

The Life of Jesus Christ

according to the quadraphonic testimony of
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John



by

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Introduction

A. The transcendent significance of Jesus Christ.

Of all the individuals who have ever lived on planet earth, it is the influence and stature of Jesus Christ that rises far above anyone else. The eloquent testimony of Napoleon Bonaparte is sufficient at this juncture.

Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. . . . Jesus is the same; always the same—majestic and simple, infinitely severe and infinitely gentle. Throughout a life passed under the public eye, He never gives occasion to find fault. The prudence of His conduct compels our admiration by its union of force and gentleness. Alike in speech and action, He is enlightened, consistent, and calm. Sublimity is said to be an attribute of divinity: what name, then, shall we give Him in whose character were united every element of the sublime? . . . I know men; and I tell you that Jesus is not a man. Everything in Him amazes me. His spirit outreaches mine, and His will confounds me. Comparison is impossible between Him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and His sentiments; the truth that He announces; His manner of convincing; are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things. . . . His birth, and the story of His life; the profoundness of His doctrine, which overturns all difficulties, and is their most complete solution; His gospel, the singularity of His mysterious being; His appearance; His empire; His progress through all centuries and kingdoms;—all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery. . . . I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above my comprehension—great with a greatness that crushes me.¹

Though Napoleon expressed these opinions near two hundred years ago, the subsequent industrial and technological revolutions have not quenched the interest of modern man, baffled though he be, in this incomparable person. However shabby, however contorted, however defective, however blasphemous contemporary portrayals of Jesus may be, whether by means of dramatic media or the graphic printed page, the fact remains that He continues to arrest the attention of man in a manner that proves He cannot be ignored, however hard man may try. He simply refuses to be abandoned as being no longer relevant. For, as the Scripture declares, He is defiantly, inescapably “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). He is no longer on trial, rather man is!

B. The historic significance of Jesus Christ.

Biblical Christianity is founded upon objective history, that is real events that concern the historic person of Jesus from Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. Here is no

¹ Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, I, pp. 3, 12-13.

mere contrived ideal man, no evolving literary tradition, no subjective Christ of faith, but rather He who the Apostle John testified as tangibly, “what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (I John 1:1). Thus F. F. Bruce, former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, has clearly written:

Some writers may toy with the fancy of a “Christ-myth,” but they do not so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Cæsar. It is not historians who propagate the “Christ-myth” theories.²

We live in existential times whereby man has lost sight of the foundational importance of concrete reality upon which is built the edifice of the vital Christian man. Thus Francis Schaeffer has warned us:

I have come to the point where, when I hear the word “Jesus”—which means so much to me because of the historic Jesus and His work—I listen carefully because I have with sorrow become more afraid of the word “Jesus” than almost any other word in the modern world. The word is used as a contentless banner, and our generation is invited to follow it. But there is no rational, scriptural content by which to test it, and thus the word is being used to teach the very opposite things from those which Jesus taught. . . . Increasingly over the last few years the word “Jesus,” separated from the content of the Scriptures, has become the enemy of the Jesus of history, the Jesus who died and rose and who is coming again and who is the eternal Son of God. So let us take care. If evangelical Christians begin to slip into a dichotomy, to separate an encounter with Jesus from the content of the Scriptures (including the discussable and the verifiable), we shall, without intending to, be throwing ourselves and the next generation into the millstream of the modern system. This system surrounds us as an almost monolithic consensus.³

In 1906, Albert Schweitzer first published *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, but this Christ turned out to be an apocalyptic dreamer, who, disappointed at the delay of the coming of the kingdom of God, died as a result of change in his plans and circumstances that got out of control. However, our quest is not for any such contrived or demythologized Christ, whether a redacted Christ, a revolutionary Christ, a psychological Christ, a sentimental Christ, a psychedelic Christ, or a TV media Christ. Rather our desire is to encounter the biblical Christ of history, and Him alone.

C. The biblical significance of Jesus Christ.

Years ago, a magazine cartoon appeared in which a movie theater was depicted featuring some great biblical extravaganza. Outside was a man with a table stacked with Bibles for distribution. As the crowd made its exit from the presentation, the man cried out: “You’ve seen the movie; now read the book on which it was based!” So our desire is to resort to the primary documents that unveil the life of Jesus Christ, principally the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This Christ of Scripture is for us both the “Jesus of history” and the “Lord of faith;” both perspectives coalesce into one harmonious representation. When an early church father was asked why there were four gospels, he replied that there were not four gospels, but one fourfold gospel! Hence the Christ we seek is not based upon speculation or imagination, but objective revelation, the truthful Word of God.

² F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* p. 119.

³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, pp. 78-79.

D. The sacred significance of Jesus Christ.

Between Pontius Pilate AD 26, and Titus AD 70, some 30,000 Jews are said to have been crucified around Jerusalem. This being so, then our pursuit concerns why just one of these crucifixions subsequently transformed the world. Who is this Christ who can so grip as debased a slave-trader and English sea captain as John Newton, and transform him into the composer of the hymn:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
 In a believer's ear!
 It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
 And drives away his fear.
 It makes the wounded spirit whole,
 And calms the troubled breast;
 'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
 And to the weary rest.
 Jesus! my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
 My Prophet, Priest, and King,
 My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
 Accept the praise I bring.

What is it that causes Christ to be the most discussed, the most studied, the most revered, the most blasphemed of all men in human history? Surely it must be because men have concluded, along with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Thus our purpose is not merely a cerebral understanding of Jesus Christ; it is not even a better understanding of His ethics, as if that were all we needed to be concerned about. Rather we wish to draw close as he beckons: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:30).

However, it also needs to be understood that coming to Jesus Christ has both initial and ongoing aspects. In John 30:31, we come to Christ to begin with for conversion so that "we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" then, having become a child of God, we continue to come to Jesus Christ, "that believing you may be having life in His name." This leads to the necessity of emphasizing that for the Christian, his Lord and Master is ever before him as a sanctifying model. Dr. Earl D. Radmacher puts it this way.

The earthly life of Jesus Christ stands unique in human history as the pattern life for all believers. The Apostle Peter states: "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). The Apostle John, emphasizing the same point, says: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6). . . . The pattern life of Christ was meant to be a guide for all believers in Christ to follow closely; for, you see, as we spend time beholding the glory of the Lord, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, ever as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18). As we concentrate on the Person of Christ, we find ourselves being metamorphosed, transfigured, changed into the likeness of Christ. Just as the crawling worm is metamorphosed into a beautiful swallow-tail butterfly, so the Holy Spirit works on us by means of the life of Christ "until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 3:19). . . . Today's churches are witnessing some new births, but very little genuine growth, thus, evangelization apart from disciplization. There is a great need for messages geared to maturation. Lambs need to become

sheep and, thus, capable of reproduction of more lambs. There is no better way to move into maturity in Christ than to give careful study to the life of Christ.⁴

E. The spirit of the time of Christ.

1. The rule of the Roman Caesars, 31 BC to 68 AD, brought one hundred years of relative peace, yet iron rule for the Jews, witness the use of crucifixion. Consequently:
 - a. Travel throughout the empire was reasonably safe.
 - b. Law and order was tightly maintained.
 - c. The Koine Greek language was the common language, in spite of Roman rule.
2. The Jews, having lost their Maccabean glory, and having been ruthlessly crushed by Rome, were eagerly looking for a (the?) deliverer, even Messiah.
3. Morally, the degradation of the period was unequalled.
 - a. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote that, “to corrupt and be corrupt is the spirit of the times.
 - b. Family life had virtually disintegrated and divorce was common.
 - c. The Roman Empire had six million slaves who were harshly treated and killed for little cause.
 - d. The picture of Romans 1:18-32 is not overdrawn concerning “all ungodliness and unrighteousness,” in which “they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”
4. But, “when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4-5). This is the Christ we look to

F. The mode of studying Jesus Christ.

The historic record of Jesus of Nazareth is contained in the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Many harmonies of the life of Christ have been published in which the four narratives are woven together into one account. Notable examples are those by W. A. Stevens and E. D. Burton, A. T. Robertson, and J. Dwight Pentecost. More recently there has also been published *The Life Of Christ In Stereo* by Johnston M. Cheney which is based upon an exact blending of the Greek text into one precise translation of the life of Christ. The result of this endeavor, which is the basis of our study, is a four year rather than the more common three year chronology, calculated according to five rather than the traditional four successive Passover celebrations.

⁴ Earl D. Radmacher. Forward to Johnston M. Cheney, *The Life of Christ in Stereo*, pp. iii-iv.

I. The Preincarnate Life of Christ

MARK 1:1; JOHN 1:1-18

A. The title to the life of Christ, Mark 1:1.

“The beginning of the gospel/good news [εὐαγγέλιον, euangelion] of Jesus Christ, Son of God.” The presupposition here concerns the bad news of the universal human predicament, namely the pervasive pollution of the Fall through our first parents, Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12, 19; Eph. 2:1-3, 12; cf. 2:4-7, 13). More specifically, this good news is a Person, designated by three titles:

1. “Jesus,” Ἰησοῦς, Iēsous, the Greek equivalent of “Joshua,” יהושוע, meaning “Jehovah is salvation” (Matt. 1:21; cf. Deut. 12:10; Heb. 4:3, 9).
2. “Christ,” Χριστός, Christos, or “Messiah” [מָשִׁיחַ, mashiach], or “Anointed One” (Luke 3:21-22; 4:18; Acts 10:38).
3. “Son of God,” a title of deity (John 5:18, 23; 19:7; 10:33). He is the precise expression of what the Father is (John 14:9; Col. 1:15).

B. The preincarnate Christ as the Eternal Word, John 1:1-18.

1. Introduction to John’s prologue.

- a. It is profoundly theological, but should never be skipped over in attempting to reach the more historic, narrative account of John’s Gospel.
- b. It establishes who Jesus Christ is in time and eternity as a definitive basis for the unbeliever to respond to through faith for salvation.
- c. It presents an encapsulated version of the Gospel of John as a whole. It is the glorious overture that weaves together all of the main themes that follow.

2. Jesus Christ and his relationship to God, vs. 1-2.

a. The eternal pre-existence of Jesus Christ with God, v. 1a.

- (1) “In the beginning was the Word,” refers to Genesis 1:1, but also to eternity past. Jesus Christ did not ever commence to exist. Thus “was,” continuous past tense, means “was continuously existing.” Jesus Christ existed eternally before creation, in a glorious capacity, 17:5. Hence he was not created, cf. v. 3. He is the “only begotten” or “unique Son of God,” v. 18. Many other Scripture references, that include theophanies, teach Christ’s eternal preexistence. (Gen. 18:1-19:1; 32:24-30; Exod. 3:1-5; Judg. 13:15-18, 21-22; Mic. 5:2; John 1:15; 8:58; 16:28; Phil. 2:5-8; I Cor. 10:4-9).

- (2) “The Word,” or ὁ λόγος, *logos*, has been interpreted along two different paths.
- (a) That of Greek philosophy, particularly Alexandrian. Thus “Word” is the supreme energy or principle, reason, the impersonal soul of the universe, comprehended spiritually rather than materially by an elite group. But John does not show interest in philosophy, and his λόγος, *logos*, is not detached from the world, or impersonal, but part of it.
 - (b) That of Hebrew thought, according to John as a Hebrew, God’s Word personified. Thus, “by the Word of the LORD the heavens were made” (Ps. 33:6). This “Word” is wisdom personified (Prov. 8:22-30; cf. I Cor. 1:24). Hence “the Word” is the “self-expression of the all-wise God of Abraham” who has become actively manifest in human flesh (1:14).

b. The intimate position of Jesus Christ with God, v. 1b.

The Word being “with God,” πρὸς τὸν θεόν, *pros ton theon*, signifies position, facing God with an intimate relationship, thus, “in the Father’s bosom, v. 18.

c. The essential nature of Jesus Christ as that of God, v. 1c.

Hence, this Word “was God,” not simply “divine,” or “a God,” according to Unitarians and Jehovah’s Witnesses because of the absence of the definite article. F. F. Bruce has written: “Those people who emphasize that the true rendering of the last clause of John 1:1 is ‘the word was a god,’ prove nothing thereby save their ignorance of Greek grammar.”¹ Simply stated, the reason the article is missing is so that we may read, “the Word was God,” but not “God was the Word.” Also refer to John 20:28 where Thomas declares Jesus to be, “My Lord and my God [ὁ θεός, *ho theos*],” with the definite article. Thus Jesus Christ is essentially God, as are the Father and the Holy Spirit, while each Person functions distinctively, in particular Jesus as the Son of God.

d. The repetition and refinement of the previous statement, v. 2.

John delights in repeating his propositions either after the manner of Hebrew parallelism, as here, or with both contrasting positive and negative declarations of the one truth. Thus Jesus Christ *is* face-to-face with God in the beginning. Furthermore, Jesus Christ does not *come to be* with God; He is *always* God.

3. Jesus Christ and his relationship to creation, 1:3-5.

a. Jesus Christ is the creator of all things, v. 3.

Consequently Jesus Christ is not created (Col. 1:17). However, Jehovah is also the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 40:28). Thus, creation is by the Father

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 60; also D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 117, 137.

“through Him,” *διὰ*, *dia*, that is the Son. The Father decrees or plans to create while the Son executes this plan of creation.

- b. Jesus Christ is the source of physical, spiritual, illuminating life, vs. 4-5.

To men, mankind, this life of Christ becomes light, as never before visited upon the human race, that *reveals* and *displaces* darkness, 8:12; 9:5. There is inevitable, constant conflict between the Light and darkness, and the darkness cannot master or overcome the Light, as much as it would like to do. This Light also brings accountability, either direction toward the truth or despair at condemnation, cf. 3:19; 12:35.

4. Jesus Christ and his relationship to man, 1:6-13.

- a. The Word announced to man by John the Baptist, vs. 6-8.

John is only a man, a witness, a voice in the wilderness, a friend of the bridegroom, he who validates and recommends the Light. Jesus is the Word, God, Creator, the Light itself, the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom.

- b. The Word offered to man that he might become a child of God, vs. 9-13.

(1) Does Jesus Christ internally illuminate every man’s soul in some way, according to v. 9? No, since only the true believer has “the Light of life” within, 8:12. Hence this verse is better translated: “Coming into the world was the true Light which shines upon every man,” v. 9, but not *into* all men, 9:5; 12:46.

(2) The great seeming contradiction of history, vs. 10-11.

(a) Jesus Christ made the world, v. 10b.

(b) Jesus Christ was active in the world by means of incarnation, v. 10a.

(c) He came to his own house (things), national Israel in particular, v. 11a.

(d) His own people, Israel, did not receive or welcome him, v. 11b.

(e) He was not recognized by the world as the saving Son of God, v. 10c.

(f) Nevertheless, God uses the unbelief of Israel to bring blessing on all the world (Rom. 11:15, 32).

(3) The greatest invitation of human history, vs. 12-13.

(a) “Believe/receive/welcome” are synonymous terms. Delete “even” as in the KJV, since faith is not some minimum requirement, v. 12a.

(b) Believe what? “on his name.” It involves, v. 12c.

- 1) He is Savior (Jesus) (Matt. 1:21).
 - 2) He is Messiah (Christ), Anointed One.
 - 3) He is God (Son of God), 5:18; 10:33; 19:7.
 - 4) He is Master (Lord), 13:13.
 - 5) He is, as Thomas confessed, “My Lord and my God,” 20:28.
- (c) The high privilege or authority involved that of a slave becoming a child of God (I John 3:1-2); it is receiving the riches of grace in Christ in place of filthy rags, on the basis of faith alone, v. 12b.
- (d) The divine viewpoint of salvation is stressed, by means of emphasis upon grace, cf. 16; v. 13. This new birth resulting in adoption from slavery to sonship is:
- 1) Not of “bloods” or human breeding and parentage
 - 2) Not of “fleshly desire” or sensual craving and attainment.
 - 3) Not of “human volition” or human decision and initiative.
 - 4) But of sovereign grace, the omnipotent, holy will of God!
5. Jesus Christ and his relationship to God’s plan of salvation, 1:14-18.
- b. The Word is manifest in human flesh, vs. 14-15.
- (3) Philosophic or abstract speculation is not in mind here, but the radical extent of God’s saving purpose through special, incarnate revelation.
 - (4) “Flesh” here means “[un corrupted] human nature,” not just “a man,” but “full man” (Heb. 4:15; Phil. 2:6-8).
 - (5) “Dwelt” means “tabernacled,” or “tented.” Jesus takes the place of the earthly Temple on earth, 2:19-21. In Exodus 33:7; I Kings 8:11, those who sought the Lord went to the tabernacle, and so should we.
 - (6) “We beheld his glory,” is essential glory, veiled in flesh, reminiscent of God’s Old Testament manifestations (Exod.16:10), but briefly shining through at the transfiguration (II Pet. 1:16-17), his miracles, his ascension.
 - (7) “Full of grace and truth,” means God’s loving-kindness woven together with God’s integrity incorporated in His incarnate revelation (Ps. 25:10).
 - (8) This, as John testifies, was divine condescension from eternity. II Corinthians 8:9 pictures this same divine condescension in a similar way. Christ veiled his

riches in heaven, by taking on poverty on earth, so that we might become rich through him.

- c. The Word manifests the superiority of grace, vs. 16-17.
 - (1) Grace here is receiving generously from God out of His spiritual horn of plenty, His overflowing storehouse; by way of contrast, the Law demands we give to God with continuous, unflinching supply, v. 16.
 - (2) The Law, as portrayed by Moses the servant of God, demands total, perfect and eternal righteousness (Gal. 3:10), but grace, embodied in Christ the Son of God, gives total, perfect and eternal righteousness (Phil. 3:9; Heb. 3:1-6), v. 17.
- d. The Word manifests God's essential nature, v. 18.
 - (1) Emphatically, no man has ever seen God in His essential being and lived. Old Testament appearances were theophanies or christophanies, that is veiled though visible manifestations of God, but not incarnations, v. 18a.
 - (2) Jesus Christ is "the only begotten God" NASB, that is the eternal God manifest through birth in human flesh, v. 18b.
 - (3) He comes from and returns to "the bosom of the Father;" this elaborates on His being "with God," 1:1, and gives the reason why the Son precisely expresses the Father, v. 18c.
 - (4) Jesus Christ has "expounded" or "exegeted" the Father; ἐξηγέομαι, exēgeomai, meant to express a revelation of a Greek god, so here with Christ as the Son of God (John 14:9; Heb. 1:3).
- 6. By way of conclusion, Jesus Christ is the unique person, the God-man of human history, and history has never been so occupied with such a person as this man. You reject this record? Then provide a believable explanation of this historic record. You accept this record? That makes good sense in view of the evidence. But it is not enough. For this truth constrains you to commit to this truth by believing in Jesus Christ in the manner He solicited. Thus, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:26). "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

II The Preparatory Life of Christ

MATTHEW 1:1-4:11; MARK 1:2-13; LUKE 1:5-4:13; JOHN 1:19-2:12

- A. The preamble of Matthew concerning Jesus' genealogy, Matt. 1:1-17.
1. "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham," 1:1. Matthew traces the genealogy of Joseph, v. 16, who was a lineal descendant of David, vs. 5-6, and thus a legitimate heir to his throne. But further, back beyond David, Jesus was descended from Abraham and thus is also an heir, even the seed, of the covenant promise (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:16, 29).
 2. By way of contrast, while Luke 3:23-38 traces the genealogy of Jesus through Mary back to Adam as the ideal Son of Man, Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph back to Abraham as the promised King of Israel.
 3. Matthew stresses that Jesus is the legal son of Joseph, hence heir as the eldest son, yet at the same time he emphatically denies that Jesus is the physical son of Joseph, having been born of a "virgin," παρθένος, parthenos, vs. 20-23. He also mentions four women, all of whom are either foreigners or considered to be involved in immorality, namely Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.
- B. The preamble of Luke concerning "the exact truth about the things" of Jesus, Luke 1:1-4.
1. His presentation of the facts, vs. 1-3.
 - a. There are many sources (cf. I Cor. 15:5-6), v. 1.
 - b. These sources were "eyewitnesses," ἀυτόπτῆς, autoptēs, from which we get "autopsy." It stresses seeing physically rather than spiritually, v. 2.
 - c. These sources and the facts have been carefully investigated by Luke, the educated physician (Col. 4:14) and historian, v. 3a.
 - d. The facts are now presented to Theophilus, a "friend" or "lover of God," possibly a titled gentleman being "most excellent." Those who are disposed toward God learn more from God, v. 3b.
 2. His purpose for the facts, v. 4.
 - a. Full knowledge, ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis, accumulated knowledge which brings an expanded understanding (cf. Col. 1:10; II Pet. 1:2-3).
 - b. The means for the obtaining of this knowledge is teaching, "oral catechizing," κατηχέω, katēcheō (cf. Gal. 6:6).
 - c. The practical effect of this knowledge is prevention of falling or tottering, hence stability/safety/security, ἀσφάλεια, asphaleia, from which "asphalt" is derived.

C. The presentation of John the Baptist from birth, Luke 1:5-80.

1. Zechariah's prayer is answered, Luke 1:5-25.

a. The end of the reign of King Herod the Great, v. 5a.

- (1) He was King only through the grace of Rome. As an Idumean or Edomite, much to the chagrin of the Jews, nevertheless he was a pagan Jew, a great builder, his most notable accomplishment being the Temple.
- (2) His character was monstrous, cruel, putting to death Mariamne, the favorite of his nine wives, also her two brothers, and even his own son Antipater, when on his deathbed.
- (3) Augustus Caesar stated that, "it is better to be Herod's hog than to be his son." His jealousy is well indicated in his slaughter of the male innocents (Matt. 2:16).
- (4) Nearing death, his last days were dreadful. He mourned for Mariamne with great lamenting, as Josephus records. On his deathbed, he ordered that all of the main Jewish leaders be locked up in the hippodrome, surrounded by soldiers, who were ordered to kill them immediately upon his death, that, "he shall have a great mourning at his funeral, and such as never any king had before him."¹ The order was not carried out. His actual death was extremely painful, with convulsion and putrefaction.

b. The refreshing contrast of Zacharias and Elizabeth, vs. 5b-7.

- (1) Both of their names were auspicious. Zacharias means "God remembers," while Elizabeth means "God is [my] oath." This priest belonged to the 8th of 24 courses/divisions, his being named "Abijah," which rotated for service twice every year, v. 5b.
- (2) The devotion of this pious couple was not merely before men, but before God, they being part of a godly remnant in days of spiritual darkness, v. 6.
- (3) However, in being childless, their right standing with God did not mean that they were without trials. Herod's wrong standing with God did not mean that he was without blessings, such as children, status, etc. But Zacharias and Elizabeth withstood their trials better than Herod did with his blessings. Nevertheless, Elizabeth must have contemplated the seeming impossibility of her giving birth to Messiah. Though another possibility probably never crossed her mind! v. 7.

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVII, VI, 5.

- c. Zacharias encounters Gabriel, vs. 8-12.
- (1) Zacharias is offering incense in the Holy Place, a once in a lifetime responsibility, having been decided by lot. It was offered twice a day while people prayed in the court outside, v. 8-10.
 - (2) Zacharias is struck with fear at the presence of Gabriel, meaning “Man of God,” cf. v. 19; here was realization of that which was far beyond his most devoted contemplations, vs. 11-12.
- d. Gabriel announces the birth of John to Zacharias, vs. 13-17.
- (1) The ministry of Gabriel appears to be especially in the answering of prayers, as well as with regard to bringing forth revelation concerning Christ (Dan. 9:20-23; Luke 1:26).
 - (2) The name of the unexpected son is to be “John,” meaning “God is gracious.” However this forerunner of Christ is *not* the founder of Baptist Churches! v. 13.
 - (3) The characteristics of John are described.
 - (a) He shall bring joy to many, no doubt because they will appreciate his distinctive, preparatory, Christ exalting ministry, v. 14.
 - (b) He shall be “great” in the sight of God, and notwithstanding his seeming tragic martyrdom, this would all the more enhance his “true greatness.” Thus he will not be filled with carnal stimulation, but spiritual life. Thus he will abstain from wine, possibly signifying a Nazirite vow (Num. 6:1-21), v. 15.
 - (c) He will be an effective minister of Christ. That is, he draws attention to Christ, not himself; he is filled with the Holy Spirit; he preaches to the hearts of men, pleading with them to turn from sin to righteousness, to prepare for the coming of the Lord, vs. 16-17.
- e. Gabriel’s sign to unbelieving, dumb-struck Zacharias, vs. 18-25.
- (1) His unbelieving question, “How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years,” receives an answer that magnifies his unbelief in the face of faithful Gabriel. Contrast Abraham’s attitude (Rom. 4:18-21).
 - (2) Zacharias’ chastisement becomes a sign to the people of the authenticity of his revelation, vs. 20-23.
 - (3) So Elizabeth conceives, and goes into retirement for five months. Why? To worship God, to help her husband in his embarrassment, to wait till the obvious evidence of her pregnancy was manifest. There was no rush to vaunt her privilege among the women of Jerusalem, vs. 24-25.

2. Gabriel's announcement to Mary, Luke 1:26-38.

- a. The time is six months later in despised Nazareth of the region of Galilee, v. 26.
- b. Mary is a virgin, betrothed to Joseph of the house of David, who will conceive through the Holy Spirit, cf. Matt. 1:20; v. 27. This was already a legal marriage, established in writing, that could only be broken by divorce. According to the law, infidelity, prior to the physical union, required death.

A problem is sometimes raised concerning the virgin birth with regard to supposed parallel "virgin birth" stories in secular history. There is the birth of Perseus by Danaë through a descending rain of gold, the birth of Plato by Perictione, the birth of Alexander through a bolt of thunder striking the womb of Olympias. But all of these are not concerned with a virgin birth, but simply the lustful gods taking advantage of women who were not necessarily virgins.² Hence we offer six reasons for believing in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

- (1) In Genesis 3:15, the term "seed of woman" is distinct from the more normal "seed of man."
 - (2) In Isaiah 7:14, where the term "virgin" is sometimes disputed, the LXX translation in Matthew 1:23, cf. Luke 1:27, is *παρθενοϛ*, *parthenos*, which undoubtedly means a virgin in the accepted sense.
 - (3) In Matthew 1:16, "by whom" is feminine, indicating Mary.
 - (4) Matthew 1:25 describes Joseph, who "knew her not until she had given birth to a Son."
 - (5) Luke 3:23 describes Jesus, "as was supposed, the son of Joseph," or literally, "as it was being thought."
 - (6) There is the implication of a dubious birth in John 8:19, 41.
- c. Gabriel's message to Mary, vs. 28-37.
- (1) She has found favor, through grace, with God, vs. 28-30.
 - (2) She will bare a son named Jesus, v. 31.
 - (3) He will be "the Son of the Most High [God]," that is "the Son of God," vs. 32a, 35b.
 - (4) He will reign over King David's throne, the house of Jacob, with an endless kingdom (cf. II Sam. 7:12-17); vs. 32b, 33.
 - (5) He will be conceived by the Holy Spirit, vs. 34, 35a.

² J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth Of Christ*, pp. 317-379.

- (6) Previously barren Elizabeth is six months pregnant, so go and see, vs. 36-37.
- d. Mary's response of faith in God's Word, v. 38. It was unqualified submission, the conclusion to the "Ave Maria/Hail Mary," v. 28. Consider the place of Mary in Scripture.
- (1) The fundamental problem of Mary as "Mother of God" in the Roman Catholic Church. It is the result of human logic which could also lead us to conclude that since Heli was the father of Mary, he was the "Uncle of God." The consequent problem of Mary as the supposed "Immaculate Mother of God," is disproved by the Magnificat, 1:47, that is her need of salvation. Hence the bodily assumption is also negated.
 - (2) Mary's qualities of humility, obedience, and devotion, indicate a most godly woman, full of faith, but not as the co-mediatrix with Jesus her son. She is the recipient of great particular grace, but she is in no way the dispenser of it (Luke 1:28a). She is "blessed among women," but there is no suggestion of her conferring blessing on man. She does not appear to have had any part in her son's itinerant ministry. After Acts 1:14, Mary is not mentioned again in Scripture. In Mark 3:31-35, Jesus clearly establishes a break with his earthly mother; He, in relation to His Father, is the only issue, not her (cf. John 2:4-5).
3. Mary and Elizabeth rejoice, Luke 1:39-56.
- a. Mary visits Elizabeth, probably to investigate, at Gabriel's prompting, cf. vs. 36-37; vs. 39-40.
 - b. Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, confesses faith in her unborn Savior or "Lord," vs. 41-45.
 - c. Mary's "Magnificat" emulates Hannah's prayer of praise and prophecy (I Sam. 2:1-10); vs. 46-56.
 - (1) She is a mother-to-be who knows her Bible since in her prayer there are echoes of Genesis, II Samuel, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Micah.
 - (2) Like Hannah, she is overcome with many of God's attributes, including His grace as a Savior, v. 4, His holiness, v. 49, His longsuffering, v. 50, His omnipotence, v. 51, His mercy, v. 54, His faithfulness, vs. 54-55.
4. John circumcised and named, Luke 1:57-80.
- a. John is born as indicative of the Lord's "great mercy," vs. 57-61.
 - b. John receives his name, meaning "God is gracious," from Gabriel, v. 13, not Zacharias, vs. 62-63.
 - c. Zacharias receives back his speech to praise God, vs. 64-66.

- d. Zacharias praises God, at John's birth, with a benediction of praise, vs. 67-79.
 - (1) He stresses the meaning of John's name, that is grace and mercy, hence the prospect of salvation, vs. 71-72, 74, 77-78.
 - (2) He refers mainly to the coming of the Redeemer, vs. 68-75, 78-79, and to John, vs. 76-77.
 - (3) He, like Mary, provides echoes of Genesis, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, Malachi.
 - (4) He, with Mary, refers to the Abrahamic Covenant, vs. 54-55, 72-73.
- e. John, like Moses, Elijah, and Paul, was desert trained, for some 30 years, v. 80.

D. The presentation of Jesus from birth, Matt. 1:18-2:23; Luke 2:1-52.

1. Joseph reassured by an angel, Matt. 1:18-25.

- a. Probably after Mary returns home from seeing Elizabeth, Joseph now begins to see visible evidence of Mary's conception. Thus he has three alternatives, as a good Jew. Either take Mary to the judges and have her stoned for adultery, or take her to the judges so as to procure a bill of divorcement, or believe Mary and carry on without thoughts of wrongdoing on her part.
- b. Gabriel intercedes to reassure Joseph of the truth concerning Mary, vs. 20-23. Hence, take Mary to be your wife since her pregnancy is of the Holy Spirit, v. 20. Her son is to be called "Jesus" because of the prospective work of redemption before him, v. 21. The prophecies of Isaiah 7:14; 8:10; 9:6) confirm this birth and Mary's virginity, vs. 22-23. You cannot explain natural birth any more than you can explain a virgin birth. Here *παρθενος*, *parthenos*, means virgin in the accepted sense. The additional name of "Immanuel" meaning "God with us," is further indication of the deity of Jesus.
- c. So Joseph is reassured of a divine visitation here and faithfully cleaves to Mary, vs. 24-25.

2. Jesus announced by an angel as "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord," Luke 2:1-21.

- a. The historic setting of Jesus' birth, v. 1-3.

Biblical Christianity is rooted in history, being based upon real events in the real world, in space-time-history. If Christianity is not historically true, would being a Christian still be worthwhile? (I Cor. 15:19). Christianity is based upon objective truth, and proceeds from that base (Luke 1:4).

- b. The census at Bethlehem, vs. 4-5.

- (1) This was not a Roman custom, but a concession for the sake of peace whereby, according to a Jewish custom, a person should go to his place of

birth or ancestry. Joseph is of the house of David, hence Bethlehem, Beth+Lechem, בֵּית-לֶחֶם, “House of Bread,” John 6:35; v. 4.

- (2) Why did Mary go with Joseph? v. 5. Roman law did not require it. It was probably to be with Joseph at the birth; to avoid criticism at Nazareth when alone; to submit to the prophecy of Micah 5:2.
- c. The birth of Jesus, vs. 6-7.
- (1) The “swaddling clothes” were long cloths, often used in medical terminology for delivery, possibly without any help other than that of Joseph. The “manger” or “inn” probably refers to a “kahn,” or a caravaneer’s resting place, comprised of stalls and a spring. Tradition says it was a cave, a smelly, dirty place.
 - (2) By way of illustration, it is as if today a couple could not find accommodation in a cheap motel, and had to deliver in a greasy, draughty car-port. This then is the beginning of Christ’s “poverty” that we might become “rich” (II Cor. 8:9; Isa. 53:2).
- d. The visit of the shepherds, vs. 8-20.
- (1) Shepherds were despised people, not trusted to give evidence in court, v. 8.
 - (2) The first words of an angel of the Lord are “fear not,” in a fearful society that more likely would tremble at the expectation of angelic judgment. However Christ’s birth is good news that shall be for “all the people,” that is Israel at this stage, cf. v. 32; v. 10.
 - (3) The song of the heavenly multitude proposes peace, not in a universal sense, but “among men with whom He is pleased,” v. 14. This peace is not akin to the “Pax Romana” since Epictetus, the first century Roman Stoic philosopher, stated that “while the emperor may give peace from war on land and sea, he is unable to give peace from passion, grief and envy. He cannot give peace of heart, for which man yearns more than ever for outward peace.”
 - (4) So the shepherds find Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, and upon relating the visitation they had received, they seem to share this gospel with a wider audience, for “all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds,” v. 18. Here is the constraint of the gospel upon the hearts of those who embrace the gospel, as v. 20 further indicates.
- e. The circumcision of Jesus, v. 21. This rite, eight days after birth, both signified the parent’s faith in the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, and the identification of their son with the nation of Israel.

3. Simeon and Anna testify, Luke 2:22-39.
 - a. Jesus' presentation at the temple in Jerusalem took place 40 days after his birth. This involved the purification of the mother after birth (Lev. 12:6), and the redemption of the first born male for consecrated service and assistance offered to the priesthood (Exod. 13:11-12).
 - b. The offering of two turtle doves instead of a lamb suggests poverty since the parents were expected to bring their best (Lev. 12:6-8).
 - c. The song or "Nunc Dimitus" of Simeon was profound in its prophecy of light for the Gentiles and glory for Israel. In the interim, many will stumble and many rise on account of Him, vs. 25-35.
 - d. The adoration of Anna the prophetess was similarly born of gospel constraint for, "she began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem," v. 38.
4. Wise Men from the Gentiles seek Jesus, Matt. 2:1-12.
 - a. The Magi were probably Jewish exiles, but also astrologists and students of the skies. They were undoubtedly accompanied by a large train of servants.
 - b. The star seen in the east gave divine direction, perhaps in fulfillment of Numbers 24:17. It seems to have reappeared later to direct them to Bethlehem from Jerusalem, v. 9.
 - c. At Bethlehem they came "into the house" where "they saw the Child [τὸ παιδίον, to paidion]," now probably a toddler or infant, and "worshipped Him," v. 11.
 - d. Yet again gospel constraint results in evidence of genuine worship, that is the lavish offering of gifts.
5. Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt, Matt. 2:13-18.
 - a. Once more Joseph is visited in a dream by "an angel of the Lord," cf. 1:20, who commands that he and Mary flee to Egypt until further instructions are received after the death of Herod, v. 13. The response was immediate, v. 14!
 - b. According to Matthew's frequent expression concerning Old Testament revelation, "This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Hos. 11:1); v. 15.
 - c. A further fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is found in Jeremiah 31:15, whereby the weeping in Bethlehem over the infant slaughter, in a manner of speaking, finds sympathy from Rachel who, having wept over the division of Judah and Israel at Ramah (I Kings 15:17; II Chron. 16:1), now, in a manner of speaking, further travails over Jacob's/Israel's children.

6. Mary and Joseph return to Nazareth, Matt. 2:19-23.
 - a. After probably less than a year in Egypt, within the Jewish community, they are directed to pass by Judea where now Archelaus, the son of Herod, also to be feared, now reigns. At the beginning of his reign he had 3000 Jews slain because of a temple disturbance.
 - b. Matthew interprets the residence in Nazareth as a fulfillment of the “prophets” (plural), v. 23. In becoming a Nazarene, Joseph and his family would join a despised community. Nazareth was regarded as being contemptuous and immoral, with a Roman camp nearby. Even the Galileans looked down on the Nazarenes (John 1:46). Thus Messiah was to be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3), which the title of “Nazarene” suggests.

7. Jesus as a youth at the Temple, Luke 2:40-52.
 - a. The first period of twelve years concludes at Nazareth, v. 40.
 - (1) His perfect humanity grows, v. 40.
 - (a) Although both “the holy Child” and “the Son of God,” 1:35, yet Jesus “was growing,” especially in physical stature. From ἀυξάνω, auxanō, here is derived “auxins” which are plant hormones that stimulate growth.
 - (b) He “was becoming strong [in spirit],” that is His human spirit, hence moral growth, as with John the Baptist, 1:80.
 - (c) He was “increasing/being filled with wisdom,” that is knowledge regulated and applied by holiness, intellectual growth.
 - (d) So “the grace/favor of God was upon Him,” hence there was spiritual growth.
 - (2) The education of a typical Jewish boy.
 - (a) His mother has the earliest influence, for example as was the case with Eunice, Timothy’s mother (II Tim. 3:15).
 - (b) His father was next, teaching the Torah, to which even meals took second place. He then taught him a trade. It was said that a man who did not teach his son a trade was worse than the heathen. So Jesus was taught carpentry (Mark 6:3).
 - (c) Schooling commenced at about the age of 5-6. It was said that a city without a school should be destroyed and excommunicated. From 5-10, he learned the Bible, starting with Leviticus. From 10-15, he learned the Mishnah, the traditional oral law in writing. From 16 on, at Rabbinical Academies, he studied the Talmud, comprised of the Mishnah and Gemara or Rabbinical commentary.

- (d) Jesus grows up in a family situation, with younger brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55-56).
 - (e) Joseph evidently dies before Jesus' public ministry commences, otherwise He could not present himself as the King of Israel. He is conspicuously absent from the substance of the gospels.
- b. The second period of eighteen years commences at Nazareth, vs. 41-52.
- (1) The environment for young Jesus at Jerusalem, vs. 41-42.
 - (a) When a Jewish boy becomes 13, his Bar-Mitzva celebration makes him a "son of the commandment," and from then on is expected to attend the three main Jewish feasts, Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles. Thus Jesus' visit to Jerusalem may have been his first when he was 12, that is in preparation for his soon coming Bar-Mitzva.
 - (b) The Rabbis held at least two levels of public lectures, that is advanced and more basic for the people in general, Jesus probably attending one of the latter kind. Rabbis were treated with the greatest reverence. They were the fountain-heads of wisdom; they could interpret every stroke and letter of the Law; they declared what was lawful or not. A Jewish tradition said that, "He who blows his nose in the presence of a Rabbi is worthy of death."
 - (c) But Galileans were treated with the greatest scorn. It was said: "Make wealth in the north, but become wise in the south." Galilee was the center of produce; Judea was the center of learning. The term "Galilean fool" was a common expression of literary ignorance in the north.
 - (2) The experience of young Jesus at Jerusalem, vs. 43-52.
 - (a) Mary and Joseph are distraught at the loss of their son during the Passover celebration, and so search the Temple precincts until they find him, amidst a crowd of over 200,000, vs. 43-45.
 - (b) All that heard the youth Jesus "were being amazed," that is continuously astonished at his insightful answers, v. 46-47.
 - (c) Mary and Joseph were stunned, shocked, ἐκπλήσσω, ekplēssō, meaning "to strike out;" they were struck in their minds at their advanced son, v. 48.
 - (d) Jesus' answer to his parents reveals a consciousness of his earthly mission, v. 49. Note that He uses "My," not "our," with regard to his intense concern for his Father. He also says, "I must," in expressing necessity, not merely, "I should." These are the first recorded words of Jesus, and they reflect the primary passion of his earthly life, that is the will of his Father in heaven (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:21-23; 13:3; 16:28; 17:4, 6, 24-26).

E. The presentation of Jesus from adulthood.

1. John preaches in the wilderness, Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18.

a. Introduction. The early Judean ministry of Jesus Christ extended for about a year, it being a period of relative obscurity. John the Baptist announces the presence of Messiah six months before, so preparing the way. He was called out of the wilderness of Judea by the Word of the Lord (Luke 3:2-3), to minister around the Jordan.

b. The inaugural ministry of John the Baptist.

(1) He comes in fulfillment of prophecy, Matt. 3:1-3.

(a) He is, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord,’” Matt. 3:3; cf. Isa. 40:3.

(b) Note the relationship of Isaiah 40:1-5 with the early ministry of John and Jesus in Judea; it is the inauguration of “comfort” for a discomfited people, that it kindness from God, the removal of iniquity, and the visitation of the glory of the Lord.

(c) Note that in Matthew 3:3, John equates Jesus with Jehovah, LORD, in Isaiah 40:3.

(2) He ministers in the wilderness, rather than the Temple or synagogues, calling the righteous out of a decadent system, Mark. 1:4-5.

(3) He ministers with a three-fold emphasis, Matt. 3:6-12.

(a) His declaration of God’s coming judgment.

It is to be brought upon a “brood of vipers,” religious hucksters, Matt. 3:7-9. Hence “the axe is already laid at the root of the trees, Matt. 3:10.

(b) His call of a righteous remnant to repentance and baptism.

1) To “repent,” μετανοέω, metanoēō, is to change one’s mind, and here concerning evident unrighteousness amongst the well clothed, the well fed, the tax gatherers, and soldiers, Luke 3:10-14. But a change of mind was also sought concerning the expectation of Messiah and his dispensing of the Holy Spirit and judgment, Matt. 3:11-12.

2) Water baptism, not uncommon within Judaism, signified the reality of Spirit baptism, Matt. 3:11-12. Josephus, c. 37-100 A.D., records about John,

for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one

another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism. For that the washing (with water) would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away, (or the remission) of some sins, but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.³

- 3) John's baptism was a ritual or "sign" baptism that indicated a consecration toward Messiah's immanent appearing, Matt. 3:11a. It was not Christian baptism. Rather Messiah's call to baptism was to the significance of that to which John's baptism pointed, namely Himself, Rom. 6:3-4; I Cor. 12:13-14; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 3:11b.
 - 4) Messiah's fire baptism was the alternative for those who reject the Spirit Baptizer, II Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 3:11c-12.
- (c) His declaration of Messiah's presence, hence "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. 3:2, cf. John 1:29; 3:29-30.
2. Jesus' Baptism and physical lineage, Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-38.
 - a. Introduction. Let us review the various baptisms recorded in the New Testament.
 - (1) John the Baptist's baptism, being *ritual* in water, identified with repentance concerning deeds (Luke 3:10-14), the Holy Spirit's baptism, and Messiah's imminent appearance (Matt. 3:2, 5-6). It was not Christian baptism (cf. Acts 19:1-5).
 - (2) Jesus Christ's own baptism by John, being *ritual* in water, identified with "all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5); His real baptism was in the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16).
 - (3) Jesus Christ's baptism of suffering, being *real*, on the cross (Luke 12:50).
 - (4) The unbeliever's baptism of Judgment Fire, being *real*, at the Great Tribulation and Great White Throne Judgment (Matt. 3:11b-12).
 - (5) The baptism with/in the Holy Spirit, being *real*, the placement of the believer into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13-14).
 - (6) The baptism of Israel into Moses, being *real*, in that Israel identified in devotion to him in the Red Sea and the wilderness (I Cor. 10:1-2).
 - (7) Christian baptism, being *ritual* in water, as identification with Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3-4).
 - b. Jesus Christ first appears as a man seeking John the Baptist, v. 13. He comes south from Nazareth (Mark 1:9). He waits until many have been baptized (Luke 3:21).

³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XVIII, V, 2.

- c. John resists Christ's request for baptism, v. 14. He indicates that Christ has no need to identify himself with repentance. He further indicates that his baptism was an identification of the repudiation of sin and embrace of righteousness.
- d. Jesus Christ justifies his request for water baptism, v. 15. He implies first of all that John is right. Nevertheless he identifies himself as a Jew, born under the law, who is obliged to identify with the fulfillment of all righteousness (Gal. 4:4). He also identifies with the righteous, repentant remnant rather than side with the rebellious Jewish leaders.
- e. Jesus is baptized in water, v. 16a. Mark 1:9-10 suggests he was immersed in that he "came out of the water." The word βαπτίζω, baptizō, primarily means to "immerse, dip, drench, overwhelm," and although Galatians 3:26 and Romans 6:3-4 are speaking of our immersion into Christ, we must ask what mode of baptism best pictures this identification.
- f. Jesus is baptized by the Holy Spirit, v. 16b; cf. Luke 3:21-22. Deity does not need strengthening, but humanity does (Matt. 12:28; John 5:19, 30). He is appointed for his messianic role, "Messiah" meaning "anointed one," as does "Christ."
- g. The Father signifies His approval, v. 17. He is pleased at his Son's submission to His will. Here the three persons of the Trinity are present simultaneously, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- h. By way of illustration, at a theater production or concert there are three main contributors; the producer-director, the lighting crew, and the celebrity or featured performer. So here these three functions are evident, as John 16:13-15 well indicates, though the three divine persons are one as God.
- i. Jesus Christ's second genealogy according to Luke 3:23-38.
 - (1) Matthew 1:1-16 traces the lineage of Jesus from Abraham to Joseph. Luke 3:23-38 traces the lineage of Jesus from Heli (Mary's father) to Adam and God.
 - (2) The improved translation of Luke 3:23. The usual rendering is, according to the NASB: "When He began His ministry, Jesus himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli." The improved rendering is, according to Johnston M. Cheney: "Now Jesus, beginning His ministry at about thirty years of age, being a son supposedly of Joseph, was himself descended from Heli."
 - (3) The four gospel pictures of Jesus Christ concerning his genealogy.
 - (a) Matthew: Jesus is of the seed of Abraham, heir to the covenant, qualified to be king, 1:1.
 - (b) Mark: Jesus is the suffering servant, whose genealogy is of no consequence.

- (c) Luke: Jesus is the Son of Man (Adam), who identifies with the whole human race.
 - (d) John: Jesus is the Son of God, whose genealogy recedes into eternity, 1:1.
 - (4) Both Jesus Christ's deity and humanity are emphasized; His deity or virgin birth, v. 23; His humanity as related to Adam, v. 38.
3. Jesus tempted in body, soul, and spirit, Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.
- a. Introduction, Matt. 4:1-2.
 - (1) The context is that immediately after Jesus' Spirit baptism, he fasts forty days in the desert. Moses, like Elijah and Paul, also communed with God for forty days when he received the law (Exod. 34:28). Here Jesus goes to the desert to confront "the god of this world" (John 12:31; II Cor. 4:4) in his own realm.
 - (2) By way of illustration, often men are challenged satanically when first thrust into the Christian ministry.
 - (3) Here, a personal devil, ὁ διάβολος, ho diabolos, the diabolical one or Satan, is here vividly real and not abstract.
 - b. Temptation One, turn stones into bread, vs. 3-4.
 - (1) "If" introduces a first class conditional clause that assumes the proposition to be true. Hence, "Since you are the Son of God."
 - (2) Desert stones often looked like bread. Similar stones on Mount Carmel are called "Elijah's Mellons" (cf. Matt. 7:9).
 - (3) Jesus quotes the Word of God, v. 4. Literally, "It has been written, and now stands written" (perfect tense). The quotation is of Deuteronomy 8:3; cf. John 4:34.
 - (4) The essential nature of the temptation was: "Do your own carnal will (Satan's), and not that of your heavenly Father." So, "Defect from your appointed mission."
 - c. Temptation Two, cast yourself down from the temple, vs. 5-7.
 - (1) "If" introduces a first class conditional clause that assumes the proposition to be true. Hence, "Since you are the Son of God."
 - (2) The devil now quotes Scripture, Psalm 91:11-12, after Christ's manner, v. 6. However he misquotes it by leaving off v. 11b, "in all thy ways." God does not offer protection "no matter what one does," but only as we "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1).

- (3) Jesus again quotes the Word of God in response (Deut. 6:16).
 - (4) The essential nature of the temptation was: “Presumptuously put God to the test; use Him for self-advancement.”
- d. Temptation Three, worship the devil and gain the world, vs. 8-10.
- (1) “If” introduces a third class conditional clause” in v. 9, which suggests, “Maybe you will or maybe you won’t fall down before me” (cf. Luke 4:9).
 - (2) The devil’s offer implies that he has “the kingdoms of the world” at his disposal, cf. Ps. 24:1; v. 8.
 - (3) Jesus again quotes the Word of God (Deut. 6:13).
 - (4) “Satan” is commanded to depart, v. 10, but Luke 4:13 can be translated, “until a good opportunity.”
 - (5) The essential nature of the temptation was” Obtain a kingdom without a cross.”
- e. Conclusion.
- (1) Contrast the temptations with I John 2:16.
 - (a) “Lust of the flesh,” equates stones turned into bread.
 - (b) “Lust of the eyes,” equates the obtaining of the world.
 - (c) “Pride of life,” equates demonstration from the temple.
 - (2) Contrast the temptations with Genesis 3:6.
 - (a) “Good for food” equates stones turned into bread.
 - (b) “A delight to the eyes,” equates demonstration from the temple.
 - (c) “Make one wise,” equates the obtaining of the world.
 - (3) Significance of the temptations.
 - (a) Jesus affirmed his allegiance to the Father’s will.
 - (b) Jesus affirmed his dependence on the Spirit’s power.
 - (c) Jesus asserted his refusal to compromise with Satan.
 - (4) Was Jesus “posse non peccare,” that is “able not to sin,” or “non posse peccare,” that is “not able to sin”?

- (a) To say that Jesus was “able not to sin” suggests that a change of mind was a possibility, that is Jesus could sin but chose not to! Such a view of Jesus’ volitional ability makes the future uncertain.
- (b) Rather, Jesus Christ was proving who he was, not what he could or could not do. Here was the acid test that proved his holy being to be pure gold, beyond sin’s penetration (Luke 4:9; Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 1:6-7).

4. John answers the Jew’s committee, John 1:19-34.

John the Baptist is the third great witness to Jesus Christ after Jesus himself and the Apostle Paul. The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were troubled about John’s popularity, influence, and brutal frankness about present decadence, especially in Jerusalem. He appears to be something of an oddball, not allied with any of the major Jewish sects. So an investigative delegation is sent; they dare not invite him to come to Jerusalem!

a. The ministry of John the Baptist concerning himself, vs. 19-28.

- (1) Negatively, he is emphatically not the Christ, in spite of rumors (Luke 3:15); he is not Elijah, though he has come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17); he is not the Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18-19).
- (2) Positively, he is a self-effacing medium of clay (Luke 7:19), an earthen vessel (II Cor. 4:7), a preacher desirous that the “crooked paths shall be made straight, and the rough shall be made smooth; and all men shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5-6), a “voice crying in the wilderness.” He is also a “water baptizer,” who yet acknowledges the greater importance of the real baptism of the Holy Spirit.

b. The ministry of John the Baptist concerning Jesus, vs. 29-34.

(1) The Lamb of God, vs. 29-30.

This profound announcement has astonished scholars on account of its doctrinal, almost Pauline maturity, so much so that unbelief has concluded that John did not actually say all of this. Perhaps John the Apostle added, “who takes away the sin of the world” or even more! After all, Matthew 11:2-15 appears to indicate that John later on had doubts about Jesus as the Messiah.⁴ More likely his acquaintance over the years with Mary, Joseph and their other children, his probably deceased parents, Zacharius and Elizabeth, and cousin Jesus himself, along with the recent baptismal revelation of the descending Holy Spirit and the voice, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16-17), all account for this remarkable proclamation.

⁴ Modern conservative scholars, such as Carson and Hendriksen, mostly agree that John did experience doubt while incarcerated in the Castle of Machaerus east of the Dead Sea. However Broadus, who is of the same opinion, yet comments: “[M]any have thought it wholly inconsistent with John’s position and previous testimony to suppose that he now felt personally the slightest doubt; and so they hold that he sent simply for the satisfaction of his disciples. So Chrys, (and his followers), with Cyril, Aug., and Jerome, followed by Luther, Calvin, and Beza, by Bengel, Maldonatus, and many others.” *Commentary on Matthew*, p. 236.

- (a) As the sin-bearer, v. 29.

“Behold, the Lamb of God.” This is an imperative invitation given to the throng from Jerusalem, even as the word is used in vs. 35-36 more privately; yet also the “world” is implicitly invited to “Behold.” Here careful investigation is recommended. However this is a Hebrew crowd, so that they would easily interpret the expression “Lamb of God.”

“The [Lamb] lifting up and bearing away [αἵρω, airō,] sin.” Here God’s Lamb transports away a heavy load, that is “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (I Pet. 2:24). The fundamental issue here is “sin” as a pervasive principle, which is more than “sins.” Further it is a universal burden; the root problem of humanity is moral rather than relational, it is unrighteousness. But God is a very merciful physician who does not wait for patients; He confronts the plague; He seeks out the lepers; He relieves those who are heavily burdened; and He even goes to the extremities of the infection, “the world”!

“The sin of the world” surely describes *extremity*, “every tribe and tongue and people and nation,” Jew and Gentile, I John 2:2; 4:14; Rev. 4:9; 7:9; 14:6, rather than *totality* that suggests universalism. Here is generosity in its largest conceivable form. If John Wesley declared that, “the world is my parish,” then he could only have obtained this vision from Jesus Christ, who in effect designates that “the world is my pastorate.”

- (b) As the pre-existent Word, v. 30.

John has made prior announcements concerning the advent of Messiah, especially concerning his superiority or “higher rank” due to his pre-existence, even as the prologue made mention, v. 15. But now this Eternal Word is identified as the “Lamb of God; now the prophetic hope has given way to realization; here is where John spans the Old Testament and the New Testament.

- (2) The baptizer in the Holy Spirit, vs. 31-33.

Jesus’ baptism, visibly witnessed by John, qualifies Him to be the baptizer. Thus, as Jesus Christ “takes away the sin of the *world*,” v. 29, so this new universal atonement ministry will be in parallel with the universal regeneration ministry of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. Here John’s description of Jesus’ superiority reaches a climax; though implicit, he does not specifically mention his baptizing of Jesus as the Synoptics do, most likely since water baptism is so inferior in importance when compared with Spirit baptism. The major issue concerns this Anointed One’s anointing ministry, “who baptizes in [with] the Holy Spirit,” and that universally. That is, Jesus Christ “immerses/drenches/overwhelms” justified sinners with the Holy Spirit. In summary then is:

The *promise* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, John 1:33; Acts 1:4-5.

The *necessity* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, John 3:3-8.

The *ground* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, John 7:37-39.

The *source* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, John 14:16-17.

The *anticipation* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8.

The *inauguration* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:1-4.

The *scope* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:14-17.

Thus this baptism is not for some Christians, but all who have authentic saving faith in Christ (Gal. 3:2-3, 5, 14; 4:6; 5:5, 24-25; 6:8). So every believer is baptized in the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:9), is placed into the body of Christ (I Cor.12:13), and is intimately united with Christ (Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:27).

(3) The Son of God, v. 34.

In declaring that “I have seen and I have witnessed,” by means of the perfect tenses John gives a declaration of finality, a seal of approval, a verbal signature of authenticity, concerning Jesus of Nazareth being “the Son of God,” the divine Messiah (cf. I John 1:1-30.⁵ Here we must avoid any association of this title with that of “children of God” as in 1:12; I John 3:1-2, or by Paul in Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:5-6. The Jews used this term as a sign of deity, 5:18, 23; 10:33; 19:7; there was also Messianic association derived from Psalm 2:7 (cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). For the Apostle here it describes the unique filial relationship of the Eternal Word to His Father in heaven, cf. 3:16-18; 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4; 19:7; 20:31.

5. Jesus calls the first five disciples, John 1:35:51

These were all Galileans, specially chosen for over three years of training that would fit them for service as foundation stones of the church of Jesus Christ. Early recruitment was vital since it takes time to fashion a man of God from a crude lump of human clay. The preparatory schooling of John gives way to graduate school under the eclectic, discriminating tutelage of this announced Son of God. However, from 3:23; 4:1; Luke 5:33; 11:1 we learn that John continued to baptize and nurture followers, so that the following instance may reflect a situation where certain disciples were ready for graduation.

a. Andrew and John – the first called of the twelve disciples, vs. 35-39.

The sequence of days here may suggest that whereas v. 29 describes John’s initial declaration of Jesus as “the Lamb of God,” following the heavenly authentication at his baptism, here, the following day, the Baptist is more expectant of Jesus passing by, and thus is prepared for this eventuality with the company of two of his most choice disciples; they must be introduced!

⁵ Some manuscripts read “the elect/chosen Son” of God.

(1) Confrontation with the Lamb of God, vs. 35-37.

Although rough fishermen, Andrew and John have been drawn to a ministry that has answered the deeper yearnings of their souls, even as it will also appeal to the void in the life of sophisticated Nicodemus, 3:1-2; v. 35. Andrew's brother, Peter, is in the vicinity, though John's brother, James, is probably back in Galilee, caring for the fishing business.

Again the same message of yesterday is proclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God;" this was John's one and only gospel message, v. 36. In accord with 3:25-30, as "the friend of the bridegroom," John delighted in introducing the bride to her Husband, that is when she has made suitable preparation by manifesting "fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8).

Now while there was no apparent result yesterday, today is different, v. 37. Hence John's ministry was selectively fruitful. There were those who observed John and yet refused to yield to baptism (Luke 7:29-30). There were those who confessed repentance and were baptized by John and yet did not follow Christ upon being directed to him, as yesterday (Acts 19:1-7). There were those who here, upon being directed to the Bridegroom, "followed Jesus." John did not seek a decision for Christ; he directed Andrew and John to Christ as the Savior, and left the saving work to the Savior, as v. 38 indicates.

(2) Instruction by the Lamb of God, vs. 38-39.

Jesus' turning reminds us of others who, amongst multitudes, yet were singled out according to particular divine interest; Levi (Matthew), (Luke 5:27); the woman with a hemorrhage, (Luke 8:43-46); Zaccheus, (Luke 19:5); the man born blind, (John 9:1, 35). The question, "What do you seek?" is but a vital element in Jesus' teaching method by means of extraction from a pupil (Matt. 16:13-17). The response, "Rabbi" is a respectful acknowledgment of greatness as a teacher, even as Nicodemus significantly confessed, 3:1-2. But the question, "Where are you residing [abiding]?" slightly timid, indicated an uncommon quest for the truth that the Son of God would never ignore, v. 38.

"Come, and you shall see," was more than an invitation to survey a location; it was Jesus' summons to participate in a session of instruction, v. 39. Being 4:00 pm in the afternoon, they may have stayed the night, in which case they were taught from the Old Testament in a manner similar to that of the Emmaus Road disciples (Luke 24:27). The stimulation of Andrew and John, vs. 40-41, would indicate that this was an experience of intense soul arousal. The bride has become very much attracted to the Bridegroom.

b. Peter – sought out by Andrew to be a disciple, vs. 40-42.

The presence of Peter in this region indicates a similar soul thirst to that of his brother Andrew. Both, along with James and John, will have prominence in all four listings of the twelve disciples, but Peter is always mentioned first (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13). So his initial encounter here with Jesus proves to have special significance

Arthur Pink comments concerning v. 41. “The first thing Andrew did [following his departure from Jesus’ residence in the morning as a convinced disciple] was to find his brother Simon.” Here true brotherly love spontaneously erupts, even before any formal apostolic training takes place. Pink adds: “For this no college training is required, and no authority from any church need be sought. Not that we despise either of these, but *all* that is needed to tell a perishing sinner of the Savior is a heart acquaintance with Him yourself. . . . [P]ersonal responsibility *begins* with those nearest to us. Witness should first be borne in our own family circle.”⁶

Andrew does for Peter what John the Baptist had done for Andrew and John. He does not merely point the way (cool, detached witnessing), but he escorts him to where Jesus was residing (warm, personable witnessing). In other words, Andrew does not merely advise Peter to attend a faithful local church where Christ is preached; rather he affectionately leads him to that location, v. 42. Probably this is Peter’s first meeting with Jesus in a personal way since Andrew has just introduced him by name. But Jesus has certainly known Peter in advance. So he “earnestly looked at him,” ἐμβλέπω, emblepō, an intensive form signifying a penetrating gaze, as if “calling his own sheep by name,” 10:3.

So Cephas Johnson receives a Christian name, one which represents what God will make of him as the primary building block of the Christian church, joined to the Chief Cornerstone, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph.2:19-22). Peter will only become the “rock man” after years of training and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But he does represent the radical change that all those saved by Christ embody. Such a privileged role will lead to heavenly, but certainly not earthly glory, 21:18-19; v. 42.

c. Philip and Nathaniel respond to Jesus, John 1:43-51.

(1) Philip – sought out by Christ to be a disciple, vs. 43-45.

Here, in determining to go to Galilee, is a strategic move by the Son of God in separating himself from John the Baptist. During his earthly ministry he will be located more in the north-west region of Palestine (Galilee) than the south (Judea); for the present he will stay in this region until the first cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem during the Passover season, 2:13.

(2) Nathaniel – the man in whom there was no Jacob, vs. 46-51.

Nathaniel, meaning “God gives,” is the first non-apostle to encounter Christ. Because he is not mentioned in the Synoptics, is associated with Cana and seven of the apostles, 21:1, some have identified him as the apostle Bartholomew, who is not mentioned in John. Here skepticism, based upon secular rationalism, gives flight when confronted with divine revelation.

Thus Jesus of Nazareth gives his diagnosis: “Behold, truly an Israelite in whom there is no guile/deceit [δόλος, dolos],” v. 47. This word “guile” is the same word used in the Septuagint (LXX) that describes Jacob’s craft or deceit

⁶ Pink, *John*, pp. 70-71.

in Genesis 27:35 when he gained Isaac's blessing by means of impersonating Esau. The context of v. 51, cf. Genesis 28:10-12, supports this understanding. But in what way could it be said that Nathaniel "had no guile/deceit"? Is he saved? No! He is like Cornelius, "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:1). Yet Peter later reports at Jerusalem how Cornelius was told by an angel that the Apostle "will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household" (Acts 11:14). Nathaniel was like the scribe who came to Jesus, and after discussion concerning the foremost commandment, was told, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:28-34).

Suppose that Nathaniel had been pondering, under the fig tree, the experience of Jacob at Bethel in Genesis 28:10-22, then the following applicatory promise would surely have set his soul ablaze. "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God going up [ascending] and coming down [descending] on the Son of Man," v. 51. Now Nathaniel had better reason than ever to confess that, "You are the Son of God; You are the king of Israel," v. 49.

6. Jesus' first miraculous sign, John 2:1-12.

Having gathered five new disciples, Jesus year of obscurity in the area of Judea, bringing transition from John the Baptist to Jesus, has come to a conclusion as He moves north to the region of Galilee. So the new disciples return to this region as well as where their number will increase to twelve. Here Jesus, his disciples, and Mary are invited to a wedding at Nazareth.

a. The setting of the sign, vs. 1-2.

First was the betrothal of up to 12 months. *Second* was the procession, with merry music, torches, praise, flowers, from the bride's home to that of the bridegroom. led by his friend. *Third* was the taking of marriage vows according to Mosaic standards, the signing of the Kethubah by the groom concerning his responsibilities, a ritual washing of hands, and a benediction. *Fourth* was the marriage supper hosted by the groom's family, which had an increasingly joyous spirit. *Fifth* was retirement to the bridal chamber by the couple. Jewish weddings usually lasted several days, depending on the financial status of family members.

b. The first sign pointing to Jesus as the Son of God, vs. 3-12.

It is significant that this first miracle of Christ should, in the context of his recent coming "to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10), take place at a wedding in anticipation of his own wedding when, at the close of this age, he takes a bride that is comprised of the sinners he came to save (Mark 2:18-20; Rev. 19:7-8).

- (1) The problem, an embarrassed bridegroom, vs. 3-5.

Mary's concern is one of social astonishment, even sympathy for the embarrassed hosts, v. 3. Why she addresses Jesus, without directly seeking his intervention, is difficult to determine; he was probably reclining next to her. Most likely her exclamation is tinged with petition that in some way hoped that her son would helpfully intervene. Had Jesus in the past displayed an aptitude for providing hospitality when accompanied with a host of friends?

We like to make much of Jesus' social participation here, and yet his mind seems to be on something else (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1). While Mary makes a pertinent comment, Jesus seems to regard it as relatively trivial, as if to say, "Woman, you are troubling me with something that is of minor importance compared with the far greater concern of my soul, v. 4. I have an appointment with death, an hour of destiny, that continually occupies my thoughts. Life is more than the mere absence of wine! My whole ministry concerns the provision of infinitely superior wine that you presently know nothing about, 4:10." However, note that Jesus does not ignore his mother's concern, but rather accommodates himself to the needy situation so that he might signify the better wine that he and his atonement ministry will amply embody.

So Mary meekly calls the waiters to attention: "Whatever he says to you, do it!" v. 5. though hardly as some vaunted mediatrix according to Roman Catholicism.⁷ When the waterpots of this world do not satisfy its own lustings, then heed the command of the Son of God to eat abundantly, 6:35 and drink freely, 4:13-14, of him with the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; cf. Luke 6:46-49).

- (2) The solution, obedience to Christ's command, vs. 6-10.

Jesus' command: "Fill the waterpots with water" is obeyed so that "they filled them up to the brim/to the point of overflow." Here the fullness speaks of the impotence of natural resources in dealing with the thirsty human soul, v. 7. Thus the waterpots simply remained as testimony to a passing and impotent era.⁸ But surely Jesus meant that a drinking vessel was to be used to draw out some wine from the larger container so that the headwaiter could first taste and give his approval. Further, the magnitude of the new wine would only enhance the representation of the magnitude of the saving grace of God, 1:16-17; v. 8.

The waiters were astonished at the obvious transformation of the water which they concluded was more than purple water; the bouquet or aroma of the wine was overpowering! So the troubled yet experienced headwaiter, with complete objectivity, having earlier tasted the best wine for the day, now tastes that presented to him. Perhaps expecting a hastily obtained batch

⁷ Carson suggests that the inability of some Roman Catholic scholars to accept vs. 4-5 as being authentic is because of the subdued role that Mary here portrays, *John*, p. 173n.

⁸ So Bruce, Carson, Westcott; contra Barrett, Morris.

of cheap wine, he is startled at the superiority of what he tastes; perhaps he exclaims: "This wine is heavenly!" Believing this to be an emergency provision, he excitedly calls the bridegroom, v. 9.

Thus the headwaiter declares: "You have kept back the good wine until now!" v. 10. In other words: "What you earlier set forth as the best wine is nothing compared to this." By application, man's best is not to be compared with God's best! Man's wine has been flowing for centuries, but "now," in the person of Jesus Christ, in "the fullness of time," Gal. 4:4, the best wine is about to be served. In fact the old has run out, the new is now in plenteous supply; the old has not fully satisfied, the new brings forth the unending praise of those who taste of its surpassing quality and sweetness.

- (3) The significance, Christ glorified through resulting faith, v. 11.

This first "sign" introduces us to the first of 17 references by John to σημεῖον, sēmeion, always intimating a supernatural event, though not used in the Synoptics. Here is the real significance of Jesus Christ, that is the self-revelation of his δόξα, doxa, the radiance, divine splendor and outshining of his person and work as a whole. But how specifically, on this occasion, has the display of Christ's glory been accomplished? Through Christ's sovereignty over creation; through his magnanimous provision; through his sympathy in time of need; through the praise of those who acknowledge his work; through the foreshadowing of his thirst quenching atonement. Here also is the real goal of genuine evangelistic proclamation. Yet the manifestation of this glory is one thing; the comprehension of it is quite another as 1:14 and the following clause suggests.

"And his disciples [having already believed, 1:49] believed in [into εἰς, eis] Him." This faith was ongoing; it was not surface or momentary faith, not merely a whiff of Christ, but a faith that submerges more into him as they learn more about him. Why did "His disciples" believe in Him? Because they admitted that they were human waterpots; the water of Jacob's well at Samaria or any other place could not satisfy the cravings of the human soul. But such a confession qualified them for the infilling of Jesus as new wine that would never run out, 4:14. It is for this reason that the disciples of Jesus, waterpots though they were, yet obtained a bouquet, a divine fragrance incomparably greater than the water of this world. Then what of the other wedding guests? We never hear of them again; none seem to have believed; they accepted Jesus as a wonder worker, but they stopped short of his significance, that is believing in him as saving wine from heaven!

- (4) The aftermath, residence at Capernaum, v. 12.

"Capernaum," meaning "Kefar-nahum," or the "village of Nahum", was Jesus Christ's main place of residence or base during his northern or Galilean ministry. Located at the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee, it was also the home of Andrew, Peter, James, John, and probably Matthew, and it is likely Jesus was gladly welcomed in boarding at one or other of their residences. Here he vigorously participated in Synagogue life, 6:59, as well as in this

overall region, Matt. 4:23. The “brethren” here refer to Jesus’ younger brothers and sisters born of Joseph and Mary; if he had an elder brother, David’s throne could not be legitimately claimed, cf. Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7. The inference here is that Jesus takes the initiative in returning to Capernaum rather than Nazareth, cf. Matt. 4:13; Mary comes as well since, Joseph probably being dead, she now lives with her children who are perhaps also involved in the fishing industry. However the astonishing sign at Cana causes them all to readily follow this supplier of incomparable wine; they may not yet appreciate the significance of what has transpired, but they earnestly want to know more; as a result, more will be given to them.