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The Working Syllabus on the Gospel of St John

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A WORKING SYLLABUS ON
THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of New Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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June 1952

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Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF DIAGRAMS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
I. THE WORKING SYLLABUS ON THE GOSPEL OF ST.	
JOHN	3
Unit One: The Prologue	3
Unit Two: Life	14
Unit Three: The Children of God	28
Unit Four: Belief and Unbelief	40
CONCLUSION	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram	Page
1. The Prologue	3
2. The Key	4
3. Jesus-The Object of Faith	42
4. A Book Outline	46
5. An Outline of John Six	57

INTRODUCTION

By careful analysis of certain terms used in the Gospel of John, one arrives at a deeper insight into the Gospel. I have made such an analysis but should like to have this analysis serve also a practical end. I have in mind the Bible class teacher who is charged with teaching the Gospel of John. For if the Bible class teacher has a grasp of the fundamental theological terms employed by John, it should not be too difficult for him to gather about these theological terms the materials of the Gospel as John presents them in his twenty-one chapters. The Bible class teacher's approach, therefore, would not be the "chapter approach," but an approach through units of thought discoverable in the entire Gospel.

My study is, as I appreciate, only a beginning. More effort will be required to do fuller justice to the theology of John. I hope however to have at least pointed the way to a teaching approach which should prove, if carefully administered, at least as effective as the "chapter approach." Since the Gospel of John is so rich in theological concepts, I had necessarily to limit myself to a consideration of some of the most basic concepts. I have chosen, perhaps arbitrarily, the following: (1) The Prologue; (2) Life; (3) Children of God; (4) Belief and Unbelief.

If this approach to the Gospel of John were to be more inclusive, several other basic terms would have to be investigated. These units would include the Son of God, the Nature of Faith, the Church, Son of Man, the Victorious Christ, the Disciples in their Relation to the World, the Sayings of Jesus.

I have tried to employ a method in this study that is not only didactic, but will also prove interesting and challenging for the Bible class teacher to appreciate the material in each unit. My organization attempts to set forth the material clearly and orderly, so that the reader can easily study each unit.

CHAPTER I

UNIT ONE

THE PROLOGUE

The Prologue is the first eighteen verses of chapter one. All that John expounds in his Gospel is condensed into this brief statement. Therefore this is not so much an introduction as a summary of the entire Gospel. The Prologue does not move from Jesus but rather to Him. Through these eighteen verses you can get a picture of the whole book. This is the aim of this unit.

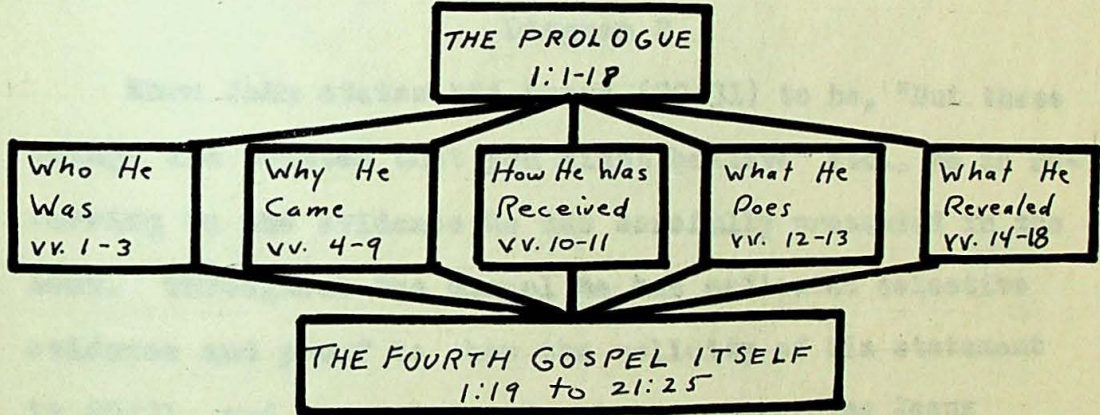


Diagram 1

As there is a key section to many books of the Bible, so too there may be a key verse that helps to open up the book. The key verse sets forth the purpose of the writer. This verse should be memorized and constantly kept in mind throughout the study. Look up the key for John.

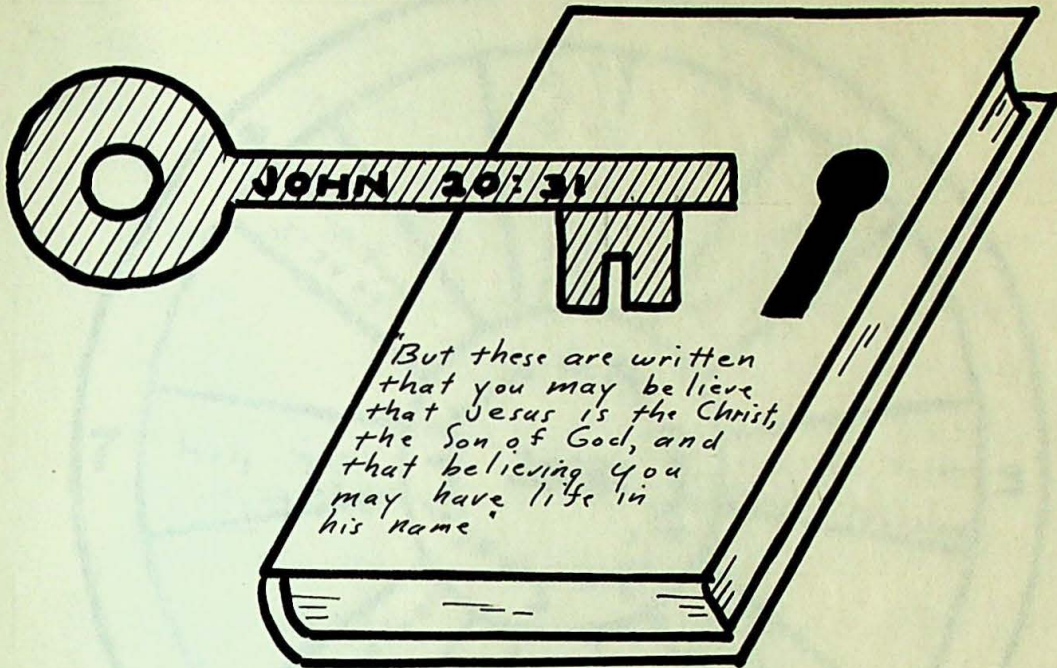
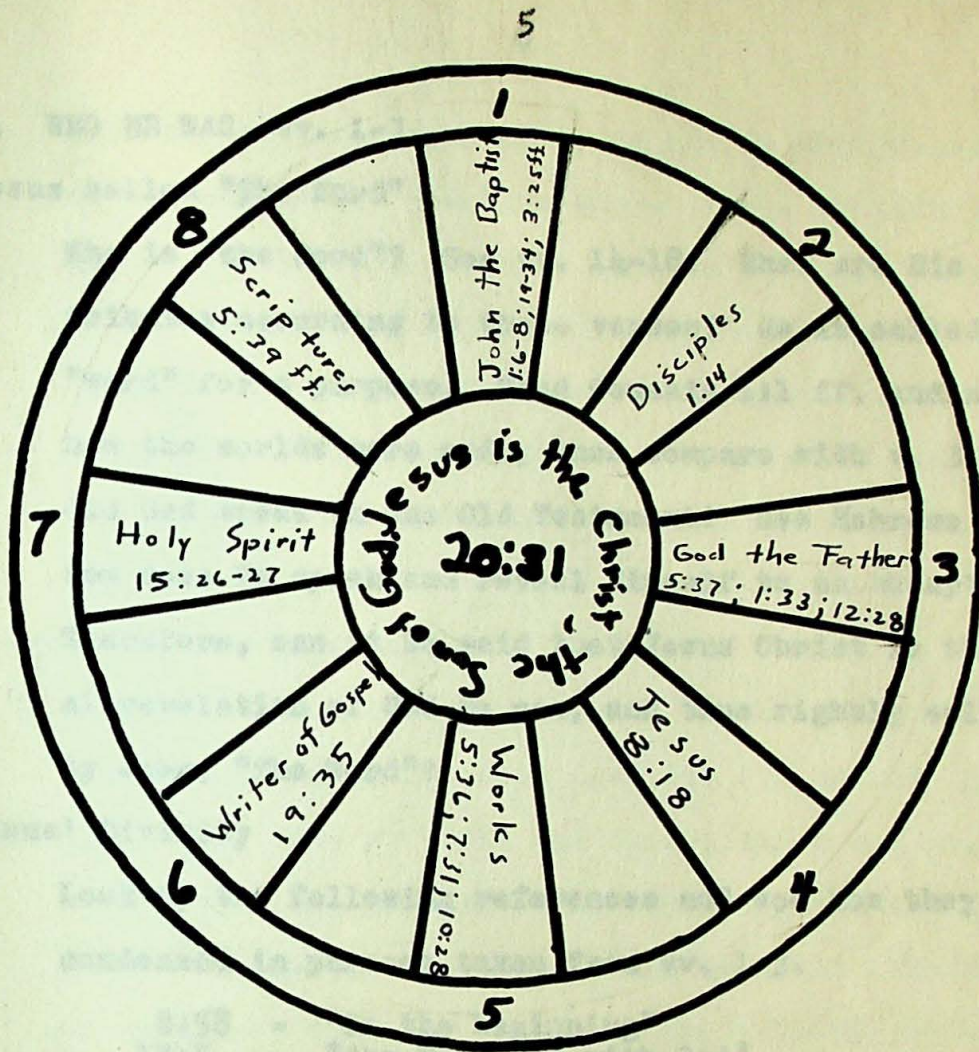


Diagram 2

When John states his theme (20:31) to be, "But these things are written that you might believe" etc., he is referring to the evidence he has carefully presented in the book. Throughout the Gospel he has collected selective evidence and proof to show the validity of his statement in 20:31, and to explain the claims concerning Jesus stated in the Prologue. Therefore, note how many times the words "testimony" and "witness" are used in the book.

Look up the indicated references that make up our "wheel" of proof and see how each is a witness to the theme.



The Prologue may be divided into five parts.¹ Each one opens up the book a little further. After this study you should have a good picture of the entire Gospel, and thus be prepared for the real study.

¹Chester Warren Quimby, John, The Universal Gospel (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947), pp. 92-93.

1. WHO HE WAS, vv. 1-3.

Jesus called "The Word"

Who is "the Word"? See vv. 14-18. What are His attributes according to these verses? He is called the "Word" for a purpose. Read Genesis 1:1 ff. and see how the worlds were made, then compare with v. 3. How did God speak in the Old Testament? See Hebrews 1:1-2. How does He speak and reveal Himself to us today? Therefore, can it be said that Jesus Christ is the final revelation of God to man, and thus rightly called by John, "The Word"?

Jesus' Divinity

Look up the following references and see how they are condensed in phrases taken from vv. 1-3.

- 8:58 - "In the beginning"
- 17:5 - "the Word was with God"
- 10:38 - "the Word was God"
- 2:11 - "All things were made by Him" (check other miracles 5:8; 6:14; 9:7; 11:43.)

Jesus' Names (an additional study)

John uses many names for Jesus throughout his Gospel. Find and list them. Ask yourself, "Why did John use these names"? See 2:34; 2:29; 2:49; 20:28; 10:7; 10:11; 14:6; 15:1; 6:35.

2. WHY HE CAME, vv. 4-9.

Jesus came to give life

Jesus came for one purpose. See 10:10b. A most sig-

nificant psychological drive in man is the preserving of his own life. (Explain why). There is life in nature and life in man only because of their relation to the Word of God (vv. 1-3). But the original life that the Spirit of God breathed into man, he lost (Genesis 2:7; 3:3,19). Therefore, only God can give the life of God, which is eternal life. Thus v. 4. (See also 3:16).

Jesus calls men to decision

Jesus clearly confronts man with a life-death decision. Throughout the Gospel John displays a fondness for opposites, such as, life and death, light and darkness, belief and unbelief, time and eternity, law and grace. Check briefly in the book for the theme of life-death as presented in v. 4: see 3:18 ff; 5:26-29; 9:39. What other word does he use for "death"? For the light-darkness theme see 12:35-36; 8:12. Note the clash between the two parts of each theme. Man is in one or the other. Discuss.

Jesus came to conquer

Read v. 5. Were there more who believed on Jesus or more who did not accept Jesus? See 6:66; 7:32; 8:59; 10:25-26. Note that the darkness is rooted in man's failure to apprehend Jesus. What was the final result of the opposition? See 19:17-18. But explain

what John means when he says that this darkness of opposition did not overcome the light. See 16:33; 12:31-32; 14:30; 20:1 ff. Name the two ways which give evidence that the Light did overcome the darkness. What does this mean to you and me in the light of 17:14-16 and I John 5:4-5?

3. HOW HE WAS RECEIVED, v. 10-11.

What is the striking thing about verses 10-11? Study the term "world." Note the light John sheds on this word in the following passages:

16:11	ruled by the devil
3:36	wrath of God upon it
3:16	object of God's love
6:51	Jesus to die for it
16:33	Jesus to overcome it
I John 5:4	Church shows the victory

The rise, development and persistence in unbelief can be traced in chapters 5-12. What is especially sad in v. 11? See also 7:5. What lesson can be learned from this, especially by those who have been brought up in the faith from childhood?

4. WHAT HE DOES, v. 12.

What does Jesus do? See v. 12. What does the phrase "gave power to become the sons of God" mean? See 3:16; 11:40; 14:3; 13:35. The word "received" used by John means the same as "believed." Yet faith is also a reception. But is it merely an acceptance of a

body of knowledge about God? Or is it more? Is it making God your own?

The "power" to become the children of God comes from God. It cannot come from man. Therefore, John states correctly that the person who receives Jesus as his Savior and Lord is born of God, v. 13. How do the following passages underline this truth? See 3:3,5; 6:63.

5. WHAT HE REVEALED, vv. 14-18

Jesus is the Son of God

Read this section. Connect v. 1 with v. 14 and read. The Word before the incarnation (v. 1) was the one source of many divine words spoken through the prophets. The Word Incarnate (v. 14) is God's Son. He is the heart and core of the Gospel (Good News). Therefore, it is true to say that Jesus is the final revelation from God to man, and that one sees the Father only through Him (14:6-9). Discuss. The Incarnation is stated in v. 14 in eight words. Find them. Although the shortest, yet this is the most profound and accurate account of the Christmas event. Refer to the other two accounts in Matthew 1:18-2:12, and Luke 2:1-20. Although the other two accounts give vital and beautiful details, yet John's account lays bare the very heart of the Christmas story.

An Additional Study: God made Himself known to men. Man of himself could not know or find God. God revealed Himself. Study the following passages which illustrate this point:

Law	the	revelation	of	God	5:46
Prophecies	"	"	"	"	2:17
Old Testament	"	"	"	"	5:39
Jesus Christ	"	"	"	"	6:45-46

Jesus is Man

"The Word became flesh" means that Jesus became man. As a man He knows well what we experience in every part of our life. This is important and comforting. This is why Jesus knows man so well. Scan the following chapters and find references to Jesus' humanity: chapters 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 19. For example, 4:6 tells us that Jesus was weary and hungry.

Jesus revealed God's glory

See v. 14b, "We beheld His glory." When John says "we", he is referring to his fellow-disciples. Whom may it also include? Is this phrase used as a testimony by John to validate his book? Can you be a witness to this same truth, i.e. "beholding His glory"? This "beholding" by the Christian is a necessary experience if he is to fully appreciate his Christian faith. But what does it mean to "behold" Jesus? Discuss.

"Glory" was the thing that the disciples beheld. This term needs defining. Since St. John uses Old Testa-

ment language and thought patterns, we must go to the Old Testament to establish the right meaning. "Glory" in the Old Testament often refers to the "self" or the "soul" of a man. (See Psalm 16:9; 57:8; 108:1). The reason for this might be that man's inner character or "soul" is the most "glorious" part of him. Glory is the whole personal activity of the living God, not merely one of His attributes. Thus God's glory comes to mean "His very self and essence all divine." God's glory is not known because of the research of man, but because of the self-revelation of God. His "glory" is His self-revealed character of being. Therefore, when men say, "Give glory to God," much more is meant than that they are extolling a power and a goodness which they have somehow discovered for themselves. They are rather acknowledging their faith in God's essential being and revealed character. To "give glory to God" is not to say, "Glory be to God," but "Glory belongs to God." God manifests His glory, makes it visible and actual in deeds of power, mercy, forgiveness, and judgment for man's deliverance and advantage.¹

¹R. H. Strachen, The Fourth Gospel (Third edition; London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), p. 103.

This "glory" it was to which Israel looked forward. The hope of the devout Israelites was that the glory of God would be exalted above all the earth and that all nations would see His glory (see Isaiah 6:18 and 35:2). See John 2:11; 5:2 ff.; 6:2 ff.; 17:1.

Discuss.

Jesus revealed God's grace and truth

See v. 16-17. What is the big difference between v. 17a and v. 17b? Was Moses the author of the law? Grace is the New Testament equivalent of the word "mercy" used in the Old Testament. See Psalms 25:10; 57:10. In the New Testament the disciples not only saw the glory of God manifested in power, but also in grace and truth. The word "grace" is not used outside the prologue, but emerges throughout the Gospel in the word "love". See 3:16. The word "truth" frequently occurs in the words and discourses of Jesus, which are the words of God.

Jesus revealed God

See v. 18. The emphasis is on Jesus as the only channel through which God can be known. See 8:12; 6:48; 10:7; 14:6. Jesus can reveal God to man because He is the Son of the Father, v. 18. See also 8:19; 3:16. Jesus can reveal God to man because He is the only one who has seen the Father, v. 18. See also

6:45-46; 17:26. This fact again shows why Jesus is the final revelation of God to man. See Hebrews 1:1-2.

CONCLUSION

Refer to the diagram 1 and 2. Do you begin to see what they attempt to illustrate? Constantly refer back to the prologue as a summary of the entire book. Never forget the object and purpose of the writer, i.e. 20:31.

UNIT TWO

LIFE

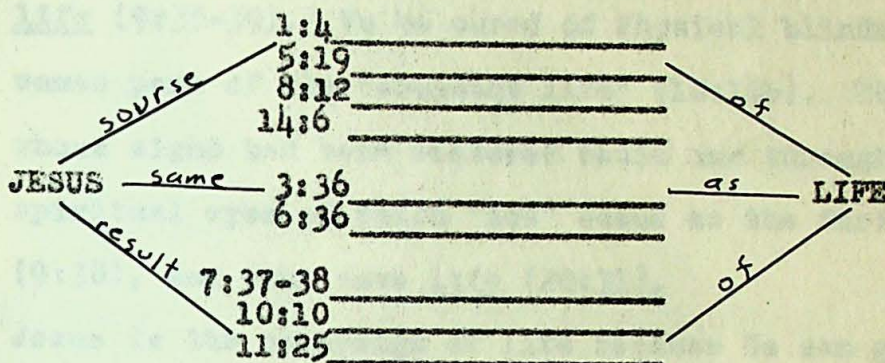
Life is an appealing word. Everybody wants life. It sums up man's dreams. It is the ground of his existence. It is the one thing of which all men want more. It is the one thing most dear to man. That may well be one of the reasons that John uses this term to carry through the theme of his Gospel. For the purpose of the Gospel is to give life. Note the key verse, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

1. JESUS AS THE LIFE

Jesus is the life

That Jesus is the Life constitutes the main part of the theme of the book. See 20:31 ("...you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...and may have life"). One cannot have the one without the other, and when one has one, one has the other. All modern philosophic, moralistic, and scientific interpretations of life, however valuable they may otherwise be, are, when weighed in the balance of divine judgment, meaningless and empty without Jesus Christ. To think of life apart from Jesus Christ is from God's point of view a catastrophic approach to the problem of one's exist-

ence an purpose. The Christian must understand this! That is why John throughout his Gospel repeatedly articulates and emphasizes this truth. Study the following:



Note - almost every chapter in John aligns life with Jesus.

Jesus is the Bestower of life

of all things, see 1:3; 1:10.

Jesus-Bestower of the soul, see 4:14; 6:35.

of the body, see 6:40; 11:38-44.

Note: Though Jesus performed some miracles that do not suggest the giving of life to the body, yet John dedicates a whole chapter to the resurrection of the body, i.e. the raising of Lazareth from the dead (chapter eleven).

Jesus is the Sovereign of life

Jesus not only gives life to whom He wills (11:43-44), that is eternal life of the body and the soul (6:40); but He is also able to heal the body of those infirmities that do not permit man to enjoy the perfect

life. See 9:1 ff. Jesus healed a blind man. This act showed Jesus' sovereignty over the infirmities of the body and His concern for man's physical ills. But He not only gave this man health, He also gave this man life (9:35-39). To be cured of Physical blindness becomes part of the "abundant life" (10:10b). The man whose sight had been restored could now through the spiritual eyes of faith "see" Jesus as the Christ (9:38), and thus have life (20:31).

Jesus is the sovereign of life because He can give life to whom He wills. Compare 5:21 with 11:25 and 11:43, and explain the relation of these passages.

Jesus is the sovereign of life because He can give life to Himself. Compare the story in chapter eleven, also 11:50-52 and 10:17-18, with 20:1 ff. Again note the stress and development of John's thought with respect to Jesus' sovereignty over life. The Resurrection Chapter (chapter eleven) foreshadows His own resurrection, for the record of the death and resurrection of Lazarus for the greater glory of God and for the glorification of His Son is enclosed by references to the death and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of the world, (10:17-18; 11:50-52). This is the greater glory of God and the greater glorification of

His Son (17:1).¹ Thus Jesus the Sovereign of life, gives:

the abundant life - 10:10, 17-18.

the resurrection and life - 11:25, 40.

life to Himself - 20:1 ff.

All of this truth has meaning for the life we now have in Christ. It assures us and makes possible our resurrection and future life.

1. THE MEANING OF THE TERM "LIFE" AS JOHN USES IT

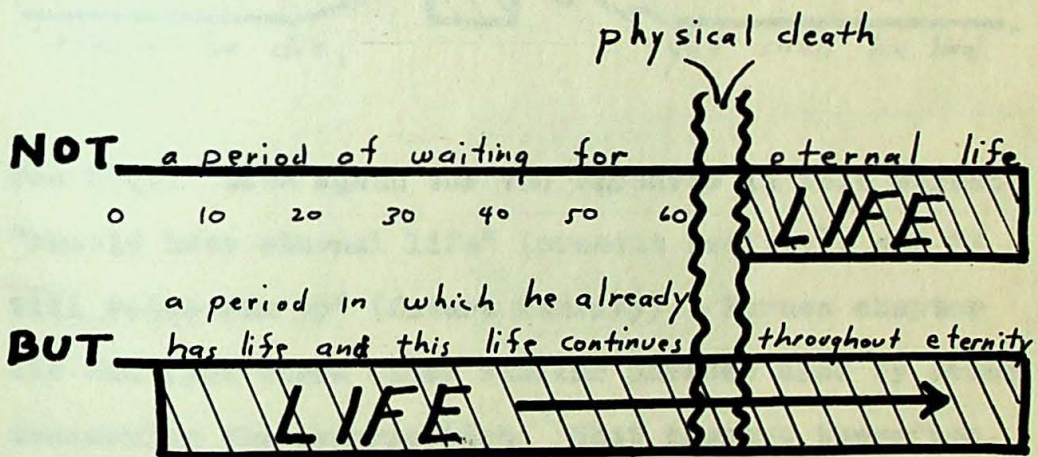
John stresses two features of life: (1) its duration or length; (2) its quality or nature. Unless both of these features are clearly seen, John's frequent usage of the term is not fully grasped. John may even seem to contradict himself at times.

The duration or length of life

John often speaks of "eternal life." But this is for him both a present and a future reality. See 20:31, "you may have life;" 3:16, "but have eternal life;" 10:10, "may have life." Eternal life is what the Christian has now. It is also something for which he looks in the future. See 4:14 and note that life

¹Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (Second edition; London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 400.

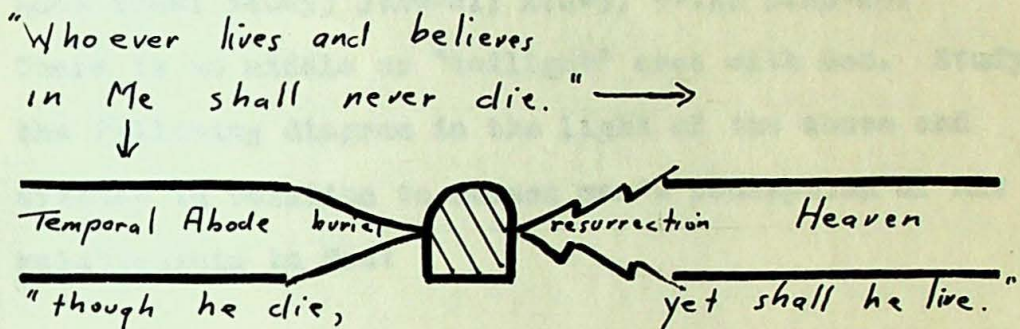
begins in man when he believes, and this life continues eternally. See 5:24, especially the words, "but has passed from death to life." John does not say, "will pass," but that a man possesses the life of God at the time he comes to faith in Jesus. Therefore, life, as John uses the word, is a gift bestowed by Jesus here in time, and not one given in "heaven," though the Christian fully enjoys this gift only when his body has been raised to immortality. Thus the Christian's sojourn here on earth is:



In showing what the life in Christ really is, John does not minimize the glory of the resurrection. The believer also dies. His body returns to the dust of the earth. Not because the body is more corrupt than the soul, as some believe, but because God so willed it that also the Christian's body fall asleep to be raised on the last day. Yet because of the new life

which God has created, the Christian never really dies, but lives eternally with God.

See 11:25 and memorize. Note the apparent contradiction in the statement that, "though he die" and "shall never die." Jesus here says the above two truths in the same breath. Thus:



See 6:40. Note again the two emphasis in this verse: "should have eternal life" (present reality); and "I will raise him up" (future reality). Peruse chapter six and find three other similar phrases used by Jesus concerning the resurrection. What happens therefore, when a person believes is this: he does not at once go to heaven, but heaven comes to him. Discuss this truth and its relevance to the Christian's faith and daily living.

The quality or nature of life

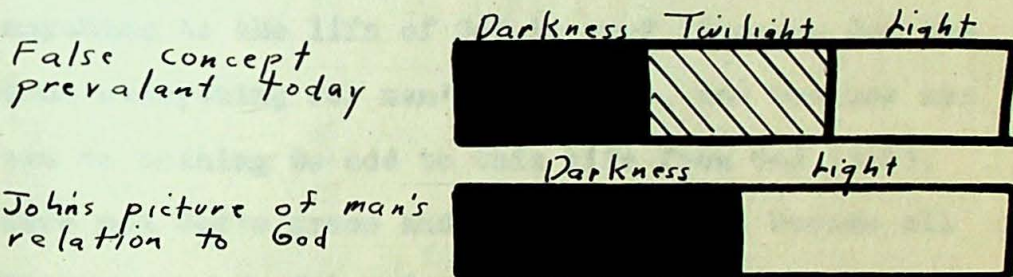
Man either has life or death abiding in him. It is an either-or proposition to the exclusion of every middle. John very clearly and decisively draws antitheses of

life-death, light-darkness, or truth-falsehood throughout the Gospel. Check the following:

	LIFE	either-or	DEATH
3:8	not condemned		condemned already
3:36	believers-life		unbelievers-wrath
4:14	never thirst		thirst again
6:12	light		darkness
8:24	unless you believe		you die in sin

Additional study: 3:16-21; 1:4-5, 9-12; 5:25-29.

There is no middle or "twilight" area with God. Study the following diagram in the light of the above and discuss in relation to modern man's conception of his relationship to God:



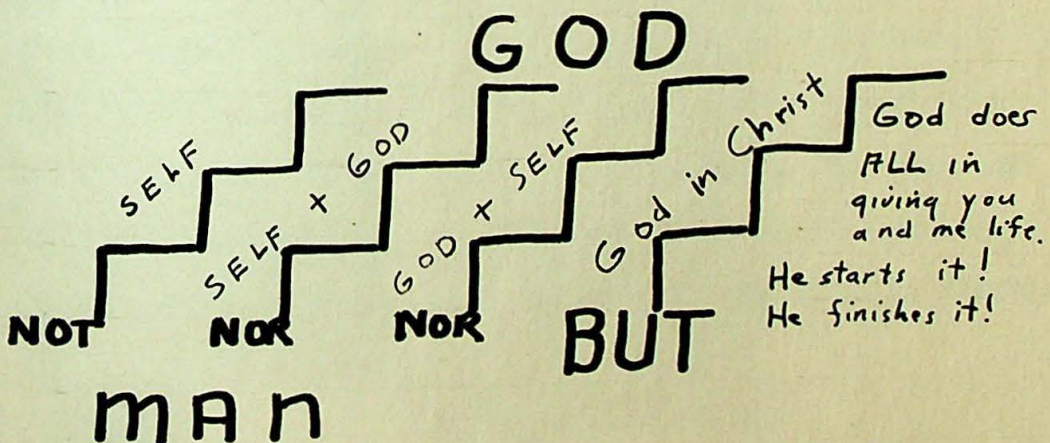
To abide between the light and the darkness is a daily temptation for the Christian. Since he is still encumbered with sin, the Christian finds it very "comfortable" to stay in the shadows and not walk in the light of the Gospel (the life of God). He tries to belong to the world as well as to Jesus Christ. See I John 1:6-7 and discuss. When a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior from the law, sin, and death, he has passed completely from the realm of

death into the realm of life, and therefore should live in the Light (8:12).

3. LIFE IS A PROCESS FROM GOD TO GOD

Life is from God. It is His creation

This life is from God and can come only from Him. No one else and nothing else can raise man into God's presence or to a plane where he can make a claim on God. See 4:14; 6:49-51; 5:21, and answer the question, "Where does this life stem from?" Does 1:13 fully answer the question? It is God who gives you and me life, and He alone! See 6:65. Have you contributed anything to the life of God in you? Because God has done everything for man's salvation, and because man can do nothing to add to this life from God (3:6), does not God's grace and undeserved love become all the more wonderful and amazing? Study the following diagram. Why do Lutherans emphasize this truth "saved alone by grace?"



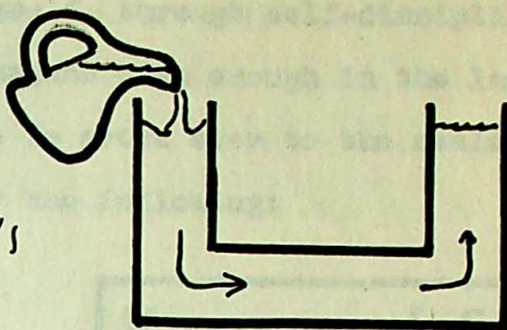
Life is from God. He gives it only through Jesus Christ.

This is the purpose of the Gospel, 20:31. To believe on Jesus is life. See part one of this unit. Note also the many "I am" clauses used by Jesus; 6:35; 8:12; 10:11; 14:6. Explain why Christianity is a very "narrow-minded" religion. Always note how Jesus mediates God and man; between life and man. See 3:16 ff; 8:19; 5:23; 14:6-7. There is no life outside Jesus Christ, 1:4.

Life in God has its beginning in the new birth

If you are a Christian, you were born again. You were born physically by your mother. But you were also born spiritually by the Spirit of God through baptism. You were born, as John puts it, "of water and the Spirit" (3:5). Read 2:23-3:15. According to vv. 3 to 5 is it absolutely necessary for every man to be born the second time? Why? The answer is given in v. 3b and 6. Study the following diagram:

Water seeks its own level. It rises no higher than its source. This is a law of nature. So, too, with the law of spiritual things —



If you start with man,

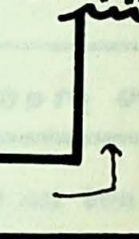
MAN
(flesh)

↓

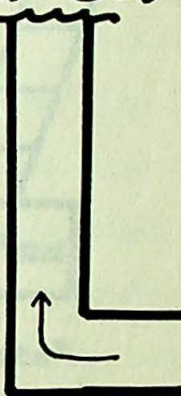


KINGDOM OF MAN

↑



KINGDOM OF GOD



GOD (Holy Spirit)



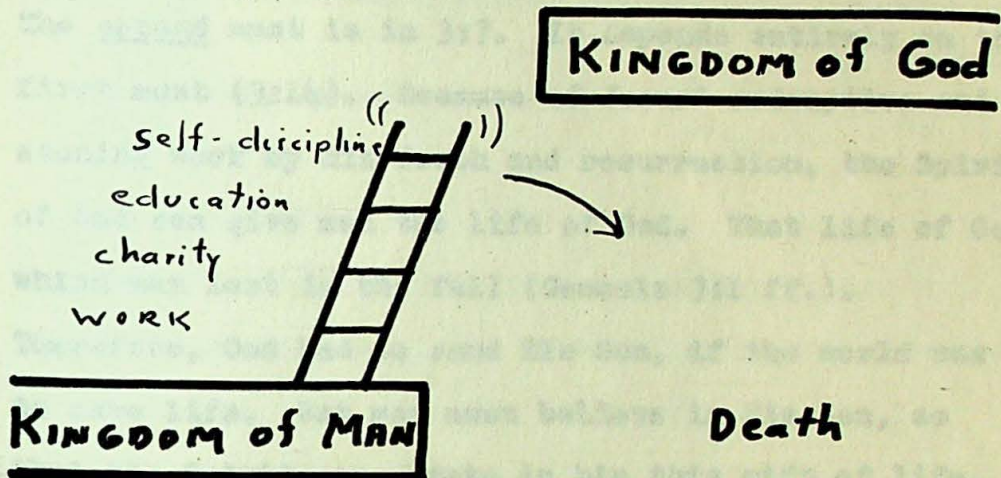
To come into the Kingdom of God a man must be born of His Spirit.

God is the only source of LIFE!

To be in the Kingdom of God means to share in the life of God. For the Kingdom of God is where God rules. And where He rules there is life. But note that there are the two realms. That which is born of each remains and must remain within the area of that which has begotten it or gives it birth.¹ If man was born of flesh, he stays in the realm of flesh, that is, of sin and depravity. He cannot be in the realm of the Spirit of life unless he was born of the Spirit. There-

¹Ibid., p. 215.

fore, no one can of himself, through self-discipline and personal striving ascend high enough in the ladder of the flesh to be able to cross over to the realm of the life of God. Study the following:



Life depends on two "musts"

The first must is in 3:14, "so must the Son of man be lifted up." Jesus here refers to the event recorded in Numbers 21:8-9. Moses had been ordered by God to affix a serpent of bronze on a pole. Whoever looked upon this serpent, in faith, was healed. Just as this serpent was set on a pole of wood, so Jesus would be nailed to a wooden cross. This would be necessary, so that whoever looks on Him in faith might have eternal life. Study the following passages and their relation to the redemptive event in history:

- 10:15b - Jesus dies so that His own will not have to die.
 10:17 - Jesus died for men of his own volition
 3:16 - "gave" for your sins and mine
 14:3 - "prepare" refers to the necessity of Jesus' passion and crucifixion
 11:50-52- Jesus a substitute for the children of God

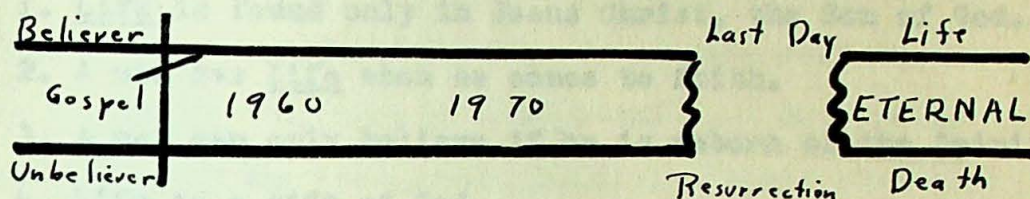
The second must is in 3:7. It depends entirely on the first must (3:14). Because of Jesus' redemptive and atoning work by His death and resurrection, the Spirit of God can give man the life of God. That life of God which man lost in the fall (Genesis 3:1 ff.).

Therefore, God had to send His Son, if the world was to have life. But man must believe in His Son, so that the Spirit can create in him this gift of life. A man must be born anew, otherwise he will never see the kingdom of God.

Life and Judgment

A person has life when he believes in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. He is under condemnation and judgment however if he does not believe. If one does not accept Jesus, he is condemned now in time. He, too, will be resurrected, but he will be resurrected to eternal judgment. Study the following diagram and fill in by answering the questions:

1. When are men confronted with the decision of believing or not believing? (See 9:35 ff.)
2. When does life begin? (See 5:24)
3. When does judgment begin? (See 3:16-21)
4. When is the final judgment? (See 5:28-29)



Judgment is not just something happening to us, but something happening in us. The following illustration may be beneficial. The day the tippler begins to scream and cry as a result of delirium tremens is not his judgment. It is but the final evidence that for a long time previously he had substituted alcoholic exhilaration for the sober facing of social problems. For a long time he had been living in a false world of escape. Again, the failure of a student in the final examination is not his real judgment. His actual judgment arises from his daily refusal to study, so that all his life he must suffer from the punishment of indolence and ignorance.¹ So, too, when a man confronted by God in His Gospel does not believe, he

¹Quimby, op. cit., p. 129.

places himself under condemnation and God's wrath from that moment forward to all eternity.

CONCLUSION

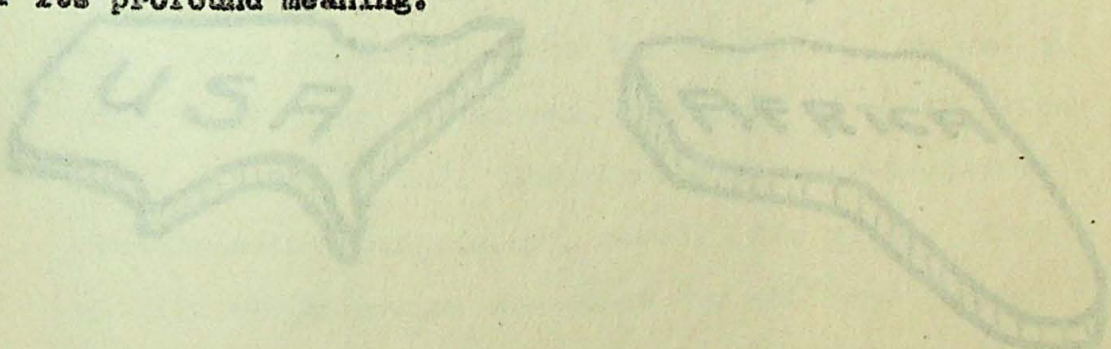
1. Life is found only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
2. A man has life when he comes to faith.
3. A man can only believe if he is reborn of the Spirit.
4. Life is a gift of God.
5. Man is either in the realm of life or in the realm of death and condemnation.

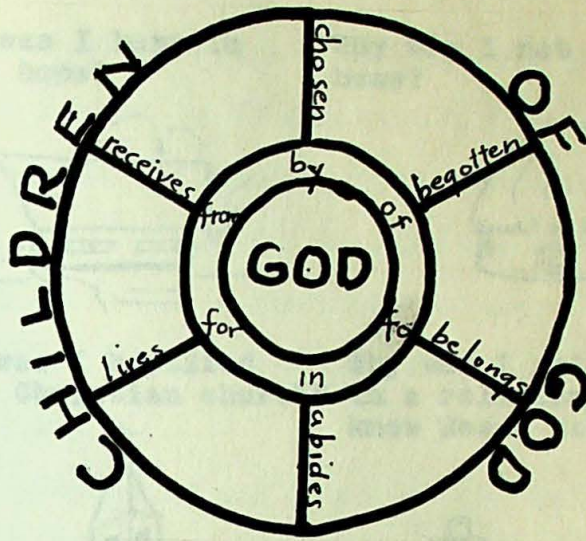
UNIT THREE

CHILDREN OF GOD

The Fourth Gospel says much concerning those who are the "children of God." It is the aim of this unit to note in the Gospel of John some of the truths that he reveals to the disciples of the Lord Jesus concerning their status as followers of Christ. This study should be most significant for the Christian. For it is undeniable that Christians often fail to attach sufficient meaning to the term "child of God," a term which is frequently found in Scripture to denote the Christian's true relation to God. Let us see what John has to say in his Gospel regarding the children of God.

The term "children of God" appears only twice in the Gospel of John, namely in 11:52 and in 1:12. But the term is unfolded throughout the book. The following study will help clarify this term and to lead to a deeper appreciation of its profound meaning.



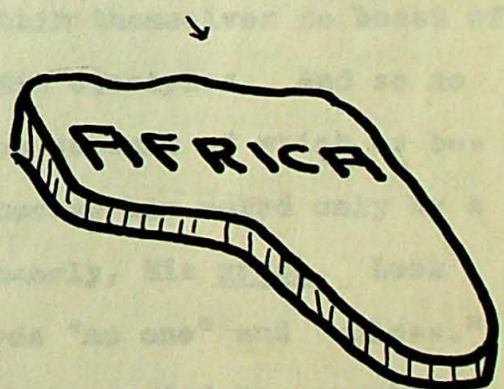
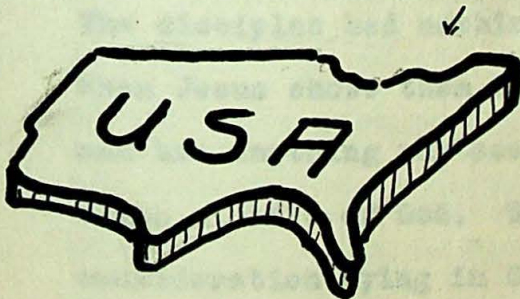


A Study Guide

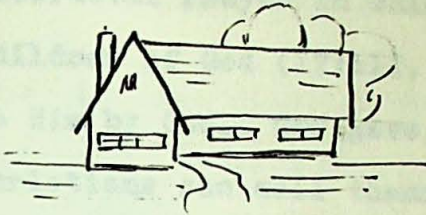
CHRISTIANS ARE THE DEAR CHILDREN OF GOD BECAUSE THEY ARE CHOSEN BY GOD

We of ourselves have no claim on God to become His dear children. He and He alone has chosen you and me to be His. Therefore, we as His children are exhibitions of the wonderful grace and mercy of God. Give thought to the following considerations:

Why was I born here? Why was I not born there?



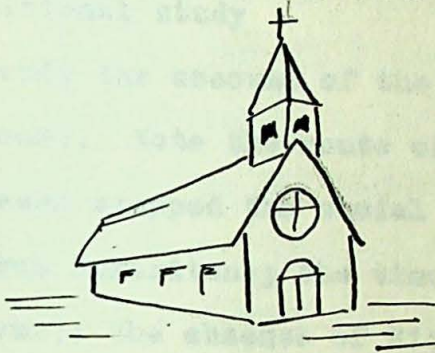
Why was I born in
this home?



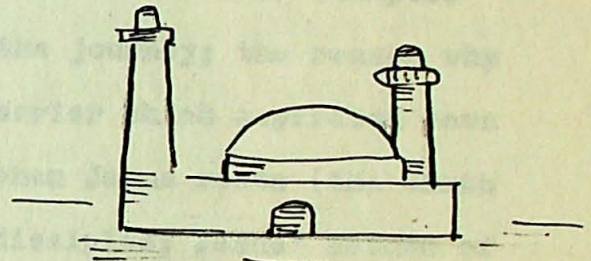
Why was I not born in that
home?



Why was I baptized
in a Christian church?



Why was I not brought up
in a religion that does not
know Jesus as the Savior?



Examine 1:35 ff. and note how Jesus chose His disciples. Name the six referred to in this chapter. Note the word "found" in v. 43, and compare this verse with 6:70 and 15:16. The word "found" does not mean to discover by accident, but it implies in the passages in this first chapter of John the idea of "searching out." The disciples had nothing within themselves to boast of when Jesus chose them to be His disciples. And so no man has anything whatsoever on account of which he becomes a child of God. God chooses him moved only by a consideration lying in God, namely, His grace. Look up 6:65 and underline the words "no one" and "unless." You and I have come to faith because God has granted

us the power to believe. Where is boasting? In the Sacerdotal Prayer in which Jesus also refers to the children of God (17:11), He says that we were "given" to Him by God. God gave, because God chose. Therefore, Christians can call themselves the very chosen of God, even as Israel was the chosen nation of God.

An additional study

Study the account of the Woman at the Well (chapter four). Note the route of the journey; the reason why Jesus stopped the social barrier which separated Jews from Samaritans; the time when Jesus rests (the sixth hour); the absence of His disciples; Jesus' method of telling the woman the Gospel. Study these features in the light of Jesus' "finding" this woman for she, too, was chosen of God.

CHRISTIANS ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD BECAUSE THEY ARE BEGOTTEN OF GOD

For a person to become a child of God it is absolutely necessary that he is born or begotten of God. Refer to unit two, section three, where the necessity of being born of God is discussed. Peruse 3:1-16 for a summary of how a man is born of God.

Now study 1:12-13. According to this passage, we are the children of God because "He (Christ) gave us power to become the children of God."

Children of God are therefore people

- who receive Him, i.e. Jesus
- who believe on His name, i.e. the name of Jesus
- who are born of God

In 1:13 John uses, in the original, the plural of "blood." He does this for a purpose. What is that purpose? To understand his purpose, we must take into account the entire verse. He continues in 1:13, "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." His purpose obviously is to rule out the children of God having become the children of God as a result of a human process. Only God is able to create children of God! He performs this act through regeneration. Therefore, if you are a child of God, you became such through the creative power and the will of God.

Thus we are the children of God because we were born:

not of bloods (genealogy)	<u>but</u> of blood (Jesus)
not of the will of man	<u>but</u> of God
not as a result of any other cause in man	<u>but</u> as a result of the creative power of God
not because we were born into a church family	<u>but</u> because we were born (begotten) of God

CHRISTIANS ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD BECAUSE THEY BELONG TO GOD

Contemplate the following thoughts which appear in chapter ten.

- We are the sheep spoken of in 10:1 ff.
- We are called "his own" in 10:3-4.
- We are known by Him individually, 10:14.
- We are saved because He laid down His life, 10:15.
- We are secure in God's embrace, 10:29.

The last thought is especially comforting for the child of God. It assures him of the new life and inheritance which he now possesses. Being a child of God you cannot be snatched away from Him. You belong to God. You are His possession.

CHRISTIANS ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD BECAUSE THEY ABIDE IN HIM
AND HE IN THEM

God is everywhere. But as a loving Father, God is only in and with His children. Unbelievers can say, "God is with me." But only children of God can say, "Our Father, who is in heaven, abides with us and in us."

This abiding presence of God the Father in and with His children is the guarantee that He will forever abide in and with them in heaven. This "abiding" is frequently referred to in John's Gospel. Chapter fifteen is called by many the "Vine Chapter" because it gives a wonderful picture of how a child of God abides in the Lord Jesus, and how Jesus abides in him. Read 15:1-11.

Keep the following thoughts in mind when reading this section. Why must I abide in Christ? What is the purpose of abiding in Christ? What is the joy of abiding in Christ?

The answers to these inquiries should be:

Abiding in Christ -

- Is absolutely necessary, v. 5-6, for only in Christ can one do good works, and without Him one can do nothing;
- Is communion with God, v. 7, for the prayers of one who abides in Jesus are heard and answered;
- Is for a purpose, v. 8, that God may be glorified by this testimony of His disciples;
- Is exhibited in His love, v. 10, if the Christian obeys God's will.

Therefore, to abide in Christ fills the Christian with joy, v. 11, for he knows that God is abiding in and with him. It is not enough for a Christian merely to follow Jesus, but the Christian must learn to abide with the Lord. Jesus' first disciples learned this. See 1:37,39. Note that the disciples did not just "follow" Him, but they also "stayed" (abode) with Him. The Christian likes to follow his Lord Jesus, but he is a true disciple only if he abides in the Word of Jesus. That His disciples might abide in Him is part of Jesus' Sacerdotal prayer for the Church, 17:21-23.

The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit

The disciples could abide with Jesus as long as He remained on this earth. But when He was to ascend into heaven, who was to take His place and abide with them? See 14:16-17. Discuss the importance for the child of God of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God. Thus when we pray to God, the request for His Spirit should be our first and most important concern. (Luke 11:13). Why? Refer to the following passages and

discuss the added statements.

- 14:16-17 - the Holy Spirit will abide in the believer
- 14:25-26 - the Holy Spirit will teach him all things
- 15:26 - the Holy Spirit will confirm faith
- 16:7-11 - the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment
- 16:13-14 - the Holy Spirit will lead the believer into all truth

CHEISTIANS ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD BECAUSE THEY LIVE FOR GOD

In his Gospel, John devotes much space to the difference between those who are the children of God and those who are not; those who live for God, and those who do not. See unit four on "Belief and Unbelief." Living for God is believing in His Son (9:35 ff.), doing His will (6:40), continuing in His Word (8:31), resisting sin (8:34-36), not being of the world (15:19), not being children of the Prince of this world (8:44), and living as children of the Light (8:12).

Many of these truths you know. But you need to become fully aware of them. The child of God who lives for God must strive to observe also the following:

Living for God means worship

Study 12:1-8, 12-15. Discover in these passages such features of worship as:

- adoration
- sacrifice
- love
- devotion
- praise
- honor

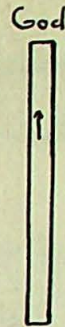
An additional study; Examine the Lutheran order of worship in the Lutheran Hymnal.¹ See how a child of God can observe the elements of true worship by comparing the order of service with the factors of worship referred to above.

Living for God means living for the brother

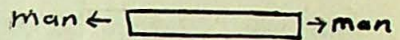
A child of God thinks not only of his relation to God, but also of his relation to his fellowman because of his new relationship to God. John emphasises this in Jesus' last discourses with His disciples. Study 13:15-17 and compare this passage with 13:1-11. Read 13:34-35 and note why this emphasis on love is called by Jesus a "new commandment" and why it is so important. See 15:12-14. Here Jesus calls Christians "friends" and not "servants" if they love one another. Study and discuss the following diagram and note that the Christian must not only think of his relation to God, but also to his fellowmen.

¹The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), pp. 5-31.

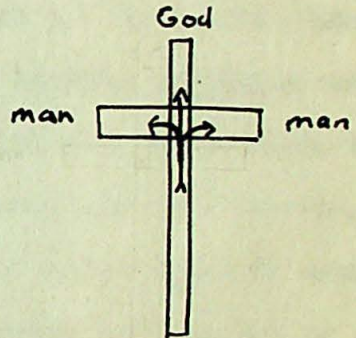
The relation of the child of God to God has often been defined as a "vertical" relation.



The relation of the child of God to his fellowman has often been defined as a "horizontal" relation.



In a sense, however, the child of God lives a cruciform life. He lives both for God and for his fellowmen, although one must remember that the Christian's life in God is the source of his life for his fellowmen.



An additional study: examine the exhortations in the Epistles, for example, Romans 12:9-12; Ephesians 5:1 ff.; 6:1 ff.; I John 2:7-11. Which command is most often repeated, and which sin is the one most often committed? We surely agree that it is the command that Christians love one another and the sin of lovelessness. Illustrate this blight on Christianity from current examples. Discuss, in the light of the above, community problems, charity efforts, the color question, labor-

management relationships, etc. How can children of God manifest their love when they are face to face with such and such phenomena?

It is possible for one to become a child of God only because of the redemptive work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, to become a child of God, one must believe in Jesus Christ. Whoever does not believe in Jesus, who revealed the Father and who fulfilled the Father's will by redeeming man from sin, death and the power of the devil, cannot become a child of God. Study the following passages and note the person and will of the Father and John's concern to stress the close relationship between Jesus and His Father. These passages culminate in the saying of Jesus that He and the Father are one (10:30). Jesus may never be thought of in total independence of the Father, nor may the Father be thought of in total independence of the Son.

- 5:22 - the Father gives all judgment to the Son
- 5:21 - the Father gives life through His Son
- 5:23 - One must honor the Son as the Father
- 5:24 - One who hears the Son hears the Father
- 7:16 - Jesus' teachings is God's teachings
- 8:19 - If one knows Jesus, one knows the Father
- 8:42 - If God is your Father, you love Jesus
- 14:9 - If you see Jesus, you have seen the Father

Children of God believe in Jesus Christ because they believe His Gospel

A person can become a child of God only if he believes in Jesus Christ. He can believe in Jesus Christ only if he hears and accepts His Gospel. Thus faith in the

Gospel brings about a loving relationship between the Christian and his Lord. Study the following in the light of this truth:

"I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (10:9).

Door	- simplicity of the Gospel	
By Me	- exclusiveness of	"
Any One	- universality of	"
Saved	- promise of the	"
Go in and out	- liberty of the	"
Pasture	- provision of the	"

An additional study:

The children of God are to have His joy fulfilled in themselves. What is this "joy" that should fill the child of God? Chapter seventeen reflects the joy that filled the heart of the Savior. Christians are privileged to share in that joy.

Refer to the verses indicated, and give each statement some thought:

Key Verse - 17:13

The joy of speaking with the Father	v. 1
The joy of eternal life	v. 3
The joy of being accepted by God	v. 6, 8
The joy of knowing that our Lord prays for us	v. 9
The joy of being kept by the Father	v. 11
The joy of knowing His joy	v. 13
The joy of separation	v. 14-
	17, 19
The joy of being sent	v. 18
The joy of fellowship with God and believers	v. 21-
	23
The joy of future glory	v. 24
The joy of knowing God's love	v. 26

UNIT FOUR

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

This unit attempts to show how John develops the great opposition of the people against Jesus. It traces this opposition in chapters five to eight. The opposition is basically unbelief. The observation of the Lord Jesus, "He that is not with me, is against me" (Matthew 12:30), is well illustrated in John's Gospel. Wherever Jesus presented Himself to man, we always note an irreconcilable opposition to Him by many. We note, too, that the few who believe in Him become stronger in their faith, and those who do not believe become even more hardened and determined in their opposition. Man is, to be sure, interested in Jesus Christ. But he wants to fashion his own Christ and not merely to accept one which God offers him. Therefore he spurns and rejects the Christ revealed by God in Scripture.

Before one can properly and fully appreciate John's dramatic account of the development of opposition to Jesus, one must bear in mind that John presents Jesus as the object of faith in chapters one to four.

Jesus—the object of faith

Briefly scan chapters one to four. Find the information desired to fill in diagram three. John does not attempt to set forth these events in chronological

order. But he has recorded them primarily to show that Jesus is the object of faith.

Referring to the first four chapters in John, Westcott therefore appropriately remarks:

Up to this present time the Lord has offered Himself to typical representatives of the whole Jewish race at Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and in Galilee, in such a way as to satisfy the elements of true faith. Now the conflict begins which issues in the Passion. Step by step faith and unbelief are called out in a parallel development. The works and words of Christ become a power for the revelation of man's thoughts. The main scene of this saddest of all conceivable tragedies is Jerusalem. The crises of its development are the national Festivals. And the whole controversy is gathered round three miracles.¹

Jesus—the object of unbelief

The opposition of the Jews toward Jesus was rooted in their failure to apprehend Him and His teachings.²

It is essential to note that when a person does not see God in Christ and does not accept Jesus as his Savior, every other phase of his faith and religion becomes warped and meaningless. Hoskyns makes the telling observation:

¹Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p. 80.

²Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 143.

JESUS - THE OBJECT OF FAITH

Chapter	Place	Time	Miracle	To Whom	How	Result	Purpose
I Prologue (vv. 43-51)	Galilee (v. 43)	Day (v. 43)	Jesus' Omnipotence (vv. 47-48)	Nathanael (v. 45)	The Promised One (v. 45)	Faith and Confession (v. 49)	In Jesus is the full & final revelation of God (vv. 50-51)
II Wine							
III Nicodemus							
IV Well							

42

Complete the diagram. Following the example in chapter one, find how John presents Jesus as the object of faith in chapters two to four.

Diagram 3

By their failure to recognize the Messiah in whom the law and the prophets are fulfilled, the Jews have shown that they have misunderstood their own worship (ii,20), their own practices of purification (ii,6), the Sabbath (v, 18), the Scriptures (v, 39,40,47), and the Passover (vi, 4); and so far from accepting the authority of God, they are actively engaged in the service of their father the devil (viii, 44).¹

GUIDES FOR THE STUDY

Diagram four gives an overview of the whole book as presented by John. Study this diagram and at the end of this unit fill in titles for each chapter studied. For example, chapter ten could be titled "the Good Shepherd."

Note that chapters five to twelve in John trace the growth of unbelief. We shall however, in this unit limit ourselves to a study of chapters five to eight and show how John presents man's conflict with God. The source of this conflict is man's refusal to acknowledge God's revelation in Jesus Christ, His Son. The following outline shall serve as a guide for this study:

¹Ibid., p. 173.

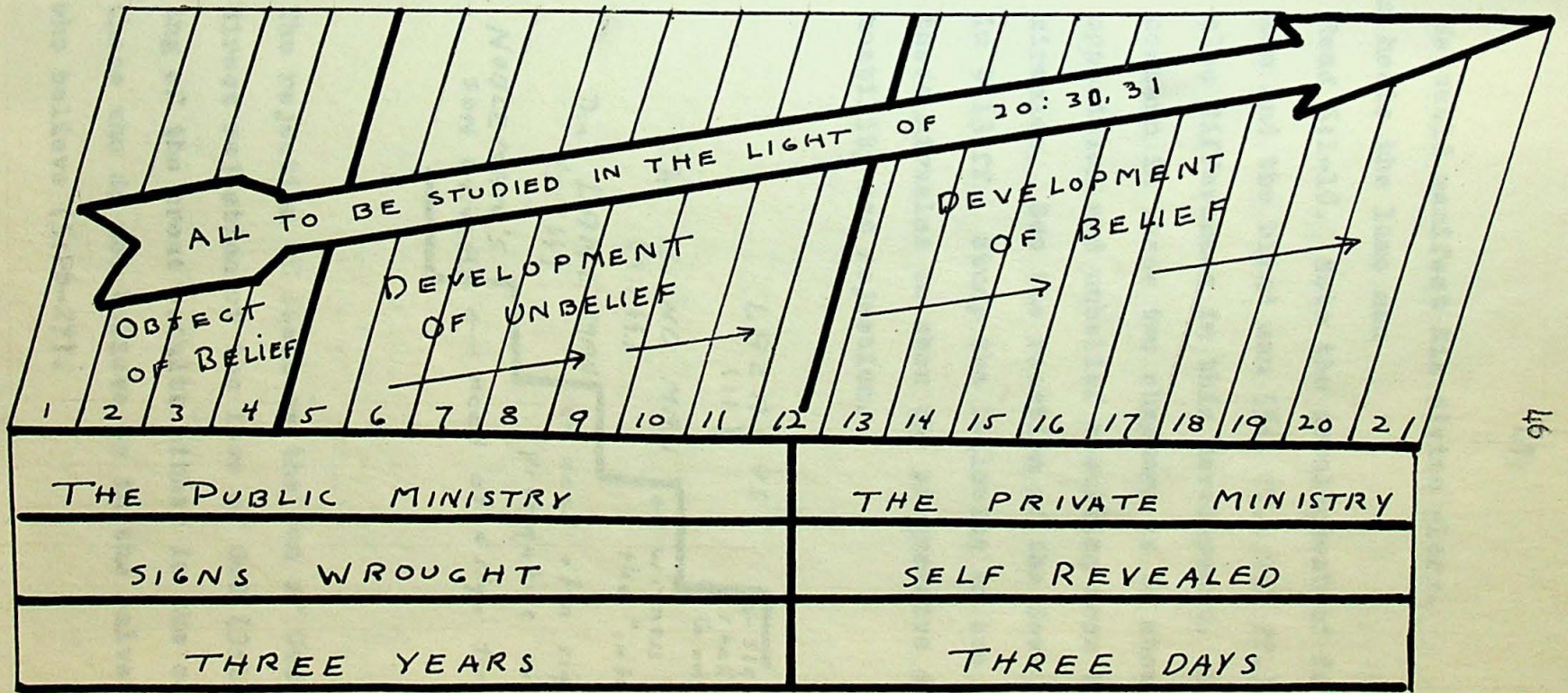
The Conflict
(5:1-12:50)

<u>Outline</u>	<u>Chap.</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Occasion</u>	<u>The Issue(s) of the Conflict</u>
1. The Prelude				
(a) The Son and the Father	5	Jerusalem	Jesus heals lame man on Sabbath	Jesus asserts His authority as the Son of God. Therefore He must be honored as the Father
(b) Christ and Man	6	Galilee	Jesus feeds the 5000	Jesus asserts that He is the Bread of Life; that He must die; that a disciple must "eat of His body..." (6:53)
2. The Great Controversy				
(a) The Revelation of Faith and Unbelief				
aa. The Feast of Tabernacles	7&8	Jerusalem	Jesus exposes the people's motives and unbelief	Jesus shows that the people do not know the God they confess because they will not know Him.
bb. The Feast of Dedication	9&10	Jerusalem	Jesus heals the blind man on a Sabbath	Some believe and some do not. Jesus accused of blasphemy because He "makes Himself God" (10:33). The Jews attempt to stone Him.

Outline	Chap.	Place	Occasion	The Issue(s) of the Conflict
(b) The Decisive Judgment				
aa. The final sign and its issues	11	Bethany	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	Jesus demonstrates His final authority as the Giver of Life to all men. Many believe.
bb. The close of Jesus' ministry	12	Bethany & Jerusalem	Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the King	Jesus challenges the Jews either to accept Him as the Messiah or to disprove His claim that He is the Messiah.

CHAPTER FIVE

In this section, chapters five to twelve, John always has Jesus reveal Himself at one of the major feasts (5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 12:1; 13:1). Each of these feasts was for Him an occasion at which He revealed Himself as the Messiah. Jesus performed two of the few miracles which John reports in this section on a Sabbath (5:9; 9:16). It seems that, according to John, Jesus purposely chose the Sabbath on which to perform these two miracles. For Jesus obviously intended to show not only that acts of charity were permissible on the Sabbath, but He also fully appreciated that the Sabbath lent itself as a superior opportunity on which



97

THE
OF
**GOSPEL
JOHN**

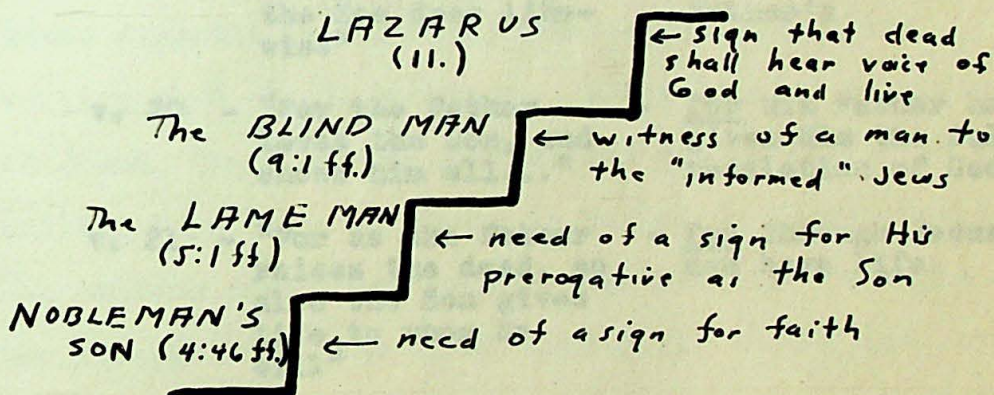
Diagram 4

Note: this is a known outline by Dr. W.W. White

He could manifest His divine glory.

Jesus heals the lame man

Read 5:1-18. Note the development of faith in the lame man and the blind man (5:1 ff.; 9:1 ff.). But note also differences in this development. But John's chief concern in these two chapters is to show the growth of opposition and unbelief resulting from the Savior's miracles. See the reaction of the Jews in 5:17 ff. and in 9:13 ff. Study the following to see how John uses these miracles to show the progressive development of hostility and rejection.



The rejection of Jesus as the Son of God (5:17-18) is a direct rejection of the love of God (3:16). The preaching of the cross results either in the condemnation of those who do not believe or in the salvation of those who believe (5:26-27).

The discourse that follows the miracle recorded in 5:17-47 is a result of the miracle performed. The miracle became the occasion for this discussion of Jesus with the Jews. This group of Jews was probably a small, trained audience. Let us analyse the argument.

The nature and prerogatives of the Son, vv. 19-29.

Jesus says that in the action of the Son, men are to see the action of the Father, and that in honoring the Son, they are honoring the Father.¹ Study the above proposition by noting the "for" in the following passages:

- | | |
|---|--|
| v. 19b - "for whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise" | - <u>for</u> His action is the same as His Father's |
| v. 20 - "For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all..." | - <u>for</u> His Father has given Him the full revelation of God |
| v. 21 - "For as the Father raises the dead, so also the Son gives life to whom He will" | - <u>for</u> through Jesus men have life |
| v. 22 - "For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" | - <u>for</u> all judgment has been given to the Son. |

¹Westcott, op. cit., p. 84.

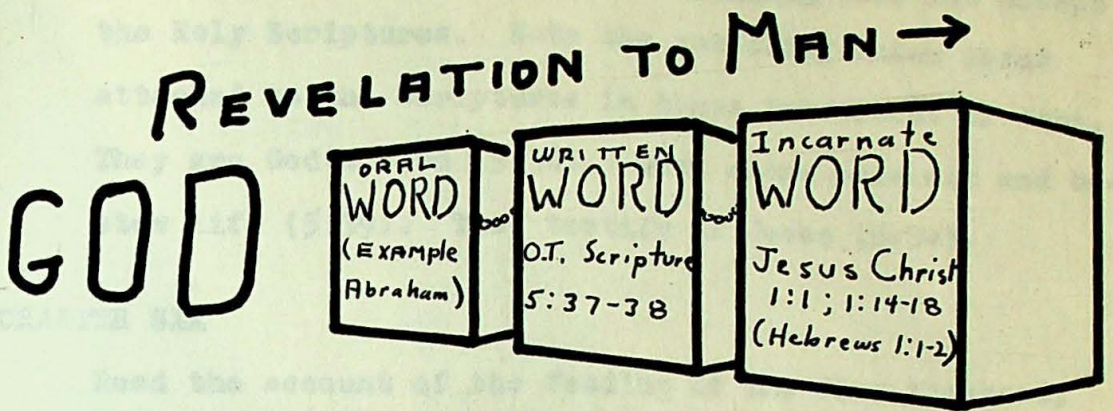
Therefore every man must honor the Son even as he honor the Father, v. 23. We agree with Westcott that to those who failed to honor Jesus as the Christ, all His miracles appeared to be no more than prodigies. "Their effect was astonishment but not belief."¹

Conclusion: unbelief exists where man does not honor Jesus as he honors God!

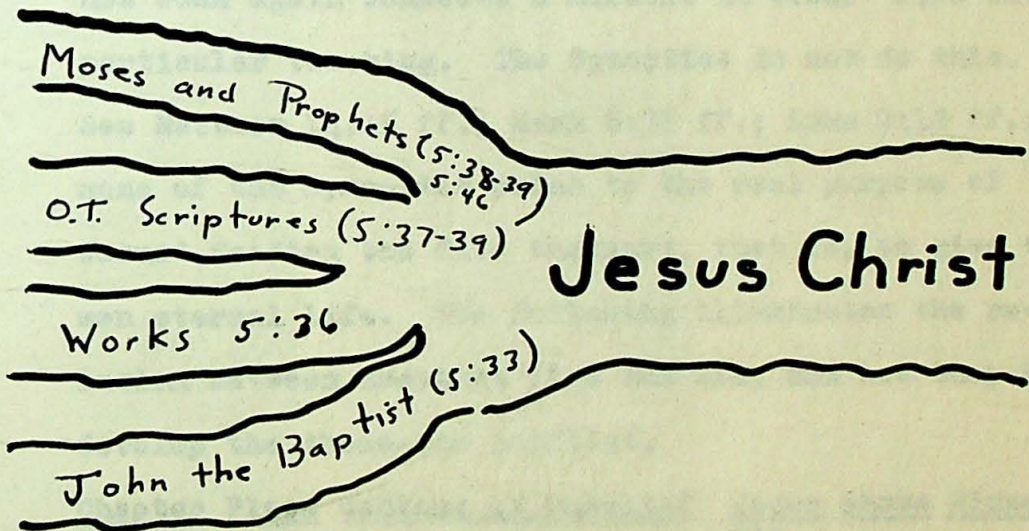
The authority of the Scriptures and the ground of unbelief, vv. 31-47.

Unbelief is the refusal to acknowledge and submit to God (in total disregard of every witness He gives concerning Himself), whether that witness is one which He gives directly or through prophets or through the written Word of the prophets. Nevertheless, according to Jesus, there can be genuine and saving belief in the written Word only, if there is belief in Jesus Christ. The written Scriptures must be believed in the light of the revelation of the final Word (1:1, 14) of God, that is, the Son of God incarnate. In refusing to acknowledge God's revelation of Himself (5:37-39). Study the following:

¹Ibid., p. 85.



All the witnesses point to Jesus as the Christ. He is the heart and core of their message. If one says that he believes in any one of them, he must also believe in Him to whom they point. Study the following by referring to the indicated passages:



Can you recall Bible passages which illustrate how Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, the Father, and Jesus Himself witness to the fact that Jesus was sent

of the Father and is His Son? Unbelief will not accept the Holy Scriptures. Note the authority which Jesus attached to the Scriptures in these few verses of John. They are God's Word (5:38). They alone proclaim and bestow life (5:39). They testify of Jesus (5:39).

CHAPTER SIX

Read the account of the feeding of the five thousand, 6:1-13. In 6:26 Jesus reveals the real purpose why the people constantly seek Him. The cause of unbelief is often man's selfish desire for "free bread," that is, a desire for an easy and comfortable existence in this life with no thought of eternity, 6:27. Discuss. Note how John again connects a miracle in Jesus' life with a particular teaching. The Synoptics do not do this. See Matthew 14:15 ff.; Mark 6:35 ff.; Luke 9:12 ff.; none of the Synoptics point to the real purpose of Jesus' feeding the five thousand, that is, to give to men eternal life. The following illustrates the relation between chapters five and six, and how they both develop the theme-the conflict.

Chapter Place Content of Unbelief Jesus shows Himself as:

5	Jerusalem	The Jews though defending the Law and the Scriptures display their disbelief in God and Jesus, and their belief in	The fulfillment of the Law and the Scriptures. Therefore He has a rightful claim on faith.
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Chapter Place Content of Unbelief Jesus shows Himself as:

		themselves (5:44-47).	
6	Galilee	The Galileans combine materialism and superstition in such a way as to display no greater capacity for faith than the Jews in Jerusalem. ¹ (6:27,42).	The fulfillment of man's need for abiding food and a King. Therefore, again, He has a rightful claim on faith.

Read vv. 25-71. Note the subject of the three discourses: vv. 26:40; vv. 41:51; vv. 52-58. Note also the reference to unbelief in the simple question in v. 25; the murmuring in v. 41; the contention in v. 52. Examine diagram five for further study of the difference between belief and unbelief. Discuss.

A summary

Chapter six shows that unbelief lies in the inability of the Jews "to apprehend the nature of the gift by which God gives life to the world (vv. 32,33) and in their consequent inability to perceive the revelation of that gift in the audible words and visible acts of Jesus (vv. 35,36,40,45)."²

¹Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 277.

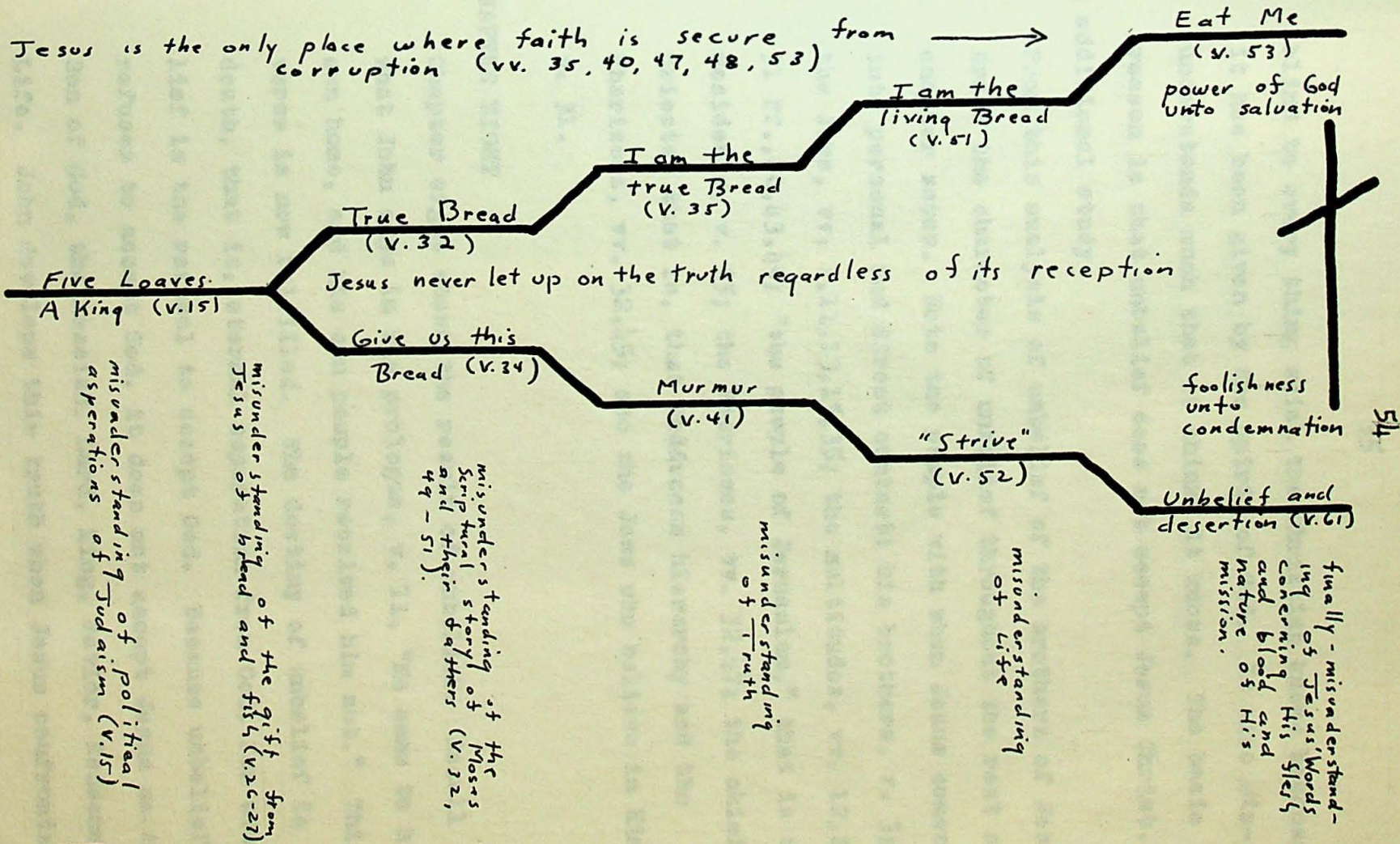
²Ibid., p. 283.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Read 7:1-13. An analysis of these first thirteen verses demonstrates the unbelief of the brothers but they also illustrate the general character of unbelief for which there are other examples in chapter seven.

Jesus' brothers

See 1:11. Does this verse become clear in the light of 7:1-13? Unbelief need not be expressed in terms of denial. It can also be expressed in a projection of false ideals and a misunderstanding of the truth. Read verse five, then verses three and four. Jesus' brothers reveal their unbelief by their exhortation (vv. 3-4). This was like the devil's approach to Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1 ff.). It was very similar to the proposition of the people who wanted to make Jesus a king (6:15). These brothers had a worldly conception of God and His kingdom. Unbelief cannot see the purpose of God. Jesus' brothers say that He should publicly manifest His power (vv. 3-4). Unbelief does not see that Jesus' ministry consisted in a public exposure of the sins of the world which would reveal its hatred (14:17; 15:18-19; 16:20,33; 17:9,14,25). Neither does unbelief see the true intent of Jesus' mission which was to be obedient to the will of His Father and to transmit to the world divine truth. Unbelief is



JOHN VI

Diagram 5

blind to every thing which the Christian knows because it has been given by the Spirit of God. It also misunderstands much that it thinks it knows. The basic reason is that unbelief does not accept Jesus Christ.

An additional study

From this analysis of unbelief of the brothers of Jesus trace the character of unbelief throughout the rest of chapter seven. Note the people with whom Jesus comes into personal and direct contact: his brothers, v. 3; the Jews, vv. 1,11,13,15,35; the multitudes, vv. 12,20, 31 ff.,40,43,49; "the people of Jerusalem," that is the residents, v. 25; the Pharisees, vv. 32,47; the chief priests, that is, that Sadducean hierarchy and the Pharisees, vv. 32,45; and the Jews who believe in Him, v. 31.

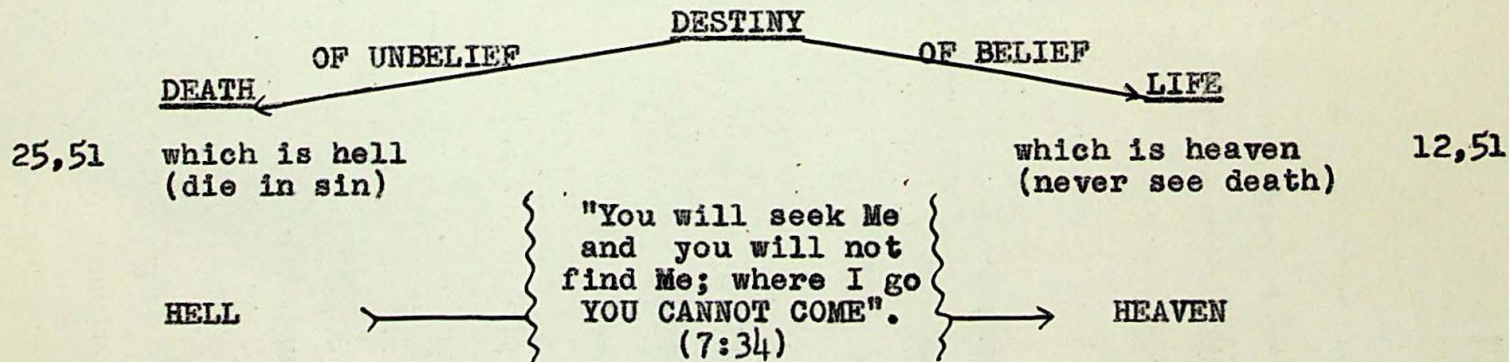
CHAPTER EIGHT

Chapter eight shows the result of unbelief. Recall what John says in his prologue, v. 11, "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not." This verse is now fulfilled. The destiny of unbelief is death, that is, eternal separation from God, for unbelief is the refusal to accept God. Because unbelief refuses to accept God, it does not accept Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, Lord, King, Savior, Redeemer, Life. John develops this truth when Jesus confronts

the Jews at the feast of Tabernacles in October some five months before the crucifixion. Study diagram six and apply to modern and daily thinking concerning God and Jesus.

RESULT

47	do not continue in God's Word	will continue in God's Word	31
44	know only lies, though they think it real knowledge	will know the Truth (this means that they know God because they believe in Jesus Christ, His Son)	32
45	do not know Truth		
34-35	will be servants of sin	will be <u>free</u> from sin	32



Note: The Argument in this chapter does not center about Moses as it does in chapter five, but about Abraham (vv. 37-40; 52-58). The Jews claim to have God as their Father through Abraham and not through Jesus, Who was the very way for Abraham to God. Therefore, the Jews missed the point when they claimed to be "children of Abraham."

THE DESTINY OF UNBELIEF

Chapter Eight

ORIGIN

Due to the inability to recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Jew is ignorant of God.

Diagram 6

	<u>JEW</u>	<u>JESUS</u>	
<u>verses</u> 15	acts after the flesh (3:6; 6:63)	acts in accordance with the will of God (5:30)	<u>verses</u> 28-29
23	are of the world (17:14)	is from above (from God, 3:13,31; 18:36)	14,23
44	are the sons of the devil (Satan)	is the Son of God (5:19 ff.)	41-42 58
44	their father is a murderer from the beginning; a liar.	His Father loved the world (3:16-17)	

57

THEREFORE

14 DISCIPLES OF UNBELIEF
(born of man; each
other, 17:14)

DISCIPLES OF BELIEF
(born of God, 3:6 ff.)

will see
but will not
believe

do see
and do
believe

GOD REJECTED

GOD ACCEPTED

note: the cross is
always the factor of

CONCLUSION

The above study in no sense does justice to the rich theological content of the Gospel of John. Nor does it presume to suggest a definitive method to be used by the teacher of a Bible class whose task it is to acquaint his class with the Gospel of John. It is rather an exploratory attempt to discover a way which might prove to be a fresh approach both to the study and the teaching of John's Gospel. It is this writer's conviction that the principal task of the Bible teacher must be not so much to increase the Christian's technical knowledge of the divine Word, but rather to activate and to strengthen his spiritual life, in particular his faith in Jesus Christ and his love of the brethren. If the writer has succeeded in being of some slight help to the Christian teacher of the Bible, he feels more than compensated for all the effort he has spent on this thesis.

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