looked after them as long as He was with them. He had been their Shield and Helper, their Advocate.

That is how He intervened for them every time the religious leaders wanted to argue with them. In the same way, He will shortly say: "If you seek Me, let these go their way" (Jn 18:8). But when He will be gone, His words will help them. This ends the subject of witnessing.

Jn 16:5-7 | The Advantage of the Lord's Going Away

5 "But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

The Lord resumes speaking about His going to the Father. If their faith had been more simple, they would not only have relied on His loving care for them, but they would also have asked Him where He was going. Then they would have heard about the glory and the blessing that this would mean for them.

But there is still no understanding for Him, as to what it means for Him to go to the Father. The thought that He will leave them does not occur to them. They can only think of a reigning Messiah. Again and again they are surprised when they hear their Divine Teacher speak of Him leaving them. Nor can they deal with the suffering He has announced.

If the bad feeling aroused by His words were to come true, it would make them sad. What are they to think of His going away? Because their faith does not yet see beyond the earthly glory, His going away will leave them without any perspective. What will then be the consequences of His coming for the world or even for Israel? Have they left everything and followed Him for that?

The Lord knows their thoughts and feelings. To Him it is the opportunity to speak about the coming, the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit. He tells them that it is even to their advantage that He is leaving. It may seem strange that the loss of His physical presence will bring them gain.

However, we must remember that He will only leave after an eternal salvation is achieved after which the Spirit will come to earth to bear witness to a glorified Christ. Also, the Spirit will continue to dwell on earth and is, and will continue to be, their Helper, as long as they and all those who will form the church are on earth.

The Holy Spirit could only come to earth after Christ was glorified (Jn 7:39) because He would come as Witness of His glorification. He will testify of what He has seen of the glorified Christ in heaven. That is why the Lord Jesus had to go away first. The Spirit will reveal the meaning of this to the disciples. Christendom is the revelation of the Father, of a glorified Man in heaven and of God the Holy Spirit on earth.

Jn 16:8-11 | The Holy Spirit and the World

8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

The coming of the Holy Spirit has consequences for the world and for the believers. The Lord first speaks about the consequences for the world. Through the coming of the Spirit on earth the world will be convicted concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

By this the Lord does not mean that the Holy Spirit will cause the message of the gospel to be proclaimed to convict sinners. Of course, every sinner only comes to conviction of his sins through the working of the Holy Spirit. However, here it is not about a sinner, but about the world. Nor is it about the world coming to repentance through the work of the Holy Spirit.

What the Lord says is that the presence of the Spirit on earth is the convicting proof of the sin of the world. Regardless of whether the world sees it or not, believes it or not, the mere presence of the Holy Spirit means the rejection of Christ by the world and thereby establishes the sin of the world once and for all.

The Lord explains what He means by this convicting. The conviction of sin by the Spirit goes far beyond the law, the Divine measure of man's duty,

which also convicts of sin. The world does not merely fail in its duty, but rejects grace. The mere presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is proof of the sinfulness of the world.

Why did the Holy Spirit come to earth? Because the Lord Jesus went away out of the world. And why did He go? Because the world rejected Him, because it did not believe in Him. The Holy Spirit is here because Christ is no longer on earth. The rejection of Christ by the world is the absolute proof of its sinfulness. The world as a depraved system is marked for judgment.

The second testimony associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is that of righteousness. We could say that His presence on earth is proof of the *un*righteousness of the world, shown in rejecting Christ. However, there is also, and the Lord speaks of this here, righteousness connected with the presence of the Spirit on earth.

God has acted righteously toward His Son, where the world has only acted unjustly toward Him. God was righteous when He judged Him for our sins. When Christ had accomplished the work, it was equally righteous of God to raise Him from the dead and glorify Him in heaven. On this basis the Holy Spirit was able to come and with His coming proved convincingly the righteousness that the Father did toward the Son.

We no longer see the Lord Jesus, but the Father sees Him and the Holy Spirit bears witness to His righteousness. There is no greater testimony of righteousness than the Son's going away to the Father. The world may deny or reject that testimony, but that cannot change the very testimony provided by the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

The third and final testimony given by the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is that of the judgment of the ruler of the world, the devil. This judgment has actually still to be fulfilled, but it is definitely fixed by the presence of the Spirit here, for His presence means that the judgment rests on the world.

Led by the devil, the world has rejected Christ. It shows once again the utter and incorrigible depravity of the world which has made itself available to the devil to express its hatred toward Christ. The verdict has been passed on the ruler and will be carried out in God's time. At the same

time, the judgment of the world rendered by the Spirit Who came to earth indicates how we, as believers, have to see the world.

Jn 16:12-15 | The Holy Spirit and the Believers

12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear [them] now. 13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose [it] to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose [it] to you.

The Lord knows His disciples and their expectations. In His grace, He takes that into account. Everything He has said is completely opposite to their thoughts as Jews. This not only applies to their thoughts about the Messiah, but also to their expectations of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

They also know about the coming of the Spirit. Joel prophesied that He would come, but then as poured out on all flesh and to bring blessing to God's people (Joel 2:28-29). But what the Lord tells here about the coming of the Spirit, they can only understand when the Spirit has come after He has gone to heaven.

The Lord therefore says that they will not remain in ignorance, but that the Spirit will make all known to them. The Spirit will guide them into all the truth, including all truths that are related to His glorification and about which He cannot yet speak.

That the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own initiative means that He will say nothing apart from the Son. Everything He will hear from and about the Son, He will speak. Just as the Son has come in dependence on the Father to glorify the Father, the Spirit will come in dependence on the Son to glorify the Son.

He will also be the Spirit of disclosure or of prophecy. This is how we see Him especially when we read the book of Revelation. Even if He serves as the Spirit of prophecy, it is with the purpose of drawing our attention to the revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory. His public glory is seen both in the exercise of judgment and in the establishment of the realm of peace

and thereafter the new heaven and the new earth. By speaking about the things to come, the Holy Spirit disconnects the saints from the world under judgment.

It does not say that the Spirit will not speak about Himself, but that He will not speak on His own initiative. The Lord Jesus is the Object of His ministry. The Spirit did speak about Himself. It is therefore important to know Who He is, what He does and how He works. If it becomes clear to us that He does everything to glorify the Lord Jesus, it also becomes clear that praying to or worshiping the Holy Spirit is not His work. We don't read about it anywhere in the Bible either. Whatever He brings forward, it always relates to the Lord Jesus. He also takes it from what is of the Lord Jesus. There is no other source for the Holy Spirit to take from than the Son Himself.

The Son is an inexhaustible source of glory. He is that as the eternal Son, and He is also that as Man on earth. Also as Man on earth, He could say that everything the Father has is His, for everything the Father has, is given to Him by the Father (Jn 3:35; 13:3; cf. Gen 25:5). Here the humble Man speaks as the eternal Son. The Lord Jesus, as Man, received everything from the Father to share it with people. Out of everything the Son possesses – and that is really all things – the Holy Spirit takes to disclose it to us. What a privilege the coming of the Holy Spirit is!

Jn 16:16-22 | A Little While

16 *"A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me."* 17 *[Some] of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"* 18 *So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about."* 19 *Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"* 20 *Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.* 21 *Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that*

a child has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one [will] take your joy away from you.

After the unfolding about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the marvelous consequences for them, the Lord once again speaks about His own situation with respect to them. His rejection and death are near. He tells them that it will only be a little while, that they will not see Him again. Now they still see Him, i.e. they look at Him as spectators of His works and His path. Soon He will no longer be seen by them. However, He immediately lets it follow that this period of not seeing will also be short. After those two brief periods they will see Him again.

What He says raises questions with some of His disciples. As Jews who truly believe in Him as the Messiah, they are convinced that the Messiah will remain. But precisely because their thoughts are still so Jewish, they do not know what He is talking about. What does He mean by not seeing Him for a little while and yet seeing Him again after another little while? They also do not understand what He said in verse 10 about His going to the Father. How will they be able to see Him if He will go to the Father?

We know that when the Lord Jesus speaks about going to the Father, He speaks about His ascension. The consequence will be that they will not see Him for a long time, i.e. until His return. Therefore, what He says here about 'a little while' cannot be related to this. The little while it will take before they will no longer see Him is the time that will elapse between the moment He says this and the tomb. The little while before they will see Him again is the time He is lying in the tomb. After that they will see Him when He has risen.

The disciples do not understand this and therefore the Lord responds to their questions. He puts their problem into words once again to make it clear that He understands what they are struggling with. It is also good for us, if someone asks us something, to repeat the question in order to be sure that we understand the other person well. For us that may be necessary because our repetition may reveal that we have misunderstood the question. Of course, the Lord did not have to repeat the question for that

reason. He repeats the question in order to comfort them and make His answer fit in with it.

The importance of the subject is again apparent from the double “truly” and the authoritative “I say to you” with which the Lord introduces His answer. By “a little while, and you will not see Me”, He means that He will be killed by the world. That will be the end of His presence with them as a living Messiah. That event will cause them to weep and lament.

The world, on the contrary, will rejoice over that event. They think they will have dealt with Him and that will make them happy (cf. Rev 11:7-11). But the world does not have the last word. He will rise and while the disciples are sad, He will come to them and they will rejoice.

The Lord compares their sadness to that of a woman in labor. When the birth pains overtake her, she suffers and is sad. However, this sadness is short-lived. Once the child is there, she has forgotten the distress. The child she holds in her arms is the source of her joy.

The Lord applies what happens at the birth of a child to His death and resurrection. His death and what He said about it caused grief with His disciples. But He will meet them again as the Living One after He has passed through the birth pains of death. Then they will rejoice (Jn 20:20) and nothing and no one will be able to take that joy away, even if they were tortured (Acts 5:40-41). The change from sadness to joy is also the experience of the disciples at Emmaus (Lk 24:17,32) and a little later, of all the disciples when the Lord Jesus goes away from them to heaven. Then they are full of joy (Lk 24:52).

Jn 16:23-24 | Pray in the Name of the Son

23 In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

The Lord connects even more joy to His resurrection and ascension. Once He has gone to heaven, “that day”, or period, begins in which He is with the Father and the Holy Spirit is on earth. In that day or period, the disciples will comprehend the new relationship in which they are placed. They

will enter into the wonderful relationship with the Father that was until then the unique part of the Son. Because of this they will have the opportunity to come to the Father in the Name of the Lord Jesus. When they come to the Father, He sees the Son coming, because the Son is their life.

Until now they went to the Lord with all their questions. They had confidence in Him and they dealt with Him in a confidential way. They asked Him all their questions and He had provided for all their needs. That is now over. But He has revealed the Father and they are now allowed to go to the Father themselves.

When they have received the Spirit, they will receive power to replace Christ on earth and also to pray in His Name. During His stay on earth, He taught His disciples to pray in a way that is consistent with their relationship as pious Jews to God. They were allowed to address God as the Father – in the sense of origin (Deu 32:6) – of His people. In this way they went to God as long as the Lord Jesus was with them.

That will change when He is in heaven and the Holy Spirit is on earth. The Lord teaches His disciples to pray in a new way. Until now, they had prayed nothing in His Name, i.e. in accordance with His place in heaven and their place in the presence of the Father as His children. This can happen after Christ has accomplished the work of salvation and the Spirit has been given, because this brings them into a new relationship.

Until now they could not pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus. It is a specific Christian privilege. The life that the Christian possesses in Christ expresses itself in the same desires that the Lord Jesus has. The Holy Spirit gives strength and insight to such desires. The Father, for His part, wants nothing more than to hear such a prayer in which His Son is recognized. It will give complete joy to the disciple.

Jn 16:25-28 | The Father Himself Loves You

25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from

the Father. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father."

The Lord Jesus has shown the Father in His works which He had received from the Father to do. His works and also all the signs mentioned in the Gospels have shown the grace and power of the Father.

After His resurrection He will no longer speak about the Father in that way, but He will speak freely about Him. Mary is the first to whom He speaks in this way, without figurative language, about the Father (Jn 20:17). He will do this especially when He will be glorified, as we may already hear in His prayer to the Father in the next chapter.

When that day has come – and it has been since the resurrection of Christ – we may ask the Father in His Name. Asking in the Name of the Lord Jesus is not in a formal utterance of words like ‘we ask this of You in Jesus’ Name’ or something like that. Asking in His Name is not a formula, but the realization that we go to the Father in the value of the Son Himself and His acceptance by the Father. The value of Who He is, is attributed in its fullness to those who ask in this way.

Through His work the Son brings us into such an intimate and personal relationship with the Father that we ourselves may go directly to the Father. Through the power of the Spirit we have free and direct access to the Father (Eph 2:18), without intermediary, to speak freely. We say “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-6) to Him. The reason for this confidentiality and intimacy is that the believer is the object of the Father’s love. We may know that He Himself loves us.

As a reason for the Father’s love for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, the Lord mentions that the disciples loved Him and believed in His unity with God and His actions by order of God. However, He not only came forth from *God*, but He also came forth from the *Father* and as such He came into the world. Now He is about to leave the world again and go to the Father.

These few words encompass His whole life in connection with His stay on earth. He speaks about His coming forth from the Father, His coming into the world, His leaving the world and His going to the Father. After all, the purpose of this Gospel is to declare God as Father in the world, to reveal Him. He has come as the eternal Son of the Father and returns to His

Father, now also as Man. What a joy it must be for Him to return to that glory where nothing is contrary to God.

Jn 16:29-33 | Peace in the Son

*29 His disciples *said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? 32 Behold, an hour is coming, and has [already] come, for you to be scattered, each to his own [home], and to leave Me alone; and [yet] I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

The disciples think that they now understand the Lord and they tell Him that. From their explanation it appears that they are still not able to realize the full scope of what He has said. They speak about their faith in Him as the One Who came from God, while the Lord spoke about the Father. It is still faith in Him as God's anointed King. Despite their failure to truly understand that He tells all about His relationship with the Father, they know that He totally knows them.

The Lord says nothing about their failure to understand what He has told them about Himself and the Father. He takes their confession seriously. Then He speaks about the consequences of their confession. Their faith in Him will confront them with the opposition of the world. When they come to capture Him, they will be scattered, they will flee in all directions and they will leave Him all alone. Thinking that everything is over, they will return each to his own home, each to his own activities and daily circumstances (Jn 21:3). The Lord speaks about this without a trace of reproach in their direction. To Him it is sufficient that the Father is with Him.

His disciples may all leave Him, He knows that He is not alone after all, but that the Father is with Him. This marks His peace and at the same time it is the peace He wishes for them. So instead of reproach, He has words of peace in His wonderful grace for His disciples. In spite of their failure that will soon be apparent from their fleeing, He has their peace in mind. That

is why He has spoken to them. They will find that peace in Him if they keep His words in mind.

And as for the world, He gives them good courage. He has conquered the world for them. This means that they don't have to fear the world with all its threats and horrors. By believing in Him, they can be sure that the world has been overcome for them (1Jn 5:4-5).

John 17

Jn 17:1-2 | The Glorification of the Son

1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

This chapter is unparalleled in depth and range of vision. It breathes perfect holiness, devotion and love. We may listen to the Son opening His heart to the Father at the moment He is about to die and leave His own, to go to Heaven.

Because we hear the Son speaking to the Father, we cannot speak of a 'high priestly prayer', because then we would hear Him speaking as Man to God. If we can speak of a prayer, it is in the sense of a confidential asking of the Son to the Father and not begging the Father for anything.

We hear the Son asking the Father to glorify Him, then to care for His disciples when He will no longer be with them, and finally to give the disciples a place with Him in glory. These are questions that are not really a request, but a sharing with the Father of things that live in the heart of the Father in exactly the same way. The Lord knows all that, but He wants us to know that He intercedes for us with the Father. This prayer shows us how He is Helper.

In His prayer, which forms a beautiful unity, we can roughly distinguish two sections:

1. In the first section, verses 1-8, the Lord speaks to the Father in view of His glorification and His connection with His disciples.
2. In the second section, verses 9-26, the disciples are the subject, in which He clearly distinguishes them from the world.

We can also make a somewhat finer division into seven parts:

1. In verses 1-5 the Lord Jesus asks the Father for His glorification as Man on the basis of the work accomplished by Him.

2. In verses 6-8 He speaks to the Father about what the disciples mean to Him.
3. In verses 9-12 He asks His Father to keep His disciples in unity.
4. In verses 13-19 He entrusts His disciples to His Father in order to keep them in the world.
5. In verses 20-21 He extends His prayer and asks the Father for the unity of all the believers on earth.
6. In verses 22-23 it is about a unity that still lies in the future and that will become visible at His revelation.
7. In verses 24-26 it is about being with the Son in the Father's house.

After these introductory words we now want to focus on the prayer. I will express myself as limited as possible because speaking about this prayer makes you feel as if you want to illuminate the sun with a flashlight. When reading this chapter it is especially important that the Holy Spirit can work in each reader the feelings appropriate to this chapter. I hope that this is the case with me and that I can pass something of it in this explanation. I myself have also been helped by what others have discovered of beauty in this prayer.

When the Lord addresses Himself to the Father in His prayer, He does so while lifting up His eyes to heaven. Similarly, He raised His eyes at the tomb of Lazarus (Jn 11:41). There He asked the Father for the resurrection of Lazarus. Here He does not ask for the resurrection, here He asks for the glorification of Himself. Yet the question of His glorification is not about Himself. He immediately adds that with His question He is aiming at the glorification of the Father.

With this question the Lord places Himself behind the work as accomplished by Him. That is why He says that "the hour has come". By this He means the hour that He will go back to the Father. When He asks for His glorification by the Father, it means that He asks this question as a result of the work He has accomplished. And when He asks for His own glorification with a view to the glorification of the Father, it means that He continues to glorify the Father after He is glorified in heaven. He has

glorified the Father both on earth and on the cross and He does the same in heaven.

He does this glorification of the Father in connection with the power over all flesh that He has received from the Father based on His work. He always remains faithful to the place He has taken and does not exercise power according to His own right. He will exercise the power over all flesh when He returns to judge Israel and the world. In the present time He uses this power to give eternal life to all He has received from the Father. Now that the Son is in heaven, He glorifies His Father by giving eternal life to those He receives from the Father. He still glorifies the Father every day in every sinner who comes to faith.

Jn 17:3 | This Is Eternal Life

3 *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

The eternal life that every sinner who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus receives is a new life within him. It is a new birth, a new nature. It is life within the believer, life given to him (Jn 10:28; 1Jn 5:11), it is life that he *has* (Jn 3:16; 5:24; 6:47,54; 1Jn 5:13). He has that life because the Son is his life (1Jn 5:11; Col 3:3-4). But here the Lord Jesus speaks about eternal life in a different sense. He is *not* talking about eternal life within the believer, but about eternal life as the sphere of life into which the believer *enters*. We hear the Son talking about eternal life as an environment, a sphere of life, a life in which is lived.

So there is a difference between the life that is within someone and the life in which someone lives. On the one hand we talk about plant life, animal life, human life. By this we mean that something or someone lives as a plant or an animal or a human being. But we also speak, for example, of city life, outdoor life, a difficult life. By this we mean the state of life, a way of life, an environment in which people live. It is the same with eternal life. It is both a principle of life within us, a life *through which* we live, and a way of life in which we have entered, a life *in which* we live. This second is what the Lord Jesus indicates when He says here: "This is eternal life."

Eternal life is knowing Him Who is addressed by the Son as Father (verse 1) and knowing the Son as sent by the Father. He is the only true God. In that way He was also known in the Old Testament. What is new now – and that is also eternal life – is to know that one true God personally as Father through a living connection with Him and to know Jesus Christ as sent by Him, through which the Father can be known.

The Son speaks of Himself as “Jesus Christ”. “Jesus” is the name of His humiliation. “Christ” is His name as the Chosen One by God and of His glorification. This goes far beyond knowing Him as the Messiah. It is to know Him as the Father knows Him through a personal relationship with Him. Knowing eternal life is about a living relationship with Divine Persons. This knowledge brings us into the atmosphere of eternal life, the atmosphere in which eternal life is enjoyed.

In short, perhaps we can say that eternal life is this: fellowship with the Father and the Son, i.e. enjoying the same part as the Father and the Son, together with Them.

Jn 17:4-5 | The Request to Be Glorified

4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

The Lord Jesus glorified the Father on earth, this little planet in the immeasurable universe, where He was and still is dishonored by the sin of man and his generation. The Son can say this from the absolute knowledge that He has done the will of the Father in everything and thus glorified Him. An ordinary person could never say that because what man does is never perfect. The Son can say this even in advance, for He is the eternal Son, even though He has accomplished the work as Man. The work of which He speaks here is the entire work of the Father’s revelation.

Before we could enter into a life connection with the Father, the Father first had to be revealed. The climax of that revelation is the cross. Here it is not the cross as the solution to the need of our sins, but as the complete revelation of the Father’s heart for His own. Based on that glorious work, the Son, as the resurrected Man, asks for the glory that He, as God, possesses

eternally. He asks for a glory He never lost. He has become Man, but has not ceased to be God and thus His glory has not vanished.

His question is to receive that glory in a new way, that is as Man. As Man He never possessed that glory because He was not always Man. He became Man and will remain this forever. Now He asks for the same glory as Man that He as Son possesses eternally. That is because He wants to share that glory with us, men. If He had not become Man, He would never have been able to share His glory with us, because we cannot become God.

Jn 17:6-8 | Given by the Father to the Son

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received [them] and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

The Lord Jesus now explains how mortal people could be brought into such close relationship with the Father. First He mentions the manifestation of the Name of the Father. This manifestation can only be given to people who no longer belong to the world. Therefore they have been taken out of the world by the Father and thus given to the Son. Those who now belong to the Son are thereby clearly distinguished from the world.

The world has become completely revealed in its hatred of the Father and His Son. On the other hand, the greatest possible contrast is the manifestation of the Name of the Father to those who are the object of the Father's love. To them the Son has manifested the Name of the Father in order to make them know the Father.

This manifestation of the Name of the Father was done through His life, His words and His works. The people the Father gave to the Son belonged to the Father. This indicates the Father's eternal purpose and election to give them to the Son. This is completely separate from any connection with Israel and with Him as *Yahweh*. They have been given to Him by the Father.

That they belonged to the Father and now belong to the Son is evident from their keeping of the word of the Father. The word of the Father is

everything the Father has spoken about the Son. The Lord Jesus sees His own as a precious treasure that the Father has given Him. He ignores all the incomprehension that they had and revealed. They have kept the word of the Father – and in fact, that is the Son Himself.

However, they have not only kept the word of the Father about the Son. They have also acknowledged that the Father is the source of all that has been given to the Son. The fact that the Father has given everything to the Son does not mean that the Father has lost it. The Lord Jesus does not say ‘was Yours’, but “is Yours”. The Son has received what is and remains of the Father.

He speaks to His Father as a recommendation that His own not only kept the word of the Father concerning the Son, but that they also received and accepted the words of the Father through the Son. The words of the Son were no other words than those of the Father. By accepting the words of the Son, they have truly acknowledged that the Son came forth from the Father and they have believed that the Father sent Him.

However little they have understood of all that He has said about this, He sees their heart in it. They have received His words and with them everything that was expressed in those words, however much that exceeded their thoughts. By receiving His words, which are the words of the Father, they have accepted the whole relationship in which the Son stands to the Father.

That He came forth from the Father means that He, as the eternal Son, revealed the Father. The fact that the Father has sent Him means that as a dependent Man He has done everything the Father commanded Him to do.

Jn 17:9-12 | The Request to Be Kept and Unity

9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and [yet] they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, [the name] which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We [are]. 12 While I was with them, I was

keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

The disciples – and we – hear the Lord Jesus once again saying that He is asking on their behalf. He no longer has any connection with the world or with Israel. The distinction is no longer between Jews and Gentiles, but between His disciples and the world.

He does not ask on behalf of the world. For the world He has no more prayer; the world is under judgment. The time when He will ask for the world to claim it as His rightful possession, as His inheritance, will come when the Father tells Him to do so (Psa 2:8). He is, so to speak, concerned here with the heirs and not with the inheritance.

Until the time comes when He will ask for the inheritance, He asks the Father for those whom He still brings before the Father as “Yours”. As stated above, the Father has not lost what He has given to the Son. It remains His. At the same time, they are also the Son’s. For everything that is of the Son, applies that it is of the Father. The reverse is also true, that everything that is of the Father is His. The first could be said by a man to God, the second cannot. Only the Son can say that all that is the Father’s is also His, for He is one with the Father. The disciples belong to both the Father and the Son. At the same time, whatever the Father gives to the Son is for the glorification of the Son.

Without any restraint or limitation He speaks of it to the Father that He is glorified in His own. We see here again that the Son sees His own in their perfect relation to Him and not in their weak practice. He is glorified in them because they believe in Him and acknowledge Him in Who He is, even though they have so often shown that they did not understand the depth of it.

When the Lord Jesus says that He is no longer in the world, it means that He already places Himself behind the cross as already being glorified. He also knows perfectly well that His own are still in the world and that that world is very hostile to them. Therefore He comes to the Father for them in their defenselessness with the request to keep them in His Name, the Father’s Name.

He addresses the Father as "Holy Father." This emphasizes the complete separation between the Father and the world. The Father stands completely apart from the world; He has no connection with it at all. Nothing of it clings to Him or is able to have any influence on Him at all. On this basis, a few verses later, the Lord Jesus will also ask for them to be sanctified. Here He asks for them as those whom the Father Himself has given to Him. He reminds the Father, as it were, of that great gift as a special motive to keep them, that is, to safeguard them from the influences of the world.

He asks that they be kept and not whether the Father will intervene in power for their benefit by exterminating their enemies. That time is yet to come and will come for His own from Israel. Their keeping does not only relate to the aspect of safety in the face of an evil world. In asking for their keeping, He also has their unity among themselves in mind.

This unity is realized through the gift of the Holy Spirit as the fruit of His redemptive work. This being one concerns the twelve apostles in their testimony concerning the Son. It is important that in spite of their differences, they will give a unified testimony concerning the Son. No difference of opinion should spoil that testimony. That unity in their testimony has been maintained is evident when we read about their service in the book of Acts and the letters we have from them in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus asks for His Father's safekeeping because He Himself will no longer be with them and cannot safekeep them in that way in the Name of the Father. In the three and a half years during which His own walked with Him, He cared for them in unfailing faithfulness. In that care He was always focused on the Name of the Father. He has that in mind also when He will no longer be with them.

His safekeeping did not include Judas because he had closed his heart to the work of God's Spirit. He was not a child of God, but "the son of perdition". He loved money and therefore made himself available to satan. That things turned out this way with Judas was not due to the Lord's failing care. He did not slip out of His hand. The doom of such a course of action is foretold by Scripture. It is not the name of Judas that is foretold, but the result of one who would act in such a way.

Jn 17:13-16 | The Disciples in the World

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil [one]. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

The Son is now going to speak to the Father in particular about the disciples in their relation to the world. He comes to the Father and turns to Him to speak to Him about His own, to entrust the continued care of the disciples to Him. He does this in the world in which He too still finds Himself, so that they can hear it. They are also in the world and will remain there when He has gone away from them to the Father. They are no longer of the world, they no longer belong to the world, but they still have to go through it.

Now they hear the Son speaking about them with full knowledge of the situation in which they find themselves. How it must have delighted their hearts to hear Him speak of them in this way to the Father. This awareness of the Father's attention and love going out to Him always filled the Lord Jesus Himself with joy in His life on earth. He always finds His joy in fellowship with His Father.

Through His prayer the disciples may know that they too may always have fellowship with the Father, that the Father always pays perfect attention to them and desires fellowship with them. The Son has been here in the Name of the Father and has found His joy in serving the interests of the Father. Thus, from now on they will be here in His Name and have the same joy in them as those who serve the Father by presenting the Son.

To enable them to do so, the Son has given them the word of the Father. Again, the word here is the full revelation of the Father that He has brought. The Lord does not say 'words', *remata*, which means 'utterances', but 'word', *logos*, which means the expression of His thoughts. Furthermore, He asks the Father to keep them because of taking His place in the presence of the world. He connects Himself with them in the presence of the Father which is a great blessing. He connects Himself with them no

less in their presence in the world, and that too is a great blessing. In both cases it is His place. Where He is, there are His own, and where His own are, there He is.

The Lord Jesus says that they are not of the world. By this He does not mean that they should not be part of it. What He means is that fundamentally they do not belong to the world because they are joined to Him. That must have the effect of making them behave that way. It is terrible if they, and also we, would even give the impression of being of the world after all. That would be a denial of the true relationship to the Father.

The Lord does not ask the Father to take them out of the world. The taking out of the world of His own happens when the believers are caught up (1Thes 4:16-17). Until that time they must remain in the world where darkness, hatred and death reign. With that in mind, He asks for their keeping.

There is no question that they should keep themselves by leaving the world, for example by retreating behind the thick walls of a monastery. Monasticism and monastery life is contrary to what the Lord Jesus is saying here. The separation from the world sought by God is not realized by isolating oneself. Evil is within us. The Son asks the Father that the evil one who is behind the evil system of the world will not get hold of them (cf. Mt 6:13).

He emphatically repeats their identification with Him in their separation from the world (verse 14). This repetition is necessary because we easily forget this separation. Only if our focus remains on Christ we will continue to see our being separated from the world. Christ Himself is the absolute example of separation from the world. He did come into the world, but never for a moment He was part of it. His place and attitude toward the world are determining for those of the disciples and also for ours.

Jn 17:17-19 | Sanctification

17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Then the Son asks the Father to sanctify them. Through sanctification we are brought into conformity with the Holy Father. Sanctification is being

set apart for Him. They have been brought into contact with the truth of the word of the Father that has come to them in the Son. They have acknowledged and accepted that word. As a result, they have entered into another world, the world of the Father and the Son. The Son has given the word of the Father that introduces us into His love, into His thoughts, into His counsels, into His glory. By being in it, we are truly set apart (sanctified). That is what the truth produces.

Again, this is far beyond the law, which also sets apart, but nationally and only for Israel from the nations around them. That we are set apart from the world does not mean that we have nothing to do with the world anymore. We are not in the world because we happen to be there, but we are in the world for a purpose. We are sent into the world as the Son was sent into the world by the Father. That means we have a word for that world, as He had. Sanctification does not lead to isolation, but to usefulness in bringing the truth to a world that lives in the lie.

Our sanctification occurs not only through the Father's word, but also through the Son's sanctification for us. This sanctification consists in His literally leaving the world to take up a sanctified place with the Father. He is there for us. He is there our model of sanctification. His place with the Father is our place. There is sanctifying power in the truth (verse 17) and there is sanctifying power in seeing Christ in glory (verse 19).

So there are two wonderful truths that sanctify the believer in the present tense. The first truth is the revelation of the Father in His word that has come to us through and in the Son. The second truth is the knowledge of the glory of the Son as the risen and glorified Man in heaven. When these two truths are before our attention through the Holy Spirit, we will live a sanctified life.

Jn 17:20-21 | Unity of All Believers

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, [are] in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Here all believers are given a place in the Son's prayer. He is speaking to the Father about those who believe in Him through "their word", that is, the word of the apostles. We have never literally heard the apostles preach, but we believe in the Lord Jesus through what they have left us in God's Word. What the Lord Jesus asks for us is that we will be one in the same way that the Father and the Son are one. That involves a unity of life, the possession of the Divine nature. Thus, it is absolutely not a unity with a characteristic that the members are imprisoned in the same system. It is not even directly about the unity of the body of Christ, although that unity is also based on a unity of life.

The unity of which Christ speaks here is a unity brought about by each child of God having the Son as his life. It is the unity of the family of God. We are not called to establish that unity, but to understand that all who have received the Son are one. The dividing line that runs through the world is between those who do have that life from the Son and those who do not. It is not a dividing line between denominations, but exclusively between believers and unbelievers.

The prayer of the Lord Jesus for that unity has been answered. When believers who have never seen each other before meet and detect the same life in each other, there is an immediate feeling and experience of unity. Of course, on the basis of this unity, believers are also meant to act in unity in practical terms. As far as this unity is concerned, unfortunately little is shown by the Christians. It is a unity of which the fellowship is experienced as the Father and the Son have fellowship and experience it with each other.

The unity is *as* that of the Father and the Son, but also a unity *in* the Father and the Son. It is according to the example of the unity of the Father and the Son and it is in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Our unity is founded in the unity of the Father and the Son. It is the same fellowship of life. If the Divine nature would characterize all believers of whatever nationality or background, the world could believe that He is the Sent One of the Father. If all believers propagated that unity, it would bring people in the world to faith. It is a testimony to the whole world.

Jn 17:22-23 | Unity in Glory

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Now the Son is going to speak about the period after the disciples' stay in the world. He is thinking of the time when they will be with Him. Then they will have the glory that He has received. In His prayer He says that He has already given to them the glory that He has received from the Father. That is the glory that He received from the Father as Man as a reward for His work. In His great mercy, He shares that glory with those whom the Father has given Him (verse 6) and to whom He has also already given eternal life (verse 2). Precisely because He as Man has received that glory from the Father, He can share it with men.

As a result, all who share this glory are one in the same way He and the Father are one. It also involves a glory that comes from the Father, which He has given to the Son, and which the Son then grants to the believers. As a result, the Lord Jesus can say that it is a unity whereby He is also in them and whereby the Father is in Him. "I in them and You in Me" means that the Son reveals Himself in the believers when He returns, a revelation in which the Father will also be revealed in Him. When that situation has come, believers have become perfectly one. This is a third unity, after the unity of the apostles in verse 11 and that of all believers now on earth in verse 21.

In this futural, perfect unity, no failure is possible. When Christ returns with His own in glory, they will have the same glory as He (Phil 3:20-21) and the unity will be seen by the world. The world will see the Father in the Son and they will see the Son in the saints. Then the world will know that the Father sent the Son and that the Father loved the believers as He loved the Son, for this cannot be denied when the world will see Christ and His own in glory (2Thes 1:10).

The world will also know that the Father has loved us, for the fact that the believers will possess the same glory as Christ, will be proof of it. What the world will then acknowledge is true now. What the world will then

see points back to what He and also they were on earth as objects of the Father's love.

Jn 17:24 | The Will of the Lord Jesus for His Own

24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

In the concluding words of His prayer, the Son, while we hear this, emphatically addresses the Father once more with "Father". What He says to the Father is not a plea, it is not even a question, but the expression of His desire or will. Here He lets His Divine will be heard, "I will", just as He once said to a leper, "I am willing, be cleansed!" (Mt 8:3). He does this not because His will would not be the same as the Father's, but to make it clear to us that His will is perfectly that of the Father.

What He announces here as His desire or will is that He wants us to be with Him in the place where He is, in the Father's house (Jn 14:3). He wants us to be there to display His glory to us. This is not His glory as the eternal Son, for that only the Father knows perfectly and cannot be seen by us (Mt 11:27). For us, who are and remain creatures, there remains a glory in the Lord Jesus that can absolutely only be known by the two other Divine Persons.

Nor is it the glory that will be seen at His revelation to the world, for we will share that glory with Him. Here it is the glory that the Father has given Him by virtue of His glorification by Him on earth. He receives that glory by virtue of His personal relationship of love that the Father had for Him from eternity as the eternal Son. We may see how He as Man enjoys that eternally.

We will not be sharing that glory, but we will see it in the Father's House. It is the glory of verse 5, the given glory, but in an aspect of glory that is His alone. We will also grant Him that wholeheartedly and admire Him in it. There are aspects in His glory that at all times exceed the glory we may share with Him. As the Most Glorious of all He will always be far above us.

Jn 17:25-26 | The Continuing Work of the Lord Jesus

25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

In verse 11 the Lord Jesus addressed the "holy Father", for His holiness must determine the disciples' separation from the world. Here He contemplates the world in its sin and blindness and speaks to the "righteous Father". Nor does He speak of the world as the system that hated Him, but as the system that did not know the Father when the Father came to the world in the Son. In contrast, the Son states that He did know Him and that His disciples have known that the Father sent Him. He knows the Father and His own know the Father through Him. They also belong to Him now.

He has expressed the Name of the Father in His whole Being, as only He could. He has done that on earth. He will do the same from heaven, and that is, that He may give the disciples and also us the consciousness of the same love of the Father that He had when He was on earth.

To remove any hesitation from the disciples, He adds that He Himself will be in them as their life. Not only is the Father's love for the Son in them, but the Son Himself is in them. As a result, they are able to live His life. That life means everything to the Father. The Father will then also love them as He loved the Son when He was on earth. In a sense Christ will then be all in all in those who have Him as their life (cf. 1Cor 15:28).

John 18

Introduction

With this chapter, the history of suffering begins. Each Gospel speaks about the history of suffering in its own special way, but nowhere in the midst of suffering do we see the greatness of the Lord Jesus so much as in this Gospel. In the midst of all kinds of suffering, whereby nothing is spared Him, the Son of the Father shines in an unsurpassable way.

After His conversations with His disciples (John 13-16) and His prayer to the Father for them (John 17), He goes forth. We see in the simple words “He went forth”, how exalted He is. We see these words several times (Jn 18:1,4; 19:5,17). He goes forth to surrender Himself into the hands of sinners. No one forces Him, but He goes willingly. No one takes Him captive, but He allows them to capture Him. He takes the initiative, as everywhere before in this Gospel, but very particularly in the next few hours.

Jn 18:1-3 | Judas Comes to Capture the Lord

*1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, 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. 3 Judas then, having received the [Roman] cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, *came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

The Lord crosses the ravine of the Kidron with His disciples. No doubt He will have thought of David who also once crossed that brook. David then, also as a suffering king, was fleeing from his son (2Sam 15:23). The Lord Jesus is not fleeing. He is going the way of the Father.

He comes into a garden, which we know from the other Gospels is the garden of Gethsemane. However, we hear nothing here about His struggling in prayer and sweating great drops of blood. He is here the Son Who, in perfect surrender until the end of His life on earth, performs the work of glorifying the Father.

Against this perfect dedication, John places a man who also performs a work in perfect dedication, but the work of the devil. Judas uses his knowledge of the place where he knows that the Lord often meets there with His disciples. He has always been there too. He also comes there, this time not to listen to Him, but with the devil's plan to capture Him.

Judas takes a large number of people with him because he and his supporters fear the power of Christ. Satan does not want to have his instruments do half a job. They want to make things as certain as possible. The cohort and the officers come with lanterns and torches to seek Him Who is the light of the world. They also have weapons with them, as if He were a great criminal, although He has never struck a blow at anyone. Judas does not know the Son any more than those whom he leads. That is how blind man is!

Jn 18:4-9 | The Lord Asks Whom They Do Seek

*4 So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and *said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 5 They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He *said to them, "I am [He]." And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. 6 So when He said to them, "I am [He]," they drew back and fell to the ground. 7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am [He]; so if you seek Me, let these go their way," 9 to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."*

With the perfect knowledge He has, the Son knows what will happen. He is the Almighty and the Omniscient. All light falls on His Divine glory. It is not Judas who comes to Him to give Him the betrayer's kiss, but He Himself goes forth again to meet His enemies. There is only One here Who plays the leading role; all the others are mere extras. Before they can say a word, He asks Whom they do seek. He knows what they are up to and Whom they do seek, but He asks it to discover them to themselves and also to protect His disciples.

His question is one with authority to which they are obligated to answer. They may not immediately recognize Him in the dark of night. The Lord Jesus is not a particularly conspicuous Man. He is not surrounded by a

halo that gives Him a special radiance that is seen by all. To His question, they answer that they seek “Jesus the Nazarene”, the humble Man from the despised Nazareth (Mt 2:23). His answer, however, is full of Divine glory. It consists in pronouncing His Name, “I am” (verse 5; Exo 3:13-14). He makes Himself known as *Yahweh*.

To paint the contrast, the evangelist John informs us that Judas, of whom he mentions again “who was betraying Him”, is among Christ’s enemies. Only a few hours ago, John was together with Judas present at the Paschal meal. Now Judas finds himself among the enemies of the Lord. The whole company, led by Judas, stands in the presence of Almighty God, the “I Am”, without being consumed by Him.

Something else happens, though. The word that makes clear to them Who it is Whom they do seek takes away all their power to grasp Him. They draw back as if held back by a mighty hand. They also fall to the ground. It does not say whether they fall backward or forward. I suppose they, including Judas, fell forward as a forced acknowledgment of His majesty after speaking His Name (cf. Phil 2:10). Just as easily He could have consumed them, but the hour of His surrender has come.

It is as if He is giving them another chance to come to their senses by asking them one more time Whom they do seek. Despite the revelation of His Name and the power expressed in it, forcing them to fall down before Him, they stick to their plan. Their answer again is that they do seek “Jesus the Nazarene”. To this He replies that if they then seek Him, they must let His disciples go their way. He must, like the ark at the Jordan, enter the waters of death alone, that the people may go their way. Here the Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

His request for a free retreat for His disciples is at the same time an unobjectionable command which is obeyed. This fulfills the word He said in His prayer to the Father (Jn 17:12). Already earlier He has also said with regard to His sheep that no one can snatch them out of His hand (Jn 10:28).

Jn 18:10-11 | Sword and Cup

10 Then Simon Peter, since he had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. 11 So Jesus

said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, am I not to drink it?"

Not only the multitude and Judas are revealed in the presence of the "I am" in their utter nothingness. The best of His disciples is also revealed in His presence. Just as weapons do not make any impression to take Him captive, Peter's sword does not make the slightest impression to defend Him. A sword used unasked for in His service only inflicts damage.

Peter's overzealous and therefore wrong action gives the Lord an opportunity to show that He is in complete agreement with the Father's thoughts. He accepts the cup of suffering from His Father's hand, although the religious leaders as His determined opponents lay their hands on Him.

The other Gospels describe a cup of which, in the midst of the fiercest soul struggles, He asks the Father to let it pass from Him. Here He has that struggle behind Him and only sees the way of the Father before Him. What else could He do but accept the cup from the Father's hand? Because He drank this cup, we can take the cup of salvation or redemption (Psa 116:13) as a cup of blessing or praise (1Cor 10:16).

Jn 18:12-14 | To Annas

12 So the [Roman] cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, 13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 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.

In what follows we see both the humility and dignity of the Son and His infinite exaltation over all who surround Him, whether His friends or His enemies. We see His utter submission and His undiminished power. He, in that infinite exaltation, allows evil men to arrest and bind Him. It is a scene of the greatest possible contradictions, as we shall see many more of them.

We see man, led by satan, arresting and binding the Son of God as if He were a criminal. They arrest Him Who only did good to them and made His Father known to them, so that they might also come to know Him as He knows Him. They bind Him Who by the simple utterance of His Name has caused all to fall to the ground, the Almighty.

It appears as if man can do as he pleases, but faith sees here that the Son submits Himself to man in order to fulfill the Father's counsels. Therefore, He lets them take Him wherever they want to go. They first take Him to the religious leaders with Annas at the head of them.

Actually, Caiaphas is high priest, but it seems that Annas is in overall charge. For quite some time the high priesthood has been in great decline and utterly deviated from God's original purpose (Lk 3:2a). Thus there are more high priests who are in charge together or alternately (Acts 4:6). This goes against what God has said, that a high priest should hold that office throughout his life and only be succeeded by his son at his death (Num 20:28).

How serious is the deviation from God's original thoughts and how great is the confusion in religious terms as a result. Human arbitrariness and political considerations came to determine the appointment of the high priest. Both Annas and Caiaphas were appointed by the representatives of the Roman rulers. When a man begins to deviate from God's Word, the result is that he takes the Son of the Father to court and declares Him guilty of crimes He never committed. This does not mean that it is out of God's control. On the contrary, it is proceeding as God has purposed.

John reminds us that God is in control by pointing again to the prophecy that Caiaphas uttered (Jn 11:50). God is directing events, allowing even a wicked high priest to say things that prove this. The man of prophecy also becomes the man who carries out his prophecy, so that what they plot in their wickedness results in praising God (Psa 76:10).

Jn 18:15-18 | First Denial by Peter

*15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, and [so was] another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, 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 door-keeper, and brought Peter in. 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." 18 Now the slaves and the officers were standing [there], having made a*

charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

While the faithful Witness is carried away and mistreated because of His faithfulness to the Father, our attention is also frequently drawn to the disciple Peter. We see alternately the faithful Lord and the unfaithful Peter. Both scenes are intertwined. The Son's perfection shines brighter and brighter, while Peter's unfaithfulness leads him further and further in the wrong direction.

Peter at first fled, but is returned to be with his Lord. For doing so, he goes a way that he cannot go. He follows the Lord on a way the Lord has to go alone. In his love for Him, he wants to stay with Him, but does so in his own strength. He also uses the familiarity of "another disciple" with the high priest to enter his court. So, the other disciple has also returned from his fleeing to be with the Lord Jesus.

No value judgment is made here about what the other disciple does, neither in an approving nor a disapproving sense, but about Peter's behavior and words it is made. What may be permissible for the other disciple, is in any case not true for Peter. The other disciple has no problem in this history; no questions are asked of him.

It says so tellingly that the other disciple "entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest". He too would like to be where his Lord is. Yet it seems that he too has not entered as a disciple of the Lord, but because the door-keeper knows him. And through his intercession, Peter too is allowed to enter. The slave-girl knows the other disciple, but not Peter.

That she has not been unfamiliar with the discipleship of the other disciple is evident from her question to Peter whether he is not "also" one of the disciples of "this Man". Peter immediately denies this with the powerful statement "I am not". What a huge contrast this denial is to what the Lord said in truth. The Lord has truthfully said "I am"; Peter speaks falsehood when he says "I am not".

The enemies of Christ are cold and so they have made a fire. There they stand warming themselves. Peter is also cold and joins them. He must have been doubly cold: cold because of the temperature outside, but also cold because of the temperature inside him. His first denial has not yet awak-

ened him. He remains in the environment where the enmity against the Lord is tangible, which will inevitably lead to his next fall.

Jn 18:19-24 | The Lord Jesus Before Caiaphas

19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, 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 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.

While Peter has denied the Lord and is standing with His enemies warming himself, the Lord Jesus is questioned by Caiaphas about His disciples, and about His teaching. First, He is asked about His disciples and then about His teaching. What someone teaches is reflected in his disciples. What should He have answered when asked about His disciples, one of whom betrayed Him, another of whom was in the process of denying Him, while all the others fled from Him?

The Lord does not answer the question about His disciples. The reason is not that He would be ashamed of them. He brought them to His Father in the previous chapter as those who believed Him and kept the Father's word. He does not answer that question because, as we have seen at the time of the capture, He said to the crowd: "Let these go their way."

He does answer the question about His teaching. His answer is exalted and clearly addressed to the conscience in order to convince the high priest of the sin he is in the process of committing. He places him in the full light by His answer. His answer, therefore, is not a defense. He has no reason to defend Himself, because everything He has said and done is completely public and transparent. He is a Man Who really has nothing to hide.

His answer is a counter-question. This question proves the inadequacy of the high priest's question. In doing so, He expresses His disapproval of the authority and validity of the inquiry. He does this not in a formal way,

but peacefully and in an exalted manner. If the high priest wants to know anything about His disciples and His teaching, he should just go and ask the people who heard Him speak. They know what He said.

The meek and just answer leads an overzealous servant of the high priest to slap Him in the face. There is no one to stop or punish this servant. Wickedness and mercilessness are the motives behind this trial. What a process! Nor does the Lord stop the hand of the servant. What a Lord!

The servant believes he must strike Him because of His answer to the high priest. He is part of an ungodly system that lacks any sense of what is right before God. He feels that the Prisoner is answering the highest authority in the religious field brutally and that a slap in His face will call Him to order, their order.

The Lord Jesus does not need to apologize. He knows that He has done nothing wrong. Later, when His great servant Paul finds himself in a similar situation, he does have to apologize (Acts 23:5). The Son is perfect in all circumstances. He is unjustly struck. Yet He does not threaten, but rebukes with impressive dignity and perfect calm as He endures the insult. He does not acknowledge the high priest in any respect, though at the same time He does not oppose him. He leaves him to his own depraved incompetence and incapacity.

The Son here is perfect in dignity and exaltation. What a huge contrast to the failing Peter. He then asks to testify to the wrong He has spoken. From His entire life, can they cite even one example of a wrong statement? On the contrary, it was testified of Him by the officers who had to take Him captive that never a man has spoken the way He speaks (Jn 7:46). Not only is there a witness missing to testify to the wrong, but there are witnesses enough to testify to the good that He has spoken. And then, if He has spoken rightly, the question of why the slave strikes Him is also legitimate. It is a probing question to which there is no answer.

Since the Lord Jesus is brought to Annas (verse 13), but the questioning takes place by Caiaphas, John mentions that the Lord has now been transferred from Annas to Caiaphas. He does so only after the interrogation by Caiaphas in order to determine to his readers that Annas is the actual leader of this whole action.

Jn 18:25-27 | Peter's Second and Third Denial

*25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also [one] of His disciples, are you?" He denied [it], and said, "I am not." 26 One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, *said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" 27 Peter then denied [it] again, and immediately a rooster crowed.*

Again, our attention is shifted for a moment from the Lord to Peter. While the Lord Jesus is questioned and struck and testifies to the truth, Peter is still warming himself in the circle of mockers. He too is questioned, for the second time. Like the first time, he is asked if he is not also one of the Lord's disciples. Again he denies it, saying "I am not".

Then a third time Peter is asked about his connection with the Lord. Now it is someone who believes that he saw Peter in the garden where they captured the Lord. Peter then emphatically drew attention to himself by using the sword. The man who thinks he recognizes him is a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off. He will not have harbored warm feelings for him. His question will have sounded threatening. If this is indeed the man who has so mistreated his family, now is the time for retribution. Peter again denies that he belongs to the Lord. It is impossible for the man to have seen him in His company when He was taken captive.

At that moment, the rooster crows. We know from the other Gospels that at that moment Peter's conscience fully awakens. John does not speak of this. At the end of his Gospel he will write about Peter's restoration, a restoration that takes place at another charcoal fire.

Jn 18:28-32 | Pilate and the Jews

*28 Then they *led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. 29 Therefore Pilate went out to them and *said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" 30 They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." 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," 32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

The Lord has been condemned by religious authority; now He is brought to civil authority. Everywhere He is an object of mockery. Thus they make the measure of their sins full, and all the more so as the longsuffering of God continues. After being busy with Him the whole night, early in the morning they bring Him to the Praetorium, Pilate's official residence.

Again we see the great hypocrisy of the Jews, this time in their refusal to enter the Praetorium. They feel it as defilement to enter this building of a heathen, while at the same time they are intent on murder and seek false witnesses against the Son of God. To commit such deeds the religious flesh is capable! They are full of zeal for the purity that belongs to their ceremonies, but indifferent as to justice. They do not have the faintest notion that they are putting the true Passover to death. Nor do they realize that they are thus fulfilling in guilty unbelief the voice of the law to their own destruction, whatever the plans of God may be concerning the death of Christ.

When they have brought Him to the Praetorium, Pilate comes out to them. He has to, because they, in order not to defile themselves, do not want to go in. To know why they are bringing the Prisoner, he asks about the accusation. In any case, in order to convict someone, an accusation is needed. The Jews do not answer Pilate's question, but attack his question itself. In hypocritical indignation they argue that surely they are not so unjust as to bring someone who would not be an evildoer. Surely Pilate should know better.

In the altercation that follows between Pilate and the Jews, each wants to impose on the other the responsibility of putting the Lord Jesus to death. Pilate gives them permission to judge Christ according to their law, but the Jews have no desire to do so. It's not that they don't want to or don't dare, but they want an official verdict so that later its legal validity cannot be questioned. Therefore, they shift the responsibility back to Pilate by pointing out to him that Roman law does not allow them to carry out a death sentence themselves. It proves their cunning. As soon as it suits them, they appeal to the authority they hate.

However, neither Pilate nor the Jews determine the manner in which the Lord Jesus will die. He will not receive the Jewish death penalty, which is carried out by stoning. He will have to die on the cross, the death penalty applied by the Romans. He Himself foretold this (Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33). As a result, Jew and Gentile will be guilty of His death (Acts 4:27-28).

Jn 18:33-36 | The Good Confession

33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 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."

John omits many details from Pilate's interrogation that we find in the other Gospels. He mentions only those words and events that show certain aspects of the glory of the Son. Pilate interrogates Him again and asks about His kingship over the Jews. This questioning takes place in the Praetorium, that is, without the Jews being present. For Pilate as Roman governor the important question is whether he indeed has to do with Someone Who presents Himself as the King of the Jews.

Here the representative of world power stands opposite Him Who governs the universe and Who, as God's King, rules over everything and will rule publicly. God's King will put an end to all worldly power by crushing as a stone those world powers (Dan 2:34). The Lord Jesus responds to Pilate's question with the same calmness and submission as He did when questioned by the high priest. Again, He reverses the situation and from Questioned becomes the Questioner. He questions Pilate in a way that confronts Pilate with the truth.

Pilate thinks he is dealing with 'a case', but is suddenly confronted with the truth by the Lord's questions. The question forces him to think about his attitude toward Him. Pilate avoids the question. He does not want to answer it and evades it by saying that the question does not concern him

because he is not a Jew. In his voice a certain contempt for the Jews can also be heard. Although he himself has asked about the kingship of the Lord Jesus, by the Lord's asking him personally, he suddenly makes his question about kingship a typically Jewish matter. In addition to saying that he is not a Jew, he points out to the Lord Jesus that He has been delivered to him by His own people and their religious leaders.

Then, when the Lord does not answer the question whether He is a King, his next question is what He has done, what is the reason for them to deliver Him to him. To the question "what have You done?" we can say that every word of His and every act, yes, His entire way is one great testimony of Who God is in love and mercy to man. He has placed man in the presence of God and with that also his sins. They cannot escape the testimony of that, except by rejecting Him, they think.

The Lord also does not address the question of what He has done. He only reacts on what Pilate has said that He was delivered to him. Pilate must not think that He is now in his power. He has to do with One Who possesses a kingdom. Only it is not a kingdom of this world, just as He is not of this world (Jn 8:23; 17:14,16) nor do His own belong to it (Jn 17:14,16). It is a kingdom established in the hearts of those who have accepted Him as their Lord (Rom 14:17).

If His kingdom did belong to the world, and if as King He asserted His power in and over the world, He would have commanded His servants to fight for Him (Mt 26:53). Then He would not have been delivered, neither to the Jews nor to Pilate. But now was not the time for such action. That time will surely come, but first the whole work of the Father must be accomplished. That means He must first go the way of suffering and rejection and death (Lk 24:26).

With what the Lord says here, He testifies the good confession before Pontius Pilate (1Tim 6:13). Paul insists to Timothy – and to us as well – that this is also his and our task. Fulfilling that task means that in our life we consider and speak of a Lord Who determines our life. We are subject to Him and not to human powers. If we submit to human institutions, it is because it is the Lord's will (1Pet 2:13; Rom 13:1). He is that other King than

the emperor (Acts 17:7). This King is not visible now, but we do submit to Him. In doing so, He also determines our place on earth.

The kingdom to which we belong is still not from here. Therefore, it is also against God's thoughts to in any way establish a kingdom on earth anyway or even to influence the government with the goal of establishing a government that applies God's standards. All such efforts are rejected by God's Word, as we can read, among other things, in Paul's admonitions to the Corinthians on this subject (1Cor 4:8-9).

Jn 18:37-38 | Testimony to the Truth

*37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say [correctly] that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate *said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and *said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.*

Pilate thinks he has now received an answer to his earlier question about the kingship of the Lord Jesus, although he now asks if He is "a" King, that is, King in a general sense. The Lord confirms his conclusion.

He adds that His birth and His coming into the world do not have as their sole purpose that He will be King. That He has been "born" indicates that He became Man; that He "has come into the world" indicates His existence before He came into the world. The great, so to speak, overarching purpose of His birth and His coming into the world is to bear witness to the truth. He became Man to testify to men about the Father from Whom He came and Whom He knows eternally as the eternal Son.

Through His testimony of the truth, His kingdom is expanded. Truth means that the true character of something or someone is seen in His light, with His eyes. Then it becomes visible Who God is, but also who man is and likewise what the authority of a government is. Everything the Lord has said and done is one great testimony of the truth. To hear His voice, one must be "of the truth" (1Jn 3:19).

Earlier He said that His sheep hear His voice (Jn 10:16). To be "of the truth" means that a person has come to new life by acknowledging the truth and thus has become one of His sheep. One who is of the truth has first ac-

knowledged the truth about himself as a sinner. He has heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of his salvation (Eph 1:13) and has been given new life. This also enables such a person to receive every truth that the Son makes known.

As a Roman judge, for Pilate to find out the truth is the same as pursuing a mirage. For Pilate, there is no such thing as truth. It makes it clear that he does not want the Son as the truth and rejects Him. Yet he wants to justify himself by pretending to the Jews that he finds no guilt in the Lord Jesus.

Jn 18:39-40 | Not Him, but Barabbas

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?" 40 So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

To escape from this difficult situation, Pilate makes another proposal to the Jews. He reminds them of their custom of releasing someone at the Passover. He also suggests who he would like to release. John does not speak of a choice he is presenting to the people, as we read in the other Gospels. Pilate has made the choice for them. He proposes to release the Lord Jesus of Whom He speaks as "the King of the Jews". All attention is focused on Him.

The people's reaction is instantaneous. They don't need time to think. In fact, it is not even right to speak of a choice. They are animated by only one thing: the death of the Lord Jesus. They want to get rid of Him. Whatever or whoever they get in His place is always better than Him. By their words they express their radical rejection of the Lord.

Significant is the name of the robber they choose and also cry out. They want "Barabbas". Barabbas means 'son of the father'. It is clear who his father is. He is a true son of his father, the devil (Jn 8:44). Barabbas "was a robber". That is the great characteristic of the devil who has robbed the glory of God. Here the son of the father, the devil, stands next to the Son of the Father.

In choosing a robber, who is also a rebel and murderer (Mk 15:7), they have determined their history. Their history has been marked by the fact that, over the centuries, they have been perpetually prey to robbers, mur-

derers and rioters in terrible ways. In the ways of God's government they have reaped what they have sown.

John 19

Jn 19:1-3 | Scourged and Mocked

1 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; 3 and they [began] to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps [in the face].

Although Pilate is convinced of the innocence of the Lord Jesus, he takes Him and scourges the Lord of glory. He does not do this personally. He orders his soldiers to do so, but in doing so he is primarily responsible. The great injustice and inhuman treatment inflicted on the Lord knows no end. Scourging is a horrible cruelty. Once satan gets the opportunity, he will do anything to humiliate the Son of God. And He allows it. We hear Him utter no complaint: "While suffering, He uttered no threats" (1Pet 2:23; Isa 53:7). In everything He is perfect, even in the deepest suffering.

The soldiers play their game with Him, while He is greatly weakened by a night of interrogation and a scourging. They amuse themselves with the Ruler of the universe, the Son of God Who upholds all things by the word of His power, Who has given Himself into their hands. The peace and exaltation He displays are all the more proof to them of vile weakness with which they love to mock. They have heard that He is a King. They will crown Him.

The crown is made swiftly. It is a crown of thorns. Thorns have come into the world as a result of sin (Gen 3:18). By putting this crown of thorns on His head, it is as if they are blaming Him for all the misery in the world. They do not realize all this, but the devil does. The robe they put on Him should increase their fun. It is a purple robe, the color of the Roman empire and of royal dignity.

In their play they pretend that He is really a King, but a King conquered by them. They greet Him with mocking deference and slap Him contemptuously in the face. Thus the soldiers horribly play with Him Who has

always done good and is here to declare the Father also to them. And He does not resist them (Jam 5:6).

Jn 19:4-8 | New Negotiation

*4 Pilate came out again and *said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." 5 Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. [Pilate] *said to them, "Behold, the Man!" 6 So when the chief priests and the officers 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." 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." 8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was [even] more afraid;*

When the soldiers have played their game with the Lord Jesus, mistreating and disfiguring Him, Pilate comes out again. He announces to the Jews the coming of the Lord Jesus. He will bring Him out to them to convince them that he finds no guilt in Him. For the second time he declares the innocence of the Lord (Jn 18:38). Each time he, representing the judicial authority, declares the innocence of the Lord, he increases his guilt for the Lord's condemnation.

Pilate does say that he will bring Him out to them, but even in this deep humiliation we read: "Jesus then came out." The Lord does not let Himself be sent, but comes out Himself. And how He appears there before the public. What a sight! There He stands, their King, crowned with the crown of thorns and the robe of mockery around His shoulders. His appearance is disfigured by the maltreatment. The blood runs down His face because of the crown of thorns. Pilate points the people to Him and says: "Behold, the Man!"

The meaning of this is deeper than Pilate realizes. Here stands the Man of God Who has fallen into the hands of men. On this occasion, man without God has shown how deeply he has fallen and how he has indulged his hatred against God and His goodness. In this Man of God we see the perfection of God's love and longsuffering by allowing this to happen and not intervening in judgment. At the same time, precisely in the face of this

incomparable goodness, the very worst in man emerges and is expressed. He regards and rejects the Son of God as dirt.

The hatred of the Jews is so great that they are not satisfied with this humiliation. Pilate has sought to arouse their pity, but when they see Him, instead only their bloodlust is increased. They are only satisfied with His death and that is His death on the cross. That is what they cry out for, so much are they filled with hatred against Him Who told them of the Father and showed Who the Father is in goodness and mercy. What absolute wickedness of man is demonstrated here! It is clear that there is not a shred of goodness in man, nothing that is even open to a single ray of God's love.

Pilate now gives them a free hand to crucify Him. As he does so, he declares for the third time that he has found no guilt in Him. What a horrible paradox. He is convinced of His innocence and clearly expresses it. Yet, while shrugging off His responsibility, He hands over this Innocent to a bloodthirsty people with his permission to crucify Him.

The Jews, however, do not accept His offer. They feel they have Pilate in their power and go to the extreme. They want him to carry out the judgment. The charge is that Jesus made Himself the Son of God. They refer to their law by virtue of which He should die (Lev 24:16). What a false charge! He has abundantly proven to be the Son of God.

His sentence must be carried out, and by the appropriate authority. Not that they didn't want to do it themselves, but it must be done with Pilate's signature. Otherwise it could be said later that they had acted arbitrarily. Pilate has lost his grip on the situation long ago. Every participant in this demonic spectacle is controlled by the invisible power of darkness, while God Himself is the great Director.

Pilate is guilty through and through. He has already openly confessed the innocence of the Lord Jesus twice. His conscience is clearly touched and troubled by the unmistakable evidence that he has an extraordinary Person before him. He is an idolater who believes in the existence of invisible powers. Perhaps the Person Who stands before him possesses such powers. He does not want to show that he is touched inside, but he is. God's Spirit is telling here that he is becoming even more afraid than he already was.

Jn 19:9-11 | The Lord Again Before Pilate

*9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and *said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 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?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has [the] greater sin."*

The indecisiveness of this authority figure is tragic. He has become entangled in a situation he never wanted and, through all the attempts to free himself, is working himself more and more tightly into the snare. Here there is no politics to be done, no diplomatic solution to be devised. Here events are taking place that are controlled from on High and in which he is forced to make a choice that he does not want to make, but still has to make.

Pilate again goes into the courtroom and asks the Lord the question where He is from. If the question had been the expression of a spiritual exercise, the Lord would certainly have answered, as in the beginning of this Gospel to the question: "Where are You staying?" (Jn 1:38)? Now He does not answer. He will never let Himself be forced, but is perfectly guided by His Father.

Pilate is visibly offended that the Prisoner does not answer him. How does He dare! What impertinence! Threateningly he speaks to the Lord about the authority he has, both to release Him or to crucify Him. Like once Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate will be forced to acknowledge with Whom real authority lies (Dan 4:32b). With what he says about his authority, Pilate passes judgment on his own inability. Formally he has that authority, but morally he is in the power of the crowd and much more in the power of Him Who stands before him as Prisoner.

He experiences this when the Lord tells him how it really is with his authority. Pilate experiences here that the Prisoner takes the place of the Judge and speaks in a quiet tone of a higher authority than that of the emperor. The temporarily limited authority which Pilate has at his disposal is granted to him by the Man Who stands before him. That Man determines the measure of the guilt of both Pilate and the Jews. That Man, in fact, is the

Son to Whom the Father has given all authority (Jn 5:27). He Who stands before Pilate is Himself “from above”. He has given him that authority, but Pilate abuses that authority.

Pilate, the heathen, is obviously guilty, but Judas and Caiaphas and the Jews are even more guilty. Pilate has been given authority by God in the world, but the Jews have been entrusted with the words of God, words of the living God that bear witness to the Son. The Son is the center and object of it. This One has shown to the world words, works and ways that the world has never heard or seen before, and that One they reject.

Jn 19:12-16 | Pilate Hands Over the Innocent

*12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts 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.” 13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he *said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” 15 So they cried out, “Away with [Him], away with [Him], crucify Him!” Pilate *said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” 16 So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.*

Pilate is inwardly convinced of Christ’s innocence and of the authority He possesses. Unfortunately, it only remains a rational conviction of His innocence. His conscience is addressed, but he does not bow down to his Prisoner. For that he loves his position and the approval of his boss in Rome too much. As a result, he remains a puppet of the Jews, who increase the pressure on Him. They threaten to send a message to Caesar that he is releasing Someone Who is a threat to the empire. The hypocrites! Never will they acknowledge the hated regime, but now that it suits them, they are hypocritically pledging allegiance to the emperor.

Pilate succumbs to the pressure. He makes the decision that the Son of God must be put to death. Against all evidence of innocence, he chooses to have Him crucified. We might cry out: ‘Where is justice?’ However, here are powers at work that are not influenced by human reasoning, but by their

own evil intent. Yet from the perspective of faith, an even greater power is present, and that is the power of God Who governs everything according to the counsel of His will.

As has been said many times, this does not mean that Pilate is not fully responsible for his condemnation of the Lord Jesus. As the judiciary that must render a just judgment, he fails miserably. The cause is that he loves himself and the honor of his lord in Rome more than God. He does not even think about God at all.

He brings the Lord Jesus out. To give his false decision the appearance of authority, he formally takes his seat on the judgment seat to confirm the judgment. The name of the place is given in both Greek and Hebrew. It emphasizes that the unjust condemnation of Christ is done by both Gentiles and Jews and that the whole world is guilty of the murder of the Son of God.

All this takes place during the preparation of the Passover. In preparing the Passover, the Jews went through their homes to remove every bit of leaven from it (Exo 12:15). Leaven is the picture of sin (1Cor 5:6-8). While they are scrupulous about getting rid of the slightest trace of literal leaven so that they can be outwardly clean for the Passover, they are defiling themselves in the grossest way: they are committing the greatest sin by killing the true Passover. They strain out a gnat and swallow a camel (Mt 23:24).

John again has an eye for the detail of the moment when Pilate passes judgment (Jn 1:39; 4:6,52). By Roman time standards, it is about six o'clock in the morning. They are early to carry out the evil deeds on which they have unscrupulously reflected during the night shamelessly at the first light of day (Hos 7:6-7).

Pilate knows he has lost. Therefore, he sarcastically points out to the Jews their King once more. When he utters the words "behold, your King" with contempt, the Jews erupt in anger. They give way to all their hatred against the Lord Jesus. With the twofold exclamation "away with [Him]" they put their signature on the sentence. He must be hung on the cross.

Once more Pilate challenges them by speaking of their King and that he should crucify Him, their King. Then they speak those memorable words: "We have no king but Caesar." With these words they pronounce their

own condemnation. They deny their Messiah and with this fateful word call down the judgment of God on themselves. Under its miserable consequences they suffer to this day.

Barabbas and Caesar – for both these names they spoke out – sum up their whole history of misery of twenty centuries. They have suffered from gangs of robbers in the land (as Barabbas) and from enemies from outside the land (as Caesar of Rome). They have been crushed, as it were, between two millstones. The prophetic scope of their choice only comes to an end when the Jews will acknowledge in the Son of God their true King.

Then Pilate hands Him over into the hands of the Jews to crucify Him, a crucifixion actually carried out by Pilate's soldiers.

Jn 19:17-18 | The Crucifixion

17 They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. 18 There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

The word of Christ's rejection has been spoken. They have nothing in common with Him, they deny any connection with Him. At the same time, God's Word is thus fulfilled and they can take Him. Again we see the exaltedness of the Son of God. They can take Him, but in fact He Himself goes out. He is not led, but takes the lead Himself, while He also carries His cross Himself.

In this Gospel we see no signs of human weakness that the Lord also had. Here we see how He takes the path of suffering in the exaltedness of the Son of God. He Himself goes to the goal, the place of execution. He is not brought there. The name Place of a Skull is the symbol of the end of all human glory. That is what remains of the once celebrated human being.

The Lord goes to that place with the cross on His back. The cross is and speaks of the most humiliating and painful way to die. Not only is the end humiliating, but so is the manner in which this end occurs. As a Roman invention, crucifixion expressed prideful contempt. Barbarians were nailed to the cross like vermin and tortured to death. And to that death Christ is handed over by the Jewish leaders. In rendering the name of the place of

execution in the Hebrew language, we again see their involvement in His being handed over.

John does not say much about the crucifixion itself. Nor do we hear any reaction from bystanders. His concern is to bring out the glory of the Son of God as a perfectly dedicated Man to God. To this end, his reference to the two others who are crucified with Him also serves. It does not matter what they did wrong. It is enough that they are two “other men”, men so completely different from Him. They only matter in order to make the glory of the Lord Jesus stand out all the more.

When John describes the two other men each being crucified one on either side of the Lord, it is clear that He is hanging in between. John places additional emphasis on this by stating that Jesus hangs “in between”. All light shines on Him.

Jn 19:19-22 | The Inscription on the Cross

19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” 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, Latin [and] in Greek. 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.”

Pilate also wrote an inscription to be put on the cross. It was common practice to state above the cross of the crucified person why he hung there, as a warning to all who read it not to commit the same crime. The ‘crime’ of the Lord Jesus is the testimony of the truth.

What Pilate is probably doing to hurt the Jews is a testimony of the truth regarding the plans of God. It contains the twofold truth that this despised Nazarene is the true Messiah. The testimony that Pilate puts on the cross is read by many of the Jews. The city is full of people who have come for the feast. The huge uproar caused by the Jews to get the Lord Jesus killed by all means before the Passover has attracted massive attention, although they had wanted to avoid it (Mt 26:4-5). Many have flocked together and

also gone along outside the city. It is a welcome distraction in anticipation of the feast.

The Lord is taken outside the city to be crucified there (Heb 13:12). Yet it does not make the city any less guilty. It reveals by this terrible act a depravity that can rival that of Sodom and Egypt (Rev 11:8). The crime takes place, so to speak, right under the smoke of the city. The people do not have to go far out of town for it.

Pilate, under the governing hand of God, had the inscription written in three languages. In these three languages the whole world in all its parts is represented and judged. The Hebrew language is mentioned first. It is the language of religion. It is primarily the religious leaders of the people who are guilty of the death of the Son of God. Latin is the language of heathen imperialism, the language of politics, of which Pilate is the representative. That field, too, is guilty of the death of Christ. Greek is the language of culture and the wisdom of the world. Through wisdom the world has not come to the knowledge of God; they have not known Him Who came and have rejected Him (Jn 1:10). The whole world is united in the rejection of God's Son.

The inscription has the effect with the Jews that Pilate wanted. They are irritated by it and want him to change the inscription. As it stands, it is an admission that He is their King. They don't want that under any circumstances. But Pilate has no intention of changing the text. He finds pleasure in being able to thwart the Jews one more time after all, because he knows that he is in fact the loser.

Jn 19:23-24 | The Soldiers Divide the Garments

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; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. 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] to fulfill the Scripture: "THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS."

To the soldiers, the crucifixion is routine work. What they are more interested in are the possessions of the Crucified. His possessions consist

of the garments He was wearing. That is all, but even that has been taken from Him. Before the crucifixion, they took off His garments from Him. The Lord Jesus is hung naked on the cross, like a shorn sheep, stripped of all covering. The soldiers divide His garments into four parts, so that everyone has something.

John mentions separately the tunic with the special features that it is without a seam and that it is woven in one piece, literally ‘from the upper part through the whole’, so in its entirety from the top down. Garments express what a person is, his behavior and habits. In this garment we see Who He is. The characteristics of His tunic are mentioned by John because it has symbolic meaning and value. Everything of our Lord, whether His Person or His work, is in one piece, without any seam. Everything He has spoken is perfect, all His words form a seamless whole. The same is true of His deeds. What He does is no different than what He says. His words and deeds fit together perfectly.

How different is it with man fallen into sin who has made an apron of fig leaves. This apron cannot cover man’s imperfections, but shows countless seams.

The Lord’s garment is also woven “from the upper part”. This indicates that He has come from above. He came from heaven as the Father’s good pleasure and brought the perfection of heaven to earth. The perfection of His garment is also an expression of the Father’s good pleasure (cf. Gen 37:3).

The soldiers see the value of the garment; they note that it is a seamless garment. It would be of no benefit to anyone if they tore this beautiful garment into four. They propose to cast lots for it. Without realizing it, the soldiers thus fulfill a prophecy of Scripture (Psa 22:18). John still emphatically mentions that this prophecy was fulfilled by the soldiers. So powerful is the Word of God that it can also use unscrupulous soldiers for its fulfillment.

Jn 19:25 | The Women Standing by the Cross

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.

After presenting to us the part played by the four soldiers in the crucifixion, our attention is turned to four other persons standing near the Lord's cross. Four raw soldiers disappear from sight and four women who love the Lord wholeheartedly take their places on the scene. They each have their own relationship with Him.

There stands Mary, the mother of the Lord. The sword has gone through her soul as spoken to her by Simeon at His birth (Lk 2:35). There also stands the sister of His mother, the wife of Zebedee (Mt 27:56) and thus the mother of John and James (Mt 4:21). This means that John is a full cousin of the Lord Jesus. Further, John mentions Mary, the wife of Clopas. She is the mother of James and Joses (Mt 27:56). Finally, John mentions Mary Magdalene, the woman with the greatest possible love for the Lord.

Jn 19:26-27 | Behold, Your Son – Behold, Your Mother

*26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, 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].*

When the Lord sees His mother and sees John standing nearby her, He first of all addresses the word to her. He is not concerned with Himself. He is concerned with His mother of Whom He knows that she needs care and protection. He entrusts her to the care of John. He tells her that she may see John as her son and from that confidential relationship receive his care. We can see from this that Joseph has already died. He could not entrust her to His brothers either, for they did not believe in Him (Jn 7:5).

It is noteworthy that the Lord addresses His mother as "woman". He wants to avoid the impression that in His care for His mother He would only be guided by natural feelings (cf. Jn 2:4). The roman-catholic church is committing an abominable idolatry with its worship of Mary. This idolatry cannot be justified in any way by the words of the Lord.

He also addresses the word to John and commends His mother to His care. The way the Lord Jesus connects His mother and John testifies to the perfection of His human feelings. With the call "behold" to each of them, He is saying that they should look at each other in the awareness of the

relationship He has just established. In our care for one another, we are also to look at one another in accordance with the relationship in which the Lord has placed us to one another.

Jn 19:28-30 | The Dying of the Lord Jesus

*28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, *said, "I am thirsty." 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 and brought it up to His mouth. 30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

In His Divine omniscience and wisdom, the Lord knows that in entrusting His own to care for one another, all things He had to do on earth in declaring His Father has been accomplished. There is still something else to do and that is to fulfill a word of Scripture. His great suffering does not make Him forget that. His statement "I am thirsty" is not primarily an expression of a physical need, but of a spiritual need. This also fits with this Gospel in which He is always shown to us in His exaltation above suffering, although He senses its full gravity.

After His exclamation He is given sour wine which He takes. How great must have been the agony of knowing that there was a jar full of sour wine close to the cross and that it was impossible to take any of it. But at the determined time He receives of it as a result of the fulfillment of a Scripture word. When also the last Scripture word has been fulfilled that was yet to be fulfilled during His life on earth, He utters what only He can say: "It is finished!"

There have been servants who, like Paul, could say that they had finished the course (2Tim 4:7). But no servant has dared to say that the work he has done was accomplished and finished. All servants worked, but when their lives ended, others continued with it. We can complete a certain activity and say it is finished, but it will never be exclusively our work and there will always be human imperfection attached to it.

The Lord Jesus perfectly accomplished the work He was given to do with an everlasting and unchanging result. He could also judge His own work,

while all others must humbly await the judgment of their work at the time determined by Him (2Cor 5:10).

The exclamation “it is finished” is just one word in Greek, *tetelestai*, but what word has so much content? It does not point us primarily to the accomplishment of the work of the cross on behalf of us as lost sinners. Also this word fits into this Gospel and indicates that He accomplished the work for which He had come to earth, namely, the glorification of the Father (Jn 17:4).

After this, the Lord bows His head. This means that He lays His head down in repose. On earth He had no place where He could lay His head (Mt 8:20). Here He finds that place, on Golgotha, and He can rest in death. His spirit He gives up to His Father. Here we do not hear the recommendation of His spirit into the hands of the Father. He does that as the true Man in the Gospel according to Luke (Lk 23:46). Here the Son gives up His spirit as an act He performs of His own free will, with Divine authority. No one takes life from Him, but He Himself lays it down (Jn 10:17). Like everything else in this Gospel, also in His death the initiative comes from Him.

Jn 19:31-37 | The Side of the Lord Pierced

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), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED.”

The Jews have achieved their goal. Jesus is dead. Their next concern is to maintain outward purity. The Sabbath immediately following the Passover is at the same time the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. To them,

therefore, a special holiness is attached to that Sabbath. In view of that high, or great, Sabbath, they want to observe all the more scrupulously the precept that the bodies are not to remain on the cross during the night (Deu 21:22-23). Imagine that their land would be defiled as a result! That they have just made their land a Field of Blood by their murder of the Son of God (Mt 27:7-8) does not occur to them.

Pilate grants their request to break the legs of the crucified and sent out some soldiers to do so. This would bring about immediate death, which otherwise could take days. Remarkably, they first break the legs of the two men crucified with the Lord. So they do not go from left to right or the other way around, but from outside to inside. All attention is again on the Lord Jesus, even as He hangs dead on the cross. When the soldiers come to Him, they see that He has already died. Therefore they refrain from breaking His legs. Their logical conclusion that it is not necessary coincides with the fulfillment of Scripture.

Yet one of them cannot help but still scorn Him, even now that He has already died. In what must have been a fit of contempt, he pierces the Lord's side with his spear. It is an utterly senseless, disrespectful act that can only serve to express his contempt for that Person. But the response in the blood and water that comes from the side of the Lord Jesus shows how God judges His Son. It is a response that shows His overwhelming grace precisely to such despisers of His Son. The blood and water coming from His side show the meaning of His work and the appreciation God has for it.

In the first place, the water and the blood testify that He truly died. But its significance goes beyond the mere observation of His death. The blood is the basis for the forgiveness of sins, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22). The blood cleanses from sins in view of God. Through the blood the sinner is reconciled to God and God can give him all the blessings He has in His heart to give. The water as a picture of God's Word discovers the sinner to himself, leading him to repentance and confession of his sins. God then forgives the sins and the sinner is cleansed from them (Jn 15:3; 1Jn 1:9).

John also writes in his first letter about the water and the blood (1Jn 5:6). Blood speaks of reconciliation through judgment. Water speaks of cleansing through acknowledgment and confession of sins. Reconciliation through judgment and confession of sins are non-separable. In his letter, John adds the Spirit by which we know that we have received eternal life. Blood and water come from a Savior Who died; the Spirit comes from a glorified Savior. With the three of them they give testimony that whereas in us there is no life, in the Son we have eternal life.

John strongly emphasizes here that his testimony is true. He is not making these things up. He knows what he is talking about. He has seen it himself, is convinced of it himself, and would like everyone who reads his Gospel come to faith. He not only points to his own testimony of truth, but also cites Scripture. Everyone can see by reading the Scriptures that everything relates to the Lord Jesus.

Scripture is the certain basis for faith in Him. If Scripture says that something does not happen to Him, it does not happen. Scripture is also fulfilled by the omission of things that would dishonor Him. The breaking of His legs (Psa 34:20) would be a sign of an imperfect walk, whereas in His whole walk on earth the Lord actually glorified God. That is why this is emphasized, so that in His death He would not have something to blame Him that would cast a stain on that perfection.

John quotes another Scripture to make his testimony of truth even stronger. This time it is a testimony to something in Scripture that did happen to Him (Zec 12:10). The piercing of the Lord's side with a spear had to happen so that the Scripture word can be fulfilled that they will see Him Whom they have pierced (Rev 1:7). The fulfillment is still in the future, but the condition for the fulfillment has already been met.

What a powerful threefold testimony – John's own testimony and two Scripture words – to convince every reader of the truth of the life, death and return of the Lord Jesus. For the second Scripture word also includes His resurrection, glorification and return. John cites this Scripture again in the book of Revelation he wrote (Rev 1:7).

Jn 19:38-42 | The Burial

38 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret [one] for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. 39 Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds [weight]. 40 So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings 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 a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

After the testimony of John and the Scriptures, it is wonderful to see someone who is going to openly confess the Lord when at first he did not. Pilate is visited again. Before the bodies are taken from the cross, Joseph of Arimathea comes to him asking if he may take the body of the Lord Jesus from the cross. Joseph turns out to be a disciple of the Lord, but had not yet come out openly with it. Fear of man had kept him from making himself known as a follower of Christ. But if there is real life from God through faith in Christ, the time comes when this life can no longer remain hidden. Life must show itself.

For Joseph, the moment has come to confess Him as He hangs dead on the cross. Now is the time to do it. He steps forward and commits himself to the Christ Who has died. It is a clear evidence of new life when a person commits himself to a Christ Who has died and thus confesses his faith in Him.

The courageous testimony of Joseph is followed. Someone joins him who also had not previously come to openly testify of the Lord. Nicodemus once sought the Lord by night and heard impressive things from Him (Jn 3:1). Perhaps he remembered what He said to him about His being lifted up (Jn 3:14).

The Lord then sowed the seed of the Word in him. That Word has begun to germinate. A first tentative confession passed the lips of Nicodemus when his fellow Pharisees spoke of taking Christ captive. He then expressed

a reservation that caused him to receive scolding remarks from his colleagues (Jn 7:50-52).

Here he joins Joseph with a quantity of ointment. He has prepared this moment. Together, with great reverence and caution, they take down the body of the Lord Jesus from the cross. They wrap His body in linen cloths in which they also put spices. This is customary among the Jews when they bury someone. This counters the smell of decay. They do not remember that God has said in His Word that He will not see decay (Psa 16:8-11). The Lord is laid in a tomb that has never had any contact with death. In this respect also He has not seen decay, nor has His body been in contact with it.

Preparation also plays a role with Joseph and Nicodemus. John mentions that "Jesus" is laid in the tomb. Note that it does not say 'His body'; He is, even though He died, the Person Jesus. Jesus is laid in that tomb "because the tomb was nearby". We know that God's hand directed everything in this way. What appeared to be a humanly practical solution that fits well within the circumstances was included by God in His counsel. It could not be other than this tomb.

John 20

Jn 20:1-2 | Mary Sees the Empty Tomb

*1 Now on the first [day] of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and *saw the stone [already] taken away from the tomb.
2 So she *ran and *came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and *said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."*

Mary Magdalene is the first to come to the tomb on the first day of the week. The first day of the week indicates a new beginning. But it is still dark. The new period has begun, but for Mary and the disciples it is still dark. Yet Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb. She wants to be with her Lord.

When she comes at the tomb, she sees that the stone has been taken away from the tomb. The stone was not taken away to let the Lord out. That was not necessary for Him in His resurrection body. Later we see that He appears in the midst of the disciples while the doors are closed. No, the stone is taken away to allow the disciples and us to look into the tomb, that we may find that the tomb is empty.

Mary is amazed about the open tomb. She concludes that the Lord is no longer in the tomb and believes that people have taken Him away out of the tomb. She quickly runs to those who she considers best able to answer the burning question of her heart as to where He, that is, His body, could have gone.

As much as she loves Him, her question also shows that even the warmest love, and she has that, can come to a wrong conclusion because she is not thinking about His word about His resurrection. She believes that people have taken Him away, even though He spoke several times about His resurrection.

Jn 20:3-10 | Peter and John at the Tomb

*3 So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.
4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than*

*Peter and came to the tomb first; 5 and stooping and looking in, he *saw the linen wrappings lying [there]; but he did not go in. 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 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. 9 For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 So the disciples went away again to their own homes.*

After Mary's announcement, hearts and feet start moving. Although they do not believe in His resurrection, they are still completely committed to His Person, although to them as well it was only His body. Peter and John quickly go to the tomb. We often see them together. John comes to the tomb first, then Peter. Why John is quicker than Peter is not stated. Could it be that Peter is a bit reluctant to see the Lord, even though he thinks the Lord has died yet, because he denied Him? Will not that have slowed him down in his running to the tomb? John did not have that inner inhibition. In verse 2 he calls himself by the name again that indicates his awareness of the Lord's love for him. That love drew him (Song 1:4).

John stoops and sees only the linen wrappings lying there. He does not enter the tomb. Simon Peter also comes to the tomb. He does enter the tomb and also sees the linen wrappings lying there. And he sees even more. Those who penetrate deeper into what the Lord has done also see more. The tomb shows a sight of order and rest. What he sees can only be the result of a calmly acting Person Who has stripped Himself of the tomb wrappings after He has risen. The order of the linen wrappings is evidence of this.

The Lord put everything aside and left it in the tomb because it did not suit His new state. He did not come out like Lazarus, who still had the tomb wrappings on. The Lord then instructed others to free him of those tomb wrappings (Jn 11:44). This indicates that His resurrection is of a different order than the resurrection of Lazarus. The rolled up face-cloth, or sweat-cloth, testifies that His work has been accomplished forever. The sweat-cloth is no longer needed and is also left in the tomb.

When Peter and John have seen the wrappings in the tomb, John believes. That means he believes based on the facts he perceives and not because God said so. What he sees does not lead to true spiritual understanding. It is a rational belief. The evidence convinces him, but what does he do with that evidence?

Here it becomes clear that faith can be based on accepting facts that are due to reasonable grounds. This can be done by unbelievers and believers; in this way, salvation facts can also be accepted. However, it is merely a matter of reason. Belief with the heart must be the basis of relationship with God, otherwise there is no relationship with Him. When a person believes with the heart, the heart welcomes the testimony of God in His Word.

The consequence is therefore that they return to their own circumstances. They come to this reaction because the facts have been accepted on the basis of undeniable observation. They do not yet see these facts as the fulfillment of what God has revealed about them in His Word.

Jn 20:11-16 | The Lord and Mary Magdalene

*11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 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. 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." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and *saw Jesus standing [there], and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she *said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus *said to her, "Mary!" She turned and *said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).*

Mary cannot take things as the two disciples take them. What does "going home" mean to her now? What is the world to her? Nothing but an empty tomb where her Lord has lain. Others may go home; she remains at the tomb. Her sorrow does not remain without fruit nor does it last long.

John saw only the linen wrappings. Peter saw more than John. He entered the tomb and saw the linen wrappings and the sweat-cloth and the order in which the wrappings lay. Mary gets to see and also hear even more. First she sees and hears angels. Then she hears and sees the Lord and receives from Him a wonderful message.

When Mary stoops and looks into the tomb, she sees two angels. They are wearing white garments, which speak of the purity of heaven. The purity of heaven matches the purity of this tomb. They are sitting at the head end and the foot end of the place where the Lord's body has lain. They mark the place where He has lain. Between them now is an empty place.

This scene is also reminiscent of the two cherubim on the mercy seat (Exo 25:18). The angels on the mercy seat look at the law and at the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. From that place emanates threat, but also reconciliation through satisfaction for all who believe. The two angels who are in the tomb look at the consequences of the sprinkled blood. To them, the empty place between them is the place where God's love has descended to liberate us from death. For this He bore the curse of the law, which was kept in the ark. It is a place that does not instill fear of death, that is connected to the law, but brings to admiration and adoration because death has been conquered.

The angels address Mary, asking why she is weeping. She does not seem to be frightened of the angels, whereas wherever angels appear, they also inspire fear. Her heart is so full of the Lord that therefore fear has no place.

Her answer to the question shows that she can think of nothing but her Lord, and she supposes the same in others. She does not mention a name, but speaks of "my Lord". This indicates a personal relationship. To the disciples she has said "they have taken away the Lord" (verse 2), but to the angels she speaks of "my" Lord. Yet she still seeks a dead Lord.

The Lord Jesus is not far from such a heart that is so attached to Him. Having said this to the angels, she turns back to continue her search. Then she sees the Lord Jesus standing, but without recognizing Him. She is still under the impression that He must be lying somewhere, so she does not expect Someone standing to be the Lord.

He addresses her with the same question the angels asked. He asks her why she is weeping. He adds another question. He also asks her Whom she is looking for. Because of her tear-stained eyes, she is unable to see clearly. She thinks she is dealing with the gardener. He will certainly know what happened to the body, perhaps he even carried it away to another place.

Again she does not mention a name, but speaks of "Him" as if everyone knows of Whom she is speaking. That is the language of love. That language does not remain unanswered. His response is the mentioning of her name. The good Shepherd Who rose from the dead calls His sheep by her name (Jn 10:3). One word, her name, makes all difficulties and doubts disappear.

The utterance of her name is not the expression of her love for Him, but of His love for her. This one word makes her, who sowed in tears, now reap with joy. Her heart fills with joy. This joy is overflowing and will also fill other hearts with joy, the hearts of all who believe. She is the same to Him as ever. He loves her now with the same love He had when He drove seven demons out of her.

Jn 20:17-18 | The Message to the Disciples

*17 Jesus *said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene *came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and [that] He had said these things to her.*

After His making Himself known to Mary and her joyful recognition of Him, the Lord says to Mary to "stop clinging to" Him. This is necessary to make it clear that the relationships are no longer as they were before His death and resurrection. He is not the Messiah in this Gospel, as He is presented in the Gospel according to Matthew. There we see, and it is fitting there, that the women are allowed to touch Him (Mt 28:9). Here His resurrection is connected with His going to His Father and it is inappropriate for Mary to cling to Him.

When He is with the Father, she will be able to “cling” to Him again and that is through the Holy Spirit He will send from the Father. On the day of Pentecost, when Mary will be filled with the Holy Spirit together with the other disciples, she will experience in her spirit a much more intimate connection with the risen Lord than she ever experienced in the days of His flesh.

She may not cling to Him, but He has a wonderful message for those whom He calls “My brethren”. Mary is allowed to deliver that message. He speaks to Mary of “My brethren”, expressing a relationship beyond “His own” (Jn 13:1) or “My friends” (Jn 15:14), as He called His disciples as well.

In speaking of them as “My brethren”, He places them in the same relation to God His Father in which He Himself stands. This relationship could only come about after He had passed through death and resurrection. If His Father is now our Father, He is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Heb 2:11-12). It means that believers are now a family.

Mary, because of her attachment to the Lord Jesus, is the appropriate person to go and tell the disciples the glorious message of an entirely new relationship. It concerns the highest truths of Christendom which are all connected with knowing the Father and God of the Son, as our Father and our God.

However, the ‘our’ refers exclusively to the believers and not to the believers together with the Son. The Lord Jesus nowhere speaks of ‘our’ Father and ‘our’ God in that sense. As the eternal Son, He has a unique relationship with His Father and His God that cannot be shared by us.

Mary does what He has told her to do. The first thing she tells the disciples is that she has seen the Lord. Her encounter with Him as the risen One is the starting point. Then she tells the disciples what He has told her. This order is important for us as well. We can only pass something on to others when we have had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus about this, that is, He came to our attention by what He has told us and we having seen Him.

Jn 20:19-20 | The Lord Comes to the Disciples

*19 So when it was evening on that day, the first [day] of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and *said to them, "Peace [be] with you." 20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*

When the disciples have gathered together, the Lord Jesus comes into their midst. This happens on the first day of the week, the day of His resurrection. This happens again a week later. In Acts 20, it appears to be the day when the believers come together to break bread (Acts 20:7). It is also the day when the needs of the saints are thought of (1Cor 16:2). It is the day of the Lord (Rev 1:10).

In all these indications, the Holy Spirit makes it clear that this is the day for the Christian, without giving it the form of an explicit commandment. It is not the day to which the rest of the old creation is attached, the Sabbath. Nor is it a day of rest imposed by the law. It is the day of resurrection and of grace to which rich blessings are attached for the believer.

The disciples closed the doors because they are afraid of the Jews. Their Protector has been killed and now as His followers they fear the same fate. But to their great surprise, the Lord – despite the closed doors – comes into their midst.

With this, He does not perform a wonder. He simply demonstrates what the resurrection body is. It is a spiritual body that is not bound by time or space. For example, the closed doors of the prison in which Peter was held were no obstacle to the angel who came to free him both times (Acts 5:19; 12:10). For Peter, however, both times the doors had to open to let him out.

When the Lord came to the disciples, He comes and stands in the midst. This means that He was not standing there immediately. Possibly He was standing near one of the closed doors that symbolize the disciples' fear. They had closed them because they were afraid of the Jews. By standing on the inside of the door, the Lord places Himself between them and (the symbol of) their fear. But then He distracts them from their fear by standing in the midst. Then they no longer look fearfully at the doors, but at Him Who wishes them peace.

His first words are words of peace, His peace. It is the peace He promised them while He was still with them (Jn 14:27). Here He repeats this promise after His resurrection. These are wonderful words in a world at war with God and full of hatred toward those who are in relationship with Christ. With these words He takes away their fear of the Jews.

To end all doubt that it is really Him, He shows them both His hands and His side. In His hands they see the wounds from the nails with which He was nailed to the cross. In His side they see the wound inflicted on Him by a soldier with a spear after He had died, from which blood and water had come.

In showing both His hands and His side, He demonstrates the basis of the peace He proclaims. That peace is based on His work on the cross and His shed blood for the forgiveness of sins. The water, which speaks of the Word of God, brings about that cleansing by actually applying the work of Christ and His blood. The signs in His hands and in His side we will see for all eternity. We will see Him, a Lamb standing, as if slain (Rev 5:6).

When the disciples see Him, they become joyful. Their sorrow has ended, like He said (Jn 16:22). They see the risen Lord and He is in their midst.

Jn 20:21-23 | The Mission

*21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace [be] with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and *said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, [their sins] have been forgiven them; if you retain the [sins] of any, they have been retained."*

The Lord wishes them His peace a second time. The first time it was to make them personally partakers of that peace. Now it is as the starting point of their mission, to which He immediately thereupon gives them the command. To fulfill that mission they must stand in peace (Eph 6:15). Into that peace He has brought them by the forgiveness of sins through His death, so that they may now bear witness to that in the world.

Their mission He gives the same character as the mission with which the Father sent Him. This means that they must also do what He has done, which is to make the Father known (Jn 17:18). They will do this by speak-

ing of the Son, proclaiming Him and glorifying Him. He is the object of their testimony.

After giving them His peace and instructing them to go into the world, He breathes on them. In doing so, He makes them partakers of His resurrection life. Before He became Man, as Creator, He had breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils (Gen 2:7). As a result, Adam became a living soul (1Cor 15:45). But the Lord Jesus is a life-giving spirit. He demonstrates this by now breathing on the disciples the breath of heavenly, eternal life, His own life, His resurrection life.

This life is marked by the Holy Spirit Who gives the power to reveal that life. Their mission of proclamation implies that they show the eternal life, which is the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit always participates in the closest way in every blessing.

It is important to see that Christ is not here giving the Holy Spirit as a Person to His disciples. As a Person, the Holy Spirit will come to earth entirely according to what He has said about it only when He has gone to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit from Him. That happens on the day of Pentecost.

These are two different events. The breathing in of resurrection life takes place on earth and only applies to the apostles. The coming of the Holy Spirit takes place from heaven and concerns all believers who are formed into one body at that time.

After the blessing received for the purpose of witnessing in the world, there is also a responsibility regarding others. Those who do not have this life are all sinners, without distinction between Jew and Gentile. On all sinners lies the judgment of God. But there is also grace. From that grace, the Lord instructs His disciples to forgive sins to all who accept their word and come to faith in the Lord Jesus.

To forgive sins for eternity can only be done by God (Mk 2:7). Once a person has confessed his sins, he may know that God has forgiven his sins (1Jn 1:9). It is then up to the disciples to acknowledge and ratify that forgiveness received from God. Such a person is accepted into the Christian fellowship. If they see that someone only outwardly professes to be a

believer, they do not speak it out, thus such a person is not included in the Christian fellowship.

The issue is the acknowledgment of someone as a believer or the refusal thereof. Practically, this happens in baptism. Then someone is acknowledged as a follower of the Lord Jesus. The baptizer forgives the sins of the person being baptized, that is, he accepts the person being baptized as accepted by God.

We see the same principle when it comes to the church. Receiving believers to the Lord's Table involves an acknowledgment of the forgiveness of one's sins. By receiving such a person, the church is saying that the sins of such a person are forgiven. If the church refuses to receive someone on the basis of sins present and not judged, it means that such a person keeps his sins. That changes when he confesses his sins. Then he can be accepted as one whose sins have been forgiven and be received at the Table of the Lord.

Jn 20:24-29 | The Lord and Thomas

*24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 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, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." 26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus *came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace [be] with you." 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; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus *said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed [are] they who did not see, and [yet] believed."*

Thomas is not there when the Lord appears to the disciples for the first time after His resurrection. It is beautiful to see how the disciples enthusiastically tell Thomas that they have seen the Lord. They do not admonish him for not being there or tell him how foolish it was of him not to be there. They bear witness to their encounter with the Lord. We see here that the

disciples use the title "Lord" not only when they speak *to* Him, but also when they speak *about* Him.

Thomas, however, is not easily persuaded. The disciples can say as much. To convince Thomas, they will also have told him that the Lord showed them His hands and side. Thomas, namely, responds that he would then like to experience that for himself. He states it strongly. He will not even be content in seeing it either, but he wants to feel it. Until he has felt it, he will definitely not believe it, even though there are so many of them who testify to it.

A week later the disciples are back in. It is said "after eight days", indicating a new beginning. Now Thomas is there too. The Lord enters in the same manner as the first time and with the same greeting. His appearance and His greeting are for all, but it is as if He comes only for Thomas. We find this appearance only in this Gospel.

He addresses the word to Thomas. He knows what Thomas has said. Therefore, He invites him to do what he first wanted to do before he would believe. The Lord adds a gentle admonition not to be unbelieving, but believing.

We do not read that Thomas used his finger and his hands to verify that the wounds are real. He immediately comes to the acknowledgment that it is really the Savior. He confesses the Lord Jesus as his Lord and his God. This is the mark of the Jewish remnant who also will not believe until they see Him Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10; Isa 25:9).

The Lord questioningly states that Thomas believes because he sees. It is certainly sufficient to be saved, but it is not the highest form of faith. The Lord praises those who have not seen and yet have believed. This applies to all those who came to faith in Him after He returned to heaven (2Cor 5:7).

The signs the Lord did we did not see with our own eyes, but we read the signs and we understood their message through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The signs have been translated into spiritual realities for us. For example, we have understood that the sign of the bread from heaven speaks of Him Who had to come from heaven to earth to give us life.

Jn 20:30-31 | The Written Signs

30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The unbelief of a believer (Thomas) is the reason for the Spirit to have the last two verses of this chapter written. From the many signs of the Lord, John, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote down a selection in his Gospel. The purpose of all these signs is to present the majesty of the Lord Jesus, to focus all attention on Him alone as the Christ, the Son of God, and to have fellowship with Him. The latter is possible through the life that all who believe possess. In his first letter, John deals extensively with that fellowship.

There are signs done by the Lord which the disciples saw, but which have not been preserved for us. We have no record of them in the Bible because they were not helpful to us in coming to faith in the Son of God. In this Gospel, the signs that have been written down are always the starting point for further teaching about the consequences of the coming of God's Son to earth and the work He had to accomplish.

Today signs are highly regarded as if they would bring people to faith or serve to strengthen faith. The signs of which John speaks here and which the disciples saw, but which are not written down, the Lord really did perform. Today, however, much is touted as signs which in reality are signs of the devil.

In a sense, these last two verses conclude the Gospel. But yet another chapter follows, as a kind of appendix. In John 20 we see in the Lord's first appearance to His disciples what His resurrection means for the church. In His second appearance, we see what His resurrection means for the remnant of Israel.

The third appearance, in John 21, completes the result of the work of the Lord Jesus. There, in the picture of the catching of the fish from the sea, it is about the blessing of His resurrection for the nations in the realm of peace.

John 21

Jn 21:1-2 | The Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias

1 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested [Himself] in this way. 2 Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the [sons] of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

The disciples went to Galilee. The Lord had also told them to go there, for there He would meet them (Mt 26:32; 28:7). Yet this is special for this Gospel because the events in this Gospel take place mainly in Judea. This means that they are outside the usual area of Judaism. Only later are they instructed not to leave Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). They find themselves near the Sea of Tiberias. There the Lord manifests Himself to them again. John describes the way in which He does this.

Seven disciples have gathered together. The names of three of them are mentioned. Peter is mentioned first, as always. Thomas is also among them this time. Again, his nickname “Didymus” is mentioned (Jn 11:16; 20:24). Furthermore, Nathanael is also present. He is of Cana in Galilee, which reminds us of the first sign of the Lord (Jn 2:1). John and James are the sons of Zebedee. That they are here referred to by this name reminds us of their natural origin. Even though the Lord is risen, that does not change their natural relations. Finally, John mentions the presence of “two others of His disciples”, whose names are not mentioned.

They are all His disciples before His suffering and death and remain so after His resurrection. The men mentioned by name are especially connected with Israel. Peter, John and James are the pillars of support for those who are “of the circumcision”, that is, the believers from among the Jews (Gal 2:9). Thomas is a picture of the believing remnant of Israel. Nathanael comes from the area of Israel that borders closely on the nations (Mt 4:15).

This brings us to the goal of the following history. The fishing by the disciples is a picture of what the Lord Jesus will do in the future through His people. He will bring a great multitude out of the nations to faith in Him

during the great tribulation (Rev 7:9), of which the fish these men catch from the sea are a picture.

Jn 21:3-6 | Appearance to the Disciples

3 Simon Peter *said to them, "I am going fishing."* They *said to him, "We will also come with you."* They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 So Jesus *said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?"* They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find [a catch]." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

The reason for the fishing is Peter's remark that he is going fishing again. It seems that, now that the Lord is no longer visibly with them, following Him has also become more difficult. There is a lack of clear direction. They are no longer full of the Lord Jesus, and then certain activities they previously abandoned for His sake have the opportunity to creep back in. For us, too, there is a great danger that by becoming impatient in waiting on the Lord, we will again start doing things that we had previously left behind for His sake.

Peter cannot muster the patience to keep waiting for a command from his Master and wants to return to everyday life. He says he is going fishing and returns to the profession he had before he was called by the Lord Jesus. His example is contagious and the others follow him. By his example, Peter takes others down a wrong path. The fact that the Lord turns it all around for the better does not diminish the wrong decision of Peter. The others are likewise responsible for their own decision to follow Peter.

They leave the house and get into the boat, which one of them apparently still had at his disposal. They fish all night, but without any result. Not a single fish is caught. A work is often left without results when something is done for which the Lord has not given orders. When they return to land early in the morning, He is waiting for them on the beach. They do not know, however, that it is the Lord.

He knows what they have been doing. Again He takes the initiative and asks if they have anything to eat. He addresses them with the friendly word “children” which also expresses His closeness to them. This does not mean that He addresses them as ‘His’ children. Nowhere are believers called ‘children’ of the Lord Jesus. Believers are children of God. The Lord addresses them as ‘children in faith’. They still need much teaching to grow in their faith.

Lack of food is always the result of taking initiatives without waiting for His guidance. Therefore, when He asks them if they have anything to eat, their answer must also be “no”. With that, they admit that they have been fishing fruitlessly all night. Then He advises them to cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat. He gives them also the assurance that they will then find what they are looking for. He assures them that this time they will not be without a catch.

Without recognizing that it is the Lord, they do as He says. They do not argue with this Stranger, nor do they ask Him Who He is. There will have been a sound in His voice that gave them confidence, possibly just by addressing them as “children”. His voice made them obey. They will have noticed that He is a special Person. The catch is beyond expectation, it is more than they can bring in.

Jn 21:7-11 | The Disciples Recognize the Lord

*7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved *said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped [for work]), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net [full] of fish. 9 So when they got out on the land, they *saw a charcoal fire [already] laid and fish placed on it, and bread. 10 Jesus *said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.” 11 Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

The great unexpected catch resulting from the Stranger’s advice opens John’s eyes as the first to the fact that they are dealing with the Lord. He

therefore says to Peter, full of wonder: "It is the Lord!" Peter, impulsive as ever, responds immediately. John is quickest in his understanding. Peter is quickest to act on the insight he has been given by the other. Without first taking a closer look at the Lord to convince himself that it is He, he puts his outer garment on and dives into the water to go to Him.

He relies completely on John's perception. He knows John as someone who has a close relationship with the Lord and if he says it is Him, there is no need to doubt it. It is wonderful when believers tell us things about the Lord Jesus that we can take for granted because we know their dealings with Him. That also, like Peter here, brings us into direct connection with Him.

After Peter, the other disciples come ashore in the little boat. They drag the net with the fish behind them. The distance is given by John. They do not have to drag far before they reach the Lord. When they come ashore, they see a charcoal fire with fish on it. They also see bread.

The charcoal fire will have reminded Peter of his denial at another charcoal fire (Jn 18:18). Peter denied the Lord at a charcoal fire. Now the Lord will restore Peter at a charcoal fire that He has lit and is standing by, in the midst of His disciples.

The fish lying on the charcoal fire and the bread make it clear that He cares for them and that He Himself provides what He has asked of His disciples. He asked if they had anything to eat and they had to say they had nothing. He asked not because He needed anything, but so that they would express to Him their need. Earlier in this Gospel He tested His disciples in a different way regarding food and even then He Himself knew what He would do (Jn 6:5-6).

He asks His disciples to bring the results of their labor to Him. He wants us to always come to Him with the results of our work that we have been allowed to do, but of which He is the origin. Peter responds immediately to the question. He goes up, which means he goes to the boat and climbs in. Then he loosens the net with the fish and draws the net to land.

The writer John further notes that the net is full of large fish and it is not torn. Everything corresponds to the perfection of the Person He describes in his Gospel. Everything is counted and everything comes ashore. The

Lord works the catch and gives power both to man and to the material to complete the work perfectly, without anything being lost.

The net did tear in an earlier fishing (Lk 5:5-6). There the fishing is connected with man's responsibility. Here the characteristic is that everything is the work of Christ, based on His resurrection and as a picture looking forward to the millennial realm of peace. Thus it does not rest on human responsibility. After His revelation in glory, when He returns to earth, He will gather a multitude from the sea of nations.

Before He reveals Himself and the multitude of fish is caught, He already has fish (verse 9). In this we can see a picture of a remnant that He has already prepared on earth. We also see this in Revelation 7, cited above, in the first part of that chapter (Rev 7:1-8), which is about the sealed ones from Israel.

There has been much speculation about the number hundred and fifty-three. The number will certainly have a meaning, but the amount of speculation that has been made about it makes it clear that the meaning is not obvious.

Jn 21:12-14 | The Lord Feeds His Disciples

*12 Jesus *said to them, "Come [and] have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus *came and *took the bread and *gave [it] to them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.*

The Lord has a meal ready for them and invites them to have breakfast. He is the Host. The disciples are not sure how to view this situation. The question burns on their lips Who He is, while at the same time they know very well. It is all so different from before His death. They experience confidentiality and yet also distance. He is different, yet the Same.

The Lord takes away all hesitation from them by coming to them and opening the meal. He takes the bread and the fish and gives it to them. In doing so, He expresses His connection with them.

John counted the times that the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, was manifested to His disciples. This is already the third time. The Lord has appeared many times before, but this is the third time to His disciples. The fact that He reveals Himself to them indicates that there has been a major change in His relationship with them compared to the way He dealt with them before His death. Before His death, He did not manifest Himself to them from time to time. They saw Him constantly, for He was with them.

After His death and resurrection, He is no longer physically with them, but He manifests Himself to them regularly before disappearing again. The first manifestation to His disciples we have seen in John 20 (Jn 20:19). There it is a picture of His manifestation to the church. The second manifestation is also to the disciples, but primarily in reference to Thomas (Jn 20:26-29). This refers to His manifestation to the believing remnant of Israel in the future. His third manifestation, which we have here, points to His manifestation to the nations who will be gathered to enter the realm of peace.

Jn 21:15-17 | The Restoration of Peter

*15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, [son] of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He *said to him again a second time, "Simon, [son] of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He *said to him the third time, "Simon, [son] of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep."*

When they have finished breakfast, the Lord begins the complete restoration of Peter's soul. The personal relationship between Him and Peter has previously been put in order. Therefore, He first appeared to Peter personally. We are not told what He discussed with Him. It is enough for us to know that everything was put in order between Him and the Lord (Mk 16:7; Lk 24:34; 1Cor 15:5). That there is nothing more standing between Peter and the Lord we have seen in Peter's spontaneous action of

swimming directly to Him when he hears that He is on the shore (verse 7). There is no longer any diffidence on his part.

Having restored his personal relationship with the Lord, Peter must now be restored openly in the midst of his brethren. As a result, the gracious work of the Lord Jesus will be deepened in Peter's heart.

The Lord does not reproach him about his denial, but gets to the root cause: Peter's self-confidence and feeling better than others. After all, Peter boasted that though all would fall away because of Him, at least he would not (Mt 26:33). To fully expose that self-confidence, so that Peter will recognize it in himself and condemn it, the Lord asks him three questions. These three questions, of course, correspond to the three times Peter denied Him.

Therefore, in His first question about the love that Peter said he had for Him, the Lord Jesus makes the comparison that Peter drew between himself and the other disciples. In his answer, Peter does not speak a word about loving Him more than the other disciples, even though the Lord asked about it. Peter understood the question well. In his answer, he no longer gives high praise of his love for the Lord. He appeals to His omniscience. As for himself, he knows that he has failed in his love for Him, but he also knows that the Lord knows his heart and that He then sees in his heart anyway that he loves Him.

In his answer, Peter uses a weaker word for love than the Lord used in His question. In His question about Peter's love, the Lord has used for the word love the Greek word *agapao* by which Divine love is indicated. He asks Peter if he loves Him with that highest love. Peter answers with the Greek word *phileo*, a word by which a weaker form of love is indicated. This is the word for love that is used among people and has more the meaning of 'attachment', 'affection'.

This response by Peter shows the genuineness of his faith which has now been stripped of its bravado. On the basis of this response, the Lord gives Peter the care of His lambs, the most vulnerable of His flock. Is there any greater proof of trust that a friend could place in me than to entrust to me his most precious possession? That is the trust the Lord gives Peter here. We might have chosen Peter last, given his threefold denial. The gracious

answer is that Peter is exactly the man He can trust. The reason is the complete breaking of his self-confidence.

The Lord Jesus will soon be going away from His own, back to His Father. Where can He find a trustworthy, true and loving shepherd who can take over His care for these vulnerable ones? He finds that shepherd in Peter. Does He also find that shepherd in us?

Peter's care for the lambs consists of tending them. Lambs are not to be herded, but tended. To tend means to give them food that consists of teaching them the truth at the level they can endure. Peter is entrusted with the care of the Jewish lambs and sheep. He will be able to give food to the lambs by presenting to them the Messiah as He was. He does this in the book of Acts and also in his two letters.

In His second question to Peter, the Lord no longer speaks of the comparison with the other disciples. That matter is settled. He does not return to that. In His second question He asks about Peter's personal love for Him: You do love Me, don't you? Here again He uses the word *agapao*, the word for Divine love. Peter does not dare to adopt this word and responds deeply humbled with the weaker *phileo*, 'affection'. As the first time, Peter begins his answer with "yes, Lord" and appeals to His omniscience. He truly loves the Lord, though he acknowledges that not much of it is seen on the outside.

The Lord knows this too and appreciates Peter's answer with a new commission. Peter is now given His sheep to care for, to shepherd, to protect. Mature believers who already know a bit more of the truth do not need food in the first place, although that too is indispensable, but that they be preserved by what they know of the truth. The danger they face is that the enemy will draw them away from what they know.

When the Lord asks about his love for the third time, Peter is grieved. This grief is not because he feels the Lord is overcharging him, but because he is now fully aware of who he has been. The Lord has accomplished His purpose with Peter. That He is not asking too much, but rather is in the process of fully restoring Peter, is evident from the fact that in this third question He uses the same word that Peter has always used. Here He takes over Peter's word and speaks of 'affection'. He is saying, as it were: 'Peter,

if you dare not say that you love Me, do you dare say that you just feel affection for Me?’

Peter realizes that he has shown so little of it and that he cannot point to evidence of love for the Lord. He again appeals to His omniscience and in a stronger way than the other two times. He now says that He knows everything, which also means that He knows him through and through. In response to that humble confession, the Lord entrusts him with the full care of His sheep by now also telling him to tend His sheep.

When Peter, after his humiliating fall, is brought to complete dependence on grace, grace shows how rich and abundant it is. What is most precious and valuable to the Lord, the gift of the Father’s love to Him, He entrusts to Peter: the sheep He has just redeemed. That grace, therefore, does not inspire confidence in ourselves, but in God, on Whose grace we can always rely.

Jn 21:18-23 | You Follow Me

*18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to [go].” 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He *said to him, “Follow Me!” 20 Peter, turning around, *saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following [them]; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” 21 So Peter seeing him *said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” 22 Jesus *said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what [is that] to you? You follow Me!” 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but [only], “If I want him to remain until I come, what [is that] to you?”*

The Lord reminds Peter of what he used to be led by. It refers to the time when he was younger, the period actually up to now. Then he girded himself, that is, he acted in his own strength and set to work. That led him to wrong statements and actions and on wrong paths. However, there will come a time when he will stretch out his hands to let them be guided and

governed by the power of the Holy Spirit. If he thus gives his life into the hand of the Spirit, he will be brought to a place to which he does not want to go as far as his old nature is concerned. Then he will be led by the Spirit to death, and with his death he will glorify God.

Everything that the Holy Spirit does is for the glorification of God. This was made perfectly evident in the life of the Lord Jesus, and it is also true in the life of every believer who lets himself be led by the Spirit. We can only entrust ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit if we have learned to abandon our own will. Where the Holy Spirit is in charge, the Lord calls us to follow Him. It points out that we must watch the Lord Jesus closely to see which way He goes.

The Lord now tells Peter to follow Him, something that was not possible before (Jn 13:36-37). Peter is also given the opportunity to follow Him in a better way than he did before, which led him to deny the Lord. He then followed Him "at a distance" (Lk 22:54). Now he may follow close behind Him.

Yet Peter's eye is not yet focused continuously on the Lord. He turns around and sees John. Not that John's name is mentioned, but the description of the person Peter sees makes it clear that it is John. John describes himself in various ways. Here he again calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved", which speaks of his deep awareness of the love the Lord has for him.

John also knows the place of intimacy, of being close to Him, which we see in leaning back to His bosom, the place of His heart. He has a confidential relationship with the Lord, which allows him to ask Him questions for himself, as well as for others. This is a wonderful description of the special relationship John has with the Lord Jesus. John kept these characteristics to the very end of his life.

Peter is curious to know what will happen to John, and he asks what the Lord has in mind for John. The Lord's answer makes two things clear. First, that He has with John a relationship of His own. He told Peter about the death with which he would glorify God. For John, He has a different future in mind. Second, that Peter has nothing to do with the Lord's plans for another, but that he himself must follow Him so that He can carry out

His plan with him. Likewise, now each servant has his own relationship with his Lord that another has nothing to do with.

What the Lord says about John has a deeper, spiritual meaning. It does not mean that John will continue to live until the coming of the Lord. It is not an allusion to the duration of John's *life*, but to the duration of his *ministry*. John did not personally remain until the coming of the Lord, but he did remain in his ministry. He fulfills that ministry by writing the book of Revelation in which he experiences in the spirit the coming of Christ to earth (Rev 1:19; 4:1).

What the Lord has said is misunderstood by the brethren and consequently this misunderstanding is passed on. This is because they are not listening well. It teaches us that it is important to listen carefully first and check that we have understood what we heard correctly before passing on anything.

Jn 21:24-25 | John's Testimony Confirmed

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they ^{}were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself ^{*}would not contain the books that ^{*}would be written.*

At the end, John points to himself as the author of this Gospel. He has testified to the glory of the Lord Jesus and that God has given us eternal life. In this testimony he involves all the apostles. "We", that is the apostles, are all convinced of these things. "We" confirm John's testimony. John has described a certain side of the Lord Jesus. He has presented Him as the eternal life.

It is not entirely accurate to speak of 'a certain side', for to present Him as the eternal life is to present Him in His whole Being. The King or Messiah (Gospel according to Matthew), the Servant (Gospel according to Mark) and the Man (Gospel according to Luke) also appear in this Gospel in a special way. We might therefore call this Gospel the 'overarching' Gospel.

The Person of Christ, the Son of God, with all His manifestations is such a comprehensive subject, that it is impossible to write exhaustively about it. However, through the four Gospels that have been given to us, we can

discover more and more of Christ's various glories. In them is written all that God wants us to know of the things that the Son of God has done.

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