

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 70.6%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: John 1:29 – 34

Monday: John 1:35 – 42

Tuesday: John 1:43 – 51

Wednesday: John 2

Thursday: John 3:1 – 12

Friday: John 3:13 - 21

Saturday: John 3:22 – 36

Current # of email addresses in the group: 722

Happy Sabbath! We each have much to be thankful for. God is so good to each and everyone of us.

Attached is the next week of the study. I hope each of you are enjoying it. We are only in the book of John this week as there is a lot to cover over just a few chapters.

I have to be honest that each week is pushing me to the max of what I can give to study the Greek, put in additional research and craft it into what is hopefully useful text. So far God is providing both the capacity to put this together and additionally to inspire a separate sermon for my congregations. I will keep doing my very best week to week, but I will prep you that it's possible there will be weeks I can not get it out. I know you will be kind and patient as we work toward the end of this study. I appreciate each of you for your encouragement and the zeal and passion you have shown for God's awesome Word. May God richly bless each of you.

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

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### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 111**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 750 – SUNDAY: December 7<sup>th</sup>

John 1:29 – 34,

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 29 – What would it have meant to those who heard John the Baptizer describe Jesus as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”?

Certainly, his audience would have immediately understood rich layers of meaning. The daily Temple lambs were offered every morning and evening as part of the sacrificial system (Exodus 29:38 – 39). The lambs of Leviticus 4 & 5 were a part of the offerings for individuals’ sins, unintentional transgressions and guilt offerings. They would have also connected the Passover lamb, whose blood brought deliverance, protection and a new beginning for God’s people. All of this typology we understand ultimately pointed to Jesus Christ as the truly perfect unblemished lamb who freely gave His life for our forgiveness and atonement. One of the most meaningful chapters in the Bible where we see this prophetically laid out is Isaiah 53. I highly encourage you to pause here and read all of Isaiah 53 --- as it reminds us how much Jesus Christ went through as a “lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7), who bore the sins of us all (Isaiah 53:6, 8, 10, 12).

The author of Hebrews clearly laid out how Jesus became the ultimate sacrifice (specifically compare Hebrews chapters 9 & 10). For example, in Hebrews 9:13 – 14 where it states “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Verse 30 – Compare both John 1:15 and John 1:27.

Verse 31 - John only knew who Jesus truly was when God revealed it through the sign of the Spirit descending at His baptism. In other words, John didn’t just assume that Jesus was the Messiah. John’s ministry existed for one purpose: to prepare Israel to meet their Messiah and to make Him publicly known. That is why John baptized—his baptism of repentance gathered Israel and created the moment

where God would clearly identify His Son. In short, John did not choose Jesus; God revealed Jesus. And John's baptism of Jesus was the God-ordained means by which the Messiah would be unveiled to the nation.

Verse 32 – Compare Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10 & Luke 3:22.

Additionally, John tells us that the spirit “remained upon Him”. The Greek word here is typically translated abide, remain or dwell. The clear point is that the Spirit didn't come upon Him for a moment in time, but then depart (as we see in examples like Judges 6:34 or Judges 11:29), but instead, remained and did not depart from Jesus.

Verse 33 – Again John the Baptizer emphasized that he didn't decide that Christ was the Messiah, but that God, who sent him (John 1:6) was the One who told him what to look for as evidence and proof that this individual was in fact the Messiah.

Verse 34 – John the Baptizer now presents his legal testimony that because of what he has witnessed, he proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God. Remember all of this is connected to the prophecy from Isaiah 53, so it builds to this moment of Jesus' identity, but also projects into the future of what Jesus will endure.

Day 751 – MONDAY: December 8<sup>th</sup>

John 1:35 – 42

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 35 – We will see in verse 40 that one of these two disciples of John the Baptizer was Andrew. Many think the other disciple here may have been John --- the author of this Gospel account (as it's consistent with John's practice of concealing himself).

Verse 36 – This isn't the first time we've seen the word in the NKJV translated “behold”. “Behold” tends to be an old English more formal way to translate the Greek. The word was used in a number of ways,

such as to both draw a person's attention to something, to point out something surprising, or announce something as important. We should think of it as an attention-grabbing word.

Verse 37 – John the Baptizer wasn't looking for his own personal following. Everything he did was to prepare people to have a relationship with Jesus. So, his disciples here clearly understand that now that John has plainly pointed out Jesus' identity, that they were to leave John and follow Jesus the Christ. This is not what a traditional disciple under a rabbi would have done. They would not leave their rabbi --- and all of a sudden join themselves to a different rabbi. Again, this shows that John wasn't jealous of Jesus Christ or trying to hold onto his own personal following.

Verse 38 – When we read the words of Jesus, we must always be careful to hear them through the tone and character that He had. It would be incorrect to assume He was harsh and critical in His tone. These were likely two very young men, who may at this moment feel insecure and a bit awkward. These words from our Savior, are likely meant to engage and acknowledge that they were now following Him. Here these two disciples first use the term "Rabbi" which was of Hebrew origin, and contained the meaning of "my master, my great one or my teacher".

It was a Jewish title of respect that seems to have been an emerging title that had only been around since the late 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. It carried with it a "personal tone". It implied that the speaker acknowledged this individual as their personal teacher with authority over them. John then clarifies this Hebrew origin term with a common classical/koine Greek term for any instructor. This term was more universal and lacked the possessive tone, but was one which would have been well known and understood throughout the Greco-Roman world.

Verse 39 – Jesus gives them a personal invitation to come along, and they followed Him. Regarding this being about the 10th hour, the JFB commentary states: “not 10 A.M. (as some), according to Roman, but 4 P.M., according to Jewish reckoning, which John follows. The hour is mentioned to show why they stayed out the day with him - because little of it remained.” The Jewish way of counting started with 6 A.M., where 7 A.M. was the first hour.

Verse 41 – John first uses the Greek word Μεσσίαν (Messian – Messiah). This was a word of Hebrew origin which meant “Anointed One”). John is the only one to use this Hebrew/Aramaic word in the New Testament (John 1:41 & 4:25). John choose to keep the Hebrew/Aramaic form for his readers, possibly to highlight the Jewish expectation of the coming Messiah. John then also takes this Hebrew origin form and gives the Greek form Χριστός (Christos - Christ), which is the exact translation of Μεσσίαν, again meaning “Anointed One”). This Greek word Χριστός (Christos - Christ) was universally understood across the Greco-Roman world.

For Andrew, this is an extremely exciting, life changing recognition. Jewish expectation of the coming Messiah in the 1st century was shaped by a collection of Old Testament promises. They understood the Messiah would be a Son of David who would restore Israel’s kingdom and reign in righteousness (Compare Isaiah 11:1–5 & Jeremiah 23:5–6). He was expected to be Spirit-anointed, bringing justice for the poor and oppressed (Isaiah 42:1–4, 61:1–2). Many anticipated a deliverer-king who would defeat Israel’s enemies and establish God’s rule from Jerusalem (Psalm 2:6–9, 110:1–2 & Numbers 24:17–19). We saw before how they expected a prophet like Moses, a leader who would speak God’s words with authority and perform signs (Deuteronomy 18:15–18). Jews looked for a teacher of righteousness who would purify worship and restore true obedience to the Law (Malachi 3:1–3 & Isaiah 2:2–4). Across these hopes was the shared belief that the Messiah would bring an era of peace, justice, and the knowledge of God, when

nations would seek the Lord and harmony would fill the earth (Isaiah 11:6–10 & 65:17–25). Together, these expectations created great anticipation among first-century Jews that God would soon raise up His promised Anointed One. We will come to see as we move through the Gospel accounts and eventually get to the book of Revelation, that the Jews did not understand who the Messiah would truly be and how the various verses above would apply in part to His first and second comings. While not fully understanding, Andrew was none-the-less excited and filled with anticipation.

Verse 42 – Simon comes to Jesus --- and Jesus shows His intimate knowledge of Simon and his family, as well as His plans for Simon’s future. Simon (Greek Σίμων - Simōn) comes from the Hebrew name שִׁמְעוֹן (Shim’on). That Hebrew name means “God has heard” or “He has heard”. This is Peter’s birthname. It’s a common name in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish world.

Then Jesus tells Simon, he shall be called Κηφᾶς (Kēphas or Cephas). This name was Aramaic (a common, everyday spoken language of the Jews) and meant “stone” or “rock”. Finally, John translates this Aramaic name that Jesus gave Simon into the Greek form of Πέτρος (Petros – Peter), which meant the same thing in Greek as “a stone” or “a rock”.

The fact that we have seen John go out of his way in recording his Gospel account to use the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek forms of words, shows that his account was meant for a wide audience. If his audience was Jewish, he would not have needed to translate the Aramaic term to Greek. It was likely intended for both a Jewish and non-Jewish audience.

It’s important to remember what is recorded for us in Isaiah 46:9-10 about God: “...For I *am* God, and *there is* no other; I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times *things* that are not yet done...”

Here Jesus gives Peter a new Aramaic name with an important meaning. From the moment Simon/Peter first meets Jesus, Jesus gives Simon/Peter a name that shows he will be a solid leader in the future. Peter would grow into a great and important leader of the new Church of God. What an impact this moment would have had on Simon (Peter).

We have to be careful not to read even more into that name than that. Scripture does not show Peter to be the one leader of the New Testament church. We will cover this in more detail when we get to Matthew 16:18.

I thought I would also mention here, we don't see Andrew get a new name. This is meant to be a bit of a joke, but why would anyone want to rename Andrew? In Greek it meant "manly" and contained the ideas of being "valiant" and "courageous". What a great name! It's interesting that Andrew (Ἀνδρέας - Andréas) is already a Greek name.

#### Day 752 – TUESDAY: December 9<sup>th</sup>

John 1:43–51

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 43 – Notice the detailed day-by-day account John is giving us here in John 1 (notice verse 29, 35 & now verse 43).

Here Jesus finds Phillip. This name is Φίλιππος (Philippos) meaning "Lover of horses". This was a strong Macedonian/Greek name because of Philip of Macedon (Philip II) the father of Alexander the Great. Philip became a very common name. One of Herod the Great's sons was also named Philip. This is the Greek name that my family name "Phelps" (which also means "Lover of horses") is derived from and overtime it shifted from being a given name (forename) to a family name (surname).

We can miss the great importance of the words "follow me" in this verse. In Greek it was Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι and it meant far more than what we might think in English. In Greek it's not casual, it implied to leave one's trade or livelihood (reordering of one's priorities and loyalty) and to

commit fully to a teacher whose authority would surpass that of others. Christ was telling Philip that He chose him to become a disciple. Discipleship was not the same as we think of as being a student under a teacher. Discipleship was a dedication to imitate the rabbi and his life. To live as they lived. To watch and learn to become just like the rabbi. To go where they went and become what they were. Here Philip received a formal rabbinic summons. It was an invitation to leave his livelihood --- and a call to apprenticeship and imitation. This meant stepping away from identity, security, and family expectations to embrace a radically new life and purpose under Jesus.

Verse 44 – This scripture tells us that Philip, Andrew and Peter all came from the same city of Bethsaida. Bethsaida (Βηθσαϊδᾶ) comes from Aramaic *Beit-Ṣaidā* meaning “House of fishing” or “Fishing place.” It was located on the northeastern shore (or slightly inland depending on water levels) of the Sea of Galilee. As the name implies, it was famous as a fishing (and boating) center.

Herod Philip renamed and rebuilt it as Bethsaida Julias, elevating its status to a small city in honor of Julia, the daughter of Augustus (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.28).

We will later see Jesus be critical of this city (as well as Chorazin and Capernaum) for being spiritually unresponsive to many miraculous “mighty works” (see Matthew 11:21-23 & Luke 10:13). None of the mighty works done in Bethsaida and Chorazin are documented in the Gospels.

Verse 45 – Now Philip finds Ναθαναήλ (Nethan’el / Natan’el). This name is of Hebrew origin meaning “God has given” or “Gift of God”. This was a common Hebrew name. He was from Cana of Galilee (John 21:2). Many scholars, including early recorded history, identify Nathanael as the same person called Bartholomew. The Synoptic Gospels list Philip and Bartholomew together (see Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14), whereas John lists Philip and Nathanael together. The



three names do not show up together in scripture. Nathanael is a personal name (forename) --- whereas Bartholomew is a surname/family name meaning “son of Tolmai” (Aramaic *Bar-Tolmai*). This verse shows that these young men, like all of Judah, were looking for the Messiah and knew the scriptures. Philip doesn’t quote anything specifically --- but is likely referring to passages such as Deuteronomy 18:18, Isaiah 4:2, 7:14, 40:10, 53:1, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:14 – 15, Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24, Daniel 9:24, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 6:12, 9:9, 12:10.

Verse 46 – Why did Nathanael say, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Nazareth was an incredibly small village of about 200 to 400 people (James F. Strange, “*Nazareth*,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 4, 1050–1051).

Based on the fact that it’s never mentioned in the Old Testament, not mentioned by Josephus, not found in major rabbinic writings, and not discovered on any known maps of that era --- it’s assumed that those around would have seen this village as an unimportant, irrelevant backwoods town.

We have no prophecy mentioning Nazareth and there is no connection to David or the Messiah to Nazareth, so Nathanael, would have had no scriptural reason to expect that the Messiah would have come from Nazareth.

Early sources seem to indicate that this area would have a mix of Gentile and Jewish people, a nearby Roman garrison in Sepphoris and a poor working-class group of people. It was seen as ordinary, unrefined and unimpressive.

Nathanael’s line probably reflects what would have been a common thought that “Nazareth would be the last place the Messiah would come from”. We should be careful not to assume he is being cynical, but this may have been a very honest and direct evaluation of his perceived likelihood of this being true. Clearly, he has his doubts, but we see he’s willing to go and find out for himself.

However, as we've already seen, Jesus appears in every way to be born of very humble means, and this continues to reinforce that there is nothing about his upbringing, wealth, social status, etc...that would have given him an unjust advantage in life. Jesus would have worked through many of the same difficult daily life situations that many of his followers would have come from and many Christians today have come from.

Verse 47 – Here Jesus says something rather amazing about Nathanael -- that within Nathanael there is “no guile” (NKJV). In the Greek this word is δόλος (dolos), and at its root it means to “catch with bait”, especially fish. Its core idea is deception designed to entrap. Later, we will see the same word used in connection with the religious leaders trying to subtly entrap Jesus (compare Mark 14:1 & Matthew 26:4). A variation off of this root word is used by James in James 1:14 where he uses a similar fishing/hunting idea to the process of temptation leading to sin and death.

For those who would like a sermon that explores the parallels between common fishing tactics and how Satan attempts to entrap us, here is a sermon I gave from back in 2023.

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/lure-temptation>

What an amazing thing for Jesus to say about Nathanael, that within him there was no hidden agenda, no false appearance and no trickery. A person “without dolos” was transparent, honest, and free of hidden motives. We should all work hard in our lives so that the same could be said of us.

Verse 48 – Here in an amazing way Jesus proves to Nathanael His amazing identity. He shows that He knew that Philip was the one who called Nathanael --- and that at that time Nathanael was under a fig tree.

The John Gill commentary on Micah 4:4 talks about how “It was usual for persons in the eastern countries to sit under vines and fig trees to read, meditate, pray, or converse together”. Adam Clarke’s commentary adds: “There are many proofs that the Jewish rabbins chose the shade of trees, and particularly the fig tree, to sit and study under.”

So, it’s likely from the culture that Nathanael is either praying, meditating or studying under the fig tree --- and that Jesus was given the ability to see him there. With this proof in hand, we can see in the next verse the impact it had on him.

Verse 51 – On the surface, this response from Jesus to Nathanael seems to make no sense. I didn’t understand it at first either, but I hope to show something cool in the Greek that I believe Nathanael must have understood.

Jesus has just said about Nathanael, that he has no “dolos” (guile – δόλος – G1388). We’ve talked a couple times now that the Jews would have been studying from the Septuagint (LXX) (Greek form of the Old Testament). This same word “dolos” appears for the first time in the Old Testament Septuagint in Genesis 27:35 where it says in the NKJV “Your brother came with deceit (dolos G1388) and has taken away your blessing.” Genesis 27:36 “And *Esau* said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob?”

So, we are potentially given this connection to Jacob through the first Old Testament occurrence of this same word. In the very next chapter, in Genesis 28, Jacob is sent to Laban. But along the way, he lays down to sleep (Genesis 28:11) and has a dream. There in Genesis 28:12 Jacob sees a vision of a ladder from earth to heaven with angels of God going up and down. In this vision, the Lord (the preincarnate Jesus Christ) introduces Himself personally to Jacob. Additionally, the Lord says “I am with you and I will keep you wherever you go” (Genesis 28:15). Jacob then makes the concluding statement, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know *it*.” (Genesis 28:16).

As I consider this, it's my personal speculation, that like Jacob, this is the exact realization that Nathanael has just come to, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." Additionally, as Jesus is clearly showing that Nathanael is going to be in this new relationship with Him --- and will be going, seeing and experiencing awesome miracles, he would be witnessing a great moment where the directives of God in Heaven are playing out here on earth through God's Son (clear communication between God the Father in heaven and God the Son on earth).

Additionally, all of this makes me wonder what Nathanael had been studying under that fig tree. Had he been reading from Genesis 27 and 28 in the Septuagint? Did Jesus not only reveal Himself as someone who saw him in these interactions, but as someone who even knew his very thoughts and meditations?

#### Day 753 – WEDNESDAY: December 10<sup>th</sup>

John 2

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 1 – Cana is the city that Nathanael is from. Multiple commentaries draw out that this was likely a family wedding of some sort. John Gill's commentary states about Mary: "who seems to have been a principal person at this wedding, and was very officious; when wine was wanted, she signified it to her son, and ordered the servants to do whatever he bid them: and since she, and Jesus, and his brethren, were all here, it looks as if it was a relation of hers that was now married."

It should also be noted that Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, is not mentioned. It is speculated, and likely, that he is already dead at this point.

Verse 3 – We see that they did not have enough wine. This Greek word for wine, can mean ordinary table wine, strong wine, diluted wine, sweet or spiced wine, or sacrificial wine. What it cannot mean is

unfermented juice. Wine was very common because water could be impure, and wine was safer to drink due to the fermentation.

Vineyards were a central part of the economy --- and wine was a daily part of meals and festivities. The Jews, Greeks and Romans typically drank diluted wine by ratios of 3:1 or 2:1 water-to-wine mixture. This avoided getting drunk but prevented drinking unsafe water. Even though during the dilution process, you introduced potentially unsafe water, ancient wines contained alcohol (usually 6 to 12%), acids and polyphenols (natural antimicrobial compounds). So even a little wine mixed with water had a sanitizing effect. Modern studies on ancient wine-making show that 3:1 and even 4:1 significantly reduced harmful microbes.

Verse 4 – On the first reading in English, this passage can seem abrupt and even disrespectful. However, in Greek and in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, His words were neither. First, the Greek γύναι does *not* mean “woman!” in an abrasive tone. It is closer to “Ma’am” or “Dear lady”. Jesus uses the same word in John 19:26, and we clearly wouldn’t read that same passage with a negative tone. Next, the phrase τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί (literally “what to me and you?”) is a common Old Testament Septuagint phrase and Hebrew idiom. When we look deeper, we could rephrase this in modern English as “Your role and My role in this moment differ—let Me act according to My Father’s timing.” It’s not harsh, but it does clarify that Jesus wasn’t acting according to His own will. He didn’t do miracles “willy-nilly”. Each miracle had purpose and was in alignment with His Father’s will, and therefore, He could only act to that end.

I will also include something that I myself have not studied, but will include as another perspective. Tom Robinson has mentioned that this Hebrew idiom shows up in places in the Old Testament where it has been translated closer to “what do you want?” or “how can I help you?”. Tom brought out how immediately after Christ’s words, His mother’s words tells the servants to do whatever He tells them, which

indicates Jesus is going to help. Hopefully when the UCG New Testament commentary is developed, he can explain this more fully.

Clearly, from Christ's interactions with Nathanael, people are already seeing who He is. However, Christ is clearly stating that He has not yet begun to do public wide-spread miracles.

Verse 5 – Clearly, His mother knows that Jesus can do miracles.

Three times in the book of John it records that Jesus of and by Himself does nothing (compare John 5:19, 5:30 & 8:28). Therefore, God decided to allow Jesus to perform this miracle for this family's wedding. I believe this first miracle provides great insight into the caring nature of God Almighty. Did God have to spare this family from suffering shame for running out of wine early? No. But the Great God is merciful, loving, gentle, and good. I believe this first miracle demonstrated His great character and nature.

Verse 6 – The John Gill commentary states: "At a wedding were set vessels of various sizes to wash hands and feet in; there was one vessel called משיכלא, which the gloss [i.e., an explanatory note added to the text to clarify a phrase] says was a large pitcher, or basin, out of which the whole company washed their hands and their feet; and there was another called משיכלתא, which was a lesser and beautiful basin, which was set alone for the more honorable persons, as for the bride, and for any gentlewoman (w); and such might be these six stone jars, or pots:" [END QUOTE]

Adam Clarke's commentary states: "After the manner of the purifying of the Jews - Or, for the purpose of the purifying of the Jews. The preposition κατα, which I have translated, for the purpose, often denotes in the best Greek writers the final cause of a thing." [END QUOTE]

It's worth noting that an average bottle of wine is 750 milliliters today. If you had 6 water pots holding between 20 to 30 gallons a piece, that's somewhere between 120 to 180 gallons of wine --- or between 605 to 908 bottles of wine. Hopefully that lasted them! They may have had a number of days left of the wedding celebration and they may have had many guests (we don't know).

Verse 8 – Who was the “master of the feast”? In Greek this is just one single word translated “master of the feast” (NKJV) or “governor of the feast” (KJV). In Greek this is one word: ἀρχιτρικλίνω (architriklinō). This in Greek literally means “the ruler/superintendent of the triclinium.” A *triclinium* was a three-couch banquet arrangement (Greek: τρι-κλίνη), standard for feasts. Guests would lay on the three couches that were arranged around tables. They would lay on their left side and use their right hand for eating. So, the architriklinos was the banquet master or professional feast organizer. First century Jewish weddings often lasted 7 days. And therefore, food and wine required detailed oversight. This individual monitored food and wine levels, keeping servants organized, and oversaw distribution. In this culture, hospitality equaled honor in many ways. Running out of wine would produce family shame. So, this “master of the feast” ensured the family did not suffer such shame. Another job of this individual was to taste all wine before it was served to guests to ensure its quality. The closest position we might have in our modern world might be a “wedding planner”.

Verse 10 – The NKJV says “and when the guest have well drunk...”. The Greek here means “to drink to intoxication”.

Verse 11 – We don't typically use the word “manifested”. It simply means to make visible or known. Through this miracle, Jesus' glory was made visible and known to His disciples, and this produced faith in

them. They both believed He was the Son of God and the Christ, but they began to put their trust in Him.

This is the reasonable response to seeing what Jesus was able to do. We will see that Jesus is critical of those areas and people who saw the signs, but it didn't produce a response of faith in their lives.

Verse 12 – Capernaum was a fishing and trade city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It sat on a major highway, the Via Maris, which connected Egypt to the northern empires of Syria and Mesopotamia. This city became the operational home base of Jesus (compare Matthew 9:1 & Mark 2:1). It seems that the reason He did not stay there long at this time is tied to the next verse.

Verse 13 – It's now close to Passover and Jesus departs to go up (in elevation) to Jerusalem to keep this festival of God and the days of Unleavened Bread. In Greek Passover is πάσχα (pascha). This word is from the Hebrew פֶּסַח (pesach) (Aramaic is פִּשְׁחָא (pashā)). In both the Septuagint (LXX) and New Testament, "Passover" is always used for either the Passover festival (but can also include the days of Unleavened Bread), the Passover lamb, or the Passover meal. One time in Acts 12:4, this word is translated Easter in the KJV, but that is incorrect (not linguistically accurate). It's clear from historical writings that Greek and Latin Christians never used πάσχα (pascha) to refer to the pagan Easter festival. Modern Greeks, because they have been influenced by the wrong Christian practices of observing Easter, now refer to Easter as Πάσχα (Páscha) but this developed later as Christianity was perverted by pagan customs.

Verse 14 - In the 1st century, the Passover season brought hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to Jerusalem. Josephus estimates that the city swelled from 50,000–80,000 people to several hundred thousand during major feasts.



Why were animals being sold at the Temple? Many Jews traveled long distances to get to Jerusalem. It was fairly impractical to drive animals that far for sacrifice. It could also develop a blemish or injury due to this travel. According to Leviticus 22:17-25 the sacrifice had to be perfect. The priests therefore began inspecting all animals for “approval”. They could be rejected by the priest for any microscopic flaw (real or invented). Pilgrims who brought their own animals often had them rejected. Those who had their animals rejected, or those who simply wished to avoid traveling with an animal and risking rejection, bought their animals for sacrifice from “pre-approved” temple merchants. These merchants charged inflated (often outrageous) prices for these “pre-approved” animals. This manipulation and exploitation is recorded in rabbinic texts. Additionally, since Roman imperial coins bore images of emperors, money changes would exchange foreign coins for Tyrian silver shekels. They charged a fee for conversion and exchange rates were another means of exploitation.

By the time of Jesus, the Court of the Gentiles (the one area where Gentiles could come, worship, and pray) was loud, full of animals, smelly, and full of people doing business, all of which made it difficult for Gentiles to worship.

As high priests began to be appointed for political reasons, corruption and roots of abuse began to appear and grow. When Herod the Great expanded the Temple, he massively expanded the Temple Mount and created an enormous Court of the Gentiles. This allowed a marketplace to be set up inside the Temple precincts. Scholars believe this was the time that the high priests began to move all of the commerce inside the Temple courts.

Therefore, the actions of Jesus is a response to the priestly corruption, the exploitation of pilgrims, the blocking of Gentile worship and the profaning of the Temple.

Verse 15 – Jesus made a “whip of cords” (NKJV) or “scourge of small cords” (KJV). This was not a Roman scourge (leather throngs with weighted tips). This was a simple herdsman’s whip used to move animals. These ropes or cords were made from a type of reed (plant fiber). Due to the large number of animals, these reed cords or rope strands would have been everywhere. These plant pieces were twisted together. These livestock whips were used for driving animals (directing movement) via the loud snap --- not for causing harm.

Verse 16 – The word “merchandise” is the Greek ἐμπορίου (emporion) meaning “a place where trade is carried out” or “a mart” (emporium). This is the only time this word is used in the Bible.

Verse 17 – Notice that as His disciples watched their new Master, they were considering and recalling scriptures (Psalm 69:9) --- and putting pieces together.

Verse 19 – The NKJV says “and in three days I will raise it up.” This is a correct literal translation, however in Greek, the verb “I will raise” or ἐγείρω is a very flexible verb. Without spending a lot of time going into koine Greek variations of active word forms, this phrase in Greek could also be rendered “in three days it will be raised up.” I share this because it’s clear from the following verses that this meant one thing to those who heard Jesus say this, and it’s clear they thought He meant He would build the physical Temple in three days, but we see the disciples would think back on this and realize that Jesus was talking about Himself. Jesus would be dead and in the ground. It was God the Father who would raise Him back up (compare Acts 2:24, 3:15, 10:40, Galatians 1:1 & 1 Peter 1:21). The New Testament never shows that Jesus raised Himself. I wanted to focus on this due to the false Trinity doctrine that exists within Christianity. We should understand the meaning to be:

“Destroy this Temple (His body), and in three days I will (in the sense of certainty) be raised.” In this case the active form reflects certainty, not self-resurrection.

We should also take note that this is a second instance where individuals request a sign and that Jesus responds that the only sign He would give them is that His body would be dead for three days and three nights (Compare Matthew 12:38 - 40)

Verse 22 – Sometimes, like in verse 17, the disciples were putting things together in real time, but at other times, understanding would come later after more things occurred.

Verse 23 to 25 – Even though many came to believe or have faith in Jesus, he did not “commit Himself to them”. We have to understand these verses in the Greek to fully understand the word play John uses. In both verses 23 and 24, John uses forms of the word πιστεύω (pisteuō). We commonly understand this word to mean “to have faith” or “to believe”.

In verse 23, John uses the word in aorist (ἐπίστευσαν) to describe a point-in-time act of belief. It doesn’t imply that they will continue to believe, only that at that moment they did.

In verse 24, John uses the imperfect (ἐπίστευεν), which shows ongoing or continuous.

This is intended to show us that while during His life many would have momentary faith or temporary belief --- Jesus understood that this would not last. And so, He did not put His continuous ongoing trust or belief in them --- because He knew often it would not last. While someone might demonstrate temporary fervor, He would not place His ongoing confidence in them. Jesus was never deceived by fickle crowds or motives of individuals who responded temporarily due to the excitement a miracle could induce. Over the years it’s been confusing to see individuals who for a time seemed so on fire for God’s way, only

to months later disappear from church. Only God and Jesus know true ongoing faith, versus something that is temporary.

#### Day 754 – THURSDAY: December 11<sup>th</sup>

John 3:1 – 12

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 1 – Who was Nicodemus? Nicodemus meant “victory of the people”. It was a common Greek name, but scholars point out that it was used in Judea primarily among wealthy Jews, Hellenized Jewish aristocrats and Jerusalem leaders associated with the Sanhedrin. Due to Nicodemus being a Pharisee, we would expect him to be highly educated, to be well versed in the Scriptures, and to carry theological authority among the people. But even more, this verse also calls him “A ruler of the Jews” (ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων). In Greek ἄρχων meant “ruler, governor or magistrate”. However, among the Jews it specifically was used to refer to those of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the only body of recognized Jewish rulers. They were commonly called “the rulers” both in the Gospels and also by Josephus (compare Luke 23:13, 24:20, Acts 3:17, 4:5 & 13:27). Additionally, we see in John 7:50 – 51 where Nicodemus speaks from right among the chief priests and leading pharisees. His voice is treated as belonging to this ruling group. John 19 shows Nicodemus bringing about 75 pounds worth of burial spices --- which speaks to his tremendous wealth. We also see him right alongside Joseph of Arimathea who is a rich man and a prominent member of the council (compare Matthew 27:57 and Mark 15:43). This makes Nicodemus one of the most influential leaders alive at this time. I don’t want to jump ahead too much about Nicodemus, so we will cover him more as we come to him later in the Gospels.

Verse 2 – We see here that Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. This detail appears to indicate that Nicodemus doesn’t want to be seen openly coming to Jesus. Remember this is the first story John tells us

after recording verses 23 to 25 of the previous chapter. He may have feared the political consequences of being seen with Jesus. Some believe he simply may have wanted time alone with Jesus.

Nicodemus seems to show genuine respect and recognition of God's activities through Jesus.

We should also note that Nicodemus says "we". This would indicate that there are others, perhaps of the Sanhedrin or Pharisees, who are also recognizing Jesus as a teacher from God. So, while we might talk generally about the Pharisees and religious leaders of that day rejecting Jesus Christ, we should recognize that there were some who heard and responded.

Verse 3 – At first glance, this seems to be an odd reply to verse 2. However, Nicodemus has just likely witnessed Jesus perform miracles at Passover (John 2:23). He's intrigued and drawn to Jesus. Jesus seems to jump ahead with this highly educated religious leader and say, there is a much greater miracle that you need to be aware of and be concerned with.

There are many in the world who don't understand what Jesus means by "born again". Here in John 3:3, the Greek word is γεννηθῆναι (gennēthē). In the Greek this is the normal word for giving birth --- a real literal birth (not a symbolic event). And that's why we see Nicodemus confused in verse 4 (which we'll come to). And Jesus is also talking about a real birth, just not a physical one, but rather a spiritual birth.

So how do we fully understand this?

We have to understand there is a difference between being conceived or begotten versus being born. These are two different things.

As Christians, we are spiritually conceived/begotten at the time when we are baptized --- and through the laying on of hands by an elder of God, we receive the Holy Spirit in our lives. We aren't fully spirit. The

Bible refers to this as a down payment or “guarantee of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14). At this point, just as any child growing and developing in their mother’s belly is their parent’s child, we are considered God’s children --- as God’s Spirit leads us and we grow and develop (Romans 8:14, 16). But we still aren’t born.

John uses the Greek verb in the Aorist Subjunctive Passive 3<sup>rd</sup> Person Singular.

This points to a future completed event done by God.

Aorist (complete event)

Passive (done by God)

Subjunctive (future/conditional)

The full “being born” occurs at the resurrection, when the Spirit-born person becomes fully spirit. This moment is clearly outlined in 1 Corinthians 15.

So, are we already born again? No. We are spiritually conceived/begotten, but we won’t be spiritually born until the resurrection.

Verse 4 – Again, because Nicodemus knows that this word means a literal birth, he’s confused. And rightfully so! He didn’t have all the understanding he needed yet.

Verse 5 – To become part of God’s Family, a Spirit God-being forever in God’s Kingdom, requires both: (1) To first be “born of water” through baptism and the receiving God’s Spirit during our physical lives; and (2) then also to be born of Spirit (which doesn’t happen until God transforms us in the future into God-beings like Him and Jesus Christ).

Verse 8 – Throughout the Bible we find this connection to wind, breathe and Spirit. Wind is invisible, yet it’s real and powerful and can have a visible impact on our physical world. Here Jesus Himself uses the parallel between wind and being a Spirit-being to help Nicodemus

understand just a tad bit what it will be like to become composed of Spirit.

Verse 10 – The NKJV (as well as the LSV, YLT, BBE, ESV) correctly translates this as “**Are you the teacher of Israel**”. However, other translations such as the ISV, KJV, NLT, CEV, ERV, all get it wrong by substitution “the” for “a” or “an”. This is not a generic statement. Jesus is identifying Nicodemus as “the” leading preeminent teacher in Israel. The Greek **ὁ** gives the phrase a title-like force. In koine Greek the Titles often take the article:

ὁ βασιλεύς – *the king*

ὁ προφήτης – *the prophet*

ὁ ἀρχιερεύς – *the high priest*

ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ – *the Son of God*

In researching why some translations “soften” it to “a teacher”, I found that the English style finds “the teacher of Israel” unusual and so translators inserted what they found more comfortable into the translations, instead of translating it literally. However, the Greek is clear-cut. Jesus uses the definite article as a title.

I wanted to spend time on this so we can clearly understand how much of an expert Nicodemus was at the time.

Verse 11 – YOU Do Not Receive Our Witness:

I read in Adam Clarke’s commentary “It was deemed criminal among the Jews to question or depart from the authority of their teachers. Nicodemus grants that our Lord is a teacher come from God, and yet scruples to receive his testimony relative to the new birth, and the spiritual nature of the Messiah’s kingdom.” So I wanted to research this more. In rabbinic culture, they had the Hebrew phrase *Kavod ha-Torah* — “Honor of the Torah”. This then turned into “respecting teachers” was an extension of honoring the Torah. The Mishnah includes “He

who disputes the ruling of his teacher is as one who disputes the Divine Presence.” (m. Sanhedrin 11:2).

While not a legal crime, disputing with one’s teacher was considered a grave insult or transgression.

We’ll see later, that the Sanhedrin and religious leaders will repeatedly frame Jesus as someone with no authority (John 7:15) and a deceiver of the people (John 7:12).

However, Nicodemus came to Jesus stating “we know that You are a teacher come from God” (verse 2).

Jesus is therefore correcting Nicodemus in words and a culture that he knows well, using his own words to force him into a decision between believing and following Jesus (risking being ostracized by the Sanhedrin), or to hold onto to his traditions and status.

Verse 11 - WE Speak What WE Know And Testify What WE Have Seen: Who is the “we” in the begging of this verse (we speak, we know, we have seen)?

It’s unclear. One idea is that it’s referring to God and Jesus Christ.

Another idea is that it’s referring to Jesus and the disciples.

I think the best explanation is that Jesus is referring in general to all of God’s prophets (such as Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc...) that God sent to Israel to teach and direct, yet they wouldn’t “receive” them.

Consider some of these words:

Matthew 23:29 – 31 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!..."



Later in Acts 7:52, Stephen would declare “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”

But even the prophet Jeremiah recorded in Jeremiah 7:24–26 “Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels *and* the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*. Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.”

Jesus ends by saying “**and you do not receive Our witness.**” “You” in Greek is plural. It’s “you all” or “you people”. It seems Jesus is trying to help Nicodemus see the trend of the religious leaders.

Verse 12 – Jesus continues to talk about the religious leaders in general. Twice more in this verse he uses “you all”. Remember, Jesus was the Word (logos) who had worked with Israel. So, when He speaks of the past, it could refer not only to His short time on earth, but anytime in the past.

#### Day 755 – FRIDAY: December 12<sup>th</sup>

John 3:13–21

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 13 – This verse has long been a memory verse --- and for good reason. But at first glance, doesn’t it feel like an odd place for this? What’s the context? Jesus has just finished correcting the religious elite --- and perhaps Israel in general --- for their general lack of understanding. More specifically, Jesus has essentially made the case, how can you all understand the things of heaven (spiritual things), if you all haven’t understood the physical. The answer likely lies in the words of Proverbs 30:4.

In Proverbs 30:3-4 it reads “I neither learned wisdom Nor have knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound

the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son's name, If you know? The religious elite claimed divine authority, but none of them had ever ascended to heaven, viewed with their own eyes heavenly things, and been able to share on earth all that they had seen, heard and learned. But here before Nicodemus, “the teacher of Israel”, is standing the Son of God, who speaks of what He knows, has seen, and is sharing it now here on earth as a direct witness, but the religious elite won’t hear it. Christ will say it even more plainly to people in John 6:38 where He said “**For I have come down from heaven,...**” and again in John 8:23 where He said “**You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.**” In other words, He is the sole source of understanding heavenly (spiritual) things. He has exclusive heavenly authority!

Before moving on from this verse, it’s worth knowing that the end of verse 13 “who is in heaven” does not exist in the earliest manuscripts, but later appears in the Majority Byzantine manuscripts. All most all modern textual scholars, even conservative ones, conclude that “who is in heaven” appears to be a later scribal addition. At the time Jesus made this statement, He was not in heaven, however, by the time John wrote his gospel account, and by the time scribes copied the account, Jesus was back in heaven at His Father’s right hand (Hebrews 12:2). What seems clear about John 3:13 is that “who is in heaven” is not part of the direct quote of Jesus. In the context of what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, it probably makes more sense in the way it is capture in the earliest manuscripts “**No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man**”. We certainly do recognize that Jesus is currently in heaven (the “third heaven” of 2 Corinthians 12:2) now.

Verse 14 – Again, on the surface, this feels like another abrupt shift from the verse before. However, understanding this conversation with

Nicodemus helps us to understand what Jesus is teaching him. So far, we've seen how Jesus is teaching this leading teacher of Israel about His authority over heavenly/spiritual matters, but now Jesus shifts to teach Nicodemus about His mission to save using something that Nicodemus would know well, but also wouldn't fully understand until much later. His mission was about the salvation of mankind. And we see this kicks off a number of verses on this topic.

Jesus is referencing how in Numbers 21:8–9 “Then the Lord said to Moses ‘Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”

They had to look to --- and believe that by looking at --- the bronze serpent they would be healed and saved. Here Jesus essentially tells Nicodemus, who knows this story well, “In a similar way, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should be healed, saved and receive everlasting life. Just as there was no other way to be saved in the wilderness for the Israelites, there is no other way to be saved than to look to and place our hope in Jesus Christ --- as Acts 4:12 reminds us: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

When the Gospel of John uses the Greek ὑψωθῆναι for “lifted up” it often (if not always) uses it with a double-layered meaning that Jesus would both be lifted up on a pole to be “crucified” but also be lifted up to exaltation (glory). This works with verse 13 that Jesus not only came down from heaven but will be lift back up into heaven.

Verse 16 – John 3:16 is widely regarded as the single best-known, most quoted and most recognized verse in the entire Bible.

If you have been in the Church of God for very long, you've likely heard many times the word “agape”. Here in John 3:16, John uses a form of this word spelled ἀγαπάω or ἠγάπησεν (ēgapēsen).

What did this mean to the average person who heard it in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? First, it wasn't a rare word, but instead used in a wide range of meanings, including affection, preference, approval, loyalty, and warm regard. People used it to describe being helpful, acting benevolently, or treating someone with goodwill. Further it was used to hold someone in high esteem, to honor them, and to care for them deeply in a steady and consistent way. In a family context it was used to express devoted loyalty.

This is difficult to sum up. "For God held mankind in such high esteem, caring for them so deeply, consistently, devotedly, that He took an action that would greatly benefit and help them..."

He did this by giving His only begotten Son. In Greek the word "begotten" (μονογενής - monogenēs) meant "one of a kind," "unique," "only one in its class".

That's how that word was used in secular Greek before Christianity.

This word comes from the following two words:

μόνος = "only"

γένος = "kind," "type," "category," "class," "offspring"

The Greeks would use this toward an only child with emphasis on the child's uniqueness, specialness, & irreplaceability.

Luke uses it in the same sense in Luke 7:12, 8:42 & 9:38. In those verses it's translated (only son, only daughter, only child).

Why did it become commonly translated as "only begotten"? The Latin Vulgate translated it as "unigenitus" which does mean "only begotten" --- and this influenced the KJV, NKJV and other translations.

John uses the term 5 times (John 1:14, 1:18, 3:16, 3:18 & 1 John 4:9) to emphasize the Son's utter uniqueness, who is unlike anyone else, the one-of-a-kind Son of God.

Verse 17 – If God wanted to condemn us, since we've all sinned we all would be condemned. Thankfully God wants to save us!

Verse 18 – There is no path to salvation without Jesus Christ (compare John 14:6 & 1 John 5:12). Therefore, if you aren't saved, you are doomed to perish (or condemned). There is no middle ground. And this is why the second resurrection is such an amazing part of God's plan. Without the second resurrection, the many people who never believed during this life would be forever dead and have no hope of becoming a part of God's plan and eternal life.

Verse 19 through 21 - Clearly there were some in Jesus day that saw the miracles, but still chose this world over responding to the teachings of Jesus. All of us have to choose between the two (light vs darkness)? The choice between two trees, two paths, two kingdoms, two masters, etc...

These two verses show us it's not only believing in Jesus Christ that matters, it's also about what we do (practice).

John does something interesting over these verses. In verse 19, he uses a word translated evil (πονηρά) which is the most common New Testament word for "evil". This word is often associated with the "evil" one (ὁ πονηρός). John's word choice seems to emphasize spiritual darkness, moral distortion, hostility toward God. John is speaking of humanity as a whole and its collective moral condition. This is the world that Satan is responsible for and the kingdom he rules.

Then in verse 20, John uses another word that also gets translated into English as "evil" but it's a different Greek word φαῦλα. This word primarily means worthless, cheap, of low moral quality. Here it describes individual actions, not the global moral condition. John makes this personal. Yes, we live in a dark and evil world, ruled by an evil being, but we are still responsible for our choices/actions. Do we choose to practice truth or the worthless?

People aren't always choosing massive wickedness, but because they are clinging to petty sins, cheap desires, worthless pursuits, low-grade moral habits, they avoid the Light.

## Day 756 – SATURDAY: December 13<sup>th</sup>

John 3:22 – 36

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 22 – This verse seems to be in contradiction with John 4:2 where it says “though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples”.

This verse is describing activity of a group. The Greek “remained” (διατρίβω) shows that Christ was present and “spent time” or “passed time” with them.

It was common in both Hebrew and Greek to show actions that others did on behalf or under a leader attributed to the leader. For example, in Joshua 5:3, Joshua did not do all the circumcisions himself, and in 1 Kings 6:14, Solomon did not build the Temple himself. We will see this clearly again in John 4:1-2 when we get there.

So the leader’s name is used to describe the actions of his followers.

It’s important to understand that they only could do these baptisms because they were given the authority by Jesus to do so. Nowhere in the Bible can someone take authority to themselves to perform baptisms, it is always passed down from authority to authority, retaining the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ.

We might take this time to ask: Why didn’t Jesus baptize anyone?

Could you imagine how much division might later come from someone who said, “I was baptized by Jesus Himself! Who were you baptized by?” Human nature may easily use this to create problems.

Verse 23 – Perhaps you’ve already noticed, but John likes to make clarifying statements in his writings to avoid possible confusions (e.g., John 2:21; 7:39; 12:33). John seems to go out of his way here, which I’m thankful for, to let us know there was “much” or “a large abundance” of water in this area. This is connected to him performing baptisms there. And as we’ve already discussed, this requires immersion/submersion. This again is another reason why the Bible is clear that baptism does not involve sprinkling a little bit of water.

We might wonder, “Why is John still baptizing here when Jesus’ public ministry has begun?”

Part of John’s role was to prepare the people for Jesus and to turn them toward repentance. This was still active. Clearly God had not removed or instructed John that his mission was over yet. We will see at the end of this chapter (verse 30) that John was aware of his own role, and was never in competition with Jesus. He remained humble and focused on his supportive role.

Verse 24 – Here we have another interjected clarification from John. John was baptizing, and likely would have continued, but God allowed John’s work to come to an end when he was thrown into prison.

Verse 25 – The Greek word for purifications used here was καθαρισμοῦ (katharismou). It was a broad term that meant *ritual washing*, *ceremonial cleansing*, or *purification rites*. By the first century, the Jews had many purification rites.

They had Mikveh fully-body immersions to purify from bodily discharges and menstruation. They also used these baths before entering the Temple or when a non-Jew converted to Judaism.

Archeology shows hundreds of these baths in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Galilee.

They also had various hand-washing rituals (especially the Pharisees – compare Mark 7:2-5). They would wash before meals, after the marketplace, as well as cups, pitchers and vessels. These are not found in the Old Testament, but were traditions.

Additionally, they had other purifications tied to being defiled by a corpse, after childbirth and for offerings/sacrifices.

We aren’t given details here, but we can imagine the conflict that is coming as large crowds are coming to both John and Jesus to be baptized. Was it motivated by those wanting to hold onto power and tradition? Was it motivated by confusion?

Verses 26 through 32 – Here John's disciples see that Jesus through His disciples is now baptizing --- and large groups are coming to Jesus. There appears to be a bit of jealousy and concern here --- as previously this was their rabbi's thing (baptizing). John then demonstrates a tremendous attitude of humility and faith. He trusts God with timing, details, etc...

John reminds his disciples that all along he has told them, he wasn't the Christ, but that instead he was going before Him. In verse 29, we understand that the best man or the maid of honor, while in valued and exalted positions, are not the focus. The focus and honor are on the bride and groom. The best man or maid of honor isn't in competition or focusing on themselves, they are joyful! In verse 30, John doesn't say his job is over (coming to a stop), but that as Jesus grows in fame and following, John's role will get smaller and smaller. In verse 31 John clearly understands that he's on a completely different level from Christ. Again, there is not a hint of competition or pride here.

Verse 33 – The NKJV says “has certified” and the KJV says “hath set to his seal”. In the ancient world, when you agreed with a document, contract, or statement, you sealed it with your signet ring. This meant you certify it as true, accept it personally, stand behind it, and make it binding to yourself.

Verse 34 – The NKJV says “for God does not give the Spirit by measure”. In the Greek, the word translated “measure” (μέτρου) was a measuring device, a fixed quantity (with limit and boundary) or a controlled and restricted amount. You might think of this as a “ration” or “quota”. The context of this and the proceeding verses is about the One God sent who comes from above. Here in speaking of Jesus, God did not set a limit, or give Him only a ration of the Spirit. John is clearly showing that Jesus is fundamentally different than anyone else on earth. God has never given anyone else His spirit in this manner.



Verse 36 – As we bring our study week to an end. We have spent the entire week in several chapters of John. And this verse is a great verse to end on, because it again summarizes much of what John has been recording and teaching us. Jesus came down from heaven --- and was not just another human being. He came down from heaven as the only special and unique Son of God. And you and I believe that. But our believing in our mind is not enough. We must walk in the light. We must become like Him in every possible way we can through the help of His Spirit in our lives. What a special calling!