



# **Jesus**

## **and the Jews**

**A Fresh Look at the  
Kingdom of God**

**Dirk Hiemstra**

## **Preface**

At some point it occurred to me to put down on paper my vision of the theology of Israel. On several occasions I have come across discussions on this subject, and often it has turned out that there is a lack of foundation in me. So it seemed good to me to put some things in order for myself, not only for the future reader, but also to be clear where I stand myself, so that my vision, which I believe is the biblical vision on this subject, is more profound and better grounded in the Bible and especially in the teachings of Jesus himself.

It took several hours to get everything down on paper. Writing, rewriting when necessary, and with the help of my dear wife, going over spelling and sentence structure again and again, so that not only did I know what I was writing, but I also had someone read it to see if they understood it and if the message came across.

Thanks also to God, I am convinced that He has helped me to get it right on paper.

I also hope to make a meaningful contribution to an ongoing discussion in the theological field.

**Dirk Hiemstra**

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# Introduction

## John 20:30-31

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

Over the years there has been a great deal of change in the Christian faith, especially within the various evangelical movements. In many ways, traditional views have been pushed aside and replaced by supposedly more contemporary views. Especially since the nineteenth century, there has been quite a change in common views. Many of these changes seem to be rather cosmetic; here and there, so-called minor issues are looked at a little differently, or at least that's how it's presented. The verse from the Gospel of John with which I began this introduction is emphasised by everyone within the evangelical movements, so it seems that at least the basis is good. In particular, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the conquest of Jerusalem by the Israeli army in 1967 have caused quite a shift in evangelical and, to a lesser extent, Reformed theology. Israel is seen by many as God's people, and as such Israel is an integral part of God's plan of salvation for this world. Within this body of thought, in the end times, where many believe we are now, the focus will shift from the Church of Jesus Christ to a restored Israel. At some point the role of the Church will be fully played out.

A number of schools of thought can be identified. In the nineteenth century the rise of the so-called dispensational doctrine, in the twentieth century the rise of various Israel-oriented movements within the church, and at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century the rise of the messianic movement. Before looking at the various aspects within these movements, I would like to mention one aspect that stands out and is seen as a vision of the future within all of these movements, namely that Jesus Christ, at his return, will settle in Jerusalem and rule from there. What these different visions have in common is the idea that the Kingdom of God will be a future physical reality in the physical world, run from the physical place of Jerusalem, with Jesus Christ sitting on a physical throne in a physical rebuilt temple, in which the people of Israel play a prominent role. To make things a little clearer, I am going to zoom in on a number of characteristic aspects within these movements.

## Dispensationalism

In the years from 1830 there was a man by the name of John Nelson Darby who developed and recorded the doctrine of Dispensationalism. John Nelson Darby (18 November 1800 - 29 April 1882) was an ecclesiastical leader of the Church of Ireland. During his life he changed his views on many matters within the church tradition to which he belonged. In particular, the hierarchical structure began to cause him increasing opposition. In 1828 he broke with the church to which he belonged. In the years that followed, he continued to develop his theology. Without going into all the aspects of this transition, I would like to highlight some aspects that are characteristic of this philosophy:

- The history of the world must be divided into a number of different ages, called dispensations, in which God deals with humanity in different ways.

- In Darby's view, two gospels can be distinguished: the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus and addressed to Israel, and the gospel of grace revealed to Paul and addressed to the church.
- Israel and the Church should therefore be seen as two distinct entities which should not be confused.
- Just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the congregation is raptured to heaven and Israel goes through a great tribulation that lasts seven years.
- After the Second Coming of Jesus, Jesus and the remnant of the people of Israel will reign on earth for 1000 years.

This doctrine became the central teaching of what we know in the Netherlands as "De Vergadering van Gelovigen"<sup>1</sup>. In later years, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this doctrine was popularised by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (19 August 1843 - 24 July 1921) and his Scofield Reference Bible, and became commonplace in 80% of evangelical denominations, especially in America. In the course of the twentieth century, this body of thought spread from America to Europe. In particular, the book "The Late Great Planet Earth", written by Harold Lee (Hal) Lindsey (born 23 November 1929), an American evangelist and Christian writer, had a great influence on this process. I remember studying this book myself during my years as a young Christian. Although I already had a number of questions, I was impressed by this book.

## Israel Vision

Under the influence of Zionism and the events surrounding the Jewish people in the Second World War, and of course the theology mentioned above, various movements with a central focus on Israel arose internationally. In the Netherlands there are a number of prominent organisations. For example, "Christenen voor Israël"<sup>2</sup> is the most prominent organisation in this field, but there are also organisations such as "Ebenezer" and "Boete en verzoening"<sup>3</sup>. Characteristic is the central focus on Israel and its support. A few key aspects:

- Israel, the Jewish people, is seen as the people of God.
- The present state of Israel is the fulfilment of biblical promises.
- There is a sharp division between the Gentile Church of Jesus Christ and the people of Israel.
- The old covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai is still in force.
- The church tradition is accused of adhering to so-called "replacement theology".
- Israel is the noble olive tree of Romans 11, and the Gentiles can also be grafted in by the grace of God.
- Jesus will establish his kingdom on earth at his second coming, and Israel and Jerusalem will play a key role in this.

Especially when it comes to the conflict in the Middle East, between Israel and the surrounding countries, we are supposed to continue to give our full support to the State of Israel, pray for Israel and on the basis of Psalm 122 pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Israel conferences are organised and we also have an annual Israel Sunday, which is observed in a large number of churches.

## Messianic Movement

In the last part of the twentieth century we see the Messianic movement, also called "Hebrew Roots" or "Jewish Roots" movement slowly emerging and seems to be gaining a

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<sup>1</sup> Plymouth Brethren

<sup>2</sup> Christians for Israel <https://www.christenenvoorisrael.nl/>

<sup>3</sup> Penance and Reconciliation <https://boete-verzoening.nl/>

lot of traction, especially now in our time, the twenty-first century. In many places we see Messianic congregations emerging, but many churches also seems to be strongly influenced by this movement in various ways. Here are a few key ideas that you will find within this movement:

- Christians, too, are to observe the Sabbath.
- There is a renewed focus on the biblical feasts.
- Jesus and the apostles were Jews, so we must learn to look at the text of the Bible through a Jewish lens.
- In many places, we see that issues such as kosher food and circumcision are being brought back into the spotlight and are often being practiced.

What is widely seen is therefore an enormous influence from Rabbinic Jewish thought. Partly because of the fact that we no longer know how the Sabbath and the feasts should be observed, people tend to widely open the door to the Jewish tradition and to mirror it. Synagogal tradition and liturgy, especially around the Sabbath and feasts, are introduced into the families and practices of these congregations. Many who become involved in this movement are distancing themselves from the rest of the church of Jesus Christ, calling themselves "Messianic" and increasingly distancing themselves from the term "Christian."

## Summary

What is characteristic of all these schools of thought is that a kind of lowest common denominator can be identified. Although there are great differences between them, we can still identify a number of things that these movements share. Just a small summary:

- Israel, the Jewish people, is the people of God.
- Israel and the Church are two different entities.
- The Kingdom of God is a future physical reality that will take shape at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the form of the Millennium.
- Eschatology, the expectation of the future, focuses mainly on Israel and its role in it.
- The state of Israel is seen as the fulfilment of biblical promises.
- Most of the promises of the Bible will be fulfilled in the future.

Although I have had questions about these things for years, it is only recently that the questions have begun to take shape more clearly in my mind.

I grew up in the Synodical Reformed Church and was an active part of it as a professing member and also served as an elder. When I decided to be baptised in 1992, my function within this church came to an abrupt end, as the Reformed Church at that time could not agree with my decision to be baptised. My search after leaving the church then led me to various congregations and movements of an evangelical nature. From 2014, I slowly became involved in the Messianic way of thinking, which led me to participate in a number of Messianic congregations and initiatives from 2017 until recently, when a series of events forced me to distance myself from them. So for years I have been confronted with different perspectives of the above-mentioned theological orientations.

Over time I have had very big question marks about the above ideas and whether they are biblical. The purpose of this book is to try to further formulate and answer these questions. I want to do this using parts of the Gospel of John, supplemented by most of the First Letter of John. Step by step I want to go through the text with the reader, highlighting in particular those aspects that have to do with the question of how we should look at the above questions. I have deliberately chosen the Gospel of John because in it we are confronted with the words of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of dispensationalism, because of the fact that there are so-called two gospels, still gives an

opening to play off the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul against each other. However, I am convinced that Jesus and Paul are in complete agreement, and therefore there is only one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul explains it this way:

*<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.  
(Romans 1:16)*

The best way to show the similarity between Jesus and Paul is to use the text of the Gospels and the words of Jesus Christ himself, and sometimes to compare them with the words of Paul. In addition to an explanation of the Gospel of John, special emphasis will be given to those aspects that relate to the kingdom of God and how this relates to the vision of Israel.

I hope you will be willing to experience this "journey" step by step through the gospel with me and not to drop out prematurely, because you simply have a different opinion. I personally see the Bible in all cases as the ultimate authority, on which we should fall back and test our personal opinion, and not the other way around. I wish you a lot of enjoyment of studying and challenge you to be willing to take a critical look at the ideas you have become familiar with, if necessary.

# In the beginning

## John 1:1-2

*1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God.*

Right at the beginning of the Gospel, John chooses to go back to the very beginning and build his Gospel from there.

To begin with, I will give a rough outline of the Gospel.

- Chapter 1:1-18 can be seen as an introduction in which a number of basic truths are set out and developed in the following chapters.
- From chapter 1:19 to chapter 12, the main theme is the confrontation that Jesus had with his contemporaries and their leaders. It is noticeable that most of the confrontations take place in Jerusalem during the biblical feasts.
- Chapters 13-17 are specific teachings to the small group of disciples who were to form the apostleship. This teaching takes place during the Last Supper and could be seen as a kind of farewell speech just before Jesus goes to the cross.
- Chapters 18-20 describe Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection.
- Chapter 21 describes the final appearance after his resurrection. This clearly shows that this small, weak group of people are called to go out into the world with the Gospel and become the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ.

## Who was John?

John was one of the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman from Galilee, who owned a fishing business with two of his sons. John was called by Jesus to follow him from the very beginning. John never mentions himself by name in the Gospel, preferring to remain anonymous. A phrase that appears several times is "the disciple whom Jesus loved", almost unanimously accepted by biblical scholars as referring to John himself. In chapter 1:37 there are two disciples who were with John the Baptist, one of whom is identified in verse 41 as Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The disciple who remained anonymous must have been John. John, like the other disciples, was a child of his time, brought up in a Jewish religious environment, brought up on the TeNaCH, the Old Testament scriptures that were studied weekly in the synagogue. In order to be able to say something meaningful about his Gospel, this background information is of great importance. I will return to this in more detail later in the book.

While the other evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, focus primarily on Jesus' ministry in Galilee, John chooses to focus primarily on Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. Jesus was in the habit of going up to Jerusalem during the feasts, as was expected of any grown man, to take part in the festivities.

Just a summary<sup>4</sup>:

- John 2 and 3 describe Jesus' activities during the first Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- John 5 describes Jesus' ministry during Shavuoth or the Feast of Pentecost.

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<sup>4</sup> There is much difference of opinion within theology about the duration of Jesus' ministry, some choose a ministry of one year while others choose a period of between two and a half and three and a half years. Personally, I have chosen to assume that Jesus' ministry represents the "acceptable year of the Lord", and I therefore assume a ministry of one year. Further discussion and elaboration of this subject is beyond the scope of this book.

- John 7 describes Jesus' ministry during Succoth or the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Chapter 10 refers to the Jewish Feast of the Renewal of the Temple.
- From chapter 12 on, the events of the second Passover are described, in which Jesus fulfils all the things to which these feasts relate by his death on the cross and resurrection.

## The text

John begins his Gospel with the same words as the Old Testament, with the phrase "In the beginning." He seems to want to make a connection with **Genesis 1:1**

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*

Genesis 1 describes the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth, and Genesis 2 describes the beginning of the human race. You could say that it is about the origin of physical reality and the place that man should occupy in it. The emphasis is on what we can perceive with our five senses, what we can see, hear, taste, smell and feel.

John, however, chooses to go back to the pre-creation situation. He describes the state of that situation by stating a number of characteristic things that apply to THE WORD, namely

- Everything begins with THE WORD.
- THE WORD is with God
- THE WORD was (or is) God

Here he is describing the divine origin of THE WORD before THE WORD became flesh (man) (see verse 14). John 4:24 indicates that God is SPIRIT, which means that God cannot be directly perceived by any of our senses. It is important to note that before our reality, namely heaven and earth, was created as described in Genesis 1, the eternal spiritual reality already existed. Of course, the same is true of THE WORD before it became flesh. What we can deduce from this is that spiritual reality is the essence of all things, while physical reality, the reality of which we humans are a part, is a kind of reflection or mirror of spiritual reality. In the Old Covenant, God comes to His people, He descends on Mount Sinai<sup>5</sup>, He manifests Himself on earth by letting heaven descend on the mountain, as it were. Later, he descends in glory on the tabernacle prepared by Moses<sup>6</sup> and, still later, on the temple built by Solomon<sup>7</sup>. God's presence on earth is thus linked to these physical places. I will come back to this in more detail later in this book. What John is trying to make clear with this choice of words is that we need to shift our focus from physical, earthly reality to heavenly, spiritual reality.

## John 1:3

*3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In the actual creation of heaven and earth, THE WORD was involved in the whole work of creation. Paul emphasises this also in his letter to the Colossians. Just the text:

*16...for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17and he is before all things,*

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 19:20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai...

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 40:34 ...and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle...

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:1 ...and the glory of the LORD filled the house. ...

*and by him all things consist.  
(Colossians 1:16-17)*

So Jesus Christ, THE Word, is not only our Saviour, but He is also the Creator, emphasising that He is Fully God. So God the Father does nothing without the Son being involved<sup>8</sup>.

## **John 1:4-9**

*4In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

*6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

In Genesis 1 it is clear that on the fourth day God created the great lights that illuminate us to this day. But on the first day, God says, "Let there be light". Before the sun, moon and stars were created, there was already light on earth. When Jesus Christ is called "the true light" in this text, it should be clear that all that Jesus is in the heavenly reality becomes visible in our physical reality at this particular moment. This is underlined by the expectation expressed in Revelation 21 that the sun and moon will no longer be needed. Just the text:

*... 23And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.  
(Revelation 21:23)*

What is clear so far is that our physical reality, the reality we live in every day, comes from the spiritual reality where God is and was brought into being by THE WORD.

The man who appears here in this situation is John the Baptist. This John the Baptist can be seen as the last great prophet of the Old Covenant and is used by God to announce the coming of the Messiah. He is mentioned in all four Gospels, so he plays a key role in this phase of history. We will return to this later in this chapter. So John can be seen as the completion of everything from the old covenant, he is not the light but he is there to testify to it. If we take this further, we can conclude that the old covenant was meant to bear witness to the light. Jesus and the new covenant are the true light that comes into the world.

## **John 1:10-13**

*10He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. 11He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

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<sup>8</sup> Within the Messianic movement there are more and more voices questioning the deity of Jesus Christ, in my opinion this is to accommodate Jewish thinking that God is one and therefore their Messiah cannot be God. Therefore, at the trial of Jesus, the high priest Caiaphas sees the claim that Jesus is the Son of God as a form of blasphemy and condemns Jesus.  
(See Matthew 26:63-66)

According to verse 10, Jesus Christ is fully present in the world of which we are a part, but we can only see Him if we are open to Him. Mankind as a whole has not known Him, even though He is the designer of our world. The world has been blinded to this truth. But not only the world was blinded, his own people, the Jewish people, his own, his fellow countrymen, did not know Him and therefore did not receive Him. The only exception is those people, both fellow countrymen and later others from the world, who accepted Jesus. In Greek, the word received is rendition of the word λαμβάνω (lambano)<sup>9</sup>, which means to accept or receive. In this acceptance, therefore, there is an active component, we are expected to actively choose to receive Him into our lives. From that moment on, the group of people who have accepted Him constitute "the children of God". While in the Old Covenant the people of Israel were the children of God, the people of God, in the New Covenant the people of God are "all who have received Him", Jew and Gentile together. Peter emphasises this again in his first epistle:

*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient,  
The stone which the builders disallowed,  
The same is made the head of the corner,  
and  
A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,  
even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.  
But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>10</sup>which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.  
(1 Peter 2:7-10)*

What in the old covenant was almost exclusively for the people of Israel, although others such as Rahab<sup>10</sup> of Jericho and Ruth<sup>11</sup> the Moabitess could also join the people, we can say that the election is now extended to all nations, Jew and Gentile together, provided they receive Jesus Christ into their lives.

What John then adds is that we must be born of God. We cannot derive any rights from our physical origin, our blood. We cannot rely on our own merit, our flesh, and finally our human adoption. If you look at the old covenant, it was important that you were descended from Abraham, that is your blood bond. Also that you had to abide by Moses, the Law, or that you had been accepted or adopted, like Rahab and Ruth, and that way you were added to the people of God. Later on in this book, when we come to chapter three of John's gospel, I will look at this in more detail.

## **John 1:14-17**

*<sup>14</sup>And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. <sup>16</sup>And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

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<sup>9</sup> Strong G2983

<sup>10</sup> See book of Joshua in Chapters 2 and 6

<sup>11</sup> See the book of Ruth

THE WORD entered into our physical reality, became flesh and dwelt in the midst of us men, and this man, Jesus Christ, was from that moment on the bearer of the glory of God on earth. We have already seen that Mount Sinai, the tabernacle of Moses and finally the temple in Jerusalem were the places where the glory of God was connected to, from the moment Jesus became part of our world as a man, He is the bearer of the glory of God. In Matthew 1 this is underlined by the statements of the angel when he explains to Joseph what is going on with Mary. Here's what the angel said:

*20...Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,  
23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,  
And they shall call his name Emmanuel,  
which being interpreted is, God with us.  
(Matthew 1:20-23)*

Quoting Isaiah 7:14, the angel makes it clear to Joseph that this child with whom Mary was pregnant is "God with us". As long as Jesus walked the earth, He was the representative of God in our midst, so if you really wanted to meet God at that time, you had to look for Jesus, He was (is) Emmanuel.

John the Baptist testifies to this by declaring that Jesus was there before he was. It is clear from the Bible that John was born six months earlier than Jesus, so when John says that Jesus was there before him, he is not referring to the physical birth of Jesus, but to the divine origin.

Jesus was full of grace and truth, so when you met Him, you became a part of Him. By meeting Him, by receiving Him, we become partakers of the fullness of grace and truth, and we even receive grace upon grace.

The Law of Moses, with all its rules, could only reflect this new reality. With the coming of Jesus Christ, we become partakers of the real reality of grace and truth, and Jesus is full of it. If we are born of God, we have become partakers of this fullness.

## **John 1:18**

*18No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

In addition to all this, Jesus' coming also meant that as the only begotten Son, in his human capacity, he showed who God really is. This is a theme that comes up again and again in the confrontation with the Jewish leaders later in the Gospel. The coming of Jesus makes it abundantly clear who God really is. While Moses and the Law give us only a glimpse, Jesus shows us the heart of the Father.

## **The conclusion**

What John does is to summarise the most important aspects of the Gospel. The core truths enumerated here form a kind of framework for understanding the rest of the Gospel, the teaching of Jesus and the confrontation with his contemporaries. All this is supplemented by teaching specifically for the disciples, in which these matters are further

explored with the prospect of the future in mind. Jesus will no longer be physically present, but his place will be taken by the Spirit of Truth<sup>12</sup>.

The intention is to go through the gospel step by step. The focus will be especially on the controversy between the old covenant, with all its physical aspects linked to physical reality, and the spiritual reality, which is of a completely different nature and in which we can participate through the ministry of Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection.

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<sup>12</sup> John 14:16-17

# Part 1 The struggle with the old

This first part discusses the great conflict that Jesus had with the Jewish culture, especially with the scribes and Pharisees. If we do not recognise the intensity of this conflict, we are likely to downplay the significance of the new covenant. The new covenant is so fundamentally different from the old covenant that it cannot be overemphasised. The conflict seems to focus on secondary issues, but when we learn to see the depth of the conflict, it turns out that we are dealing with fundamental truths that are characteristic of the gospel and the kingdom. The conflict shows in no uncertain terms how far the Jewish culture and leadership of the day had strayed from biblical thinking. In Matthew 23 we find the following remark of Jesus to the Pharisees and scribes:

*13But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.  
(Matthew 23:13)*

Jesus makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the question is whether or not the Pharisees and scribes, who together with the Sadducees formed the spiritual leadership of that time, are part of the Kingdom of God. In line with this, the question of whether or not they have been retained is justified. So it is not a question of minor side issues, but of fundamental truth, which must also be understood by us.

In this first part, we will trace the public ministry of Jesus step by step. We go through chapter by chapter through the Gospel of John, in order to bring to the surface this fundamental struggle step by step.

# A Voice in the Wilderness

## John 1:23

*23He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

All four Gospels begin with the ministry of John the Baptist. In fact, it is in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke that the announcement of his birth and the birth itself are described. The angel Gabriel explains to his father Zechariah what God has in store for this boy and what he will do:

*15For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*  
(Luke 1:15-17)

This statement refers to the last text of the Old Testament. This John fulfils the role of Elijah in **Malachi 4:5-6**:

*5Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

Jesus reaffirms this position in **Matthew 11:14-15**:

*14And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. 15He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

This Elijah is the last one described in the Old Testament, so it can be seen as a closure followed by a transition to something new. In the same passage in Matthew 11, Jesus refers to **Malachi 3:1**:

*1Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The first half of the text refers to the ministry of John the Baptist, the second half to the coming of the Lord Jesus, the angel or messenger of the covenant. Incidentally, the term "Lord of hosts" in the Old Testament usually refers to the Son of God, the Messiah, and thus to Jesus and his place in God's great plan of salvation.

So it is safe to say that John's ministry is the completion of the old covenant and that the coming of Jesus is the starting point for the new covenant announced in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**:

*31Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband*

unto them, saith the LORD: <sup>33</sup>but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

John's opening statement in this chapter is based on **Isaiah 40:3**:

<sup>3</sup>The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40 to 66 is generally regarded as describing everything to do with the coming of the Messiah, not only by Christian commentators, but also by Rabbi Kimhi <sup>13</sup>, a medieval Jewish Rabbi:

"The entirety of this prophecy," says Kimhi, "belongs to the day of the Messiah."

By quoting Isaiah 40, John places himself at the beginning of this new age. Here are some of the passages from this prophecy:

<sup>9</sup>Behold, the former things are come to pass, **and new things do I declare**: before they spring forth I tell you of them.  
(Isaiah 42:9)

<sup>19</sup>Behold, **I will do a new thing**; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.  
(Isaiah 43:19)

<sup>6</sup>Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? **I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.**  
(Isaiah 48:6)

The whole of this prophecy in the last 29 chapters of Isaiah describes the new age to come, with Isaiah 53 describing the "Suffering Servant of the Lord" at its centre. John's ministry thus marks the transition from the old covenant, of which he is the last prophet, to the new covenant that came with the coming of Jesus Christ. This is how Jesus puts it:

<sup>26</sup>But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, **and much more than a prophet.** <sup>27</sup>This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. <sup>28</sup>For I say unto you, **Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.**  
(Luke 7:26-28)

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<sup>13</sup> David Kimhi (Hebrew: ר' דָּוִד קִמְחִי, also Kimchi or Qimḥi) (1160-1235), also known as his Hebrew acronym as the RaDaK (רַדְ"ק) (Rabbi David Kimhi), was a medieval rabbi, Bible commentator, philosopher and grammarian.

So John is depicted here by Jesus as a prophet, and then he is presented as the greatest of all, the forerunner who goes before the Messiah. But Jesus adds that the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than this John. So John is the herald of the Kingdom, but apparently not yet part of it. John's message was a call to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven:

*1In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, 2and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand  
(Matthew 3:1-2)*

He baptized those who wanted to repent in the Jordan River. You must understand that before attending the festivals in Jerusalem, people were expected to purify themselves and wash their clothes. They did this by immersing themselves in one of the many purification pools that were in the Temple Square in Jerusalem. By baptizing the people in the Jordan River, he distanced himself from this practice of the temple festival. So his action was at a distance from the temple and the temple service. John's baptism was thus a preparation for the coming of the Messiah, who declared himself to be the new temple, in the same way that the ritual of purification was a preparation for the encounter with God in the temple.

John makes a few remarkable statements:

*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  
(Matthew 3:7<sup>b</sup>)*

In this way he announces the coming of the judgement of God, he calls it "the wrath to come".

*9and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.  
(Matthew 3:9)*

The Jews could not claim their physical lineage, so if you wanted to participate in the Kingdom of God, repentance was a requirement, ancestry had no bearing on it.

*10And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire  
(Matthew 3:10)*

We are no longer talking about pruning, we are now talking about cutting down, uprooting and burning with fire.

*11I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 12whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.  
(Matthew 3:11-12)*

He announces that "He who comes after me", Jesus Christ, will do two things: He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and He will baptize with fire. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is for those who repent because they desire to be part of the announced Kingdom of God. The baptism of fire represents the judgement that will come upon those who are unwilling to repent. The baptism of the Holy Spirit took place during the great feast of

Pentecost in Acts 2. The announced baptism of fire followed later. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD is estimated to have cost the lives of 1 million Jews, while not a single Hebrew Christian in Jerusalem perished. The Hebrew Christians heeded Jesus' warning and fled early<sup>14</sup>. The city and its temple were consumed by fire. So the coming of Jesus brings not only salvation but also judgement and destruction. Paul's statement, "The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!"<sup>15</sup>, refers to this transition from old to new. This applies not only to our personal lives, but also to the transition to the new reality in Christ, the Kingdom of God.

## John 1:24-28

*24And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The rumour about John had soon reached Jerusalem and the spiritual leaders, so people from the Pharisees' circle were immediately sent to John to investigate. In the description of the Gospel of Matthew, John unmask this club:

*7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: (Matthew 3:7-8)*

John was not in the least impressed by their status, pointing out to them what true repentance meant, and then pointing out to them the coming of the Messiah.

## John 1:29-34

*29The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Despite the expectation of much of the people at that time that the Messiah would come to establish his kingdom on earth, and that this would include driving the Romans out of the land, John proclaims here that He is the Lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world. When John makes this statement, even he does not understand the

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 21:20-22: *20And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

implications. Later, in prison, he wonders in despair whether Jesus is the one who is to come<sup>16</sup>.

If we then go back to the text of Isaiah 48 that we saw at the beginning of this chapter, it may become clear that the new things that are being announced are not only new, but will also consist of "mysteries". So there must be a great change in the way people think about the role of the Messiah in relation to the Kingdom of God. Later in this book, as we go through the Gospel of John, we will discuss this in more detail.

To emphasise the transition to a new age in relation to John the Baptist, we will go to the second half of chapter 3 later in the Gospel. It is important to read this passage in its entirety.

### **John 3:22-36.**

*22After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. 24For John was not yet cast into prison.*

*25Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. 26And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

*27John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30He must increase, but I must decrease. 31He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. 35The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

In order to gain a broader perspective on the role of John the Baptist, we will now highlight some aspects of this passage

In verses 22-24 we see the transition phase. Jesus and his disciples also begin baptizing at the same time that John baptized at Ænon near to Salim. The content of the sermon is also the same, namely:

*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand<sup>17</sup>*

John announced the coming of the Kingdom, with the coming of Jesus however, the Kingdom of God had actually come in the person of Jesus Christ Himself. His followers still had to go through the transition, for which of course the teaching of Jesus was needed, but it may be clear that the Kingdom of God only took serious shape after the death and resurrection of Jesus, followed by the ascension of Jesus, on which occasion he

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 11:3

<sup>17</sup> See Matthew 3:2 (John) and Matthew 4:17 (Jesus): Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

sat down at the right hand of the Father, that is, at the throne of God. In fact, this moment, the enthronement, is the beginning of the heavenly Kingdom of God. Because we have been baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit, we too can participate in the Kingdom of God.

In verses 28-30, John proclaims loud and clear that He is not the Christ, but that He was sent before Him. The Christ is the one who lays claim to the bride and that is Jesus. John then declares himself a friend of the bridegroom, which also means that he thinks of himself as not being part of the bride. Israel, the people to whom the prophet John belonged, had become apostate and in this situation is no longer the bride. To be part of the bride, you must be owned by the Bridegroom, you must have received Him into your life.

The last part is about the one who comes from above, the Word made flesh, the one who comes from heaven, the supreme authority. He is the prophet that Moses said would come<sup>18</sup>. He's sent by God, He speaks for God and He's the baptiser with the Spirit. He, Jesus Christ, is the beloved Son<sup>19</sup>. He has received everything from the hands of the Father so that he may reign in the Father's name on the throne of God<sup>20</sup>. Faith in the Son, which is an obedient surrender in trust to Jesus Christ, is necessary to claim the reality of the kingdom of God and to receive eternal life. Those who, through lack of faith, continue to disobey are destined to suffer the wrath of God announced by John.

Of course, there is still much to be said about the Kingdom of God and how it relates to Israel as a physical entity in the Old Covenant and to us as spiritual children of God in the New Covenant. Later in the Gospel of John we will encounter much more that relates to this.

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<sup>18</sup> Deuteronomy 18:18-19 ...<sup>18</sup>I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. <sup>19</sup>And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 2:7<sup>b</sup> ... Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee...

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 110:1<sup>b</sup> ... Sit thou at my right hand...

# The first Disciples

## John 1:35-43

*35Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 37And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*

*43The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.*

The first thing Jesus did was to gather a group of disciples who would be allowed to walk with Him on a daily basis and who would be trained by Him. It is remarkable that Jesus chooses a group of people who have not been trained within the regular system of the time, so they are still fresh. In everyday practice it turns out that it is much easier to learn new things than to unlearn things that have been learned wrongly. If you have already had some education, it forms a kind of bulwark in you and if it is not good, it has to be demolished before something good can be built.

The first disciples were those of John the Baptist. As we have seen, John operated outside the regular system of the time, which was connected to the temple in Jerusalem or connected to the synagogue. So these two disciples, Andrew and John, were already with John the Baptist to be taught by him. You can read here the desire of these two men, they were people with a searching heart, and Jesus allows himself to be found by them, as it were. In the other Gospels, Jesus visits them and says to them: `follow me`, in the Gospel of John, it is John the Baptist who draws their attention to Jesus as the "Lamb of God".

By addressing Him with the title "Rabbi", they indicate that they see Jesus as someone who can teach them. Not only that, but it is also clear from the text that they expect Jesus to be the Messiah.

Immediately these first disciples began to look for others they knew had the same heart. Andrew goes looking for his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Simon is immediately given a new name by Jesus, Cephas or Peter. Simon is given a new identity and as such he will play a key role in the future of the church that will be formed.

## Johannes 1:44-50<sup>a</sup>

*44Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

*45Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of*

*him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?*

Jesus then finds Philip and challenges him to follow him. Again, you immediately see the search for others with the same heart. Philip finds Nathanael . When this Natanael then comes to Jesus, Jesus says to him, 'I saw thee under the fig tree', to which Natanael immediately responds with: 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel'. In the culture of that time, if you were looking for deeper truths then you were proverbially under the fig tree. So in Jesus' utterance there is a piece of recognition of the heart of this Nathanael. In this recognition, Natanael sees that Jesus knows him before he has even met him.

It is clear from this section that Jesus is looking for people who are not yet too indoctrinated within the religious climate of the time. Jesus clearly chooses not to bring people from the religious system of the time to Himself. From this we can already infer that Jesus will confront the religious system of that time and come up with a totally different story that was prevalent at that time. Later in the gospel, this will also become clear.

## **Johannes 1:50b-51**

*50... thou shalt see greater things than these. 51And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.***

And then Jesus' remarkable statement at the end of this passage. For a proper understanding we have to go back to Genesis, to the story of Jacob's flight. This is in Genesis 27 and 28. It is during this flight that Jacob has a dream.

*12And he dreamed, and **behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.** 13And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.  
(Genesis 28:12-14)*

In his dream, Jacob sees a ladder on which he sees angels ascending and descending to heaven. In this dream he receives a great promise of a great offspring who will be a blessing to all the generations of the earth. What Jesus does with His statement is to make the connection between Himself and Jacob's dream. The ladder in Jacob's dream represents the "Son of Man" in Jesus' statement, explaining that it is He Himself who is the fulfilment of that promise. So Jesus is the promised offspring. Paul also makes similar statements in the Epistle to the Galatians:

*16Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)*

*29And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.  
(Galatians 3:29)*

Most of the promises in Genesis refer primarily to the coming Messiah, rather than to Israel. The promised offspring, also called seed, refers first and foremost to Jesus Christ and not so much to the people of Israel. I still sometimes encounter the thought 'Yes but that was Paul', as if Paul had a different message than Jesus. What is clear is that Jesus agrees with Paul. He is the promised offspring, and so the Church of Jesus Christ is the promised worldwide offspring in Him. This, of course, goes against everything that was believed about Israel at that time. Incidentally, even today there are many in the various churches who do not know or do not want to know this truth.

Later in this book we will come across much more of the same.

# A wedding

## John 2:1-11

*1And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. 6And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on Him*

In verse 11 we read that Jesus gave this sign as the first sign at a wedding in Cana. The purpose of a sign is not just to perform a miracle, but to demonstrate something by deliberate action. You will find many signs in the Bible that are actions with a message. There is a sign in Genesis 17 when Abraham is instructed to circumcise himself and all the men in his household.

*10This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and **it shall be a token** of the covenant betwixt me and you.  
(Genesis 17:10-11)*

The circumcision that Abraham is commanded to perform has no substantive meaning, as if it did anything in itself, it is only a sign, comparable to the function of a traffic sign on the road.

The ministry of Jesus is characterised by many signs:

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

The purpose of the signs that Jesus did was to make us believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that by believing in Him we would receive eternal life in His name.

The sign described here is that of water becoming wine through Jesus. So this change has to do with the coming of Jesus and wants to tell us something about the coming of Jesus. Water is an image of natural birth and natural life, in Hebrew the womb is associated with the letter MEM, which in ancient Paleo-Hebrew is a wave of water. By

turning water into wine, Jesus shows that He wants to move us from a natural life to a spiritual life. We have already seen this in the introduction to the gospel of John

*12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.  
(John 1:12-13)*

To be part of the Kingdom of God, we have to be born of God. In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, the part about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, we come back to this at length.

When we speak of a transition from the old to the new, from the dispensation associated with the old covenant to the new dispensation of the new covenant in Christ, the change from water to wine is a sign of this. This sign is indicated as the beginning of all signs, where Jesus wants to make it clear that a new time has dawned or is about to break out. Moses came with the law, with Jesus came grace and truth:

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

If we look at some of the details of this story, there are a number of striking things.

- First of all, the fact that the wine had run out. In those days, contrary to our culture, it was customary for the guests to provide the delicacies and the wine at such a wedding feast. The fact that the wine has run out indicates that there are guests who have apparently broken this agreement, which is an image of us letting people down.
- Another detail is that stone water jars were present "according to the purification custom of the Jews"<sup>21</sup>. The Pharisees in particular had to ritually wash their hands before they could eat bread, and these stone water jars were needed for this. So there are Pharisees at the feast, which also means that the leader of the feast is a Pharisee.
- The fact that the jars were filled to the brim by the servants is in keeping with the Talmudic requirements for filling these jars<sup>22</sup>.
- Not only was the instruction followed, but the same instruction in the Talmud indicates that fermentation makes the water unclean and therefore unsuitable for use in the ritual of purification. Wine, a fermented product, even the smell of wine, makes the water unfit and the water vessels unclean. So the sign of Jesus makes the water vessels unfit for use for a long time, I can imagine that here and there someone got very angry when they discovered this.
- The wine scooped out of the water jars is the best of all the wines so far.

I When you put it all together, it makes sense to come to the conclusion:

- that the coming of Jesus brings change, water becomes wine,
- The fact that the wine is also the best indicates that the change is a significant improvement,
- and that the advent of the new makes the old customs superfluous and impossible, as evidenced by the fact that the water jars became unusable for a considerable time.

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<sup>21</sup> For this, see Matthew 15 and Mark 7 where reference is made to this ritual.

<sup>22</sup> See for this in the Talmud, Chullin 26b

Another effect is that the wedding at Cana involves a direct confrontation with the Pharisees and their customs, a theme that is discussed in various ways later in the Gospel of John.

In a number of places in the other Gospels there are references to new wine being put into new wineskins<sup>23</sup>. If we compare this with the background of this story, we can conclude that the new wine of the gospel and the life with Jesus that is connected with it does not fit into the old forms, not into those of the law with all its sacrifices and ceremonies connected with the temple service, and especially not into those of the Jewish tradition, which to a large extent does not even have a basis in the law of Moses, such as the ritual of washing the hands mentioned here, which is not prescribed anywhere in the law. Holding on to Old Testament forms and Jewish traditions is detrimental to the gospel. We have already seen that the temple service is only a shadow<sup>24</sup>. When we are confronted with reality, the shadow becomes superfluous. A shadow can only leave an impression, a kind of silhouette, and never give a complete picture of the underlying reality. The ideas mentioned in the introduction to the book, especially the dispensational doctrine of John Nelson Darby, and much of the Israel-oriented ideas and the Messianic movement are skewed here. In order to accommodate the Jewish tradition, much of this philosophy wants to hold on to the old, and this is exactly what Jesus and Paul warn us against. We will come back to this in more detail later in this book.

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<sup>23</sup> See Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:2, Luke 5:38 : New wine belongs in new wineskins

<sup>24</sup> See Colossians 2:16-17 and Hebrews 10:1

# A clean house

## John 2:13:22

*13And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*

*18Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? 19Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21But he spake of the temple of his body. 22When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

And then it's Passover. Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. This "going up", called אעלה (Allyah)<sup>25</sup> in Hebrew, is an obligation for every man from the age of 12. In the Gospel of Luke<sup>26</sup> we find the description of the first time Jesus went up to Jerusalem with his parents. Since then, Jesus has gone up to Jerusalem every year for the feasts prescribed by the Law. The book of Deuteronomy summarises this as follows:

*16Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles,...*  
(Deuteronomy 16:16<sup>a</sup>)

This particular feast is no exception.

When Jesus arrives at the temple, he finds all sorts of illegal practices going on. It is true that these are things which in themselves are not punishable, but the trading of animals and the exchanging of money have no place in the temple, the house of God. You also have to ask yourself whether what is happening here is based on correct assumptions, but more on that later. Jesus takes a kind of whip and drives the people out of the Temple who are engaged in this activity, albeit with the permission of the Temple authorities. The animals are chased away and the tables of money are overturned. Jesus is obviously angry at what is happening and shows no restraint. In the opinion of the leaders of the temple service, he did not have the authority to do so, and they call him to account for it:

*What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?*  
(John 2:18<sup>b</sup>)

But Jesus' defence is remarkable, and at first glance does not seem to answer the question posed. Jesus defends himself by saying:

*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*

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<sup>25</sup> Strong H5927

<sup>26</sup> Zie Luke 2:40-52

(John 2:19<sup>b</sup>)

After the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the disciples understand that Jesus was talking about his own body, which at that time was the temple. It is important to understand that the Temple is not about the Temple itself, but about the place where God is present in the Holy of Holies, so it is about the manifestation of God's presence, which is also why the people should go up to Jerusalem, the Temple itself is only an "empty shell". In Deuteronomy 12 we are reminded of this:

*5But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: 6and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: 7and there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.*  
(Deuteronomy 12:5-7)

We are not to go merely to the temple, but to appear before the LORD.

There is still something to be said for the trade in animals. You have to imagine that Jews from many parts of the world came to Jerusalem for the feast, and it is impossible to bring animals on such a journey and then be able to sacrifice them, but of course this trade should not have taken place in the Temple Square, but elsewhere in Jerusalem or the surrounding area. Changing money however was different story. In the prescribed Jewish tradition, only temple money was allowed to be used in the offering box in the Temple Square, no other coins were allowed, so you had to buy temple money first and then offer it. In the description of the cleansing of the temple in Luke<sup>27</sup>, Jesus quotes a text from Isaiah and adds that the leaders of the temple had turned it into a den of thieves. Apparently this was a "business model" in which those who traded had to give part of their profits to the temple leaders. Of course, such a large building needed maintenance, and the leaders were involved and obviously wanted to profit from it..

The statement that this temple has been under construction for 46 years reveals something very remarkable about how the temple was viewed at that time. The first temple was built under Solomon's inspiring leadership. No expense was spared and it was a beautiful building. But we know that during the Babylonian captivity this temple was completely destroyed<sup>28</sup>. The temple was rebuilt in the days of Zerubbabel and Ezra. The book of Ezra chapter 3:10-15 describes how the foundation was laid, but in verse 12 we find the following remark:

*12But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:*  
(Ezra 3:12)

Obviously the rebuilt temple could not stand in the shadows of Solomon's original temple. In the works of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century AD, the temple was incomparable in splendour, so beautiful. How could this be? It had been under construction for 46 years by Herod the Great. He was king of Judea at the time of Jesus' birth. It would take too long to describe it all, but you can bet it was beautiful. This temple had become somewhat of an idol in the Jewish tradition of the time. Obviously,

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<sup>27</sup> Zie Luke 19:46

<sup>28</sup> To this end, read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21

the temple service was no longer about the presence of God himself. Trade and money exchange made this very clear, and Jesus is right to be angry. Jesus is "zealous for the house" because of the God of the house, not because of the house itself.

In his answer to the question of his authority, Jesus speaks of the temple of his own body. This makes it clear that the Jerusalem Temple's time has passed. By declaring himself to be a temple, Jesus is making it clear that a new time is coming. The temple in Jerusalem was part of the old covenant, in the new covenant in Christ, Jesus himself is the temple, and after Pentecost the church, the body of Christ, is the temple:

*<sup>15</sup>But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.***

*(1 Timothy 3:15)*

Paul makes it clear in his letter to Timothy that the church is the temple.

The moment of Jesus' intervention marks this transition that will take place. What is added is based on the text from Isaiah 56, referred to in the Gospel of Luke:

*<sup>46</sup>saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

*(Luke 19:46)*

The term "house of prayer" is taken from Isaiah 56:7.

*<sup>7</sup>...for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*

*(Isaiah 56:7)*

It is clear from this text that in the future, under the New Covenant linked to Isaiah 53, which includes the description of Jesus' death on the cross, the door will be open to all nations. This also means that all kinds of money will be accepted as an offering. So the money changers in this story are completely superfluous from Jesus' point of view.

## **John 2:23-25**

*<sup>23</sup>Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, <sup>25</sup>and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*

A characteristic feature of the situation surrounding Jesus Christ is the question of what it is that motivates people to believe in Jesus. It is said that many believed in Jesus because of the signs He did, but Jesus did not associate with them because He knew them. Later in the Gospel we come across several situations where people believed in Jesus, but the question is whether they really believed in Jesus and what He came to bring, or whether they believed in Jesus because they expected Jesus to be the fulfilment of their own wishes and desires. In the Gospel of Mark we find Jesus' challenge to those around him.

*<sup>34</sup>And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*

(Mark 8:34-35)

To truly believe in Jesus costs something, if not everything. Jesus came to carry out His plan, God's plan of salvation, not to satisfy our desires. I am convinced that much of the misunderstanding and unbelief has to do with this difference in thinking. In Isaiah 55, the very passage that shows what we must do to participate in the achievements based on Isaiah 53, the prophet clearly shows that God's conditions are the norm, not our conditions:

*6Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

(Isaiah 55:6-8)

There is a price to be paid for following Jesus and serving Him, a price that may cost us everything at first, but will be worth it in the end. If we are not willing to pay that price and lay our lives on God's altar, we will end up with nothing and be lost. Jesus puts it this way:

*23He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*

(Luke 11:23)

So it seems to be pretty black and white. It's all or nothing, so there's no space in between.

# Born Again

## Johannes 3: 7

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again.***

Before we dive further into this section, it is wise to read the entire section, namely **John 3:1-21**, in its entirety.

We will now proceed to look at the details in the text.

## Johannes 3:1-2<sup>a</sup>

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

In verse 1 Nicodemus enters the scene. This Nicodemus, according to the text, was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. In **John 7** we find more information about this person

*Then came the officers **to the chief priests and Pharisees**; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. **Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)** Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. (John 7:45-52)*

The Chief priests and the Pharisees made up the government in Jerusalem. This executive council was then called the Sanhedrin, a council of leaders chaired by the current high priest. The text shows that this Sanhedrin was quite hostile towards Jesus Christ, his ministry and his message. This Nicodemus was "one of them", so he was part of the Sanhedrin.

As we read on, we see that he comes to Jesus in the night, it is clear that he did not want the people around him, especially of course the other members of the Sanhedrin, to know about this action..

## Johannes 3:2<sup>b</sup>

*...Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

When he comes to Jesus, he calls Jesus "Rabbi". There is a beginning of recognition in that statement, he calls him Rabbi, something a Jewish leader would never do unless it was someone who was officially recognised as a Rabbi. To become a Rabbi you had to be educated in one of the recognised schools of that day and be ordained as such. You could compare it to the pastor in most Protestant churches, they also have to be theologically trained and ordained by a group of older pastors. We know that Jesus came from Galilee and was not formally educated in any of their schools.

In addition, Nicodemus looks at the signs Jesus is doing and may have concluded that this Jesus might be a good candidate to be the Messiah.

When Jesus responds to Nicodemus' remark, it is good to remember that the answer Jesus gives is not just for this Nicodemus, but that Jesus has the Judaism of that time and its leaders in mind. This means that the rest of Jesus' message is addressed especially to this group. It is good to keep this in mind as we read.

### **John 3:3**

*3Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Because Jesus immediately starts talking about the Kingdom of God, it becomes clear that this is where the conversation gets going. It's about the Kingdom of God and how both parties see it. In Judaism there is an expectation of the future in regard to the coming of the Messiah, which assumes that the Messiah will ascend the throne of David, drive the Romans out of the land and rule from Jerusalem. What Jesus does by saying that someone has to be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God is, as it were, a straightforward attack on this way of thinking and an attempt to make it clear that this way of thinking is not correct. From the following remark it is clear that Nicodemus is thinking in physical terms. This means that his vision of the future is physical in nature and that the kingdom of God will be an earthly kingdom. Just look at the text:

### **John 3:4**

*4Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

Nicodemus does not understand the language, namely that what Jesus is talking about is a spiritual reality, and that the Kingdom of God is to be seen in that light.

### **John 3:5-8**

*5Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

What Jesus is doing with this way of speaking is shattering the complete expectation of the future, which was common at that time, and which had an earthly focus.

The kingdom of God is not earthly, it is heavenly and spiritual and we can only be a part of it if we have had a transfer to that reality and are a part of that heavenly state of being. As a result of the Fall, we humans have become trapped in the physical, earthly reality and are no longer able to break free from it. We must therefore be born of water and Spirit; our natural birth of water is not enough. We need our spirit, which is dead because of sin, to be revived, and in this process we must receive the Spirit of God and thus gain access to the spiritual reality of the Kingdom of God. In John 18, when Jesus is facing Pilate, He says the following:

*36...My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.  
(John 18:36)*

Lets continue our reading.

## John 3:9

*9Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

From this remark of Nicodemus, it can be seen that He does not understand what Jesus is talking about. Apparently, the penny still hasn't dropped.

## John 3:10-13

*10Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

Nicodemus, as the teacher of Israel, ought to understand these things. It should have been a piece of cake for Nicodemus, but the opposite is true. Jesus reproaches them for not believing what was said about the earthly. You could say that the old covenant was already not understood, and as it was seen by Nicodemus and his contemporaries, they obviously did not understand that Israel in the Old Testament, with its temple service, was not the reality that mattered, but that, as Paul repeatedly told the Hebrew believers, that the old covenant was supposed to be seen as a shadow, a foreshadowing reflection.

*1For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.  
(Hebrews 10:1)*

The true reality of which Jesus speaks is heavenly. Misunderstanding the relationship between the shadow in the old covenant and the reality of Christ causes us to fail to understand what Jesus really means and causes us to linger in unbelief. The Jews of that time often did not realise that with the coming of the Messiah, a heavenly reality would enter with a better temple and a greater, worldwide people who would be born of God.

As Jesus continues to answer, there are also some important things discussed, which we need to read a little further to find out:

## John 3:14-21

*14And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

With this last section a number of perspectives are shifted, namely what the coming of the Messiah and the coming of His Kingdom is all about. He came to give Himself to save

mankind. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of God will be lifted up on a cross, leading to eternal life. Contrary to the Jewish way of thinking, which is aimed at the earthly Israel and therefore only for Jews, this is for "all" and for "the world". Jesus did not come to judge, or even to set things right, as is the Jewish way of thinking, but to save the world. This salvation is based on faith, obedient surrender to God's only Son and what He did for you on the cross.

The coming of Jesus also announces the judgement of people who, in spite of everything, continue to cling to their own ideas and refuse to entrust themselves to Jesus. Just a few scriptures:

*3For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:3)*

*7For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his **evil deeds**.*

*(2 John 1:7-11)*

To cling to one's own ideas, to want to assert one's own righteousness on the basis of one's own efforts, and then to continue to teach this, is to choose darkness and the evil works associated with it, in spite of the coming of the light. But if we accept the light, if we come to the light, then that is a work that is done in God and also results in works that are done in God.

Nicodemus has a lot to deal with, but not just him, but the whole dominant culture of the time. Nicodemus comes to the realisation of the truth, as shown above in chapter 7, that he was willing to stand up for Jesus and later on by taking care of the body after Jesus' death on the cross, together with Joseph of Arimathea<sup>29</sup>, and giving it a proper burial.

We face the same choice. Do we choose an earthly reality with an earthly Israel and with the challenge to come into "our best life now", or do we choose the heavenly reality that is offered? The latter comes with a price. Jesus puts it this way:

*...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34)*

Jesus has decided to save us. It is up to us whether we want to be part of it or not, whatever the price.

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<sup>29</sup> See John 19:38-42

# A Strange Woman

## John 4:1-42

*<sup>1</sup>When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, <sup>2</sup>(though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) <sup>3</sup>he left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee. <sup>4</sup>And he must needs go through Samaria.*

### **The Woman of Samaria**

*<sup>5</sup>Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

*<sup>7</sup>There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. <sup>8</sup>(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

*<sup>9</sup>Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. <sup>11</sup>The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? <sup>12</sup>Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? <sup>13</sup>Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: <sup>14</sup>but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. <sup>15</sup>The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. <sup>16</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. <sup>17</sup>The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: <sup>18</sup>for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. <sup>19</sup>The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.*

*<sup>21</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. <sup>22</sup>Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. <sup>25</sup>The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. <sup>26</sup>Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

*<sup>27</sup>And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? <sup>28</sup>The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, <sup>29</sup>Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? <sup>30</sup>Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.*

*<sup>31</sup>In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. <sup>32</sup>But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. <sup>33</sup>Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? <sup>34</sup>Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup>Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto*

*you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. <sup>36</sup>And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*

*<sup>39</sup>And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his own word; <sup>42</sup>and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

Jesus withdraws from Jerusalem. This in itself is a momentous phenomenon. The bulk of Jesus' ministry takes place in Galilee. Just as we have already seen that Jesus recruited most of his disciples in Galilee and did the beginning of his signs in Cana, also in Galilee, he now withdraws to the same area to do his work there. In fact, most of the descriptions in the other three Gospels also take place in and around Galilee<sup>30</sup>, which is remarkable. Jesus deliberately leaves Jerusalem as it is. By concentrating much of his ministry in this corner of the country, he also seems to be making a statement:

*<sup>50</sup>Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) <sup>51</sup>Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? <sup>52</sup>They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? **Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.**  
(John 7:50-52)*

Jesus could have known that his ministry in Galilee would not be good for his cause, humanly speaking. We have already seen that Nathaniel, when he was called as a disciple of Jesus, wondered whether anything good could come out of Nazareth<sup>31</sup>, and the same is true in Galilee. We would have said that the Messiah, who will sit on the throne of David, must at least be in Jerusalem to present himself there, but we see that Jesus does the opposite, he is only in Jerusalem for the feasts which necessarily require his presence<sup>32</sup>, and nothing else. So he seems to make a conscious decision not to do anything to ensure his credibility. He seems to want to make it clear that Jerusalem's role will eventually come to an end.

And then, on his way to Galilee, he passes through the territory of the Samaritans.

## **John 4:4**

*<sup>4</sup>And he must needs go through Samaria.*

In those days the Jews did not mix with the Samaritans; in fact, when they went up to Jerusalem to attend the feasts<sup>33</sup>, the Galileans travelled across the upper Jordan. The woman with whom he later speaks also observes the same thing:

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew and Mark only describe the ministry in and around Galilee during the summer months, except for the account of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection.

<sup>31</sup> See John 1:47.

<sup>32</sup> See Deuteronomy 16:16.

<sup>33</sup> In Luke 9:51-56, Jesus also travels through the area of the Samaritans as He makes the journey to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

## John 4:9

*9Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? **for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.***

Does Jesus consciously choose to deviate from existing protocols in order to make it clear that a different time has dawned?

When Jesus arrives at the town of Sychar on his journey<sup>34</sup>, he meets a woman and speaks to her. Sychar is at the foot of Mount Gerizim, the central sanctuary of the Samaritans<sup>35</sup>.

The fact that He is talking to a woman is also remarkable. As a Rabbi you wouldn't do that, women were considered inferior in that culture, good for the household and so on, but you don't talk to them seriously. Later, when Paul writes his letters, he says the following:

*26For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, **there is neither male nor female:** for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.  
(Galatians 3:26-28)*

While under the old covenant there was indeed a distinction between men and women, much less extreme than had become common in the Jewish culture of the time, in the new covenant this distinction is abolished. There is still a difference in the role to be fulfilled, but there is no longer a difference in status. So Jesus is different from the usual and does not seem to care about existing protocols. This too is a sign that a new era has begun.

Jesus opens his conversation with her by asking for a drink.

## John 4:7

*7There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, **Give me to drink***

The woman's reaction is astonishment that a Jew should ask her to drink. Jesus gives a remarkable response when she questions him about this:

## John 4:10

*10Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

The reaction of the woman immediately shows that she does not understand what Jesus is saying. By referring to the fact that Jesus does not have a bucket, she does not seem to understand that Jesus is not offering her physical water, but spiritual water. This is a

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<sup>34</sup> Sychar is Shechem from the Old Testament. Shechem is one of the places where God reveals himself to Abram

<sup>35</sup> The Samaritans are a non-Israelite people who, at the time of the Assyrian exile, when the house of Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians, were relocated by the same Assyrians to this empty land and developed a religion very similar to that of Israel. This story is described in 2 Kings 17:24-41

remarkable way of speaking, characteristic of Jesus' teaching. There seems to be a shift from the physical to the spiritual. Jesus' message is spiritual, but he expresses himself in physical terms. The many "I am" statements in the Gospel of John testify to this. This also tells us something about how we should interpret Old Testament prophecies that refer to the new age to come, but more on that later.

## **John 4:13-14**

*13Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

Jesus is trying to make her understand that he has something for her that is much greater than ordinary water, living water that reaches into eternity. The woman's reaction shows that the message is not getting through; she keeps talking about her physical thirst. In order to break through this, Jesus speaks to the woman about her previous marriages and about her present relationship with a man who is not her husband. The woman's reaction shows that the penny is starting to drop.

## **John 4:19**

*19The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

What immediately follows is a discussion about the place of worship. Should it be Mount Gerizim, the sanctuary of the Samaritans, or should it be Jerusalem, the place of the Jews? Jesus parries the discussion by pointing to the new era that has arrived.

## **John 4:21-26**

*21Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.*

The time when worship is associated with an earthly sanctuary is over, Jesus says that the coming time, beginning NOW, will be spiritual in character. We have seen in John 3 that this requires us to be born again. We are no longer focused on the old physical Jerusalem, but on the new spiritual Jerusalem.

*22but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (Hebrews 12:22).*

Our place of worship is no longer on earth but in heaven, and for that you must have received the Spirit of God, otherwise you have no part in it.

I often hear that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem, that this should be our task as Christians based on Psalm 122. Just the verse:

*6Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
They shall prosper that love thee.*

*7Peace be within thy walls,  
And prosperity within thy palaces.  
8For my brethren and companions' sakes,  
I will now say, Peace be within thee.  
9Because of the house of the LORD our God  
I will seek thy good.  
(Psalm 122:6-9)*

What is overlooked in many of these exhortations is the connection between Jerusalem and the House of the Lord. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem because of the temple and the encounter with God that is associated with it<sup>36</sup>, especially during the biblical feasts. If we think we need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in the present day, it is like settling for an empty package without any content. The focus of Psalm 122 is the temple, and for us that temple is in heaven, in the new Jerusalem, the true city of peace. Moreover, we as the church are the temple, the house of God<sup>37</sup>. To be obedient to Psalm 122 in our day means to pray for peace for the church of Jesus Christ. This is where we meet God.<sup>38</sup>

On to the text. This woman is the first to be told that Jesus is the Messiah, which means that the coming of the Messiah is the beginning of this new age that is dawning. A time when earthly sanctuaries are a thing of the past.

When the disciples returned from the city where they had been shopping, they were surprised to see Jesus talking to this Samaritan woman. Even the disciples do not realise the implications of Jesus' coming. Time and time again it will turn out that even they do not seem to have understood anything at all. Just a verse:

*12I have yet many things to say unto you, **but ye cannot bear them now.** 13Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come  
(John 16:12-13)*

Even the disciples, who walk with Jesus every day, who see what He does every day, who hear what He says every day, will not understand until they receive the Spirit of God, the Spirit who will guide them into all truth.

Jesus then turns out not to be hungry at all, and this surprises the disciples too. Jesus' response is revealing:

## **John 4:31-35**

*31In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? 34Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, **and look on the fields; for they are white already to***

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<sup>36</sup> See Deuteronomy 12:5: *5But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come.*

<sup>37</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15 ... the house of God, which is the church of the living God,

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 18: 20 *20For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

## **harvest.**

In doing God's will we find a degree of satisfaction that even the best bread cannot give. Jesus challenges the disciples to shift their focus from their daily needs, the effects of which are temporary, to reaping the harvest. Again, we are challenged to move from the physical, the earthly, to the spiritual, the heavenly. This harvest is not just four months from now, just around the Feast of Tabernacles, the great harvest festival, but it is now. You have to imagine that the disciples' eyes were fixed on that large group of Samaritans dressed in white who, thanks to the story of this woman, were on their way to meet Jesus in person. The harvest does not begin when the Messiah ascends the throne of David in Jerusalem, it begins now, immediately. It is the witness of the woman who brings this group of Samaritans to Jesus, the challenge to the disciples is to do the same..

## **John 4:42**

*42and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.... and they said to the woman, "We believe no more because of what you say, for we ourselves have heard him, and know that he is truly the Savior of the world."*

The result is impressive.

It should be noted, however, that later in the year, in the run-up to the Feast of Tabernacles, there is another confrontation between Jesus and probably these same Samaritans, which shows that they too do not really understand what the coming of the Messiah is all about. In Luke 9 we read this story:

*51And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*  
(Luke 9:51-56)

Jesus had set his face on Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This made the Samaritans angry. Obviously this Messiah, whom they had welcomed with joy only a few months before, had no intention of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles with them on Mount Gerizim.

Many of the people, as we will see later in John's Gospel, believe in Him in the hope that He will be the fulfilment of their expectations, and when it later appears that Jesus does not seem to respond to this, many still drop out. Perhaps this is why, four days later, many of those who shouted "Hosanna" when Jesus entered Jerusalem were shouting "crucify Him".

Continuing in chapter 4, we meet Jesus again in Cana of Galilee.

## John 4:43-54

*46So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. 48Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. 52Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. 54This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.*

Arriving at Cana, he is confronted by a certain nobleman whose son is seriously ill. As the rest of the chapter shows, Jesus heals this son. John calls this the second sign, the first we also saw in Cana, at the wedding feast where Jesus turned water into wine. Jesus' next remark is almost proverbial: "If I did not do miracles, you would not believe in me". Of course there are two sides to this, the first is that Jesus is meeting us in our lack of faith by showing us who he is so that we can believe in Him, the other side, the dark side, is that we humans have a tendency to believe only in that which is to our advantage, and this is shown several times in the Gospel.

# A lame man

## John 5:1-47<sup>39</sup>

*1After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. 5And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. 8Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. 10The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. 11He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. 14Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. 15The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. 16And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. 17But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. 19Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. 22For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26For as*

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<sup>39</sup> Note: Verses 3b to 4 are not found in most older manuscripts of the Gospel of John. Most modern translations have omitted these verses.

Archaeological research seems to indicate that the Bethesda Baths were about the bathwater of Siloah, which was a so-called 'siphon spring', the water moving constantly up and down in a cadence of several hours. The idea was that whoever was first in the water when the bath was refilled would be healed. This would infer be the 'waters of salvation' of Isaiah 12:3 (see also Isaiah 8:6), which would bring both physical healing and spiritual salvation.

*the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; 27and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. 28Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. 30I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. 31If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. 33Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. 35He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. 36But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. 37And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. 39Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. 41I receive not honour from men. 42But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? 45Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*

In chapters 5 to 12 of the Gospel of John, we see Jesus in constant conflict with the Jews. It seems that Jesus does things that contradict the traditions that the Pharisees and scribes held. We have already seen a beginning in John 2, at the wedding feast at Cana, when He turned water into wine in the stone jars used for the Jewish ritual of washing hands. The wine in these jars rendered the jars useless, so that the Pharisees attending the feast could no longer participate in the wedding feast. Jesus seems to have no respect for these customs and even deliberately violates them in the presence of the Jews. The story in chapter 5 of the Gospel of John describes another such confrontation, this time over the rules and customs surrounding the Sabbath. The Jews have a number of rules that apply to the Sabbath that have no direct basis in the Law of Moses. To give just one example, which we find in the Gospels, the Jews have what they call the Sabbath journey. A Sabbath journey is the distance that may be travelled outside one's home on the Sabbath. This distance is about 800 metres<sup>40</sup>. There is nothing in the Torah, the Law of Moses, to support this rule.

Let's go to the text. We have arrived at a "feast of the Jews". Why John chose this term is not clear to me, in Leviticus 23 these feasts are called "the feasts of the Lord". I won't have any further speculation on this point. What is clear to me is that we have arrived here at the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, which is seven weeks after the Feast of Unleavened Bread that we have read about in John 2 and 3. Jesus is in a bathhouse called Bethesda in Jerusalem, this place was one of the places where people, especially

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<sup>40</sup> The New Testament; revised Voorhoeve edition (Vaassen: publisher H. Medema, 1982, ISBN 90 6353 117 6). Annotation to Acts 1:12

Pharisees, could stay when they visited Jerusalem during the feasts. When Jesus arrives there, he encounters a paralysed man.

## **Johannes 5:5-9<sup>a</sup>**

*5And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. 8Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked:*

I won't go into the description of the movement of the water any further, some think that this would be some kind of superstition, but I'll leave to that. The fact is that Jesus heals this man and then instructs him to pick up his mattress and start walking.

## **Johannes 5:9<sup>b</sup>-13**

*9...and on the same day was the sabbath.*

*10The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. 11He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.*

So it was the Sabbath on that day, and there were many Jews in that place who were using that place as a place to stay. These Jews confront the man who has just been healed with the fact that no burden should be carried outside the house on the Sabbath<sup>41</sup>. Again, this is one of those Jewish rules that is not explicitly found in the Law of Moses, but only in their "traditions of the elders"<sup>42</sup>. So Jesus told this man to pick up his mattress, which was a direct violation of Jewish rules. Not only that, but it is possible that the person who spoke to this man about it was carrying a mattress under his arm. The same traditions indicate how to declare this rule inapplicable. On the day before the Sabbath, by placing an object from your house at a distance from your house, you can move the front door of your house, which means that in this tradition you are allowed to walk freely between your house and the object that now serves as the front door of your house, even if this distance is greater than a so-called Sabbath journey. You would also be allowed to carry your mattress there, since the prohibition against carrying your mattress applies only outside the home. By the way, such a mattress cannot be compared to what we think of as a mattress; such a mattress was a thinly woven rug, often made of palm leaves, and was no heavier than an average grapefruit (talk about carrying a load).

## **John 5:16-18**

*16And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.*

*17But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the*

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<sup>41</sup> See Talmud, Shabbat 6a, 8b

<sup>42</sup> See Talmud, Shabbat 6a, 8b

*sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*

Once it was clear that Jesus had healed the man, and that He had done so on the Sabbath, it was proverbially 'going out on a limb'. The Jews want to persecute Jesus, and not only that, but when Jesus calls God his Father, they even want to kill Him, because He has made Himself equal to God. If you look at the chronology<sup>43</sup> of the story, it is only nine weeks since Jesus came out of the wilderness and began his ministry. So the great confrontation is there from the beginning. We have seen that Nicodemus found it necessary to come to Jesus at night, he did not do it because the Jews were able to view Jesus in a positive way, the opposite is true.

*<sup>13</sup>Howbeit no man spake openly of him **for fear of the Jews.**  
(John 7:13)*

Even Nicodemus, as a member of the Sanhedrin, could not go in peace to see for himself who this Jesus really was. He too had to do this secretly at night.

Then, to answer the Jews' accusations, Jesus will give a great testimony about who he is and what he has come to do. The whole rest of the text from verse 19 to verse 47 contains this argument.

## **Johannes 5:19a**

*<sup>19</sup>Then answered Jesus and said unto them, **Verily, verily, I say unto you,**...*

We have already encountered this phrase in the text of the Gospel of John. As soon as Jesus puts these words into his mouth, he is making fundamental statements that have to do with the gospel of the Kingdom. In the Gospel of John alone we find this phrase 25 times. The original text uses the word "ἀμήν" (amen) for the word "verily", a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew "אמן" (amen). Every time Jesus makes such statements the Jews are offended. It would take too long to go into every detail in the context of this book, but I will highlight a number of aspects that are always met with resistance, especially from the Jewish leaders.

- In verses 19-23 Jesus declares Himself to be the Son of God and the relationship between Him and the Father, indicating that He is the fulfilment of Psalm 2:7: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."
- In verses 24 and 25 He speaks of "My word", indicating that He is the prophet Moses spoke of coming (see Deuteronomy 18:18-19).
- In verse 30 He is the one who has received judgement from the Father. Jeremiah 33:15 says: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land".
- In verses 32 and 33 He shows how John the Baptist testified of Him.
- In verses 34-36 He shows that the Father testifies of Him by the works He does; He could not have done this without the Father.
- In verse 37 He says that the Father has spoken from heaven.
- In verses 39 and 40 Jesus indicates that the Scriptures, the Old Testament, speak about Him.
- In verses 41-47 He calls the Jews to account for not believing the Scriptures: "If you do not believe the Scriptures, how will you believe my words"? so that they will not be able to believe in Him.

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<sup>43</sup> For this, see: The Chronological Gospels, Copyright ©2013 by Michael Rood

## John 5:39-40

*<sup>39</sup>Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. <sup>40</sup>And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

You have to imagine that He has in mind a group of people who pride themselves on knowing the Scriptures, who examine the Scriptures daily, and yet they miss out on it completely. This fact alone indicates that for them the Scriptures are not the Word that God has spoken and can only be understood in relation to God, the Scriptures have become a kind of idol for them. If you look at current synagogue practice, I need only point out the fact that sometimes a round dance is performed with the Torah scrolls, but also the way in which the contents are studied and interpreted. Some of the terms that I encounter today that have to do with textual interpretation are PARDES, Gematria, Torah Code. These things give a picture of how Judaism deals with the biblical text.

- PARDES is a system of explanation based on four levels.
  - The P stands for Peshat (פֶּשֶׁט), which is the superficial, literal reading.
  - The R stands for Remez (רִמְזָה), which is the symbolic meaning,
  - the D stands for Derash (דְּרָשָׁה), which is the narrative or midrashic meaning, and
  - Finally, the S stands for Sod (סוּד), the secret or mystical meaning.

Note: In this system it must be assumed that every text must be interpreted on each of these four levels.

- Gematria, an explanation of the text and words based on the numerical value of each letter added together.
- Torah code, where the Bible is interpreted on the basis of so-called hidden codes.

Of course, not every text in the Bible is meant literally; alongside the literal texts there are also texts with a symbolic or comparative meaning, such as the parables of Jesus. There are also texts that use so-called apocalyptic language, the most obvious being most of the Book of Revelation. However, it is usually possible to determine from the text which way of interpretation applies. The Jewish ways of interpretation, however, are very different in character, because each of the different ways is always applicable. I understand that these ways of interpreting the Scriptures have developed over the centuries, but they are indicative of the way in which the Scriptures were already treated by the Scribes and Pharisees, as the warning that Jesus gives them here shows.

Jesus presents Himself in a way that should lead a good listener to conclude that He must be the Messiah, but many do not believe in Him and are inclined to oppose Him violently from the start. Jesus obviously does not live up to the expectations most people had of the coming of the Messiah. We will see more of this later in the book when we come to the text of the Gospel of John.

# Bread to eat

## John 6:1-71

*1After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. 2And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. 3And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. 4And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*

### **The Bread of Life**

*5When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 6And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. 7Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. 8One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, 9There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? 10And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. 12When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. 13Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. 14Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*

*15When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. 16And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, 17and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. 18And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. 19So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. 21Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. 22The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; 23(howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) 24when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. 28Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*

*30They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*41The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*

*47Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48I am that bread of life. 49Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

*52The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 59These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. 60Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? 61When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? 62What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

*66From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. 67Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal*

life. <sup>69</sup>And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. <sup>70</sup>Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? <sup>71</sup>He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

## John 6:15 en 66

<sup>15</sup>When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

<sup>66</sup>From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

We have now reached the main course. The previous chapters, as far as the core of the content of this book is concerned, have been the appetizers or the soup, but from this chapter onwards the enormous controversy between Jesus and Judaism, especially the Jewish leaders, becomes visible. It is of the utmost importance that we learn to see this conflict and judge it on its proper merits. Very early in the early church, which was largely made up of Gentiles, this conflict came to the forefront. We are introduced to this phenomenon in Acts 15:

<sup>1</sup>And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. <sup>5</sup>But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:1 and 5)

What comes to mind here is the way in which the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, viewed themselves, the world around them and the Gospel. First of all, from the beginning there is enormous resistance from Judaism, but when later on some of the Pharisees also come to faith, they then try to convince the young Gentile community in Antioch that they should be circumcised according to Jewish tradition and keep the Law of Moses, otherwise they could not be saved. In those days, in order to have anything to do with the affairs of the Kingdom, before you could go any further, in their view you first had to become a Jew, i.e. be circumcised and assimilated into Judaism, and then start off by keeping the Law. In the understanding of the time, salvation was exclusively for Jews<sup>44</sup>. So when some of the Pharisees come to faith, they are convinced that this is what has to happen, apart from all the other motives that might be involved.

The sharp contrast between the two quoted passages, verses 15 and 66 of John's Gospel chapter 6, is a clear symptom of the difficulty the Jews had at that time with the message of Jesus and his interpretation of the Kingdom of God. When Jesus shows them that the gospel is about something completely different, and that it is clearly not physical but spiritual in nature, the great mass of the disciples drop out completely the next day, they no longer go with him. Jesus is left with this small group of 12 disciples.

Let's go back to the text of the chapter.

## John 6:1-3

<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup>And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which

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<sup>44</sup> By the way, this is still true within Jewish thought in the Talmud and Kabbalah

*he did on them that were diseased. <sup>3</sup>And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.*

Jesus crosses to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and it turns out that a very large group of people are also crossing to the other side in boats, they want to follow Jesus, and that might take some effort. Jesus then goes up a mountain, which means that there is a mountain to climb after the crossing. The mountains around the Sea of Galilee may not be very high, but they are often steep. But the motive that drives these people is not so much the teaching of Jesus, but the fact that Jesus heals many sick people, and who wouldn't want that? Then, to add another sign to the many signs that Jesus had already done, he asked the disciples to feed the crowd. From a practical point of view, this is impossible, as Philip's protest makes clear. When Jesus then asks them what they have available, it turns out to be no more than five loaves and two fish. Jesus goes to work and it turns out that this small amount is more than enough to feed the whole crowd with bread and fish. There is clearly a lesson here for the disciples. If we are willing to give of what we have, then God is willing to add to what we lack. So it was not really about bread, but about the principles of the Kingdom which the disciples needed to learn and which they would later need as they preached the Gospel throughout the world. The great mass of the rest of the disciples only see the loaves and fishes, which satisfy them. There is also a lesson in it for us, is the gospel and the practice of life about Jesus himself and his message, or do we focus on what we can glean from it? By the way, the same lesson is also in the part about the crossing, which is not successful because of the wind and Jesus coming to them over the water. It is not about our commitment, because it will turn out to be insufficient, but it is about Jesus who, if necessary, comes to us on foot over the water, with the result that we immediately reach the other side..

## **John 6:25-27**

*<sup>25</sup>And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. <sup>27</sup>Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

So the crowds follow Jesus because of the loaves of bread that satisfy them and not because of the teachings that Jesus wants to pass on to his disciples. With the statement that follows, Jesus clearly begins to shift the focus from the physical, in the form of our daily food, to the spiritual, in the form of what he has to offer us, because that alone has lasting, eternal value. Based on the beliefs of the Jews at that time, there is a discussion about the great sign, the manna from heaven at the time of Moses in the wilderness. The people are ready, they say: "Give us this bread again and again". Jesus parries this discussion with these beautiful, big words:

## **John 6:35-40**

*<sup>35</sup>And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup>But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. <sup>37</sup>All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. <sup>39</sup>And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him,*

*may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Jesus' point is clear: life is not about what the spectators were doing, namely It is about Jesus himself and our life of faith and trust in Him and the total surrender that goes with it. Jesus puts it this way in the Sermon on the Mount:

*33But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.  
(Matthew 6:33)*

If we surrender to Him and follow Him obediently, He will provide us with what we need. Receiving Him into our lives is the only thing we will ever be truly satisfied with.

It is also true that without God's help we cannot even come to Jesus. We need God to reach out to us in Jesus in order to enable us to choose what we stand for. It is not enough for us to want to live with Him, God must draw us, and this requires the necessary humility on our part.

When Jesus explains that He is the bread that came down from heaven, doubts arise, the masses are unable to see beyond the fact that they know Him and know His Father and His Mother, how could He have come down from heaven? After Jesus again makes the comparison between Himself and the manna that the Israelites had to eat in the wilderness, He adds to the controversy:

## **John 6:53-58**

*53Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

The very thought that you could and should eat human flesh is not one bridge too far, but dozens. I hear people thinking, "I'm not a cannibal, am I?" which again shows that people are not able to see that the words of Jesus are spiritual and not physical.

## **Johannes 6:61-64<sup>a</sup>**

*61When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? 62What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64But there are some of you that believe not...*

People are offended by it. Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Corinthians:

*22For the **Jews require a sign**, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23but we preach Christ crucified, **unto the Jews a stumblingblock**, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.  
(Corinthians 1:22-24)*

The Jews need physical evidence that is or becomes visible in physical reality, and a crucified Messiah does not fit into this picture. The Jewish way of thinking and the message of the cross are diametrically opposed. Jews expect an earthly kingdom with their Messiah, the son of David, on the throne in Jerusalem, who will deliver them from the Romans and restore the Jews to their special standing in the world. They are the only people of God. That is why the vast majority of the Jews in Galilee no longer go with Him.

Today I often hear that we need to return to a Jewish or Hebrew way of thinking, after all Jesus and the apostles were Jews were they not. At first glance this seems very plausible and you see one after the other arriving at this way of thinking. So we bring a lot of Jewish thought and tradition back into the understanding of the message of the New Testament. Of course, it is important to include the historical context in a pure understanding of the Bible, but if we do not take into account the fundamental controversy that exists between the message of Jesus and the Jewish tradition, then we will also follow the example of the Jews and look for the physical fulfilment of texts that are mainly spiritual in nature and find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ..

*<sup>20</sup>For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.  
(2 Corinthians 1:20)*

Right at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel we are confronted with the fact that Jesus returns from Egypt with Joseph and Mary, coupled with the fulfilment of an Old Testament promise:

*<sup>14</sup>When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: <sup>15</sup>and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**  
(Matthew 2:14-15)*

In the Old Testament Israel is the Son of God<sup>45</sup>, in Matthew 2 Jesus is the Son of God. What Matthew wants to make clear is that Israel, as a physical nation and as a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God, finds its fulfilment in Christ alone. We have already seen in Galatians that Jesus Christ is to be seen as the promised offspring of Abraham<sup>46</sup>, and that the church which is in Christ is to be seen as the offspring of Abraham<sup>47</sup>. In Hebrews this is reaffirmed:

*<sup>1</sup>God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>hath in these last days spoken unto us by **his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;**  
(Hebrews 1:1-2)*

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<sup>45</sup> See Exodus 4:22-23 'let my son go'

<sup>46</sup> See Galatians 3:16

<sup>47</sup> See Galatians 3:29

So Jesus is the heir of all the promises. The people of Israel can be seen as the bearers of the promises, not the heirs<sup>48</sup>. For people stuck in a Jewish way of thinking, this is a far-fetched concept. Many seem unable to shake off the idea that there is still a future for Israel and the Jewish people. But Jesus is concerned with freeing people from Jewish tradition and its way of thinking right from the beginning of his teaching.

## **John 6:67-69**

*<sup>67</sup>Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? <sup>68</sup>Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*

The small group of disciples who remain are confronted by Jesus with the question of whether they too should leave. Peter explains why they continue to follow Jesus. Later in John's gospel it becomes clear that they do not understand much either, but they realise that they have to stay with Jesus to find out what it really is. We too need the truth of the Gospel to be explained to us by the Holy Spirit. We too will remain stuck in our western way of thinking, or perhaps the Jewish way of thinking if we have embraced that. We will eventually have to arrive at the conclusion that the Kingdom of God is heavenly, that the temple and the temple service are now spiritual, and that there is nothing outside of Jesus Christ and His teachings that will help us in this process.

Finally, the question for us too: "Do we follow Jesus because of who He is and all that goes with it, or do we follow Him because of what we get out of it? This question was the crucial distinction between true disciples who stayed and false disciples who left, and it is still the distinguishing mark between true and so-called Christians. It is up to us to choose.

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<sup>48</sup> ["De Erfenis"](#) A Bible study of mine on the question of who is the heir.

# The family

## John 7:1-9

*1After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. 2Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. 5For neither did his brethren believe in him. 6Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. 7The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. 9When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.*

And then it's almost time for the Feast of Tabernacles. During these feasts the Jews are supposed to go up to Jerusalem to take part in the feast<sup>49</sup>. Jesus is expected to go too, it is a biblical commandment. His half-brothers call him to account for this, not to urge him to attend the feast, but to get Jesus to actively manifest in Jerusalem that he is the one sent from God. The devil had already tried to get Jesus to show in public that he was who he said he was by throwing himself from the temple as a demonstration<sup>50</sup>. The devil tries to do it himself first, but if he doesn't succeed, he then uses people around him and you can't get any closer. Jesus is confronted by the brothers he grew up with. "If you have to play the Messiah, do it in Jerusalem, there are people who can help you on your way, not just here in Galilee". Even his own brothers didn't believe in him. I can imagine it must have been a lonely existence for Jesus for the first thirty years of his life. Much later, after the resurrection, Jesus also appears to his brothers and they finally come to faith in Christ<sup>51</sup>. The epistles of James and Jude were written by two of these half-brothers. What is important to know about them in the context of this book is the fact that both of them refer to themselves as servants of Jesus:

*1James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,... (James 1:1)*

*1Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James... (Jude 1:1)*

Paul writes the following in his second letter to the Corinthians:

*16Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, **though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.***  
(2 Corinthians 5:16)

I often hear lately that we need to understand Jesus as a Jew in a Jewish culture. From the above it is clear that knowing Jesus as a Jew does not seem to mean that we always understand Him and therefore believe in Him. Jesus himself emphasises this at another occasion in the Gospels, when his mother and brothers come to see Him:

*46While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. 47Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother*

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<sup>49</sup> See also Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16

<sup>50</sup> Reading from Matthew 4:1-11

<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:7<sup>a</sup> : After that, he was seen of James...

*and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 50For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*  
(Matthew 12:46-50)

Believing in Jesus means first and foremost that we are His disciples and therefore obedient to the Father. Physical relationships seem to be of little importance to Jesus.

Jesus defends himself in the confrontation with his brothers by pointing out that they are of the world and therefore cannot be hated by the world. But the world hates Jesus and what He stands for, and that He calls the works of the world evil. In John 3, during the conversation with Nicodemus, we already came across this:

*19And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, **because their deeds were evil.***  
(John 3:19)

So what do these evil works consist of? In John 3, they apparently involve unbelief. 2 John 1:11 also talks about evil works. Let us just read the portion:

*7For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11for he that biddeth him God speed is **partaker of his evil deeds.***  
(2 John 1:7-11)

What is seen as "evil works" in this passage is the refusal to acknowledge Jesus as having come in the flesh and then to teach it. Within Talmudic Judaism this confession is not only not accepted but fiercely opposed<sup>52</sup>. Within Islam it is also not accepted; "Allah has no son" is one of the standard beliefs within Islam<sup>53</sup>. Within the world's major religions it is believed that if we try hard we can attain the state of divinity. Meditation techniques, yoga and other mystical expressions focus on this, all based on the lie that the serpent whispered to Eve:

*4And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, **and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.***  
(Genesis 3:4-5)

It is of the utmost importance that we know the huge difference between what Jesus is bringing and how other ways of thinking based on this lie deal with it. It could be argued that Jesus is proverbially "from another planet". Too much focus on his physical origins

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<sup>52</sup> [https://www.jarjiiivanainen.net/Messiah\\_prophesies\\_Talmud7.html](https://www.jarjiiivanainen.net/Messiah_prophesies_Talmud7.html): Contemporary Judaism denies the divinity of the Messiah. Jews do not believe it....

<sup>53</sup> Another clear statement of the Qur'an is found in Surah 19:88-99, which bears the caption: 'GOD HAS NOT TAKEN A SON' and reads: 'And they say, The merciful one has taken himself a son. Truly thou hast come to an unholy thing. Soon thereby the heavens would be split, and the earth cleft, and the mountains turned to dust. Because they grant to the Most Gracious a son. But it is not necessary for the Most Gracious to take a son.'

and the extent to which he relates to them leads to a lack of belief rather than a better understanding of what is important.

To his brothers he finally says: "You go to the feast, I don't" The way the Feast of Tabernacles was apparently treated in the culture is not appropriate for Jesus, He doesn't want to be part of it. The fact that He goes later, but in secret, indicates that the Feast of Tabernacles is about Him and not just a Jewish celebration..

## **John 7:10-13**

*10But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. 11Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. 13Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

Again we see the same phenomenon: secretly they want to believe, but they are persuaded not to believe "for fear of the Jews". This again shows the difference between Jesus and His Gospel and the Judaism of that time.

# A Sent One

## John 7:14-24

*14Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. 18He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. 19Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? 20The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? 21Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. 22Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. 23If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? 24Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

When Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, He initially kept a low profile, and it was not until halfway through the Feast, which lasted eight days in all<sup>54</sup>, that Jesus appeared and began to teach in the temple. This is the first time that Jesus actually gives public teaching to the people in the temple in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, we do not always have the specific content of the teaching. In order to discover the content of Jesus' teachings, we need to read and study carefully all four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles written by the various apostles. What this passage from the Gospel of John is trying to show is who Jesus is, along with some of the details of what Jesus is teaching at this time. The people are amazed at Jesus' knowledge of the things he is teaching. They seem to realise that Jesus was not trained in any of the rabbinical schools of the day. Immediately after Jesus' arrival in Galilee, at the end of the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" described in Matthew 5-7, we encounter a similar reaction:

*28And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*  
(Matthew 7:28-29)

God promises to Moses that one day a prophet will come who will not only be like Moses, but will surpass him in authority.

*18I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*  
(Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

In Acts 3, during one of Peter's speeches in Jerusalem, Peter points out that Jesus is the one referred to in Deuteronomy.

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<sup>54</sup> See Leviticus 23 for the Lord's feasts..

*22For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.  
(Acts 3:22-23)*

From the above it is clear that the authority of Jesus as a teacher is comparable to that of Moses in the Old Testament. Exodus 20 shows that the people did not want to be addressed directly by God because they would not be able to handle it.

*18And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 19And they said unto Moses, **Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.** 20And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. 21And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.  
(Exodus 20:18-21)*

At that time, Moses acted as a mediator between God and the people of Israel. The text of Deuteronomy 18 shows that God agrees to this only temporarily, but that there will come a time when God will speak directly to the people again, and the ministry of Jesus, as we have already read in chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, is the fulfilment of this. He is the Word made flesh. He is God Himself speaking to the people in human flesh. Moses is not the one who brought grace and truth, Jesus is; Moses is only the one who gave us the Law.

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

The law is not the point, the law is only a foreshadowing of the essence of grace and truth that came with Jesus Christ.

In response to the comments of those around Him, Jesus makes a remarkable statement.

*16Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.  
(John 7:16-17)*

Jesus indicates that the teaching he comes with is not his own, but given by the One who sent him. And that the one who is obedient to do the will of God will recognise this teaching as such and acknowledge that it comes from God. This shows that the gospel can only be understood by people who are at least willing to actually respond to it. Paul also writes about this in 1 Corinthians 1:

*18For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written,  
I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.  
20Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?  
21For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22For the Jews*

*require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; <sup>24</sup>but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.  
(1 Corinthians 1:18-25)*

When we are born again, as we read in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, we are also able to see and recognise what the Kingdom of God is all about and to enter into it.

Jesus puts his finger on the sore spot by pointing out that people claim to have the Law of Moses but do not actually obey it:

*<sup>19</sup>Did not Moses give you the law, **and yet none of you keepeth the law?**  
(John 7:19<sup>a</sup>)*

So it is not only important to have the Law, we will also have to do it, the same applies to us in our time under the New Covenant. We can quote the Bible until we are blue in the face, but if we don't actually do something with it, it will eventually turn out to be of no use to us. This is what Jesus is talking about in the Sermon on the Mount.

*<sup>21</sup>Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven  
(Matthew 7:21)*

Or as it is expressed in Luke 6 by Jesus:

*<sup>46</sup>And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? <sup>47</sup>Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:  
(Luke 6:46-47)*

Do we, as New Testament Christians, dare to look in that mirror? The Jews were told that they did not keep the Law, are we keeping the Word of God or have we, like many at that time, found all kinds of excuses to think that the words of Jesus do not apply?

What else is clear from the text is that they have the specific rules of the law and think they understand how to interpret them, but that they have not understood the essence of what God is doing in the law. Jesus is referring to the one incident that took place at Bethesda<sup>55</sup>, where Jesus healed a paralysed man on the Sabbath, but was accused of doing so on the Sabbath. Not only that, but the religious leaders wanted to kill Him for breaking the Sabbath.

We will come back to this later in this book because it is a recurring theme in the confrontation between Jesus and the Jews.

## **John 7:25-36**

*<sup>25</sup>Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? <sup>26</sup>But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? <sup>27</sup>Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. <sup>28</sup>Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. <sup>29</sup>But I*

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<sup>55</sup> John 5:1-18

*know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. <sup>30</sup>Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. <sup>31</sup>And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?*

*<sup>32</sup>The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. <sup>33</sup>Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. <sup>34</sup>Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. <sup>35</sup>Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? <sup>36</sup>What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?*

As we read on in this chapter, we find the people of Jerusalem wondering how the leaders view Jesus. First of all, is this Jesus the one the rulers are trying to kill, suddenly to be the expected Messiah? But that's not possible either, because we know where He comes from, Galilee, where He grew up, and we don't know that about the true Messiah<sup>56</sup>. Jesus replies that although they think they know Him, He is sent by the True One, which means that their assumption that they don't know the origin of the Messiah is wrong.

It is striking that although Jesus claims to be sent by the Father, he does not seem to prove this in any substantial way, we have to put up with the comment earlier in the text that we can only judge this on its own merits if we are willing to be honest and obedient.

The Jewish leaders then try to seize Him, but are apparently prevented by the fact that 'it is not yet time' and so Jesus still enjoys temporary protection. We find another such example in Luke 4, when Jesus acts in the synagogue of Nazareth.

*<sup>28</sup>And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,*

*<sup>29</sup>And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. <sup>30</sup>But he passing through the midst of them went his way,...*

*(Luke 4:28-30)*

Even then it wasn't the time.

More relevant to the content of this book are Jesus' remarks that He will only be with them for a short time and then go to the one who sent Him. Significantly, Jesus will not be found afterwards. While the Jews are speculating about whether He might go to the Greek dispersion, Jesus emphasises that it is a place that cannot be found by them. This is a clear reference to heaven and the heavenly realm that is typical of the Kingdom of God. Throughout John's gospel, the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God and the reign of Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God in heaven, is emphasised time and again.

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<sup>56</sup> It is assumed that this line of thought would be based on Malachi 3:1 that the Messiah will suddenly appear, and so we cannot know where He comes from.

# Living Water

## John 7:37-44

*37In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

*40Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. 41Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? 42Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? 43So there was a division among the people because of him. 44And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.*

In connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, Jewish tradition added a water-related element to the festivities. On one of the last days of the feast, it was customary to draw water from the well of Shiloh<sup>57</sup>. The intention was to take this water to the temple in a festive procession and then pour it on the altar of burnt offering. The purpose of this sacrifice was to pray for rain before the rainy season. Unlike Egypt, for example, where the Nile was the source of water, Israel was dependent on rain. In the Bible, this is made abundantly clear at the time of King Ahab and the prophet Elijah. Judgment came upon Israel because of idolatry, and the prophet Elijah was the one who had to announce that judgment. The judgement was that it didn't rain in Israel for three years:

*1And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, **there shall not be dew nor rain these years**, but according to my word.  
(I Kings 17:1)*

In the New Testament, in James 5, we find a reference to this situation:

*17Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.  
(James 5:17-18)*

It is understandable that within the Jewish culture at the time of Jesus, people were aware of the fact that they were very dependent on rain and so they had been concerned about that and that was the basis of this ceremony and that was meant as a kind of prayer for rain. If you look for the origin of this ceremony, it turns out that there is no mandate in the Law for this ceremony, so it is based solely on Jewish tradition, often coming from Babylon, and not on the Bible. Of course, they looked for some kind of biblical justification and found it in Isaiah 12:

*3Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.  
(Isaiah 12:3)*

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<sup>57</sup> In the New Testament, it is referred to as the Spring of Siloam

However, there is no specific mandate for this in the Bible. In an interview that Michael Rood conducted with Nehemiah Gordon<sup>58</sup>, Nehemiah Gordon explains how this happened in the time of the Second Temple<sup>59</sup>. Among other things, he explains how one of the high priests wanted to get out of this sacrifice and poured the water over his feet instead of on the altar, to show that what he was being asked to do had no basis in the law of God. Nehemiah Gordon also explains that in addition to the prayer for water, there is also an element in it that relates to the Spirit of God.

By the way, the Law of God clearly states that we are not to add to or subtract from the Law:

*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.  
(Deuteronomy 4:2)*

This ceremony is one of the many examples of additions that the Pharisees, in particular, made to their lives and to synagogue practice, and which were a constant source of conflict between the Jews and Jesus.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, this ceremony came to an abrupt end. Within Judaism, a kind of alternative was developed within the synagogal practice, and it is still performed every year during the Feast of Tabernacles<sup>60</sup>. Within Christianity, there are various movements that are quite impressed by many Jewish traditions, and this tradition is one of them. An example of this is the publication by "Christenen voor Israel" on their website about this ceremony<sup>61</sup>, in which they speak very highly of this water ceremony. During the Feast of Tabernacles, this ceremony is often given substance in Messianic circles.

On the last day, the great day of the Feast, Jesus begins to cry out that one must be with Him for the living water and its relationship to the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost. It is not clear to me whether this was during the ceremony in question or the day after, but it is clear that Jesus is using this context to invite people to come to him. Given the unbiblical nature of this ceremony, Jesus contrasts himself with this practice and declares that it is not this kind of ceremony that is to be sought, but that we are to focus on Him, He is the source of living water, He is the one who pours out the Spirit of God on those who believe in Him. It is very characteristic that the actions of Jesus constantly provoke conflict and divide people. Jesus Himself also indicates elsewhere that He did not come to bring peace and unity, but a sharp sword that brings division.

*34Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: **I came not to send peace, but a sword.** 35For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

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<sup>58</sup> For this, see the interview in question during the broadcast of Shabbat Night Live.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=926am32n2ss> as of 12:26 minutes

<sup>59</sup> See his website for more information on Nehemia Gordon: <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/>

<sup>60</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4491/jewish/The-Drawing-of-the-Water.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4491/jewish/The-Drawing-of-the-Water.htm)

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.christenenvoorisrael.nl/artikelen/prachtig-waterceremonie-bij-siloam-vanwege-loofhuttenfeest>

(Matthew 10:24-39)

When we are confronted with the truth, we are always faced with the choice of whether we want to receive that truth or not; receiving the truth always has consequences for us, and they are not always immediately positive. Paul speaks of receiving the love of truth:

*even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup>and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.  
(2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)*

Love of the truth is first and foremost a choice that many are unwilling to make because of the potential consequences involved, and then it is very tempting to take refuge in one's own fabricated, often Christian-appearing reality instead of receiving the truth.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.  
(John 14:6)*

We must realize that Jesus Himself is the Truth and that there is no salvation to be found in hiding in our own, often religious, world of make-believe, of which the above-mentioned water ceremony is a part. Salvation is only in Him and nothing and no one else.

# Caught

## John 8:2-11

*2And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. 7So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

When Jesus is back in the temple the next day to teach the people, the Pharisees and scribes come up with a woman they have caught red-handed in adultery. First of all, one wonders how they could have caught her red-handed without being actively involved themselves, but that's beside the point. They bring this woman to Jesus with the intention of tempting Him. So what is this temptation? I've read several different commentaries on this, but not all of them come to a uniform conclusion. Clearly, the intention is to catch Jesus on something, and what could be simpler than confronting him with something to do with the law of God. To mention the text of the law that refers to the violation of the seventh commandment:

*10And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.  
(Leviticus 20:10)*

What is clear from the above text is that not only the woman should be brought, but both, the man and the woman, should be brought before the people.

Jesus bends down and then writes something in the dust of the temple square. What He wrote there is not clear, but what is clear is that He does not really intend to take seriously the challenge that the Pharisees and scribes put before Him. Jesus clearly states in John 3 what the purpose of His coming is:

*17For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.  
(John 3:17)*

He didn't come to play judge. If you look at the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, it refers to kingship from Jerusalem with the temple as the central residence from which the Messiah will judge. Jesus will not satisfy this expectation. When they continue to insist, Jesus shifts the judgment to themselves:

*7...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.  
(John 8:7b)*

Then it becomes clear that none of the men present dare to take the responsibility of being the first witness. According to the law, he who testifies must cast the first stone.

*7**The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him** to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.  
(Deuteronomy 17:7)*

Of course, if you take responsibility for judging, you are also judging yourself, and apparently no one wants to take that on himself.

If no one ultimately condemns the woman, Jesus indicates that He will not do so either. He concludes by saying:

*11...Neither do I condemn thee: **go, and sin no more.**  
(John 8:11b)*

The message of the gospel is a message of repentance and forgiveness, not a message of law and judgment, though it is clear from Jesus' final remark that the law is not being set aside here. Grace is not a license for sin.

*44And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47and that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem.  
(Luke 24:44-47)*

And this message is for anybody in the world who wants to hear it. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about. It is a message of restitution for sinners who are willing to repent.

# Light of the World

## John 8:12-20

*12Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world:** he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. 13The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. 15Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. 19Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. 20These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*

In the gospel of John we find several times that Jesus proclaims himself as "I AM". There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from this, the first being that there is a clear reference in the statement towards the Name of God. When God reveals Himself to Moses at the burning bush, Moses asks for the name of God, and this is what God says:

*13And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 14And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM:** and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. 15And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The **LORD** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: **this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.** <sup>62</sup> (Exodus 3:13-15).*

The statement of Jesus in question connects Him with the Name of God.

In addition to this meaning, there is still another meaning in it, namely that He is the fulfillment of the promises given by God. For example, when He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," it is a direct reference to the Old Testament, namely to Ezekiel 34, in which God explicitly denounces the shepherds of Israel and then promises that He Himself will be the shepherd from now on:

*1For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered...*  
(Ezekiel 34:11-12<sup>a</sup>)

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<sup>62</sup> The term LORD in the Bible translation used is a translation of the term אֱלֹהִים and has the meaning of 'He who is' or also 'He who will be'. The name LORD (with four capital letters) is thus derived from 'I AM'. Whenever we remember or invoke God we do so with this Name, because this is His eternal Name.

Jesus declares himself to be the fulfillment of this promise. When Jesus says: "I am the light of the world", it is a clear reference to two texts from Isaiah:

*5Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, **and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;** 7to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.  
(Isaiah 42:5-7)*

*6And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,** that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.  
(Isaiah 49:6)*

Here also, He is the fulfillment of the promises of Isaiah. There are a number of aspects that can be mentioned here. First, the word "light." Where there is no light, there is darkness. Already in the creation story in Genesis 1 we see that without God's intervention there is darkness, only when God speaks his word of power: "Let there be light", the darkness is stripped of its power. So darkness has no substance, light does, darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. We have already seen in chapter 1 of the Gospel of John that with the coming of Jesus the light has come into the world:

*9That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.  
(John 1:9)*

Light therefore represents the intervention of God, both in creation and in the world around us, as well as in our personal lives. Jesus Christ is the ultimate intervention of God:

*19And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.  
(John 3:19-21)*

When the light shines in our lives, it exposes things that have to do with the darkness in our lives, and this is experienced by many people as being unwanted, we want to continue in our own way without taking responsibilities for our choices.

*16No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17**For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest;** neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. 18Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.  
(Luke 8:16-18)*

It is clear from the above scripture that in the end nothing is hidden, and this is what makes the proclamation of the truth of the gospel so controversial. As long as we are preaching a message that people like to hear, there are little consequences for us as the bearers of the message, but if we are like Jesus, there will be serious controversy.

In John 9, Jesus says the following:

*<sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.  
(John 9:5).*

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his disciples:

*<sup>14</sup>Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.  
(Matthew 5:14-16)*

The Pharisees immediately protest against Jesus' statement and try to pin Him down to the Law of Moses, which requires at least two witnesses, and in their opinion Jesus does not meet this requirement, He stands alone as a witness and therefore can never be legitimate. Jesus refutes this by explaining that not only He, but also the Father testifies of Him and therefore His testimony is true. The reason they don't recognize the Father's testimony is because they don't know the Father. Of course, we know from the Gospel a number of times when the Father, apart from the testimony found in Scripture, testifies to who Jesus is. When Jesus is baptized by John, a voice comes from heaven:

*<sup>16</sup>And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: <sup>17</sup>**and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**  
(Matthew 3:16-17)*

Also at the transfiguration on the mountain a voice is heard from heaven:

*<sup>5</sup>While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: **and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.**  
(Matthew 17:5)*

When Jesus explains in John 12 how He will glorify the Father, another voice is heard from heaven:

*<sup>27</sup>Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify thy name. **Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again**  
(John 12:27-28)*

But apart from these testimonies, we know of the testimony of John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old dispensation.

*<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. <sup>8</sup>He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. (John 1:6-8)*

Evidently Jesus is not alone, but we need to know the testimony of the Father, and that can only happen if we really know the Father.

In addition to this whole story about the light, there is another aspect that is overlooked by many, and that is that Jesus is the light of the "world". For many Jews at that time

this was a step too far, they see themselves as the chosen people of God and salvation is primarily meant for them and not for the world. We have quoted the text from Isaiah 49, and for the sake of clarity I will quote it again:

*6And he said, **It is a light thing** that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.***

*(Isaiah 49:6)*

That salvation would only be for Jews in this world is contradicted by God Himself. Jesus is announced by the Father as a light to the Gentiles, even to those at the end of the world, Israel alone is clearly not enough for God. This issue also emerges in the early church when a group of Pharisees who have come to faith teach that even a Gentile must be circumcised in order to be saved:

*5But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:5)*

In Judaism it is assumed that salvation is in essence only intended for those from the "People of God", i.e. the Jews, and that the Gentiles, the Goyim, can have no or only an indirect part in it. The Pharisees are regarded by rabbinic Jews as the great forerunners of rabbinic Judaism, and these Jews are proud to be descended from them. When the door is opened to the Gentiles in the first church, in the case of Cornelius<sup>63</sup> and his household, then the struggle arises which is described in Acts 15 and in this Jewish way of thinking, namely that in the deepest sense only Jews have a claim to the covenant with God, that the Gentiles must first enter Judaism and only then can they really be saved<sup>64</sup>. A Gentile who joins Judaism is called a proselyte, and this entry is accompanied by a number of ceremonial things that he must go through<sup>65</sup>. In addition to baptism, circumcision plays a crucial role.

The followers of "The Way" in Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians, were very zealous in keeping the law until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as James' statement in Acts 21 shows.:

*20And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; **and they are all zealous of the law:** ( Acts 21:20)*

It is inevitable that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple put an abrupt end to this<sup>66</sup>. However, everything that was later put in place as a substitute for the temple service by rabbinical Jews, often on the basis of this Jewish way of thinking, lacks any biblical basis.

That God had the nations in mind from the very beginning can be seen from God's statement before the conclusion of the covenant at Sinai.

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<sup>63</sup> See Acts 10.

<sup>64</sup> See also Paul's epistle to the Galatians, which is entirely devoted to this subject.

<sup>65</sup> <https://joodsactueel.be/2010/05/07/gioer-%E2%80%93-overgang-tot-het-Jodendom/>

<sup>66</sup> Jewish Christians fled in large numbers to the mountainous land southeast of the Dead Sea prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem, in this great judgement of God the Hebrew Christians were spared.

*3And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: **for all the earth is mine**: 6and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:3-6)*

In this passage Israel is challenged to listen to the voice of God and to keep the covenant in order to be a kingdom of priests, because the earth and therefore the nations belong to God. Israel was allowed to fulfill the role of priest for the benefit of the nations<sup>67</sup>. So when Jesus declares that He is the "light of the world", it is completely in line with Old Testament thought.

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<sup>67</sup> N.B. We know that Israel did not fulfil these conditions due to the incident with the golden calf and this called for the Levitical priesthood which was to accompany them until the coming of the great High Priest Jesus Christ.

# From above

## John 8:21-30

*12Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. 13The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. 15Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. 19Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.*

*20These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*

*21Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 24I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. 25Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. 26I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. 27They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. 28Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. 29And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. 30As he spake these words, many believed on him.*

In the rest of this chapter, Jesus paints two opposing worlds that have nothing in common with each other. It is true that Jesus walks in the world of men, but He is only a temporary part of it. "I am going" means that, having come into the world at the Father's command, He is also leaving it. So Jesus is not to be found in our physical world today. This means that He is not to be found with all kinds of techniques or systems that are offered, He is not to be found in our feelings and our experiencing of Him, with the result that anyone who seeks Jesus in this way will "die in his sin." Many people in the world, including within the churches, are looking for God, often using all kinds of tools. We are offered all kinds of meditations that would be helpful in finding God. A common method is the use of music, which puts us in a kind of atmosphere that makes us feel like we are close to God. What is also common, especially in our churches, is the so-called "preaching of the word", through which we are affirmed in our experience in that which we want to hear. Paul warns Timothy of this in his second letter:

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

(2 Timothy 4:3-4)

People who seek God, but do not seek Him in the way He allows Himself to be found, often end up with fairy tales that give them the idea that they belong, but in a large number of cases the words of Jesus remain: "In your sin you will die." The reaction of bystanders towards suicide alone indicates that they are trapped in a physical way of perceiving. We have already seen this in the case of Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus indicates that He is from above, while we are people from below, so we have to make a transition from our physical world, which is below, to the spiritual world of which Jesus is a part. This requires faith, faith that is characterized by three things, namely:

- Hearing or listening
- Receiving or accepting
- Embracing and obeying

Jesus begins his preaching with an exhortation:

*<sup>14</sup>Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye, and believe the gospel.***  
(Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus announces that the fullness of time has come, that the kingdom of God is within reach, and that repentance and faith are necessary to be a part of it. Part and parcel of repentance and faith is that we seek Him in the way He allows Himself to be found. In Isaiah 55, we find a beautiful description of what we must do if we sincerely seek God and actually want to receive Him:

*<sup>6</sup>Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. <sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. <sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*  
(Isaiah 55:6-9)

Isaiah 55 follows Isaiah 53 and it flows out of it, so to speak. Jesus is the suffering servant of the Lord, He died for us. Now, in order to participate in all that follows, this text gives us a list of things we need to do. We must:

- Seek the Lord
- Call upon Him
- Walk in a different way
- Adopt a different way of thinking
- Repent so that there is forgiveness of sin

As a result, we no longer die in our sin, but receive life in Jesus. We can then become part of the world above, where Jesus is. The aforementioned religious activities, however sincere they may be, will not bring this about.

## John 8:30-36

*<sup>30</sup>As he spake these words, many believed on him.  
<sup>31</sup>Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; <sup>32</sup>and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. <sup>33</sup>They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never*

*in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. <sup>35</sup>And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. <sup>36</sup>If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Believing in Jesus does not just mean that we "believe that Jesus died for our sins," although that is of course an essential part of the whole of the Gospel. We must also "abide" in His Word. The word "abide" is a translation of the Greek "meno," which has the meaning of dwelling, of being at home. The Word of God must be our home base, so to speak, from which we live. We must also be willing to learn so that we may understand the truth, for only the truth of the Word of Christ can truly set us free. An important part of this truth is that we are slaves to sin by nature, and therefore do not have an eternal home in the house in which we think we live. We must be effectively set free by Jesus in order to have an eternal home and be truly free. Appealing to the fact that we are descended from Abraham will not do it. Neither is relying on our Christian upbringing, our church membership, or any so-called "decision for Jesus" we may have made in the past. The reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be real today. Today we must be an obedient follower or disciple of Jesus in order to gradually enter into the freedom of which Jesus speaks. In the so-called Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks of two gates and two roads.:

*<sup>13</sup>Enter ye in at the strait **gate**: for wide is the **gate**, and broad is the **way**, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: <sup>14</sup>because strait is the **gate**, and narrow is the **way**, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.  
(Matthew 7:13-14)*

So we have to choose the right entrance, the narrow gate, and then walk the right way, the narrow way, both of which are necessary to not die in sin, but to reach the ultimate destination. I've been hearing a lot lately that repentance is not an essential part of the gospel, that it would be a type of works, and Paul supposedly says it's "not of works," but was that really what Paul meant?

*<sup>19</sup>Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: <sup>20</sup>but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. <sup>21</sup>For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.  
(Acts 26:19-20)*

Evidently, repentance was also an essential part of Paul's preaching. In Jesus' missionary commission in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says:

*<sup>6</sup>and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: <sup>47</sup>**and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached** in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.  
(Luke 24:46-47).*

Repentance and forgiveness are thus explicitly and directly connected, and forgiveness is obviously not available separately.

# Offspring of Abraham

## John 8:37-47

*37I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. 38I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*

*42Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

The rest of this chapter, from verse 37, is no longer about the Jews who believe in Jesus, but about the Jews who will not believe in Him. Jesus acknowledges that they are physically the descendants of Abraham, but He is confronting them with their behaviour, which is not what would be expected of the true descendants of Abraham. Jesus says that He speaks what He has seen in the Father, but that they, the Jews, act in accordance with what their Father wants them to do. What is happening here is that Jesus, in order to speak of the offspring of Abraham, is not paying attention to the physical origin of the Jews, but is taking the faith and behaviour of Abraham as his starting point. Jesus disputes the Jews' claim that Abraham is their father. Then, in order to prove their point, the Jews point to the fact that Jesus was born of fornication, as they suggest, and add that they have only one Father, God. Jesus counters this claim by pointing out that if they really had God as their Father, they would love Him. Jesus then adds very sharply that they do not have God and Abraham as their father, but the devil, and that he is a murderer and a liar, and that he is always out to lead people away from the truth with lies big and small, and to kill them in that way. " He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God".

It is clear from the above passage that Jesus is setting different criteria to those used by the Jews of His day, and of course this is still true today. In the present day, and this also applies to contemporary Judaism, the claim is maintained that the Jewish people are God's chosen people and that the Jews are the Israel of God. We find the same philosophy among many Christians. Much of contemporary Western evangelical Christianity teaches the same thing. This has its origins in the period after the Reformation, within a part of the circle of the Puritans in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. You can see how this body of thought is slowly coming to the forefront.

What later had a huge influence was the teaching of John Nelson Darby, who in the nineteenth century developed his famous 'dispensational theology'. Within this body of thought, the history of the world should be divided into a number of dispensations, or periods, in which God would deal with humanity in differing ways, each with a different

system of standards and values. It is not the intention of this book to explore this subject in any greater depth, but I would like to highlight a few things that are important in relation to the text read from the Gospel of John. The most important assumption here is the idea that God has not one but two covenant peoples, namely Israel, the Jewish people, on the one hand, and the Church on the other. Israel would supposedly be the covenant people on the basis of the Old Covenant and the associated Law of Moses, and the Church on the basis of the New Covenant, based on the gospel of grace, supposedly taught by Paul. The dispensation of grace would have been given to the Church because of the rejection of the gospel of the kingdom by the Jews at the time of Jesus, and would end with the rapture of the Church, followed by a short period of the continuation of God's plan with Israel, culminating in the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of peace on earth. During this period the Church would have some sort of role to play in heaven. This doctrine gained enormous traction with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967, and has become an indispensable doctrine in many contemporary evangelical circles.

The big question that needs to be asked is whether this way of thinking is consistent with the teachings of Jesus and his apostles. From the above we have clearly seen that in order to be counted as the offspring of Abraham, and therefore as the children of God, the faith and behaviour of Abraham is the standard, and physical descent plays little part in this. This is consistent with the Old Testament pattern of the eldest being replaced by a younger one. Just a few examples from Genesis:

- Isaac replaces Ishmael (Gen 21:12)
- Jacob replaces Esau and becomes Israel (Genesis 25:23)
- Joseph replaces Reuben (Genesis 49:26)
- Ephraim replaces Manasseh (Gen 48:17-20)

Significantly, the birthright does not go to the one who is physically the oldest, but faith and obedience are the norm. If we overlook this fundamental truth from the first book of the Bible and thus explain it away, then the conclusion drawn today in many evangelical circles is understandable, but if we take these fundamental facts into account in our considerations, we cannot maintain the emphasis on the physical origins of Israel. This is also consistent with what Paul teaches, just a few examples from his letters:

*8For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

*(Romans 2:28-29)*

*...For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

*(Romans 9:6b-8)*

*16Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

*(Galatians 3:16)*

*26For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in*

*Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.  
(Galatians 3:26-29)*

We can find other examples of similar explanations in Paul's epistles. This is not only because Paul is supposed to be the bringer of the gospel of grace, but also because this explanation is consistent with what I already find in the book of Genesis and also with what Jesus explains here in chapter 8 of the Gospel of John to the Jewish leaders of that time. There is only one people of God, the believing offspring of Abraham, the children of God, and the unbelievers in this world, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, do not belong to it.

Let's go back to chapter 1 of the Gospel of John and read:

*<sup>11</sup>He came unto his own, and his own received him not. <sup>12</sup>But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: <sup>13</sup>which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.  
(John 1:11-13)*

"His" in this passage means His people, "His own" are Jesus' fellow countrymen, as opposed to those who have no physical connection with the people of Israel, but people who are born of God because they have received Him, they will eventually prove to be children of God..

## **John 8:48-59**

*<sup>48</sup>Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. <sup>50</sup>And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. <sup>51</sup>Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. <sup>52</sup>Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. <sup>53</sup>Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? <sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: <sup>55</sup>yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. <sup>56</sup>Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. <sup>57</sup>Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? <sup>58</sup>Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. <sup>59</sup>Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

If we read on, we see that the listeners at that time did not understand anything, and then they seize on the accusation that he was a Samaritan, which is exaggerated by declaring him to be possessed. In those days to call someone a Samaritan was to say that he had been deceived. Jesus then goes on to explain who He is and what He came for. Contrary to what He observed in His fellow countrymen, namely that they did not really honour God, Jesus demonstrated that He honoured God the Father. He adds that He has seen Abraham, so He is of heavenly origin: "Before Abraham was, I am". By using the term "I am" he offended his listeners to such an extent that they picked up stones to stone him. The contrast between what Jesus teaches and what the Jews believe could not

be sharper. The message of the Kingdom of God and the view of the Jews are diametrically opposed.

Even today I encounter a similar phenomenon. When I point out that it is not the Jews but the Church of Jesus Christ that should be seen as "the Israel of God"<sup>68</sup>, I am very quickly accused of being an anti-Semite. It is said that so-called "Replacement Theology"<sup>69</sup> is the cause of much anti-Semitism in the world and that there is blood on the hands of those who hold to this theology. However, the Bible shows that the Jewish contemporaries are by no means exempt because of their attitude towards Jesus and later towards the Church, but more on that later.

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<sup>68</sup> Galatians 6:16.

<sup>69</sup> This theology, namely the so-called replacement theology teaches that the Israel of the Old Testament has now been replaced in this age by the Church of the New Testament and that in this age not the Jewish people are to be seen as the Israel of God but the Church of Jesus Christ.

# A man born blind

## John 9:1-41

*1*And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. *2*And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? *3*Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: **but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.** *4*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. *5*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. *6*When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, *7*and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

*8*The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? *9*Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. *10*Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? *11*He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. *12*Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

*13*They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. *14*And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. *15*Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. *16*Therefore said some of the Pharisees, **This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day.** Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. *17*They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

*18*But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. *19*And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? *20*His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: *21*but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. *22*These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. *23*Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. *24*Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. *25*He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. *26*Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? *27*He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? *28*Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. *29*We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. *30*The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. *31*Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. *32*Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. *33*If this man were not of God, he could do

nothing. <sup>34</sup>They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. <sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? <sup>36</sup>He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? <sup>37</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. **<sup>38</sup>And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.**  
<sup>39</sup>And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. <sup>40</sup>And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? <sup>41</sup>Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Again and again the fact that Jesus must be the expected Messiah was proven by the signs that Jesus did. This story is another clear example. Jesus heals a man blind from birth. There is not a single example of such a sign in the Old Testament, neither by Moses nor by any of the other prophets. There is no more clear evidence that Jesus is the Messiah.

What this story shows once again is that the Jews, and in this case the Pharisees in particular, continue to bend over backwards to ignore the evidence. In the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus could not be the Messiah because He would not keep the Sabbath. Jesus broke several rules of Jewish tradition<sup>70</sup>. It is expressly forbidden to mix water and mud on the Sabbath, it is also forbidden to rub one's eyes with saliva on the Sabbath, and the distance from the Temple Mount to the Pool of Siloam is greater than the maximum prescribed distance for a Sabbathday journey, while there was enough water in the Temple Mount to bathe in. Jesus did not keep their commandments, and apparently did so deliberately, so He could not be the Messiah.

Ignoring the evidence in this way can only mean that Jesus did not meet other criteria that are important in the eyes of the Jews. What Jesus wants to make clear again and again is that there is something fundamentally wrong with the Jewish understanding at that time. These misconceptions were the result of their assumption that they had the right to regulate matters not specifically dealt with in the Law of Moses. Deuteronomy 4:2 specifically warns against this:

*<sup>2</sup>Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.  
(Deuteronomy 4:2)*

We human beings have no right to change what God has ordained; we are not allowed to take anything away from it, but neither are we allowed to add anything to it.

*<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:  
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.  
(Psalm 19:7)*

By changing what God has offered to us as being perfect, we are putting ourselves in the place of God. Jesus warns against the teachings of the Pharisees and scribes:

*<sup>1</sup>Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying, **The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:** <sup>3</sup>all therefore whatsoever they bid you*

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<sup>70</sup> See: 'The Chronological Gospels' by Michael Rood (ISBN-13:978-0-9895281-1-5) page 166

observe<sup>71</sup>, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. **4For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders;** but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

(Matthew 23:1-4)

By sitting in the seat of Moses, they place a heavy burden on the common people and thus enslave them. They claim to abide by Moses, we should abide by them too, but all the rules changed or added to it do not apply and are not only rejected but deliberately violated by Jesus, as this story shows. James puts it this way when he speaks of the law:

*25But whoso looketh into **the perfect law of liberty**, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

(James 1:25)

The perfect law of God sets us free; anything we add or change to it has the opposite effect. The teachings of the Pharisees and scribes can therefore be described as manipulative and intended to make us slaves to the leadership. Of course, this is not unique to the Jewish tradition. Many church traditions have the same effect and should therefore be called "devilish".

That Jesus on the one hand and the Jewish leaders on the other are enemies of each other is shown by the fact that this man, blind from birth and healed by Jesus, was thrown out of the synagogue, and that had far-reaching consequences in that culture. If we are ever thrown out of a church, we can find another one, but if you were thrown out of the synagogue, it wasn't that easy. Socially you were an outcast.

The appearance of Jesus has two consequences: judgement and salvation. Judgment for those who ignore the challenge that Jesus brings, and salvation and healing for those who believe in Him, the Son of Man, even when it has far-reaching consequences, as in the instance of the man born blind. The false expectation of the Messiah, coupled with the desire to exercise power, creates this controversy, the man born blind is healed and saved, while the Jewish leaders face judgement. Just as David was the man after God's own heart<sup>72</sup>, Jesus is above all the man after God's own heart. Most of the Jews at that time were looking for the man after their own heart, not the man after God's own heart.

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<sup>71</sup> N.B. The preserved Hebrew text of Matthew's gospel explicitly says that we are to abide by 'what he says', namely Moses, and not follow the precepts and customs of the Pharisees and scribes. For this, see 'Hebrew Gospel of Matthew' by George Howard (ISBN 0-86554-442-5) page 112. (The translation given on page 113 incorrectly goes along with the Greek texts by rendering not the single HE, but the plural THEY)

<sup>72</sup> 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22

# The Good Shepherd

## John 10:1-21

*1*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. *2*But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. *3*To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. *4*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. *5*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. *6*This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

*7*Then said Jesus unto them again, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.** *8*All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. *9*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. *10*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.** *11*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. *12*But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. *13*The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. *14*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. *15*As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. *16*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. *17*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. *18*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

In this passage Jesus uses three examples to illustrate the relationship between a shepherd and a flock of sheep. He makes a great connection between the sheep who listen to the voice of the shepherd. At the same time he reveals the things that cause this relationship to be lacking. Two questions emerge clearly, namely

- What is the true flock and who are the sheep that go with it?
- Who is the true or good shepherd and how can he be recognized?

What is clear from this passage is the servant-like nature of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. It is clear that leadership is not about power and who is " the most ", but about the willingness of both sides to subordinate their own interests to the interests of the other. By speaking in these images, Jesus is holding up a mirror to the Jews. The leaders are being challenged to evaluate their leadership, and the people around them are being challenged to evaluate their relationship with leadership on two fronts: am I adequately obedient, and am I following the right shepherd?

Consider the responsibility of the sheep first. A good leader comes in through the door, which means that he does not use manipulative means to gain a position of power, but has a genuine servant's attitude, and a good leader has the interests of the flock as a whole and the sheep in particular at heart and can be recognised by this. In this way Jesus makes the people around him responsible for determining who to follow and who

not to follow. I myself was involved for a time in a somewhat cultish group with a manipulative leader who caused me more harm than good. I remember ignoring a number of warning signs at the time, with all the harmful consequences that entailed. If those signs hadn't been there, I wouldn't be to blame, but the fact that I had them makes me responsible for my decision. In retrospect, I shouldn't have done business with that individual or group of people. In the same way, Jesus offers his people a kind of yardstick to judge whether they are following the right shepherd. In the Old Testament we find the example of a situation where God judges the condition of the people.

*17And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, **These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.***  
(1 Kings 22:17)

Israel does have a king in this case, Ahab, and he is not a good king. In this case the Lord gives the people the freedom to go home and not worry about this king.

Now to judge the leaders. Throughout the Bible, leadership is compared to shepherding.

*1And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. 6My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them*  
(Ezekiel 34:1-6)

In this passage the leaders of Israel are condemned by God through the Prophet Ezekiel for their wayward leadership at the expense of the common man. With their knowledge of the Law and the Prophets, they should have understood that Jesus was referring to this passage and holding up this mirror to them.

*15I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*  
(Ezekiel 34:15-16)

By proclaiming himself the Good Shepherd, Jesus is in effect saying that His coming is the fulfilment of this promise of the prophets. Again, the reaction of the Jewish leaders is obvious, most of them accuse him of being insane and possessed by demons, while others seem to do nothing more than give Jesus the benefit of the doubt. Think about being compared to 'a thief who comes to steal, to kill and to destroy', while you do your utmost to maintain your image as a spiritual leader. Time and again, it appears that there is a huge yawning gap between the way the Jews, regardless of all corruption, interpret in their way of thinking those things based upon their expectation of the future and the way Jesus presents the matters concerning the Kingdom of God to them.

And then there is another approach that I skipped over at the beginning:

*<sup>16</sup>And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.  
(John 10:16)*

Again, Jesus focuses on the Jewish understanding of themselves as God's chosen people. If we are willing to make Jesus Lord in our lives, to be led by Him and to listen to His voice, then we will all be part of that one flock, led by that one Shepherd. There will no longer be any distinction between Jew and Greek, the believing remnant of the Jews and the believers from the Gentiles will together be the chosen people of God. Peter emphasizes this again in his first epistle:

*<sup>9</sup>But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>10</sup>which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.  
(I Peter 2:9-10)*

Knowing Jesus as the Good Shepherd is the only thing that is significant. The common idea that the Jewish people are still the chosen people today is completely swept away by these statements of Jesus and Peter<sup>73</sup>. In the New Covenant, the Church of Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile together, is the chosen people of God.

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<sup>73</sup> For this, see also my studies on Israel on my website article on [Israel](#) and my YouTube channel playlist "[Israël](#)"

# Risen

John 11 and the beginning of 12 describes the last and most profound miracle performed by Jesus. The event took place just before Jesus went to Jerusalem to begin the journey that would eventually lead to his death on the cross.

## John 11:1-7

*1Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. 7Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judæa again.*

Jesus is informed that Lazarus, whom Jesus loved very much, is ill. Instead of acting immediately, Jesus waits two full days, by which time Lazarus is already dead<sup>74</sup> and buried, as is customary in that part of the world. The reason for this is that Jesus wants to show one more time by a miracle who He is and what He stands for, and that this will glorify the Father in an undeniable way.

## John 11:8-16

*8His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? 9Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. 11These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

Immediately afterwards, Jesus begins to explain what He will do when He gets to Bethany. Lazarus has died and He will raise Lazarus for the express purpose as He says, 'to the intent ye may believe'. The intention is that this miracle will remove every last doubt from the disciples regarding Jesus.

## John 11:17-32

*17Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. 18Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: 19and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

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<sup>74</sup> See verse 14

<sup>20</sup>Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. <sup>21</sup>Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, **if thou hadst been here**, my brother had not died. <sup>22</sup>But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. <sup>23</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. <sup>24</sup>Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. <sup>25</sup>Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: <sup>26</sup>and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.** Believest thou this? <sup>27</sup>She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. <sup>28</sup>And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. <sup>29</sup>As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. <sup>32</sup>Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, **if thou hadst been here**, my brother had not died.

It is clear from this passage that both Martha and Mary had not yet understood the full implications of Jesus' coming: "If only you had been here". To them, too, Jesus was obviously a great, miracle-working rabbi or teacher, to be loved and honoured as such. But even they were unable to see beyond the limitations of physical existence. They too needed the miracle to believe and understand the full extent of Jesus' work. The culture of the time, in combination with Jewish thought, did not allow them to think beyond these limitations. In Jewish thought, and often in much Christian thought, the resurrection of the dead is a reality that will happen sometime in the future at the end of the world. Martha is convinced that Lazarus will one day be raised from the dead. Jesus, however, again makes one of his famous "I AM" statements. What He is trying to make clear is that the resurrection of the dead is not primarily an event that will one day take place, but that the "resurrection and life" is a person, namely He Himself, Jesus Christ. Again, the physical reality of the resurrection is subordinate to the spiritual reality in which we participate through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of this in his epistle to the Romans:

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. <sup>7</sup>For he that is dead is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: <sup>9</sup>knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. <sup>11</sup>Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
 (Romans 6:3-11)

By faith we have died, have been buried with Christ and have been raised with Christ. What is being described here is the first resurrection, which takes place when we come to faith and are baptised. People who do not participate in this spiritual resurrection will not participate in the part of the resurrection to life that is yet to come. Natural people are

not able to think in spiritual terms because they see reality primarily as physical, possibly supplemented by a spiritual component in whatever form. I'll come back to this later when we arrive at John 14, where Jesus explains the new age that comes with the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. A reality that will be visible only to those who have received the Spirit of God and totally invisible to the world. In John 1 we saw that the spiritual reality existed before the foundation of the world and that our physical reality is but a shadow. The physical reality in which we live would not have existed if "the Word" had not been spoken in the beginning. In preaching the gospel, we will have to explain and demonstrate this with the help of the Holy Spirit, because the people of the world are not able to see and experience it for their own.

## **John 11:33-44**

*33When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35Jesus wept. 36Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

*38Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. 40Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

And then comes this great moment, Jesus sees the sorrow of Mary and the people around Him, and He is deeply moved with them. He asks to be taken to the tomb and when He arrives, He weeps with the people. Jesus cries because he is moved by our grief. Then, when He asks that the stone be rolled away from the tomb, Martha, Mary and the others again show their lack of faith when they try to warn Him about the corpse smell, but Jesus does not let them stop Him. He knows that the Father always hears Him, and it is with this authority that He addresses Lazarus, saying "Lazarus, come out". Then Lazarus comes out, bound with grave cloths. Lazarus is alive again. It is true that the tomb has been conquered here, but not yet completely. Although he is alive, after his resurrection he is still a mortal man. The resurrection of Lazarus is therefore a sign pointing to the final resurrection in which we will be in Christ. Jesus himself is the first fruits to rise definitively from the dead, after His resurrection He is no longer wrapped in grave cloths. The shrouds represent our mortality. Lazarus is still mortal after his resurrection, Jesus is not.

## **John 11:45-53**

*45Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

*47Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and*

nation. <sup>49</sup>And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup>nor consider **that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.** <sup>51</sup>And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; <sup>52</sup>and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup>Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

The result of the resurrection of Lazarus is twofold. Many people believe in Jesus because of what they have experienced, others complain to the Pharisees, the arch-enemies of Jesus. Wherever Jesus appears you see this division. It is to be expected, therefore, that the preaching of the gospel will have the same effect. In Matthew 10, Jesus puts it this way:

*<sup>34</sup>Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. <sup>36</sup>And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*  
(Matthew 10:34-36)

Wherever the true gospel is preached, the separation between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of darkness is exposed. People who are trapped in the realm of darkness, such as the Pharisees and their associates, rebel against the preaching, and will do everything in their power to stop the work. This is also the reason why the Jewish council wants to kill Jesus. They are so caught up in their position as spiritual and also political leaders that they are totally blinded with regard to the person of Jesus. Fearing the loss of their position vis-à-vis the people as spiritual leaders, but also vis-à-vis the Roman government that had given them great powers, there was only one goal left for them, Jesus must die. The irony is that 40 years later, these same Romans are being used by God to put an end to Jerusalem and the Temple and thus their position. For them, the message began with John the Baptist when he said to them: "Bring forth fruit, therefore, that corresponds to repentance."<sup>75</sup> The message ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. Genuine repentance across the board could have prevented this.

## **John 11:54-57**

*<sup>54</sup>Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. <sup>55</sup>And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup>Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? <sup>57</sup>Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.*

Jesus withdraws for a short time, first to Ephraim, later to Galilee, only to return to Jerusalem for the Passover. The decision to kill Jesus remained. We heard Jesus say that there are twelve hours in a day, those twelve hours were almost up, the night in which He was to be delivered was near.

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<sup>75</sup> Luke 3:8

## John 12:1-8

*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. <sup>3</sup>Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. <sup>4</sup>Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, <sup>5</sup>Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? <sup>6</sup>This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. <sup>7</sup>Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. <sup>8</sup>For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.*

When Jesus returns to Bethany six days before the Passover, Mary seems to have started to understand deep down what Jesus' destiny would be. The resurrection of Lazarus had obviously contributed to this. Contrary to the prevailing Messianic expectation, it seems to have dawned on her that Jesus had come to die. Her reaction is telling: she takes the most precious thing she has, a pound of precious spikenard myrrh, and anoints Jesus' feet in preparation for the burial to come. Jude's reaction shows that he did not understand any of this, and not only that, but that he followed Jesus for his own sake, even to the point of stealing money from the treasury. It is striking that Jesus knew this and yet did not intervene. Any earthly leader would have removed such a person from the circle, but not Jesus. This is all the more a sign that Jesus' coming as the Messiah was not to administer justice and rule, as was the common expectation of the Messiah, but to serve and give his life. This passage also shows the difference in motive that can lie behind our following of Jesus, the enormous contrast between Mary on the one hand and Judas on the other makes this visible. Why do we follow Jesus, why do we go to church? Is it a form of self-preservation or is it total love and commitment to Jesus?

## John 12:9-11

*<sup>9</sup>Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; <sup>11</sup>because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*

When the crowds heard that Jesus was in Bethany, they flocked there. Did they really come for Jesus, or did they have some other motive? Perhaps they had come for the great miracle and not just for Jesus. Judas had his own interests, he had experienced everything, not just the miracles and signs that Jesus did, but he was one of the twelve sent by Jesus to preach and heal, and apparently successfully. Yet he was the one who would eventually betray Jesus. There seems to be a great dividing line that runs through all the churches, a dividing line that Jesus mentions as the difference between the sheep and the goats<sup>76</sup>. The characteristic of the sheep is that they follow the shepherd and hear his voice, the characteristic of the goats, although they are part of the same flock, is that they go with the flock. Judas went along, but apparently not wholeheartedly.

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<sup>76</sup> Matthew 25: 31-46

# The Entry

## John 12:12-13

*<sup>12</sup>On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup>took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, **Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.***

And then the great day would seem to have arrived. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, and the many disciples who were with Him, as well as the people who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus, pulled palm branches from the trees and went to meet Him, waving these branches, and began to bring Him in, as it were. The tension of that moment must have been great. The people cried out, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord". The phrase used comes from Psalm 118:

*<sup>24</sup>This is the day which the LORD hath made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
<sup>25</sup>Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD:  
O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.  
<sup>26</sup>Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD:  
We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.  
(Psalm 118:24-26)*

Hosanna<sup>77</sup> means something like "Save us, Saviour of the world", which corresponds to verse 25 of Psalm 118: "O Lord, give salvation", with the addition of the first half of verse 26: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD". If you also include verse 24, it should be clear that everyone thought this was the moment of all moments, "the day the LORD has made". There hadn't been a king in Israel for centuries. The last king of Judah was Zedekiah. The country is now under Roman rule and this has been a thorn in the side of many. The expectation for the future at this time was that there would be a king who would deal first of all with the Romans and restore the kingship over Israel. The call for salvation and prosperity was directed towards this. Many of His disciples felt that the time had come when all this was going to come true.

## John 12:14-16

*<sup>14</sup>And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, <sup>15</sup>Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt<sup>78</sup>. <sup>16</sup>These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

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<sup>77</sup> Contrary to what is often thought in church circles, 'Hosanna' is not an expression of praise. It is a prayer for salvation or deliverance.

<sup>78</sup> See Zechariah 9:9-10

<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. <sup>10</sup>And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

But Jesus takes a very different route. Instead of riding in on a horse, He rides in on a colt<sup>79</sup>. According to Deuteronomy 17, the king of Israel was forbidden to use horses<sup>80</sup>. Horses represent status and power. In the battle with the Canaanites, Joshua was even ordered to cut the tendons of the horses<sup>81</sup>, Joshua was not allowed to use the horses as spoils of victory. The donkey on which Jesus sits represents humility and dependence. The prophet Isaiah also indicates this contrast by referring to horses:

*<sup>15</sup>For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. <sup>16</sup>But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.  
(Isaiah 30:15-16)*

In this passage from the prophet Isaiah it is clear that horses represent independence from God and doing things on one's own strength and on the basis of one's own understanding.

Instead of responding to the general expectation, Jesus goes the way of the cross, salvation is of a completely different order, salvation is not physical but spiritual in nature. In Acts 1 this becomes clear again when the disciples ask Jesus about the kingship in Israel:

*<sup>6</sup>When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?** <sup>7</sup>And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. <sup>8</sup>But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

Jesus gives a twofold answer: He says that it is no concern of theirs, but that they have a mission that reaches to the ends of the earth. Subsequently He does not ascend the throne in Jerusalem, but He ascends to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, and from that position to shape His kingship and dominion.

## **John 12:17-19**

*<sup>17</sup>The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. <sup>18</sup>For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. <sup>19</sup>The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.*

The last few verses of this passage show once again how much the Pharisees are at odds with Jesus.

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<sup>79</sup> N.B. Mathew 21 speaks of an adult donkey and the foal of a donkey. According to some commentaries, the adult donkey would refer to Israel under the Old Covenant, the foal, which had never been ridden, would refer to the Gentile nations, who would be one with the people of Israel in the New Covenant and thus become an integral part of the people of God.

<sup>80</sup> See Deuteronomy 17:16

<sup>81</sup> See Deuteronomy 17:16

# The Grain of Wheat

## John 12:20-36

*20And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: 21the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

*23And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. 27Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. 29The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. 31Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33This he said, signifying what death he should die. 34The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? 35Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

In contrast to the attitude of the Jewish leaders, who clearly reject Jesus, Jesus has a great attraction for the common man. As we have seen, it is based on false expectations, but it is there nonetheless. In this passage it seems that this attraction was also felt by a group of Greeks. These Greeks wish to see Jesus. But the answer these potential disciples receive is very different from what they expect. We have seen Jesus do this time and again, leading people astray, so to speak, in order to highlight the fact that the coming of the Messiah has a completely different purpose than what is humanly expected. Jesus indicates that the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. This glorification is quite different from the common human expectation. The way He will go is the way to glorification. The grain of wheat must first drop into the earth and die in order to bear fruit. In the same way, Jesus must first die on the cross before there can be a harvest. In this process of dying, followed by resurrection and ascension, glorification is built in. The way in which people view glorification is quite different, and this is evident from the cry of the bystanders and the chief priests and scribes as Jesus hangs on the cross:

*32Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe...*  
(Mark 15:32a)

Glorification would in that case be shown by a demonstration of power by coming down from the cross. But true glorification is not of this manner, it is connected with dying, and this is not only true for Jesus, but also for us, if we really want to follow Jesus. To follow

Him is to go the way of the cross, to go the way of surrender, of laying down one's life. As in this very verse, Jesus emphasises this very clearly in the Gospel of Mark:

*34...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it  
(Mark 8:34-35)*

If we follow this path, we will receive honour from the Father. This is not an easy journey, especially for Jesus. He shows how much He fears to go this way. By going the way of the cross, the Father will be glorified. To emphasise this, a voice is heard from heaven. This specific voice is heard three times: at his baptism<sup>82</sup>, at his transfiguration on the mount<sup>83</sup> and in this particular case. Heaven does not show off when Jesus is about to go to his death on the cross.

Jesus shows us the death that he must die, a death that means our death by substitution. When He is lifted up on the cross, He will draw us all to Himself and take the punishment we deserve.

Immediately afterwards it is shown again that this is not understood. The Messiah was supposed to be eternal, so how could He die? Who is this man who claims to be the Son of Man? The leaders knew that this claim would be based on the following passage from Daniel:

*13I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like **the Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.  
(Daniel 7:13-14)*

Contrary to what many believe today, Jesus does not come to earth to rule, but goes to the "ACIENT OF DAYS", the Father in heaven, to receive the rule there. So the eternal Kingdom is heavenly and not earthly. Jesus now sits on His throne next to the Father in heaven, and this reign has no end. Paul speaks several times of the heavenly, new Jerusalem, not the earthly one<sup>84</sup>. Jacob blesses his sons, he also blesses Judah:

*10The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh come;  
And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.  
(Genesis 49:10)*

With the coming of Shiloh, which is the coming of Jesus<sup>85</sup>, the earthly dominion of the tribe of Judah comes to an end. David was the first of a series of kings, first over Israel

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<sup>82</sup> See Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22

<sup>83</sup> See Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35.

<sup>84</sup> See Galatians 4:21-28; Hebrews 12:22.

<sup>85</sup> (1) That the sceptre would come from the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, on whose lineage the crown rested. (2) That Silo would be from this tribe, his seed, that promised seed, in whom the earth would be blessed: that peaceful and prosperous one, or the Saviour, as others translate it, He will come from Judah. Thus Jacob saw the day of Christ at a great distance, and it was his comfort and support on his deathbed (Matthew Henry).

and then later on only over the house of Judah, with Zedekiah the son of Josiah to be the final one. Jesus is also from the tribe of Judah, He is also in the lineage of kings, as the son of David, but His kingship is in heaven, in the new Jerusalem, and not like the other kings of Judah in the earthly, ancient Jerusalem.

Jesus emphasises again that He is the light that has come into the world. We are called to walk in that light.

Once more He withdraws, obviously the time is not yet fulfilled..

## **John 12:37-43**

*37But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

*And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*

*39Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,*

*40He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart;*

*That they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart,*

*And be converted,*

*And I should heal them.*

*41These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

*42Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Despite the fact that Jesus did many signs, most people did not really believe in Him. Isaiah speaks of revelation on the one hand and blindness combined with a hardened heart on the other hand<sup>86</sup>. Now, before we start thinking that this was a sovereign act of God and interpret the text as such, we need to look at the wider context. The ultimate reason for the blindness was that they loved the honour of men more than the honour of God. Chapter after chapter in the Gospel of John we hear this reproach of Jesus against the Jews. Obviously, blindness and lack of revelation are culpable and the result of culpable actions. Choosing Jesus has consequences, and if we are not willing to face them and make the right choices, we will find that in the end we are not really part of Him and of His Kingdom.

## **John 12:44-50**

*44Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

Once more, as a farewell to His public ministry as prophet and teacher, He explains who He is and what He has come for. He is

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<sup>86</sup> Isaiah 65:1-2; Romans 10:20-21

- the Sent One of the Father,
- the Reflection on earth of God in heaven
- the Light of the world
- the Word of Life, the prophet Moses foretold would come
- the Saviour of the world
- the Judge of the Last Day

With this enumeration the public ministry of Jesus ends. What follows are a number of chapters of teaching to the inner circle of disciples and a description of his arrest, condemnation, death and burial, followed by an account of his resurrection.

Again, the verse from the introduction to this book:

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

*(John 20:30-31)*

This text shows the motive for John to put all this down on paper, and it is not just the pleasant things; the ongoing conflict with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem is an integral part of it and should not be disregarded. The focus of Judaism at that time was earthly and physical, the Kingdom of God presented by Jesus is heavenly and requires a different focus. If we don't include the conflict we miss the full breadth of what the Gospel is about. Often it is taken very lightly, with the assumption that all we need to do is accept Jesus as our Saviour and Redeemer and everything will be fine. Accepting Jesus into our lives, as described in chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, means that we must receive Him in His fullness, not only as Saviour, but also as Lord and King, and that implies obedience to His voice. As Jesus also says in Luke 6:

*46And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.*

*(Luke 6:46-49)*

Building on the Rock means listening to Him, hearing His voice and doing what He says. This is what true acceptance of Jesus is all about. It is up to you and me to decide.

# Part 2 Introducing the new

## John 13:1

*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved **his own** which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

Having publicly confronted his contemporaries, especially the Jewish leaders, Jesus now enters the last phase before his passion and death, in which he concentrates exclusively on the twelve disciples, who will soon be called to carry out the great mission of spreading the Gospel throughout the world. He had retired to the table with his disciples to explain to them a number of significant things that are important for the understanding of the new situation that will arise with the coming of the new covenant, which will eventually completely replace the old covenant. Step by step, Jesus takes his disciples back to explain what is specifically important in the new era that is coming. While the other three Gospels introduce the Lord's Supper, during the meal, John's Gospel centres on this teaching, leaving aside the institution of the Lord's Supper.

# Washing the feet

## John 13:2-17

*2And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; 3Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. 6Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

*12So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

The first lesson is a visual lesson to show that the Kingdom of God has first and foremost a servanthood character. During the meal, when there are no servants, Jesus takes off his outer garment, takes a basin of water and washes his disciples' feet with it and then dries them with a cloth tied around his waist. Simon Peter's protest shows that he, and perhaps also the others, did not quite understand. Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus as the Messiah has come to reign, and then you are not going to do the work of a servant, you are going to be served by others. Jesus says in so many words that they may not understand this now, but they will understand it later. When Jesus then explains that if He does not wash your feet, you have no part in Him, Peter pulls back and swings the pendulum to the other side, "then completely". What Jesus is clarifying at this moment is that we can only be truly clean if He first declares us clean, and then we just need to have our feet washed. We are part of the world around us and our feet get dirty and dusty, so we need to be washed regularly, but on the inside we are clean when He declares us clean and we no longer need to bathe. In the old covenant, people had to wash themselves and their clothes in preparation for an encounter with God. A good example is found in Exodus, just before the encounter between God and the people of Israel:

*10And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, 11and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.*

*(Exodus 19:10-11)*

Even in the time of Jesus, this was a common practice among the Jews, with baths set up in the synagogues and in the area around the Temple in Jerusalem, where people could wash themselves and their clothes before the meetings. This ceremony emphasised the need for cleansing as a recurring phenomenon. With the coming of Jesus, it is no longer a recurring thing, but a one-time thing. He cleanses us and then we are clean.:

*<sup>3</sup>Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.  
(John 15:3).*

When Jesus returned to his seat, he asked if His disciples had understood what He had done. He explains that the Kingdom of God is about serving one another, not dominating one another. We are also expected to wash one another's feet. It is clear that we are not expected to carry a basin with us to literally wash each other's feet, but that we are called to serve each other in whatever way we can in whatever situation. Leadership, and this is what the disciples will soon be expected to do, is done in serving and leading by example, not by imposing rules and making demands.

Judas has already decided to betray Jesus at this point, and yet he is allowed to experience this section of the teaching, he too has his feet washed. In this way Jesus also clearly emphasises the servanthood character of the Kingdom of God.

## **John 13:21-30**

*<sup>21</sup>When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. <sup>22</sup>Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. <sup>23</sup>Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. <sup>24</sup>Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. <sup>25</sup>He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. <sup>27</sup>And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. <sup>28</sup>Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. <sup>29</sup>For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup>He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.*

Judas had been there the whole time Jesus was working and teaching in public. He had even been sent out<sup>87</sup> and experienced the power of God at first hand, but his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, he was the one Jesus referred to during the washing of the feet when He said that not all are clean.

*<sup>4</sup>Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, <sup>5</sup>Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? <sup>6</sup>This he said, not that he cared for the poor; **but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.**  
(John 12:4-6)*

As John 12 shows, Judas was a thief who stole from the treasury under his control. Apparently, he could be a partaker of Jesus and experience power and still remain unchanged for whatever reason. We are told that Jesus knew this and was saddened and moved in the spirit. When Jesus indicated that one of them would betray Him, the

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<sup>87</sup> See Matthew 10:1-8; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6

confusion that ensued showed how much Judas was integrated into the group, no one was looking in his direction. By the way, this is something we need to be aware of in our churches also, people can be fully integrated into the church, participating in all the activities, even ending up in leadership positions, and still not be changed. Jesus warns us of this in Matthew 7:

*21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22Many will say to me in that day, **Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?** 23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.  
(Matthew 7:21-23)*

So prophesying in the name of Jesus, casting out evil spirits and doing many mighty works, perhaps even accomplishing a great many works, do not appear to be conclusive evidence of whether one is a disciple of Jesus or not. Apparently Judas was such a person, he participated but not really from the depths of his heart. He was a thief and therefore lawless. Paul warns us against this:

*28Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.  
(Ephesians 4:28)*

When Jesus dips a piece of bread and gives it to Judas, that is the moment when the devil definitely takes possession of Judas and from that moment on there is no turning back. Judas leaves the middle of the circle of disciples, he no longer partakes in the rest of Jesus' teachings, and that might never have been understood by him anyway.

## **John 13:31-32**

*31Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.*

After Judas has departed, Jesus speaks of the fact that the Son of Man has been glorified, has been glorified by God and will be glorified by God. We have read in chapter 12 of John's Gospel that Jesus speaks of glorification in relation to dying, this is confirmed by God with a voice from heaven:

*28Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.  
(John 12:28)*

Our perspective on glory or even fame is usually the opposite. Our perspective is based on our life and what we will achieve in our life, not in our death. When Jesus speaks of glorification, he is speaking in relation to his death and what will be accomplished in and through his death. This underlines once again that the Kingdom of God is of a very different nature from what we seem to assume in the world.

## **John 13:33-35**

*33Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, **Whither I go, ye cannot come**; so now I say to you. 34A new*

*commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Then Jesus also indicates to them that He is going away and that they cannot follow Him there. Jesus is leaving, leaving them in the world with the command to love one another and in this way to bear witness to the reality of the Kingdom of God, so that "all", that is, the people everywhere around them, will understand that they are disciples of Jesus..

## **John 13:36-38**

*<sup>36</sup>Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; **but thou shalt follow me afterwards**. <sup>37</sup>Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. <sup>38</sup>Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*

Peter then asks where Jesus is going, Jesus then indicates that no one can follow Him, but that they will follow later. Later in the following chapters of John's Gospel, Jesus will explain to them how this will be accomplished. When Peter protests that he is willing to risk his life, Jesus tells him instead that he will deny Jesus. It tells us that no matter how well intentioned we are, we remain weak and will fail, at least if we are left to our own devices. It also tells us that the way Jesus has to go is a way He has to go alone, none of us are capable of going that way with Him.

# The House of God

## John 14:1-7

*1Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. 5Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? 6Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

The following passage is, in my opinion, one of the most misinterpreted verses. These verses are often used in connection with funerals. If you just believe in God and also believe in Jesus, then at the Second Coming of Jesus you will be able to move into your mansion that Jesus has prepared for you. The question that has bothered me for years is whether this is the correct interpretation of this passage. We have come to the final portion of Jesus' teaching to his disciples. This final portion began with a vivid teaching about mutual service. The time ahead, the time when Jesus goes away and leaves them, these 11 remaining disciples, on their own, is the main focus of the whole discourse. That is why he begins by saying that "Let not your heart be troubled" by his departure, and later on adds the following:

*7Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away  
(John 16:7<sup>a</sup>)*

The fact that Jesus will no longer be with them physically is not only a cause for grief and worry, but is even described by Jesus as "better for you". The whole context is focused on the fact that Jesus will no longer be physically present and is intended to be an explanation of what this change is all about, focusing not on the distant future but on the immediate future. The whole section from chapter 14 to chapter 17 is about this, and therefore has nothing to do with the future Second Coming of Jesus.

The first thing Jesus calls us to do is to believe in God and in Him. This faith is vital for the time to come. The time that is about to come is a reality of faith that cannot be seen by the eyes of the world.

*33Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. 34Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.  
(John 7:33-34)*

This then applied to the audience, the Jews, but it still applies to anyone who does not believe in Him. This reality of faith is spiritual, not physical.

The second thing He refers to is "my Father's house". The question that needs to be asked is what this house of my Father entails. Is it some kind of house in heaven that we can claim in the future, or is it something for today? Just a few scriptures:

*9Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21But he spake of the temple of his*

body. <sup>22</sup>When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.  
(John 2:19-22)

In these verses, Jesus himself is the temple, the house of God. And then the following verse by Paul:

<sup>15</sup>But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**  
(1 Timothy 3:15).

In this verse the church of Jesus Christ is the house of God. The question that then arises is whether the house of the Father that this passage is talking about is not exactly the same thing, namely Jesus Himself and the New Testament Church.

The word dwelling in this text is the Greek word ΜΟΝΗ<sup>88</sup>, which means something like dwelling place or abode. This word is derived from the verb ΜΕΝΩ<sup>89</sup> which means to abide, to stay, to dwell, and is translated in chapter 15 of the Gospel of John as to abide:

<sup>4</sup>**Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me**  
(John 15:4)

So when Jesus talks about abiding in chapter 15, and everyone agrees that this refers to the present-day relationship we have with God, with Jesus, then it seems logical to me that the Father's house in chapter 14 refers to the present-day dwelling place and not something in the distant future. This is underlined by Jesus' statement: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"<sup>90</sup>. The tabernacle of Moses had three entrances, the entrance to the court, the entrance to the Holy place and the entrance to the Holy of Holies, these entrances respectively were called "the way, the truth and the life". What Jesus is saying is that He Himself is the entrance to the Father's house, both to the court, with the altar and the laver, but also to the Holy place, with the candlestick, the table of unleavened bread and the altar of incense, and finally also to the Holy of Holies, where once stood the Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat. In Hebrews these things are called a foreshadowing of Jesus:

<sup>9</sup>which was a **figure** for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience...  
<sup>1</sup>For the law having a **shadow** of good things to come, and not the very image of the things...  
(Hebrews 9:9; 10:1a).

It is therefore of the utmost importance to take these things into account when interpreting the scripture. So when Jesus says that He will prepare a place for us, He is referring to the situation that arises when the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, is sent. We are offered a place in Him. Paul speaks of this at length in his epistle to the Ephesians:

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<sup>88</sup> Strong G3438 **μονή** (monē)

<sup>89</sup> Strong G3306 **μένω** (menō)

<sup>90</sup> See: <https://emmausroadministries.international/2020/02/08/the-way-the-truth-and-the-life-tabernacle-series-part-4/> on the Rabbinic tradition in this

*4But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)*

This, then, is the state of things today, in which we are partakers by faith.

## **John 14:8-14**

*8Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? 10Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. 12Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

Philip then asks for a physical manifestation of God the Father. God the Father is to be made manifest by Jesus in our world, the physical world. While this is an authentic desire, similar to Moses' desire to see God and Elijah's desire to see God, all Jesus does next is refer to Himself as the ultimate revelation of the Father. Jesus, as the Word made flesh, the ultimate revelation of the Father. In Matthew 13, Jesus blesses the disciples for having seen him.

*16But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. (Matthew 13:16-17)*

Many of the people of the Old Testament had an overwhelming desire to witness the presence of the Messiah, Jesus, and to be allowed to hear Him, but they did not live to see it. The disciples, however, were allowed to experience it. One might conclude that however great the revelation of God may have been under the old covenant, the presence of Jesus in their midst is far greater. The disciples themselves experienced Him, not only as a person, but also the miracles He did before their eyes, which may be the fundamental basis of their faith, rather than the supernatural manifestation of God the Father. And out of this faith, if it is based on this revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ, they will also be able to do great works, perhaps even greater than those of Jesus.

When Jesus tells the disciples about the time to come and points them to the Father's house, there is no reference to a utopian reality, later in heaven, but they are pointed to the faith that they need to have in order to stand in this world and to perform the works that they are allowed to do on the basis of that faith. As we shall see, the remainder of this part of John's gospel is about the time that is about to come when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, will be sent into this world to be with them and to enable them to live in the reality of the Kingdom of God, while they are still physically

connected to the earthly reality. My Father's house, therefore, is the reality by faith in which we are permitted to walk today while we are physically present on this earth. Jesus goes on to describe how this will be possible.

## John 14:15

*<sup>15</sup>If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

The first thing Jesus does next is to point out the relationship between loving Him and keeping His commandments. The two are not separately available. If we are to have a loving relationship with Jesus, it must necessarily involve obedience. We will discuss this in more detail below.

## John 14:16-17

*<sup>16</sup>And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; <sup>17</sup>even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

And then Jesus announces the coming of the Comforter. The word "Comforter" in the 1951 KJV is the translation of the word παράκλητος (paraklētos). If you analyse the word, you can break it down into two parts, "para" and "kaleo". "Para" means next to or beside, "kaleo" means to call. So the "parakletos" is the one who is called to be with us. The best translation in our time is "Companion"<sup>91</sup>. This Companion is the Spirit of Truth who cannot be received by the world, He is the great Un-Known to the world. In order to receive Him, it is necessary to belong to the community of disciples. This "Companion" will not only be with us, but even in us. To be a part of Him is required in order to be a partaker of the Kingdom of God<sup>92</sup>. In 1 John 2 Jesus is called our "Advocate", again the word "Paracletos" is used. So Jesus is our Companion in heaven, while the Spirit is our Companion on earth. In this way heaven and earth are connected. In the 'experience' of the disciples, the presence of Jesus is the most beautiful thing there is, but it is not sufficient for the time to come, later Jesus even says that it is better for the disciples that He goes away in order to make room for the coming of the 'Companion'<sup>93</sup>. It is typical of the old covenant that God himself descends to the earth, to Mount Sinai, connects himself to the Tabernacle and later to the Temple, and thus dwells in the midst of his people. In the context of the New Covenant, however, it is different and better: we, His disciples, are a part of the Father's house, and the Spirit assigns us a dwelling place in heaven with God. It is true that we remain physically on this earth, but this earth is no longer our home; we are in the world, but no longer of the world. Paul explains it this way in Ephesians:

*<sup>6</sup>and hath raised us up together, **and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**  
(Ephesians 2:6)*

We are no longer confined to the earth; we have been given a place in heaven.

## John 14:18-20

*<sup>18</sup>I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. <sup>19</sup>Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. <sup>20</sup>At that*

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<sup>91</sup>See <https://www.theologie.nl/de-geest-als-metgezel/> (The Spirit as Companion)

<sup>92</sup> For this, see John 3:1-21 and Romans 8:9

<sup>93</sup> See John 16:7

*day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

We are not abandoned, like children without a father or a mother, but Jesus promises to come to us. The coming of the Spirit is the coming of Jesus, not bodily but spiritually. He is with us on earth, within us, and we are with Him in heaven, and in this way we receive life in its fullness, eternal life.

## **John 14:21-24**

*21He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

*22Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

By the coming of the Spirit, a relationship of love is born, which is characterised by obedience to the commandments of Jesus. We should not read these verses in separation from the rest of the chapter. We are compelled and empowered by the Spirit within us to walk in this loving obedience. It all starts with a choice, as a sign of our love for Him, to have or receive His commandments, then we are to keep those commandments and in this way we grow in the knowledge of Jesus and the Father. The more we learn obedience, the more we will discover that He loves us, and the more He will reveal Himself to us. If the desire to be obedient to Him is not there, then we are demonstrating that we obviously do not really love Him.

## **John 14:25-26**

*25These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

Jesus explains to his disciples what it will be like when he is gone. What becomes clear in this statement of Jesus is that the disciples will not really understand what He is explaining to them until they receive the "Companion" sent to us by the Father. This "Companion" will clarify all that Jesus has explained, so that they too will understand.

## **John 14:27-31**

*27Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence*

The ultimate result is that we will have the peace of God, the peace of Jesus, within us and carry it with us. Although Jesus is gone, we can rejoice because He is not so much with us now as He will be in us. In the time that Jesus is on earth, He is Immanuel, God

with us; in the time that has come, He is God in us through His Spirit. Paul puts it this way in his letter to the Colossians:

*27to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.***  
(Colossians 1:27)<sup>94</sup>

Jesus is about to walk the ultimate path of obedience, He will give His life to reconcile us to God, the ruler of this world is just a useful instrument, nothing more. This shows the enormous love that God has for the world.

With Jesus' last remark, to get up and go, it seems that He is asking his disciples not to linger on the situation as they know it, but to move on to the new reality that is just around the corner.

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<sup>94</sup> N.B. Christ in or among you is both individually 'in us' and also collectively 'among us'

# The True Vine

## John 15:1-8

*1I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

In the Old Testament the house of Israel is often compared to a vine or a vineyard<sup>95</sup>. These comparand scriptures show that, in most cases, the Israelites did not bear the fruit as expected. God brought his people out of Egypt and planted them in the Promised Land on the assumption that they would bear fruit, but in most cases the opposite seems to be the case. Isaiah puts it this way:

*7For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: **and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.***  
(Isaiah 5:7)

Jesus declares himself to be the True Vine, the True Vine which, unlike Israel, will bear fruit. This fruit will be found in the Church, which in this metaphor is represented by the branches that the vine produces. By using the comparison of how a vine grower deals with his vine and the branches that belong to it, Jesus is explaining that we are to bring forth fruit and how we can bring forth fruit.

I have two vines at the back of my garden and I treat them in the same way. In the autumn I prune the grape back to the central branch, the vine. When it sprouts in the spring and begins to flower, I cut away all the branches that do not blossom; the branches that do blossom I prune back to the first leaf after the new bunch of grapes, so that the growing power is concentrated on the new bunches of grapes and not on the overgrown branches on which there are no or too little grapes.

Jesus uses the word "in" several times in this text, and it is clear that when Jesus says that we must abide **in** Him, this cannot be interpreted as a physical reality, but as a spiritual one. In the previous chapter we saw that the Spirit is promised, it is the coming of the Spirit that makes it possible to be **in** Jesus and to know the inward reality of Christ **in** us. Whereas in the Old Testament the Israel of God was an earthly, physical people, here Jesus, together with his disciples, the Church in the process of being born, declares Himself to be the true Israel of God, which is spiritual. We have already seen that the Israel of the old covenant with its temple and worship is only a shadow of this reality and not the actual reality itself which is spiritual, so also in this comparison the Israel of God as a vine or vineyard is only a foreshadowing of the true Israel of God, namely Christ and His Church. Whereas in the old covenant Israel was limited to the one nation brought out

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<sup>95</sup> See, among others: Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10; Joel 1:7.

of Egypt, in the new covenant Israel is extended to all nations to the ends of the earth. The Acts of the Apostles shows that this truth was difficult for them to grasp. Although they had been commissioned to witness first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth<sup>96</sup>, it seemed very slow to dawn on the church that the gospel was for everyone in the world. Whereas in the old covenant distinctions were made on the basis of ethnicity, in the new covenant this distinction has disappeared completely. Paul puts it this way:

*16For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; **to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.** 17For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.  
(Romans 1:16-17)*

*22even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is **no difference:**  
(Romans 3:22)*

*12For there is **no difference between the Jew and the Greek:** for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.  
(Romans 10:12)*

*11Where there is **neither Greek nor Jew,** circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

*... where there is **no distinction** between Greek and Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian and Scyth, slave and free, but all and in all is Christ.  
(Colossians 3:11)*

Paul thus proclaims the gospel to all people without distinction of ethnicity, which means that the Israel of God is to be found among all the nations of the earth, and also that Israel is worldwide and spiritual in nature. Whether you belong to the physical people of Israel or to the nations, the branch that does not bear fruit is cut off and thrown into the fire. God is not satisfied with a mere vine, He is looking for fruit. What was promised to the people of Israel in the old covenant is promised to all the nations in the new covenant:

*5Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: **and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.** These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.  
(Exodus 19:5-6)*

*9And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood **out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;** 10and hast made us unto our God **kings and priests:** and we shall reign on the earth.  
(Revelation 5:9-10)*

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<sup>96</sup> See Acts 1:8

The same promise of a kingdom of priests, limited in the old covenant to the obedient branch of the people of Israel, is promised in the new covenant to all peoples who believe in Him.

## **John 15:9-17**

*9As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

*11These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. 16Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

The fruit that God is seeking in our lives manifests itself especially in love. We all know the summary of the law given by Jesus, namely to love God above all and our neighbour as ourselves<sup>97</sup>, but the commandment that Jesus gives here seems to go beyond this, the brother is not just a neighbour, but a special neighbour who deserves double attention. This, as we have seen above, has everything to do with the fact that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. In this way, as Christians, we are spiritually connected in a special way because we are partakers of the same Christ, and this shoot necessarily leads to the mutual fruit of love. Family members in general have a special place in our lives because they are physically connected to one another, in a similar way we are spiritually connected in the Church because we have received the same Spirit. Paul explains it this way:

*12For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*  
(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

Together we constitute this one body, the Church, and together Jew and Greek constitute the one Israel of God, united by the "Companion", the Spirit of God. And this is manifested in obedience to God's commandment and also in the denial of our own interests and the willingness to lay down our lives on the altar before God and for one another. In this way, the fruitful fellowship of which Jesus speaks is established. Our Lord calls us friends when we obey Him and love one another. Then we are chosen by Him to bear fruit for God.

## **John 15:18-27**

*18If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my*

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<sup>97</sup> See Matthew 22:34-40

saying, they will keep your's also. <sup>21</sup>But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. <sup>22</sup>If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. <sup>23</sup>He that hateth me hateth my Father also. <sup>24</sup>If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. <sup>25</sup>But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. <sup>26</sup>But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: <sup>27</sup>and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning

Because we are connected to Jesus, we have become partakers of a reality unknown to the world, we have become completely unworldly. As a result, we are not well understood by the people around us and are regarded as a threat. This lack of understanding is intensified, of course, by the fact that our great enemy, Satan, interferes and incites people to take action against us. Under the old covenant, the people of Israel were called to be distinct from the world around them, to uphold a mirror to the world around them, to be a separate people, a kingdom of priests<sup>98</sup>. God had chosen to dwell among them by descending into the tabernacle and later into the temple, becoming part of the physical environment of the people. By listening to God's voice and keeping His covenant, they would be the people who would show the world who God really is. As we have seen above, we have become part of the spiritual reality of God and, provided we are obedient to God and love one another, we will be witnesses in this world. Peter puts it this way:

*<sup>4</sup>To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, <sup>5</sup>ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>9</sup>But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: <sup>10</sup>which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:4-5; 9-10)*

The people around us who do not participate in the spiritual reality of which we, as Christians, are a part, are physically minded and shy away from the spiritual or seek to extract the spiritual from within the physical reality through all sorts of occult practices. However, because we are in Him and therefore partakers of the heavenly reality, we have, as Paul says, "the mind of the Spirit"<sup>99</sup>. As citizens of that heavenly kingdom, we can bear witness to Jesus and His Kingdom in this world. And this causes offense in the world around us, but we have received the Spirit of God who empowers us.

## **John 16:1-4**

*<sup>1</sup>These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. <sup>2</sup>They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. <sup>3</sup>And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. <sup>4</sup>But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

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<sup>98</sup> See Exodus 19:5-6

<sup>99</sup> See Romans 8:5-9

Rejection could have serious consequences. Exclusion from the synagogue placed someone not only outside the religious system, but also outside the social system. The Jewish leaders not only constituted the spiritual leadership, but in the Sanhedrin they also had an extraordinary amount of political power, albeit under the authority of Rome, but Rome had delegated a lot to the Sanhedrin. Especially in the early days of the Church, Christians were excluded and severely persecuted, often to the point of death. In very many places in the world this is still a serious reality today. In communist countries, Muslim countries and even in the state of Israel, Christians are seen as scavengers and treated as outcasts. Paul therefore warns us:

*<sup>12</sup>Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.  
(2 Timothy 3:12)*

I sometimes wonder if the reason why we experience so little opposition might have something to do with a far too weak attitude in our church culture, which seems no longer to provoke tension. Paul speaks of "all" in the above verse, which is not the same as "some".

Jesus challenges us in the Gospel of Luke:

*<sup>23</sup>And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup>For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.  
(Luke 9:23-24)*

Are we really willing to stand fully in the reality of the Kingdom, to truly abide in it, even if it costs us everything? To really be standing for Jesus and the truth of the Gospel, regardless of the opposition it may cause? To really be the light and salt that Jesus speaks of in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>100</sup>? With the exception of John, who is reported to have died of natural causes at an advanced age, all the other apostles met a violent death, and what Jesus promised them here became true for all of them. This is what happens when we truly follow Jesus, take up our cross and deny ourselves.

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<sup>100</sup> See Matthew 5:13-16

# The Farewell

## John 16:5-11

*5But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth; **It is expedient for you that I go away:** for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9of sin, because they believe not on me; 10of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

For a considerable amount of time the disciples spent day and night with Jesus. There is some disagreement within theology about the length of this period, which varies between a period of one year to three and a half years. This does not alter the fact that the time spent with Jesus was extremely intense. A number of the disciples are described as having left everything behind, even family, relatives and business, when Jesus called them. And now the time has come for Jesus to withdraw and no longer physically walk with them. As a result, the disciples are overwhelmed with grief. What they could not see was that this farewell would prove crucial when they later looked back on it. Although they didn't really understand it, Jesus explains the how and the what: "It is expedient for you that I go away". You have to imagine that this group of people had spent a long time with him, day and night, during which time they discovered that Jesus really must be the promised Messiah. This group of disciples was also influenced by the then prevailing future expectation regarding the Messiah and the coming of His Kingdom. Even after Jesus' resurrection, just before his ascension, the book of Acts shows that this expectation was still valid for them.

*6When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, **Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?***  
(Acts 1:6)

Even at that time they didn't yet realise that it was all going to be very different from anything they could have imagined. But Jesus explained to them that it would be better for them to withdraw in order to make room for the coming of the Comforter, the Companion, the Spirit of Truth, whom He would send to them. This shows that the situation they knew under the old covenant must give way to a new covenant and, as described in Hebrews 8<sup>101</sup>, a covenant on better terms. What is made clear here is that there will be a transition from a physical, earthly reality to a spiritual, heavenly reality, and this situation is described as "better". Jesus was for them Immanuel, "God with us", the coming of the Spirit would be "God in us". God would convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgement from within through the Spirit. The Spirit would break open people's consciences and make them realise that they are sinners in need of salvation. The presence of Jesus was tied to the specific place where Jesus was walking at that particular moment, but the Spirit of God is not tied to a physical place, but they would all carry the Spirit within them wherever they went in the world. Deuteronomy 5 says:

*5But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:*

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<sup>101</sup> See Hebrews 8:6

(Deuteronomy 12:5)

The presence of God was bound up with the place where He would cause His Name to dwell, and that was the one place that God had chosen to be His dwelling place, namely the tabernacle of Moses and later the temple of Solomon. In both cases, the glory of God had filled the house at the time of its dedication<sup>102</sup>. Any form of religiosity that was not tied to this place would by definition be idolatry, because the essential presence of God was tied to these places. With the coming of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit, everything would be different, no longer tied to a place, but to wherever the church gathered. Jesus puts it this way:

*20For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*  
(Matthew 18:20)

Jesus promises here that wherever people gather in His Name, He will be in their midst. In the new covenant, the presence of God is no longer tied to a physical place, but is wherever Jesus is by the Spirit. We don't have to seek God in this respect, but He seeks us, and that is "EXPEDIENT."

## John 16:12-15

*12I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

Jesus indicates that there is still much to be explained, but He points out that they would not be able to bear it at that moment in time. He explains that the Spirit of Truth is needed to teach them further. This has to do with the fact that the Kingdom of God is not earthly or physical, but heavenly and therefore spiritual. They too need to be born again first, born of the Spirit. This also reveals a serious challenge in our time, we too need to be enabled to understand the message of the Kingdom of God by receiving the Spirit. Paul is very concerned about this when he states the following:

*5For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.***  
(Romans 8:5-9)

With our natural disposition or mindset, we will never be able to understand what the Kingdom of God is really about. In practice, this means that many in and outside the church who do not have the Spirit, have not received Christ in them, may think they understand how the Bible and the Kingdom of God operate, but they are missing the point because they do not have the necessary spiritual mindset. Paul warns the young church that they are vulnerable to attack from within:

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<sup>102</sup> See Exodus 40:34; 2 Chronicles 7:1

*29For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears  
(Acts 20:29-31)*

Paul had spent three years doing everything he could to make it clear what the gospel was all about, and yet people who obviously had not received the Spirit and therefore did not belong to Jesus would go on the attack. We find some examples of this in the New Testament. In Galatians we are dealing with Jews who taught that Gentiles also had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. In Colossians we are warned about several things at once:

*8Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy** and vain deceit, after the **tradition of men**, after the **rudiments of the world**, and not after Christ.  
(Colossians 2:8).*

Paul lists a number of different things here that have to do with people who attack either from a Greek mindset, from philosophy, as well as people from a Jewish mindset, the so-called tradition of men, as well as people who believe that the things of the Kingdom of God can be understood by human logic. Jesus makes it clear to us that we will only be able to understand what is really at stake when we have become partakers of the Spirit of Truth. Even today in the churches we are under pressure from these different angles, and we too need to pray to God for insight through the Spirit of God, otherwise we too will be pulled in all sorts of directions that may seem helpful in understanding what is at stake, but will ultimately lead us astray from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In conclusion, Paul emphasises the same thing again in his letter to the Corinthians:

*11For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.  
(I Corinthians 2:11-16)*

## **John 16:16-24**

*16A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.  
17Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but*

*as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. <sup>22</sup>And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. <sup>23</sup>And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. <sup>24</sup>Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

Jesus compares the coming time with a childbirth. Like a delivery, which is accompanied by much pain, this transition into the new age will also be marked by pain. But like a natural birth, the pain will give way to joy when the child is born, and to the discovery of new life that follows this transition. It could be said that through this transition the disciples become partakers of the necessary rebirth that Jesus speaks of in John 3 when he talks to Nicodemus. Without this process the way is not open to receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God necessary to live in the new reality of the Kingdom of God. We now know that this transition consisted of the arrest of Jesus, followed by his condemnation and execution, his death on the cross and burial, but followed by His resurrection on the third day. The death of Jesus was accompanied by great disappointment and sorrow, after his resurrection comes the promised joy in which the disciples participated.

Another striking difference is that from now on the disciples can and may pray in His Name, the Name of Jesus. Jesus is our Companion and Advocate in heaven with the Father, who represents us to God, while the Spirit is our Companion with and in us, who represents God to us. From now on, we pray from the awareness that we are connected to God wherever we are, whatever the moment. All we have to do is turn our hearts to Jesus and the Father and the connection is immediate. Whereas under the old covenant the Israelites had to come to the temple and the high priest to consult God, and this was limited to the space and time of our natural existence, under the new covenant we can be in direct communication with God because we have been given a home with God in heaven.

Does this mean that we can ask God for anything and it will be given to us, or is it limited? If you take that statement from Jesus, you might reach that conclusion. I've once heard somebody say that if you asked God for a BMW he would give it to you at least if you had enough faith. This is a way of thinking that we encounter in different denominations. My response to this is that, just as in the Old Covenant, in the New Covenant we use prayer to consult God and seek His will, and are not merely to seek our own way. Jesus teaches us how to pray in the Sermon on the Mount:

*<sup>9</sup>After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done** in earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)*

Prayer, then, is foremost an effort to honour God, to desire His Kingdom and to seek His will, so that heaven and earth may be united and our hearts may and be one with the Father's heart. James adds:

*<sup>5</sup>If any of you lack **wisdom**, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. <sup>6</sup>But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. <sup>7</sup>For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. <sup>8</sup>A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8)*

Here we are challenged to pray for wisdom, and the wisdom we receive is the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of ourselves or those around us. If we doubt the wisdom of God and do not respond to it in faith, we will continue to be tossed around, inwardly divided. To pray in faith, then, is to ask for God's will in our lives and then to obey it, and this takes place within the direct fellowship with God in which we have been given a share by the Spirit.

## **John 16:25-33**

*25These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. 26At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. 28I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. 29His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 30Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. 31Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*

Jesus explained much to them about the Kingdom of God and the new age that was dawning with it. He used images and parables. These images and parables are physical representations of a spiritual reality. This method was necessary because the disciples did not yet have access to the inspiration of the Spirit. Jesus is saying that there will be other times in this area when He will speak freely with them. When will that be? Jesus indicates that when the time comes, the disciples will pray in His Name, and this refers to the time that is to come, and is therefore linked to the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth.

From the whole context we have seen so far that even the disciples, who had been with Him day and night, could not really understand what was really at stake. The kingdom of God, which is spiritual in nature, cannot be grasped by the natural understanding of us humans, so something must be done to enable us to understand these things. Paul explains it this way:

*10But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*  
(1 Corinthians 2:10-16)

According to Paul, we need the Spirit of God to really understand the things of God, because God is Spirit and the things that concern Him can only be understood spiritually.

So this statement of Paul's is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Jesus. We have already seen that in various places in the New Testament, things relating to the things prescribed in the Law of Moses are compared to a shadow, also called a reflection, and this refers both to the temple and to the ceremonies associated with it<sup>103</sup>.

In the same context, Jesus makes it clear to the disciples once again that He is about to leave, and not only that, but that they will be scattered and that despair will overtake them, with all the consequences that this implies. But he encourages them by pointing towards the peace of which they will be a part, and as with Jesus himself, the sorrow and pain will have to give way to the joy that is to come. In Hebrews 12 we find a reference to this:

*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who **for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.  
(Hebrews 12:2)*

We are equally challenged to respond in a similar way. We now experience rejection and persecution, but if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we will share in His peace as the disciples did.

The final conclusion to be drawn from Jesus' teaching in these chapters of John is that without the promised Spirit of Truth we will not be able to comprehend the things of the Kingdom of God. So not only do we need to have access to the Spirit, we also need to reach out to Him in all humility. It is the Spirit who leads us into relationship with God. We've been given access to God in heaven through the Spirit, we've been given a place in the Father's House, and that House is our home out of which we are witnesses to the world around us.

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<sup>103</sup> See Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:1

# Jesus Prays

## John 17:1-5

*1These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Jesus has come to the point where He will leave this world and return to His Father. The Father has sent Jesus into this world with a specific mission. In the chapters that follow this chapter in particular in which Jesus prays for His disciples, it is described how He is arrested, how He is interrogated by the Sanhedrin and by Pilate, how He is declared to be innocent in an illegal trial, how He is then nailed to the cross and dies there immediately after crying out:

*It is finished.  
(John 19:30)*

Then how He was buried and rose again after three days, and how He appeared to His disciples and gave them the final instructions and breathed on them to receive the Spirit. Jesus accomplished the whole plan of God by carrying out this mission and thus glorifying the Father who sent Him. He came into this world and temporarily laid aside the glory He had with the Father. Paul also refers to this in his letter to the Philippians:

*6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  
(Philippians 2:6-11)*

The glory of God was at stake, and Jesus gave himself willingly to glorify the Father. The life intended for Adam, the human being, had been squandered as a result of the fall, and one could conclude that the Adam project had been a failure. Jesus reverses this by restoring to us the eternal life that was intended for Adam.

So what does this eternal life consist of? It consists of a restored relationship with God. Knowing the Father and knowing Jesus Christ **is** eternal life. Outside of this reality there is no real life, the physical life we are sharing in this world is finite, it ends in death. What is clear from this text is that there is no life outside of God, so when we think about what eternal life means, it is not so much that our mortality has come to an end, but that eternal life is in knowing Him. So the original relationship that Adam had with God in the Garden of Eden has been restored, and that relationship has no end because it is not physical, it is spiritual. Physical life is finite, it is limited in space and time, spiritual life is not subject to these limitations.

Jesus now asks the Father to allow Him to receive back the glory He had with God, He has completed the work, this reclaiming goes through death and resurrection. We read earlier about the grain of wheat<sup>104</sup>, which can only bear fruit if it is sown in the ground and dies to itself. You could also use the image of the caterpillar and the butterfly, a caterpillar will never be able to bear fruit if it just continues to eat, it can only bear fruit if it dies in the cocoon, because only then can it rise from death, so to speak, fly out as the butterfly it is destined to be. Caterpillars do not lay eggs, butterflies lay eggs and thus create a new generation of caterpillars. The tomb of Jesus can be compared to the cocoon in which the caterpillar has spun-in itself and there dies in order to emerge as the Risen One.

## John 17:6-19

*6I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

Jesus then prays for the group of disciples standing with Him. There are a number of aspects that stand out, namelyThe disciples belong to the Father and are given to the Son.

- The disciples have acknowledged the truth that Jesus is the one sent by the Father.
- The disciples have become partakers of what Jesus possesses.
- The disciples have become partakers of the glory of God.
- The disciples are kept by God, Jesus watches over them.
- The disciples are saved, not lost.
- The disciples have received His word.
- The disciples have become partakers of the joy of Jesus.
- The disciples have been placed in this world, but are hated by the world.
- The disciples are set apart as Jesus was set apart.

What is written here is actually too great to describe in words. The promises of God in it are enormous. The source from which these disciples can draw is unlimited. They have

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<sup>104</sup> See John 12:24

been made partakers of eternal life, and all these things are included. God is glorified when they can continue to walk in this reality. The reality referred to is unlimited, therefore eternal, which means that it transcends all the limitations that characterise physical, earthly life. They can dwell in the Father's house and use that dwelling as their base of operations in this world.

## John 17:20-26

*20Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Jesus prays not only for this small group of disciples, but also for the group they would reach with their word, and by that we mean the whole Church of Jesus Christ. He prays for his Church, that they may be one. Over the years I have discovered that this is of a completely different nature than is often assumed<sup>105</sup>. In order to understand what Jesus means when He speaks of unity, we must first understand a number of things, namely that

- God is one<sup>106</sup>.
- The Father and Jesus are one<sup>107</sup>.
- Jesus and His church are one<sup>108</sup>.
- Husband and wife are one<sup>109</sup>.

All these aspects show the character of this unity. This unity is holy, God is holy, the relationship between the Father and Jesus is holy, the relationship between Jesus and His Church is holy, and also the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage is holy. Holiness means set apart and exclusive, nothing is allowed to come in between. In the same way, the ordained unity within the Church is exclusive in character, so the quest for inclusiveness, so characteristic of many ideas of unity and ecumenism, must be rejected in this respect. As Jesus prays, we are placed in the unity between the Father and Himself, and true biblical unity can only exist where people have come together to share in the unity of God. We are housed together in the Father's house, and so we are only one with others who inhabit the same house, where we have come together to share in the spiritual reality in which we have been placed. True unity is spiritual, not physical. The pursuit of some sort of physical unity is therefore unscriptural. Mutual unity is very rich, all the aspects mentioned above are part of it, and we can be witnesses to it in the

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<sup>105</sup> See my article on my website about unity

<https://www.huis-van-god.nl/artikelen/eenheid/>

<sup>106</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4

<sup>107</sup> John 5:19-22; John 10:30; John 17:22

<sup>108</sup> John 15:1-8; John 17:21

<sup>109</sup> Genesis 2:24

world in which we have been left. Where people become aware of this unity, they will be allowed to discover who God really is.

Being the church of Jesus Christ, we are allowed to see and reflect the glory of God in this world. Paul refers to this in his epistle to the Corinthians:

*17Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.  
(II Corinthians 3:17-18)*

What a prospect Jesus prays over His Church, over us. God is Spirit, through whom we are lifted up above the limitations of our physical existence. May we discover and know the depth and richness of this, so that in it, amidst all the limitations of this life, we may be transformed more and more into the image of God, from glory to glory.

# Part 3: A look in the Mirror

We've pretty much been through the teaching of Jesus. After the introduction to the Gospel of John in chapter 1, we have seen from chapter 1:19 to chapter 12 that the teaching of Jesus stirred up serious opposition in the culture of the time. The reason why the Jews wanted Jesus dead was motivated by this controversy, which had to do with the fact that the Jewish culture of the time was entrenched in physical minded thinking. It failed to recognise that the Kingdom of God is not physical but spiritual in nature. Paul exposes this controversy in Romans:

*1Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*  
(Romans 10:1-4)

In this passage Paul shows that Judaism was stuck in a false way of thinking, pursuing a righteousness that was based on themselves and not on God and faith. I have noticed that there is often reference to the 613 commandments of the Torah, which means that Judaism has only distilled the rules from the whole Pentateuch and does not see that the first book, the book of Genesis, contains no rules, whereas this book shows us that the basis of righteousness is not the observance of rules. This shows us the great importance that the Bible attaches to faith, not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old Testament, as can be seen from the many quotations from the Old Testament that refer to faith. A few examples:

*6And he <sup>(Abraham)</sup> **believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.***  
(Genesis 15:6)

*4Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: **but the just shall live by his faith.***  
(Habakkuk 2:4)

The above verses, and many more, are referred to in various places in the New Testament. Jesus' contemporaries had drifted away from biblical righteousness based on faith and ended up with their own righteousness based on their own observance of the law.

In addition, this controversy was also regarded as a threat to the status of the Jewish leadership, the loss of their status as spiritual leaders and also their position as political leaders.

*48If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*  
(John 11:48).

In the following chapters, chapters 13 through 17, Jesus gives an extensive discourse to the intimate circle of the disciples about the time to come and all that goes with it. What stands out above all is the servant character and the role of the Spirit of Truth and the

fellowship that will be established with the Father and Jesus Christ in the Father's house. What also stands out is the spiritual character of the coming Kingdom of God.

What we want to look at in the last part are the epistles written by John, which are not so much forward-looking, which is characteristic of the teaching of Jesus, but rather backward-looking, as in a mirror, to see how it should develop in practice. In his epistles he deals with those things which he considers to be characteristic of the life of a Christian within the Church.

*<sup>13</sup>These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.  
(1 John 5:13)*

This statement shows the purpose for which he wrote this epistle, namely that we can use the content as a kind of evaluation framework, a mirror so to speak, to be able to judge for ourselves whether or not we are really partaking of the gospel and the Kingdom of God.

# Yet another epistle

## 1 John 1:1–4

*1That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2(for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

In his first epistle he goes back to the beginning. In this way he makes a clear connection with the first part, the introduction of the Gospel. At that time there were some teachings which denied the physical coming of Jesus. Let's just say that here we see the first manifestations that quickly lead to the emergence of what is known as Gnosticism<sup>110</sup>, which caused great strife in the churches of that era. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into this in detail, but I would like to mention a number of characteristic discrepancies:

- God as a person *versus* the divine and its influence.
- Jesus is God, the Word made flesh *versus* Jesus has reached the status of divinity.
- The spiritual is a gift from God *versus* the spiritual is a goal to be pursued and achieved.

John emphasises here that he saw Jesus with his own eyes, touched Him with his hands, looked at Him closely and experienced Him, and that this Jesus was the one who revealed eternal life. We have already seen that eternal life is characterised by knowing God and knowing Jesus Christ. Jesus is not so much the giver of eternal life but eternal life in person. Eternal life exists only in the fellowship we have with the Father and with Jesus Christ. The joy that results reflects the happiness, satisfaction and fulfilment associated with that fellowship, which is eternal.

John then goes on in this letter to describe a number of characteristics by which we can tell whether a person is a true Christian or not, whether he is a true partaker of eternal life or not, whether he is truly in Christ or not. We are looking in the mirror, so to speak, and are challenged to be honest in our judgement of what we see. Piece by piece, we will now put the pieces of the jigsaw together.

## 1 John 1:5–7

*5This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

*6If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

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<sup>110</sup> By the way, Gnosticism is very much related to the Jewish Kabbalah, it is sometimes suggested that Gnosticism originated from Kabbalah. Gnosticism is also very much related to Hinduism and Buddhism in its way of thinking.

The first characteristic has to do with light and darkness, a true Christian walks in the light and therefore does not engage in things that cannot bear the light of day. Being cleansed by the blood of Jesus is thus linked to walking in the light.

## **1 John 1:8–10**

*8If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

The second characteristic is that we see and admit that we are sinners in need of forgiveness. The mark of a Christian is that he confesses his sins and comes clean, only then will our sins be forgiven. Therefore, honesty first.

## **1 John 2:1–2**

*1My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

That which is written here is there to make us realise that we need to deal with sin, we need reconciliation, and not just us, but everyone in the world. The mark of a true Christian is to seek these things. The beauty of this passage is that Jesus is presented here as the Advocate, the Parakletos, the same word that describes the Spirit of God.

## **1 Johannes 2:3-5<sup>a</sup>**

*3And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*

Another characteristic of being a Christian is obedience to the commandments of Jesus. If we claim to know Him, but are fundamentally rooted in disobedience, then that tells us something from which we can conclude that we are not really partakers of Him. You must remember that in those days a flock consisted mainly of sheep and goats. Sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd and follow Him, goats do not so much follow the shepherd but walk with the flock.

## **1 Johannes 2:5<sup>b</sup>-6**

*...hereby know we that we are in him. 6He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

Being in Him, as Jesus commands us to do in John 15, results in behaviour that looks more and more like the behaviour of Jesus. It is characteristic that we take seriously the task of mirroring ourselves in Jesus and his behaviour, and making the necessary adjustments on the basis of this.

## **1 John 2:7–11**

*7Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is*

*true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

*9He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

Another characteristic of a true Christian is that we love the brother. If we don't love the brother, we are still walking in darkness. We have already seen that we have fellowship with each other and with the Father and the Son. What John is trying to make clear here is that these two, fellowship with God on the one hand and fellowship with each other within a church on the other, are not available separately. People who continue to distance themselves from the church of Jesus Christ are challenged by John to take a serious look in the mirror.

## **1 John 2:12–17**

*12I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. 13I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 14I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. 15Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Two things stand out in this section, development and growth. The development from childhood to adulthood, we start as children, grow into young men who can face the devil, and fathers who can raise the children. Christian life is also characterised by growth, with the aim of becoming increasingly detached from the influence of the world around us and growing in obedience and holiness.

## **1 John 2:18–27**

*18Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 20But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 21I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. 24Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

*26These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

As Christians we have received the Spirit of God who enables us to distinguish between what is of God and what is of the world. It is a mark of a Christian to be able to make this distinction, if necessary independently. The fact that John here presents a number of features by which the antichrist or antichrists can be recognised shows that we need the teaching of the apostles and also the rest of the Bible.

However, if we zoom in on one important characteristic that appears several times in John's epistles, it is the denial that Jesus is the Christ. We have already seen that this is the basis of the great contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees, not only then but also today. Both Judaism and Islam deny the sonship of Jesus, and so both are part of the anti-Christian world system. One wonders, then, whether those who claim that Jews and Christians worship the same God have been deceived and have drifted away from the truth of the Gospel.

### **1 John 2:28 - 3:3**

*29If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. 1Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

What a prospect, we who have been adopted by God as His children will be like Him when He is to appear. Everything that clings to us, that has to do with our sinful state, with the pressures of the world and the constant influence of the kingdom of darkness, will at that moment simply fall away from us, and we too will be perfect, serving God just as Jesus lived and lives for the Father. In the meantime, we are challenged to make a serious effort to want to be as He is now, as much as we can, so that when He comes, we will not be ashamed of ourselves. We are not supposed to be completely clean right away, but we are making an effort to cleanse ourselves. I am reminded of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. The third person with the one talent had buried it in the ground, and this is what Jesus said about him:

*26His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*  
(Matthew 25:26-30)

This servant stood ashamed when the Master appeared, with all the consequences that entailed. If we truly want to serve Him, we will take this challenge seriously. John adds

that the mark of someone who is born of God is that he does righteousness; fine words alone do not seem to suffice.

## 1 John 3:4–10

*4Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

*9Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

I always find this part very difficult, so I want to be careful not to explain it away or water it down. It would seem that John is suggesting here that a true Christian does not sin any more, and if he does, he is obviously of the devil. I have serious doubts about this explanation, and I have a very important argument in opposition to it. John says, "He who is born of God does not **sin**". The word "does" in the Greek is ποιέω (poieō)<sup>111</sup>, which means something like doing, making, or producing, and has in it the character of willfulness. If we are born of God, then we have a desire to be like Jesus and to do what He asks of us. If we claim to have come to faith and this desire does not grow in us, then we must ask ourselves whether we have really become partakers of Jesus. Imagine the extreme case that I am an assassin and this is the way I earn my living, is it possible for me to come to faith and not see that I need to choose another profession and instead continue happily in my profession? Judge for yourself, is that possible? No, it's not possible. Being born of God, changes everything. Am I then without sin, no, otherwise I would be fooling myself, but I do intend to stop sinning in that way. Why? Because something of God has come inside me. John calls it "the seed" and so I am transformed from within by God Himself, by His Spirit dwelling in me.

## 1 John 3:11–17

*11For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

*13Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. 14We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 15Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 16Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him*

In this section we'll be repeating a bit. You can see that this is a top priority subject to John. If we do not love our brother, but hate him, we are like Cain who hated Abel and

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<sup>111</sup> Strong G4160

killed him. When we are born again, the love of God is poured out in us, it cannot be that this has no effect on our lives. If it does not, then it is time to take another serious look in the mirror. Paul also challenges us to do this:

*5Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

So it really does make sense to look in the mirror once in a while. As long as we have time to live, we also have the opportunity to repent, which is no longer possible if we stand ashamed at the coming of Jesus.

## **1 John 3:18–24**

*18My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

*19And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 22And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

It is very important that we also look in the mirror with practical glasses. Love has almost nothing to do with feelings, love can be measured in practice, in how we actually treat our brother. "To measure is to know" and has nothing to do with feelings, but everything to do with conscience. Our conscience expresses itself in things that we "know" deep down, and sometimes this is contrary to our feelings. The heart in the text refers to our inner conscience. When we look in the mirror from this perspective, what do we see inside? People who are often guided by feelings and emotions can have a hard time with this, what these people need to learn is to separate the conscience from the feelings. Conscience is connected to the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Truth, who convinces us of how things really are within us, which is the truth, and this has little to do with our emotions.

## **1 John 4:1–6**

*1Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

*4Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

The purity of our confession is also emphasised in this passage. Once again John gives us a series of criteria by which we can judge whether we are dealing with brothers or leaders of the right kind or the wrong kind. Earlier I referred to unity. True unity is

exclusive and directly related to truth. It is of the utmost importance that we make a distinction in this regard. Here are the criteria:

- Whether or not confessing the coming of Jesus in the flesh.
- The Antichrist is already in the world<sup>112</sup>.
- Notice the language, is this from the world or from God, so is it biblical or not.
- Are people joining the Church?
- Do they keep the commandments of Jesus?

## 1 John 4:7–21

*7Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

*11Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 14And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

*16And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. 17Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 19We love him, because he first loved us. 20If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

Speaking of love. John notes that this is the mark of all marks. If we do not love, we show that we are not in Him and He is not in us, and that we have not received the Spirit. When we receive the Spirit of God, we can love our brother and our neighbour without fear. Jesus' commandment is that if we love God, we must also love our brother, and this is possible because God is in us and God is love.

## 1 John 5:1-5

*1Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

In addition to love, it is emphasised here that a child of God is characterised by keeping the commandments of God. These commandments are not difficult for people who are

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<sup>112</sup> If we look too much for a future manifestation of the "Antichrist", we often become blind to the manifestations that are immediately around us.

born of God, the strength is in our faith. Faith is characterised by action based on trust and therefore has everything to do with obedience.

*14What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.  
(James 2:14-17)*

According to James, true faith finds its effect in working love; without it we are powerless and lost.

## **1 John 5:6-12**

*6This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 9If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 10He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

John here speaks of the testimony to which heaven also testified, he speaks of water and blood, he himself was there when the soldier pierced Jesus in the side with a spear, he himself saw water and blood flowing from the body of Jesus. This alone would be worth writing a book. We too, through the Spirit, may carry this same testimony with us. "It is finished" is what Jesus uttered just before He died, and the water and the blood are the proof there-off.

## **1 John 5:13**

*13These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

And then we are back at the beginning of this chapter. John has provided us with a mirror. When I look into this mirror, what do I see? Is it about me, or does it seem to be about a total stranger? We cannot earn our salvation, we have long since failed in every way. We desperately need Jesus and His atoning work on the cross. Therefore, the mirror has nothing to do with what we all have to do to get into heaven. The mirror gives us a glimpse of whether we have really been made partakers of Jesus and whether we really know the Father's house as our home today. As Paul puts it:

*20I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.  
(Galatians 2:20)*

It is not my accomplishment, but the fact that I, like Paul, know that Christ lives in me. This is the nucleus around which everything revolves and by which we may mirror ourselves.

# Conclusie

## John 18:33-38

*33Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, **Art thou the King of the Jews?** 34Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.** 37Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, **Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.** 38Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

During Pilate's interrogation of Jesus, Pilate asks the pressing question, 'Are Thou the King of the Jews?' The Gospel of Luke records that this was a key component of the accusations against Jesus.:

*1And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest it.  
(Luke 23:1-3)*

At that time the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, had great powers, including political and judicial powers, but they were not empowered to enforce the death penalty by crucifixion, which the Romans had reserved for themselves. So to get Jesus nailed to the cross, they had to persuade the Roman governor, Pilate, to condemn Him to death. The accusation that Jesus would claim to be a Messiah, a king, could be understood as rebellion against the Emperor of Rome, and this accusation seemed to them the ultimate means of getting Jesus condemned. Pilate's question is intended to challenge Jesus to condemn himself, but the text in John shows that He does not really respond. Although Jesus agrees with Pilate and thus acknowledges that He is the King of the Jews, He shifts the discussion to the position of the Kingdom over which He reigns. By stating that the Kingdom is not of this world and therefore does not need to be defended by the use of arms, Jesus is placing Himself outside Pilate's jurisdiction. Reassured, Pilate then declares Him to be innocent and wishes to release Jesus.

Jesus' statement that his kingdom is not of this world is an indication that His Kingdom is fundamentally of a different order. The great controversy between Jesus and the Jews is expressed again here. The Jewish expectation of the Messiah is focused on the earthly Jerusalem and the physical reality of which it is a part. This is underlined by several statements of Paul. Here are just a few examples:

*22For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which*

is Agar. <sup>25</sup>For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to **Jerusalem which now is**, and is in bondage with her children. <sup>26</sup>But **Jerusalem which is above** is free, which is the mother of us all.  
(Galatians 4:22-26)

<sup>22</sup>but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup>to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, <sup>24</sup>and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

<sup>22</sup>Maar gij zijt genaderd tot de berg Sion, tot de stad van de levende God, **het hemelse Jeruzalem**, en tot tienduizendtallen van engelen, <sup>23</sup>en tot een feestelijke en plechtige vergadering van eerstgeborenen, die ingeschreven zijn in de hemelen, en tot God, de Rechter over allen, en tot de geesten der rechtvaardigen, die de voleinding bereikt hebben, <sup>24</sup>en tot Jezus, de middelaar van een nieuw verbond, en tot het bloed der besprenging, dat krachtiger spreekt dan Abel.  
(Hebrews 12:22-24)

Jerusalem under the Old Covenant was crucial because it was the predominant place where God appeared. Under the Old Covenant, the Israelites were required to appear before the Lord, obeying the commands in Deuteronomy:

<sup>5</sup>But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: <sup>6</sup>and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: <sup>7</sup>and there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee  
(Deuteronomium 12:5-7)

<sup>16</sup>Driemaal per jaar zal ieder die onder u van het mannelijk geslacht is, voor het aangezicht van de HERE, uw God, verschijnen op de plaats die Hij verkiezen zal: op het feest der ongezuurde broden, op het feest der weken en op het loofhuttenfeest...  
(Deuteronomy 16:16)

The focus was not on the sanctuaries per se, but on the glory of God associated with them. The focus was on "the Face of the Lord". Under the Old Covenant, because the Spirit had not yet been poured out, it was necessary for most of the people of Israel to come to Jerusalem because that was the only place where the people could meet God. Under the New Covenant all this has changed. The focus on the old Jerusalem, because of the presence of God, has been replaced by the new, heavenly Jerusalem, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and reigns from that position.

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said unto my Lord,  
Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.  
<sup>2</sup>The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:  
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.  
(Psalm 110:1-2)

This psalm is often quoted by Paul in Hebrews to support his argument about how everything has changed with the coming of Jesus. It would take too long to go into this in more detail, that itself is worth writing a book, but what is especially clear in this epistle is that pretty much everything has changed. So there is an essential difference between the Old Covenant, centred on the old Jerusalem, and the New Covenant, centred on the new, heavenly Jerusalem. And it has everything to do with where God allows himself to be found. We have seen that we have been given a place in the Father's house and that house is in heaven where Jesus is seated on His throne. So it is all about where God allows himself to be found. As long as the Old Covenant is in force, God allows Himself to be found in the physical aspects of the "shadow", but with the coming of the Christ we have entered into the reality to which the shadow points, and that reality is spiritual and therefore heavenly. Going back to the introduction, we see an increasing focus on Israel in the Middle East, in this way we are going back to the shadow, so to speak, and slowly but surely we are losing the depth and meaning of the New Covenant. I once read a statement by an American rabbi in which he pointed out that the greatest influx into Judaism comes from the Messianic movement, also called the Hebrew Roots or Jewish Roots movement. So when we shift our focus to Israel, we lose sight of Jesus. Jesus says that the Scriptures are about Him, not about Israel. Jesus is the seed of Abraham, Jesus is the heir, Jesus is the door, Jesus is the true vine, Jesus is the noble olive. The whole Bible revolves around Him. Everything about the temple service and the shadow in the Old Testament points to Jesus, He is the Christ, the Son of God, not Israel. Within Jewish culture, then and now, everything is focused on the special standing that Israel, the Jewish people, have in the world. This is evident from the fact that even within the first church there was a struggle over the special position that Israel and the Jews would occupy. In the early churches of Antioch<sup>113</sup> and Galatia<sup>114</sup>, Gentiles were told to be circumcised. This idea concerning circumcision has everything to do with the Jewish notion that ultimately only Jews can be saved. So to be saved as a gentile you had to first join Judaism, and that meant that as a gentile you first had to be circumcised. Paul constantly counters this thinking. He repeatedly points out that in the context of the gospel there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, we are all one in Christ<sup>115</sup>. To make distinctions between Gentiles and Jews in this day and age is therefore completely unbiblical and must be seen to be wrong.

*¶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁊which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ¶But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ¶As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.  
(Galatians 1:6-9)*

Paul uses very strong words in this regard. If we understand that the underlying motive of this alternative gospel is the superiority mentality of the Jewish culture of the time, a mentality that can still be found in Judaism today, then the question is justified whether

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<sup>113</sup> Acts 15:5

<sup>114</sup> The whole of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

<sup>115</sup> and put **no difference** between us and them... (Acts 15:9)

... for there is **no difference**: (Romans 3:22)

For there is **no difference** between the Jew and the Greek:. (Romans 10:12)

... where there is **neither Greek nor Jew**,...(Colossians 3:11)

and to what extent a false gospel is being proclaimed in pro-Israel circles, with all its consequences.

In Part 1 we saw how Jesus first confronted the Jewish culture of His day and its ideology. He wanted to make it clear in no uncertain terms that the Judaism of that time was not in accord with the Scriptures and therefore could not see Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Being stuck in physical thinking was the bottleneck. In Part 2, Jesus again explains to the intimate circle of disciples how things really are, a truth that the disciples initially do not understand, but Jesus promises them on this occasion that they will understand when they receive the Spirit of Truth. In Part 3, I reviewed 1 John to discover what the Gospel is really about, and a so-called Israel vision is completely absent there. Paul speaks of a better covenant based on better terms:

*6But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon **better promises**. 7For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*

*13In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.  
(Hebrews 8:6-7;13)*

The old covenant is completely replaced by a new, better covenant. When Paul speaks of the disappearance of the old, he is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. With this destruction, God has rigorously abolished all remaining aspects of the Old Covenant. The focus on Israel and the role that the Jews might still play in the end times obscures the grandeur of the new covenant, which is superior in every way.

Isaiah calls us to seek God and repent:

*6Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
(Isaiah 55:6-9)*

Isaiah places this invitation as a follow-up to Isaiah 53, where Jesus is proclaimed as the sheep led to the slaughter, taking our sin upon Himself and carrying it away. We are challenged to seek the Lord, to take a different path, to embrace a different way of thinking. Heaven is higher than earth, God's ways are higher than our ways, higher than the Jewish mindset of the time, even higher than the mindset associated with an earthly Israel.

The challenge we face is whether we are truly ready to repent, to align our thinking fully with the teaching of Jesus and his apostles, and thus to participate fully in all the aspects that characterise the New Covenant in the Blood of Christ.

In conclusion, I would like to quote one more verse:

*15Who (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the*

*preeminence. <sup>19</sup>For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; <sup>20</sup>and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.  
(Colossians 1:15-20)*

What an awesome perspective on our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.