

APRIL 2012

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

In the
beginning
was the Word,
and the Word
was with God,
and the Word
was God.

John 1:1



The Gospel of John:
New Creation, New Kingdom

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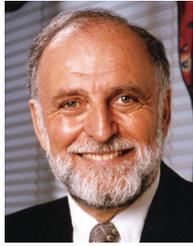
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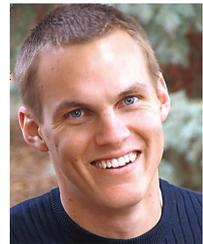
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TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Who Are You, Lord?



Last December, Cheryl and I had the privilege of hosting all four of our grown children and their families at our home in Chicago for Christmas. Because of their different travel schedules, we had eight short hours when all of us were home together. Let me tell you, we savored every minute of that day.

During their visit, we spent time catching up, playing games, and as our Christmas tradition, we spent time together in God's Word. Even though our children are now adults, Cheryl and I still want to do everything we can to remind them who our God is and what Scripture says about Him. I believe that nothing is more important to the believer than having a proper view of God. Why?

First, Scripture tells us that having a right view of God is the highest pursuit in life. In Jeremiah 9, the Lord says, "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord" (Jer. 9:23-24).

The Lord says that the person who should boast is the one who knows and understands Him. Despite what our culture esteems, knowing God is greater than the acquisition of wisdom, wealth, and might. It is the most important pursuit in this life.

Second, a wrong view of God can lead to idolatry. Idolatry is more than just bending a knee to a stone god or a graven image; it is also entertaining thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.

Exodus 32 tells the story of Moses on Mount Sinai. While Moses received the Law from God, the Israelites waited, envisioning what this God was like. You see, many of the Israelites knew very little about the God of their forefathers; their only framework was the gods of the Egyptians. Out of their ignorance, they built and worshiped a golden calf. I believe the Israelites were sincere, but they were sincerely wrong. Tragically, their wrong view of God led to idolatry.

Indeed, nothing is more important for a believer than having a right view of God. For this reason, I'm thrilled for this month's study of the Gospel of John. In John's Gospel, he makes it clear that Jesus has fully revealed the Father to us. John writes in his prologue, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" (John 1:18).

Jesus has made God known for us so we can understand Him and have a right view of Him. I pray that during our study of John, God will grow our understanding of Him as we earnestly ask the question, "Who are You, Lord?"

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Trinitarian Gospel

Although the Gospel of John does not include an account of the nativity of Christ, it still does emphasize the miracle of the Incarnation. John refers to Jesus Christ as “the Word” who was “with God” and “was God” (John 1:1). He also declares that the Word “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). In his Gospel, John reveals that Jesus Christ is both truly divine and truly human.

John also highlights another important and corollary doctrine in his Gospel. If John is a theologian of the Incarnation, he is also a theologian of the Trinity. John does not use the term Trinity to refer to the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But by recording Jesus’ statements about His relationship to the Father and the Spirit, he reveals the essential truths of Trinitarian theology. The doctrine of the Trinity asserts that the one God of the Bible exists in a unity of three co-equal Persons. They are one; yet each Person is distinct from the other.

As the Word who became flesh, Jesus is God’s “one and only Son” (John 3:16, 18). As such He is distinct from the Father. Jesus distinguishes Himself from the Father

when He compares His works to those of the Father (John 5:17). The fact that Jesus alone has seen the Father indicates that He is not identical with the Father (John 1:18). Jesus is not the Father but was sent from the Father (John 5:37). The Son is not the Father but is equal with Him. “I and the Father are one,” Jesus declared in John 10:30.

Similarly, Jesus distinguishes Himself from the Spirit. Jesus is not the Spirit but is the one who sends the Holy Spirit to be a helper to the church. The Spirit is not identical with the Father but comes “from the Father” to testify about Christ (John 15:26). Jesus’ equality with the Holy Spirit is evident from the Spirit’s ministry of bringing glory to Christ. Jesus explained the Spirit’s ministry this way: “He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:14). Jesus’ teaching about the Father and the Spirit proves that the three members of the Godhead, although distinct from one another, work together in harmony and equality. In the person and work of Christ we see the essence of the Father and the proof of His love. Through the Spirit we come to know Christ and understand His Word.

For Further Reading

To learn more about the doctrine of the Trinity, read *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Faith and Practice* edited by Timothy George (Baker).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Heather Moffitt



The Power of the Resurrection

Throughout church history, Easter—or Resurrection Sunday—has been the focal point of the church calendar. Churches had special services in the days leading up to Easter, sometimes referred to as Holy Week. Maundy Thursday, foot-washing service, Good Friday, The Seven Last Words, Easter Vigil, and Sunrise service are all examples of the special gatherings that believers have used to commemorate and celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection.

Yet even as we anticipate the peals of "Hallelujah! He is risen!" I wonder how much we have grasped the power of the resurrection. I recently heard an African pastor say that the resurrection is essential for hope. He lives in the newly independent country of South Sudan, a land that has been torn by war, poverty, and disease. Many women die in childbirth, and children die of preventable diseases. The joy surrounding political independence has given way to ethnic and tribal tension that has sometimes turned violent.

Christians in South Sudan know about suffering. They know about disillusionment. They understand the Cross in a way that many of us in North America do not. It is the resurrection that helps them persevere in their faith and make sense of the pain and sorrow. Without the resurrection, there is only another dead

messiah. Without the resurrection, the bitter hurt in this world is the end of the story. Without the resurrection, there can be no hope.

When you live in South Sudan, the need for the reality of this hope is palpable. The resurrection doesn't just mean flying away at the end of life to have eternal bliss. It means that all the persecution and pestilence you've experienced is within the reach of God's mighty arm of salvation. God could take the worst injustice ever perpetrated in human history—the crucifixion of the sinless Savior—and bring from that a triumph over sin and death through the resurrection. That means our own experience of injustice, pain, and even death can be redeemed by God into a triumph that brings Him glory.

Of course, we live far from South Sudan. Our lives have far more material comforts. We have access to clean water and medical care. We don't worry that another tribe will burn down our village and steal our cattle. For many of us, life on earth may seem rather nice.

This is one reason why Easter is an appropriate time to remember millions of Christians who face trials and tribulations in many parts of the world—Nigeria, Iraq, Venezuela, just to name a few. Their lives remind us that the way of the

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The Gospel of John: New Creation, New Kingdom

Like the book of Genesis, the Gospel of John opens “in the beginning,” but it tells of the creation of an entirely new world. Instead of a world in which light was brought on by a word, this new world brings the light of life straight from the Word Himself. And this world would not be destroyed by sin—it would be the very destruction of sin and death.

This month in *Today in the Word*, we will take a new look at one of our favorites, the Gospel of John. We’ll see how John’s account tells the story not just of Jesus’ identity and ministry with which we’re so familiar, but also of His place in the creation of a whole new world.

Jesus ushered in a world with new life through a new birth. He brought a new message of a new Kingdom. But He didn’t simply discard the elements of the old world—Jesus Christ fulfilled the ancient Law and redeemed a fallen world.

Thank you for studying with us this month and for supporting *Today in the Word* and the ministries of Moody—may God bless your gifts and our efforts together!

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New Creation, New Kingdom

Some people always seek the latest gadget; others prefer nostalgia and the way things used to be. Interestingly, this tension does not exist in the kingdom Christ brings. As we begin our study of the Gospel of John this month, one of our themes will be how the Incarnation is in fact a new creation, one that does not destroy the past, but fulfills it, pulling our human experience into the new reality of God's kingdom.

The opening words, "In the beginning was the Word," echoes Genesis one. As "the Word," Christ participated in the first creation with the Father. The very nature of His "life" (v. 4) cannot help but create new life. He is the light that shines in the darkness (cf. Gen. 1:2).

John takes the word *logos*, which tended to have impersonal and strictly rational overtones in Greek philosophy, and reminds us that God used His speech to create. The "Word" is not about ab-

stract propositions but life itself. John re-creates the Greek concept of *logos* and shows us how Christ, being God the Word, comes to us right from the heart of God Himself.

Verse 10, however, interjects a somber note into this majestic proclamation. Humanity is so distant from God that we absurdly reject the light that gives life itself (vv. 9–11). Well, God created once before, and now Christ will usher in a new creation, a new birth, by taking on human nature and being born of the virgin Mary (v. 14).

One of the glories of the gospel is that this new reality of Christ does not merely seek to fix the past. The Old Testament tells of God's people having many hints, warnings, and proclamations, but John tells us: "No one has ever seen God" (v. 18). But given who Christ is and was, He can reveal God more fully than ever before.

In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God.

John 1:1

Apply the Word

In his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement of Alexandria wrote, "O mystic wonder! The Lord was brought low, and man rose up! He that fell from Paradise receives even better . . . heaven itself!" We must marvel with Clement. What God is this, when His children flee, goes to still greater lengths and assumes humanity itself to make it right?

Pray with Us

Will you pray for Food Service employees serving at Moody's Chicago campus? Ask the Lord to give safety and strength to Collin Bockelman, Rachel Campbell, Karen Davis, and Gregory Dickson as they work behind the scenes in the Student Dining Room.

The Order of the New World

Writer and apologist G. K. Chesterton once remarked that Christianity does not come to upset the world so much as make it sane, and we get glimpses of this truth in today's reading.

Verse 19 introduces us to John the Baptist, who, as we know from other Gospel accounts, had garnered lots of attention and even disciples of his own (v. 35). Priests, Levites, and Pharisees—the religious hierarchy who jockeyed for power and influence—came to question their potential rival. But John showed his greatness through his humility, a kingdom principle taught by Christ (Matt. 5:5).

John called Christ the Son of God (v. 34) and referred to His deity (v. 30), but then tells us that Christ comes as the meek, sacrificial “Lamb of God.” Time and time again, Jesus would downplay His power and majesty. In fact, later Je-

sus assumed the much more modest “Son of Man” title for Himself (v. 51).

John's act of baptism hints at our “New Creation” theme. Water was significant in the first creation (Gen. 1:3–10), and the reference to Jesus' baptism recalls Genesis 1:2. As this Gospel demonstrates, not since the creation of the world had anything so important happened.

Andrew and Nathaniel followed Christ. Nathaniel remained skeptical and prejudiced (v. 46), but one comment from Christ changed him completely.

Jesus followed up with a reference to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28, and when we remember that Jacob was renamed Israel, the progenitor of the Twelve Tribes, we see the boldness and wonder of Christ's claim. He comes to re-fashion the people of God. He is that to which creation itself points. Christ is Son of Man and Son of God.

Very truly I tell you, you will see “heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending” on the Son of Man.

John 1:51

Apply the Word

People today share the same problems as those in our text. John's message shows us that no longer do we need to be consumed with power and striving to be heard. No longer do we need to judge according to class or origin. Christ's coming creates new people of God. He frees us to be new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

Pray with Us

Each day, Food Service prepares meals for more than 1,000 students. Praise God for the ministry of Vinh Hoang, Jennifer Jones, Hoa Lam, and Martin Rios. May the food they prepare give students the energy they need to attend classes and study God's Word.

Follow the Clues: New Creation's Mystery

Novelist David Lodge writes that mysteries appeal to us because “a solved mystery . . . asserts the triumph of order over anarchy.” They allow the reader to participate in the action and try to put together the clues to solve the mystery.

John begins his Gospel by introducing the motif of a new creation. In John 1:10, the world does not recognize its maker, and through the Incarnation, God intervenes to fix the problem. Jesus not only makes it possible to form a new people of God but

He also tells us that in His person heaven and earth will intersect (1:51).

We get a “clue” about the new creation when Jesus performs His first miracle at a wedding. This was socially significant. To run out of wine at a wedding would embarrass the bride and groom and create an inauspicious beginning to their new union. Jesus showed His mercy and power for this nameless couple.

But this miracle was also a sign of who Jesus is. His first miracle was at a wedding, the creation of a new family. These things “reveal His glory” (v. 11) and point to Christ’s true identity.

When He cleansed the temple, we again see many of the same themes. He discarded outward ceremony in order to reveal the truth. We already know He is the “lamb of God” (1:29), which adds another layer of meaning to His concern for the abuse of the temple sacrificial system.

Indeed, He intends to remake our worship of God Himself (v. 19).

But crucially, this new creation does not seek to obliterate our humanity. Rather, Christ as the “Son of Man” affirms humanity’s true purpose by having His very body be the temple of God. The building would be destroyed, but we can always have access to the Father because Jesus has made the way.

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

John 2:19

Apply the Word

We may ask ourselves why Jesus often uses such perplexing language (2:4, 19). Sometimes God requires us, like the disciples, to decipher the clues He has provided so that we can understand. In our text today John begins to give us “signs” to follow. He will force us to be involved in the narrative. Are we ready to become part of His story?

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for employees serving in Food Service, please remember Josefina Rodriguez, Lois Sanders, Jonathan True, Steven Washburn, and Jeffery Williams. Let’s ask the Father to fill this team with the peace and joy of Christ.

The Cost of New Birth

We find themes of new life, glory, and death in our text today. When we first see Nicodemus in this story, we might admire him for following the “signs” Jesus gave. He came at night (v. 2), which may reveal the risk he took in coming at all. But notice that Jesus does not pat him on the back for taking the first step of investigating. He forces Nicodemus to go deeper still.

In Nicodemus’s culture, birth into the right family would have been the greatest predictor of success in life (8:39). That’s why Jesus’ words have a sting to them. Jesus tells him that our life in God is not in fact simply determined by our birth to our physical parents. The new life God gives, this life “in the spirit,” will be vital, active, and ongoing (v. 8). Christ roots the urgency of His message in our future judgment (v. 21).

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

John 3:14–15

Parents know that having children involves a kind of death of their old way of life. Mothers know the pain through which this new birth takes place. The same is true of our spiritual lives. Jesus references Numbers 21:4–8, where God sends serpents to punish the people. Their cure came, however, simply by looking at the snake lifted up. So the gateway to our new birth comes when we look to the Son of Man, who will be “lifted up” (v. 14).

We need not be confused by Christ linking Himself with the serpent, for

Jesus was not sent as a form of judgment. Jesus wants to highlight God’s love in healing His people. Jesus emphasizes the expansiveness of God’s love by focusing not only on God’s concern for Israel but also on His love for the whole world.

Apply the Word

Our new life comes at the price of death. Strikingly, John uses the phrase “lifted up,” a term of glorification, to describe the crucifixion. His suffering is His glory. It “must” be this way (v. 14). So too, if we want new life, we will be perplexed (v. 4), and buffeted unpredictably (v. 8). If we wish to be “born of the spirit,” we must be prepared.

Pray with Us

This year, Moody is training over 3,500 students in undergraduate, seminary, and distance learning programs. Express appreciation to God for the leadership of Dr. Junias Venugopal, Provost and Dean of Education.

Dance of the New Creation

In our reading today we encounter wedding language for the second time. In chapter 2 Christ performed His first miracle at a wedding. Here, John the Baptist described his role with wedding imagery. John broke with convention, put the focus off himself, and started his narrative with a marriage. We should wonder what role we have to play in this unusual story.

John's disciples were in crisis. Many had no doubt given up much to follow John. They were part of a growing ministry that challenged established authority. As Jesus gained His own followers, it all seemed to slip away. It's understandable that they felt plagued with worry that they were about to be written out of the story.

John the Baptist's response shows us that he understood that his role was to play the "best man." He was supporting cast. He does not have the "best lines."

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.

John 3:35

He does not get to "kiss the girl." But John reveled in this. It was his joy.

Commenting on John's words, the Gospel shows that humility is not just the key to understanding our place in the here and now, it is the ultimate intersection between heaven and earth (cf. 1:51). The Father's love pushes Him to glorify the Son (v. 35). To glorify the Son, the Spirit comes "in full measure" (v. 34). Early Christians described this reflection of glory as a *perichoresis*, or literally, a "circle dance," in which

the participants move in unity, basking in the opportunity to highlight the other.

As Christ prepared to begin His public ministry, we see that His story changes some of the rules. The characters seek to deflect rather than to grab attention. The love within the Trinity has implications for us as well. We too can be transformed through humility and love, which gives glory to God.

Apply the Word

As God creates His people, He calls us into this great dance of joy. If we join, we do so not to "strut our stuff." We find our role, we move with rhythm, grace, and reverence. We can learn, as C. S. Lewis wrote, "To play great parts without pride, small parts without shame."

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody's educational ministries, lift up Randall Dattoli, James Holesapple, and Daniel Snoek at Moody Theological Seminary. Ask the Lord to give this administration team unity as they serve at MTS's Chicago campus.

The Old Order Collapses

After 9/11, the State Department began a program for students from Afghanistan to spend a year in the United States. The planners hoped to give them positive associations to take home, and it succeeded—until problems arose. Taliban clerics intimidated participants. Women could be “tainted” merely by coming to America. Some students received violent threats. Recently the United States suspended the program because the risks had become too great.

In our story today we see the same dynamics found in modern-day Afghanistan, where religious, ethnic, and moral issues cause great division. We will see how boldly Jesus challenged that world.

Most good Jews would have avoided Samaria altogether. Samaritans claimed to be Abraham’s true descendants, the preservers of God’s law. Both sides had done violence to the other. Jesus piles

on the surprises. He (a Jewish holy man) talks with 1) a Samaritan, 2) a woman, who is 3) alone. No wonder He shocked His disciples (v. 27)!

Jesus even initiated the conversation. He did not speak like a detached mystic.

His language forced the woman to reconsider how she viewed the world. His spiritual words have a very practical application. The woman tried to avoid the implications, saying in effect, “Let’s just wait for Messiah to come—let him sort this out!” (v. 25).

She’s played her last card, but Jesus trumps it. “I am He” (v. 26).

Jesus saw this short encounter with an eternal perspective. Whether we are the sower or the reaper, we can participate in God’s cosmic dance of creation and redemption. The disciples had to learn from this woman (who had spread the word herself), and gain the humility to learn Jesus’ rules of the new creation.

Whoever drinks
the water I give
them will
never thirst.

John 4:14

Apply the Word

If we feel our role in God’s kingdom burdensome, we may not be drawing on living water for our strength. We may not have joined the dance in the right spot or tempo. We may need to see our earthly lives with heavenly eyes, and prayerfully consider our place in God’s new creation.

Pray with Us

Please mention Facilities Management—Konrad Finck, Timothy Krug, James Miedema, and Dannon Zurek—in your prayers today. They care for Moody’s Chicago campus, ensuring safe work spaces for employees and residence halls for students.

Holiness in the New World

England banned the African slave trade by 1833, but faced a thorny problem. Many influential companies had profited from it. Some thought a solution would be territorial and financial expansion into Africa. Though we cheer slavery's end, England did not address the root issues of racial superiority and using Africa for profit. Some historians see nineteenth-century European imperialism as the mainspring of twentieth-century totalitarianism and Islamist ideology. Dealing with symptoms rather than the root cause can have dangerous results.

As Jesus returns to Cana we see His fame has spread. Jesus' attitude towards miracles (v. 48) may puzzle us, and He expressed it often (see also 2:4; Matt. 12:39; Luke 4:9–12). But Jesus did perform miracles, and many led to real transformation, so we need to resolve this seeming tension.

Do you want to
get well?

John 5:6

In both of the healing stories today we see a clear response to the word Christ speaks. The official trusted what Christ said. The crippled man clearly believed in Christ's power and command (5:8) and acted upon it. John's Gospel surely wants us to connect Christ's words with the fact that He is the Word of God.

These signs also reveal God's love for the world and foreshadow why Jesus would get in trouble later with Jewish leaders. The royal official almost certainly served King

Herod Antipas, who made himself quite unpopular by building a new capital city on a Jewish burial ground. Later Herod killed John the Baptist, but Jesus didn't hesitate to help one of his servants. He also cured a man who associated himself with a quasi-pagan ritual, whose sin may have led to his ailment (v. 14). Salvation is offered to the Jews (note how 5:1 begins in Jerusalem), but Christ's mission is for the whole world.

Apply the Word

Many of us might sometimes fall into seeking "signs and wonders" for a quick spiritual high. This not only doesn't work, it can be exhausting. Jesus does not come merely to deal with our symptoms, but to give us new life. This will bring new challenges, and so the question before us is the same faced by the sick man: "Do you want to be made well?"

Pray with Us

Student Programs provides support to international students, student leaders, and more. Joe Gonzales, Sarah Green, and Nok Prukpitikul would be grateful for your prayers as they help the next generation of ministry leaders.

The Old Man on Trial

One of paganism’s distinguishing marks is the desire to control or manipulate gods and nature. Yesterday we looked at the unusual story of the Sheep Gate pool (5:2), where diseased people would try to receive healing by hustling into the waters. Today we see that some Jews had to face the disturbing truth that their approach to God resembled paganism much more than they would ever admit.

Their reaction to the healing (v. 16) surprises us until we realize that this dispute stemmed from the threat to the power of Jewish religious leaders. Pharisees and others put a great deal of stress on obedience to certain regulations in order to receive God’s favor. Right Sabbath conduct (as defined by them) served as a guarantee of God’s blessings on Israel—as if God could be controlled by their actions.

A time is coming
and has now come
when the dead
will hear the voice
of the Son of God
and those who
hear will live.

Proverbs 2:6

Christ challenged the religious leaders by first tackling their interpretation of the Sabbath. In the background is Jeremiah 17:21, which prevents bearing a burden and bringing it within Jerusalem. The context there discourages mixing worldly cares with their worship, but in John 5 the religious leaders had extrapolated this principle to forbid carrying anything for any purpose.

Jesus wanted to liberate them from a view of God that missed the entire point of the Sabbath, which was “made for man” (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath reflects completion and wholeness. It was meant to give life, not to restrict it (cf. Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:9–10). Jesus wants to end the reign of religious leaders who gained power at the expense of others (Luke 11:46). He framed much of the context of His words in terms of the life He came to give (vv. 21–25).

Apply the Word

Throughout much of His discourse (vv. 19–47), Jesus once again wants us to make the connection between heaven and earth. If His hearers could “rejoice in the light” (v. 35) of John the Baptist, how much greater can we bathe in the light of Christ? He has been granted true authority (v. 25), and we must end our own grasping for power.

Pray with Us

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ today, praise God for sending His Son to earth to die on a cross for our sins. Praise Him who has made a way for us, so that by believing we may have life in His name (John 20:31).

Spontaneous Generation: Life from Life

In a famous *Peanuts* strip, Lucy asks Charlie Brown to name life's three certainties. He quickly gets "death" and "taxes," but comes up with the third only when lying on the ground after Lucy yet again pulled the football away.

Creation has failure built into it since the Fall. We see this principle at work in food. Whether we have chicken, grapes from the vine, or wheat from the ground, something died so that we may live. In today's reading, Christ showed His identity by pointing to the new heavens and new earth.

His life will break the cycle of failure and decay.

All four Gospels record the feeding of the five thousand, but John mentions that Passover was near (v. 4). Aside from explaining why so many came to Jerusalem, John's Gospel wants to make

a connection between Christ and the Exodus, specifically the theme of God feeding His people. In the wilderness the Jews ate manna, bread from heaven; their life was sustained straight from God Himself. So too, Christ multiplied the loaves and fish from the life that flowed through Him. It is a major clue to His identity that no one should miss.

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

John 6:15

Christ walking on water should also recall the water miracle of the Exodus story when the Red Sea parted. But the fact that this miracle arose from the necessity of Jesus fleeing those who sought

to make Him king is an ominous foreshadowing (v. 15). In creating a new people of God, Christ does not borrow from the fallen world and use force to destroy others to get His way. He harkens to the beginning, when life flowed from Life Itself, when harmony and order made all "good."

Apply the Word

In his book, *Your God Is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips shows how many of our conceptions of God are really idols of our own making. The Israelites wanted someone to fix their temporary problems. Christ wants to take us out of our narrow, personal ideas about Him and show us creation from His perspective. We, in turn, must be humble enough to let Him.

Pray with Us

Thank God for Moody Radio's commitment to reaching more people with the truth of God's Word. Join Collin Lambert, Vice President of Moody Radio, in praying for Moody Radio's new Spanish and urban praise Internet stations available to listeners around the world.

The Pain and Joy of Kingdom Vision

The innocence and naivety of children can be endearing, but parents know that at some point children must face reality. Santa Claus does not deliver presents, and Candyland is not a real place.

For His hearers, Christ's words shattered their expectations of the Messiah and their view of reality. The crowd from the previous day had followed Jesus, believing that Jesus was special (vv. 14–15). Moreover, we cannot overstate the desperation and the spiritual and psychological hunger an oppressed and occupied people felt. Their excitement was palpable as they wondered if maybe Jesus was a second Moses, ready to liberate them.

Throughout this discourse Jesus repeatedly told them that they have to move beyond their own narrow vision. Their needs were real, and they looked to Jesus to meet them (v. 34). But they still

expected Him to be a political deliverer. They didn't see the signs that pointed to His identity and mission.

Christ's language of "eating" and "drinking" (vv. 53–56) surely shocked His hearers. His audience would have known the story when David refused to profit from the sacrifice of his soldiers (cf. 2 Sam 23:17). As Messiah, David's Son comes neither to destroy nor to make others sacrifice for Him. He will be the drink offering; He will do the serving and suffering.

As the living
Father sent me
and I live because
of the Father, so
the one who feeds
on me will live
because of me.

John 6:57

Jesus' words may foreshadow the Last Supper, but He reveals more than this. Some see in Jesus' language a pie-in-the-sky mysticism. Christ's overtly physical language, however, tells us that redemption is really real. We do not have to wait for some vague future time. It can begin right now. "The Word became flesh and . . . we have seen His glory" (1:14).

Apply the Word

Emerging out of childhood means realizing that the world does not conform to our self-centered wishes. Apologist Ravi Zacharias wrote, "The older you get the more it takes to fill your heart with wonder, and only God is big enough to do that." God will not be put in a box. But as always, His seeming severity serves as a great vessel of mercy.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Radio, pray for Moody Radio's Web Team: Courtney Gaines, Adam Grandy, and Ryan McConaughay. May God use them to encourage the thousands of people around the world who interact with Moody Radio online.

Hope and Reality

Politicians know that in order to be successful in their campaign for office, they need to communicate optimism about the future. Voters rarely reward candidates who announce that they don't have the answers or can't see the solution.

Dealing with dashed expectations can be traumatic, and today we see the fallout of Jesus' telling people that they cannot put Him in a box. The fact that He is what they need makes little difference, and many leave (v. 66).

Some commentators mistakenly see verse 60 as an indication that Jesus' speech was too lofty for His hearers or that He operated on a higher spiritual plane. While Jesus did say things that may be beyond full human understanding, His meaning was plain. Indeed, we might suggest many left because they understood all too well. This humble man from Nazareth would not follow in Moses' footsteps. In fact, He is the

reason for Moses' existence at all—He is the source of life itself.

Turning to His disciples, Jesus gives them another reminder of His origin (v. 62). An earthly perspective won't explain spiritual reality (v. 63). It's important to note that Jesus is not dismissing the importance of physical creation—nor should we expect Him to. After all, He created it and called it "good!"

Lord, to whom
shall we go? You
have the words of
eternal life.

John 6:68

In a passage that mirrors Matthew 16:13–20, Peter sees with "the Spirit" and confesses Christ's true nature, as the full embodiment of the union of heaven—He is fully God—and earth—He is fully human. Gifted by the Spirit, Peter can join Christ in sharing the life that Christ has, and so can we. But this chapter closes with an ominous warning of what might happen to us if we refuse this gift. As John's Gospel hints, we will see later what will unfold because of Judas's rejection of the Son of God.

Apply the Word

Jesus's words were likely as hard for Peter to hear as for the others. Though he might have been confused or downcast, Peter wanted to cling to this truth: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines . . . yet I will rejoice in the LORD" (Hab. 3:17–18). Life may disappoint us, but where else would we go? Christ has the words of eternal life.

Pray with Us

Will you lift up Moody Radio station KMBI broadcasting out of Spokane, Washington? Ask the Lord to use Gordon Canaday, Rich Monteith, Jodi Murphy, and Chris Wright to make an eternal difference in the lives of their listeners.

The New Kingdom's Law of Life

One underlying principle of American jurisprudence is that the law should promote and protect life, an idea enshrined in the phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In our reading, Jesus challenged His opponents' conception of the Mosaic Law's purpose. As clues to His own identity accumulate, His hearers will be forced to choose to accept Him or reject Him.

As chapter 7 opens, Jesus made an appearance at another Jewish festival (cf. 2:13; 5:1). During the Feast of Tabernacles, Israelites slept in tents or outdoor booths as a reminder of their wilderness wandering. Thousands would come to Jerusalem, and Jesus' brothers urged Him that it would be the perfect stage for an aspiring leader. But they did not really know who He was or understand His method (v. 5). Jesus wasn't interested in manipulating a crowd with a show of power.

Whoever believes
in me, . . . rivers
of living water
will flow from
within them.

John 7:37-38

One sign was His healing on the Sabbath. Once again, the religious leaders claimed that Jesus was blasphemous. No true prophet would go against Moses, and the punishment for such false claims was death (v. 19, cf. Deut. 13). Jesus pointed out that Moses did not give them an onerous checklist. If they miss this, they are not "judging righteously" (v. 24), and do not know the Law.

The authorities prove Jesus' point. "A prophet does not come out of Galilee," they argued (v. 52). They could not grasp that Jesus' identity would not fit in their preconceived categories. Jesus was clearly human, but twice He miraculously avoided being captured (vv. 30, 44). Even Nicodemus, who had been so cautious in chapter 3, here asserts a legal defense of Jesus in front of his peers. He had some understanding of who Jesus was, and he was willing to suffer ridicule for the Lord (v. 50).

Apply the Word

At the culmination of the Feast, a priest poured water and wine from the harvest on the altar. At that moment Jesus extended His great invitation (vv. 37-38). He made Himself the offering. Water is a quite precious resource and essential for life. Christ is God's precious gift of love and mercy to us. To refuse this invitation is like refusing life itself.

Pray with Us

For over 125 years, the school that D. L. Moody founded has been training men and women to proclaim God's Word to the world. Today our prayers go to God for Dr. Larry Davidhizar who serves as Vice President and Dean of Moody's Undergraduate School.

The Old Kingdom's Law of Death

A feeling of moral superiority over others will always intoxicate and threaten our souls. Today in our reading we see how Jesus confronted this attitude in the Pharisees, and we get a glimpse as to what matters most to God.

First, we note that those that brought the woman to Jesus had no concern for her as a person. They used her as an object lesson in their ongoing dispute with Jesus over the true meaning of the Law. They believed they had found the perfect set-up

with which to trap Him: Jesus would either disregard the Law or go against His reputation for mercy. Either way, they could accuse Him.

Jesus was not entangled in their trap. He did not disregard the Law, but He did reframe the question. He addresses the fundamental question: "Who has the authority to execute judgment?" Did the religious leaders get to decide whom to

punish? Or were there deeper principles of justice and mercy that they were ignoring? Their self-righteousness was exposed, and they crept away.

Just as in John 4, Jesus had compassion on a disreputable woman. He did not condemn her, but neither did He condone her actions, a crucial distinction often lost on the modern world (v. 11). True grace and forgiveness are active extensions of God's love, and far greater than mere passive tolerance.

Let any one of you
who is without
sin be the first to
throw a stone
at her.

John 8:7

Again we see Jesus getting to the true purpose of the Law. The Law exposes sin, and it cannot produce righteousness. The Pharisees realize that their approach to pleasing God has failed. Adultery is a sin, but it is not the worst sin in this episode. The pride from trusting in their own moral performance put the teachers of the law in danger, and this is the danger that Christ Himself will face head on as we read further.

Apply the Word

Any Christian living a "good" life will likely face temptation to commit this same sin to view morality as a way to compare ourselves to others. Christ is not interested in moral games, and He's even less interested in power. He seeks to put us into right relationship with God and others. Neither of these can happen so long as we put ourselves above others.

Pray with Us

Today Moody's Chicago campus is hosting a special event called Day One for future undergraduate students. Will you ask the Lord to use our students to welcome and encourage these young people as they tour our campus and visit classes today?

The Evidence for “I AM”

If we have been students of God’s Word for some time, we might easily forget that Christ’s claims are quite shocking. This man from a town with a bad reputation and a family they knew had just used the sacred name of God to describe Himself! Try to imagine how His first listeners would have reacted to the statement in today’s key verse! Like the original hearers, we too have to decide what to do with such claims.

While Jesus’ questioners positioned themselves as prosecutors, in reality they were on trial. Most rabbinic teachers referred to previous scholars to verify their teaching. Jesus “taught as one who had authority” on His own (Matt. 7:29). He framed His entire mission and identity with the teaching of the Old Testament. His authority was derived from His Father, not other teachers. Imagine a defendant claiming that God is on his side and no other wit-

nesses are necessary! Would you trust such a claim?

Verse 30 indicates that many did trust Him, and Jesus instructed them what true faith looked like (v. 31). Many expected a political messiah to free them from physical humiliation and bring judgment. Jesus pointed out that they really need spiritual liberation from the worst slavery of all: slavery to sin. They cited Abraham, so He did also, calling Abraham as His witness (v. 37).

His prosecutors understood the implication, and in the fury of argument they stuck to their guns. They insisted that He must not really be from Abraham, in either a spiritual or physical way (v. 48). Jesus responded to this accusation by making His identity plain. He takes the divine name from Exodus 3:14 for Himself (v. 58). He existed before Abraham, because He is the eternal I AM.

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 8:58

Apply the Word

Has Jesus made a claim that you struggle to believe? Does it seem impossible that He can care about your life? Or do you think Jesus is the Son of God, but it doesn’t matter for your life or the way you live? Jesus invites you to believe and obey Him. We can follow this Messiah, because He is the eternal God who creates a way for us to have salvation.

Pray with Us

You can support in prayer the faculty serving in the Pastoral Studies department at Moody’s undergraduate school in Chicago. Ask God to sustain professors Trevor Burke, John Goodrich, Ernest Gray, John Hart, and William Marty with His grace.

Question and Answer

Michael Kellogg, Moody Radio Host



In Genesis 1:3-5, God created light on His first day of creation. This light appears to have illuminated His creation from day one to day three, provided a separation of day from night, and was supported by what we know as the rotation of the earth (a day). In addition, to separating day from night it appears that (given our earthly perspective) the light was in a fixed stationary position as the earth rotated and experienced gravitational pull that allowed for all things to exist in their normal natural balance. Not until day four did God create the sun to rule the day. What was the light created by God on day one?



The Bible tells us that God commanded the light, and simply from the power of His word, it came into being. That's the delight. God said it, and it happened. From nothing came something overwhelming, breathtaking, awe-inspiring. The very creation of the heavens and earth allowed for the earth's rotation, the gravitational pull, and the existence of all things in their natural balance. But we don't read about those things in Genesis 1. What we read is that God did it. While we accept the scientific

principles regarding the sun and its position, the earth's revolution, and the gravitational pull, we know most fundamentally that it is God who makes it possible.

God indeed spoke, "Light!" And light appeared, and God separated the light from darkness. I believe the divine Person speaking here is the Logos or Word of God, which was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who Himself is the light that illuminates every creature (see John 1). The light that God created came before the light bearers (the sun, moon, and stars) were called into being. But I believe the creation of that light on the first day is what made the existence of plant life possible on the fourth day.



Does God really care about each person individually? There are some days when I wonder if God has any idea of everything I am going through, the pain I'm suffering, and the burdens I'm under.



I think the words of Jesus are very explicit: He said of sparrows that none of them fall to the ground without God's knowledge. And we are of more value than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31). That doesn't mean

Continued on next page

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that God promises to make us rich or keep us from sickness, but what He does say is that in our most trying days we can receive the strength to handle the tough times. Even those difficult moments are somehow working to make us the people He wants us to be. It would be silly to pray if we thought that God doesn't care.

All of us are subject to the laws of the universe. A Christian man is just as capable of dying from a fall as an unsaved one. We can be subjected to vandalism or vicious storms just like the people of the world. There are days when we, like Job, wonder why the people of the world get away with murder while the people of God are going through hard days. God never tries to explain away those difficult times. What He wants us to do is have confidence in His care and trust Him that He will complete His good work in us (Phil. 1:6).



What is meant by the Bible telling us to lay aside every weight?



The passage referred to is Hebrews 12:1. This text has to do with living a disciplined, focused spiritual

life. It's talking about pushing away the things that would tempt you, and with divine help allowing the Lord to help you overcome the things of the flesh and worldliness. With God's help we are to develop a godly character that will enable us to say no to the things of this world. This would include amusements that don't really build up our faith, and companions whose desires are opposed to that of God.

Laying aside every weight also has to do with getting rid of grumpiness (which pushes people away from you), not letting worries overwhelm you, or trying to live for the approval of others. It would mean living a life with no guile, making sure we battle to conquer our tongues (see the book of James). Our highest desire as a child of God is to say no to anything that drags us down and away from growing closer to our Savior. This is something that can only be accomplished by submission to the power of God in your life.

Blindness and Sight

For the past few hundred years, Western societies have often used science as the way to understand the world. In *The Golem*, professors Harry Collins and Trevor Pinch question the seeming certainty that experiments and observation bring. Science might in fact provide more uncertainty and fewer categories than we would like.

In our text today Jesus challenges the assumptions that many hold dear. Experience tells us that sometimes our suffering comes from sin (cf. John 5:14). But this is not an absolute law of the universe, as John 9:3 (along with the book of Job) show us. We will not always see or understand God's ways of working in the world.

Christ used this opportunity for healing. Earlier He used the power of speech to heal (4:46–54), which reminds us of the power of the Word alluded to in both

Genesis 1 and John 1. Here His use of the Pool of Siloam evokes 2 Kings 5, where God healed Naaman. Some scholars see the use of mud as a clue about the redemptive use of creation itself.

Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath, and He made it plain that the religious leaders had misunderstood the whole idea of work. They had omitted God Himself. In short, healing on the Sabbath perfectly reflects the fullness and abundance in the original creation (Gen. 1:31–2:3).

As in chapter 8, the accusers of the (formerly) blind man find themselves condemned. They wanted evidence, but ignored its clear implication (v. 16). They used Moses as a rhetorical weapon (v. 29), without noticing that he indicts them. They chose to suppress the evidence of who Christ is. Those who cling to their own vision really have no sight (vv. 39–41).

For judgment I
have come into
this world, so that
the blind will see
and those who see
will become blind.

John 9:39

Apply the Word

Uncertainty often breeds fear. And fear robs us of an opportunity. The world's mysteries should cause us amazement at God's purposes. We are not left to stumble around in the dark. The Light of the World has come, and He offers us healing and vision to see His new creation. Even in these uncertain times, we can trust that God holds our world in His hands.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for faculty in the Pastoral Studies department, please thank the Lord for using Gerald Peterman, Ronald Sauer, Andrew Schmutzer, Timothy Sigler, Michael Vanlaningham, and Michael Wechsler to equip leaders to serve the church.

“My Yoke Is Light”

In 167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple, and Judas Maccabeus led a Jewish revolt that ended Antiochus’s reign. In gratitude the Israelites made Judas king. They purified the temple and started the Feast of Dedication, which we know as Hanukkah.

In our reading today Jesus was teaching during Hanukkah (v. 22), and the revolt had to be on their minds. Many who heard Jesus expected a coming Messiah, and many expected someone like Judas Maccabeus. But Jesus had a different idea, one rooted in Ezekiel 34.

Using the metaphor of shepherds and sheep, we see that Jesus had a different idea of what distinguishes the people of God: they know His voice.

Sheep can be led by shepherds from the front, but for this to work, the shepherd must spend time with the sheep so they recognize his voice. Jesus’ words

in verse 1 through 5 offer a “light yoke” (Matt. 11:29). He does not demand that we continue with the weary cycle of violence, uncertainty, and repression. In a world of pretenders we can take comfort. Sheep follow only their shepherd (v. 8).

My Father, who has given them to me . . . ; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.

John 10:29–30

Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus did not offer just another set of rules or a formula to follow. He offered Himself (v. 9) and fantastic rewards (v. 28), surely more than any mere man could offer. Jesus stated that He shared the same divine nature as God the Father, and His hearers

understood Him perfectly (v. 31). Despite their animosity, Jesus persisted in inviting them to believe in Him. He quoted Psalm 82 to show us that we can share in His reality. The words should have left them breathless. We can take that hope and cling to it desperately, or hold our ears and crush it under our feet. There is no middle ground.

Apply the Word

Jesus gives us both promises and a challenge to believe. He offers us the safety of listening to His voice and following our Shepherd. Will we trust Him? Reflect today on Psalm 23, and thank the Lord for being a Shepherd who provides for our needs, leads us in truth and righteousness, and banishes our fears.

Pray with Us

Will you pray for Greg Thornton, Senior Vice President of Media? Ask the Lord to guide and direct Greg as he provides leadership to Moody’s radio and publishing ministries.

Christ and Death

For all of us, death lurks beside us as the unalterable fact, regardless of the kind of life we lead. Some ignore it, some despair, and some explain it away by saying that “death is a natural part of life.” None of these views admit that death is a curse, and none hope for a champion to defeat it.

Many readers have wondered why Jesus did not leave right away when He heard that Lazarus was sick. Was Jesus acting as a manipulative puppet master? Was He selfishly seeking His own glory at others’ expense? Even when we know the real reason—the glory of God—we might forget that going to Judea involved hazarding their lives (vv. 8, 16). Jesus likely knew that His time of suffering and sacrifice was drawing near. Was this trip worth the risk? Perhaps a sense of foreboding is why He spoke in such an indirect way (vv. 9–14). The disciples certainly understood the dan-

“Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept.

Luke 12:34

ger in returning to that region, and still they chose to follow Him there even if it meant their death (v. 16).

Jesus’ conversation with Martha unfolds yet more of His identity. In response to a grieving sister, He could tenderly unveil the truth about the resurrection and reconciliation that He brings. He is the Messiah.

Yet He, the power of life itself incarnated before her eyes, wept at Lazarus’s tomb. Verse 35 shows Jesus again as the fully divine Son of God still being fully human. He

is the embodiment of the intersection between heaven and earth. This verse is crucial to understand His delay in coming. God’s ways may be mysterious, but He does not play games with us merely to prove a point. His triumph does not remove real pain. However much we deserve it, death is a terrible price to pay, and God knows it. Jesus wept.

Apply the Word

Lazarus will have to die again, and the crowd’s response (v. 37) foreshadows Christ’s own death. But His promises should give us hope and quicken our hearts. Even in the face of death, we need to walk in the Light. Even at those times when God may seem curiously detached from our own lives, Jesus weeps. He is full of both power and compassion.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Moody Publishers editorial staff: Carolyn McDaniel, Elizabeth Newenhuyse, Pamela Pugh, Christopher Reese, and James Vincent. Praise God for editors who acquire and prepare resources that will encourage our readers.

Mud Pies in a Slum

Many counselors say that people often prefer feeling right over feeling happy. The immediate pleasures and power that come with feeling right have a certain satisfaction—even if the feeling isn't based in reality.

Jesus has just resurrected Lazarus and revealed His own identity more fully. This should be a joyous occasion, but the religious leaders slink away to plot Christ's demise. Before we denounce them, let's remember that we often do the same thing when confronted with evidence that contradicts our notion of being right. Part of the problem is that the religious leaders still saw Jesus through geopolitical eyes, not spiritual ones. John mentions the Romans in verse 48. The Romans controlled them, but it could have been worse. They still had freedom of worship and a degree of local autonomy. If Jesus launched a messianic power grab, the Roman mili-

tary would crush them: thousands would die, they would lose positions of power, and Rome's hold on them would tighten. Caiaphas thought his prophetic decision (vv. 49–52) merciful.

We see a similar dynamic between Jesus, Judas, and Mary. Here Mary "wasted" thousands of dollars and created an embarrassing scene. Prudent and reliable Judas (or so he must have seemed) surely had a good point. But Jesus told him that she had done a great service of worship. Judas would have many opportunities to care for the poor. There would be few chances to pour out worship before the Lord on this earth.

The epilogue exposes the bankrupt morality of the religious leaders (vv. 9–11). They preferred to take a man's life rather than to admit the life-giving power of Jesus.

You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.

John 11:50

Apply the Word

C. S. Lewis wrote, "We are . . . like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine . . . a holiday at the sea." Will we be Caiaphas, concerned about holding on to power? Will we be Judas, concerned with maintaining false propriety? Or will we be Mary, lavishing our devotion on Jesus no matter what?

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Publishers editorial staff, please remember Brittany Biggs and Steven Lyon. May God grant them success in developing content that helps readers to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ.

Ego and Short Sight

“Attack and you will destroy a great kingdom,” were the words heard by Croesus, king of Lydia (ca. 550 B.C.), from the famed Oracle at Delphi. The ancient historian Herodotus recounts that Croesus left satisfied and began to plot an assault on Cyrus the Persian. Subsequent events showed that Croesus had not fully understood the message. The kingdom he destroyed was his own.

Not understanding fully about the Messiah was an issue for many in Jesus’ day. Once again the Jewish revolt of 167 B.C. lurks behind our text today. When Judas Maccabeus overthrew the oppressor Antiochus, his followers waved palm branches in celebration as he entered the city. But here Jesus rides a meek donkey. He did not reject the role of conqueror, but He was redefining what it meant. He came into Jerusalem not at Hanukkah but at the beginning of Passover, a time of sacrifice. Jesus

inaugurates something new here. And though it was prophesied (v. 15), they did not see the whole picture at the time (v. 16).

Jesus made it clear that His followers will have certain demands on their lives.

Some Greeks sought Him out, but Jesus said that He was not yet leading a victory parade. We need to count the cost (v. 25). If this troubles us, well, it troubled Jesus, too (v. 27). But even in His anguish He pointed out that we will not step out into a vac-

uum. Sticking with Jesus means sticking with God Himself (vv. 26, 44–50).

Verse 24 shows us the clue to what Christ as conqueror really means. His death is needed, but it will not be the final chapter. The same holds true for us. The path may not always be strewn with palm branches, but that is not our final chapter.

The hour has
come for the Son
of Man to be
glorified.

John 12:23

Apply the Word

Most of us would prefer a victory parade to a death march. Following Jesus means both. We are continually dying to self so that, as Paul said, we can share in His victory over death (see Phil. 3:9–11). We have the example of Jesus’ obedience to follow and the indwelling power of the Spirit to sustain us. One day we will receive the crown of life.

Pray with Us

Please join us in lifting up Moody Publishers Finance team: Harrison Gunter, Richard Peterson, and Think Pham. Ask the Father to give these individuals joy for the work they do that helps Moody Publishers share God’s truth with people around the world.

A Surprising Counter-Attack

As we follow the theme of new creation in John's Gospel, we may notice that in chapter 13 things don't seem to be going well. Christ said He was the light of the world, but now it is night (v. 30). The world seems to revert to when "darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Gen. 1:2). But in our reading today, Jesus shows that He can triumph over Judas and the devil, though not in the way we—or they—might think.

First, note that despite Judas's actions, John tells us of Jesus' full command of the situation, and the full awareness of His identity (v. 3). He washed the disciples' feet, which certainly struck them as odd (v. 8). It might strike us, who know what Judas is about to do, as odd as well. Judas has determined to betray Him! Why won't Jesus do something? We forget that in fact Jesus was doing something. Washing their feet was His response, His counter-attack.

He began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:5

Nor should this surprise us. It is because of who He is that He must do this. Peter's amusing reaction shows yet again his refusal to accept Christ as a suffering servant (vv. 8–9). Jesus stated that "the Son of Man is glorified" (v. 31) right after Judas left, linking suffering to His identity.

This should comfort us that in this dark hour, He remains in control.

Judas's betrayal came after the most intimate part of the evening, sharing the bread (v. 30). Perhaps, like Peter, he was horrified at the idea of a suffering Messiah. Might it horrify us? How often

has the church and its members perverted the power of love into a weapon? Perhaps we do not want an intimate Savior who serves and suffers. Perhaps we prefer a God who responds with force and cunning the way we would. Perhaps, like Judas and Peter, we are reluctant to submit to the Lord who doesn't fit our expectations.

Apply the Word

Jesus used Old Testament passages about love to form the "Great Commandments" (Matt. 22:37–39). What makes this command new is not the words but the context and foundation. Jesus can speak of love in the very moment of being betrayed. Love is right in the heart of God Himself, the foundation of the new creation Christ fashions.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody Publishers Finance team, remember Maryanna Pieleanu, Jeffrey Reynolds, and Edgar Santiago. May the Lord bless these individuals for their dedicated service to Him at Moody.

The Inclusiveness of the Narrow Path

The theories of archaeologist J. Eric Thompson on Mayan hieroglyphs dominated Mayan studies for 30 years. In the 1960s, a woman named Tatiana Proskouriakoff, with no formal training, published findings that refuted many of Thompson's core assumptions. Upon reading her work, Thompson announced, "I was completely mistaken."

Jesus calls us to face the reality of His truth. This may challenge our core assumptions, but our vision of God and ourselves will be wrong without it. Even the disciples labored under false assumptions (13:36–38; 14:8).

Those who say, "All religions are the same!" might sound tolerant, but in the end this idea leads us to conclude that God has not cared enough to reveal Himself decisively to mankind. Jesus says He came to do just that (14:9). Refusing to recognize Jesus as Lord leads us to

exalting another—likely ourselves—over everything. We begin to think that we are the source of truth.

Jesus declares the path to God is not hidden. The way is here. The truth is here. "I AM" is here, in front of the disciples. This Truth is not arrogantly exclusive, but inclusive. No hidden agendas or secret handshakes needed, just a Person. "My Father's house has many rooms" (14:2).

I am the way
and the truth
and the life. No
one comes to the
Father except
through me.

John 14:6

The remainder of the chapter reinforces that the so-called narrowness of Christ's claim actually leads us into an infinite world. Somehow (and mysteriously) we "will do even greater things" than Christ (14:12). Jesus pledges the "Spirit of truth" (14:17). We will not be alone. The presence of the Holy Spirit with us carries us right into the very life of eternal Trinitarian reality. No wonder the disciples did not understand this glorious assertion.

Apply the Word

When we act in Jesus' name, we proclaim the identity of One who laid down His life for the sheep, One who washed His disciples' feet. We will not win others to the claims of Christ by shouting or arguing. We will be compelling witnesses when we are living like Jesus, with sacrifice and service to people. Then we can share the Truth and Life with others.

Pray with Us

Praise God for Christine Gorz, Vice President of Corporate Communications. Christine manages several departments—Marketing, Web Communications, and Public Relations among them. Her skilled leadership helps Moody communicate effectively.

Two Cities

In the fifth century A.D., Augustine wrote *The City of God*, where he argued that the world consists of two kingdoms, the city of God and the city of man. “The earthly city is formed by the love of self, the heavenly by the love of God.”

Christians often hold truths in tension. God is one in three persons. Christ is fully man and fully God. Scripture is the Word of God, written by men. When we join Christ’s kingdom, we must renounce our own, though we cannot escape it.

Yesterday we saw Christ make wonderful and exalted promises, but today we see the larger context of those promises. The world has rejected its Maker. The Holy Spirit will be sent out of love and necessity (v. 26), for He will keep us connected to Christ’s life and work.

Often in the Old Testament, prophets and poets used vine imagery to repre-

sent Israel, the people of God (see Psalm 80; Isaiah 5). In simple language Jesus tells His hearers that His coming creates a new people of God, a Kingdom within kingdoms. Our presence is not merely passive, but active in obedience to our King (15:12–14). Earthly realms cannot legislate love, but Jesus can command us to love, and when we love we become most like Him. Love itself is renewed, and we become God’s “friends” (15:14).

But this glory comes with at least a temporary cost, a tension we must live with. No kingdom can tolerate a foreign body in its midst for long. The world rejected the new king, how much more His subjects? Our loyalties may be divided, and that may be why Christ promises an “Advocate,” someone to stand in the gap for us when we face attack (15:26). Again, a warning is implied. If we never feel alienated from “the world” we may need to check our citizenship status.

You are my
friends if you do
what I command.

John 15:14

Apply the Word

Living with this tension between God and the world isn’t easy. In a sermon given shortly after Rome’s collapse, Augustine said, “The world is passing away, the world is losing its grip, the world is short of breath. Do not fear, *Thy youth shall be renewed as an eagle.*” In our day-to-day lives, God is building His new kingdom within our very selves.

Pray with Us

Include the Campus Post Office in your prayers today. Ask the Lord to give Anthony Harper, Michael Lathrop, Victor Perez, Samuel Ramos, Jenny Matthews, and Richard Tatina opportunities to encourage those they serve: students, parents, faculty, and staff.

Ask for Nothing . . . or Anything

A long illness can cause us to forget what health feels like. When winter has dragged on for months, we might think spring will never come. In difficult life situations, it seems there's no way out.

Jesus has just told His disciples some hard words in chapter 15 that the world will hate them. Today we see that in the sickness of the world and our own hearts, Christ's cause will have the final victory.

When we read these verses we must be careful to take them in the right spirit (vv. 5–11). So often we long to be right so we can say, "I told you so." The Holy Spirit's mission will not give us a chance to gloat, for it's not really about us being right. Nor does the Spirit's work necessarily provide an "I told you so" moment for Christ either. For God's kingdom to come He must redeem a world that killed His Son.

In that day you
will no longer
ask me anything.
. . . my Father
will give you
whatever you ask
in my name.

John 16:23

Though we don't get spiritual bragging rights, we do have real joy when all this comes to pass. Surely expectant mothers occasionally think it seems that this baby will never be born! All the backaches and nausea and fatigue fade away when her new baby enters the world.

Jesus uses this childbirth analogy to remind us that the horror of the cross lies in the background to His whole discourse. If we want new creation, it will come through pain.

The childbirth analogy can help us understand the puzzling nature of verse 23. The image is one of contentment. The mother who has just delivered needs nothing but her child, but at the same time she knows that if she asked for something her husband would happily oblige. This sense of fullness and peace permeates Jesus' words about the temporary pain we must endure while we wait for coming glory.

Apply the Word

Redemption is a Trinitarian endeavor, with a marvelous interplay between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Reflect on this Trinitarian prayer: "Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth: Set up your kingdom in our midst. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God: Have mercy on me, a sinner. Holy Spirit, breath of the living God: Renew me and all the world."

Pray with Us

Today we ask that you pray for Ken Heulitt, Chief Financial Officer. Ask God to give Ken and his teams discernment as they help manage the resources that our ministry partners have generously given to support the Lord's work at Moody.

The Church and the Trinity

In 1864, a group of 195 children mailed a petition to Abraham Lincoln asking him to ensure freedom “for all the slave children.” Lincoln wrote back, commending them that “their young hearts are so full of just and generous sympathy.” In 2008 this letter sold for \$3.4 million, the highest ever paid for a manuscript in the United States. Aside from the letter’s subject, what added to its value was what it revealed about Lincoln. Even during the Civil War, he took time to respond to children.

We should be filled with wonder as we see Jesus think of us in His prayer just before His arrest. Chapter 17 culminates the great Trinitarian discourse began in chapter 13. We see Father, Son, and Holy Spirit here—but also His disciples are here, and we are here.

Our text today shows how the Trinity is the foundation of all reality. The

inner life of the Godhead is about the reflected glory of continuous giving. The Father’s words become the Son’s (v. 8). The Son gives to the Father the people entrusted to Him (v. 10). This joyous activity and mutuality can’t help but spill over. The pronouns of “Them,” “I,” and “You” get joined together in a surge of love.

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one.

John 17:20

After revealing the close mutual relation between Him and His Father, Jesus turns to His disciples. Jesus shares the “equality” between Him and His Father with His disciples in verses 16 through 19. At this point the disciples have

hardly revealed any particular mettle, but in generosity and anticipation of the reality to come, Jesus includes them. And in verse 20, Jesus prays for us, that we too might join in the fellowship of the new creation.

Apply the Word

Jesus prayed for believers, “that they may be one” (v. 21). We must grapple with the tragedy of lack of unity among Christians. It is a bad witness. More than that, it is a denial of the very Trinitarian life we hope to share. Our prayer—and our lives—should be in line with Jesus, as we seek to live with our brothers and sisters in Christ that “we may be one.”

Pray with Us

Diane Hill and Richard Wilson in the Financial Aid Office work with Moody students and their parents during the financial assistance process. Join us in asking God to give them wisdom as they help students apply for scholarships.

Power Through Submission

Many theologians have remarked that Scripture begins with a wedding. But the happy beginning quickly turns to divorce. God pursues, but when they are confronted, Adam and Eve mumble excuses, blame each other, and flee.

This month we have noted how John portrays Christ's coming as a grand drama of a "new creation" of the people of God, with Jesus both as fulfillment of the old and focal point of the new. In our reading today we have a warped replaying of Genesis 3. In this scene the people seek God in the garden. But God does not hide. He waits for the grotesque "judgment" to come. Creation itself appears ready to unravel. Jesus lets this script play out, and in so doing, reveals the weakness of the world and His power and majesty.

Unlike the first Adam, Jesus will not flinch from the cup of His Father's wrath.

Though at no point is Jesus merely passive. There is enormous power in His submission. Many Bible versions have Jesus saying, "I am he," in verse 5, but the Greek texts leave off the "he." Jesus' reply is simply, "I am." In the context it is a simple way to say, "Yes," but John means for us to see this statement in light of all His other "I am" statements. Jesus shows His equality with the Father and the absurdity of their actions.

When Jesus said,
"I am he," they
drew back and fell
to the ground.

John 18:6

Creation began when God declared, "Let there be light." Here darkness and disorder seem to reign. Peter denies Christ. Caiaphas maneuvers to add to the danger. Both instances serve to highlight the power of God's love. Even Caiaphas testifies to this in spite of himself (v. 14). Though the worst is yet to come, we are safe. Creation shall not be unmade after all, but renewed.

Apply the Word

We are sometimes told that God "needs" us to do something. This implies God is helpless in a broken world. Today's text contradicts this assertion. Even when "powerless," Christ still is full of power, and when we forget this we are likely to imitate Peter (v. 10). We are not needed—but we are wanted! His love conquers us, love motivates our service for Him.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Lloyd Dodson, Vice President of Corporate Projects and Human Resources, who guides Moody's efforts in the recruitment and development of faculty and staff, and also assists with organizational development and strategic planning.

Pontius Pilate, Our Mirror

Henry David Thoreau commented, “We are double-edged blades, and every time we whet our virtue the return stroke straps our vice.” This was true of Pilate, who failed at the crucial moment of his life.

The chief priests must have been desperate to go to a Roman prefect so early in the morning, indicating they knew their work needed to be secret. This continues the reversal of creation attempted by forces of darkness.

John includes the detail that they dared not enter Pilate’s residence for fear of defilement (v. 28), an absurd irony given that they are attempting to destroy the very fulfillment of Old Testament law.

We expect Rome to clean up the confusion. They had the greatest legal system in the ancient world. But the priests’ shameful aversion subverted the Roman legal system. The priests cannot even make a direct accusation (v. 30). Pilate

falls back on Rome’s strengths (v. 31)—no need to leave too strong a “footprint” in Jerusalem. But Roman virtues are now clearly vice, and now if Pilate enforces Roman justice and frees Jesus, he could pay the price of his political future.

My kingdom is not
of this world.

John 18:36

Pilate’s infamous utterance, “What is truth?” encapsulates all that has gone wrong. The priests think they are doing their people a favor by eliminating Jesus. Pilate just wants to smooth over the problem and has no idea

how to solve it. That’s just the point. Separated from the “light of the world” (8:12) they stumble blindly in the darkness, for “it was night” (13:30). In light of this, Jesus’ claim that “My kingdom is not of this world” is not mystic fluff but starkly obvious reality. If this is what the world does, how could His kingdom originate here? And yet in spite of all the world’s twisted indifference, it can’t help but give glory to God: “You say that I am a king” (v. 37).

Apply the Word

Pilate’s failure is our failure. His whole life should have prepared him for that moment, and in the end it proved worthless. He had the strongest army in the world behind him, yet that could not make him wise or give him courage. This world, with its wealth and its power, can never meet our deepest needs. Only Jesus has the power to remake creation.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Pat Friedline, who serves in Career Development. He assists Moody graduates in finding ministry roles that match their individual passions and skills. May God use his guidance to lead Moody alumni to the ministries He has for them.

Fierce Idols of Death

The Romans built a large empire by tolerating most local customs and faiths in areas they controlled. But the Romans thought that their empire could not tolerate any challenge to their sovereignty, lest the whole glorious machine come to a grinding halt. They devised slow deaths for any who attempted to claim authority from Rome. Tolerance has its limits, after all.

Pilate was confused. He wanted to end this annoyance, but he knew he had no real basis for charging Jesus. In verse 10 he tried to muster up all of his authority and ended up with the emptiest of boasts. From 18:28 on Pilate was confused, blind, and powerless. He couldn't make the Jews go away. He couldn't make Jesus go away, and Christ's words in verse 11 finally seem to convince him to release Him. Then the priests pull out the trump card of "sovereignty," and touch on something Pilate truly did believe in. In addition, Pilate's career depended

on defusing any unrest. Gods must be obeyed, and Pilate obeys his.

Yet throughout this nightmare we see hints that the world truly is powerless to defeat God's strong purpose. Even in killing Him, the Jews saw that Christ is proclaimed King, and are powerless to stop it (vv. 19–21). In the simple matter of dividing His clothes, the Romans fulfill Scripture (v. 24). Hope still resides.

Pilate answered,
"What I have
written, I have
written."

John 19:22

John alone records the touching exchange between Jesus and Mary (vv. 25–27). Pilate says, "Behold the Man!" (v. 5, NKJV). Indeed, Jesus shows us who we should have been in the Garden, and the contrast between Him and Pilate couldn't be more stark. Pilate suffers mild annoyance and can think only of his place in Rome's grand order. Christ suffers excruciating pain, yet John's first recorded words from Him on the cross have Jesus showing tender compassion for His mother.

Apply the Word

Our hearts know the fierceness with which we defend our idols of power, and the lengths to which our fears will drive us. These are the powers of darkness Christ conquered. "Behold the Man" whose kingdom, power, and glory are not of this world. "Behold the Man" who shows compassion while suffering. "Behold the Man" who died so that you are able to live.

Pray with Us

Moody Aviation in Spokane, Washington, has trained over half of today's missionary pilots. Thank the Lord for the important ministry of Flight Instructors Jay Bigley, James Conrad, and Ian Kerrigan. May God give them continued safety and protection.

Secretly, All Things for Good

In Coleridge’s epic poem *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the sailor finds himself marooned at sea after the thoughtless killing of an albatross. “Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink,” the poem intones. Water will serve as the instrument of his death. But after his repentance the heavens open, and “living water” rains upon him. This idea of water as both harbinger of death and means of life resonate with our text today.

And Jesus . . . so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst.”

John 19:28

There is great irony in Jesus’ words, “I thirst” (v. 28). Water has been a frequent theme for Jesus, and we recall that creation itself came through water (Gen. 1:2). The new birth comes through “water and the spirit” (3:5). With the woman at the well Jesus proclaimed that He had unending reserves of living water, and He repeated this during the Feast of Tabernacles. John tells us that this fulfills Scripture, and some have

suggested Psalm 69:21 as the text he has in mind.

The mocking, the crown of thorns, and the agony may seem like the “living water” has failed, His streams run dry after all. His first miracle made good wine for others; now in His great need He gets only sour wine. Once again, events seem out of joint. Scripture is fulfilled in that Christ must come to place where all of us are, to save us: a place of shame, looming death, and that most basic of human needs,

thirst. With this, now the “suffering servant’s” work is truly finished (v. 30).

John includes details to make sure we understand that Jesus has died (vv. 33–37). The detail of “blood and water” confirms this by a variety of medical theories. Once again, God uses this evil to reassure us. All things are working together for good (Rom. 8:28).

Apply the Word

Joseph of Arimathea offers the first act of direct kindness to Jesus we’ve seen in many chapters. Suddenly we are back in a garden, in a new tomb. It’s nearly the Sabbath, the last of the days of creation in Genesis 1. We sit upright in anticipation. The new creation long promised is nearly here. We wait expectantly for Easter to arrive.

Pray with Us

Ask the Lord to watch over Public Safety—George Birkenstock, David Bloch, George Brown, and Steven Cascio—as they help secure Moody’s Chicago facilities, ensuring a safe environment for staff and students.

A World Turned Right Side Up

G. K. Chesterton wrote, “If a man saw the world upside down, with the trees hanging downwards as in a pool . . . It would make vivid the Scripture which says that God has hanged the world upon nothing.” What if the impossible came true? Today in our reading it does. Christ’s resurrection turns everything upside down, but in so doing He begins the process of making everything right side up.

Throughout this chapter John tells us concrete details that force us to remember that he did not write fairy tales. He includes many specific details that let us know he was there as a witness. Lazarus needed someone else to remove his grave-clothes (11:44), and reentered a world where death still reigned (12:10). Jesus leaves His behind, and gives a new world where death itself stands defeated.

I am ascending
to my Father and
your Father, to
my God and
your God.

John 20:17

Later He appeared to the disciples, and He came through a solid wall to do it (vv. 19–20). Who can blame Thomas for doubting? The whole thing seems absurdly unreal. But even “doubting Thomas” was convinced by the great Reality, for clearly Jesus was no ghost.

Perhaps Christ’s most stunning appearance was to Mary. Here we have “the gardener,” the New Adam, recognized when He speaks her name. Mary is not deterred by the instruction not to grasp at Jesus. She is transformed

by the startling intimacy of His words. Christ’s resurrection creates not just the possibility but also the reality of our relationship to God being like the relationship of the Father and the Son. His victory was for all of us. At chapter’s end, John says that his words are not just for him or his time alone, but for us as well (vv. 30–31).

Apply the Word

Twice in this chapter (vv. 19, 26) Christ tells us that resurrection means “Peace.” Biblically, peace denotes not just absence of conflict, but wholeness, fullness, and depth. What we broke, Christ restores. As we celebrate His resurrection, we should rejoice in peace with God and seek peace with others.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Public Safety, please thank the Lord for Ryan Croniser, Thomas Jackson, Timothy Kirkpatrick, Brian Stoffer, and Jerry Zeldenrust. May these men be rewarded by the Father for the valuable service they provide to Moody each day.

All Things Made New

J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy includes many exciting battles. But for many fans of the book, favorite scenes involve not action but fellowship between the characters. This reflects Tolkien's goal, for the action was the process used to restore and renew a world. Perhaps this is why the book continues past the destruction of the "One Ring" in Mount Doom. The story isn't over until the characters return home.

Verses 24 through 31 form the dramatic climax of John's Gospel, but John continues. He has one more scene to describe that shows us that Christ's kingdom is for the here and now, and that the story isn't over until a world is restored.

John included several unusually specific details, such as Peter's outer garment (v. 7), their distance from land (v. 8), and the amount of fish (v. 11). This is evidence that we might "know his testimony is true" (v. 24).

Jesus said to them,
"Come and have
breakfast."

John 21:12

Peter may have been scared to face Jesus again, but his love for Christ overshadowed his fear. Many of us are so familiar with Peter's three-fold affirmation that we might miss the detail of the fire. His denials took place over a fire (18:18). As one commentator suggests, "Not even the resurrection could rid [Peter] of that memory." With Jesus no doubt deliberately choosing this particular location, He gave Peter back not only restoration and his vocation but also the simple smells and joys of a fire.

Understandably Peter might have been rattled at Christ hinting at his death, which likely took place in A.D. 64. As usual, Peter's lovable impetuosity cuts both ways. "Lord, what about [John]?" (v. 21). Christ freed Peter from the burden of enslaving himself to the future, and freed him from the need to control others.

Apply the Word

Jesus issued the invitation, "Come and have breakfast." He wants our fellowship more than our activity. He is sufficient, and He wants us to share in that joy. The last meal they shared ended in His betrayal. Now Jesus restores and renews that experience too. He invites us to join this fellowship—embrace the joy of His sufficiency today!

Pray with Us

Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's President, requests your prayers as Moody equips people around the globe, across cultures and generations with the truth of God's Word using new technology in an agile and innovative community.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

Cross continues to define the Christian journey for many people today. We cannot grasp the power of the resurrection, or the hope that it brings, without wrestling with the reality of suffering.

Jesus said to His disciples—and to us—“In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). We may not experience the same kind of persecution Christians in Sudan go through, but we are not immune to suffering and hardships. I remember in my life two years ago, a beloved family member was released from a long stint in the hospital just a few days before Easter. The condition had been difficult to diagnose and even more difficult to treat. We didn’t know what the prognosis would be. We felt helpless. During the Easter morning service I sat with my loved one and felt a small portion of the power of resurrection. I sang the hymns with great fervency that day, and I marveled at the power of God to restore us to health. This healing is a foretaste of the day when God will remove all our sins, sorrows, and sickness forever. That

day in church, Jesus’ words at the end of John 16:33 came to me with renewed vividness: “But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

The theme of our study this month is the new creation that is possible through the resurrection of Jesus. We can be preparing for Easter in three ways. First, we can pay attention to the suffering that our brothers and sisters in Christ experience. We can acknowledge that life here on earth is not always easy or convenient, and following Jesus can be costly.

Second, we can pay attention to the glimpses of resurrection and hope that God brings into our lives. We can rejoice in the healing of loved ones, and the reconciliation between enemies. Third, we can pay attention to the story of God’s new creation in Scripture. The Word who created the world now has given us His Word that re-creates our hearts so that we can know and love God. What a miracle!

As we journey together, we are grateful that so many of you choose to partner with *Today in the Word* to study Scripture. Our prayer is that as we pay attention to the Word, we will be shaped and formed in such a way that we can see the hope of God in our world. Easter Sunday will soon be here—He is risen! May our study of the Bible this month prepare us to rejoice in God’s new creation and in the power of His Resurrection.

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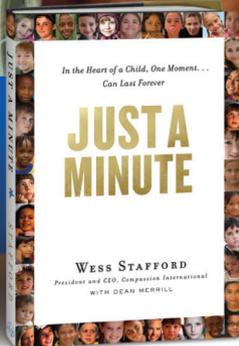
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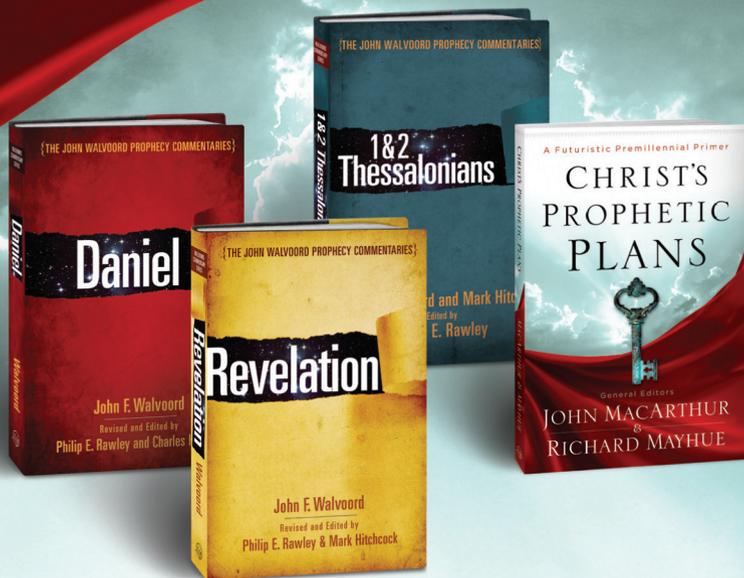


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