

**The Gospel according to St. John**  
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**Part 2**  
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**Selected Texts with Commentary**

**The Messiah of Israel – the First Sign (the Miracle at Cana)**

Introductory Comment:

John, like the other writers of the New Testament, proclaims Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the messiah or Savior-king promised to Israel by God through the prophets of the Old Testament. In our earlier discussion of the Old Testament prophets, we saw that the Messiah was to be a king in the tradition of David, who was to suffer and die for the sins of the world and who would be a manifestation of God himself (the "Son of Man")." And in our analysis of the synoptic gospels, it was pointed out that most Jews of Jesus's time, while still hoping for deliverance through a messianic king, had lost touch with the prophetic view that the Messiah was to be a divine being who was to save the world through his own death. The New Testament tells us that even the disciples of Jesus, who recognized him as the Christ, did not understand the true nature of his messiahship until after his resurrection (see Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24; Jn 2:22, 12:16; Ac 1-2). But John, reflecting upon the ministry of Jesus nearly seventy years after the crucifixion, portrays the messiahship of the Lord as an almost perfect fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And, as we might expect, he places special emphasis upon the divine sonship of the Christ.

Christ's identity as the divine Son of Man was revealed in his teachings and also in his miraculous works. John speaks of the miracles as "signs" (from the Greek, semeion) which point to the true nature of Jesus's messiahship, to the fact that the Christ was fully human and, at the same time, fully divine. In the broad sense of the term, all of the Lord's acts – his teachings, miracles, passion and resurrection – are "signs" of his true identity and of the meaning of his ministry. The fourth gospel emphasizes that the miracles were performed "not simply to alleviate physical suffering and need, but to bring men to the saving knowledge of God." John reports the "signs" done by Jesus in order that we might believe that Jesus is both the Christ and the Son of God and that, in so believing, we might have eternal life through him (Jn 20:30-31).

According to the fourth gospel, Christ worked his first miraculous sign at a marriage feast in the town of Cana (in Galilee):

Text:

[2:1] On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. [2:2] Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. [2:3] And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, They have no wine. [2:4] Jesus said to her, Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come. [2:5] His mother said to the servants, Whatever He says to you, do it. [2:6] Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. [2:7] Jesus said to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. [2:8] And He said to them, Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast. And they took it. [2:9] When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. [2:10] And he said to him, Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now. [2:11] This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. [2:12] After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

### Comment:

The setting of this first sign is significant, for in ancient Jewish thought marriage feasts were symbolic of the final union of God and Israel which was to follow the coming of the Messiah. And there are several other notable things about this passage (Jn 2:1-11).

Many have been puzzled by Jesus's words to his mother, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4). The Greek text, literally translated, reads: "What to me or to you, woman? Not yet is come my hour." In calling his mother "woman," Jesus was not being disrespectful, for in his day such a title functioned much as does the English term "Lady." The mother of our Lord was distressed when the wine for the feast had run out because she feared that the parents of the bridegroom, the hosts of the party, might be humiliated before their guests. Not knowing what else to do, Mary instinctively turned to her Son, and, on behalf of her friends, petitioned him to "do something." In his mild rebuke to his mother, Jesus reminded her that the time for his full and public self-disclosure had not yet arrived, and that his "hour" would be determined by God the Father and not by the desires of men and women. The term "hour" refers both to the time of Christ's emergence as a public figure and to the time of his "glorification" (that is, his death and resurrection). But in spite of his reservations, Christ did "do something" in response to his mother's wishes. It is clear from John's text, however, that the miracle at Cana was witnessed only by a few – the Lord's mother, his disciples and some of the servants at the feast. In performing this sign, then, Jesus was honoring his mother and "saving a humble Galilean family from hurt and humiliation"; and in manifesting his divine glory only to a few and not to all, the Lord continued to await his "hour," and thus he was honoring his heavenly Father.

Jesus's transmutation of water into wine at Cana is symbolic of the transcendence of Judaism by Christianity. The water in question was present at the feast for the ceremonial washings before and after eating which are required by Jewish ritual law. In turning the waters of "the Jewish rites of purification" into "new wine" (see Ac 2:13), Jesus was instituting a new covenant sealed by his own blood. In the "good wine" of the holy Eucharist, we receive a purification "for the remission of sins" which will enable us to attend the great marriage feast of Christ and his Church at the end of days (see Rv 19:1-10).

### **Jesus's Discourse with Nicodemus – "You Must be Born Again!"**

At the first of three Passovers mentioned by John, Jesus engaged in a dialogue with a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. This is the first of eight lengthy discourses by Christ recorded in the fourth gospel.

### Text:

~The New Birth [3:1] There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. [3:2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him. [3:3] Jesus answered and said to him, **Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** [3:4] Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? [3:5] Jesus answered, **Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** [3:6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [3:7] Do not marvel that I said to you, **'You must be born again.'** [3:8] The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

### Comment:

Nicodemus was, no doubt, astounded and perhaps even overwhelmed by the Lord's teaching on "the new birth" and on the "lifting up" of the Son of Man. The Lord's teaching on spiritual rebirth was probably incomprehensible to many of his followers during his earthly life. But after his resurrection and ascension,

and after the Holy Spirit had descended upon the apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost (see Ac 2), the Church gradually came to understand the meaning of Christ's discourse with Nicodemus. To the Jews of his day, represented by Nicodemus, Jesus was saying that being a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was not enough if one hoped to enter into the kingdom of God. Only through faith in the Son of God can one receive the gift of eternal life. And such faith is possible only on the basis of a spiritual rebirth effected by God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the waters of baptism, and through the unpredictable agency of the Spirit of God, one may be "born anew from above" and recognize the crucified, resurrected and exalted Son of Man as the Savior of the world. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Jn 3:6); and it is an Israel of the Spirit rather than an Israel of the flesh which is to inherit the blessings of the heavenly kingdom. Being a Jew is no guarantee that one will see the kingdom of God; and being a Gentile does not exclude one from that kingdom. Faith in and obedience to Christ is the key to the kingdom, for Jews and Gentiles alike.

Text:

[3:9] Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be? [3:10] Jesus answered and said to him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? [3:11] Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. [3:12] If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

[3:13] No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. [3:14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [3:15] that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **[3:16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.** [3:17] For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. [3:18] He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

[3:19] And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [3:20] For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [3:21] But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God....

[3:35] The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. [3:36] He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

Comment:

Nicodemus, a devout Jew and zealous Pharisee, had great difficulty accepting this teaching of Christ. He must have been especially disturbed when the Lord spoke of the "lifting up" (that is, the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension) of the Son of Man. That salvation depends upon the Spirit rather than upon the flesh, and that spiritual rebirth into love of the light rather than darkness is necessary for entry into the kingdom of God, Nicodemus might have been willing to grant; but that the Messiah was to suffer and die! Such a claim, judging from John's gospel, reduced Nicodemus to a confused silence. We do not know the details of the spiritual struggle that eventually brought Nicodemus to discipleship in Christ, only that he was somehow able to respond to the promptings of the Spirit and thus to acknowledge Jesus as Lord (see Jn 7:50-51 and 19:38-42).

**Baptism, Chrismation, and "Being Born Again."** The water-and-Spirit baptism spoken of by Jesus was not (no doubt contrary to Nicodemus's understanding) identical with the rite performed by John the Baptist. The Baptist himself had prophesied a new baptism in the Holy Spirit that would become available in Christ (Jn 1:33). The fourth gospel distinguishes clearly between the baptisms performed by Christ's disciples and those performed by John the Baptist (3:22-36). During the decades following the creation of the Church on

the day of Pentecost, the apostolic community came to realize the full significance of the baptismal rite which Christ had commanded his followers to perform (Jn 3:22-23; Mt 28:18-20). The rite instituted by Jesus during his public ministry was not simply a baptism symbolizing repentance but a sign of the "new life" which was made available to the world through the saving Word of Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ, as we have seen, was himself baptized by John the Baptist; and in Christ, the sinless one, the sins of the world have been washed away. Identifying himself with the sins of humankind, Christ was perfectly repentant; and by identifying ourselves with him through faith, we may enter into the perfect repentance of Christ. The Lord's washing in the waters of repentance was a prelude to his immersion in death; for death is the ultimate sign of the fallenness of mankind and the world. Through his death, and through his resurrection from the dead, Christ has liberated us from the tyranny of evil and has made possible our enjoyment of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Thus, the element of repentance is both preserved and transcended in the baptismal rite of the apostolic Church. Christian baptism is a sign of human repentance in Christ, of humanity's deliverance from the corruption of sin and death, and of rebirth in the life of the Spirit; it is a baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, a person receives power to follow Christ faithfully and obediently.

As the sacramental theory and practice of the Church developed, the work of spiritual regeneration came to be expressed in two intimately related mysteries of the Church: baptism and chrismation. It is through these two sacraments that we are "born again," according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Through immersion in the waters of baptism, we descend with Christ into death; and upon emergence from the water, we enter into the eternal life made possible by Christ's resurrection from the dead. In baptism, we are reborn to newness of life; and in the sacrament of chrismation, we receive "a new power by which this life can be lived." Jesus was the Anointed One of God, the one on whom the Holy Spirit has been poured. Through Jesus, the Church herself was anointed and born in the Spirit on Pentecost. In chrismation, when we are anointed with the holy oil, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables us (although it does not force us) to live the Christian life. As baptism is a participation in the saving acts of Pascha – in the death and resurrection of the Lord – so chrismation is a recapitulation of Pentecost by which we are born of the Spirit as members of the Church, the body of Christ. "Born of water and the Spirit," we become children of God, sharing in the divine sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and entering into the eternal life of the Holy Trinity.

However, the Orthodox Church stresses that baptism and chrismation do not automatically accomplish the salvation of the individual. The saving grace of God is communicated to us in the sacramental ministry of the Church; but divine grace does not cancel out human freedom. Being baptized and chrismated is not a sufficient condition of salvation. To make our spiritual rebirth actual, we must respond freely to God's grace in faith and obedience. We must accept the salvation which has been offered to us by the Holy Trinity. We must recognize our need for salvation and, in faith, turn to Christ as our only hope of deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. We must also receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts; for only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we live a life of holiness under the lordship of Christ. Only through a personal and decisive faith in Christ, and only through a life of obedience to God in the power of the Holy Spirit, can we enter into the fullness of salvation promised to us in the sacraments of baptism and chrismation. To be "born again," in Orthodox terms, we must "make a personal decision about Jesus Christ and His Church"; we must "make the faith of the Church our own" and "live each day in the profession of faith made at our baptism." We must "grow up in Christ and not allow the gift of life bestowed upon us at baptism to be covered by our sin and the world." To be a "born again" Christian is "to hear the Word of God and to follow Christ."

It should also be noted that the apostolic Church has never regarded the relationship between baptism-chrismation and the development of a personal Christian faith as a simple cause-and-effect relationship. From at least as early as the second century, the Church began to baptize and chrismate the children of Christian families. In the course of time, most Christians were baptized and chrismated as infants and came to conscious faith in Christ later in their lives. Indeed, as implied above, many baptized and chrismated Christians may never develop an authentic Christian faith at all. Furthermore, during the early centuries of the Christian era, thousands upon thousands of pagans were converted to faith in Christ before being baptized and chrismated. Even today, many converts are received into the Church on the basis of their faith and then baptized and chrismated. It is clear, then, that a Christian faith may emerge both before and after baptism and chrismation. The faith of some is an actualization of sacramental grace; while the faith of others

is a gracious gift of the Holy Spirit leading them into the sacramental life and fullness of the Church. The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be defined in a neat, legalistic formula. For the Spirit, like the wind, "blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes" (Jn 3:8).

## **The Bread of Life**

### Introductory Comment:

The theme of Christianity's transcendence of Judaism is continued in John 6, where Jesus is depicted as a new Moses leading his people, the new Israel, into the kingdom of God. The events described by John took place in Galilee on the occasion of the second Passover festival mentioned by John. The fact that the Lord and his followers celebrated this Passover in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem is significant; for Christ, and not the Temple, is the center of God's plan of salvation.

John 6 presents Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament's Passover imagery and as the source of the Church's Eucharistic life. It begins with an account of Christ's miraculous feeding of the multitude who came to him in Galilee at Passover time in search of healing and enlightenment. From five barley loaves and two fish which were offered by "a lad," Jesus fed more than five thousand people. And the food was abundant, more than enough for all who had gathered (Jn 6:1-13).

The climax of John 6 is Jesus's discourse on "the bread of life," in which the Lord speaks prophetically of the significance of his death and resurrection and of the sacrament of holy communion, which was to replace the Passover meal as the central feast of the people of God.

### Text:

[6:26] Jesus answered them [the people following Him] and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. [6:27] Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. [6:28] Then they said to Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? [6:29] Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent. [6:30] Therefore they said to Him, What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? [6:31] Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' [6:32] Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. [6:33] For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. [6:34] Then they said to Him, Lord, give us this bread always. [6:35] And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. [6:36] But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. [6:37] All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. [6:38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [6:39] This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. [6:40] And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

### Comment:

Jesus delivered this discourse in response to the masses of people who continued to pursue him in the hope that he might miraculously solve all of their earthly problems. Jesus tried to turn the minds of the people from worldly to spiritual concerns, telling them not to "labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life," which is available in the Son of Man (6:22-27). Speaking in the synagogue at Capernaum, the Lord reminded his audience that, during their wilderness wanderings, the hungry people of ancient Israel were fed by God with manna, a "bread from heaven." Now, through Christ, the new Moses,

God has once again offered bread from heaven to his people; and in this bread, which is Jesus himself, God has given "life to the world" (6:22-34).

To those who accused him of blasphemy because of his claims to a heavenly origin (6:41-42), Jesus replied:

Text:

[6:43] ...Do not murmur among yourselves. [6:44] No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. [6:45] 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. [6:46] Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. [6:47] Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. [6:48] I am the bread of life. [6:49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. [6:50] This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. [6:51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. [6:52] The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?

Comment:

Many who heard him were perplexed and wondered what meaning the Lord's words might have. So Jesus said to them, becoming even more explicit:

Text:

[6:53] Then Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. **[6:54] Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. [6:55] For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. [6:56] He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. [6:57] As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. [6:58] This is the bread which came down from heaven - not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.**

[6:59] These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. [6:60] Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, **This is a hard saying; who can understand it?** [6:61] When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured about this, He said to them, Does this offend you? [6:62] What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? [6:63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. [6:64] But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. [6:65] And He said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.

[6:66] From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. [6:67] Then Jesus said to the twelve, Do you also want to go away? [6:68] Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. [6:69] Also we have come to believe and know that **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God....**

Comment:

The Eucharistic significance of Jesus's discourse on the bread of life is obvious. Christ's body was broken and his blood shed on the cross. And through his death and resurrection we have been liberated from the forces of sin and death. But to realize the salvation offered to us in the "lifting up" of the Son of Man, we must eat his flesh and drink his blood. It is through the sacrament of holy communion, instituted by Jesus himself at the last supper, that we may partake of the body and blood of our crucified, risen and exalted Lord. As in baptism, so in the Eucharist: through the sacramental agency of the Church, we enter into the paschal

mystery of redemption, and we ascend with Christ into the eternal life and being of the Holy Trinity. For communion in the precious body and blood of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is communion with God. And communion with God is the key to life eternal, the fulfillment of the human quest for perfect happiness.

## **The Light of the World**

### Introductory Comment:

John 7-9 tells of Jesus's visit to Jerusalem on the occasion of a Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles (or Sukkoth) is an autumn harvest festival lasting eight days and commemorating the wanderings of ancient Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, a time when the chosen people lived in tents (or "tabernacles"). Along with Passover and Pentecost, Tabernacles was one of the three most important festivals of the ancient Jews.

During the festival described by John (which probably occurred during the last year of our Lord's earthly life), Jesus taught in the Temple and attracted a great deal of public notice. Some thought him mad, others believed him to be the Messiah, and still others (Sadducees and Pharisees who were members of the Sanhedrin) considered him a threat to the religious and political status quo in Palestine (7:1-52). The Jewish authorities, alarmed at the Lord's popularity and perhaps fearful of trouble with the Romans, challenged his authority at every turn, sought to prove that he was teaching people to break the law of Moses (see 8:2-11) and plotted (unsuccessfully) to have him arrested.

In that atmosphere of religious celebration, public controversy, and political maneuvering, Jesus delivered another of the great discourses in the fourth gospel. One of the ceremonies connected with the Feast of Tabernacles was the "Illumination of the Temple." On the evening of the first day of the festival, great golden lamps were lit in the center of the Temple court. This illumination was symbolic of the pillar of fire by which God led Israel during the years of her wilderness wanderings. With this ceremony in mind, Jesus spoke out in the Temple:

### Text:

[7:2] Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.... [7:37] On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. [7:38] He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of **living water**. [7:39] But this He spoke concerning **the Spirit**, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

[8:12] Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, **I am the light of the world**. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

[8:13] The Pharisees therefore said to Him, You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.

[8:14] Jesus answered and said to them, Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. [8:15] You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. [8:16] And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. [8:17] It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. [8:18] I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.

[8:19] Then they said to Him, Where is Your Father? Jesus answered, You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. [8:20] These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come. [8:21] Then Jesus said to them again, I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.

[8:22] So the Jews said, Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?

[8:23] And He said to them, You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. [8:24] Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

[8:25] Then they said to Him, Who are You? And Jesus said to them, Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. [8:26] I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.

[8:27] They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

[8:28] Then Jesus said to them, When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. [8:29] And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.

[8:30] As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

#### Comment:

In claiming that he was the light of the world, Jesus was associating himself directly with the being and activity of God. The Pharisees therefore reacted to his declaration with hostility; and in response to them, the Lord spoke of his relationship with God the Father (8:13-20). However, the Pharisees were either unable to understand him, or, more likely, they were simply astonished that Jesus was claiming God as his own Father (8:21-27). Others, however, were moved by the Lord's words and began to believe in him (8:28-30).

#### Text:

[8:31] Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. [8:32] And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

[8:33] They [his opponents] answered Him, We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?

[8:34] Jesus answered them, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. [8:35] And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. [8:36] Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. [8:37] I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. [8:38] I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.

[8:39] They answered and said to Him, Abraham is our father.

Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. [8:40] But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. [8:41] You do the deeds of your father. Then they said to Him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father – God. [8:42] Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. [8:43] Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

[8:44] You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [8:45] But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. [8:46] Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? [8:47] He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.

[8:48] Then the Jews answered and said to Him, Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?

[8:49] Jesus answered, I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. [8:50] And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. [8:51] Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.

[8:52] Then the Jews said to Him, Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' [8:53] Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. **Whom do You make Yourself out to be?**

[8:54] Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. [8:55] Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. [8:56] Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day [i.e., the coming of the Messiah], and he saw it and was glad.

[8:57] Then the Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?

[8:58] Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I AM.**

[8:59] Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

#### Comment:

To the claim of the Pharisees that they, being descendants of Abraham, did not need the "truth" or the "freedom" of which he spoke, Jesus responded that they were not true children of Abraham. For the father of the Pharisees is not the God of Abraham, but rather the devil! (8:33-47) Chagrined by this indictment, the Pharisees charged, in turn, that Christ was demon-possessed (8:48, 52).

**"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."** To the Jews of that time, this pronouncement by Jesus was a direct, explicit and unmistakable claim to perfect equality with God. For "I AM" (*Hehyeh-Hasher-Hehyeh*) was the name of God which was revealed to Moses in the revelation at the burning bush (see Ex 3:13-15). In addition to declaring himself to be the light of the world, Jesus was now asserting his oneness with the eternal being and activity of God the Father. The Jews regarded this as the most abominable form of blasphemy, so "they took up stones to throw at him," for death by stoning was the penalty for blasphemy required by the Mosaic law.

### **The Good Shepherd**

#### Introductory Comment:

John 10 describes another of Jesus's encounters with the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. This encounter took place approximately three months after the Feast of Tabernacles described in John 7-9. Again, the occasion of Christ's presence in Jerusalem was a religious festival – the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), also known as the Festival of Lights (Jn 10:22).

Hanukkah is one of the minor feasts of historic Judaism. Instituted during the second century BC, the feast commemorates one of the victories of Judas Maccabeus over the armies of the Seleucid empire in 164 BC, his liberation of Jerusalem from Greek rule, and the rededication of the Temple to the God of Israel (the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, had desecrated the Temple in 168 BC – see 1 Mc 1-4). Hanukkah was an eight-day festival, celebrated in December, and included the lighting of candles in the Temple and in every Jewish home. This feast is still celebrated by the Jews of the world, but without the illumination of the Temple; for the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD The setting of John 10, therefore,

reemphasizes Jesus's identity as the light of the world, and it ironically points to the rejection of Christ by the Jews at the very time when Judaism was celebrating its rededication to God.

As was his custom during his visits to Jerusalem, Jesus preached and taught in the Temple during this feast, delivering now-famous discourse on himself as the good shepherd (Jn 10:1-18). The Old Testament frequently speaks of both God and the Messiah as shepherds and of the people of God as members of the Lord's flock (see Ps 23:1-6, 80:1, 95:7, 100:3; Is 40:11; and the Song of Solomon 17:45). It should also be noted that, in Palestine, sheep are largely kept not for their meat but for their milk and wool. The relationship between a shepherd and his flock is a close and affectionate one, and it is common for the shepherd to give each of his sheep a name by which he calls it. The sheep, moreover, know and understand only their own shepherd's voice, and "they will never answer to the voice of a stranger."

Text:

[10:1] Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. [10:2] But he who enters by the door is **the shepherd of the sheep**. [10:3] To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [10:4] And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. [10:5] Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

[10:6] Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Comment:

In claiming to be "the shepherd of the sheep" (Jn 10:1-2), Jesus was, once more, identifying himself as the Messiah and associating his ministry with the activity of God. He (the shepherd) will call to the true people of God by name, and they (the flock), hearing and knowing his voice, will follow him out of the sheepfold of the world and into the green pastures of heaven (10:3-5). The Lord was also clearly implying that those who did not hear and know his voice (for example, the Pharisees) were not really members of God's flock (10:6).

When, as usual, the Pharisees did not (or would not) understand what he was saying, Jesus became more explicit:

Text:

[10:7] Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [10:8] All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. [10:9] I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

[10:10] The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Comment:

In calling himself "the door," Jesus remains "the shepherd of the sheep." For out in the pastures of Palestine, a shepherd would herd his flock at night into a wall-enclosed sheepfold. Such a sheepfold would have an opening through which the sheep could go in and out; but there was no door at the opening. The shepherd himself would lie down for the night across the opening in the wall in order to keep his flock in the sheepfold. "In the most literal sense the shepherd was the door; there was no access to the sheepfold except through him." Jesus is both the shepherd and the door of God's flock. Only through him may we "go in and out"-that is, move freely and securely – in the pastures of our heavenly Father.

Text:

[10:11] **I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. [10:12] But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. [10:13] The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

[10:14] **I am the good shepherd;** and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. [10:15] As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. [10:16] And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. [10:17] Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. [10:18] No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.

[10:19] Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. [10:20] And many of them said, He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him? [10:21] Others said, These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?

Comment:

Continuing his discourse, Jesus proclaimed that the good shepherd would "lay down his life for the sheep." He prophesied his impending death, through which his people were to be reconciled to God the Father. Emphasizing the loving unity between himself and his Father, the Lord made it clear that his atoning death was to be voluntary on his part and that, by the power given him by his Father, he would be raised from the dead. He also made it clear that his death would be redemptively effective, not only for the remnant of Israel, but also for those Gentiles who turn to him in faith and obedience: the good shepherd's flock will include the sheep of a faithful Israel as well as "other sheep" drawn from "the nations" (Jn 10:11-18).

The climax of the good shepherd discourse comes in response to the criticisms and questions of the ever-hostile Pharisees. The Pharisees and other members of the Jewish religious establishment demanded to know in plain words whether Jesus was the Messiah or not (Jn 10:19-24).

Text:

[10:24] Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.

[10:25] Jesus answered them, **I told you, and you do not believe.** The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. [10:26] But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. [10:27] My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. [10:28] And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. [10:29] My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. [10:30] **I and My Father are one.**

[10:31] Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

[10:32] Jesus answered them, Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?

[10:33] The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.

[10:34] Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, 'I said, You are gods'? [10:35] If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), [10:36] do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? [10:37] If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; [10:38] but if I

do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe **that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.**

[10:39] Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. [10:40] And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed....

#### Comment:

Here Jesus asserts – or at least strongly implies – that he is, indeed, the Messiah (10:25-29); and then, duplicating the bold claim which he had made three months earlier at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus declared: "I and My Father are one" (10:30). In response to the inevitable charge of blasphemy (10:31-33), the Lord appealed to his accusers to try and view his claim to divine sonship both biblically and open-mindedly (10:34-38): "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (10:37-38). But his opponents would not listen to reason and tried, once more without success, to have him arrested (10:39).

### **The Resurrection and the Life**

#### Introductory Comment:

The well-known story of Christ's raising of Lazarus from the dead is told in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John. Lazarus of Bethany and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, were good friends and faithful disciples of the Lord. When Lazarus fell ill, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus (Jn 11:1-3). The Lord knew that Lazarus must die and that, through the death of his friend, his own divine glory would be made manifest (11:4).

#### Text:

[11:1] Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

[11:2] It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. [11:3] Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick. [11:4] When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

[11:5] Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. [11:6] So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. [11:7] Then after this He said to the disciples, Let us go to Judea again.

[11:8] The disciples said to Him, Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?

[11:9] Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. [11:10] But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.

[11:11] These things He said, and after that He said to them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.

[11:12] Then His disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.

[11:13] However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

[11:14] Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead. [11:15] And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.

[11:16] Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him.

[11:17] So when Jesus came, He found that he [Lazarus] had already been in the tomb four days. [11:18] Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. [11:19] And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

[11:20] Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

[11:21] Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. [11:22] But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.

[11:23] Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again.

[11:24] Martha said to Him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

[11:25] Jesus said to her, **I am the resurrection and the life.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. [11:26] And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?

[11:27] She said to Him, Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world. [11:28] And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, The Teacher has come and is calling for you. [11:29] As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

[11:30] Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him. [11:31] Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, She is going to the tomb to weep there.

[11:32] Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

[11:33] Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. [11:34] And He said, Where have you laid him? They said to Him, Lord, come and see. [11:35] Jesus wept.

[11:36] Then the Jews said, See how He loved him! [11:37] And some of them said, Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?

[11:38] Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. [11:39] Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days. [11:40] Jesus said to her, Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?

[11:41] Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. [11:42] And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.

[11:43] Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! [11:44] And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Loose him, and let him go.

### Comment:

This astonishing occurrence is the last of the seven miraculous signs of Christ's divine sonship recorded in the fourth gospel. It was a sign of Christ's power over death itself and is thus a confirmation of the universal resurrection of the dead, which has been made possible in and through the Lord's own glorious resurrection. Strictly speaking, however, Lazarus was raised but not resurrected from the dead. For one who is resurrected will never die again, and according to tradition Lazarus did die in the flesh some years after his miraculous resuscitation by Christ. The resuscitation of Lazarus was a shadow or copy of the true resurrection of Christ himself, the final and ultimate sign of the Lord's victory over the powers of sin and death.

Of all the signs performed by Jesus, the raising of Lazarus was the most shocking and alarming to the Lord's enemies in the religious establishment. It would appear that a special meeting of the Sanhedrin was then convened just to discuss the "Jesus problem" (Jn 11:45-53):

### Text:

[11:47] Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. [11:48] If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.

[11:49] And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all, [11:50] nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish. [11:51] Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, [11:52] and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

[11:53] Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death....

### Comment:

**"You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."** John points out that the high priest's words were actually prophetic in that Jesus was indeed to die for the nation of Israel as well as for all of God's people among the nations of the world (11:51-52). Caiaphas, of course, did not understand the full prophetic significance of his words; but under his leadership, the growing conspiracy to have Jesus arrested and executed became both more serious and more effective.

With his account of the raising of Lazarus, John completes his portrait of the divine sonship of Christ, as the incarnate Word, the Messiah, the Son of God, the bread of life, the light of the world, and the good shepherd. The episode at Bethany was a prelude to the culminating events of our Savior's earthly ministry, events which were to make manifest the profound and world-shaking sense in which Christ is truly the resurrection and the life.

## **The Farewell Discourse**

### Introductory Comment

Jesus's final teachings of his earthly ministry are compiled in John 13:31-16:33. This section of John's gospel is often called the "Farewell Discourse," for it is the last of the major discourses recorded by John.

Text:

[13:31] So...Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. [13:32] If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. [13:33] Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.

[13:34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [13:35] By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. [13:36] Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where are You going? Jesus answered him, Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward. [13:37] Peter said to Him, Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake. [13:38] Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

Comment:

Jesus began the discourse by speaking, once again, of his coming "glorification." The glory of both the Father and the Son was to be made manifest in the death of Jesus. For through that death, God was to show himself victorious over the powers of darkness, and the love of God for mankind and the world was to be confirmed. Christ's resurrection from the dead would be a sure sign of God's glory, power and love (13:31-33).

Text:

[14:1] Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. [14:2] In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [14:3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. [14:4] And where I go you know, and the way you know. [14:5] Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way? [14:6] Jesus said to him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through Me.

[14:7] If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. [14:8] Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. [14:9] Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? [14:10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. [14:11] Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. [14:12] Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. [14:13] And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14:14] If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. [14:15] If you love Me, keep My commandments.

[14:16] And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, [14:17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [14:18] I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. [14:19] A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. [14:20] At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. [14:21] He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. [14:22] Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world? [14:23] Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. [14:24] He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine

but the Father's who sent Me. [14:25] These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. [14:26] But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. [14:27] Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. [14:28] You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. [14:29] And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. [14:30] I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. [14:31] But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

Comment:

The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ would also constitute his departure from the apostles and his other followers; for where he was going, they could not go (13:33). But the separation of Christ from his followers was not to be permanent. Through his resurrection from the dead, his glorious ascension into heaven, and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, Jesus was to make possible the entry of all faithful people into the kingdom of God. And through his second coming, which will take place at the end of days, the Lord will return to the world and lead his people into the fullness of salvation (14:1-4). Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life": he is the way to salvation; in him and in his saving work we discover the truth about God, the world and ourselves; and by accepting that truth and following that way, we may receive the life of the heavenly kingdom (14:6). For in Christ, we are reconciled with God the Father. Speaking to the apostles, the Lord said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father [is] in me" (14:9, 11). Because of this perfect oneness between the Father and the Son, man-kind may enter into fellowship with the Father through faith in and obedience to the Son. Our relationship with Christ will determine our relationship with the Father. If we reject Christ, then we will not find the Father. But if we believe in Christ and follow him, then we ourselves will become "sons of God" (see 16:16, 20-28).

In the Old Testament, God's salvation of the world was conceived of primarily (although not exclusively) in futuristic terms: the kingdom of God will be established at the end of days. In contrast to the "futurist eschatology" of the Old Testament, the New Testament teaches that the kingdom of God has come and will come in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, we find a "realized eschatology" as well as a "futurist eschatology." In other words, the New Testament contains what has been called an "inaugurated eschatology," a doctrine of "last things" which takes into account the past, present and future dimensions of Christ's ministry. Through his life, death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus has saved us from the forces of evil, and through the second advent of the Lord, the reconciliation of all things in God will be fully and finally accomplished. In Christ, we have been saved, we are being saved and we will be saved – the kingdom of God has come, it is coming and it will come. Past, present and future are organically united in the ongoing economy of redemption.

Text:

~Jesus Is the Vine – Followers Are Branches [15:1] I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. [15:2] Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. [15:3] You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. [15:4] Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. [15:5] I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. [15:6] If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. [15:7] If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. [15:8] By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. [15:9] As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. [15:10] If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. [15:11] These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

~Disciples' Relation to Each Other [15:12] This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [15:13] Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. [15:14] You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. [15:15] No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. [15:16] You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. [15:17] These things I command you, that you love one another.

~Disciples' Relation to the World [15:18] If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. [15:19] If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [15:20] Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [15:21] But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. [15:22] If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. [15:23] He who hates Me hates My Father also. [15:24] If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. [15:25] But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' [15:26] But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. [15:27] And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

~Jesus's Warning [16:1] These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. [16:2] They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. [16:3] And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. [16:4] But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

~The Holy Spirit Promised [16:5] But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' [16:6] But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [16:7] Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. [16:8] And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: [16:9] of sin, because they do not believe in Me; [16:10] of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; [16:11] of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. [16:12] I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [16:13] However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. [16:14] He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. [16:15] All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

#### Comment:

The Farewell Discourse contains several passages dealing with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his apostles that they were soon to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit would dwell in them and enable them to comprehend the truth concerning salvation which Christ had shared with them during his earthly life (14:15-17, 25-26). But they were to receive the Holy Spirit only after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus (16:5-7). After his departure from the world, Jesus would send the third person of the Holy Trinity, "who proceeds from the Father," into the world to live in and to guide the apostles and, indeed, all members of Christ's Church (15: 26-27; see also Acts 2).

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as "the Advocate" (Greek, *parakletos*) and as "the Spirit of Truth" (Jn 14:15-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7, 13). As Christ had been the advocate of his people (see 1 Jn 2:1), so the Holy Spirit would counsel, en-courage, comfort and defend the Church before the onslaughts of the world, the flesh and

the devil. Dwelling in the hearts of the apostles and in the life of the apostolic Church, the Spirit of Truth would teach the followers of Christ "all things," and would bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught during his days on earth (Jn 14:25-26). The Spirit would also reveal truths which had not been communicated by Christ because of the limited spiritual readiness of his disciples (16:12-13). As one commentator on these verses has written, "God's revelation is progressive. Christ revealed to the disciples only what they were ready to receive and understand. But he told them to expect further revelation after His ascension at the coming of the Holy Spirit, and to accept this revelation as the Word of God."

The Farewell Discourse goes on to say that the Holy Spirit would empower the Church to witness effectively to the salvation which has -come through Christ (Jn 15:26-27). Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the Church will carry on Christ's work of salvation, and, indeed; will do even "greater works" than the Lord himself had done (14:12-14). This does not mean that the saving mission of the Church is superior to the work of Christ, but that through the mission of the Church, which is possible only in Christ, God's salvation will be made available on a world-wide scale.

Christ's teachings on the ministry of the Holy Spirit were presented to his disciples in the context of his preparing them – the Church – for the period of time after his departure from the world. The Church was not to be left desolate after Christ's departure from the world (Jn 14:18). Through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, the Church was to receive the peace offered in Christ by the Father (14:27). Through the Holy Spirit, the followers of Christ would come to know that the Son is in the Father, that the Church is in the Son and that the Son is in the Church (14:19-20). The Holy Spirit would encourage and empower the Church to love and obey Christ (14:21) ; and in the Spirit, the Father and the Son would make their home in and with the Church (14:22-23). Thus, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Christ would be glorified in his Church, and the Church would live in union with the Holy Trinity (16:14-15).

#### Text:

~Jesus's Death and Resurrection Foretold [16:16] A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father. [16:17] Then some of His disciples said among themselves, What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'? [16:18] They said therefore, What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying. [16:19] Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'? [16:20] Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. [16:21] A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. [16:22] Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

~Prayer Promises [16:23] And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. [16:24] Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. [16:25] These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. [16:26] In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; [16:27] for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. [16:28] I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father. [16:29] His disciples said to Him, See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! [16:30] Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God. [16:31] Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? [16:32] Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. [16:33] These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Comment:

At the end of the Farewell Discourse, Jesus "lifted up his eyes to heaven" and prayed to his Father. This prayer is known as the "High Priestly Prayer," and it may be divided into **three sections**.

**First**, Jesus prayed that his imminent "glorification" by way of his death and resurrection would bring his disciples to full knowledge of God and thus to eternal life; and looking beyond his death and resurrection, Christ also prayed to be reunited with his Father in the glory of heaven (17:1-5):

Text:

~The High Priestly Prayer [17:1] Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, [17:2] as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. [17:3] And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. [17:4] I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. [17:5] And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. [17:6] I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. [17:7] Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. [17:8] For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. [17:9] I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. [17:10] And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. [17:11] Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. [17:12] While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Comment:

**Second**, Jesus prayed that the apostles would remain united in love, that they would have joy in spite of tribulation, that they would resist the designs of the devil, and that they would fulfill their evangelistic mission to the world:

Text:

~The Disciples in the World [17:13] But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. [17:14] I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17:15] I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. [17:16] They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. [17:17] Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. [17:18] As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. [17:19] And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Comment:

**Third**, Jesus prayed for the entire Church, that she might live in love and unity throughout the ages to come:

Text:

[17:20] I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; [17:21] that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. [17:22] And the glory which You gave Me I have

given them, that they may be one just as We are one: [17:23] I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. [17:24] Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. [17:25] O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. [17:26] And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

## **The Resurrection**

John's testimony concerning the resurrection of Christ is contained in chapters 20-21 of the fourth gospel. Again, John supplies us with material that supplements the resurrection narratives of the synoptic gospels.

John tells us that Mary Magdalene went to the Lord's tomb early on the Sunday following his death. The evangelist does not mention the other myrrh-bearing women, but that does not exclude the possibility that they were present. John 20:1-18 is written mainly from the point of view of Mary Magdalene, and it may well be that she was the source of most of the material contained in these verses. Discovering that the stone had been moved from the entrance to the tomb and that the tomb itself was empty, Mary ran and declared to Peter and the beloved disciple, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we (note the plural) do not know where they have laid him" (20:1-2). Peter and the beloved disciple ran to the tomb to see for themselves that it was empty. After witnessing the empty tomb, the two men "went back to their homes" (20:3-10). Like Mary Magdalene, they probably assumed that the Lord's body had been removed by the Romans or the Jewish authorities (20:9).

### Text:

[20:1] On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. [20:2] Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him. [20:3] Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. [20:4] So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. [20:5] And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. [20:6] Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, [20:7] and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. [20:8] Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. [20:9] For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. [20:10] Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

### Comment:

**"Then the disciples went away again to their own homes."** Like Mary Magdalene, Peter and John probably assumed that the Lord's body had been removed by the Romans or the Jewish authorities.

Following his account of the discovery of the empty tomb, John records **four post-resurrection appearances** of Christ. **First**, he appeared to Mary Magdalene as she (and the other myrrh-bearers?) lingered at his tomb after Peter and the beloved disciple had gone home. Mary reported this appearance of Christ to the apostles, saying, "I have seen the Lord."

### Text:

[20:11] But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. [20:12] And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. [20:13] Then they said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

She said to them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him. [20:14] Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. [20:15] Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away. [20:16] Jesus said to her, Mary! She turned and said to Him, Rabboni! (which is to say, Teacher). [20:17] Jesus said to her, Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' [20:18] Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

Comment:

The **second** appearance of the risen Lord which is reported by John took place on the evening of resurrection day. Jesus appeared to the apostles (in Jerusalem), showed them his pierced hands and side and then commissioned them to carry on his work (20:19-23):

[20:19] Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be with you. [20:20] Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. [20:21] Then Jesus said to them again, Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. **[20:22] And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. [20:23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**

Comment:

**20:22-23:** These words of Christ are among the scriptural foundations of the sacraments of holy orders and repentance. Through the consecration and empowerment of the apostles by the Lord, and through their ordination of others to continue their apostolic mission, Christ's own holy priesthood was communicated to the bishops and priests of the historical Church. It is also noteworthy that the communication of the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the occasion under discussion was distinct from the descent of the Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost (Ac 2). There is a difference between the apostolic priesthood (into which only a few Christians are called) and the priesthood of all believers (which encompasses all Christians).

**20:24-29: "Doubting Thomas":** The apostle Thomas was not present when the Lord appeared to the other apostles on Easter evening; and when he heard of what had transpired, he refused to believe it (Jn 20:24-25). Eight days after the resurrection, the Lord appeared again (**third** appearance) to the apostles, including Thomas:

Text:

[20:24] But Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. [20:25] The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe. [20:26] And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace to you! [20:27] Then He said to Thomas, Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. [20:28] And Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God! [20:29] Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Comment:

Thus, St. Thomas – "doubting Thomas" – had his doubts overthrown. The deity of Christ, which had been recognized by a blind man (9:1-41), was now acknowledged by a skeptic (20:27-28). Jesus chided Thomas for his insistence upon a physical vision, and praised those who were to believe in the resurrection without

direct visible proof. It should be added, however, that, according to tradition, St. Thomas was consecrated to the apostolic priesthood by Christ and became a dedicated and effective minister of the gospel. Indeed, John implies that this third appearance of the risen Christ was especially intended to bring Thomas into the fullness of the apostolic brotherhood (20:26-29).

**John 21:** In John 21, a **fourth** post-resurrection appearance of Christ is recounted. Jesus appeared, to seven of the apostles as they were fishing in Galilee (21:1-14). The highlight of this epiphany is a dialogue which took place between the Lord and the apostle Peter (see 21:15-19):

Text:

[21:1] After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: [21:2] Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

[21:3] Simon Peter said to them, I am going fishing. They said to him, We are going with you also. They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

[21:4] But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. [21:5] Then Jesus said to them, Children, have you any food? They answered Him, No. [21:6] And He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

[21:7] Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord! Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. [21:8] But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

[21:9] Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. [21:10] Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish which you have just caught. [21:11] Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

[21:12] Jesus said to them, Come and eat breakfast. Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? – knowing that it was the Lord. [21:13] Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish....

[21:15] So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. [21:16] He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Tend My sheep. [21:17] He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.

[21:18] Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. [21:19] This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, Follow Me.

Comment:

Here, Peter does not boast that his love for the Lord is superior to that of the other apostles. And Peter's threefold denial of Christ on the night of the Lord's trial is reversed and forgiven in a threefold affirmation of Peter's love for his Master. Peter is charged to tend the Lord's flocks – a sign that Christ was confirming Peter's full membership in the apostolic college. And the concluding words of this passage (21:18-19) imply

that Peter would thenceforth be a steadfast follower of Christ even though such faithful discipleship was to bring the apostle to his death.

Text:

[21:20] Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is the one who betrays You? [21:21] Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, But Lord, what about this man? [21:22] Jesus said to him, If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. [21:23] Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? [21:24] This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true....

Comment:

With this final post-resurrection appearance of Christ, the Gospel of John comes to an end. In John 21:20-24, we are told that the beloved disciple was the primary source of the material contained in this gospel; and, as we have seen, it is likely that the author of the fourth gospel was St. John the Apostle. The author also tells us that his purpose in writing is that, through his testimony, we may come to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," and that in so believing we may "have life in his name" (20:30-31).

Summary:

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of Israel, the incarnate Son of God, "the Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42). In his incarnate life as Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus is the point of union between God and mankind.

Union with Christ, on the basis of faith and obedience, is union with God. In the words of St. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373 AD) , "the Word of God Himself...assumed humanity that we might become [one with] God." Christ is "the true vine" (Jn 15:1-17), and in him we are united to God, to the divine life of the Holy Trinity.

Through Christ the Enlightener, and by way of his ministry of signs and teachings, we receive the truth concerning God, man and the universe. Christ is "the light of the world" and "the light of life" (Jn 8:12), and he gives us the truth that makes us free from spiritual blindness, from sin and death, from eternal suffering (Jn 8:31-32 and 9:1-41).

Christ is the good shepherd who leads us to pasture, to the kingdom of God (Jn 10:1-18). He is "the Door" to salvation, to union with God (10:7, 9). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life – the way to salvation, the truth of authentic enlightenment, and the life of God (14:6). No one can come to the Father who has not received Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. Humanity is alienated from God as a result of sin; and Christ brings us to reconciliation and union with God through his own incarnate being, through his truth, and through his death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. In dying, Christ identified himself with our sin and with our death, and he thereby freed us from the curse of sin and death. For when absolute righteousness becomes sin, sin is eradicated; and when the fullness of life dies, then death is vanquished – death is "trampled down" by death. In rising from the dead, Christ raised human nature from the grave and made "new life" in God a real possibility for all. In his glorious ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God the Father, Christ opened "the door" to the deification of man. In and through Christ, we may "have life and have it abundantly" (10:10).