

JOHN

- 1) – Probably written around 100 AD, when Judaism and Christianity had diverged irrevocably and the future of Christianity lay with the Gentiles. May have been written by the disciple John. According to legend, John was a missionary at Ephesus when Domitian came to power (AD 81-96) and persecuted the Christians. John retired to the island of Patmos, 50 miles SW of Ephesus. (Legend: with Jesus' mother, Mary). After Domitian's death, John returned to Ephesus and died in the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117), and therefore would have been in his 90s when he wrote the gospel. (Izaak Azimov has a detailed discussion on this subject, *Azimov's Guide to the Bible*, pp 952-960). /// Only in John is there mention of the Beloved Disciple. He is mentioned as witnessing the crucifixion, as the first disciple to reach the sepulcher, and as recognizing the resurrected Jesus. (See note # 119.)

Synoptics

One year Galilean ministry
 Goes to Jerusalem one time
 Crucified 1st day of Passover
 Many parables beginning "the kingdom of God is like..."
 No long "farewell discourses"
 Jesus asks questions that draw the reader into the stories
 Peter and Andrew first disciples to called, and from fishing

John

Three years in Galilee
 Goes there three times for Passover
 Crucified day before 1st day
 None like this
 Four chapters of "farewell discourses"
 Jesus does not do this
 Andrew, Nathaniel, Peter are the first to be leave John the Baptist and join Jesus

Of Ezekiel's symbolic animals, John is the flying eagle, because he begins on the highest spiritual plane.

- 2) 1:1 -- "In the beginning" is intentionally evocative of Genesis 1:1. "The Word" is not used in the OT nor elsewhere in the NT. Its Greek counterpart "logos" was first used by Thales of Miletus in 640 BC, before the Exile, and at the time of Manasseh. He used it to mean "laws of nature" and supposed that the universe ran on fixed, rational, knowable rules, rather than at the whim of gods and goddesses influenced by threats and entreaties of humans. In 500 BC Heraclitus of Ephesus used Logos to mean the rational principle according to which the world was created. Logos means Word but with greater implications and came to stand for a personified entity: a rational, creative God. In post-Exilic times, under Greek influence, the Jews tried to justify Logos in terms of their God, using the Hebrew word for Wisdom. So it was Divine Wisdom that created the world and its rational rules. See Prov 8:22-23, Sirach 24:9, Wisdom of Solomon 1:6, 7:22, and Luke 11:49. /// Gail O'Day, NIB: John makes an important shift in wisdom terminology. "Wisdom" (Sophia) is a feminine noun, so when John uses "Logos" instead of "Wisdom," he reflects the historical reality of the incarnation, for Jesus as the Word is male. In the use of **logos**, John has chosen a term familiar to both Jews and Greeks at the time, but he has used it in a new context with fresh meanings. He draws on the rich symbolism associated with **logos** and uses it as a lens through which he views the coming of Jesus into the world. When one sees Jesus, he sees God – 5:37-38, 8:19, 14:9-11. Not only does Jesus speak God's word, he **is** God's Word. No line can be drawn between what he says and what he does. /// (Jehovah's Witnesses translate "The Word was God" as "The Word was a God," proving that Jesus existed in heaven before the

incarnation.) /// Women must realize that the extensive use of Father/Son language is not to reinforce the claims of patriarchy but to highlight the intimacy and love that rests at the heart of God.

- 3) 1:2-5.-- A refutation of gnosticism. Gnosticism: God was indeed personified Wisdom, but was far remote and unknowable to man. He was pure spirit and had nothing to do with material things. Gnostics found the world evil and supposed that an evil principle had created it. Jesus himself was pure spirit, taking the form of a man to guide men away from the idea that God was anything but spirit. /// John makes it clear that his God was **not** pure spirit, but both spirit and matter, and was the God of the OT who had created the world. See John 1:14 -- nor was Jesus mere spirit, but was incarnated in a real body. /// All scholars agree that these verses were taken by John from a hymn. Where that hymn came from is debated in detail on pp. 517-18 in the NIB but seems of little importance to me!
- 4) 1:6-8, 19-23 – Written to counter those who thought John the Baptist was the Messiah, perhaps even as late as AD 100 when the gospel was written. Note that the Fourth Evangelist never calls John the Baptist,” and never mentions the baptism of Jesus. His function is to witness to Jesus.
- 5) 1:11-13 – “Human decision” (NIV) and “will of the flesh” (NRSV) refers to being born of sexual desire, which a child of God will not be; they all will be given a chance at a life of faith not governed by the temporal realm.
- 6) 1:14a – The basic statement of the Incarnation. The Word becoming flesh changes God’s relationship to humanity and humanity’s relationship to God: the incarnation means that human’s can see, hear, and know God in ways never before possible: “intimate, palpable, corporeal access to the cosmic reality of God.” The NIV catches the OT association with the use of “dwelling” rather than the NRSV’s “lived among us,” because the noun has the same root as “tabernacle.” 14b – An allusion to the Transfiguration, which is **not** described in John! The “we” does not refer to eyewitnesses but to the confessing community. 14c – “Full of grace and truth” echoes the OT “steadfast love and truth.”
- 7) 1:15 – Belongs after v 8 to read properly. May be completely out of place and a duplicate of 1:30. Note that none of the synoptic gospels make allusion to the pre-existence of Jesus.
- 8) 1:18 – A controversial verse, even for early Christians. Some claimed that making Jesus God destroyed monotheism. But it should be taken that the only Son shares in the fullness of God, is fully God. The same claim is made in 1:1 “The Word was God...”
- 9a) 1:21-23 – John’s terse denial of being Elijah differs from Matthew 11:14 and Mark 9:13 where Jesus identifies John as Elijah. /// "The Prophet" is a reference to Deut 18:15-22, which was written at the time of Josiah, who received the book after its discovery in the Temple, and may refer to someone contemporary with the Deuteronomist. But by **post**-Exilic times it was accepted as Messianic, and now by Christians as a reference to Jesus. So it actually means that John was being asked if **he** were the Messiah.
- 9b) 1:28 – Jesus went to Bethany across the Jordan, a village 2km east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, where John the Baptist lived, not the Bethany where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived about two miles from Jerusalem. This probably means that Jesus was baptized in Bethany, not in the Jordan. There is, in fact, a deep well there thought by some archaeologists to be where Jesus was baptized.
- 10) 1: 29-34 – The gospel of John clearly recognizes here that Jesus was the Messiah. In the three synoptic gospels there is no such recognition. In fact, Matthew and Luke report that John sent disciples to ask if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, which would not have been necessary if

John the Baptist had actually seen the Spirit descending on Jesus. The synoptic gospels show a slow realization that Jesus is the Messiah. /// "Lamb of God" comes from Isaiah 53:7b: "Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth." **But**, see Rev 5:6-13: "Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders a Lamb that seemed to have been slain." See also Rev 7:14, 14:1, and many, many other references. /// The theology of atonement is more fully developed in 1 John 1:7, 2:2, 4:9-14. 1-7: "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin." Note that sin is singular – John emphasizes the collective brokenness of the world, not individual sins.

- 11) 1:38-39 – The Greek word for "staying" is also used many times in John to mean the relationship with God. Jesus's answer also has theological overtones – this kind of indirection is common in John's gospel – he is saying, "Come see me with eyes of faith."
- 12) 1:41 – Unfortunately, this passage negates the dramatic moment in the three synoptic gospels where Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah, and turns Jesus toward Jerusalem and the crucifixion. Oddly, the 4th evangelist never says that John the Baptist actually baptized Jesus!
- 13) 1: 42 – This verse demonstrates what the entire gospel emphasizes: the self-consciousness of Jesus concerning himself and his work:
 - Supernatural discernment of potentialities of his disciples: 1:42, 47-48, 51.
 - Predicted his death and resurrection: 2:19, 3:14, 6:51, 8:28, 10:18, 12:32
 - Claimed a peculiar relationship with God: 5:19, 26, 10:38
 - At the close of his ministry, this gospel emphasizes his supernatural awareness:
 - a) Time to leave his disciples: 13:1
 - b) Father had committed all action to his authority: 13:3
 - c) Betrayer at hand: 13:10-11
 - d) Chosen believers settled: 13:18
 - e) Outcome fixed: 13:19, 18:4
 - f) Moment of consummation had come: 13:21, 19:28
 - Knew that the witness of John the Baptist was valid: 5:32
 - Knew what his procedure would be for the feeding the 5,000: 6:6
 - Knew that his disciples were grumbling about his enigmatic speech: 6:61
 - Knew who believed in him and who did not: 6:64
 - Sure of his origin with the Father: 7:29, 8:14,55
- 14) 1: 46 – Nathaniel (Bartholomew) was from Galilee so this wasn't contempt. Rather, it was probably a reference to the fact that the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem, not Nazareth. See John 7:41-42.
- 15) 1:48 -- A rabbinic phrase meaning "meditating on the Law."
- 16) 1:51a – A reference to Jacob's vision at Bethel, Gen 28. First of 12 references in John to the "Son of Man." Tenney: "The title of the incarnate Christ...the representation of humanity before God and representative of deity in human life."
- 17) **REFLECTIONS 1:19-51**
 John's identification of Jesus in these verses:
 Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (v. 29)
 Son of God (34)
 Lamb of God (36)

“Rabbi” (38)

“Messiah (41)

Him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote (45)

Son of Joseph from Nazareth (45)

Rabbi (49)

Son of God (49)

King of Israel (49)

Son of Man (51)

18) Chapters 2-5 – The first cycle of Jesus’s ministry, the first realization of the “greater things” Jesus promised in 1:50. These chapters establish the themes and tensions of the entire Gospel, contain the drama of the gospel of John in miniature.

- 19) 2:1-4 – “On the third day” – after his baptism by John. Mary is never named by John, but she plays a greater role in Jesus’s life in this gospel than in the others. Jesus frequently addresses a woman as “Woman,” so addressing his mother that way does play down their familial relation (see Mark 3:33 – “Who are my mother and my brothers?” His “hour” is his death and resurrection and not even his mother can control God’s time.) /// Three telling points that this was not Jesus’ wedding: 1) v. 2 – Jesus and his disciples were *invited* to the wedding, 2) v. 4 – clearly neither Jesus nor his mother has any *obligation* to cater to the wedding, 3) v. 12 Jesus goes to Capernaum with mother Mary, brothers and disciples after the wedding. /// Note that this first miracle involves wine and the second miracle involves bread, feeding the five thousand (in all four gospels).
- 20) 2:6 – Leviticus 11:29-33 warns against using water from “an earthen jar” after something unclean (mouse, gecko, lizard, etc.) has fallen into it – it must be destroyed. Presumably a stone jar can be cleaned out and used again. The “purification rites” are the ritual washing of hands.
- 21) 2:9-11 – The steward focuses on the wine but John wants the reader to see the transformation of water to wine as a manifestation of Jesus’s glory. John calls this a sign because it points to the significance of the deed as an act of eschatological salvation and God’s abundance.
- 22) 2:12-22.– Incident placed during Jesus’s first (of three) visits to Jerusalem, rather than at the end as in the three synoptic gospels, who are probably right because the Temple authorities would not have tolerated such an act early in Jesus’s ministry. John highlights the challenge and threat that new life poses to the existing order. In those, Jesus did not say he would be raised in three days. In fact, Mark 14:57-58 records that a similar statement was **falsely** attributed to Jesus. But Mark accepts it as a true statement of Jesus. /// Vast numbers of animals were necessary for sacrifice. Roman and Greek money could not be used to buy them so money-changers were necessary.
- 23) 2:16-18 – In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 – “house of prayer” and Jeremiah 7:11 – “den of robbers.” Here John quotes him alluding to Zechariah 14:21b – “and you shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord.” The quote from Psalms 69:9 is altered by John. In the LXX and most versions, the verse reads, “has consumed.” Here John has his hearers and readers believing that it “will be” Jesus’s passion. John’s Temple story is about Jesus’s fate, not the Temple’s. Many other vss from this same psalm are applied to Christ: vss 1-4 (his anguish), vs 8 (his estrangement from his people), vs 21 (the gall and vinegar on the cross). In John, Jesus’s opponents are always “the Jews,” never Pharisees, Sadducees, or scribes.
- 24) 2:19-20 – The verb Jesus uses for raising the Temple is the same one used for his resurrection – 2:22, 5:21, 12:1, 9 17: 21:14. /// The Second Temple was built in 22 years, 538-516 BC. But Herod the Great initiated a vast restoration (sometimes called the Third Temple) in 19 BC, which would have been 46 years earlier if this visit occurred in AD 27.

25) REFLECTIONS ON 2:13-22

This episode should not be taken to mean that Jesus was against Judaism. He was against part of the rituals of Judaism that he felt defiled the temple. “The Jews” didn’t want that kind of change. Modern-day Christians should be careful about maintaining rituals and other aspects of Christianity that need changing.

- 26) 2:23-25 – These vv point out the inadequacy of faith based on miracles alone. Jesus would not entrust himself to those people. His all-encompassing knowledge is the source of this distrust. This knowledge is a central theme of the 4th Gospel.
- 27) 3:1-2 – Significantly, Nicodemus comes at night – see vv 19-21 for Jesus’s condemnation of ‘those who seek darkness rather than light.’ /// The first person plural “we” indicates that Nicodemus’s community acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah come from God.
- 28) 3:3-4 – “Anōthem” is a Greek word for which there is no equivalent in Hebrew, Aramaic, or English. It can be translated “from above,” “again,” or “anew.” So all three should be read into the admonition, not one or the other. Nicodemus is oblivious to meanings other than “born again.”
- 29) 3:5-8 – We think of “being born of water” as baptism, but it also can be taken literally as the waters breaking before the birth of a child. /// In v7 “you” is plural. /// In v8, the Greek “pneuma” and Hebrew “ruah” can mean “wind” or “Spirit.” (Both are feminine words.) The new birth is like the wind/Spirit, a mystery beyond human knowledge and control.
- 30) 3:10 -- In that culture, "a teacher of Israel" was an important rabbi.
- 31) 3:11 -- "we": Jesus may have been speaking as a representative of the godhead, or including the disciples, or perhaps the royal "we."
- 32) 3:13-16 – An anachronism: Jesus had ascended for John, but not for Nicodemus. /// The Greek word “hypso_” has the double meaning of “lift up” and “exalt,” Jesus implying that the physical act of lifting up is also a moment of exaltation. This overlap is crucial to Johannine soteriology (Jesus as savior) because John understands Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection as one continuous event: the irony is that the cross as humiliation is actually exaltation – for John you can’t separate them. For John you believe and are saved, or you don’t believe and you perish. V. 14: See Numbers 21:5-9. (Origin of the caduceus as a symbol of healing.)
- 33) 3:25-30 – Suggests a rivalry between the disciples of John the Baptist and Jesus, which may have extended up to the time of the writing of St. John’s gospel (see Acts 19:1-7). Vv 3:26 and 32b contradict each other. V 26 shows Jesus’ popularity to anticipate his increase and John’s decrease. V 32b stresses Jesus’ rejection to illustrate the faith community’s struggle with those who don’t accept Jesus’ witness.
- 34) 3:36 – Sounds too much like the Koran: Sura 48:11 – “Who can intervene on your behalf with God if it be his will to do you harm or good?”
- 35) 4:2 – Added by a later editor who feared that it would be misunderstood that Jesus was imitating John the Baptist.
- 36) 4:4-6 -- The Samaritans were a mixture of two peoples: The Israelites from the northern kingdom who had **not** been deported to Assyria by Nebuchadnezzar in 722 BC. And the captives of the Assyrians from other countries resettled in the northern kingdom. They claimed descent from Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Their mongrel religion (worship of Jehovah mixed with the gods brought in by the captives) set them apart religiously and politically from the Jews, most of whom felt defiled by even casual contact with them. **Sychar** was either Shechem itself, or more likely a small village near Shechem, one-half mile from Jacob's well, which lies at the foot of Mt. Gerizim, the center of Samaritan worship, where lay the temple to Zeus Xenios. Jewish troops destroyed this

temple in 128 BCE, intensifying the schism. /// This passage of Jesus through Samaria is unique to the Gospels. The synoptic gospels show him avoiding Samaria. This story prepares the reader for Philip's missionary trip to Samaria (Acts 8).

- 37) 4:7 – Recalls 1 Kings 17:10ff where Elijah interrupts a woman's household work to ask for water, suggesting the image of Jesus as prophet, which becomes a theme in their conversation.
- 38) 4:10 – A play on words: “hyd_r z_n” can mean either “fresh water from a spring” or “life-giving water.”
- 39) 4:12 – A universally recognized instance of John's irony. For John and his readers, Jesus is greater than Jacob, but the woman clearly assumes the opposite. In fact her question is introduced by the Greek interrogative “mē” that anticipates a negative reply.
- 40) 4:15-19 – She still has failed to grasp the radical nature of Jesus' gifts. Her request is right for the wrong reasons. But it would be wrong to assume that Jesus is judging her immorality because of her marital history. She may have been trapped in the custom of levirate marriage (See Deut 25:5-10 and Luke 20:27-33).
- 41) 4:20 – Referring to Deut 27 and 28. As the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, Moses instructed the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin to build an altar on Mt. Gerizim and sing blessings. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphthali were to build an altar on Mt. Ebal and pronounce curses, antiphonally with the blessings.
- 42) 4:22 – JB: Hard to reconcile – salvation doesn't come from the Jews – they mostly rejected Jesus – but from a Jew – Jesus.
- 43) 4:25-26 – The Samaritans also expected a Messiah and thought of him as a teacher, hence her statement. /// Basis for Jesus's “I AM” sayings are Isaiah 43:25, 51:12, 52:6.
The first of seven I AM sayings in John:
- 4:28: “I AM the one who is speaking to you”
 - 6:20: “I AM, do not be afraid”
 - 8:24: “...you will die of your sins unless you believe that I AM”
 - 8:58: “...before Abraham was, I AM”
 - 13:19: “...when it does occur, you may believe that I AM”
 - 18:5; Jesus replied, “I AM.”
- 44) 4:37-38 – No one has found the origin of this saying. Note that in Galatians 6:7-8 Paul says that one always reaps what he has sown. Jesus is probably referring to the men even then coming toward them from the city. May also be referring to a much broader field in the future.

45) REFLECTIONS ON 4:4-42

The setting of this episode in Samaria is a scandal lost to modern readers. But for the 1st century readers it would have broken two boundaries – between Samaritan and Jew, and between man and woman. This episode should be read helpfully along with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The difference is that Jesus himself is the one to break down the barriers. Jesus wants to open the eyes of the woman and his own disciples with many metaphors – living water, hour, food, harvest – so they can see what is being offered to them today, rather than dwelling on old realities.

- 46) 4:43-44 – John omits the part of this episode in Nazareth where Jesus fails to impress his townsmen, and is in fact run out of town. This doesn't fit John's picture of Jesus! There are similar versions in Matt 13:57. Mark 6:4, Luke 4:24. The consensus of scholars is that Jesus' “own country” is Judea, his own in God's plan of salvation, not Galilee where he lived his

early life.

47) REFLECTIONS ON 4:43-54

We must look beyond what Jesus can **do** – to what he **is** – not just a miracle worker but a giver of life. Then the “miracle” becomes a “sign” that God is available to humanity if one can look beyond the visible to the invisible.

- 48) 5:8-18 – Jesus is accused of healing on the Sabbath and the healed man is accused of doing work on the sabbath (carrying his mat). But Jesus is interested only in making the man well, doing the work of his Father, which infuriates “the Jews” because they consider him to be proclaiming himself God, whereas Jesus means just the opposite, that his “work” is dependent on God. The surprising thing is that this “work on the sabbath” escalates to wanting Jesus dead.
- 49) 5:22 – Are vv 5:22 and 5:45 in tension, contradicting each other?
- 50) 5:28-29 – Ambiguous. Are we not to be astonished that those in the grave will hear the Father’s voice, or that they will come out of the grave to be judged?
- 51) 5:31-32 – Jewish law holds that no man can bear witness on his own behalf. The NIV’s “valid” highlights this better than the NRSV’s “true.” The “another who testifies” is God.
- 52) 6:1 – To consult with disciples because John had just been beheaded (Matth 14:12,13). This is the only miracle to be found in all four gospels (Matthew 14 and 15, Mark 6 and 8, Luke 9).
- 53) 6:8-12 – In 2 Kings 4:42-44 we read that 20 small barley loaves fed 100 people. /// JB: Why did Jesus need the boy’s fish and loaves to feed the 5,000? /// Here Jesus distributes the food. In the other three gospels the disciples do it. /// Jesus telling the disciples to gather up the left-over food introduces the Exodus theme where Moses tells the Israelites to gather up all the manna lest it spoil.
- 54) 6:19-21 – The boat reaching land “immediately” is a second miracle. John omits the stilling of the storm found in Matthew 14 and Mark 6. God’s dominion over the waters is a symbol in the OT of God’s sovereignty and care (Isaiah 43:2, 16; Psalm 77:19; 107:23-32; Exodus 14, many others). God can also walk on water: Job 9:8.
- 55) 6:35 – First of seven metaphors:
- 6:35: I am the bread of life.
 - 8:12: I am the light of the world.
 - 10:7: I am the door of the sheepfold.
 - 10:11: I am the good shepherd.
 - 11:25: I am the resurrection and the life.
 - 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life.
 - 15:1 I am the true vine and my father is the gardener.
- The hunger/thirst symbolism: 1) Exodus imagery where God supplied manna from heaven and water from a rock, 2) Through the lens of Jewish wisdom tradition (Prov 9:5, Siriac 24:21), 3) Eucharistic symbolism anticipated here, 4) What people need in life is available in Jesus.
- 56) 6:41-42 – JB: Isn’t this the same crowd who just got fed by the miracle of multiplying five loaves and two fish to feed 5,000 men and unnumbered women and children?
- 57) 6:44-46 – I don’t read this to mean that believing in Jesus is the **only** way to the father.” But it is one **sure** way. Also, I don’t read it to mean that if you don’t believe in Jesus, you’re going to Hell (whatever and wherever that is!)
- 58) 6:49-50 – In 6:31 he says “our ancestors.” Here he distances himself from the crowd and their history with “your ancestors.”

- 59) 6:51-58 -- Tenney: a "figure of belief." To eat this bread is to take in Christ as one's life. Vs 51 introduces the concept of Jesus' vicarious sacrifice of his body for the sins of the world. He is predicting that as God is incarnated in him, he will give up his life for mankind. Vs 55-57 indicate that to figuratively take in (the Greek word here is "consume:") Christ's body and blood is to bring one into an abiding relationship with him. Vss 58-59 compares the "bread from heaven" **for** Moses and "bread from heaven" that **is** Jesus. (This text may be John's substitute for the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper.) Leander Keck (Disciple 5): "Eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood" is a metaphor for internalizing the meaning of Jesus. When his meaning is internalized, he becomes an enduring presence who continues to nourish the true, eternal life of the believer.
- 60) 6:69 – This parallels the Great Confusion found in Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-33, Luke 9:18-20 The "Holy One of God" is a rare term, used by Peter in Acts 2:27 and 3:14. Also strongly resembles the "Holy One of Israel" frequently used by Isaiah, e.g. 41:14, 43:3, 47:4, elsewhere.
- 61) REFLECTIONS 6:60-71**
- A basic theological tenet of the 4th Gospel is that a sign alone is not an adequate ground for faith; the believer must come to understand the theological and christological truths revealed in that sign. The miraculous feeding is only that – a miraculous feeding – without the life-giving words of Jesus that follow. On the other hand, if the words of Jesus had not been preceded by the physical act of feeding, there also is no life. Flesh and Spirit belong together; only when they are together is life possible. ///
- Chapter 6 substitutes for the Last Supper narratives in the synoptic gospels. Eating Jesus's flesh and drinking his blood through the Eucharist causes the believer and Jesus to abide together.
- 62) 7:2-3 – The "Feast of Booths" is described in Leviticus 23:33-36. It is one of seven annual national celebrations described in Leviticus 23:5-39. (See note #65 below.) /// Jesus's brothers: James, Joses, Judas, Simon.
- 63) 7:24 – Don't see the sign as simply a miracle, but as revealing the presence and identity of God.
- 64) 7:25-36 – The "Messianic debate" reflects not only the debate at the time of Jesus but also the debate going on at the time John wrote the gospel, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. /// 7:27 – This was a popular belief of the time, not scriptural. V.35 – An unconscious prophecy of the future of Christianity.
- 65) 7:37 – The Feast of Tents (Booths), when the people lived in huts or tents to recall the years in the desert and carried water from the Pool of Siloam as a reminder that water came from the rock. One of the central rites of the Feast of Booths was the water libation on the last day – the priest circles the altar with freshly drawn water. The old rites now acquire new meaning with the presence of the incarnate Word. The scripture quoted is not found in the OT – may be a composite of texts – see NIB, page 623.
- 66) 7:39 -- "Glorified" is a distinctly Johannine verb, and has varied meanings in John. In many vv it refers to Christ's established status or growing reputation. See e.g. 8:54, 12:28. In this context it refers to his "coming into his glory" at the resurrection. (See Phil. 2:8-9 for Paul's interpretation of "glorification" or "exaltation.") John is not denying that the Spirit existed before Jesus's death and resurrection but that it did not yet exist in the life of the church.
- 67) 7:40-44 – The belief that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matthew 1:18-2:12) contradicts 7:27 where no one knows where the Messiah will come from. Both beliefs were current in the 1st century.

- 68) 7:52 – Twice wrong. Jonah came from Gath-hepher, 3 miles NE of Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25) in Galilee. Now, Jesus.
- 69) 7:53-8:11 – (8:1-11 – In parentheses because it was probably not in the original ms. May belong in Matthew. Many of the old and best mss do not have it at all.) Almost certainly not written by John. The style, syntax and vocabulary are different. Impossible to name the author. Who are referred to in “each of them”? Only mention of the Mount of Olives, only use of the word “scribes,” only time Jesus is addressed as “teacher,” in the book. The accusers provide no witnesses as prescribed by law. They accuse no man. The situation and the language here has more in common with the synoptics. In fact, some ancient manuscripts place the story in Luke. /// The non-verbal response by Jesus would have been taken in that time as a disengagement from the conversation. He wrote on the ground because **permanent** writing was not permitted on the Sabbath. Perhaps he was writing the name of his accuser, or their own sins./// The fact is that in this story Jesus speaks as if sin was a physical act, whereas John's notion is that sin is a refusal to recognize Jesus as the Word. On reflection, this powerful story should not just be a morality play, with the sin of the woman or the crowd's sin of self-righteousness, but Jesus's challenge to embedded religious authority. ///
- 70) 8:12 – Light was an important element in the Feast of Booths – four huge lampstands were placed in the Temple Court of Women that illuminated much of Jerusalem. Celebrants danced around them with lighted torches. Light was God's first creation. Pillars of fire lighted the way for the Israelites in the desert. In the wisdom tradition, light is a symbol of the Word of God in the world. Jesus gives the people that choice of walking in his light or in darkness.
- 71) 8:21 – The “sin” was the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit described in Mark 3:29 and Matthew 8:31. **But**, Barbieri, quoting extensively from Chas. Ryrie, claims that once Christ no longer existed in human form on earth, there is no "unpardonable sin." The sin of the scribes was a "sin of the heart" directly against Jesus. It required the visible and personal presence of Christ on earth. "A person's eternal destiny is determined in this life, but no sin is unpardonable as long as a person has breath." (See also Mark 3:28-30.)
- 72) 8:22a – A person who committed suicide was forbidden regular burial rites and their souls go to the “darkest Hades” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*). (See also 8:24-25a – Both the NIV and NRSV ignore the Greek “I AM” statement by Jesus.) In the Greek he identifies himself with the divine name (egō eimi). The Jews miss the significance, a great irony. Also see 8:28-29 – “I AM” points to Jesus's pre-existence with God, Jesus identifying himself with the divine name. Jesus is greater than Abraham because he is one with God. The irony here is that in killing Jesus by lifting him up, the Jews participate in his exaltation.
- 73) 8:25b – Various translated – note difference in NIV and NRSV. O’Day favors the latter and offers from another ancient source, “What I told you from the beginning, I am also telling you now.”
- 74) 8:33 – Can be read on two levels: 1) By descending from Abraham they are already spiritually free, and don't need Jesus's offered freedom. 2) Their denial of being slaves is a poignant irony, for their history was one of repeated periods of slavery and captivity, and even now they are subject to Roman rule.
- 75) 8:39a --The focus shifts to Abraham as the Jews' father, not God as Jesus's father, unusual for the 4th Gospel, where Jesus as God's Son is a crucial theological theme. The early readers of this verse would have recognized that this was Jesus's interpretation of a great debate among Jewish theologians (writers in the Mishnah and in the Qumran scrolls) about just who were the descendants of Abraham.

- 76) 8:44 – Refers to Satan in the Genesis temptation story where he deprives humans of the gift of immortality. (See also Wisdom 2:23-24.) Thought by many scholars to be erroneously attributed to Jesus.
- 77) 8:48-51 – The irony here is that the Samaritans also claimed to be inheritors of the promises of Abraham. Note that Jesus doesn't refute the charge. /// In the ancient Mediterranean world the one sent is the same as the sender, so by dishonoring Jesus, the Jews dishonor God.
- 78) 8:56 -- Not satisfactorily explained anywhere. Merrill Tenney has a somewhat convoluted explanation, which he admits is not based on any specific statement in Scripture: In Gen 12:3, God promises Abram that his seed should become the channel of divine blessing to all the nations. /// By "my day" Jesus may have been referring to his redemptive work. Abraham's experience at the sacrifice of Isaac could have been an object lesson to him of the coming of the promised Seed (Gen 22:1-18), a vision of Jesus' "day."
- 79) REFLECTIONS 8:48-59**
 A pivotal text in the discussion of Christian anti-Semitism. We should neither whitewash Jesus's invective nor treat it as a license for anti-Semitism. John was writing after a decisive rupture with the synagogue had occurred. Before that, Christians had continued to participate in temple worship as well as their own worship services. This caused a conflict as to the interpretation of "messianic" passages in the scriptures, primarily between Johannine Christians and "the Jews." They were repeatedly cast out of the synagogues, even though the 4th gospel shows that they were not antagonistic to Jewish tradition. The virulent language of Chapter 8 must be read against this backdrop of being excluded from Jewish religious centers. The language of this chapter is that of a minority group protesting the majority culture. So contemporary Christians (99% Gentiles) should not use Chapter 8 as a weapon against Judaism. They are now the majority group with their traditions and have not been rejected by Jews as the people of John's day were.
- 80) 9: 1-5.– Does this mean that years of misery were inflicted on this man by God for the express purpose of demonstrating Jesus's power? Tenney quotes G. Campbell Morgan as saying that the translation from the Greek is wrong in most Bibles, a matter of grammatical error. It should read, "But that the work of God might be displayed in his (the blind man's) life, as long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me." /// The disciples' question implies that the man's parents or he himself sinned **before** birth, either in a previous existence or in utero, an idea common in Jewish teachings of the day. /// Weatherhead: There should be a period after "parents." Thus it should read, "Neither did the man sin nor his parents. But, that the works of God should be manifest in him, we must work..." /// Kneading was one of the 39 categories of work explicitly forbidden on the Sabbath, so Jesus's kneading of the clay into mud was a sin.
- 81) An interesting progression in the development of the blind man's faith:
 9:11: the man called Jesus
 17: he is a prophet
 33: from God
 35: Son of Man
 38: Lord
- 82) 9:24 – "Give glory to God" was a traditional way of enjoining a person to tell the truth or confess one's sin (see 1 Samuel 6:5 and Jeremiah 13:16).
- 83) 9:31-- See Job 35:13, Psalm 66:18-19, Isaiah 1:15.
- 84) 9:41 – Jesus discounts any link between physical blindness and sin, then labels them with the sin

they have tried throughout Chapter 9 to place on him and the blind man. The blind man goes from physical blindness to spiritual sight. He literally and figuratively “sees the light.” The Jews go from physical sight to spiritual blindness because they refuse to recognize that Jesus is the light of the world. Sin (to John) is refusal to believe in Jesus, not a specific act (like healing on the Sabbath). Thus John believed that salvation through Jesus is primarily through his life, not his death. It's his incarnation, not the expiation of his death, that brings salvation from sin, a view difficult for many Christians to grasp. Sin is fundamentally about one's relationship to God, and, for John, the measure of one's relationship to God is one's faith in Jesus. This removes the usual norms of behavior from the category of sin (making many people uncomfortable). “The Johannine gospel is thus the most radical example of salvation by grace anywhere in the New Testament.”

- 85) 10:8 – This can't mean a rejection of all OT figures, rather just those leaders who have rejected Jesus.
- 86) 10:11 -- All the references to the "good shepherd" refer back to Ezek 34:2ff where God denounces wicked Jewish leaders as wicked shepherds. Then in 34:23 God sets one shepherd over both good and bad sheep, because when he freely chose to die for his people, he showed the way to life (gate) and offers abundant life by the example of his love, namely as the Messiah. Then in John 10:30, Jesus equates himself with God. /// In Swahili, the word used for an ordained minister is “mchungaji,” meaning literally “shepherd.” It derives from the verb “kuchunga” which translates “to protect.” /// Note the two christological images. Jesus is not only leading the way to life (shepherd) but is the way to life (gate). He can be both because when he freely chose to die for his people, he showed the way to life (gate) and offers abundant life by the example of his love (shepherd).
- 87) 10:17-18 – It's wrong to say that Jesus wins the Father's love through his death. Rather, his death is the ultimate expression of the love that already exists. His death defines who he is and how he enacts God's will. God's work is not complete until Jesus returns to the Father through his resurrection and ascension.
- 88) 10:22 – The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) celebrated the Maccabees' cleansing and re-dedication of the Temple after reclaiming it from the armies of Antiochus IV in 165 BCE. It was celebrated two months after the Feast of Booths.
- 89) 10:24 – Much better translated, “How much longer are you going to annoy us?” Note the similarity of 24b to Luke 22:67 where Jesus is being questioned before the Sanhedrin after being arrested.
- 90) 10:25 -- The seven miracles described in the book of John:
 2:1-11 -- water to wine
 4:43-54 -- healing the official's son
 5:1-15 -- healing the paralytic
 6:1-14 -- feeding the multitude
 6:16-21 -- walking on water
 9:1-41 -- curing the blind man
 11:1-44 -- raising Lazarus

The NIV's unfortunate translation of “miracles” in vv 25 and 32, rather than “works” limits Jesus's ministry. **Jesus's works include miracles but are not limited to them.** The Greek text of 29a is impossible to reconstruct. The NIV and NRSV present the two main alternatives. Either is possible. In v 30 the word “one” is neuter in Greek, so Jesus is not

saying that he and God are one person, but that they are **united** in the work they do. V. 30 is justification for vv 25-29.

- 91) 10:31 -- Literally, "carried," for there would not have been loose stones in Solomon's Colonnade.
 92) 10:34-36 – The quote is from Psalm 82:6. Jesus does not cite the second half, “children of the Most High, all of you.” But he clearly presupposes that the Jews know it. To modern exegetes, Jesus's exegesis of the psalm may be strained, but to first century exegetes it was common for rabbis to argue from the lesser to the greater. Therefore if scripture says that all people are children of God, then Jesus can be the Son of God.
 93) 10:40 -- Jesus’s ministry ends where it began, in Bethany across the Jordan, not the Bethany three miles from Jerusalem where Lazarus lived with his sisters Mary and Martha.

94) REFLECTIONS – 10:22-42

We come face to face with the relationship between God and Jesus – “The Father and I are one.” There was no Trinity in John's theology or his gospel. Theologians in the 2nd and 3rd centuries used this text in their struggle to think through the three persons of God, but John didn't have this problem. The relationship of God and Jesus was not a metaphysical puzzle for John, just the evidence of God's love for the world. Jesus's incarnation was wholly the result of God's initiative. God gave. God sent. For John, this divided Christians from non-Christians. For the 2nd and 3rd century theologians, this divided Christians from heretics.

- 95) 11:1ff -- The raising of Lazarus is not told in any of the synoptic gospels. WHY? Was it allegorical, the name borrowed from the beggar in Luke's parable (16:19ff), intended to show the power of Jesus's teachings? 11:4 – Jesus makes an explicit connection between Lazarus's illness/death and his own death, resurrection, ascension. Lazarus's illness will not end in his death but will end in Jesus's death. /// Mary's anointing of Jesus's feet is an anachronism because it hasn't happened yet. /// (Lazarus is a slurred Galilean construction of Eleazar.)
 96) 11:9a – There is limited time for Jesus – and the disciples – to accomplish what must be done.
 97) 11:17 – The popular Jewish belief at the time was that the soul hovered over the body for three days after death, hoping to re-enter the body. After “seeing that the color of the face had changed” it leaves for good. Remember that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, not after the third day. (JB: Why did Jesus wait till the third day, keeping his family and followers in a frightened, depressed state? Why not come back that night, maybe even before entombment?)
 98) 11:23-26 – Jewish belief in the resurrection can be traced back to Daniel 12:2. (Daniel lived during the Babylonian captivity beginning in 597 BCE.) In v. 25 Jesus counters Martha's belief in the eventual resurrection by affirming that he is life in the present as well as resurrection in the future. /// These vv are the theological heart of the story. They point to the identity of Jesus. The reader has to believe that Jesus and God are one in order to believe that Jesus could raise a dead man to life after three days in a tomb. “Jesus defeats the power of death because in him the world meets the power of the love of God incarnate.”
 99) 11:33 – Both the NIV and NRSV mistranslate both verbs. In the Greek, the first verb connotes anger and indignation. The second verb connotes agitation and trouble. Jesus's reaction therefore should not be taken as evidence of compassion. So why did he become angered and troubled? 1) The unbelief of Mary and the Jews. 2) The power of sin and death in the world. 3) The prospect of his own death and having to reveal himself through the raising of Lazarus. O'Day prefers #1. The tears are Jesus's public acknowledgement of the pain that death causes in the human heart.
 100) 11:41-42 – Jesus wants his listeners – and John wants his readers – to know that Jesus can do

nothing on his own – it's his Father's power mediated through Jesus.

101) 11:44 – A second miracle – Lazarus walks even though his feet are bound.

102) 11:47-53 – The priests had a lifetime appointment but in reality they held the position only as long as they pleased the Romans, so Caiaphas may indeed have served one year. /// This was a common aphorism in the Mediterranean world at the time. /// In the synoptic gospels it is the cleansing of the Temple that precipitates the decision to kill Jesus, not his raising of Lazarus. /// The raising of Lazarus stirs Caiaphas to demand Jesus's death. His statement in vs 50 is reported only by John, and allows him to point out that Caiaphas was engaging in unconscious prophecy -- that Jesus would indeed die in order that salvation might be brought to all people -- including Gentiles. This follows John's "campaign" to include non-Jews in the expanding Christian church in the year AD 100, or whenever he wrote the gospel. The "children of God scattered abroad" does **not** mean only Jews, clearly shown in John 12:20-22.

103) **EXCURSIS** – see note @ Matt 26:6 for all the anointings of Jesus.

104) **REFLECTIONS ON 11:55-12:11**

This story shows discipleship is defined by acts of love and one's response to Jesus. Note that John names a woman as the first to embody the love that is commanded of all disciples. A woman by conventional standards had no claim to that position and does not conform to the church's stereotypical assumptions about the composition of Jesus's circle of disciples. E. g., the twelve as a fixed group are nearly invisible in John's gospel.

105) 12:13 – Since Maccabean times (mid-2nd century BCE), waving palm branches was a symbol of national victory, so Jesus was greeted as a national hero. Psalm 118 was a royal psalm sung in thanksgiving of victory in battle at the time of the return of a triumphant king.

106) 12:14:15 – From Zechariah 9:9, where he comes not as a triumphant warrior king but as a humble visitor riding on a donkey's colt. Royalty rode on mules, soldiers on horses, common people on donkeys.

107) 12:19-24 – The Pharisees unwittingly recognize that Jesus has come “to the whole world.” The Greeks were probably converts to Jesus's teachings. John is indicating in vss 23-24 that the thrust of his message will now be toward the Gentiles, which is what the audience wanted to hear at the time John wrote his gospel. Note that the first Gentiles (Greeks – non-Jews) to seek a meeting with Jesus come to Philip and Andrew, the first disciples to be called by Jesus (1:39, 43). This points to a fulfillment of the promises of universal salvation.

108) 12:24-26 – “Fruit” is Jesus's metaphor for the life of the community. The salvific power of his death resides in the community that is gathered as a result of it. /// To love one's life is the opposite of Jesus's own action. (JB: But is “hate” the proper word? Doesn't make sense to me.)

109) 12:27-28 – “Now my soul is troubled” is an allusion to Psalm 42:5. “Father, glorify your name” means that Jesus lays down his life of his own free will – his hour has come for God's glorification. O'Day: There is no internal struggle such as in Mark 14:32-42. (JB: Really? Psalm 42:5 reads, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?”) Three voices from heaven in the gospels: his baptism, his transfiguration, and (only in John) at the conclusion of his ministry. Does this refer to the raising of Lazarus as the first glorification?

110) 12:29-34 – The crowd's hearing the voice of God as thunder or an angel's voice suggests that they recognized that they were witness to an epiphany but did not grasp that they had witnessed the presence of God in Jesus. “Lifting up” can be read as the crucifixion or the

return of Jesus to God. But they have not misunderstood completely as indicated by their question, “Who is the Son of Man?” because Jesus did not use those words. /// John's understanding of Jesus's death differs from the three classical atonement theologies, which are: 1) Jesus's death was a ransom that bought the world freedom from sin and death. 2) His death was as a sacrificial victim, atoning for human sin and guilt. 3) His death was a model of moral behavior, revealing how much God loves his people. John's theology is that Jesus's death was both necessary and life-giving because it resulted in a community being formed (much fruit). Jesus's glorification is the final step in the offer of a new life because God's relationship to the world is irrevocably changed. Jesus's death has effect, not because it is a sacrifice, but because it reveals the power and promise of God's love. **Summary:** the faith community is the fruit of Jesus's death. It is what shows forth Jesus's love to the world. It is critical to believe in Jesus so that one can share in the gift of his life, the gift that leads to eternal life.

- 111) 12:44-50 (should be read after 36a, then return to 36b to conclude Jesus's ministry). These verses stand as an overview of Jesus's entire ministry. When Jesus “cries out,” he is proclaiming his central theme – that he makes God known, that faith in him is faith in God. Jesus says or does nothing on his own, but speaks what God has given him to say. Jesus is one with God. Vv 46-48 state plainly that belief in Jesus is to be saved. He states plainly that he has not come to judge, but his presence will evoke judgment because of the response that people make to his word. These vv point forward to the farewell discourses to come in the next chapters.
- 112) 12:40-43 – This passage played an important role in early Christian attempts to explain lack of faith in Jesus and appears in all four gospels and Acts. The inability of the crowd to believe in Jesus is not Jesus's fault but is part of God's plan for salvation history. John maintains the tension between divine initiative and human freedom. This concludes Jesus's public ministry, makes faith or unbelief the reader's choice. Jesus is not speaking to a specific person but to everyone who reads this. A simple alternative to believing that Jesus is life, is to reject Jesus and incur judgment.
- 113) 13: 1-15 -- Maundy Thursday, from the Latin “mandatum” (commandment), the admonition by Jesus to “love one another” in 13: 34. /// **Or**, a much better etymology from Webster: derived from the archaic French word “mandé” (pronounced mahn-day), meaning “washing the feet,” which is what Jesus did for the disciples on the night he was betrayed, not on the night before he was crucified. This story is unique to Johaan's gospel.
- 114) 13:4-5 – The verb used to describe Jesus removing his outer garments is the same one Jesus used to describe laying down his life (10:15 and half a dozen other places). John therefore signals the connection between the foot washing his gift of life.
- 115) 13: 8b-9 – Jesus's response: To “share with” or “have a part with” is to join Jesus in his eternal home. It is not a ritual purification but a uniting of the believer with Jesus as he enters the events of the hour – the gift of a full relationship with him and the promises of God. Peter doesn't understand this. He locates the value of the foot washing in the cleansing power of the water and not in Jesus's offer of relationship. The salvific dimension of the foot washing comes not from the water but from Jesus's assuming the role of foot washer.
- 116) 3:12-15 – In 1 Timothy 5:10 Paul instructs that among the things a widow must do in order to be “put on the list” is to “wash the saints' feet.” So the early church must have read this admonition and acted on it.
- 117) 13:19 – Again the NIV and NRSV mistranslate “egō eimi” by adding the predicate “he.”

- 118) 13:21 – The verb “troubled” is usually translated “angered” or “indignant,” better contrasting his offer of himself with the emotional state of being rejected by one of his own.
- 119) 13:23-26 – In Matthew 26:19 and Mark 14:19 each of the disciples asks Jesus if he is the one. Here the “beloved disciple” is the only one, giving the impression that the rest didn't understand what Jesus was talking about.
- 120) 13:31-32 – A difficult passage. “Past, present and future are redefined in the light of the arrival of 'the hour.'” Jesus has come from God and will now return to God.
- 121) 13:34-35 – The “love commandment” is not new. What is new is that they are to enter into a love that marks the relationship of God with Jesus.
- 122) 13:36-38 – Peter still doesn't realize what Jesus is asking of him. When he does, he denies Jesus three times.
- 123) 14:1 – Marks the beginning of the “Farewell discourses.” Jesus shifts from talking specifically to Peter, to speaking to the entire group of disciples. It follows the genre of “farewell” literature of the ancient Mediterranean world. In the Bible: Jacob's farewell to his 12 sons (Genesis 49), Joshua's farewell (Joshua 22-29), David's instructions to Solomon (1 Chronicles 28-29), the entire book of Deuteronomy, Paul's speech at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38). As well as many other examples in extra-biblical literature. /// The word used for “troubled” is the same used previously to describe Jesus's agitation as he anticipates his death so here his advice doesn't mean “be sad that I'm leaving you,” but rather “be strong after I'm gone.”
- 124) 14:2-3 – For John, the “Father's house” is not a synonym for heaven. It's about the relationship of Jesus being within the father, and Jesus inviting the disciples to join him there. They are also “welcome in the Father's house.” “Where I am, you may be also.”
- 125) 14:4-7 – “The way” is not a geographical term but is synonymous with knowing Jesus and his way. **This is the heart of Johannine theology, his good news:** in Jesus the incarnate Word, the son of God, one can see and know God in a manner never before possible. John does not say that Jesus said that no one comes to **God**, but no one comes to the **Father**, “except through me.” Jesus is talking to his disciples, not to contemporary Christians when he says, “none of you.” O'Day: “Those who say that not believing in Jesus condemns them to hell are seen as exclusionary and narrow-minded. John is saying that ‘we are the people who believe in the God who has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ.’” Christians have access to God through Jesus and are not concerned about how Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews have access to God.
- 126) 14:13-15 -- This limits requests to those consistent with Jesus's character and purpose. The if” is not conditional. Jesus is saying that anyone who loves him will keep his commandments.
- 127) 14:16-17 – The Greek word translated advocate is literally “a person summoned to one's aid.” But can also be translated Comforter, Counselor, Advocate. Note that God will send **another** paraclete, so Jesus must be one also? But in 14:26 the Advocate is identified as the Holy Spirit. The concept of the Holy Spirit was not new:
- It was present at the creation: Gen 1:2, the Spirit of God moved over the waters.
 - It remonstrated against sinners: Gen 6:3, the Spirit of God would not remain in humans forever because they are mortal flesh.
 - It empowered man: Judges 3:10, the Spirit of God came over Othniel (the first judge) and delivered the king of Aram into his hands; Judges 13:24-25, the Spirit of God began to move Samson (12th judge) as he grew.
 - It empowered men to prophesy: Zech 7:12, the Lord of Hosts sent the law and

teachings to the prophets of old.

- John the Baptist baptized Jesus with the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again (born from above? Born anew?).

And now, in vss 25-26 Jesus proclaims that the Holy Spirit will be his officially designated representative to act in his behalf. The function of the Spirit is teaching ("instructing from within," Tenney) and also recalling what Jesus taught.

- 128) 14:30-31 -- Literally, from the Greek, "he has nothing on me," no claims. In Luke 4:13, Satan leaves "until a more opportune time." This may be that time, and Jesus denies him any power over him. V. 31 is considered by many scholars to be the most controversial phrase in John because they don't go anywhere. In fact, Jesus just keeps speaking. Long, convoluted explanation by O'Day in the NIB, not at all satisfactory (to me). May be an exhortation to rise to the occasion, not rise physically.
- 129) 15:1-6 – All three elements are essential to the production of fruit: gardener, vine, branches. In an actual vine, all the branches are indistinguishable from one another. Hence, in the church, each individual gives up his individual status and no one is free-standing. The discernment of fruitfulness falls to the gardener, God. Compare this to Paul's description of the body of Christ, in 1 Corinthians 12, where each person has a gift distinctive from the others. John undercuts any celebration of individual gifts, which challenges contemporary Western understanding of individualism and self-expression.
- 130) 15:20 – Recalls the entire foot-washing episode for his disciples.
- 131) 15:22-25 – A further example of what John calls sin: not believing that God is present in Jesus. Before Jesus came into the world people could not sin because they hadn't the choice of believing that God was in Jesus. (JBD: Doesn't make sense to me.) Jesus makes it clear that "the world" is the Jewish leaders who oppose him, and he quotes scriptures to bear witness against themselves – Psalms 35:19, 69:4.

132) REFLECTIONS 15:18-16:4a

There are three negative aspects of John's sectarianism.

- 1) It can lead to a rigid dogmatism that shuts out all other ways to find God.

- 2) It can be interpreted as a call to extreme asceticism.

- 3) It can lead to dehumanizing or even demonizing one's adversaries. What this passage actually does is to challenge the community to be fully present in the world but not to follow the dictates of that world, not to be governed by the expectations of the world, not to play by the rules of the world.

- 133) 16:7 – See note #127 where the Holy Spirit (Paraclete?) was present from the beginning of the world. /// The Advocate here is believed by Muslims to be Mohammed.
- 134) 16:8-16 -- Three major aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit: a) vss 8-11, to the world: conviction of sin, righteousness, judgment; b) vss 12-13, to the disciples: direction and truth; c) vss 14-15, to Jesus: revealing him more perfectly, to glorify him. /// Weatherhead in *The Christian Agnostic*: The first "see" (v 10) in Greek is "theoreo," seeing what the optic nerves do. The second "see" (v 16) is "horao," mental insight or vision. In discussing what happened to Jesus's body, he asks the question, "Did Christ, by the immense power of his mind and spirit, dispose of the material of his body?" Then he answers himself, "Jesus finished in the tomb with the matter which composed his earthly body by means of a metamorphosis which we cannot understand and that what the disciples saw after Easter Day was technically an apparition." "What matters is not what happened to his body, but that his personality survived and was recognizably active in the world." (See pp. 133-134 for

examples of modern day “apparitions.”) /// In these verses the Paraclete acts as the prosecuting attorney in a trial, whereas in 15:26-27 he is the defense counsel. This confirms the importance of not limiting the translation of “Paraclete” to one English noun.

135) EXCURSUS : THE PARACLETE IN JOHN 14:16-17, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 16:12-15

(In Greek, *paracletus*, “one who speaks for...” Here John uses it as intercessor, advocate, legal assistant, comforter, counselor, particularly the latter two.) A crisis arises when Jesus dies. The incarnation of God is gone. The revelation of God has left this Earth. John presents the Paraclete as the solution to this crisis. The presence of the Paraclete is the link between the historical ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Paraclete. The promise of the Paraclete portrays Jesus’s death and resurrection as the beginning, not the end, of a new era in the life of the believing community. Future generations of believers are not left bereft of the experience that God made known by the incarnation. The Paraclete makes Jesus present to believers even though he is physically absent. The Paraclete is given to the community, not to the individual. It is not a private possession of anyone.

- 136) 16:21-22 – In Isaiah 26:17 the metaphor of childbirth is used to describe the advent of God’s salvation. In Isaiah 66:7-17 childbirth envisions the restoration of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The Greek word used here “for pain” usually describes emotional, not physical pain. So Jesus is anticipating more than his own resurrection, but there will be a transformation of the entire community as a result of his death.
- 137) 16:23a – They will not need to ask him any more questions –everything will have been made clear.
- 138) 16:28 – A summary of John’s gospel in one verse.
- 139) 16:31-32 – The NIV has Jesus mocking the disciples, NRSV congratulating them. Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 to predict that the disciples will abandon him at the hour of his death: “Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be scattered.” See also Matt 26:31 and Mark 14:27.
- 140) **Chapter 17** – Jesus’s prayer: 1-8 – for his glorification. 9-19 for his contemporary disciples. 20-23 for future believers. 24-26 – for the eschatological union of God, Jesus, and the faith community.
- 141) 17:1-5 – Note the stark difference between this prayer and the agony in the Garden in Mark 14:34-36. For Jesus to return to his pre-existence glory, the incarnation must end; Jesus must die. His death demonstrates his love for his own. (JBD: But why at 33, why not 53 or 83?)
- 142) 17:10b – Means that the community is identified as a locus of Jesus’s glorification. Which means that the identity of Jesus is made visible **in** him.
- 143) 17:12 – “destined to be lost” in the NRSV is better translated “son of destruction”. The reference is to Psalm 41:9, as it is in John 13:19.
- 144) 17:15 – JBD: Did God ignore Jesus’s prayer and allow all the disciples to be martyred?
- 145) 17:19 – Here, “to sanctify” means to set oneself apart for God’s work. Which for Jesus includes his death, but doesn’t exclude everything else he has done for God. “Consecrate” or “dedicate” might be better understood by moderns.
- 146) 17:24 – This is pure eschatology, not just a prayer for the union of the individual believers with Jesus after the believers’ death. This hope transcends the limits of time and history and returns the reader to the world of the Prologue. The love of God for Jesus, the love of Father for the Son, will continue in the life of the faith community. The community will become the locus of that love, just as the incarnate Logos was that locus. Jesus’s ultimate enactment of that love is in his gift of life.
- 147) **Chapters 18, 19** – These two entire chapters show a divine Jesus as not mute nor as the

suffering servant of Second Isaiah and the synoptic gospels. Jesus as portrayed by John is completely self-possessed and in control of events. John shows Jesus announcing his identity to the soldiers in the garden. Jesus dominates the exchange with Pilate, forces him to admit he knows nothing of the affair and is merely a mouthpiece of the Jewish priesthood. John lifts the blame from the Gentiles and places it squarely on the Jews. /// Later, in 19:10-15, this is made even plainer. Jesus is not silent and Pilate becomes desperate and is pictured as a puppet who can do only what he must do in accordance with Roman law. Since he knows nothing of scripture, the Messiah, or Jesus's teachings, he doesn't know what he is doing and the greater sin belongs to those who **do** know about scriptures, etc. /// In 19:12, Pilate yields to a political threat (which is not found in the synoptic gospels): the priestly party is prepared to accuse Pilate of treason if he acquits Jesus. In the days of the suspicious Tiberias (14-37 CE), accusation was often equivalent to conviction. /// In 19:15, they deny the Messianic hope altogether. John's carefully constructed case against them is complete.

- 148) 18:4-6 – The actual response by Jesus is “égo eimi” and is a theophany that causes the soldiers to fall on the ground, a conventional response.
- 149) 18:10-11 – Peter still doesn't get it. He misunderstands Jesus's acceptance of his arrest and impending martyrdom. In contrast with the synoptic gospels' portrayal of Jesus in agony about accepting the cup, here he freely accepts it as a gift of God.
- 150) 18:12-27 -- Some problems with the text. 1) John's gospel alone takes Christ before Annas. Tenney suggests that Annas was an "elder statesman," no longer priest but highly respected and the "power behind the throne" of Caiaphas. 2) John gives none of the details of the appearance before Caiaphas, where Jesus is accused of blasphemy, which is recorded in all three synoptic gospels: Matth 26:57, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:66. 3) The proper chronology is probably 12-14, 19-24, 15-18, 25-27, 28-40. The proper order is marked in the text, 1-5. /// The Sinaitic and Palestinian Syriac texts arrange the verses: 12-13, 24, 14-15, 19-23, 16-18, which really makes sense of the passage but is not accepted as "legitimate" by most commentators. /// V. 15 – Several opinions as to who is the “other disciple.” Probably not one of the 12 because it is unlikely that any of them would have been an acquaintance of the high priest.
- 151) 18:28-19:16 – It would be wrong to picture Pilate's being convinced that Jesus is innocent and his ally as the synoptic gospels tend to do. John, Josephus and others portray him as mean-spirited and driven entirely by political expedience. He intends to humiliate the Jews by ridiculing their national hopes by means of Jesus.
- 152) 18:32 -- See Deut 21:22-23, Gal 3:13 for the "curse of God."
- 153) 18:35 – John purposely introduces a theological irony in Pilate's response. For all practical purposes he **is** a Jew by siding with “the Jews.”
- 154) 18:36-38a – In v. 36, a better translation than “kingdom” is “kingship” – referring to it origin, not its location. The word translated as “followers” is used in several places to describe the temple police, so Jesus is ironically comparing his “officers” with the temple officers. (Note that the NIV has Jesus admitting that he is a king.) To belong to the truth is to be one of Jesus's sheep, a theological theme throughout John's gospel.
- 155) 18:40 – See note @ Matthew 27:15.
- 156) 19:1-3 – John sees the soldiers' actions ordered by Pilate to convince “the Jews” that Jesus had already been punished enough. The soldiers do not mock Jesus as in the three synoptic gospels. They leave him in kingly robes, setting the stage for his ultimate exaltation on the cross as the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

- 157) 19:8-12 – Why is Pilate afraid? 1) He has just heard that Jesus claims to be the Son of God and maybe he is divine. 2) By not crucifying Jesus he may be jeopardizing his own political career.
- 158) 19:13 – Note the difference in NIV and NRSV. O'Day favors the latter because Pilate was fully capable of a final irony by placing Jesus in the seat of power and judgment, where the verdict of life or death will be issued, and saying, "Here is your king." Only "the Jews" – leaders and priests – call for crucifixion. By doing so they renounce their distinctive identity as God's people, renounce their messianic hopes, and enslave themselves to Rome, in fact deny their God. From John's perspective, the rejection of Jesus is of monumental proportions – they have lost everything. John doesn't gloat, there is no exultation, rather a funereal silence – who can rejoice at anyone losing their relationship with God? Pilate, also, by siding with "the Jews," rejects Jesus and the truth he has revealed, loves the darkness more than the light, rejects the revelation of God in Jesus. This, for John, shows that it is not Jesus who is on trial here, but the world – the world has to decide what the truth is and react to it, thereby coming to judgment by God. So, opting for crucifixion, they end the trial as a tragedy for them, not for Jesus. Gabbatha means "ridge" in Aramaic. Probably the Fortress of Antonia, which housed the Roman garrison.
- 159) 19:16ff -- The differences in John's version of the crucifixion:
- Jesus bears his own cross. No one helps him along the way.
 - The humiliating aspects, e.g. jeering crowds, are omitted.
 - Mary, his mother, is put in the charge of the Beloved Disciple, who is also there.
 - Like Luke, the last cry of despair is omitted.
 - The soldiers break the legs of the other two, but not Jesus's.
 - A soldier suspects Jesus is not dead and pierces his side with a spear.
 - John feels the necessity of defending the truth of what he has said, for the benefit of the doubters at the time the gospel was written.
- 160) 19:25-27 – "his mother's sister" – Thought by some scholars to be Salome, mother of James and John (the sons of Zebedee). /// The absence of Mary's other sons is a clear indication of the estrangement of Jesus' real brothers. This changes dramatically later – see Acts 1:14, 1 Cor 9:5, 1 Cor 15:7. /// See Matt note #95 for discussion of Cleopas and Mary are the two people walking to Emmaus with Jesus, not two men.
- 161) 19:29 – The verb "finished" is synonymous with "completed," his mission now completed with his death. In the synoptics the offer of wine is mockery, but not here. Jesus remains a figure of dignity.
- 162) 19:35 – Some scholars read symbolism into the blood (eucharist) and water (baptism) that came out of Jesus's chest.
- 163) 19:36-37 – There is no OT quote for the breaking of leg bones. The closest are Exodus 12:46 and Psalm 34:20. As for the quote from Zechariah, this is a word of hope for the reader: when one looks at the One who is pierced, one sees God's only child, the firstborn. (See John 1:18.) There may have been a wider meaning than reference to Psalms 34:20 and Zech 12:10. Fitting events of Jesus's life to OT utterances is more Matthew's style. John's construct is probably this: Jesus was the Passover lamb. In Exodus 12:3 the Israelites are told to each take a sacrificed lamb's blood and smear it on their doorposts. In Ex 12:13 the Lord says He will pass over those houses and spare them the plague. In Ex 12:46 he says no bones of the lamb shall be broken. John's analogy is clear: the crucifixion of Jesus on the eve of Passover is a new and greater sacrifice. The Lamb of God is sacrificed for all mankind,

not just Jews. This interpretation also gives greater significance to John the Baptist's greeting in John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

164) REFLECTIONS 19:38-42

One should not misread the "Passover Lamb" analogy. The slaughter of the lamb and painting blood on the doorposts marked inhabitants as those to be protected, not as an act of atonement. If there is a link between Jesus's death and the slaughter of the Passover lamb, it is not in the terms of his death as an expiatory sacrifice, but as the new sign of what it means to be marked as God's people. "It is to this powerful and poignant gift of his life in love that Jesus asks his followers to conform their lives. The crucifixion and the love commandment go hand in hand because it is impossible to understand what Jesus's love is if it is separated from his death on the cross."

165) 20:1-10 – So many questions! Where were the guards? Why did the two disciples just go home? Why did Mary stay? How did the stone get rolled back? Is Jesus raised in his own physical body? If not, where is his body? How did he get out of his wrappings.? How did he wash off the 100# of spices and where is it? Where did he get his clothes? Where was he when Mary first got there and when she returned with the disciples?

166) 20:17 -- He is saying to Mary not to worry that he is going to disappear from her presence yet. See Mark 3:33-34.

167) 20:19-23.—This was probably a gathering of the faith community in general, not just the eleven. If this is Sunday evening, where has Jesus been all day? Didn't they believe Mary M.? Where is she if not with this group? In Luke 24:11, he says that they "did not credit her report," but also adds that Peter was "amazed." /// The **only** other reference to "breathing on" is in Gen 2:7, God breathing life into Adam. The literal meaning of vs 23 is: those whose sins you forgive have already been forgiven; those whose sins you do not forgive have not been forgiven." Tenney: "God does not forgive men's sins because **we** decide to do so, nor withhold forgiveness because **we** will not grant it. We announce it; we do not create it. This is the essence of salvation." A crucial passage debated at the council of Trent (1545), in defense of the ordained clergy granting absolution from sin. O'Day: "Jesus commissions the community to continue the work of making God in Jesus known in the world and thereby to bring the world to the moment of judgment with regard to sin." When the believer receives the Spirit he is empowered to carry out the work of the Paraclete – the community is to continue what God sent Jesus to do. (JB: If the disciples have been given the Holy Spirit at this time, why was it necessary for the Holy Spirit to descend as tongues of flame on the day of Pentecost? Acts 2)

168) REFLECTIONS, JOHN 20:19-23

Bill Hamon in his book *70 Reasons for Speaking in Tongues* makes a distinction between "gift of the Holy Spirit," which is Jesus giving the Holy Spirit to a person, and the "Holy Spirit's gift," which is speaking in tongues. Furthermore, until one is born again and can speak in tongues, he isn't saved.

169) **Chapter 21** is probably a postscript, possibly by a different author, and added when the book was written.

170) 21:3 – Various interpretations!

1) The disciples have abandoned Jesus and have returned home.

2) They have scattered to begin their mission to spread the word. 3) They are aimless, not knowing what to do so they go fishing.

171) 21:11 – Significance of 153 fish? Augustine: add the integers 1-17 and you get 153 (so?), or it

stands for the Trinity (how?). But most scholars see it simply as John's way of saying that he or someone else had actually witnessed the catch and counted the fish! /// The verb used to describe Peter "drawing" in the net is the same word used in 12:32 to describe the salvific effect of Jesus's death: "And I, when I am lifted up, will draw all people to myself."

- 172) 21:13 – The early church – and some people even now – see Eucharistic symbolism in this first meal with the disciples. It is consistent with the theme of the 4th gospel.
- 173) 21:15-17 -- There is ambiguity in the word "these." Probably means "more than these other men do?", but could also mean "more than you love these men?" In the first two questions Jesus used the word "agapao," meaning divine love. In the third, he uses "phileo," meaning affinity or fondness. Morris concludes that they can be used interchangeably with no essential difference in meaning. Note that Peter uses "phileo" in his answers. **But**, Tenney thinks that Jesus's changing the verb is what caused Peter's distress: Jesus is not only challenging his love but implying that it was superficial. Peter's answer to the third question is also different: he uses a word for "knows" that implies knowledge gained through long experience.