

Chapter 33: “Come and See”, The Gospel of John

The New Pentateuch of the Apostle John

The name “Pentateuch” of course was given long ago to the first five books of the Bible which Moses wrote—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Since the Apostle John also wrote five books, the last five of the New Testament, it seemed natural to call a volume on those five books, THE NEW PENTATEUCH OF THE APOSTLE JOHN. Those five New Testament books written by the Apostle John are easily identified by four with his name on them—John, I, II, and III John, and the other—Revelation—where he clearly identifies himself.

1. Revelation.

“I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and ‘What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’” (Revelation 1:9-11)

2. The Gospel of John.

“Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, (John 13:13) and said, ‘Lord, who is the one who betrays You?’...This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:20,24)

NOTE: When after the book of Revelation we come to a study of the Gospel of John, we will discuss further obvious ways in which the Apostle John is the author of the Gospel of John.

3. I, II, and III John.

These three little epistles are not as clearly identified as Revelation and the Gospel of John, but such internal evidence as the usage of “little children”, “beloved”, and the reference to a fellowship that centered around him before a split in fellowship, certainly indicate the author as the Apostle John.

33-1: Law and Grace.

There is a more important reason to call the five books from the Apostle John THE NEW PENTATEUCH as contrasted to the Old Pentateuch which is the five books of the Bible, the law of Moses. It reminds us as the Apostle John expressed in his preface to the Gospel of John that while law came from Moses, grace and truth came from Jesus. (It is not that truth did not come through Moses and in the law, but rather that complete truth came from Christ!)

**“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
(John 1:17)**

Grace and Graciousness is what the books of John reflect as a spirit. True, it comes from Christ; but John reflects it best of any New Testament writers.

33-2: Law, Prophets, and Revelation.

You have suspected already that a great deal of integration is required in order to put commentaries on the whole New Testament of 27 books in a three-section-one-volume commentary. (Beyond that a significant amount of the Old Testament is covered.) Of course, it is easier than you think when the approach is made that there is a built-in integration to the whole Bible that the Spirit put there when He wrote it. Also there is sort a coding to the total Bible that comes from the ministry of the Apostle Paul as Christ started him in the Arabian desert and Paul back at Tarsus continued during the so-called “silent years”. We have spoken about it previously; however a reminder is in order: Paul at Tarsus re-read the whole Old Testament, recording quotes from it that were to be part of the 17 books that he wrote or edited. Those quotes form this encoding from the Old Testament, with proper interpretation from Christ, that would provide the overall integration of truth.

Many minor (only because not as easily apparent) built-in integrations in the Bible will be encountered throughout the three sections of this one volume. Such is one that relates to law, prophets, and Revelation. Basically stated this is it: an understanding of the law provides background for a study of the Prophets and in turn a study of the Prophets provides a background understanding for the book of Revelation.

NOTE: Someone might reply, “Of course, a study of the Bible anywhere provides help in the study of the Bible elsewhere.” And that is true. It is a good principle of hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation, to allow the clearer passages of the Bible to help in an understanding of the less clear passages. But more specific matters are referred to here than this basic principle of biblical interpretation.

Dr. B. H. Carroll in AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE expresses this idea of integration in the manner that is quoted below. In an introduction to the prophets and on an interpretation of prophecy and after discussing how the Prophets present “dark saying” and “enigmas”, he writes what you read below.

33-3: The “Logos”

You see in the first chapters of Hebrews the way that the Apostle Paul proved that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: you see in the Gospel of John the way that the Apostle John proved that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The introductions to the Gospel of John and Hebrews are similar; however, with some striking differences.

In Hebrews chapter 1: God speaks through His Son; His Son is the heir of all things; through Him all the worlds were made; He is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, the power to keep the world going, the one who alone purged our sins, and sat down at the right hand of the Father. In John chapter 1: the Word was with God, was God, and all things were made through Him; the world did not know it's own creator; however, to those who believed He gave the privilege to become children of God; this “Word” became flesh and dwelt among men; man saw the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

I. Revelation 19:1-16

I'm sure you've noticed the striking difference between Hebrews 1 and John 1. The Apostle John is unique in using the word “Word” to describe the eternal and pre-existing Christ. Only John of the four Gospels uses the word “Word”. Only John uses the word “Word” for Christ in all of the New Testament. Where did John get that word “Logos” for Christ? From the Holy Spirit of course; but more specifically it was revealed in the book of Revelation, Revelation 19:11-13.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he has a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.”

While some might protest that the Son of God would never make war on the people of earth, you must recall that very shortly in the book of Revelation all the non-believers will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. There is no way that this can happen without pain and suffering; so that surely the time will come (the time of judgment) when Jesus no longer turns the other cheek or tolerates any kind of behavior. Also recall that the passage in Revelation 19:11-13 reminds us that Jesus will both “judge and make war” in righteousness.

Even as Jesus urged Christians to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), even so does Jesus at the Second Coming judge righteously; and that is basically what the passage of Revelation 19:11-13 is all about. It begins with the great voice of the peoples in heaven saying of one accord that “true and righteous are his judgments” (Rev 19:2). Specifically in the last chapter Babylon was judged with destruction in one hour with the guarantee that a candle would no longer shine in her forever. God avenged the blood of the saints against her. And while we

tend to think of the Babylon of Revelation as Rome, it could be any great and wicked city of the world that persecutes Christians. A candle still burns in the city of Rome and one stone is still left standing on another in Rome. So either this destruction is the final one on Rome or some other wicked city.

You may think of the Son of God as “gentle Jesus, meek and mild”; and that is true until the end time when this Word, the One from in the beginning was with God and the One through whom all things were made and through whom all things consists will come and make war and judge righteous judgment. You can count on that! While it may be true as Parrington states that New England has never forgiven Jonathan Edwards for preaching on the wrath of God, those souls that were saved from the worse fate in life have forgiven him; and while Parrington also believes that Edward’s unconsciously brought on the death of Calvinism, the word of God stands firm!

II. The “Word” in John 1:1-18.

The Greek word “Logos”, translated “Word” in English was a common word in New Testament Greek times. The use of the word in secular terms meant either: (1) something that remained in a man as his thought or reason; or (2) something spoken from a man that denoted an expression of his thought.

In philosophical Greek “logos” meant something like the “world-soul” or soul of the universe. You could identify with it in terms of Walt Whitman’s Oversoul or that of the transcendentalists. While the Greeks who listened to John would know that the “logos” as John used it was something important, they had to listen to the total context of the Gospel of John to know that this God in Jesus was passionately involved in the Universe, a God who came where we are, took our nature, entered the world’s struggle, and won man’s salvation.

Those Jews who heard John would immediately recognized in John 1:1 with the “in the beginning” a similarity to Genesis 1:1. All would recognize from the Old Testament where the Word of the Lord is an agent for accomplishing the will of God. (Psalm 33:6). For God to speak is for God to do something. Even today we can not miss the almost independent existence of the Word as in Isaiah 55:11.

“...so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”

As Leon Morris writes in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY: *“For him (the Apostle John) the Word was not a principle, but a living Being and the source of life; not a personification, but a Person and the Person divine. The Word was nothing less than God.”*

1. The “word” stands for the whole Christian Gospel in Mark 2:2 and Mark 8:32. In Mark 2:2, Mark’s record of the healing of the paralytic man, Jesus preached the word to them. In

Mark 8:32, Jesus “spoke this word openly” of how the Son of man must suffer, be rejected by the religious leaders, and crucified.

2. Preaching the word in the New Testament often implies or states that it is the same as preaching Jesus. (Luke 1:2, Acts 8:4, Acts 11:20, I Corinthians 1:23, II Corinthians 4:5, Gal 3:1, and Colossians 1:13.)

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (I Corinthians 1:22-13)

Henry Steele Commager in THE AMERICAN MIND is buffaloeed by an American people, so optimistic and self-confident, accepting the depravity of man; and also how an American people so distrustful of authority could submit to the authority of Scripture. Well, they see in it the Word of God.

III. The “Word of Life” in I John 1:1.

Whether you look at the book of Revelation or the Gospel of John or I John 1:1 as we look at now, you can not get away from the consistent objective of the Apostle John to show men the way to Jesus as the Christ the Son of God that they thereby might have eternal life.

1. John states it the introduction to the Gospel of John in the words of John 1:12,13.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

If you see little else about the authority and power of Jesus, you should see that while most in the world reject Him and He knows it, He has the authority to make any who will believe the children of God through the new birth. They are not children of God by birth or the will of the mind or the strength of the human body but of God.

2. John records it in Revelation 19:9 as part of the Second Coming of Christ and the righteous judgment.

“Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.”

It is a true saying of God that the believers in the church of the firstborn will be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

3. Then you see it also in I John 1:1.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— (here it is more than the Word or the Word of God, it is the Word of life) the life was

manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” (I John 1:1-4)

Wow, this passage is full of true sayings also!

- (1). When John says what we have seen and heard, etc.—the voice of personal experience—he is talking about what the Apostles saw and heard.
- (2). The Word of Life was manifested, this is the Son of God, this is Jesus Christ. What was revealed to be the Word of God in Revelation, what was presented to be the Logos or Word in the Gospel of John; now here in I John is the Word of Life.
- (3). This eternal life, alias this Jesus, was with God the Father from the beginning; and it is this incarnation of life eternal that the Apostles witnessed and are testifying to.
- (4). John and the other Apostles are declaring nothing less or more than what they saw and heard of this eternal and incarnate life in order that you the reader or listener can have the fellowship with the Apostles, with other Christians.
- (5). This fellowship is with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- (6). The record is made in I John as in Revelation and the Gospel of John in order that you may know the fullness of joy through Christ.

IV. We must see the connection between Jesus as the Word, the Son of God, and life itself.

1. Jesus words are the words of God. We see this in John 3:34; 14:10; and 17:8,14. Jesus made a prayer of intercession for his Apostles and for all that would believe through those Apostles. Among other things He prayed as follows to God the Father.

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” (John 17:8)

2. It is extremely important for you to believe the words of Jesus, John 5:47. Jesus tried to tell the people of His own time that they did not listen to His words of the words of Moses. Then it is that hear from Jesus as recorded in John 5:47.

“But if ye believe not his writings (Moses), how shall ye believe my words?”

Recall that as John stated in the introduction that while the law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. In effect, Jesus is saying, ‘If you don’t pay any real attention to the Ten Commandments as far as obeying them, you will not also pay attention to the matters of life in grace and truth.

3. The abiding in the word of Jesus is the same as being a disciple of Jesus, or a Christian. (John 8:31). The Bible itself only uses the word “Christian” three times. The person who believes in Jesus is more appropriately referred to a believer or as a disciple.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31,32)

4. Jesus words bring life. Jesus’s words are life. We see this in John 5:24; 6:68; and 8:51.

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:68,69)

5. Jesus’ words being cleansing (John 15:3).

“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”

Conclusion: The negative side of not listening to the words of Jesus is also in the Bible.

There is a positive side: listen to Jesus, believe in Jesus and live. The negative side is that a refusal to listen to the words of Jesus will bring judgment. In short, those who will not heed the words of Jesus belong to the devil. Wow, let me see it in the Bible!

6. The refusal to heed the words of Jesus bring judgment (John 12:47f).

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.” (John 12:47-50)

33-4: A Candle Still Burns in Rome Until the Fall of the United States Empire

Of course the classic interpretation of Revelation chapters 17 and 18 is that Rome is the city of Babylon; and that is obviously true of chapter 17 with its references to the seven hills of Rome and the obvious sequencing of the Roman Emperors including the Nero that burned Rome. However, in chapter 18 the pattern changes; and the Babylon of chapter 18 could either be Rome in its ultimate destruction or another great and wicked city that persecutes Christians. There is one obvious reason this is true and this is found in Revelation 1:21 and 23.

1. In Revelation 18:21 the city of Babylon is found no more.

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

We know that the city of Rome does still exist in the nation of Italy; people still toss coins in the fountains of Rome as they visit there; it is considered I suppose to be the home of the Mafia; and of course, it is the home of the Roman Catholic church.

2. A candle still burns in Rome, Revelation 18:23.

And that brings us to the second reason that the Babylon of chapter 17 is not the same as the Babylon of chapter 18. A candle still burns in Rome! In fact, many candles.

“And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee...” (Rev 18:23a)

I. The Babylon of Revelation 18 is closer to being the world itself, or at least any and several wicked and great cities that persecute Christians. There are several reasons besides the one of the introduction that are shown in the text.

1. The general nature of the groups of “all nations” and the “all that were slain on the earth” of Revelation 18:23,24 indicate that this is the final judgment on the earth.

“...for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth...” (Rev 18:23,24)

. The words of Revelation 18:8 obviously remind the reader or listener of the destruction of the earth by fire predicted by Peter in II Peter 3:10. Compare the two portions of Scripture.

a. II Peter 3:10.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

b. Revelation 18:8.

“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

Babylon shall be utterly burned with fire: that sounds like the same fire that consumes the earth.

3. The events of the next chapter, Revelation 19, show us the Second Coming of Christ and the marriage supper of the church of the Firstborn.

4. The extent of the fall of Revelation 18:2 has also obviously not happened to Rome as it does still exist and as also a candle does still burn in Rome.

“...Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”

5. If Babylon can be Rome in chapter 17, and obviously it is instead of the real Babylon, then the Babylon of chapter 18 could be a large city in the United States, or Europe, or could be representative of all large cities before the Second Coming of Christ.

6. The sins of Babylon of chapter 18 and even 17 is also what all other nations are guilty of as far as sin, Revelation 18:3.

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Honestly, it sounds more like the United States and the cities of the United States to me.

II. Look at Revelation 17 and 18, especially the references about the merchants and the fornicators, and you will see the United States written all over it.

What is the sin of fornication? The regular dictionary gives three definitions for fornication: (1) voluntary sexual intercourse, generally forbidden by law, between an unmarried woman and a man, especially, an unmarried man; (2) any unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery; and (3) worship of idols.

Let us face the bottom line of what we are talking about here. Jesus summarized the existing Ten Commandments as “You shall love the Lord God with all your heart, mind, and soul; and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The first is a summary of the first three of the Ten Commandments: not to have any other gods before the LORD God, not to make an graven images or idols, and not to take God’s name in vain. The love of neighbor as self summarizes the rest of the commandments as not stealing, no adultery, no false witness, etc. So when the Old Testament prophets called those named the children of God fornicators or whores, as they often did as you well know from reading your Old Testament, and the same in the prophesy of Revelation, it is an obvious reference to not giving God the first place in love of heart, mind, and soul.

And certainly you must see in all the references to merchants in Revelation 17,18 that it is America that leads the world in business. When you travel overseas what do you see General Motors, Exxon, MacDonalDs, etc. Constantly since the failure of communism in Russia, the United States is sending businessmen to Russia to teach capitalism. The business of America is business, and the United States is the undisputed world leader in business.

I recall visiting the various sites of missionary activity in Thailand with a CMA missionary named Neal Webber. He said that previously they gave the native Thais shoes. But soon it was heard from them that “you can get a pair of shoes if you become a Christian.” And that is the way the world looks at us, as merchants of plenty.

Now, already we suspect that the fornication of cities and nations influenced by Babylon must the last, the worship of idols; but let us continue. Vine’s EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY

gives the first and obvious meaning of “illicit sexual intercourse” and then the second as metaphorically, of the association of pagan idolatry with doctrines of, and professed adherence to, the Christian faith, Rev 14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3; and 19:2.”

And we must decide from a look at any concordance and the usage of the word “fornications” in the Old Testament, that the fornications of Revelation 17 and 18 are like that of Ezekiel 16 where the Prophet talks of the harlotry of Jerusalem. How they had taken idols to worship instead of God. It is background for Revelation 17 and 18 as Jerusalem like Babylon is called a whore.

American religion what is it? It is 1 part church, community, Bible, and Christianity; 2 parts freedom and democracy; and 3 parts merchandise, things, status, success, comfort, and the good life. Believe you me, the movies are influencing foreigners more than our missionaries; and what the people of the world want is our goods and comfort. They by and large see little relationship between our Christianity and our democracy of things.

III. The nations like the United States are in trouble because the churches are also in trouble.

If that seems like an odd thing to you remember that of the seven original churches mentioned at the beginning of the book of Revelation only two were not in serious trouble. The church at Ephesus left its first love, and was threatened with removal; the church at Smyrna was the only one not in trouble; the church at Pergamos had members of very unsound doctrine and were fornicators in that they were influenced by idol worship, and were threatened with a fight from The Word of God; the church at Thyatira allowed Jezebel to influence fornication of idol worship, and those followers and Jezebel were threatened with destruction; the church at Sardis had a reputation of being active and alive, but the Risen Christ said they were dead; and the church at Philadelphia was also not in trouble.

Now if five out of seven of the original churches had these magnitudes of problem to the extent of being threatened with extinction, what do you think the state of the churches in America almost two thousand years later is going to be like.

Do you not recall that the Apostle Paul wrote of what would happen in Christianity and churches as time passed.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables.” (II Timothy 4:3,4)

Now, do you think that time is here already or not. Look at the unsound doctrine of Roman Catholics all over the world that think they have salvation because they were baptized as babies; look at the Mormons who look so good with their TV ads, and evangelism, but have hideous doctrines that make salvation by works instead of faith (they call it the restored gospel);

and look at some of our Southern Baptist Churches so deep in divorce that if a preacher presents the Bible on the subject, the people don't come to church.

Notice the way it goes—

First, people no longer have tolerance for sound doctrine. They don't want to hear it, and they will assure themselves that they do not listen to it. Second, motivated by certain pet sins that they desire to keep in their lives, they look for preachers and teachers to agree with them. To talk about something new like the government that will not miss with their sins. As the Old Testament says, "Like the priest, like the people." The teachers with itching ears become like the people that called them. Thirdly, after a period of time they gradually turn their back on truth. They, preachers and people alike, do not even recognize any longer what has happened to them. Fourth, they are turned into fables. You can see where other churches are headed by looking at the fables that the Mormons have turned into with their book of Mormon about a previous civilization here in America, about Jesus coming to preach here while He was in the grave, and so on.

IV. Where does that leave the individual Christian?

We've talked about the nations and the fate of the nations in Revelation; we've talked about the churches and the fate of the churches in Revelation and II Timothy. But where does that leave the individual? Notice that right in the middle of Revelation 18, what with all the activity of the merchants and the fornication by not loving God with all the heart, mind, and soul, and the announcement of destruction on their cities, comes an appeal to the individual

Revelation 18:4.

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Also, you will notice if you have not already done so that in the midst of all the disturbing information about five out of the seven churches is an appeal to the individual to still act wisely.

1. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Ephesus, the Risen Christ said.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7)

2. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Smyrna the Risen Christ said.

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Revelation 2:11)

3. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Pergamos the Risen Christ said.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Revelation 2:17)

4. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Thyatira the Risen Christ said.

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak: I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” (Revelation 2:24,13)

5. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Sardis the Risen Christ said.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” (Revelation 3:4,5)

6. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Philadelphia the Risen Christ said.

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” (Revelation 3:10-12)

7. To the individual churchmembers in the church at Laodicea the Risen Christ wrote.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.” (Revelation 3:19)

33-5: Revelation, the Gospel of John, and the Epistles

Since the book of Revelation provided motivation for the Apostle John to start writing and provided background for him to continue writing, in our continued Bible study we will utilize Revelation as BACKGROUND for the Gospel of John; and since the epistles of I, II, and III John came after the Gospel, providing IMPLEMENTATION of the Gospel and Revelation to the problems of a split in Christian fellowship, we will naturally use the epistles for the implementation of the Gospel. Therefore the outline of each paragraph of the Gospel will have these three points (no poem!):

1. Background from Revelation.
2. The Gospel of John.
3. Implementation in the Epistles.

I. The Word.

No other Gospel or book of the Bible refers to Jesus as the Word except the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. No one even knew that name for Christ until it was revealed to John in the book of Revelation.

1. Background from Revelation.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and with righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. And He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. And He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:11-13)

2. The Gospel of John.

Armed with this revelation from Christ Himself of the name only known by Christ Himself, John starts writing the biography of the life and times of Jesus Christ. Only John of the four Gospels goes back into eternity to begin with the pre-existent Christ. Matthew goes back to Abraham, Mark goes back to Isaiah to pick up the prophecy about John the Baptist as the messenger to prepare the way for Christ, and then Luke goes back one generation more to the parents of John the Baptist. John starts like the book of Genesis with “In the beginning...” That was very purposeful on the part of John and the inspiration to John from the Holy Spirit. This is in Christ the new beginning of life. And in order to receive that life, which is the very purpose of John’s writing of the story of Jesus, you must see Christ as: (1) The Word that existed before the foundation of the world was laid, (2) The Word, Christ, who was with God from before the beginning of Creation; (3) That this Word is very God; (4) That this Christ was definitely not exclusively the God as He was with God in close fellowship; (5) Christ the Word was the mediating cause of Creation as all things in the heavens and the earth were made through Him; (6) Here is the subject of John—”In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:4,5) The darkness of earth with the sin and doubt and rebellion could not overcome the light and extinguish it, although it was tried!

3. Implementation in the Epistles of John.

I John 1-3 is a summary of the whole Gospel of John.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—for the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with His Son Jesus Christ.” (I John 1:1-1)

Then John implements the story of life in Jesus with its practical application of joy in Christian fellowship.

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” (I John 1:4)

There is the implementation of life in Christ: **full joy**.

II. John the Baptist’s Testimony, John 1:6-13.

1. Background in Revelation.

Obviously this passage from John is about “light and life”, and the light of New Jerusalem comes from the Lamb of God, the Christ.

“And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light.” (Revelation 21:22,23)

Naturally if a person is to eternally enjoy this temple of God and this light of God, then they must begin right now on earth to find a way to get fellowship with that light and life!

2. The Gospel of John.

The Apostle John does not divert from the focus on Christ as the light and life as he introduces John the Baptist as the witness to the Light. “That (Christ, the Word) was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world.” (John 1:9)

NOTE: This could be a show stopper right here. That is, moments could be spent on this. In what way does Christ light every man that comes into the world. Certainly, the kind of spiritual light that gives life does not come to every man, so that John must have learned something from the Ascended Christ about physical light, and of Christ as the source of all light in the universe.

3. Implementation in the Epistles.

“Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.” (I John 2:8)

This is true in you and in Christ: that the darkness that tried to comprehend Christ is passing away. Something is getting better on this earth, and that something is the darkness that the light of Christ is overcoming.

“Come and See”, The Gospel of John

“Come and See” is the invitation that Jesus gave to His first disciples, the Apostle John being one of them.

“Come and See” is the invitation that Jesus gives to people today. Not the same way as originally recorded at the beginning of the Gospel of John. However, the way is later in John: it is through the Other Jesus, the Comforter, the “alter ego” of Jesus, in other words the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit who came to take the place of Jesus on earth when He ascended back to the right hand of the Father.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world [the American Conscience] cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:16,17)

“Come and See” is the essential gist of the Gospel of John. “Come and See” what Jesus did, what Jesus taught, and the life and death of Jesus.

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30,31)

Here is where you begin to see the uniqueness of the Gospel of John as compared to the other Gospels.

1. The “signs”. John carefully chose seven of the miracles and Jesus performed from the many, and selected events and teachings closely related to those seven miracles in order to give the focus of John.

2. These Seven Miracles were done in the presence of the disciples. The work of Christ by no means was done in secret. The personal experience of “come and see” is the tone throughout the book.

3. These are written. There was the need for a written record of what John and the other disciples had seen and heard for themselves. There was the need to wrap up the revelations of the New Testament.

4. The goal was simple, evangelism: that men might believe that this Jesus of Nazareth whom they followed was indeed the Promised Messiah or Christ of the Old Testament, and that He was indeed the very, only Son of God.

5. It was evangelism that lead to “life”—“that believing ye might have life through his name.”

33-1: John the Baptist

Since the Apostle John does not use his own name in the book of John, you know that the “John” referenced in the first chapters is John the Baptist. This is the John who came to prepare the way for Christ. The same John that was prophesied in Isaiah as “the voice crying in the wilderness”. Also in Malachi he is referred to as the new Elijah, because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.” (John 1:29- 31)

1. If again we replace in the text “American Conscience” for “world”, we have the encouragement that no matter what shape the collective American Conscience is in or the individual american conscience, Christ came to take away the sin of the American Conscience.

2. By referring to Jesus as the “Lamb of God”, a term of sacrifice from the Old Testament, John the Baptist was not only preparing the nation of Israel to listen to Jesus but also preparing them for His death on the cross.

3. The Apostle John uses the quote from John the Baptist about “he was before me” to keep going with the theme of the “Word” who was with God from the beginning. Naturally, as John the Baptist admitted Christ would be preferred before him, He existed before him.

33-2: “COME AND SEE” IS THE EVAGELISTIC INVITATION THAT JESUS GAVE TO HIS FIRST DISCIPLES.

Evangelism is first of all a matter of learning. Jesus did not ask the first disciples to believe immediately, but rather to come and live with him in order to see and learn.

Jesus did not first say, “Believe”, he said “Come and See”. Jesus did not first say, “Repent”, He rather said “come and see”; first it was not “be baptized”, but “come and see”. First things and first, and the first priority is to learn Jesus before believing, repenting, and being baptized. Before working for Christ is believing, and before believing is coming to Jesus in order to learn about Him. These words recorded in John 1 were to two disciples that followed John the Baptist until that John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, then when they expressed interest in Jesus, He told them to “come and see.” One of these two disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Andrew found his own brother and said to him:

“We have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted, the Christ.” (John 1:41)

NOTE: You see that Andrew as many others in his generation were looking for the promised Messiah, promised in the Old Testament. In the next chapter of this book we will look at some of those prophetic expectations that were created in the minds of Old Testament readers by the many Old Testament prophecies about the “Christ”.

“And he brought him to Jesus...” Still the greatest thing any brother or friend can do for another person, to bring them to Jesus. It is another way of repeating the invitation of Jesus to “come and see”. Come and See Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Jesus went into Galilee looking for disciples. He found Philip and said, “Follow me.” (John 1:43) This is the step beyond “come and see”; and if we are to understand the complete process of learning Christ, then we need to know the difference between coming to see and following Jesus.

Step 1: “Come and See”.

Step 2: “Follow Me”.

What it comes down to is what did Philip know about Jesus that first disciples did not yet know when the invitation was simply to “come and see”. Well, to answer that, we must investigate learning. Educational theory indicates that in general people learn four ways: (1) Rote memory, (2) Example, (3) Trial and Error, and (4) Creativity. We must add a fifth way in order to include the special way that Christ is learned. True, the other four secular ways are also included in the learning process, but without the fifth and special way it is impossible to pass from the simple “come and see” to the “follow Me.”

To see this fifth way of learning, we need to look at what Jesus Himself told us about learning in the Gospel of John.

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” (John 6:45)

1. Those who have heard directly from the Father are those who really learn Christ, heard from the Father through the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit.

2. Those who have learned from the Father are those who come to Jesus.

Philip found Nathaniel and said to him:

“We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45)

Nathaniel was sceptical. He asked: “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) (NOTE: Nazareth had a bad reputation in the time and generation of Nathaniel.

Philip had learned by example from Jesus. Philip said to Nathaniel, “Come and See.” Those who are sceptical, Phillip not being one of those since he immediately received the invitation to “follow me”, must “come and see” more than those who are not sceptical; and later in this book we will discuss not only the importance of hearing the Word of God in believing, but also the important of “evidence” in believing.) Jesus knew men even as He knows men today. He immediately took care of the scepticism. He provided Nathaniel with “evidence” for believing in Him as the Son of God.

“Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.’” (John 1:47)

1. Nathaniel was a real Israelite.

2. Nathaniel was sincere about being an Israelite.

Jesus replied: **“Before that Phillip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” (John 1:48)** With a little demonstration of His powers as the Son of God, Jesus showed Nathaniel that He could exhibit the all-seeing capabilities of God the Father. How quickly it worked on Nathaniel! Instantly Nathaniel passed from the sceptic who must “come and see” to the disciple that is ready to “follow Me.”

“Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” (John 1:49)

This identified Jesus of Nazareth in the mind of Nathaniel, the former sceptic, as: (1) The Son of God, and (2) as the King of Israel, the Prophet Messiah of the Old Testament.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.” (John 1:50)

This was not a reprimand. It was rather an invitation to see more and believe more. Seeing Nathaniel under the fig tree was only a minor miracle, Nathaniel would see much more godlike-

ness in the miracles that Jesus would perform in his presence as in the presence of the other disciples. (NOTE: See how carefully John has selected what he writes in the Gospel of John. “the Son of God” from Nathaniel reinforces the preface of John where Jesus is the “word” with God and is God, and where a very minor miracle with a promise from Jesus of seeing much more, is preparation for the seven magnificent miracles around which the Gospel of John is weaved.)

33-3: “Come and SEE” is the Invitation of Today.

“COME AND SEE” IS THE INVITATION THAT JESUS EXTENDS IN THIS DAY AND TIME AND THAT TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS HIMSELF. A person recently said to me in an attempt to justify his lack of interest in Christianity, “There is so much confusing about the Bible: all those translations, the priests had their own ax to grind and sins in their own lives, and the manuscripts have gone through so many languages.”

To which I replied simply: “Since there are 66 books in the Bible, what I do is to compare one book against the other 65.”

That is what will be done in this volume and the other of the seven volumes of THE LEARNING CHRIST NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES. In the science of “hermeneutics”, or the science of Biblical interpretation, it is called comparing scripture with scripture. For example, you will find that it is the same Jesus being quoted in Matthew as in John. You will find that what Jesus says and does in John is consistent with what Jesus says and does in Matthew. For that reason, Matthew is quoted now on what Jesus said in other words with the equivalent of “come and see”. Actually it really goes a little beyond “come and see”, which John also does as we will see later.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

See how that goes beyond “come and see” and even beyond “follow me”. Recently as I was driving along after my daily prayers, and thinking of some of the problems that I would commit to Christ since He “cares for me”, I was warmed within as I saw the billboard of the sign with the fireman carrying the child to safety and the word “Gotcha”. God and God through Jesus with much more power to carry it out says to the Christian disciple, “Gotcha!”

1. It is a today invitation.

(1). It is an invitation to those that work for a living.

Jesus has a preference, and always has, for the blue collar worker over the white color worker. Not only is it difficult for the rich and wise to believe, but the preference for the Gospel of Christ in the Bible is for the poor and humble in status. Those that “labour and are heavy laden.”

(2). It is an invitation to those that are heavy laden.

The invitation becomes more general here, for truly the rich and wise are as heavily laden with problems as are the poor and laborer. While the wise and established in this world have more of a problem with the special learning of Christ from God the Father, this general invitation is to the educated and uneducated, the down and outers as well as the up and outers, to the wealthy and the poor, and to the established as well as the struggling.

(3). It is an invitation for rest.

The Shepherd of the Old Testament is one with the Shepherd of the New Testament. Even as we can say of the Shepherd of the Old Testament, “Our Father which art in heaven...” and “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...” and “He restoreth my soul”, so also we can say of the Shepherd of the New Testament He “will give you rest.”

(4). It is the invitation to take a yoke.

The invitation is also a call to the discipline of discipleship. The yoke like the yoke on the oxen is a discipline of direction and dedication in life. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me...” However, the yoke is easy and the burden is light.

(5). It is an invitation to learn. We need a reminder that this is what disciple means, a learner. The first disciples called Jesus “Rabbi”, or Teacher before they called Him Master or Lord. The “come and see” was an invitation to come and learn. When these first disciples asked Him, “Where do you live?” it was really a question of how do you live and what is your life-style?

2. The Invitation to “Come and See” tells us something about Jesus Himself.

(1). Jesus is Meek.

Jesus is a supervisor that is concerned about His disciples. He will not beat them down or expect of them what they are not capable of doing. He will patiently teach and guide disciples. He will give them what is best for they life and career as a disciple.

(2). Jesus is Lowly in Heart.

Jesus is not like the rich and powerful. Or even Christians who want to be bossy and exercise control. He is like among the humble folk. Even as Jesus taught that “blessed are the poor in spirit”, another way to say the humble, and blessed are they that mourn, and blessed are the meek, and merciful, and pure in heart, and blessed are the peacemakers, first of all He offers all these things to disciples that will first “come and see” and then “follow me.”

33-4: “COME AND SEE” IS THE CONTINUING AND PRESENT INVITATION OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, THE HOLY SPIRIT.

John’s stay on the isle of Patmos put him in the authorship business: not only did he with the revelations of Revelation get the word “Word” for Christ with which to start the Gospel of John, but also he received as recorded in Revelation 22:17 the primary invitation of the Gospel of John.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17)

Come, Come, and Come in the book of Revelation as an introduction to the Gospel of John. Behind Revelation all the Gospel of John has to do is add the “See”. See what Jesus said, See what Jesus taught, and See the character of Jesus: then when His life on earth is over, See how the Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus on earth. The best way to visualize the relationship between the work of Jesus and that of the Holy Spirit is to consider the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus at work on this earth. Before Jesus lived on this earth, during Old Testament times, the Spirit of Jesus was at work among the authors of the Old Testament writing Scriptures; and after Jesus Ascended to the right hand of the Father, the Spirit of Jesus came back, sent by and from the Father, in a more powerful and more democratic fashion.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Joel 2:30 and Acts 2:17-21)

1. Recall this is a prophecy from the Prophet Joel which the Apostle Peter said was being fulfilled before their eyes on the first day of pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus.
2. This is in the “last days”.
3. See the democratic outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, with the Spirit on all flesh, the young men, the old men, the men and women.
4. Since one day is to God as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day, the first coming of Christ blends in together with the Second Coming in the “great and notable day of the LORD.”
5. The most significant aspect of those days between is that “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

So...the “bride” says COME in Revelation 22:17. The bride is, of course, Christ: “I Jesus”, we read in verse 16 of Revelation 22. It is the root and offspring of David and the bright and morning star who says “Come” first in Revelation and then in the Gospel of John in the sequence of writing. Or in the actual historical sequence first during His life on earth as recorded in the Gospel of John and then in the book of Revelation that occurred after His Ascension back to the right hand of the Father.

Everyone that hears says “Come”. All Christians that have personal experience because of their listening to the Holy Spirit say “Come.”

The Spirit says COME.

Let everyone that is thirsty COME.

Jesus said that He was “the bread of life” and “the water of life”, and the Holy Spirit today reminds us of those facts. As Jesus taught:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go way: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment...” (John 16:7,8)

1. The Spirit reproves the world of sin.

Jesus explains further in the next verse (John 16:9) that the primary sin is that of unbelief: “of sin, because they believe not on me...”

The only condemning sin that Jesus and the Spirit are concerned about is the sin of unbelief. The sin of unbelief is the only unforgivable sin. The Spirit works with men today to remind them that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, the Spirit reminds men that Jesus is the Christ, the Promised Messiah; and the Spirit reminds men that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the Son of God.

NOTE: This is a problem with the American Conscience today especially as practiced by the fundamentalists. They try to usurp the work of the Holy Spirit, themselves desiring to reprove the rest of the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This besides making themselves feel godlike, also eases the guilt of their own conscience and provides a certain superiority complex.

2. The Spirit reproves the world of righteousness.

“...of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more...” (John 16:10)

We can not see Jesus today exactly as the first disciples did in flesh, but the Spirit was sent to remind us of what Jesus is like. Jesus is righteousness and when we look at the character and works of Jesus and the teachings we see righteousness.

3. The Spirit reproves the world of judgment.

Simultaneously while the Spirit is at work in the world today reminding us of sin and righteousness, He is also reminding us of the judgment to come if we do not believe on Jesus as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

“...of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged...” (John 16:11)

The New King James Version calls this “prince of this world” the “ruler of this world.” This is of course Satan! He is the top leader in the “world” that is to be shunned: He is the top leader in

the world of the American Conscience. So if the top is judged so also will be all that chose to follow Satan in the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ through unbelief.

You see how this rejection is more than a disbelief, for you know that Satan having been an angel in heaven knows that Jesus is the Son of God. Unbelief is a positive rejection of the Lordship of Jesus over life, a rebellion, if you will, against the high God of the universe.

33-5: “COME AND SEE” IS THE ESSENTIAL GIST OF THE BOOK OF JOHN!

(NOTE: To contend for the faith is to take the faith back from the simulators of Christianity. They simulate Christianity in that they replace methods and a sensitized American Conscience with the correct learning of Christ. The manner in which the faith is taken back from them is: (1) Identify their status, popularity, nice suits and buildings for what they are (contrast what you know about the way Christ lived with what you see today); (2) put doctrines especially the doctrine of Christ up front in priority beyond their methods; (3) Provide examples of how Christ is learned since there are some Christians left in the fundamentalists churches that are overwhelmed, leaderless, and surrounded.)

“Come and see” is the invitation of the Gospel of John. It is an invitation to read about, to hear about, and then later to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

John the Apostle tells the reason that he wrote the Gospel of John.

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30,31)

You must see some similarity between “the signs on the earth beneath” of Acts 2 and Joel with the “signs” of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Indeed the last days shows signs above and below!

1. Jesus did “signs” in the presence of His disciples. What are signs? Signs are something that you can see, the essential gist continues of coming in order to see.

a. The character of Christ is a signs. The thief on the cross said, “We are being crucified justly, but He has done no wrong.”

b. The teachings of Jesus are signs. It was said of Jesus when he was on earth and is still said of him today that “Never man spake like this man.”

c. The works of Jesus are a sign. When Jesus turned the water into wine, or walked on water, or made the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, it was a “sign” from God that this Jesus of Nazareth was the very Christ. Nicodemus said to Jesus as other have:

“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John 3:2)

d. The death of Christ on the cross was a sign. As John the Baptist said, This was the Lamb of God—the Lamb which God provided—taking away the sins of the world.

e. The resurrection of Christ was a sign. Where else have you heard of God bringing someone from the grave on the third day. And it is easily verifiable as a fact that would stand up in a court of law. As Peter said on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection, “This Jesus hath God raised up, wherof we all are witnesses.” (Acts 2:32)

2. To be a personal and reliable witness was the purpose of John’s writing of the Gospel of John. Jesus did these signs in the very presence of John and the other disciples. Nothing was done secretly.

3. John was selective about the signs that are recorded in the Gospel of John. Jesus performed many works and miracles, some in Matthew, others in Mark and Luke, and not all recorded.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” (John 21:13)

John was selective to achieve the goals of (1) Come and see, and then (2) believe and have life.

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:31)

4. The correct response to the Gospel of John is to believe.

It is written for no lesser purpose but that you the reader might have everlasting life after death and abundant life on this earth. The book of Revelation describes it as out of the belly comes rivers of living water.

a. The Gospel of John is the Gospel of Belief. The word “believe” is mentioned an overwhelming number of times in John.

b. It is a selective belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, as the Promised Messiah or Christ of the Old Testament. It selective belief is to believe as John the Baptist said that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world; to believe like John the Apostle recorded that “He is the Christ”; to believe like Phillip told Nathanael, **“We have found him, of whom Moses wrote in the law and the prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45)**

33-6: In John 3 we have Nicodemus coming to see Jesus.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night...”

This tells us four things about this “man” that came to see Jesus: (1) he was a Pharisee; (2) his name was Nicodemus; (3) he was a ruler of the Jews; and (4) he came secretly at night.

1. Nicodemus was ruler of the Jews.

The Roman government was in power, but they permitted each culture they dominated to retain their own form of government. For the Jews, it was the Sanhedrin that ruled both the politics and religion of Israel. In fact, the religious laws were also the laws of the nation. You will recall that Paul was a lawyer before he became a Christian, and that meant that he was trained in the religious laws which were the laws of the nation. Well, Nicodemus was a member of that religious and political and even social ruling body, the Sanhedrin.

Later in the gospel of John, it will be members of the Sanhedrin that plot to put Jesus to death lest the Romans come and take away their place and their nation; later in John, it will be the Sanhedrin, or at least the Pharisees and chief priests of that body, that look for Jesus during the Passover; and later in John, it will be member of this body, with help from Judas, that come to arrest Jesus. You see that this Sanhedrin was very concerned about their status as religious and political leaders in the nation—they didn't want to lose it—and they did not want to lose their status in the Roman Empire. (It reminds you of certain Baptist churches today who are so fearful of losing their position in the association and in the Southern Baptist Convention.) And we must also recall the statement from the Bible that it is very difficult for a person of wealth and status to become a Christian.

“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, nor many noble, are called.”

And this was what Jesus had in mind when He said that it was harder for a rich man to go to heaven than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Why? Simply the status, position, wealth, and possessions get in the way of putting Christ first in life. However, we do know looking ahead in the story that Nicodemus did take seriously the teachings of the new birth, but that is for later.

2. Nicodemus was a Pharisee.

There were two parties in the Sanhedrin: the Sadduces that did not believe in a resurrection from the dead and the Pharisees that did; yet it was primarily the Pharisees that made themselves an enemy of Jesus which seems strange since believing in the resurrection, one of their main accusations against Jesus was that He would rise from the dead on the third day. John the Baptist condemned both of these religious and political parties.

“But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Phraisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come.”

The most stinging accusations that Jesus made against people or groups of people while on earth was against the Pharisees and Sadducees. Just before chapter 3 of John and in the second half of chapter 2, Jesus has an encounter with the Pharisees and Sadducees in the temple at Jerusalem. Jesus said they were making His Father's house a den of thieves and mon-

eychangers. Jesus with a whip drove them out of the temple, He poured out the money of the moneychangers and threw over their tables.

“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?”

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Jesus was speaking of His own body. Either the Pharisees and Sadducees did not understand this, choosing to think that He meant the physical temple there in Jerusalem, or they refused to acknowledge it. Indeed, this is the very crux of the whole plan of salvation for the people of God: realizing that the new temple and tabernacle is the body of Christ! The whole plan of salvation is that God is building through the body of Christ a large temple of worship composed of believers, Jews and Gentiles. It took forty years to make that temple in Jerusalem, the religious leaders said, how could you rebuild it in three days? (NOTE: other possible subjects for Bible study in this passage are: Christ before wealth, status, etc; Pharisees and Sadducees, Matt. 3:7; a house of worship becomes a den of thieve, John 2:18 and John 2:19; the new tabernacle is the body of Christ