

I Am He (Jesus the Nazarene) **The I AM** I Am the True Vine
I Am the Light of the World I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life
I Am the Door of the Sheep **Statements** I AM
I Am the Resurrection and the Life I Am in the Father and the Father is in Me
of Jesus I Am the Bread of Life

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The Gospel of John - Introduction

It is my understanding that the majority of scholars accept that the apostle John did write the book. He was one of the first four to be called by Jesus as an apostle, **Mt. 4:18-24, Mk. 1:16-20 & Lk. 5:10-11**. "The disciple whom Jesus loved", **Jn. 13:23, 19:26, 21:7 & 20**. "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things", **Jn. 21:24**. John was at Jesus' crucifixion, **Mt. 27:56** and was asked by Jesus to take care of His mother, **19:25-27**. We conclude then, that he is the "apostle whom Jesus loved".

Probably written from Ephesus, no fixed date is known, but it is believed to be from 85 – 90 or 100 A.D. probably closer to 85 A.D. after the other three gospels. John also writes 1st, 2nd and 3rd John and the book of Revelation.

Quite different from the Synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. . (Synoptic is from the Greek work synopsis which means "to see together".) Matthew, Mark and Luke have the same narrative as they share a lot of the same information from the life of Christ. They share similar teachings, parables and historical events usually in the order they happened.

John takes a different approach than the other gospels. John writes about events in Judea and other events in Galilee. He gives us information on Jesus' ministry after His baptism and His attendance to various feast in Jerusalem, that the others do not go into. He only records seven miracles, none of which include demon possession. John is very theological in his approach. We see this immediately from his opening dialogue and a number of "I am" statements from Jesus. He wants us to know who Jesus is, God in the flesh. The purpose of his writing is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.", **Jn. 20:31**.

Why study the I am statements? Because John wants us to. He wants us to further solidify the foundation of our faith and enrich our relationship with our savior. While there is a few more statements that you could count in this list, here are the statements we'll study.

The "I am" Statements

Passage	Statement	Application
6:35 & 48	"I am the bread of life"	He Provides & Delivers
8:12 & 9:5	"I am the Light of the world"	The Glory and Salvation of God
8:58	"I AM" (before Abraham was born)	He is Yahweh
10:7 & 9	"I am the door of the sheep"	Peace and Protection
10:11 & 14	"I am the good shepherd"	Known by Him
11:25	"I am the resurrection and the life"	Resurrection to Eternal Life
14:6	"I am the way, and the truth, and the life"	Path to absolute better existence
14:11	"I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me"	Part of the Trinity
15:1 & 5	"I am the true vine"	He Sustains us
18:5	"I am He" (Jesus the Nazarene)	The Historical Jesus

I am the Bread of Life

John Chapter 6

30-31, We don't know the sincerity in which they asked their question on doing a sign. Maybe they were looking for a way out of believing in Him or maybe they really did want to know what work to do to please God. They were witnessing signs from Him. After all, they were wondering how it was possible He arrived on the shore before they did, **vr. 26-27**. They mention their fathers eating manna in the wilderness, the "bread out of heaven" as a sign to them to believe in God, **Ex. 16:12-15**. And yet, just a day or so ago, they saw Jesus feed over 5,000 people. So, there were signs for them to believe in Jesus as the son of God.

32-34, Jesus now begins setting them up for His teaching, that He is the bread of life. He points out to them that the manna in the wilderness was not provided by Moses, but by God, **Ex. 16:6-8**. Which is something they would know. But notice Jesus' statement, He says, "My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven", **vr. 32**. They would have understood that the manna came from heaven, but Jesus doesn't say "God" He says "Father". The point being that with Moses the manna comes from God, but with Jesus the manna comes from His Father. This shows a difference in the relationship, specifically the intimacy with the Father.

Jesus takes it even further by correlating Himself as the manna when He says, the "bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven." He is metaphorically saying to them that He is from God. He will repeat the point in **verses 50, 52 & 58**. The bread from God had sustained their forefathers in the wilderness. The audience realizes that the bread Jesus is referring to, "that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world", is different and incredibly special. So, they now ask Him to "always give us this bread".

35, In response to their request for this bread that "gives life to the world", **vr. 33**, Jesus plainly tells His followers, "**I am the bread of life**". He will say it again in **verse 48**. This is the first "I am" statement made by Jesus that John records.

The Bread of Life

We can clearly see from the context of the conversation that this metaphor is in reference to the manna that was supplied to the children of Israel in the wilderness. To help better understand what Jesus is saying with this statement, we'll look at some things from the original story, which is in **Ex. 16:1-34**.

God Supplies

The first thing we see is that it was Yahweh who supplied the bread from heaven, **Ex. 16:4-5**. Moses and Aaron point this out to the Israelites, **Ex. 16:6-10**. This was all about the children of Israel understanding their place before God. They were to follow His instructions and trust He would provide.

In **II Peter 1:4-8**, Peter explains that, because we get to be part of God's "divine nature", we should grow in faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. He then says we should practice these things "for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you", (NASB) **II Ptr. 1:10-11**. Through Jesus, God has supplied all that we need to be in a righteous relationship with Him.

I again want to stress the point made in **vr. 32**. In this conversation they would have absolutely understood the manna came from Yahweh. Jesus' choice of words to say, "My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven" (emp. Mine) would certainly have been noticed and started brewing tension in the conversation that follows. With this point we see that God supplied for the physical needs in the "wilderness of Sin", **Ex. 16:1**, and He is now suppling our spiritual needs in our wilderness of sin, through Jesus.

We Gather

The second thing we see is that Israel had to gather the manna, **Ex. 16:4-5**. God supplied it, but they had to get it. Maybe they had to gather because they complained about not having any food, **Ex. 16:2**. In any case, remember those following Jesus had just come from a place where they couldn't buy food, so Jesus provided for them, **vr. 5-14**. Now, it seems they weren't seeking Him for signs or because they thought He was Prophet. Rather, they were seeking Him because they know He can feed them, **vr. 25-26**. What is our motivation for seeking Jesus? Is it earthly comfort or gain? Or do we truly desire to gather the spiritual life He brings?

As He is the bread of life, He says that the one "who comes to Me will not be hungry and the one who believes in Me will never be thirsty". After again telling them "I am the bread of life" in **vr. 48**, He tells them their fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died, **vr. 49**. Back in **4:14**, Jesus said that whoever drinks of the water that He gives will never thirst again. Obviously, Jesus being the bread of life isn't about our physical well being. While we understand God cares for us physically, the metaphor is about showing us that Jesus is the sustenance needed to completely take care of us spiritually.

Jesus taught that we should not worry about being taken care of physically. Our priority is to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness", **Mt. 6:27-34**. Yes, this is easier said than done but that does not excuse us from striving to follow what He commands. We should seek God first. While dealing with family, work, bills and other stresses in life, seeking God and being who He wants us to be should always be the priority.

God Delivers

Finally, the manna is placed before the Lord, so they could remember they were fed, **Ex. 16:32-34**. The Hebrew writer tells us it was a "golden jar holding the manna" that was eventually placed in the ark of the covenant, **Heb. 9:4**. The manna comes from God to be consumed by man and then is placed back with God. When Jesus makes the statement again in **vr. 48**, He will then speak to eating His flesh and drinking His blood, **vr. 54**. Gross statements when taken literally. But when we look at the imagery of the metaphor, we see the beauty of what God has done for us. Jesus, the manna of life, comes from God to be consumed by man and then will go back to be with God.

After His resurrection, Peter explains that Jesus had "been exalted to the right of God", **Acts 2:32-33**. The Hebrew writer also explains that Jesus has "sat down at the right hand of God", **Heb. 10:12**, where Paul says that He "also intercedes for us", **Rom. 8:34**. Paul also writes to the church in Ephesus that he prays they will "know what is the hope of His calling...the riches of the glory of His inheritance...and what is the surpassing greatness of His power...which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places", **Eph. 1:18-20**. Understanding Jesus as the bread of life is to trust God has saved us. Jesus is the manna God has given, that goes back before Him delivering us to eternal life.

John teaches us more on spiritual life in his first epistle. He points out that he and others were witnesses of the "Word of Life" and are now proclaiming to us the "eternal life" that was manifested to them, **I Jn. 1:1-2**. He goes on to explain that eternal life is in His son and in Him we "may know that you have eternal life", **I Jn. 5:11-21 (vr. 13)**. Paul will explain that in Jesus we are made complete. While we were dead in transgressions, Jesus makes us "alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions", **Col. 2:9-14**. Giving us Jesus as the bread of life, is how the Father now takes care of us spiritually, so that we may eat and live forever.

Jesus challenged their belief, by making the point that Him being the bread of Life isn't just about God taking care of the physical, but more importantly, the spiritual. To come and believe in Jesus is to sit at our Creator's table partaking in the most amazing banquet ever. To not hunger or thirst again tells us that there is nothing more after Him. He is all we need in the wilderness; He is all we need before God. He is the simple provision for us to partake and He is also the most lavish feast that continues to sustain. He satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst for God. He is the bread of life.

I am the Light of the World

John Chapter 8

12, We don't know for certain if Jesus' words here are the same day that started in **vr. 2**. It seems likely that they were as He probably resumed His teaching as crowds began to gather again. At whatever point Jesus resumes His teaching, John records that He started it by saying, "**I am the light of the world.**" This is the second "I am" statement. He will say it again in **9:5** when He heals the blind man. With this powerful statement, Jesus shows us He is the Glory and Salvation of God.

Glory of God

When Daniel received an understanding of king Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel praised God saying "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells in Him.", **Dan. 2:22**. When Simeon saw Jesus after He was born, he said "For my eyes have seen Your salvation...a light of revelation", **Lk. 2:32**. When Simeon said that, maybe he had a passage like **Isa. 9:2** in mind which says "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." Or **Isa. 60:2** which says "For behold darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and his glory will appear upon you."

In **II Cor. 4:3-6**, Paul shares some interesting insight into the spiritual warfare going on while the gospel is spreading. He tells us that if the Gospel is veiled, referring back to Moses (**II Cor. 3:12-16**), it's veiled to those who are perishing because the god of this world, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. Paul goes on to reference "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Telling us that God said there would be light to shine out of darkness. And that it is God who has put in their hearts "to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Paul tell us the Glory of God is literally in the face of Jesus.

Jesus is how we, as mankind, are able to see. He shows us the image of God, showing us who God is, His divine will, nature, wisdom and love. As the light of the world Jesus shows us that we are in darkness. We see how far away from God we are and how much we need a savior. "And He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For in Him all things were created. Both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been. Created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." **Col. 1:15-17**

Salvation of God

After stating that He is the light of the world, He goes on to say "the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

If we are in a dark room, we turn on a light so we can see where to walk and not run into anything. And even then, we have probably ran into something at some point. We only try to navigate darkness in a place that we have seen illuminated. We wouldn't dream of doing something where we truly can't see, like driving down the road at night with no lights on. To understand Jesus as the light of the world is to understand that He comes from God to reveal to us the profound and hidden things from God. Jesus not only shows us God, but He is the illuminated path we need to travel to be saved.

John began his gospel by speaking of Jesus as "the Light of men" and that the "Light shines in the darkness", **1:4-5**. Jesus as the light shows us the way to walk with God. And "if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin", **I Jn. 1:5-7**. Light and darkness are used as a metaphor to show us the spiritual contrast between God & Satan; good & evil. This illustration is also used in **Mt. 5:14-16 and Eph. 5:8-13**.

Light		Darkness	
Gen. 1:3; Jam. 1:17	God is the author	Col. 1:13	Has Domain
I Tim. 6:16	Jesus dwells in	Eph. 5:8-9	We were in
Col. 1:12	We are saints in light	Eph. 6:12	Satan rules

Jesus as the light of the world shows us the very glory and majesty of God. He is our Creator, the first cause, cause. Everything is through Him and for Him. The heavens and earth exist because of Him and in Him it is all held together. As a compass directs a lost hiker home, He leads us to salvation. He illuminates for us what is true, right and just. He is the meaning to our existence, our law to live by and our moral standard. He is the radiant power over darkness and death...He is our victory, the light of the world!

John Chapter 9

4-5, We should always be about working the works of Jesus. As the people around Jesus were figuring out who sinned, they were making the state of existence about them and doing it in a very negative way. Yes, we have to deal with sin, but life is not all about us. It's about God. Sometimes big results come from simple things. God is bigger than the box we put Him in when dealing with our life. Life should be about looking for the glory of God and working for Him.

Jesus said "we must carry out the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming". (KJ translates "we" as "I"). "We" probably meant Him and the Spirit. We see the Spirit active in Jesus' ministry, **Mt. 4:1; 12:28-32, Lk. 4:1, 14, 18**. The works of the Father are what need to be accomplished. Jesus had things to do. We too, as disciples of Him, have work to do. There is action on our part in our obedience to God. In **Eph. 4:11-16** for example, we see we have different roles, to equip ourselves for "work of service", **vr. 12**. We are to "mature", **vr. 13** and "grow up", **vr. 15**. So together we cause "the growth of the body", **vr. 16**. We should always be about how we can glorify God and lift other up in doing so.

He uses day and night as an illustration for light and death. There will come a time when no one can work, because we won't be living. Because He says "While I am in the world", it seems that He is speaking more in reference to His own time on the earth, rather than ours. But the point remains the same, He made the most of His time being intent on His purpose to obey the Father's will. We should strive to do the same while we have breath.

Using day and night references goes with the "I am the Light of the world" metaphor in **vr. 5**. He's already made the same "I am" statement in **8:12**. The metaphor fits in beautifully with the miracle. The blind man has not been able to see light, or more precisely, all the things that the light shows. Even if one has eye sight, if you sit in a room without any light, you can't see anything anyway. Jesus is the light that illuminates the things we have from God. They beheld His glory as He did these miracles in front of them, "so that the works of God might be displayed", **vr. 3**. Later, the blind man will come to the knowledge that Jesus is the savior and worship Him, **vs. 35-39**.

35-38, After the man is "put out" (of the synagogue per **vr. 22, I Kings 12:2-11 and vs. 18-19**); Jesus finds him and asks him if he believes in the son of man. The man asks who the Son of Man is so that he may believe him. When Jesus answers, "you have both seen Him and He is the one who is talking with you", the man confesses he believes and worships Him. Keep in mind that the man did not know what Jesus looked like. When Jesus sent him away to wash in the pool, he was still blind. Through all of the events to this moment, the man had not seen Jesus, even after his sight was received. This conversation is such a beautiful moment as the blind man, not only sees, but now beholds the one who healed him. Finally seeing Jesus he can't help but to worship Him.

The ancient scripture, which pointed to Jesus, gave the wisdom "that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus", **II Tim. 3:14-15**. It is because of Jesus that we can see and receive salvation from God. He enables us to enter into the presence of God and worship Him, **Heb. 10:19-22**. We won't see and know everything about Jesus. After all He is God. That's the great thing about our relationship with Him. We won't run out of things to learn. But not fully seeing Him isn't an excuse not to move in obedience. The blind man couldn't see Him at all and

he still did what Jesus asked. We need to be where the blind man was, willing to move in our relationship with Jesus, this is how we end up seeing! Let us worship Him who has healed us from our sin!

I AM

John Chapter 8

56-57, Back in **verses 33 & 39** the Jews brought up that Abraham is their father, they are his offspring. They were proud of this lineage, and it was especially important to them. The promise God made to Abraham was that he would be the father of a great nation, **Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5-6; 22:16-18**. The Jews took the promise that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed", to a level in which they thought they didn't have to obey. Unlike their father Abraham, they lost sight of the fact, that they needed to continue putting effort into their relationship with God.

We don't know exactly how Jesus is referencing Abraham seeing His day. What we do know is that Abraham graciously received the promise that God had given Him and saw God begin to fulfill it through Isaac, **Gen. 17:18-22; 22:14-18**. In **Heb. 11:8-19**, the writer speaks to Abraham and Sarah's faith in God and says, "all these died in faith without receiving the promises but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance...", **vr. 13**. Abraham saw enough, even if only from a distance, to rejoice, knowing that God was fulfilling His promise. But Jesus is speaking about this in a way that conveys He personally saw Abraham's joy. The Jews did not at all like how the conversation was going and quickly pointed out that Jesus isn't even 50 yrs. old. So, how in the world could He have seen Abraham?

58, In response to the Jews question in **vr. 57**, Jesus simply says "**before Abraham was born, I AM.**" This is the third "I am" statement that John records and I think, the most powerful.

The Greek word "am" is "*Eimi*" and means "to be". Jesus is quoting God's answer to Moses. Moses was told by God to go before Pharaoh. Moses knows he is talking to the God of his fathers (Hebrew word "Elohim"), but wants to know, what name should he give as the one who sent him. God's answer is "I AM WHO I AM". He tells Moses to "say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'", **Ex. 3:13-15**.

In the conversation with Moses, "I AM" is the Hebrew where we get "Yahweh". While it is a bit difficult to transliterate, we understand God is saying "I is" or "I alone exist". Keep in mind Moses will be standing before Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt and telling him "I alone exist" sent me! This was telling Pharaoh that the source of everything, the one without beginning and without end was asking for the release of His people. "I AM" is the God of his fathers and this is His name forever. Yahweh instructs Moses to say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you... this is My eternal name, and this is how I am to be recalled for all generations". And so, the generation that is now conversing with Jesus knew "Yahweh" to be God's eternal name. By using this name, Jesus isn't simply saying He existed before Abraham but is saying He is God Himself.

Yahweh is often times translated in our English text as "LORD", using all capitol letters. It's found more often in the Old Testament, approximately 6,823 times, more than any other name for God. Yahweh is the most revered of God's names and means "the existing One". It is actually a four-letter name represented by the Hebrew letters YHWH (Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh). It is also referred to as the Ineffable Name (meaning incapable or too holy to be expressed), the Unutterable Name, the Distinctive Name, and as the "Tetragrammaton," coming from Greek meaning "The Four Letters". Linguistically, it is related to the Hebrew root HYH (Heh-Yod-Heh) which means "to be", reflecting the eternal existence of God. It is frequently shortened to Yah (Yod-Heh), Yahu or Yeho (Yod-Heh-Vav), especially when used in combination with other names or phrases, such as in Yehoshua (Joshua, meaning "the LORD is my Salvation"), Eliyahu (Elijah, meaning "my God is the LORD"), and Halleluyah (Hallelujah, meaning "praise the LORD").

It is understood that the name Yahweh was pronounced as part of daily services in the Temple. This was the only place it was allowed to be pronounced. With the temple being destroyed in 70 A.D. and with Jews not being

allowed to say it outside of the temple, the exact pronunciation was lost. It's understood some scholars passed down the knowledge of the correct pronunciation of "YHVH" for some generations, but eventually it too would be lost. It is estimated that it was extinct from any use around 200 A.D. Some religious scholars believe the name was pronounced the way we pronounce it today, or close to it.

Some people believe the four-letter name is pronounced "Jehovah". The word "Jehovah" comes from ancient Jewish texts that put the vowels of the Name "Adonai" (the usual substitute for YHVH) under the consonants of "YHVH". This was to remind people not to pronounce YHVH while they read. It is understood that a sixteenth century German Christian scribe, while transliterating the Bible into Latin for the Pope, wrote the name out as it appeared in his text, with the consonants of YHVH and the vowels of Adonai, (for example in English: "JeHoVaH"), becoming the name "Jehovah" which continued. Whether we pronounce YHVH as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah" we simply don't know the proper pronunciation for certain.

In **Ex. 6:2-3**, Yahweh tells Moses that He did not make Himself know to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but is now revealing Himself by name. While we are bound by time, Yahweh is not, **II Peter 3:8**. After all Yahweh created time. He is unchangeable, He was, is, and always will be. He is the one constant that exist. He controls "the big picture". Yahweh is! He is "everlasting" ...always present. He has never had a beginning and will never have an end. He and His "attributes" are eternal. It is YAHWEH ELOHIM who made earth and heaven, **Gen. 2:4**. Yahweh commanded, and they were created, **Ps. 148:5**. Yahweh created the heavens and stretched them out, **Is. 42:5**, The heavens, righteousness, salvation, all created by Yahweh, **Is. 45:8, 18**.

There are passages in the New Testament where the writers connect Jesus as Yahweh. In **Rom. 10:9** Paul says, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord...you shall be saved." A few verses later in **Rom. 10:13**, Paul quotes from **Joel 2:32** saying "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved". Paul is using the Greek word "kurios" for Lord in both verses, but he is clearly interchanging it with the quote from Joel 2, which in Hebrew is Yahweh, connecting Jesus then as Yahweh.

Another example is from Peter in **I Ptr. 2:2-4**, where he quotes from **Ps. 34:8**, "O taste and see that the LORD is good" in **vr. 3**. The "Him" in **vr. 4** is referring back to the LORD mention in **vr. 3**, but is clearly talking about Jesus, as He was the living stone "rejected by men." Again, we see a quote interchanged with a reference to show Jesus is Yahweh.

In the Old Testament, the presence of Yahweh was a special place...holy ground, **Ex. 3:4-6, Acts 7:33**. As the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, God was in the temple in the holy place, in the holy of holies, at the mercy seat on top of the ark of the covenant, **Ex. 25:21-22**. But this divine being isn't in gold, silver or stone. Or in any image created by man, **Acts 17:29**. His divine nature is seen in the beauty of His creation, **Rom. 1:20**. The imagery of the true presence of God is both awesome and terrifying, **Isa. 6:1-7**. Paul, writing about Jesus says, "And He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. God revealed Himself through His son. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him.", **Col. 1:15 & 19**. Jesus, Yahweh, is this amazing presence on earth. The fullness of Deity dwelling in a body, **Col. 2:9**.

Peter explains that we see God's divine power in Jesus and because of Him we get to partake in His "divine nature". In Jesus we have been granted "everything pertaining to life and godliness", **II Peter 1:2-4**. There is not anything that remains for God to give us. He has given us everything we need to be with Him! Jesus and Him crucified, is how we see the divine power of God, **I Cor. 1:18 & 24**! What an amazing thought! Maybe this is why John writes His gospel the way he does so that we can see the beauty of what God has done. As John explains the Word was God "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth", **Jn. 1:14**. And in **Jn. 1:18**, when he tells us no one has seen God, but the only begotten God (Jesus) has explained Him!

Of all the "I am" statements made by Jesus, this is the shortest, two simple words, but I think the most powerful. Calling Himself "Yahweh" he does, in fact, declare Himself as God. The supreme, divine, eternal being who created us. God in the flesh who dwelt among us. God, who alone exists, the great I AM!

I am the Door of the Sheep

John Chapter 10

1-6, It seems to me that this is a continuation of Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees at the close of **chapter 9**, as there is a reference to the healing of the blind in **vr. 21**, "Others were saying, 'These are not the words of one who is demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of those who are blind, can it?'" It is possible there is a break in conversation between chapters and these events are closer to the feast of dedication mentioned in **vr. 22**, it fits either way.

His parable explains that the one who does not enter into the sheep pen by the door is a thief or robber. Obviously not the shepherd. The illustration comes from the practice of a sheep porter protecting the sheep at night. Different shepherds had different flocks but would put all the sheep in the pen together at night and take turns being the porter. The porter would sleep at the entrance of the pen becoming the "door". Even if there was a literal door, the porter controlled the entry way. He would only let sheep or other shepherds enter the pen. During the night he would protect the sheep from thief's or animals from his position at the doorway. Then in the morning, each sheep would follow their shepherd back out to pasture. Since the shepherd knew the sheep and the sheep knew the voice of the shepherd, they would follow into the proper herd.

The sheep and shepherd metaphor is not a new one. It was used a lot in the Old Testament, **Ps. 80:1 & 95:7; Jer. 23:1-6, 31:10; Zec. 11:4-11. The whole chapter of Ezk. 34** uses shepherds and sheep as an illustration, concluding in **vr. 31** saying "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God, declares the Lord God."

While the metaphor should be one they can relate too, as shepherding was prevalent in Judea, the audience did not understand what He was saying. This fits the context of **9:39-41** where Jesus told them "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind...since you say, 'We see', your sin remains".

7-10, To help them better understand His sheep/shepherd metaphor, He explicitly says "**I am the door of the sheep**", "I am the door", **vr. 9**. The fourth "I am" statement recorded by John. In light of the illustration in the previous verses, as sheep enter through the door for peace and protection, we go through Jesus to have the same before God.

Peace

Sheep know their shepherd's voice and follow him out through the door to pasture to find the nourishment they need. Jesus has already taught that He is living water, **4:10** and the "bread of life" in **6:35 & 48**. He is the spiritual nourishment we need. But more importantly, He is the only doorway to salvation, **Acts 4:12**. It is through Jesus that "we have peace with God", being reconciled back to Him, **Rom. 5:1 & 11, Col. 1:20**.

Eph. 2:14-18

"For He Himself is our peace" vr.14

"by abolishing in His flesh, the enmity...thus establishing peace" vr. 15

"having put to death the enmity" vr. 16

"He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near" vr. 17

"for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" vr. 18

Just to be sure of the understanding, Jesus is not saying we move in and out of Him to find continual spiritual blessings. We can escape the "defilements of the world", come to a knowledge of salvation in Jesus and again get entangled in the world, **II Ptr. 2:20-22**. The point is that we must go through Him to receive spiritual blessings.

Protection

In addition to guiding the flock, a shepherd's rod was used for protection. Fearing no evil, David feels protected as God's rod and staff comfort Him, **Ps. 23:4**. Passing under the rod was to pass under the shepherd's protection for whatever purpose, sometimes to count and set aside, **Lev. 27:32**. In **Ezk. 20:36-38**, God uses the passing under the rod as an illustration for His protection and judgment.

We see peace and protection beautifully put together in Christ as Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." **Phil. 4:6-7**.

Jesus points out that the thieves not only steal, but also "kill and destroy". Those who know God would have known those who came before Christ that tried to lead them away. He could be referencing false prophets from long ago. He could also be referencing those religious leaders of the time. He certainly warned against false prophets "who come to you in sheep's' clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves", **Mt. 7:15-21**.

Ultimately, the thieves are under the provision of the devil. Jesus called out leaders of the time for doing the desires of their father, the devil, **Jn. 8:44**. Satan is our adversary who seeks to devour us, **I Ptr. 5:6-9**. Jesus is our peace and protection as His blood "cleanses us from all sin", **I Jn. 1:7-10**.

I am the Good Shepherd

John Chapter 10

11-14, In contrast to the thief, Jesus now shifts to a different metaphor but with a similar theme. With His 5th "I am" statement in **vrs. 11 & 14**, He says "I am the good shepherd". This surely resonated with them as they knew prophecies of a shepherd, **Isa. 40:11, Ez. 34:23; 37:24, Mic. 5:4**. In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as "the great Shepherd of the sheep", **Heb. 13:20**; "the Shepherd and Guardian" of our souls, **I Ptr. 2:25** and the "Chief Shepherd", **I Ptr 5:4**.

Hired Hand Contrasted

The hired hand illustration in **vrs. 12-13**, would be anyone outside of Christ, but certainly references the Pharisees who did not care about God's people. They had an appearance that they were righteous, but did not truly desire to follow God, **Mt. 23:25-28**. They cared about money and prestige, wanting to justify themselves before men, but their heart was "detestable in the sight of God", **Lk. 16:14-15**.

While some were refusing to acknowledge Him as the Messiah, there were some who were recognizing that Jesus was from God. Remember our context here is right after Jesus heals a blind man. Some Pharisees were saying Jesus wasn't from God and some were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" and there was a division among them", **9:16**. And even before Jesus healed the blind man, He confronted some of the Jews as they did not believe in His teachings, let alone that He was from God. Their explanation being that He had a demon, **8:48-52**.

Good Shepherd

By being a good shepherd, Jesus is illustrating that He cares for them, will protect them and will not leave them. It is interesting to me that Jesus says He is "the good shepherd" instead of just saying "I am the shepherd". After all, "No one is good except God alone", **Mk. 10:18**. Just as He stated in **8:58** "before Abraham was, I AM", I think He is being very emphatic with His statement to again emphasize that He is Yahweh. With His emphasis, the words of David come to mind, "The LORD (Yahweh) is my shepherd, **Ps. 23:1**. Jesus is saying that He and He alone, is the one who will protect, provide and care for them as a good shepherd does for his sheep. This shepherd knows his sheep and they know him.

Known by Him

The good shepherd establishes a relationship with his sheep and the sheep follow his voice. The disciples will be put to the test with this as Jesus will later ask Philip “Have I been so long with you and yet you have not come to know me?”, **14:9**.

It is through the shepherd’s interaction with the sheep that they learn his voice and know they will be taken care of. His audience would be familiar with this and therefore understand the point of His illustration. It is God who establishes a relationship with us by loving us first, **I Jn. 4:19**. He knows the number of hairs on our head, **Mt. 10:29-30**. He knows what we need before we ask, **Mt. 6:8**. “If anyone loves God, he is known by Him”, **I Cor. 8:3**. David, one who cared for sheep, understood how awesome it is to have God as his shepherd, **Ps. 23**.

God gave us Jesus so we too would know how awesome it is to have Him as our shepherd. Jesus is the shepherd who’s voice we hear and follow. It is through Him we “come to know God, or rather to be known by God”, **Gal. 4:4-9**.

15, Jesus points out just how intimate the relationship is between Him and His sheep. It is “just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father”. We get to partake in an amazing relationship with God. John explains at the beginning of his gospel that we have “beheld His glory” and received “His fulness”, **1:14-16**. We see and understand God because Jesus has “explained Him”, **Jn. 1:18**. When a child is born, they do not see or understand the relationship they have with the parent. Only as the child grows and matures can they see all that the parent does for them. The same is true for us in God. Even though we are His creation, we do not see or understand God’s relationship with us. Christ enables us to see God. As we grow and mature in Him, we see the wonderful things God has done for us, mainly our salvation.

We know that, as a shepherd, David risked his life for his sheep fighting off a lion and a bear, **I Sam. 17:32-36**. This kind of sacrifice comes from the one who owns the sheep. A hired hand runs away when he “sees the wolf coming” and does so because he is not the owner. The hired hand simply doesn’t care for the sheep the same way the shepherd does.

In this same conversation, Jesus will state again that He will lay down His life, no one takes it from Him. Just as a shepherd willingly lays down his life for his sheep, Jesus will make such a sacrifice. He reiterates that this sacrifice is done willingly and by His own authority in **vrs. 17-18**.

For us to be compared to being sheep is not at all complement. Here are three “Ds” concerning us being sheep: we are Dirty, Defenseless and Dependent.

1) First, we need to see that sheep are Dirty. Jesus speaks to laying down His life, **vrs. 11 & 15**, because we have sinned and fall short of God, **Rom. 3:23**. A sheep’s wool is not “spotless white” it is tinted brown from the dirt it gets into. As we just looked at the Gentiles being brought into the fold, we understand we are all sheep separated from our shepherd because of sin. Jesus has brought us back, **I Ptr. 2:21-25**, through His cleansing blood, **I Jn. 1:7**.

2) Next, we see sheep are Defenseless. A hired hand will leave the sheep when a wolf comes and the sheep are left defenseless, **vr.12**. It’s the shepherd who will defend the sheep, laying his life down. In **II Tim. 4:14-18**, Paul mentions a man named Alexander, who did him much harm. Paul says no one helped defend him but, the Lord stood with him and delivered him from the “lion’s mouth”. We need to see that the devil is a lion, who can easily devour sheep, **I Ptr. 5:8**. We need the good shepherd to have a defense against the schemes of Satan. We cannot defeat Satan alone. It is only in the strength of God and the armor He supplies that we can stand against the schemes of the devil, **Eph. 6:10-19**.

3) Finally, we see sheep are dependent on the shepherd. While sheep are smart enough to follow the voice of the shepherd, they still need to be led, **vrs. 3-4**. As looked at in **vrs. 7-10**, we rely on Jesus to give us peace and protection. When we think of how a child is dependent on a parent, we see the level of dependency we should have on God. In fact, Jesus said, whoever is converted and humbles themselves like a child is the greatest in the

kingdom of heaven, **Mt. 18:3-4**. We have to be willing to follow the good shepherd. We have to be willing to give ourselves over totally to God. Let's be real, this is a struggle for us. We'll pray "not my will but Yours be done" but what we really want is "please let my will be done". Looking again at Peter's words in **I Ptr. 5:6-9**, we see we are to submit ourselves under "the mighty hand of God." Dependency on Him is how we stand against our adversary.

Sheep cannot defend themselves against foe. They don't have claws, sharp teeth, horns, venom or even a tail that could be used for a weapon. They don't have a defensive exterior to protect themselves and they can't run or climb to get away from an enemy. To my knowledge, there aren't any major sports teams named after sheep as they simply do not strike fear into the heart of an opponent.

Sheep would not last long alone in the wild. They need a shepherd. They are totally dependent on their shepherd for protection, direction and provision. To be on their own would lead to their own demise, but when they subject themselves to their shepherd they are well cared for. If they listen and follow their shepherd, they don't have to worry about a thing. This is why Jesus uses such a metaphor. This is how our relationship with Him should be. We are to listen and follow Him. Being in His flock is where we are protected, have direction and are provided for. This is the beauty of the relationship. We are dependent on Him and He takes care of everything. He isn't just *a* shepherd, He is *thee* good shepherd!

I am the Resurrection and the Life

John Chapter 11

23-24, As Jesus reassures Martha that her brother will rise from the dead, she makes a great confession of faith that she knows he will "rise in the resurrection on the last day". All Jews, except the Sadducees, believed in the resurrection of the dead. Martha is showing her faithfulness to this doctrine.

It was believed that when the Messiah comes, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and all Jewish people will gather there, including those that have died who will be resurrected. References to this resurrection are **Isa. 26:19** "your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as of the dew of the dawn and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits." And **Dan. 12:2** "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." A general belief in the resurrection of the dead is still held by Orthodox Jews today.

25-26, In response to Martha's statement Jesus says, "**I am the resurrection and the life**". The sixth "I am" statement in the gospel. In light of the Jews understanding that the resurrection comes in the time of the Messiah, Jesus's statement becomes all the more powerful. To say that "I am the resurrection" is also a confirmation that He is the Messiah. He is the anointed one that brings us back from being dead and the new life to which we are resurrected.

Jesus has already spoken to the topic of resurrection in **5:25**, when He said, "an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live". In this conversation in **John 5**, Jesus speaks to two resurrections, the first being to life in Him, **5:25-27**, the second being when He will come again, **5:28-29**. (See those notes for more information.)

Resurrection

We see mention of the individual members of the Godhead contributing to the resurrection. Christ was raised "through the glory of the Father", **Rom. 6:4**. It was "God the Father, who raised Him from the dead", **Gal. 1:1**. In **10:17-18**, Jesus says that He lays down His life that He may take it again. And that He has the authority to lay it down and speaking to His resurrection, He has the power to "take it up again". The Spirit also contributes to the resurrection as Paul tells us that "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you", **Rom. 8:11**.

We also see that God, the complete Godhead, brought Jesus back to life. As we read through Acts seeing the spread of Christianity, over and over again we see how the apostles taught that God raised Christ from the dead, **Acts 2:32; 3:15 & 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13: 30, 33 & 37**. And that is just in the book of Acts.

The resurrection of Jesus is “the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus”, **Acts 13:32-39**. Jesus as the resurrection is God making good on His promise of salvation. This is the good news that spread to Jews and Gentiles alike that salvation had come for all of them.

If Christ has not been resurrected, then we are to be most pitied, **I Cor. 15:17-20**. But if Jesus was raised from the dead, then we have the foundation of our faith and the salvation of our souls and. Jesus is proclaiming that He is the very power of God that conquers death. “And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be Held in its power.”, **Acts 2:24**. God knew Jesus would have to die in order to defeat Satan, “that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death that is, the devil”, **Heb. 2:14**.

With Jesus being the resurrection, we now have the ability to be raised with Jesus, **II Cor. 4:14**. Not just raised from physical death but resurrected spiritually to something new. We come out of darkness and into light. We rise out of sin and into righteousness, out of condemnation and into forgiveness, out of spiritual death and into “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me”, **Gal. 2:20**.

Eternal Life

Jesus points out that He isn't just the resurrection, but that He is “the life”. Jesus is the spiritual life that makes us right before God. In **5:24-29**, Jesus explains that believing in His words is what enables us to pass out of judgment and into life. He points out that those who did good deeds will have a “resurrection of life, those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment”, **5:29**. All will be resurrected and stand before judgment, some receiving life, some receiving punishment, **Mt. 25:31-46**. Jesus is the power of the resurrection that brings everyone to stand before God, but He is also that life that saves us from “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

In the garden, Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from the tree of life, meaning they were created to live forever. After Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God removed them from the garden and their access to the tree of life. In **Gen. 3:22-24** we read “lest he stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever...so He drove the man out”. God then positions a cherubim “to guard the way to the tree of life.” Outside of Genesis, the tree of life is only mentioned in the book of Revelation where John writes that it is now in “the paradise of God”, **Rev. 2:7**. It is also mentioned in **Rev. 22 vs. 2, 14 & 19**.

In **Acts 5:19-20**, Peter and John are broken out of jail by an angel who commands them to go back to the temple and speak the “message of this life”. This message of life resurrects us from being dead in our trespasses and sins, **Eph. 2:1**. Jesus reconciles us back to God, putting to death the enmity or sin, which separates us from Him, **Eph. 2:13-16**. Jesus not only gets us back to God but is “the one true God and eternal life”, **1 Jn. 5:20**, not just bringing meaning to physical life, but bringing eternal spiritual life.

When Thomas confessed, “My Lord and my God” after seeing Jesus' hands and side, Jesus asked the question “Because you have seen Me, have you believed?” He then goes on to say that those who believe and haven't seen are blessed. We are blessed because we believe, **Jn. 20:27-31**. And in believing we have life in His name, getting access to the Father. In **14:6**, Jesus says that He is “the way, the truth” and will again say that He is “the life”. There He will also point out that “no one comes to the Father but through Me”. Jesus is the only way we can get to God. Over and over, He has been trying to show those around Him that He was from God. The point of the miracles was so they would believe He was the Christ. A few moments after making this statement to Martha, He will raise Lazarus. Before doing so He will say “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. But I knew that You always hear Me; nevertheless, because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”, **vs. 41-42**. We cannot begin to get to God without Jesus and many there with Him were still missing this point.

As Jesus continues His statement, we see to achieve life comes with a choice. Everyone will be resurrected from physical death. Jesus is emphatically the resurrection. He doesn't say anything else to follow up on that. What He does follow up on is the fact that we need to believe in Him to live. And those who live in Him will never die. Jesus is Life: believe in Him and live, live in Him and never die.

Even though we die physically, spiritual death, eternal separation from God is the greater concern. Living in Him means we subject ourselves to Him. Jesus brings us into the presence of the Father allowing us eternal life with Him, **I Jn. 2:23-25**. But it starts with believing in Him. Just as He asked Martha "Do you believe this?". The same question is for you..." Do you believe this?"

27, We can see that Martha is not grasping the weight of what Jesus is saying. She is receiving Jesus' words as a comforting discourse in light of the passing of her brother. She could have answered His question with a simple "yes" but instead she answers it with a great declaration of faith. "Yes, Lord; I have come to believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, and He who comes into the world." This answer encompasses a lot and shows she had a tremendous belief in who Jesus was.

1. Lord - Martha refers to Him a Lord, the Greek word "kurios", which means "supreme in authority, controller, master". She referred to Him as Lord when He visited their home, **Lk. 10:40**, but then went about doing all the preparation a hostess does. Here, at the death of her brother, she is not in the house tending to chores, rather, when she hears that He is coming goes out to greet Him, **vr. 20**. Martha's actions showed she did regard Jesus as Lord. Even in a time of great despair, Martha did not wait for Him to come to her, rather she went to Him.

2. Christ – Martha had "come to believe" that He was the anointed one of God. Many think that "Christ" is part of His name, but it is a title for who He is. Christ is the Greek word "Christos" which means "anointed" and is the translated Hebrew word for "Messiah", which also means "anointed one".

In the Old testament, priest, **Ex. 28:41; 29:7 & 29** and kings were anointed, **II Sam. 5:3**. Prophets were anointed, **I Kings 19:16**, altars **Ex. 40:10**, lavers and body parts, **Ex. 40:11, food, Lev. 2:4** were anointed. Even the tabernacle, **Lev. 8:10**, got anointed. When something got anointed, it was for a cleansing, a sanctification, **Ex. 40:30, Lev. 8:12; 16:32**. It showed this person, or this thing was consecrated by or for God. Later, before He is crucified, Jesus will confirm that He is the Christ. "Again, the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am'", **Mk. 14:61**. As we see people like priests, kings and prophets anointed by God, we see Jesus is all of these things for us. Jesus is our high priest, **Heb. 2:17; 4:14**, prophet, **Mt. 13:57, Lk. 7:16** and king, **Mt. 2:2; 27:11, Jn. 18:37, I Tim. 6:14-15**, the anointed one of God.

Martha's belief in Jesus as the Christ, explains her thinking if He were with them sooner, her brother would not have died. Though she did not fully comprehend the power that He possessed, she was convinced enough to confess that He was the anointed one from God.

3. Son of God – We do not know what Martha meant exactly when she referred to Jesus as the "son of God". Did she believe that Jesus was simply begotten of God, or did she believe that He was, in fact, deity? There are some who believe in Christ that do not believe He is God. Our Jehovah Witness friends for example, do not believe that Jesus is divine and will say that He never said He was God.

Maybe Martha heard the conversation in **John 5:17-18**, when Jesus said, "My father is working until now and I myself am working". Jesus was putting Himself equal with God, we know this because John explains "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." John explains to us exactly what Jesus meant and exactly what was understood. This is one of the beautiful things about John's gospel, he shares with us these wonderful conversations and the lessons we can take from them concerning who Jesus is. Certainly not the least of which, is that He did proclaim to be God.

We don't know the exact meaning that Martha was intending in her statement. But John starts his gospel telling us that He is God, **1:1,14**. John heard the statements that Jesus made and understood that He was deity. Paul tells us all the "fullness" dwells in Him and in Him all the "fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form", **Col. 1:19 & 2:9**.

We also know the Jews understood Jesus was declaring that He was God, since this is the charge, they will eventually use to allow Him to be put to death. Later in **Jn. 19:6-7**, Pilate will tell the Jews to crucify Jesus themselves because he does not find him guilty of anything. The Jews will answer "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." This law comes from **Lev. 24:16** where God says "The one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native when he blasphemes the Name shall be put to death." Notice that Jews told Pilot He made "Himself out to be the Son of God" and therefore violated the law blaspheming God's name. Obviously, they understood Jesus' statements in **Jn. 5:17** and certainly in **8:58** when He said, "I AM", that He was in fact, declaring that He was God.

4. He has come into the world. This part of Martha's confession is dovetailed into Him being the Son of God. It seems then she did understand Him to be God having come in the flesh. Again, John teaches us at the beginning of his gospel that Jesus was Word and "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Jesus, who they saw in person. They interacted with Jesus the same way we interact with each other.

Peter also reiterates that they were "eyewitnesses of His Majesty" and heard the voice from heaven that said "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" when they were on the mountain at His transfiguration, **Mt. 17:2-5, II Ptr. 1:16-18**. John will write later in His epistle, that we get to see God's love because He sent Jesus "into the world so that we might live through Him", **I Jn. 4:9**. Seeing Jesus enables us to see God, His power and everything we need "pertaining to life and godliness". It is through Jesus that we actually get to be part of His "divine nature", **II Ptr. 1:2-4**.

The only way we get to see or understand anything about the supreme being who alone exist, is because He reveals Himself to us. The only way we get to know and have a relationship with God is because Jesus came in the flesh. Man isn't smart enough to figure it out. We don't have the intellect to be able to come to know our creator. Let alone devise a plan to save ourselves so that we can be in His presence. God does all of that through His son who came into the world to resurrect us to eternal life.

I am the Way and the Truth and the Life

John Chapter 14

6, Thomas says they do not know where He is going, so how would they know the way. To answer his question Jesus gives another "I am" statement: "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**". A statement that encompasses Him being three different things. He is the all-encompassing means to get to the Father. There is no other way to the Father except through Him. So, what does it mean that Jesus is all these things?

The Way

Concerning Jesus being the way, the short answer is that He is the way back to God. When man sinned in the garden, it changed the world in every way, including physically and spiritually. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil it brought shame and sin. He no longer walks among us as He did with them in the garden, **Gen. 3:8**. Sin removes us from an intimate relationship with God.

Because of this separation, God knew He would have to bring man back to Himself. As God removes Adam and Eve from the garden and gives punishment to them and the serpent, He says to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." **Gen. 3:15**. Jesus will be the seed of the woman that will bruise the head of the serpent removing the enmity that separates us from God, **Eph. 2:14-16**.

As we read the Old Testament, we see how God moves in His plan for Jesus to become the way back to Him. With Abram (Abraham) God promises “I will make you a great nation”, **Gen. 12:1-3**, and “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven...”, **Gen. 22:17**. This begins to lay the foundation for all that will follow leading up to Christ. The promise is significant as we see reference to it over and over again in the New Testament. This list just references a few:

- Acts 2:39**, “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off...”
- Acts 7:17**, “But as the time of the promise was approaching which God has assured to Abraham...”
- Acts 13:32-33**, “God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus”
- Rom. 9:8**, “not the children of the flesh...but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants”
- II Tim. 1:1**, “the promise of life in Christ Jesus”
- Heb. 9:15**, “the promise of the eternal inheritance”

We see God’s promise to Abraham as Physical, which includes nation and land. But more importantly, we see God’s promise to Abraham as Spiritual.

1. Physical

- Gen. 13:14-15**, “all the land which you see, I will give to you and your descendants forever”
- Gen. 15:18-21**, “to your descendants I have given this land”
- Deut. 1:10**, Moses tells Israel “God has multiplied you...like the stars of heaven in number”
- Joshua 21:43-45**, “the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give”
- Joshua 23:11-16**, keeping the land was conditional on their faithfulness to God

2. Spiritual

- Gen. 22:18**, “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”
- Gal. 3:16**, “and to your Seed’, that is, Christ”
- Acts 3:25-26**, “saying to Abraham ‘and in your seed’...God raised up His Servant”
- Acts 13:34-38**, “sure blessings of David...through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you”
- Rom. 2:28-29**, “not a Jew who is outwardly...circumcision is that which is of the heart”
- I Peter 2:9**, “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation”

One of the most notable passages in reference to the promise to Abraham being fulfilled in Jesus is **Gal. 3:26-29**, where Paul says, “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed...heirs according to the promise”. How awesome is that? We are a child of Abraham being in Christ!

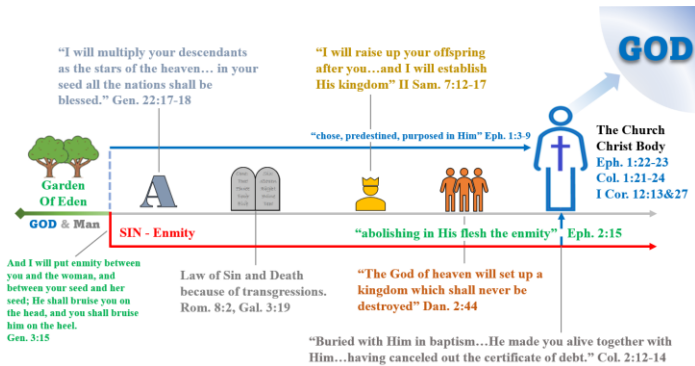
Next, we come to the law of Moses. Not just the “10 commandments” but some 613 commandments contained in the Torah. Paul explains that the law “was added because of transgressions”, **Gal. 3:19**. It’s given to show that “sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin” brings death, **Rom. 7:12-13**. In other words, the law shows us the enmity between us and God by showing just how far away from God we are. The law points to Jesus as it shows mankind that we cannot keep ourselves in perfect obedience to God and therefore need a way to get back to Him. It becomes the “tutor to lead us to Christ”, **Gal. 3:24**. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death”, **Rom. 8:2**.

Jesus plainly states that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, rather he came to fulfill and accomplish the Law, **Mt. 5:17-18**. John tells us that “the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”, **Jn. 1:17**.

God promised David that He would raise up his offspring “and I will establish His kingdom”, **II Sam. 7:12-17**. Jeremiah tells us that this offspring will be a righteous branch from David “and he shall reign as king”, **Jer. 23:5-6**. We see God fulfills this promise by giving Jesus the “throne of His father David”, **Lk. 1:32-33** and as “a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David”, **Lk. 1:68-74**, which fulfills prophecy from **Is. 9:6-7**.

The prophets, speak about a descendant of David who will be king over God’s kingdom, “a kingdom which shall never be destroyed”, **Dan. 2:44 & 7:13-14**. Jesus says the “things written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled”, **Lk. 24:44**. Jesus is the way it is all fulfilled. He cancels out the

“certificate of debt”, **Col. 2:12-14**, which allows us to once again, be in God’s presence. Salvation does not come through anyone else, **Acts 4:10-12**. Jesus is the mediator and the way we are reconciled back to God, **Col. 1:19-24**, **I Tim. 2:4-5**.



While the spiritual “rulers of this age” crucified Jesus, **I Cor. 2:8**, and the men of Israel nailed Him to a cross, it was all part of the “predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God”, **Acts 2:22-23**. God determined that Jesus was going to have to die to enable man to get back to God. “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ”, **Eph. 1:5**. Jesus is pointing out that His death is going to happen because He was allowing it to happen.

While God had a plan determined, it did not change man’s ability to make decisions along the way. It may seem difficult for us to comprehend how God can predetermine a plan and still allow man's free will. This is what we call the sovereignty of God. God was going to fulfill His plan regardless of man's decisions along the way.

God's knowledge of everything all at once is truly beyond our comprehension as we are limited by space and time. But while it is ultimately beyond our understanding it doesn't mean a determined plan by God and an allowance of man’s choice can’t happen simultaneously. If not, then how do we reconcile Jesus saying He lays down His life, **Jn. 10:15-18**, and Peter saying in **Acts 2:22-23**, that it was at the “hands of godless men” that Jesus was put to death? Peter is speaking to the simultaneous interaction of God’s foreknowledge and man’s interaction at the same time. God determined that Jesus was going to lay down His life. An allowance for mans choices remained in the plan that put Him on the cross. In the same way I know saying certain things will get a reaction from my wife, God can know how man will react to certain situations. What was foreknown was that Jesus was going to have to die for our salvation, whether we accept His salvation or not, is still our choice.

As we read **Jn. 13:31-14:6**, we see Jesus’ statement more in context. With that we see a few more ways Jesus is the way. First, He is the way to love. In **Jn. 13:34** He tells them He has a new commandment for them, that they are to love one another. He comes back to this point in **Jn. 14:15** when He tells them if they love Him, they will keep His commandments. Jesus is the way we see love, as God is love, **I Jn. 4:8**. Jesus is the way we see God’s mercy, forgiveness, grace. Jesus is how we have the means to utilize the fruit of the Spirit, **Gal. 5:22-25**.

Secondly, Jesus is the way to live with God. I think it is important for us to keep this context all together. While people usually reference **Jn. 14:2** to heaven and just start reading from the beginning of the chapter, we need to realize it’s in the middle of a conversation. He told them He was going away, and they wanted to come with Him, but He told them they couldn’t come. We see now what He was talking about. It was because He was going to be crucified, but at the time He makes the statement they didn’t know what was going to happen. While He tells them they can’t follow Him now, but they will follow Him later, **Jn. 13:36**. And say this and telling Peter that he will deny Him, Jesus tells them not to let their heart be troubled. Believe in Him because, in His “Father’s house are many dwelling places”. While I wouldn’t dispute that the ultimate view is heaven, I think the real picture is of the church which is established after His resurrection.

In the body of Christ, the church, we “have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”, **II Cor. 5:1**. Jesus is the “great priest over the house of God”, **Heb. 10:21** and we are living stones that are built up in the spiritual house, **I Ptr. 2:5**. Jesus is the way we live with God on this earth as we dwell in His body, the church. And there is no shortage of rooms in God’s house!

Finally, Jesus is the way we know things given to us by God, **I Cor. 2:12**. The full context to this is all of **I Cor. 2**. Jesus crucified is how we receive the wisdom from God. So incredible is this wisdom, that if Satan and the rulers of the age had understood it, they would not have crucified Jesus. Jesus’ death defeated Satan and enables us to have the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is how we see, know and grow in the things given to us by God.

The Truth

When Jesus says He is “the Truth” He is answering a great philosophical question, “What is truth”? How would you define it? We have the “Sunday school” answer, because Jesus tells us He is the truth. But how do you work through the answer to that question with people in our world today? It seems our world no longer sees truth as an absolute or to have any standard. It is a continually moving target, subjectively defined by whoever may be answering it.

In **Jn. 18:33-38**, Pilate is questioning Jesus about being king of the Jews. We know that, after His resurrection Jesus’ kingdom, the church, will be established, **Col. 1:19-24**. But at the time of this conversation, Pilate is a government official who is interviewing a disruptive religious zealot whose own people want to put to death. In the conversation Jesus affirms “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”, **Jn. 18:37**. Pilate’s response to this is simply the question, “What is truth?” and then he leaves Him, not waiting for a reply. In light of the context, it seems Pilate believes the truth is that Jesus is innocent of anything deserving death as he then goes out and tells the crowd, “I find no guilt in Him.”, **Jn. 18:38**.

Pilate’s question is bigger than the event. I believe Pilate ultimately knew that, but at that moment he only had the capacity to deal with the event. However, the bigger question still remains for all of us...what is truth?

Wikipedia says truth is “viewed as the correspondence of language or thought to a mind-independent world”. An article in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy notes a broad view that “truth is a relational property involving a characteristic relation (to be specified) to some portion of reality (to be specified).” * Truth is a unique relationship that is obtained between a representation about something, when that something, has evidence as being properly represented.

*David, Marian, "The Correspondence Theory of Truth", 1st paragraph, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/truth-correspondence/>>.

Defining truth involves our mind. The mind provides the substance to define truth and falls into a domain of intelligence and relativity. There is a capacity within us to be able to evaluate truth. For example, if you lost your cell phone, you would retrace your steps, only looking where you know the possibility could be true. Interestingly, this ability to evaluate begins at an early age. Children learn to expose, defend or hide truth, depending on the situation.

Ultimately, truth has to be understood to be absolute, not relative. And it has to be understood as something outside and beyond our selves. For example, if you are building something you would use a tape measure to determine measurements. We are certainly glad the people building our homes use tape measures and other standards. However, it is not always possible to fully validate truth. We’re not always carrying a tape measure. When we are not able to fully validate something is truth, we often evaluate the evidence of premises that are true. For example, Einstein’s theory of relativity ($E=mc^2$) assumes the speed of light in a vacuum is constant. There is great evidence to support that, however, the speed of light being constant has not emphatically been proven.

Truth is not belief. Belief is about something that may or may not be true. Belief is dependent on a person, truth is not. You can believe you are outside when you are sitting in a building and therefore your belief would be wrong. There is no correlation between truth and belief and so truth carries with it an authority that belief does not.

Beliefs may be related to things we cannot inspect or verify. Our belief does not prove truth. Something may be “true to you” but that is not a validation that establishes truth. To validate your beliefs, you need to provide evidence to confirm truth. In the conversation Pilate had with Jesus, he did not see evidence that Jesus was guilty of anything deserving death.

When Jesus says that He is the truth, He is saying that He is an ultimate absolute. That He is a standard beyond thought, belief, feeling, teaching or the Law. That He is an eternal, spiritual constant, that He, in fact is God. The Word that became flesh, “full of grace and truth”, **Jn. 1:14**. The historical accounts of Jesus, the apostle’s testimony, the scripture that we hold in our hands, provide the evidence for Jesus as truth. John writes “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”, **Jn. 1:17**.

The famous British nonconformist preacher from the late 16, early 17 hundreds, Matthew Henry wrote this about truth: “When we search the scriptures, and attend the ministry of the word, it must be with this enquiry, ‘What is truth?’ and with this prayer, ‘Lead me in thy truth, into all truth’. But many put this question, that have not patience and constancy enough to persevere in their search after truth, or not humility and sincerity enough to receive it when they have found it.”

(John 18 Commentary, 1708-10, Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete), John 18, vr. 38 [1.]

What Matthew Henry is saying is, we need to be seeking truth. But many who seek it get impatient, get distracted and so the desire to seek truth slows down or stops altogether. Or those who seek it and find it are then too selfish to submit to it. Isn’t that how people are with Jesus?

In reference to truth, people will often quote all or part of **Jn. 8:32**. They will say “and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” Or “set” you free, depending on translation. Yes, Jesus is the truth that makes us free, but we also need to see the other part of the message. **Jn. 8:31-32**, “Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine: and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free’”.

Notice He was speaking to those “who had believed Him”. Belief is independent of truth. Their belief in Him did not change the truth that He was who He said He was, the Christ, the son of God. Truth convicts us in our belief. If we believe something and come across evidence that says what we believe is not true, then we need to change our belief. This is how knowing the truth will make us free. “For a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...and will turn away their ears from the truth”, **II Tim. 4:3-4**. Our encounter with Jesus should convict us to change course to follow His truth, **Eph. 4:20-24**. If we are honestly mistaken and come to truth, we either quit being honest or we quit being mistaken.

There is a necessity to abide in the truth of His word, which makes us His disciples. The commission from Jesus in **Mt. 28:19-20** says “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” We need to see that “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” is part of the commission. The presupposition is that they ARE observing all that He commanded.

Continuing to grow in our knowledge of Jesus more firmly establishes us in truth. And that makes us free. Free from what? Free from the “law of sin and of death”, **Rom. 8:1-2**. It’s not just believing in Jesus, but the action of obeying that allows us to abide in Jesus. If we are disciples of Jesus and Jesus is truth, then we are abiding in The Truth.

The Life

When Jesus visited Mary and Martha after their brother Lazarus dies, Martha tells Jesus that if he had been there, her brother would not have died. Jesus says that her brother will rise again. Martha tells Him she knows that he will rise on the day of resurrection. To which Jesus replies “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even if he dies”, **Jn. 11:25**. See that section for more study on Jesus being the Life.

Jesus also says, “no one comes to the Father but through Me”. Jesus has already stood up to the Jews who wanted to kill Him because He was calling God His Father and making Himself equal with God. In that conversation, Jesus explained that those who hear His words and believe have eternal life. Jesus even makes the point to them that they search the scriptures because they think they contain eternal life, but it’s the scriptures that testify about Him, **Jn. 5:21-40**. As we examined how Jesus is the way, we saw how events of the Old Testament pointed to Jesus. They had the same opportunity to examine these scriptures to see how they are fulfilled in Him.

Jesus goes on to explain in **14:7-10** that if they know Jesus they know the Father. Jesus shows, explains and declares the Father to us, **1:18**. The example from Jewish history is in the temple. The holy place, even more specifically, the holy of holies, is where the presence of God was. Jesus is how we get to enter into the holy place, **Heb. 10:19-22**. It is through His redeeming blood that we are cleansed and able to enter into the presence of God.

Jesus makes the point that access to the Father is only through Him. It seems to me that this connects with **14:1**, to say that if you believe in God, you also need to believe in Jesus because you don’t get to the Father without Him. His followers certainly had enough evidence to validate that they should be paying attention and believing in what He was saying. Jesus is our mediator: **1 Tim. 2:5**, **Heb. 9:15**, propitiation: **Heb. 2:17**, **1 Jn. 2:2 & 4:10** and high priest: **Heb. 4:14-15**. He is the absolute only means for mankind to be able to be in the presence of God for eternity. He is the one and only way, truth and life.

I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me

John Chapter 14

10, In the context of a question, Jesus makes another “I am” statement here by asking Philip “**Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?**” Jesus also reiterates that His teachings come from the Father and the works that He has done are the Father’s. We understand that He is not saying He and the Father are the same person. Jesus is speaking in a spiritual context on the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Even though God the Son was in the flesh, the complete and harmonious relationship with the Father remained. So much so that the words Jesus spoke were all about the Father doing His work. Jesus will speak to the intimacy of this relationship more in **vr. 11**.

11, The “I am” question in **vr. 10** is made here as a statement as Jesus clearly says, “**I am in the Father**”. This is what Philip, and the apostles needed to believe, that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him. Jesus has already told them that He and the Father are one, **10:30**. Again, as looked at in the previous verse, this is to be understood as the oneness of God, while maintaining being separate persons. John is bringing to us Jesus’ teaching that He is God. John learned this point and teaches this from the very beginning of his gospel telling us that Jesus is God. John tells us that “no man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”, **1:18**.

The Trinity

John starts his gospel with “In the beginning” as used in **Gen. 1:1**. He does so on purpose, as he will show that this “word” who was with God and is God, is Jesus. And that it is Jesus, who as God, created all things. Paul writes that “by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by Him and for Him”, **Col. 1:16**.

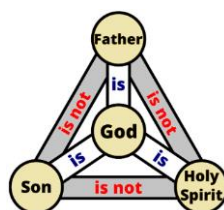
The “Word”, “Logos” means 1) of speech; a) a word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea; 2) it’s use as respect to the MIND alone a) reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating”. The Word was in the beginning, was with God, and was God. Creation was done by Word and the word was “God”.

A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term “Logos” circa 600 B.C. It was used to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. The reason for John’s use of the word may be to explain that this philosophical “word” is God. John is assuring Christians that this Word became flesh and was observed. In **John 1:1-3**, John, again using the word “logos”, saying that they heard, saw and touched this Word of Life. They had personal contact with Jesus. They saw, in person, Immanuel - God with us.

John explaining that it was by the word of Jesus that creation came into being, brings clarity to the use of the plural form of God, “eloheem” used in **Gen. 1:26**. The word “eloheem” has troubled the Jews in understanding how one God could be plural? In fact, the first verse of the Shema, which is the central prayer in Judaism and considered to be the most essential says “Hear (“shawmah”), O Israel! The LORD is our God, The LORD is one!”, from **Deut. 6:4**. (The Shema is made up of multiple verses from **Deut. 6:4–9, 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41**). The question becomes “How can one God be plural?”.

We understand God to be trinity or triune, meaning three in one. The word “trinity” is not found in scripture, but that doesn’t mean the concept is not taught. It’s simply a word we use to describe and understand more easily. Like the word “incarnate”, which is also not in scripture, but we use to describe Jesus in the flesh. Trying to define the trinity is a challenging task for all of us. The first thing we need to understand is that we cannot fully explain it. If we could fully explain God, that would mean we are God. But since we are not, we need to see there is a ceiling to our comprehension and that is ok. However, that does not mean we can not understand anything. The view of the trinity is something we should be able to speak too and defend. Not everyone in the world believes there is one God who is also three persons. This becomes important for a few reasons. First, if God is not triune that means Jesus was created and if He was created, then that changes the sacrifice on the cross. If Jesus was just a guy who was killed, then how are we atoned for sin? Secondly, if Jesus is not God, then how is God love? The Trinity allows God to exist as love between the members of the Godhead. Otherwise, God would not have anything to love until He created something to love and therefore would not be love but would have learned love. And finally, knowing some things about the Trinity helps prevent us from going down a road of mis-understanding God, which could lead to following false doctrine.

A simple definition of the trinity is that there is one eternal, indivisible being: God. God is three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This belief is called “trinitarianism”. Being a trinitarianist means we have the belief that there is one God (monotheism), with 3 “persons”, all of whom are equal. All of these concepts are taught in scripture. We see aspects of the Trinity touched on by John here in **1:1**, “in the beginning was the Word”, one God, and the Word was with God”. He doesn’t define that there are 3 persons, but He tells us the Word, Jesus, was with God showing they are separate beings. Then he says, “the Word was God”, explaining that while they are separate, they are still together God.



In **1 Cor. 8:6**, Paul says “there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”. Many believe Paul is referencing the Shema here and intertwining Jesus into it as he speaks to Jesus being part of God. The Hebrew writer says “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers...has spoken to us in His Son...and He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature”, **Heb. 1:1-2**. In order for Jesus to be “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” He must be God.

And just to be sure we cover all 3 persons: the Spirit is referred to as God in **Acts 5:3-4**. Peter asks Ananias why he lied to the Holy Spirit in **vr. 3**, but then interchanges the reference in **vr. 4** to say, “You have not lied to men, but to God”. Paul does a similar thing when preaching to some Jews in **Acts 28:25-28** when he tells them the Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah the prophet, **vr. 25**. They would have understood God to have spoken through Isaiah. Then in **vr. 28**, still speaking on passage from Isaiah he exchanges “Holy Spirit” to say that this salvation is “of God.”

In **Acts 2**, we have a quote from the Old Testament to show that it is Jesus who is the Messiah and sits at the right hand of the Father. Peter preaches that this Jesus, whom they knew and killed, was the one David spoke of. In **Acts 2:22-32**, Peter quotes from **Psalms 16:8-11**, making the point that the Psalm has to be about someone other than himself because David died, was buried and they know where the tomb is. He then points out that David was prophesying about Jesus.

In **Acts 2:33-36**, Peter notes that Jesus has been exalted to “the right hand of God”, showing a position of authority and power with the Father. Peter goes on to quote from **Psalms 110:1** in **vrs. 34-36** saying “the LORD (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adonai) ‘Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’”. We also see Jesus quoting from this passage in **Mk. 12:35-37**, where He is answering a question regarding how David could be referring to his own descendant as “my Lord”. The answer is because the first “LORD” references the Father, the second Lord references the son. Yes, Jesus is physically in the lineage of David, through both Joseph **Mt. 1:6-16** and Mary **Lk. 3:23-32**. But He is not just a descendent of David, Jesus is “both Lord and Christ”, **Acts 2:36**. Jesus confirms that He is Christ in **Lk. 22:67-70**, when they say, “If you are the Christ, tell us” and ask, “Are You the Son of God?” He answers “Yes, I am”.

Through out John’s gospel, we’ll see a number of conversations where Jesus speaks of Himself in a way that shows He is saying He is God, **10:30, 12:38-41, 17:5, 10 & 22**. We already looked at **Jn. 8:58**, where Jesus emphatically calls Himself “I AM”. The Jews knew that He was saying He was God and their reaction in **8:59** was to pick up stones to kill Him. (See notes on “I AM” for more information.)

The Word Becomes Flesh

In **John 1:14**, John is emphasizing that Christ was God in the flesh. The word “dwelt” is from the root word “tabernacle”. The picture John is painting is that Jesus is God encamping among us! Jesus is also “the life” (or Word of Life), **Jn. 11:25-26**. As “the Word became flesh”, we see God’s Word is Christ revealed. We also know Christ’s body is the church, **Col. 1:18 & 24**. Therefore, to be in the church is to be in the Word. As the church, we are a dwelling of God in the Spirit, **Eph. 2:22**. If we are in His church, then we have the Spirit and are in the Word: Word = Jesus = Church = Spirit. Jesus shows us how these exist together. He shows us the light, life and glory of God. John writes because he wants us to see that Jesus is God. And because He came to earth in human form, we get to see God more clearly. This is what John wants us to understand in both his gospel and his Epistle.

The Gospel	The Epistle
1:1 - beginning was the word	1:1 - was from the beginning
1:1 - word was with God	1:2 - Life...with the Father
1:4 - in Him was life	1:1 - the word of life
1:4 - the light shined	1:2 - life was manifested
1:14 - beheld his glory	1:1 & 3 - that which we beheld and seen
1: 5 - light & darkness	1:5 - light & darkness

Works of the Father

We cannot fully comprehend Jesus as God in the flesh, with Father and Holy Spirit still remaining as spirit and all still being together as God. If we could fully understand all of this, that would mean we are God. What we do see here is the beauty of the union between Father and Son. Remember, the context of this “I am” statement is in the events and conversation that began in **chapter 13**. The relationship between Father and Son is ultimately about God being glorified, **13:31-32** and giving us eternal life, **17:3, I Jn. 1:2 & 5:20**.

If the disciples were having trouble comprehending the teachings of Jesus as being from God in light of His relationship with the Father, then they should focus on “the works themselves”, **14:11**. The miracles they had seen Him perform were there to provide proof that Jesus was who He said He was, **2:11, 5:36, 10:37**. Peter will refer back to the signs Jesus performed in **Acts 2:22**, telling the Jews that God was confirming who Jesus was “with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst.” Even with the miracles, some had trouble believing that He was the Christ, **Jn. 10:24-25**.

Later in his gospel, John will make the point that there were many signs performed in the presence of the disciples and he was writing these down so that we may “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”, **20:30-31**.

I am the True Vine

John Chapter 15

1, Jesus makes another “I am” statement saying, “**I am the true vine**”, and similarly “I am the vine” again in **vr. 5**. Keep in mind that this verse and those following are in the middle of a larger conversation that started in **chapter 13** and continues into **chapter 16**. Jesus is obviously speaking to the apostles, so we need to keep in mind the specifics of what He is saying is TO them, FOR us to learn from. We need to be reminded about this difference as it helps us better understand what He is saying. Context is always important in the study of any scripture.

In this conversation with the apostles, of which there are only eleven with Judas gone, Jesus knows He will soon be killed. He knows the events have started that will lead to His crucifixion, having already told Judas “What you are doing, do it quickly”, **13:27**. He has already spoken to the intimacy of His relationship with the Father saying “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him”, **13:31**. He will go on to give them some final words so that they “may be kept from stumbling”, **16:1** and explain that He is telling them all of these things so they will remember them when He is not with them, **16:4-13**. Their eventual task will be to go into the world and make disciples, **Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16**, but we are not there yet. Right now, we are in the middle of this dialog that seems to be a commission in and of itself.

Some call outs from earlier in the conversation:

- **13:36**, He tells them where He is going, they cannot follow
- **14:15**, He tells them if they love Him, they will keep His commandments
- **14:18**, He won’t leave them as orphans
- **14:26**, but the Helper will teach them
- **14:31**, the “ruler of the world” was coming, but I do “as the Father commanded me”

In the midst of all this teaching, Jesus now introduces the metaphor of “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” The vine metaphor reiterates the intimacy of the relationship between Him and the Father and shows how they are working together as He is doing as the Father commands, **14:31**. As Jesus goes on to teach in the following verses, it also shows the closeness of the relationship He has with His apostles.

They would easily connect to this example as it would be quite common for them to see vines growing around the region. They would also be familiar with vine metaphors in passages from the Old Testament. In **Psalms 80** for example, a vine is used to illustrate salvation from God, **Ps. 80:7-8, 14-15** which seems to be a foretelling of the church. In **Rom. 11:17-24**, Paul uses branches, broken off and some grafted in, to illustrate unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in relation to being included in God’s salvation.

Being “the true vine” teaches us a couple of things. First, it means He is the absolute, only one. It conveys that He was planted there on purpose and is not a weed or something that is growing by accident (to use words that go with the metaphor). Jesus has already told them He is “the way” to get to the Father, **14:6**. “There is salvation in

no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved”, **Acts 4:12**. The gospel message “was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity”, **II Tim. 1:9**.

Secondly, Him being the true vine, tells us we must be connected to Him. He sustains our spiritual life and gives us the means to produce godly fruit. As Jesus develops the metaphor, we see that we become branches that bear fruit, **vrs. 5-8**. The fruit comes because of the connection to the vine. The context is that He is preparing the apostles for His departure and for the ministry they will begin with the start of the church. They were told to teach others, **Mt. 28:20** and so we too come to understand Jesus’ teachings and that our connection to Him is what allow us to bear spiritual fruit, **Gal. 5:22-25**. It’s not enough that we stop doing bad, we must learn to do good. Being connected to the vine means that we not only put away the deeds of the flesh but we are to bear the fruit of the spirit.

A vinedresser oversees the growth of the vines, including the branches. Remember, the context here is that Jesus is about to be put to death. After His resurrection, the apostles are going to go out and “bear fruit”. This is all part of God’s plan in establishing His kingdom, the church, **Eph. 1:19-23**. You can come to a knowledge of Jesus, but still do things that cause you to fall from grace, **Gal. 5:1-4**. Paul’s point in this Galatians passage is that in Jesus, things change and that is the lesson we too can apply.

2, He “takes away” is the Greek word “airo”. It is a verb that means “to lift, by implication to take up or away; figuratively to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind); away with bear up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away up).

Jesus is preparing his apostles for the stress that will come. For the fear, deception, hurt, all the things that they will see and feel, watching Him be crucified. For folks who don’t believe the one can fall away, they explain that not all branches are “real branches”. However, Jesus doesn’t teach that. He says the branch is in Him, it just doesn’t bear fruit. It’s like saying Judas wasn’t a real apostle. He was, but then he made bad decisions and did not follow Jesus as He should. God the Father is the vinedresser. In light of the timeframe that Jesus is saying all of this to His apostles, when He says, “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away”, could be a reference to Judas, **18:2-4, Mt. 27:3-5**.

Pruning is actually a cutting or trimming the branches and is a way the vine dresser controls the growth and health of the crop. For us, we could consider the discipline of our heavenly Father as “spiritual pruning”. Being able to take some discipline, even pain, to allow us to grow better fruit, **Heb. 12:1-11**.

3, Jesus says, “you are clean” when He washes the disciples’ feet, in **Jn. 13:2-14**. Jesus washing their feet after the meal, is the event that began the conversation that led into all of this teaching. Jesus tells them they were already clean because they had already “bathed” in His teachings. They only needed the feet washing at this time.

In **verse 2**, “prunes” in the Greek is the word “kathairo” and means to “cleanse” (from the Greek word “katharos”). Here in verse 3 the word for “clean” is the actual word “katharos” and means “clean”.

Verses 2 and 3 transliterated:

“every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away it; and everyone that fruit bears he cleanses it that more fruit it may bear.

Already you clean are by reason of the word which I have spoken to you”.

The point here is to not get too hung up on prune (or purge) vrs. clean. Jesus has prepared them for what He is going to have them do. For us, we are made clean by also obeying Jesus. To go along with the vine, fruit metaphor, it is interesting to note that we receive an imperishable seed, the word of God, **I Ptr. 1:21-25**.

4, The same dependency that the branch has on the vine, we have on Jesus. The branch cannot bear fruit without the vine. It cannot exist without the vine. “Abide in me and I in you.” Speaking to them individually, they were to

abide in Him and He will abide in them. They were dependent on Him and He will supply them accordingly, as the vine does the branch.

In, **14:16-17**, He promises them the Helper, the “Spirit of Truth”, who is already abiding with them and will be in them. He tells them in **14:20**, that they will know that He is in the Father, they in Him and Him in them. Meaning they would be in the Father as well. And to be certain, He says in **14:23**, “we will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

Notice “abide in Me” is stated at the beginning and end of **Jn. 15:4**. As we look at this verse in light of our relationship with God, this point also becomes especially important to us. The apostles were not going to be on the outside looking in. We are not on the side, observing the vine. We have to be IN Him. As we see how the vine sustains the life of the branch, we see how our life is sustained by Jesus. And how we come to have God abide in us.

We do not have to think of our relationship with God as a one-way street. When we surrender ourselves to God, we’re inviting Him to influence us through His Spirit. When we give our all to God, we give Him the opportunity to give us all we need. Abiding in Him means we need to give Him control and allow Him access to touch the broken and wounded parts of our soul.

Consider a larger theological conversation about sharing Christ’s divine nature, **II Ptr. 1:2-4**. Peter says that we “become partakers of the divine nature.” This isn’t that we become God, but through Christ, we can take part in His fullness, **Eph. 3:17-19, Jn. 1:16-18**. In Christ we see God’s grace, holiness, righteousness, etc. We see and grow in His nature.

As we looked back into the conversation Jesus had with the apostles, we see the interactions with the Spirit and the Father and how we abide in Him. It is through obeying His commandments, **14:15 & 21-25**. To obey His commandments and “receive the word implanted”, **James 1:21-25**. We abide in Him by surrendering to Him in obedience. Not just obeying a commandment so we can check it off a list, but obedience where we surrender ourselves to listen, follow and dwell in Him. In doing so He abides in us.

5, Jesus does begin to expand the specific inclusiveness of the audience for the teaching. As the apostles will go and teach others what they have been taught, others...us, will abide in Him and He is us. While the inclusivity of the scope has broadened beyond just the apostles, it is good to note that He is still speaking on an individual level. The branches are obviously not groups or denominations of people, but the actual people themselves.

Truly abiding in Jesus is more than just doing some “religious” activities once in a while. To abide in Him, means we are walking on His path. Not a path off to the side or our own path, but His path. And if we get distracted it means we repent and get back on the path. The bearing of fruit of God in our lives means He is evident. It means people see Him in all that we do. If they don’t realize they are seeing God in us, at least they know there is something different about us.

Jesus being the true vine means He is the only source for us, His branches. Apart from Him none of us can do anything. If we are not connected to Him there is no peace, truth, life or salvation. In Him we can do all things, **Ph. 4:13**. All of our nutrients, all that sustains our existence comes from Him. We are totally dependent on Him for spiritual life and fruitfulness.

I am He

John Chapter 18

4-8, Jesus, knowing all the things that are about to happen to Him, steps up to the crowd and asks them who they are seeking. They answer, “**Jesus the Nazarene**”. Jesus answers “**I am He**”. “Jesus of Nazareth” is how He was referred to by various people, **Mt. 26:71, Lk. 18:36-37** including His entrance into Jerusalem about a week before,

Mt. 21:10-11. Mark and Luke record that it is how demons referred to Him in **Mk. 1:24 & Lk. 4:34**. And when Peter later speaks to various Jewish audiences, he will also refer to Jesus this way, **Acts 2:22, 4:10**. As Jesus was calling His disciples, Philip told Nathanael they had “found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” to which Nathanael replied “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”, **Jn. 1:45-46**. John is the only one who records the conversation between Philip and Nathanael. Maybe this is why he documents the way they asked for Jesus, so that we can know, something good did come out of Nazareth.

When He answers them, He literally says “I am”. Our translators add the “He” to the phrase here in English. These are the same words “*Ego eimi*” that He said in **8:58**, “before Abraham was, I am” (*ego eimi*). The other gospels record the group arriving and Judas betraying Him with a kiss, **Mt. 26:48-49, Mk. 14:44-45, Lk. 22:47-48**. John doesn’t record the kiss but tells us Judas “was standing with them”. We can suppose the kiss happened sometime during this exchange.

When Jesus answers “I am He”, “they drew back and fell to the ground”. We don’t know the exact cause of this. Was there some divine intervention or was it purely the intensity of the moment? I believe it’s a combination of both. There seems to be something ominous to the circumstance of it all. After all there were 72,000 angels watching, **Mt. 26:53**. (Six thousand troops in a legion x 12 legions.) Mere men were coming to arrest the Creator of the world in the flesh. Some in the event had known Jesus for years, some just “knew of Him” and yet they all bowed. Jesus could have easily removed Himself from the situation as He had done at times before, **8:58-59, Lk. 4:29-30**. But the time had come. The answer to the prayer in the garden was that this had to happen. Jesus is no longer on His knees, sweating drops of blood, rather, He is standing ready to battle against the forces of evil, intervene for His faithful followers, submitting to the will of the Father.

Whatever the cause was for their bowing to the ground, it’s Jesus who initiates the continuation of the events by asking them again who they are looking for. Again, they say, “Jesus the Nazarene”. And He tells them emphatically “I told you that I am He; so, if you are seeking me, let these men go on their way”. “I am He” is a simple answer to the question “whom do you seek?”. His answer is not usually counted as an “I am” statement, maybe because it doesn’t seem as “profound” as the others, but I believe it is.

It’s a profound statement when you understand that history tells us this Jesus of Nazareth did walk on this earth. That He had a following, some who hated Him and some who were willing to die for Him. He had noble teachings and obviously made a tremendous impact on the world.

There are conversations in our secular world today exploring questions around the historical Jesus and His resurrection. On January 7, 2025, Wesley Huff appeared on the Joe Rogan Experience Podcast, the #1 podcast on Spotify in 2024. Wesley is an apologist who is currently a Director for Apologetics Canada. He holds a BA in sociology and a master’s in theological studies. On the podcast Joe Rogan asked “So what is your personal belief when it comes to the resurrection? What do you think happened? Do you have a belief, or do you just try to interpret the text and try and see what is the message?” Wesley answered “As a historian, I do think it is a historical question. You have a guy who objectively lived, he objectively died and then, individuals close to his inner circle claimed that they see him not dead again.” Joe’s response: “Right. This is a highly unusual activity.”

The conversation goes on into a discussion related to Jesus’ resurrection. Here is a real-world conversation of someone using history as a common ground to further explore who Jesus was. Examining facts about the historical Jesus can strengthen our faith and help us lead others to understand the facts about the spiritual Jesus. This Jesus of Nazareth, God in the flesh, who saved us from our sin.

Jesus of Nazareth – The Historical Jesus

Men like Dr. Gary Habermas and Dr. Mike Licona, both American New Testament scholars, theologians and authors, have helped bring to light ways historical scholars determine the validity of historical events and people. One chooses to believe historical data based on the probability of the evidence presented. Here is an adaptive list of some ways used to help evaluate historical evidence and therefore used to evaluate if Jesus of Nazareth existed.

1. Multiple Independent Sources – Pretty self explanatory, it means there are a number of various sources, writing about the same event or person.

2. Early Eyewitness Testimony - We understand this in light of our own judicial system. The more eyewitnesses there are to an event, the greater probability the event happened. Additionally, the closer to the event or person you have documentation, the more reliable the source.

3. Enemy Attestation - This says if an “enemy” or opponent of an event or person acknowledges that event or person existed, it is good evidence. This is in contrast to a supporter of the event or person making a claim. Obviously, a supporter would want to make a case but if an enemy confirms, this is evidence that is all the more reliable.

4. Embarrassing Admonitions - If a person has to “own up” to something embarrassing or negative about themselves or an event they are supporting, to which they are not gaining anything, the admission brings credibility to the statement.

5. Inference for the Best Explanation - This is the examination of evidence to infer the best and most probable explanation that an event occurred, or a person existed. For example, a trinket falls off a shelf that nobody is near. But work was being done on the house that could have caused the wall to vibrate. With that, one could accept vibration of the shelf as the reason for the trinket falling off. Even though the work being done is not a usual occurrence, it presents the best explanation.

1. Multiple Independent Sources

Gospel of Mark – 50-55 A.D.*

- General agreement among scholars is that Mark was written first (if not Mark then Matthew).
- Mark writes information he received from Peter, who is an eyewitness.
 - Early church writings and tradition says Mark was a close companion of Peter and wrote the gospel.
 - Mark’s gospel favors Peter, compare Peter’s denial: Mk 14:27-31 to Lk 22:31-34 and Jn 13:34-38.
 - And the “stare”: Mk 14:66-72 with Lk 22:54-62.
 - The narrative fits Peter. Peter preached life, death and resurrection of Jesus,
 - for example: Acts 1:21-22 & 10:37-41.
- Writing style, Palestinian Jew, fits Mark.
- Mark’s gospel does not contain private narratives like the birth of Jesus.

Gospel of Matthew – circa 55-60 A.D.*

- There is information in common between Matthew, Mark & Luke.
- Matthew does also have information that is only written by him.
 - For example:
 - Jesus’ birth
 - angel appearing to Joseph, 1:18-25;
 - wise men visit, 2:1-12;
 - trip to Egypt, 2:13-18;
 - return to Nazareth, 2:19-23
 - Death & Resurrection
 - Judas kills himself, 27:3-10;
 - guards at tomb, 27:62-66;
 - Jesus appears to women, 28:8-10;
 - bribe of guards, 28:11-15;
 - various other information on beatitudes, miracles and parables

Gospel of Luke – circa 60 A.D.*

- Luke investigated eyewitness accounts to share with Theophilus, Lk. 1:1-3.
- We don’t know all of his sources.
- Information only found in Luke:
 - Birth and early childhood: 1:5-80; 2:1-40; 2:41-52

- Start of ministry: 3:19-20
- Rejection in Nazareth: 4:16-30
- Call of 4 fishermen: 5:1-11
- Jesus raises widow's son: 7:11-17
- Jesus anointed by sinful woman: 7:36-8:3
- Ministry in traveling from Galilee to Judea and in Perea: 10:1-18:14
- Zacchaeus and ten minas (pounds) 19:1-27
- Before Herod: 23:6-12
- After resurrection, opens their minds: 24:44-49

*This is an early estimate, I do believe it was before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

"Q" – circa 30-50 A.D

- Scholars call shared information exclusive to Matthew and Luke, "Q"
 - From the German word "quelle" meaning "source"
- The Beatitudes are an example of this shared information
- This information could be another independent source
- Not all scholars believe "Q" is a source, as Luke may have borrowed from Matthew

Gospel of John – circa 85-90 A.D.

- Written in a very different style from the synoptic gospels
- Different narrative focuses on who Jesus is (He "was the Word", the "I am" statements)
- Does not contain parables like the other gospels (does contain metaphoric stories)
- Fewer miracles mentioned (no demon possessed healings)
- Less historic aspect but does contain eyewitness testimony

Letters from Peter – circa 62-68 A.D.

- Peter calls out that he and others were witnesses of Christ
- **I Ptr. 5:1** – "as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ"
- **II Ptr. 1:16-17** – "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales...but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty"

Pre-Pauline Letters – circa A.D. 30-35

Information such as creeds, hymns and formulations that circulated prior to Paul writing his letters. These were passed on orally as less than 10% of the population could read or write. The majority of scholars agree Paul records some of these in his writings.

Two popular ones are:

- **I Cor. 15:3-7** – died, buried, raised with eyewitnesses
- **I Tim. 3:16** – "He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory"

Some others are:

- **I Cor. 11:26** – "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes"
- **Rom. 4:25** – "He who was delivered up because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification."
- **Rom. 10:9** – "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."
- **Phi. 2:8** – "And being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
- **I Tim. 2:6** – "who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time."

From Luke and Peter:

- **Acts 2:22-36** – “nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death...let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified”
- **I Ptr. 3:18** – “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

Apostolic Fathers – 1st and 2nd Centuries A.D

- Not referred to as “Apostolic Fathers” until 17th century
- Believed to have personally known some of the 12 apostles.
- Their writings were widely circulated in early Christianity.
- They are.
 - Clement of Rome, c. 35-99
 - Ignatius of Antioch, c. 35-110
 - Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 69-155
 - Papias of Hierapolis, c.60-130
 - Quadratus of Athens, died c. 129.

Non-Christian Sources

While these do not hold the same weight as the canonical gospels, these are independent historical writings that include a mention of Jesus. Some mentions are in opposition to Jesus and so do not present Him in a positive light. We’ll look at some of these under Enemy Attestation.

- Tacitus - Roman historian
- Josephus - Jewish historian
- The Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a),
- Mara bar Serapion – Roman philosopher
- Thallus (quoted by Julius Africanus)
- Roman satirist Lucian of Samosata (The Death of Peregrine 11-13),
- Acts of Pilate (from Justin Martyr, First Apology 35),
- Gospel of Truth (20:11-14, 25-29) (a Gnostic writing)
- The Gospel of Thomas (45:1-16) (a Gnostic writing)
- The Treatise on Resurrection (46:14-21) (a Gnostic writing)

2. Early Eyewitness Testimony

In his writing to the Corinthians Paul mentions an early creed that mentions Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. It also names witnesses who saw Him after He was raised. This is significant because as this creed circulates, these witnesses could have been questioned on what they saw. “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also”, **I Cor. 15:3-8**.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul mentions another creed, “By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”, **I Tim. 3:16**.

Referencing what is believed to be a hymn Paul writes, “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven

and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” **Ph. 2:6-11.**

When Paul writes to the church in Rome “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;”, **Rom. 10:9**, it is understood that he is referencing an early confession, obviously testifying that Jesus is Lord and was raised from the dead.

J. Warner Wallace, is a cold-case homicide detective who has appeared on TV, including NBC’s Dateline, Fox News and CourtTV, just to name a few. He uses his skills to investigate claims of the New Testament. He notes, “The evidence indicates the Gospels are, indeed, early enough to have been written by eyewitnesses.” Mr. Wallace believes there is ample evidence for early dating of the Gospels.

The following are excerpts from his article “Why I know the Gospels were Written Early”:

The New Testament Fails to Describe the Destruction of the Temple

We begin with perhaps the most significant Jewish historical event of the first century, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. You might think this important detail would be included in the New Testament record, especially since this fact would corroborate Jesus’s prediction (in Matthew 24:1–3). But no gospel account records the destruction of the temple. In fact, no New Testament document mentions it at all, even though there are many occasions when a description of the temple’s destruction might have assisted in establishing a theological or historical point.

The New Testament Fails to Describe the Siege of Jerusalem

No aspect of this three-year siege is described in any New Testament document.

Luke Said Nothing About the Deaths of Paul and Peter

The apostle Paul was martyred in the city of Rome in AD 64, and Peter was martyred shortly afterward in AD 65.

Luke Said Nothing about the Death of James

James was martyred in the city of Jerusalem in AD 62, the execution of James is absent from the biblical account, even though Luke described the deaths of Stephen (Acts 7:54–60) and James the brother of John (Acts 12:1–2).

Luke’s Gospel Predates the Book of Acts

In the introduction to the book of Acts, (Acts 1:1–2) It’s clear that Luke’s gospel (his “former book”) was written prior to the book of Acts.

Paul Quoted Luke’s Gospel in His Letter to Timothy

Paul appeared to be aware of Luke’s gospel and wrote as though it was common knowledge in about AD 63–64, when Paul penned his first letter to Timothy. Note the following passage: (*1 Tim. 5:17–18*). Paul quoted two passages as “scripture” here—one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” refers to Deuteronomy 25:4, and “The laborer is worthy of his wages” refers to Luke 10:7. It’s clear that Luke’s gospel was already common knowledge and accepted as scripture by the time this letter was written.

Paul Quoted Luke’s Gospel in His Letter to the Corinthians

Paul also seems to have been familiar with the gospel of Luke when he wrote to the Corinthian church (nearly ten years earlier than his letter to Timothy). Notice the similarity between Paul’s description of the Lord’s Supper and Luke’s gospel: *1 Cor. 11:23–25...Luke 22:19–20*. Paul appears to be quoting Luke’s gospel—the only gospel that has Jesus saying that the disciples are to “do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke Quoted Mark (and Matthew) Repeatedly

Luke, when writing his own gospel, readily admitted that he was not an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus. Instead, Luke described himself as a historian, collecting the statements from the eyewitnesses who were present at the time: (*Luke 1:1–4*). As a result, Luke often repeated or quoted entire passages that were offered previously by either Mark (350 verses from Mark appear in Luke’s gospel) or Matthew (250 verses from Matthew appear in Luke’s account).

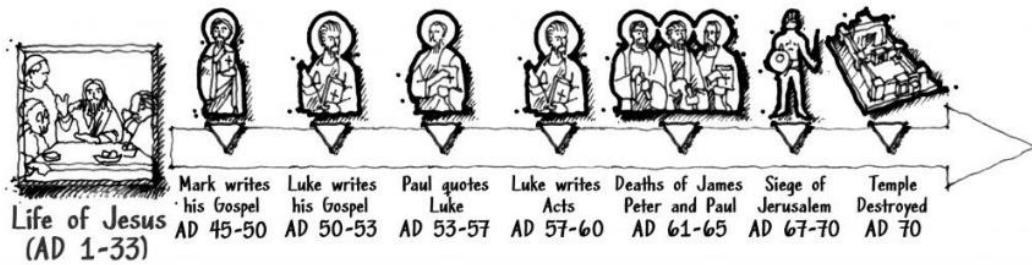


Illustration from Cold-Case Christianity

Based on these facts, an early dating time-line can be established: The evidence from history (and the texts themselves) most reasonably points to the early authorship of the Gospels. This early dating is helpful in assessing their truth status. If the Gospels were written this early, in the very region where the events took place, it would have been difficult for them to include obvious lies, given that they would have been written to people who were alive during the events recorded in the New Testament. These people would have been available to vet the content of the Gospels and call them out as lies if they contained fallacious information. The early dating of the Gospels is an important factor in determining their reliability.

J. Warner Wallace, 'Why I Know The gospels were Written Early', *coldcasechristianity.com*, From the book "Cold Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels", <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/why-i-know-the-gospels-were-written-early-free-bible-insert/>, (accessed Jan. 3, 2025).

3. Enemy Attestation

The point here is that if an enemy makes a positive or noteworthy statement about a person or event, it provides evidence to that person or event. For example, if a mom says, "My kid is a great soccer player.", people are bit skeptical because of course, she's going to say that she's the kid's mom. But if the coach of a team who just lost to the child's team says "That kid is a great soccer player" it carries much more weight.

Tacitus – circa 56-120 A.D.

- a senator under Emperor Vespasian and Roman Historian
- Mentions "Christus" and His followers known as the Christians, who they are named after
- He mentions a "mischievous superstition" in Judea, a seeming reference to Christ resurrections

Josephus – circa 90 A.D.

- He was a Jewish historian that was also a Roman sympathizer, not a Christian.
- In his Antiquities 18.3 he writes:
 "[63] Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."
<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=J.%20AJ%2018.3&lang=original>

Talmud – circa 220 A.D.

- The Babylonia Talmud – Sanhedrin 43a
 "AND A HERALD PRECEDES HIM etc. This implies, only immediately before [the execution], but not previous thereto. [In contradiction to this] it was taught: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! Ulla retorted: 'Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defense could be made? Was he not a Mesith [enticer], concerning whom Scripture says, Neither

shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him? With Yeshu however it was different, for he was connected with the government.”

https://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

- Notice the reference to Him being hanged near Passover because he “practiced sorcery.”

Mara Bar-Serapion – circa 70-73 A.D.

- Was not a Christian, but in writing a letter to his son, mentions:
“What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment, their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their King [Jesus]? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three men... the Jew, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.”
<https://www.jesus skeptic.com/exist-serapion>
- Notice he references Jesus as a wise man (like Socrates and Pythagoras)

Thallus – circa 52 A.D.

- We do not have Thallus’ original writing; he is quoted by Julius Africanus circa 221 A.D.
- Thallus tried to explain the darkness that occurred at Jesus’ crucifixion:
“On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.”
(Julius Africanus, Chronography, 18:1)

4. Embarrassing Admonitions

You have probably heard a saying like “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn’t true”. Why do we say that? Because there is always “a catch”. We know the odds in life are there is a balance of bad with the good. No one has all good happen to them all the time. And if someone tells us how awesome they are all the time, we start to lose faith in what they are telling us. So, to admit some flaws or something embarrassing helps bring validity to what is being said.

Disciples Did Not Understand

If you are going to lead a movement, you want your followers to understand the plan. As Jesus tells the twelve what is about to happen, “they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.” **Lk. 18:31-34**. John explains “These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him”, **Jn. 12:16**. While they did come to understand, it would be a bit embarrassing to admit they did not at first. To admit such a thing is to be totally open and honest about themselves and helps verify historical accuracy. It does so because if one were going to lie about starting a movement, you would want people to know how great everyone one was that started it. You wouldn’t want to record the ignorance of the initial group of followers.

Jesus’ Lack of Knowledge and Stress

Mark records Jesus saying, “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone”, **Mk. 13:32**. If the apostles were lying about Jesus being God, then why would a statement concerning a lack of knowledge be given? This would only give opponents ammunition to doubt Him. To include such a seemingly embarrassing statement brings validity to the writing.

In the movies, we usually see the hero calm, cool and collected. If the hero is stressed, there is a triumphant moment overcoming the stress to conquer all. In **Mt. 26:37-44**, Jesus was “deeply grieved” and prayed 3 times “let this cup pass from Me”. Luke tells us the stress was so intense “His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground”, **Lk. 22:44**. The gospels record that Jesus is in stressful agony and eventually killed. This is not the

usual Hollywood ending. To admit such stress could be viewed as embarrassing but brings authenticity to the writings as we would expect Him to be stressed.

Women Lead The Testimony

The only one of the twelve apostles recorded at the foot of the cross was John, **Jn. 19:25-26**, the rest were women, **Mt. 27:55-56, Mk. 15:40-41, Lk. 23:49**. The disciples (men) “shut the doors” hiding because they were in “fear of the Jews”, **Jn. 20:19**. From the time Jesus is arrested, to then being killed, the men are fearful and run away. To admit they did not remain and fight for Christ their leader can be viewed as an embarrassment.

In the time of New Testament writings, we know men had a higher position in Jewish and Roman society. We understand that men had much more legal, social, and economic status. We would also understand that it would be men who would rise up and fight for a cause, not lock themselves in a room and hide. However, it’s women who first go to the tomb and report back that it’s empty, **Mt. 28:1-8, Mk. 16:1-8, Lk. 24:1-9, Jn. 20:1-2**. In the first century, if you wanted to boost your credibility, you would not record that women led the way in initial testimony on the core foundation of your movement. We continue to see women mentioned in scripture as the church grows, **Rom. 16:1-3, 7, 12; Ph. 4:2-3** and **I Cor. 16:19**. The testimony and actions of these women is a powerful testimony to the truth of the events.

Joseph of Arimathea Buries Jesus

Mark records that “Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council...asked for the body of Jesus”. Pilate granted Joseph the body and he laid it in a tomb, putting a stone against the entrance, **Mk. 15:44-46**. To have a prominent member of the very council that killed Jesus, bury Him, on the surface, would seem embarrassing as it would seem Jesus’ followers could not provide a proper burial.

Doubt of the Resurrection

With all the miracles that Jesus did and with all the specific teachings to the apostles on His resurrection, you would expect the men who were going to lead the growth of the church to not hesitate in their belief. We would expect some people to doubt and enemies to argue against it, but if you were making this up, wouldn’t you have those closest to Jesus believing? The gospel writers admit, even those closest to Jesus doubted. “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped him, but some were doubtful”, **Mt. 28:16-17**. Luke tells us that multiple women were telling the apostles that Jesus wasn’t in the tomb, “but these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them”, **Lk. 24:10-11**. And of course, Thomas, who said unless he sees the nail prints in His hands and feet “I will not believe”. He did see and he did then believe, **Jn. 20:24-29**. The fact that some of them did doubt His resurrection could be viewed as embarrassing but is behavior that we can naturally understand and testifies to it being true.

5. Inference for the Best Explanation

In his book “Inference to the Best Explanation”, Peter Lipton develops a model on how we work out what we can infer from weighing evidence and testing hypotheses. The point being, we figure out what we can infer by examining evidence and developing thoughts on what the best explanation is from that evidence. This application can be done in science and history as well as in theology.

I believe the evidence that shows Jesus the Nazarene existed is so over whelming, that we can be sure it is true. Taking the time to examine such evidence for the historical Jesus is important because ultimately the question becomes “Was this Jesus resurrected from the dead?” If we understand the tremendous weight of the gospels, from a historical point of view, then we understand our faith is built on sound evidence leading us to the best explanation.

Conclusion

When Matthew, Mark and Luke record for us the words of the angel “He has risen”, **Mt. 28:6, Mk. 16:6, Lk. 24:6** and John records for us that Mary saw Jesus standing outside the tomb, **Jn. 20:11-16**, the evidence for the historical Jesus, brings validity to such statements made in these writings.

Dr. Craig Keener, who was a convinced atheist at an early age, is now a renowned scholar in New Testament Background, the book of Acts, Jesus and miracles. He has authored many books including “The Historical Jesus of the Gospels” in 2009. In his conclusion on the chapter on The Resurrection he writes:

“However we understand or explain it, a major historical impetus for the spread of Jesus' movement after his martyrdom was a pivotal event that his disciples, virtually unanimously (along with at least a few former detractors) understood as his resurrection. Whatever one does with the more controversial question of divine causation, the best evidence suggests that the first witnesses believed that they had seen Jesus alive from the dead. They interpreted Jesus's current life as a resurrected life - a foretaste of the new order, not at all comparable with mere ghost apparitions. Moreover, they were convinced enough as to the nature of this life as to stake the rest of their own lives, both in the current age and in the coming one on Jesus's resurrection. For them, Jesus' resurrection cohorted with the message, God was establishing a new order, and Jesus its proclaimer held first place in it. Whether we choose to agree with their faith or not, we cannot easily doubt the depth of their conviction.”

Dr. Craig Keener, ‘The Historical Jesus of the Gospels’, p. 348,
https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Historical_Jesus_of_the_Gospels/cnfT1YnW7ZsC?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA4&printsec=frontcover,
(accessed April 14, 2025)

Dr. William Lane Craig, a leading Christian apologist, analytic philosopher and theologian says it this way:

“Today it is widely agreed that the gospels are valuable historical sources for the life of Jesus and that the proper context for understanding the gospels is not mythology, but Palestinian Judaism. It is widely agreed that the historical Jesus stood and spoke in the place of God Himself, proclaimed the advent of the Kingdom of God, and carried out a ministry of miracle working and exorcisms as signs of that Kingdom. I find it tremendously gratifying to see that the movement of New Testament scholarship as a whole is in the direction of confirming the traditional understanding of Jesus as portrayed in the gospels. In particular, my own research concerning Jesus' resurrection has convinced me more than ever that this was a historical event, verifiable by the evidence. The Christian can be confident that the historical foundations of his faith stand secure. You can bet your life on it.”

William Lane Craig, 'Presuppositions and Pretensions of the Jesus Seminar', *reasonablefaith.org*,
<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/jesus-of-nazareth/presuppositions-and-pretensions-of-the-jesus-seminar>, (accessed Jan. 3, 2025).

History tells us this Jesus existed; faith tells us He is the son of God. Jesus of Nazareth is who they sought. “I am He” was His answer. The son of a carpenter, a religious rebel to some, a wise teacher to others. A simple, but profound response...as the God of heaven was standing there in the body of a man, Jesus the Nazarene.