

**A Time to Pause and Reflect**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 10**  
**September 1, 2013**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the tenth chapter of John. We're going to be looking at the last three verses, John 10:40-42. It is a passage that really is one that would be easily skipped over. Now let me say something, I had promised this week it would be a Part II of last week's sermon, and I was going to talk about the implications of the Trinity. So I just want to be clear on this, I did pray over that, considered that, and felt like it was time to move on, because we are going to come back to the Trinity more and more in this book, and the implications are worked out in successive passages. So I realized I was going to be preaching a later passage today if I had done that. So I felt like, let's keep it going verse-by-verse through the book of John. So anyway, just to be clear. What was going to be Part II is not, it is a new sermon on John 10:40-42. You might want to make a note. Really we're going to look at 29-42, though the paragraph is 40-42, because I think that there is a reason to tie those together, so John 10:39-42.

The title of the message is 'A Time to Pause and Reflect'. This passage, as I said, is very brief, and at first glance seems, you know, what is the significance of it? And that is always a good question to ask as you come to the Bible, and any passage, is: *Why did God put it here? Why did the Lord inspire these words to be written?* Some things are more obvious, just from a cursory examination than others, but there is no word of God that is there by accident. No word of God is an afterthought or a misstatement. There is a purpose and a reason for every passage of Scripture. So we want to look at this one today with that in mind. Sometimes those that we esteem less are those that might bless us most. God has a way of surprising us, doesn't He? So we pray that He will do something of that this morning as we look at this passage. Now I want to begin reading in Verse 39 and we're going to read through Verse 42. Before I read Verse 39 let me just remind you of the general context of what's been going on.

Jesus had, in the first part of John 10, been preaching or teaching, continuing His ministry at the *Feast of Tabernacles*. That is October/November, the feast that the Jews celebrated to commemorate their time of the wilderness wandering when God dwelt with them in a pillar of fire, and a pillar of cloud for those 40 some odd years. So they celebrate that once a year. Like I said, it was October/November, depending on the particular year. Then John immediately skips ahead, in the first 21 verses of John 10, I mean Verse 22, he skips ahead to the *Feast of Dedication*.

The next thing he records is a couple of months later. That is December, Hanukkah, actually, is the *Feast of Dedication*, the feast which commemorates the rededication of the temple. The temple had been desecrated at a point in time under the Greek rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, and after a revolt of the Jewish people to take back the house of God for the people of God, they defeated Antiochus, they rededicated the temple, and were able to be liberated from Greek rule for a number of years. The *Feast of Dedication* was about that.

And now what we have, we had Jesus then talking to the Jews, and the Jewish leaders in the temple courts, and they did what they are becoming more and more ready to do. Rather than listen and carefully weigh His words, they reacted in anger and rage, and were ready to kill Him. They picked up stones to stone Him to death. He continued to dialogue with them, offering basically more truth to them that they might repent and believe. Then we pick up in Verse 39 with the second response of the people, the Jews there in Jerusalem.

***John 10:39-42 ~ Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp. 40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 Many believed in Him there.***

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, as we bow before You this morning, we acknowledge that Your word is life, that this is more precious to us than the bread that we eat. It is that which will last forever. We pray that You might open the eyes of our hearts to understand it even now, by Your Spirit You might grant us light in Your word. For the glory of Your Son, we pray in His name, Amen.*

Now when you come to a passage of Scripture, one of the things that you also want to do is carefully observe the text, and I want us to actually organize our outline this morning around questions of observation which we will use from time to time in outlining a passage, and that is the five W's and an H. We're going to use all five W's and an H, so you are going to be looking for *What? When? Where? How? Who?* and *Why?* Because we want to look at exactly what is being said. When it is happening, where it is happening, why it is happening, so that we can understand what the Lord is trying to say to us, what this passage, the claim that it makes on our lives.

## 1) What?

Now, let's start with the first W, *What?* What is the issue, the main subject matter of this text? I alluded to this when I gave you the title 'A Time to Pause and Reflect'. These three verses form something of a pause, something of an interlude, a brief respite from the intense action that has been going on. We have been for a number of chapters in periods of really stiff opposition and conflict. More than once the crowd has been trying to seize Him. Actually, a number of times the Jews have been wanting to grab Jesus, or stone Him. In John 8:59 they picked up stones to stone Him, and here again in John 10, they picked up stones to stone Him. Then as the verse we just read, after they had picked up the stones, and He basically silenced them with the questions He asked them, then they are ready to rush at Him and grab Him, but supernaturally He eludes their grasp. It's been this intense back and forth. Jesus revealing His glory and the opposition, the surprising, stunning opposition, intensified, which shows us again one of the things we are seeing in John's Gospel is: People's problem isn't just that they need truth. It is that, but that's not merely enough because sometimes the revelation of truth without a heart change results in more opposition and more defiance. We see this in this passage as well.

But what we have in these three verses is kind of a surprise. The fact that it is here, to me is initially surprising. Why didn't He just go to the next event? He did that earlier. We went from Jesus teaching in the temple to then Jesus then healing the blind man. Basically, most of the things in John's Gospel are tied together by this phrase '*after these things*'. He'll tell you something and then He says, "After these things," next event. "After these things," next discourse of Jesus. "After these things," next event. But here you have, not an '*after these things*'. Here you have exactly where Jesus goes and what He's doing for a period of time summarized. I mean, this is several months summarized in a few verses because you really have, we said it is in December that they were trying to grab Him again at the *Feast of Dedication*. That is 90 days away from the crucifixion basically, March/April, Passover. So all those events are summarized here in these three verses, all that time. What is it that God is trying to tell us in this passage?

Well, this respite sets the stage, I think, for His last great miracle, the raising of Lazarus, but it does more than that, it really frames that last great sign that we are going to look at in Chapter 11. It forms a frame around it. You know, a good frame beautifies a picture by helping your eyes focus on it, and I think this text does some of that. It helps provide a pause and a frame around the glory of Christ that is about

to be unveiled in John 11. It invites the reader to pause and reflect on what has gone before. That is the *What?*

## 2) When?

A second question, the second W we want to look at is *When?* I said this is after the *Feast of Dedication*, and it is before the cross, within the last 90 days of Jesus' earthly ministry. The cross is beginning to cast its shadow upon the life and ministry of Jesus. He is beginning to move into the shadow of the cross. It is looming there on the horizon. As He nears the end of His ministry, we read that He goes back to the first place. Look at Verse 40:

***John 10:40 ~ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing,...***

In the Greek, it really has the force of where John was at first baptizing. It is a little more emphatic, the place where he was *at first* baptizing. What I think it is intended to do, for the reader of John's Gospel, remember this is John the Baptist and John the Apostle. John the Apostle is the author of John's Gospel. He is talking about John the Baptist, another man who is now at this point of this event here, is dead. His ministry is over, he's been put to death. But John the Apostle brings to mind again where John was first baptizing, and as he does that, I think he does it for a particular purpose. This is a time to pause and reflect, where did Jesus' ministry begin? It began where John was first baptizing. That is where we first meet Jesus in the Gospel of John. That is where we first meet Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. Matthew and Luke give some brief birth narratives, but basically they move right ahead from birth to the ministry of John the Baptist. That is the beginning of Jesus' ministry because Jesus ministry begins when He is baptized by John the Baptist.

So what John is doing here, with his carefully chosen words here, is he is reminding us Jesus, when He retreats, this strategic retreat from Judea, He goes to the place where He first began His ministry. He has gone full circle. You know there is something powerful about that from a literary perspective, and I think it is one of those things that when you read it you don't necessarily notice it. It is kind of like you watch a good movie or you read a good novel, think about how many times a novel or a movie that is well-written will start in a certain place, presents the problem, and the resolution will happen at that same place. You come back full circle and now everything is resolved, worked out. There is a power to that, and I think what John is doing is doing some of that here. He is reminding us, he is

telling us what actually happened. Jesus actually went to this place, but he is very selective in what he tells us.

Remember, John is very selective. He doesn't tell us about as many miracles as the other apostles do. He is very focused, and everything he presents is about painting a particular portrait of Jesus as the eternal Son of God. So when he pulls things together, it is the idea of, "Wow, Jesus is back where it all began." At the end of His ministry, He is back where it all began. It is a time to reflect and to pause. We mentioned that next Sunday is our 30th anniversary celebration. August, 1983, God started this church. It is a good time for us to step back, meet the people that since the Lord has taken other places, as they come back to share with us, "What was God doing then? Tell us about it." That's what we are going to do in the afternoon. One clarification, by the way, Mitchell did a great job on the announcement. There was a lot of material to cover, but one thing that I want to make clear is the children, if your children go to children's church, what we mean is, you are to take them to children's church before you come into worship. That is the difference. You may have understood that, but just to be clear so that will free up about 25 or 30 seats right there. With 30 seats up here, these really prime time seats over here, 13 seats over here, then you are already up to about 60-70 seats. Anyway, it all works out, and if we all scrunch together. One more thing, if you park a mile away, you don't have to walk. There will be a shuttle for the overflow parking.

All right, now, it is a time of reflection. That 30th anniversary thing we'll be thinking back on where God has brought them. I'm sure that is going to be especially meaningful to those first members, our founding pastor, David Pickard. It is going to be special to him to think back on what God was doing, and now where is he in his life, and in his ministry, and what God has done through him. That is a good thing. There are things like that. In fact, it is interesting, I just realized this morning again, this is the first Sunday in September, 2013. The first Sunday in September, 1993 was my first time I stood in this pulpit as the pastor. So 20 years ago, not today, but the first Sunday in September. You reflect on those, I'd known that has been coming up, it just hadn't hit me that September is here. You reflect on, "How far have we come? How much progress have we made?" There is some of that that John is inviting us to consider in this sort of nostalgic reference. When this happens, what is going on, He goes back to the place when, where it all began. Now, that is *What?* and *When?*

### 3) Where?

The third thing, *Where?* It leads us right into the *Where?* because that is clearly emphasized in the passage. Look what he says, *...He went away again...* And then he describes where He went away again, *...Beyond the Jordan...* But he doesn't stop just merely with that. *...He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing...* I think the language really emphasizes the place. *...He went away beyond the Jordan...* That is significant especially to any Jewish reader because the Jordan River has tremendous significance in the life of God's people. Remember it was crossing over the Jordan into Palestine, into Canaan, when you came over the Jordan, you were in the Promised Land.

Now Jesus goes over the Jordan, out of the Promised Land. He went to Trans-Jordan, the other side of the Jordan. Then it is emphasized even more when he says: *...to the place where John was first baptizing...* He could have just said, "He went away again, beyond the Jordan, to where John was baptizing." But he doesn't say to where John was baptizing, he says *...to the place...* Do you see how that word kind of focuses your attention even more, it takes root there. *...to the place where John was first baptizing...* And then he says, *...and He was staying there.* He wants you to see, to put your finger on the map, "That's where He is. There!" And it is emphasized even more with the repetition. *...He was staying there.* Look at the end of Verse 40:

***John 10:40-42 ~ He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 Many believed in Him there.***

You see that? That second '*there*'. Many believed in Him, we would have known they were there, but he adds the '*there*' for a reason. In fact, in the Greek, the word order is always emphatic. It is like other languages where there is more flexibility in word order than in English. You can move words all around and the reader just naturally understands how it fits together. You can use word order then for emphasis. First and last words are more emphatic. The word '*there*' is the last word in Verse 40 in English and in Greek, and it is the last word in Verse 42 in English and in Greek. '*There*', that's emphatic.

So where they are, he is drawing a contrast as you pause and reflect, and you consider this time versus that time. What is happening today versus what was happening then? That is what we were talking about with *When?* Now we are talking about *Where?* Pause and reflect, compare this place with that place. This place with that place. This place, there beyond the Jordan. Where had He just come from? From Jerusalem, from the temple, from the Portico of Solomon. That is the

porch around the temple, in the temple complex. So He's gone from the temple to the wilderness. He has gone from Jerusalem to the heart and the center of God's Promised Land, the mountain of Zion, the mountain of God. He has gone from that spot to completely outside the Promised Land, and this John wants us to see. Compare and contrast the places. That is *Where?*

#### 4) How?

Now the fourth point is *How?* We move to the H. We looked at *What? When? Where?* Now *How?* He contrasts the places, not because he just wants you think about, "Wow, that is interesting on the map." He wants you to think about where they are and *how* the various groups at the different places responded. That is the real contrast. One of the major contrasts in the passage is how they responded in Jerusalem versus how they responded in Trans-Jordan. How they responded in the Promised Land on Mount Zion to Jesus versus how they responded in the desert, outside the land flowing with milk and honey. How did they respond out there to Jesus? He makes this even more clear in the way that the text unfolds.

In fact, this is something where the translators, in my view, have messed it up a little bit here. I will try to explain it. I am reading out of the New American Standard, and I do so because this is one of the areas where the New American Standard does a better job than the other translations do. Even though the ESV is excellent, the King James is excellent, but the NAS gets it better at this particular point, and that is they are very sensitive to try not to remove words, or add words. Although, I have to confess, that in the most recent version of the NASB that I'm reading right now, they've joined the others in making a mistake. I'll try to explain it. It's not a major discouragement, and it's not a huge thing, but it is a minor thing that is somewhat important.

In my library I read out of the NASB, but I have the 1977 version I read out of, and they got it right. In '95 they messed it up, but the ESV, King James, and the NIV had already gotten it wrong in this area. Let me explain what I'm talking about, the word '*and*', it's very small, it seems insignificant. The conjunction '*and*' occurs six times in the Greek text between Verse 39 and Verse 40. Six times the word '*and*'. What happens though, is in the ESV, and the King James, they translate one of those '*ands*' as '*but*' in Verse 39. It says in Verse 39:

***John 10:39 (NASB) ~ Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.***

That is what it says in the Greek, but the King James, the ESV say, ...*but He eluded their grasp*. But it is not the word 'but'. There are a couple of words it can be translated with that conjunction, but that is not there. This is the word 'and'. Then it says in Verse 40:

***John 10:40 ~ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.***

This is where the NASB most recently dropped what they had in 1977 because in the Greek it reads like this:

***John 10:41 ~ And many came to Him.***

It starts off the sentence with the conjunction 'and'. That doesn't sound so good in English, does it? We're taught when we're writing not to put 'And' at the beginning of a sentence. Well, it is there in the Greek and I wish it was here in the English.

***John 10:41 ~ And many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."***

Verse 42 also should have an 'and' in front of it.

***John 10:42 ~ And many believed in Him there.***

Now why all this focus on the conjunction? Well, it is a Hebraism that John is using here. It is a Hebraic form of expression that you will find in the Old Testament often, and that is the repeated 'and' in a grammatical construction tends to tie together a series of events very tightly. Say there are seven main verbs between Verse 39 and Verse 42. Seven main verbs, each of them joined with the conjunction 'and', and basically it should read like this: They were seeking to seize Him, *and* He eluded their grasp, *and* He went away, *and* He was staying there, *and* many came to Him *and* they were saying, *and* many believed in Him there. In the Old Testament, what happens is it tends to bring those seven main verbs together. I left out some of the extraneous, I mean not insignificant, but the other adverbial clauses and stuff that were going on there so you could hear the main verbs. The 'ands' connect the main verbs so that you see the first verb beside the seventh verb. So what do you do? This is why I read Verse 39 because when you see that, that's why you see the first verb, "They were seeking again to seize Him," and you see it right beside, "Many believed in Him." Do you see that? That is the contrast.

In Jerusalem, Jesus reveals His glory and they are trying to kill Him. Over in the wilderness when Jesus is there, we don't even have what He said to them, but they are believing in Him. This is the contrast that is being made here and the *How?* How they received Him, that is the issue. *Where?* and then *How?* In Jerusalem they rejected Him, they hated Him, they tried to murder Him. In Trans-Jordan they believed in Him. This is surely surprising when you really step back from it and lay aside our own knowledge of the fact that we know, from reading our Bibles, that the Pharisees are bad guys, right? We know the scribes are bad guys. We know the temple priests are bad guys basically throughout the New Testament, but if you forget that for a moment, and you go back and you read it freshly, and you think, "How would a 1st Century Jew have read this? And without having known the whole picture, how would you look at this?" What you would say is: "Where would Jesus, where would you expect Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, to be accepted?" Jerusalem! The temple! The people who who've been reading their Bibles—the scribes, the Pharisees. They are the ones that should. They've been reading the book, the Old Testament that describes Him from A to Z. All the hope of Messiah, layered chapter-after-chapter, verse-after-verse through the Old Testament, they are poring over the Scriptures. He walks in, they should be, "There He is!" but they are the ones that are not hearing Him. They are similarly rejecting Him.

It is the less learned, the less schooled, who are actually more open, and who are seeing and saying, "Yes." That is exactly what they are saying here. They are saying, "Everything John said about Him was true," they just have John's testimony, and they take John's testimony and they say, "Look what John said. Everything John said about this Man is true." This is what those in Trans-Jordan do. That is completely counterintuitive, and I would suggest it is still difficult for us to realize how much we are affected by just our expectations. This means that the best soil in Jesus' ministry was not the soil that we would have thought was the best soil, it was the soil which we would have thought was the least likely. It wasn't the Jews of Jerusalem, it wasn't those who were schooled in the Scriptures and wise in the eyes of the people. It doesn't mean that there weren't, there were people that were schooled in the Scriptures outside, but it wasn't those that everybody expected. We're reminded of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Listen to what Paul says as He writes to the Corinthian Christians:

***1 Corinthians 1:26-31 ~ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the***

*wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God.*

God chooses the least likely, and we ought to remember that. We ought not to expect that because somebody appears likely to us, because they're like us that surely they'll become a believer, or they seem to be reasonably intelligent and I think they'll reason and listen here. It's not outward appearances. It's the work of God in the heart. Here you had one group that was more learned. Surely they'll recognize Him, but in reality they did not. They wouldn't even give Him a hearing, not a fair hearing. They had already decided that He is not going to be worshiped or accepted as Messiah before He even begins to speak.

I think that's something that you see play out in a number of different ways. Those who you think would be the most rational, the most intellectually honest, people who just want truth, are actually often times the people who are least interested in the truth. I can give you an example. It would be why is it that intellectual atheists, people who have studied and seem to be on a relentless pursuit of truth, why is it that they get so angry when you try to discuss creation with them? I mean if they really are in a relentless pursuit of the truth, why can't they have a reasonable, calm conversation about it? If they really want the truth, don't they want to just look at more evidence on either side of the issue? Why is it that they are so quick to resort to ad hominem attacks, which means personal attacks? *You're just an idiot, therefore, I'm not going to listen to anything you have to say.* Is that the way a scientist approaches an issue? I thought you're supposed to consider all the data and form conclusions from all of that data. That's what you see.

In fact, I haven't watched all of this video, but I've seen parts of it by Ray Comfort: *Evolution vs. God*, a recent production, and in it the snippets that I've seen, he basically begins the video with this statement by Richard Dawkins, the highly revered atheist, who says, "Faith is the great cop out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence." He says the Christians are the ones who won't think and evaluate evidence. But what Comfort does is he goes to all these atheistic evolutionists and he presents evidence to them, and they're the ones who basically admit throughout the video—they don't say it exactly this way, but basically they've made a preconceived determination to believe in evolution.

In fact, one time one of the ladies with a PhD beside her name that's been teaching for a long time, he's like, "Let's talk about this. Can you give me one example of a link between the kinds of different animals? Is there one link between all the different kinds that have been? Surely there would be one." She said, "No, there are no missing links." She's trying to evade everything, and basically she ends up saying, "Well, I guess to accept evolution you have to have a lot of imagination." Here's this person saying, "You Christians are the idiots who just imagine there's a God." No, they're imagining that there isn't one when it's everywhere before them. So the reality is don't be surprised by that. That's what we see here. Don't be surprised that the people you think would be reasonable and rational aren't. That's actually the normal human condition really of all people. Intellect doesn't make you more or less likely to be irrational. Fallen sin and pride makes you guaranteed to be irrational unless God opens your heart. I think it's just the intellect and those things that sometimes puff people up a little more and make it a little harder for them.

Now, not just in the area of evolution, but also people that are religious. I mean, sometimes very religious people are the hardest to reason with over the scriptures. You have the hardest time having a conversation over the scriptures with a Jehovah's Witness or with a Mormon. *Let's talk about this. Let's look at this honestly. You say you believe this. Well, let's look at what the scripture says.* They'll be the people that don't sit down with you and really work through it. They say they know their Bible but they know it the way the Scribes and the Pharisees did. They're protecting their agenda. So what it says is I think there are a few things, a few implications that we can draw from this regarding evangelism and our own attempts to share the gospel with others around us.

Remember that our targets for evangelism we ought to be constantly reminding ourselves that we're not good assessors of who the most likely to believe is. So be ready to think outside the lines, and if you're going to err, err on the side of the most unlikely rather than the most likely. But I mean we're to preach the gospel to every creature, so don't get hung up on trying. "You look too sane and rational. I'm not going to talk to you." No, I don't mean that, but be willing—it's possible that your Muslim neighbor is much more open to a reasonable conversation about the things of God than your Catholic neighbor. Amen. So that says something about our targets in evangelism. Now, our manner in evangelism, it's interesting to note that he says what they said about John.

***John 10:41 ~ Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."***

These guys Trans-Jordan had been rationally reasoning, reflecting on what John said, and what they'd seen to be true of Jesus in His words and His deeds, and so they've connected, there's this sense in which they're just looking, they've seen things in a calm, rational way. Well, I think what that says in evangelism is be confident, be calm, and be reasoned. And when you share the truth, just share the truth. We don't have to be uptight. We expect that they may just think we're nuts because of their own predispositions, and it's possible they're going to hit us with things we don't have answers for. It seems to me that this happens. It happens to me all the time, too. You talk to somebody and you think, "I wish they hadn't asked that question. That's not one I've worked on. If you would ask me any of these last seven right here," no, they don't do that. Well, the Lord just does that to humble us, and when that happens just be humble. "Lord, thank You for reminding me that I'm not in control here, You are, and it's the power of Your gospel. Help me to respond in a way that's kind, confident, calm," even as I'm trying not to be unsettled, because Satan's at work to stop the propagation of the gospel. Okay? So be calm, confident, and just reason.

Then finally: the method. I think it's so powerful in really trying to reason with people about the things of God to show them the unity of the prophet's prediction to the person and work of Christ. That's what happens here. They heard what John had to say, they looked at Jesus, and they connected the dots. That's really the way that much of evangelism should be done is to show that look at not just what John said, but look at the whole Old Testament and look at how it perfectly describes Jesus of Nazareth. And when you look at the beautiful, extraordinary, infinite, complexity, and yet beautiful, intricate unity of the Bible, just look at it openly and you confidently challenge somebody, "Just read your Bible and look at what it says about the Messiah to come, and then read the New Testament and see it's Him. And these things were written, all of these prophecies were written between 500 and 1,500 years before Jesus was born. What are the odds of that?" It just unfolds before the person whose heart has been opened, who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

We don't have to be intense. We just lay it out. We should be concerned. I'm not saying we're not concerned. We should be concerned and impassioned in that sense, but not defensive. As Spurgeon said, "Just let the beast loose, the Word of God." He was asked one time, "How do you defend the word of God against skeptics?" In the late 19th century, rationalism had taken a strong foothold in England, and he's basically asking Spurgeon, "Dr. Spurgeon, you have all these foolish..." this wasn't exactly how they said it, of course, but this is the

assumption. “You have all these people that come to listen to you preach, and thousands come to listen to you preach, and you bring out this Bible, this ancient Book that’s full of contradictions.” These are the assumptions people have. “It’s full of contradictions. How do you defend the Bible against its critics? When people really come looking honestly at it, I mean, how do you defend it?”

Spurgeon said, “Defend the Bible? I never need to defend the Bible. If you had a pet lion and somebody started messing with your pet lion, would you have to defend it? No, you’d just let the beast loose.” So that’s what you do with the Scripture. You just let it loose. Just tell them what the word of God says. In their hearts, they already know it’s true anyway. So let it loose. That is the H (How?) Now we come to the fourth W which is the fifth point:

## 5) Who?

What happens in the passage is surprising when you really think about it, that I mentioned that Jesus has gone back to where He first began His ministry, so you would expect reflection on Jesus’ ministry. Well, He’s back where He began, but what happens is you have one quotation of something being said by people and you’re told it’s said repeatedly. Here again the New American Standard is good the way it translates:

***John 10:41 ~ Many came to Him and were saying,...***

It doesn’t read, “Many came to Him and said...” In the Greek, the idea is an ongoing event in past time. It’s ...***were saying***... the imperfect tense. That is right. Many came to Him, not just a few. Many came to Him, and they were saying... And what were they saying? What were all these people coming and saying? Well, they were saying:

***John 10:41 ~ ...“While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.”***

What’s surprising is what they were saying was about John, and why did John the apostle include this in his message about Jesus? Well, because of what they said about John. They said, “John performed no sign, yet everything he said about this man was true.” What we have here is basically the people—now remember, it’s not really that surprising that they would say this if you stop and think about it. They are from the area where John spent months and months at the beginning of his own ministry, where Jesus then comes. After he’s been preaching in the wilderness baptizing, preparing for the Lord, Jesus comes, is baptized there, but the people in

that region, this is where John's main base of operations was. They heard him preach, so it's natural that they would think about John. It's more surprising that John the apostle would include it in his gospel, but he has perfect reason, of course.

What he does is he shows that the people that had heard John, they're basically evaluating John in his prophetic ministry. Was he really a prophet? The verdict is yes, he was even though he did no sign. Now, this was actually a great handicap. In the first century Judaism, they expected that a prophet would be able to do signs, but John did no miracles, therefore the assumption would have been he was not a prophet of God, but they realized no, he was a prophet of God, because everything he said about Jesus was true. And here again in the word order in the Greek, in what you have, it comes out pretty good in the English in the NAS.

*While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about Him was true.* You see 'no sign' right beside 'yet everything'. In the Greek it actually says, "While John performed a sign none, everything whatsoever he said about Jesus was true." That's really the force in the original. "He performed a sign none, everything..." There's no *yet* in between. It's *none* and *everything* side by side. So how many signs did he do? None. How good was what he said? Everything was good about what he said, because why? He was talking about Jesus. And that comes to the point of *Why?* which is the final point in our W's and an H.

## 6) Why?

The question, "Why?" really is the focus on John's ministry. Well, it has been a lot in his gospel, and I think the reason he goes back to it is to set the stage for the final miracle to frame it. He was esteemed by a number of Jewish people, by many Jews throughout the first century, even at the time of John's gospel being written. Remember the events happened around 30 A.D., the events that are being described. John writes this book down 85 or 90 A.D., 55 or 60 years later. At that point in time, most Jews have rejected Jesus' messiahship, but surprisingly a number of them still have great esteem for John the Baptist, and this is the reason John the Gospel-writer is coming back to him again and again, because he's like, "How can you esteem John and not esteem Jesus? That is an impossible situation. How can you say John was a prophet and then not accept what he said?"

John's basic message was, "It's not me, it's Him. It's the One who comes behind me. It is Jesus," and so he's bringing this together, and then even by saying no sign, he's reminding his readers, "Look at the signs I've already shown you," and he's framing the One who's about to come. "John was a great prophet, but he was

not the Son of God. He did no signs. Look at what Jesus is about to do. He's about to raise the dead."

So he frames it that way and what he does is he focuses us on all that John has said, and I think one of the applications I want to make at this last point is what is the measure or the test of Christian ministry, of any kind of Christian ministry that names the gospel as part of what it's trying to do? Whether it's say a church ministry or a para-church ministry, what is the measure of that ministry? I think you see it in what John the apostle is inviting us to see about John the Baptist. You see it as you consider what he says about John the Baptist. And I think why he puts him in the spotlight is it's kind of like this. He says we're talking about Jesus.

Jesus has retreated from Jerusalem because it's not yet time for Him to go to the cross. He goes out to Trans-Jordan. We see the contrast between how people receive Him. The most unlikely receive Him. The most likely don't. He shows us that contrast, and then he says, "Now I want to put John back in the spotlight," and so John the Baptist is put into the foreground again, and basically John the apostle says, "Look at him. Look at John the Baptist. Look at him and listen to him. Look at him and listen to him. What was it that John the Baptist was continually saying?" And this is the measure of truly effective ministry. Whether it's an individual evangelistic ministry, whether it's our counseling ministry, whether it is our preaching ministry, whether it is our ministry of any kind that names the name of Christ, what is the measure of that ministry? It is what you say about Jesus Christ and not just what you say, but how much you say. It's not just quality, it's quantity.

A lot of times there are a lot of wonderful ministries that do a lot of good things but they get off track because they stop talking about Jesus very much, and this is a red flag. Anytime you see a ministry that is talking about the things of God but Christ is not front and center, that is a warning light going off. It doesn't mean that they don't love the Lord and they don't know Him, but they're getting off track, because the ministry that God will bless is the ministry where Jesus Christ is preeminent, where He is placed front and center again and again, where all roads lead back to Jesus, where no matter where we start, we end up at Christ, because He is everything. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He's the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. What do we have apart from Jesus? We have nothing. So if a ministry is not doing that, we need to beware.

It also tells us that whenever we feel like our lives are getting off track, what do you do? Go back to Jesus, and if you're talking to somebody and you're having an

evangelistic conversation, one of the best things you can do is try to get the focus back on Jesus. If people try to sidetrack you over to some kind of crazy question over here, well you want to be respectful and kind, but what you want to do is try to get back to Jesus. Just keep putting Jesus up there. *Have you considered Jesus?* Not what people say about Him, not the church being hypocritical, but have you looked clearly at Jesus Christ? Keep looking at Him. Keep looking at what the Bible tells you about Him. Well, when you look at John's ministry, let's look back at what John the apostle has told us about John's ministry. He's spends a lot of time on John. There are 42 verses in this Gospel on John the Baptist. He starts off in Verse 6 of Chapter 1:

***John 1:6 ~ There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.***

This is John the Baptist.

***John 1:7 ~ He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.***

Do you see how he's dealing with people who want to say, "John was a prophet, and hey John's a great guy. We follow John"? No, John was not the Light. He came to testify about the Light. Don't think you love John if you don't love the Light he came to testify about." And look now at Verses 14 and 15:

***John 1:14 ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"***

He repeats that same statement in Verse 30:

***John 1:30 ~ This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'***

That's the preexistence of Jesus Christ. John was born several months before Jesus. They were second cousins, and undoubtedly he'd been told the story by his own mother about Jesus' mother's visit to her [Elizabeth's] house that you read about in Luke 1, but they hadn't seen each other through the years. They didn't have easy transportation. Apparently they hadn't had any family reunions or any church 30th

anniversary celebrations, or whatever, so they hadn't met each other, because when John saw Jesus, he said, "I didn't recognize Him, but I saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him and remain on Him."

That's also in this first chapter of John. And the difference between Jesus and everybody else was that when the Holy Spirit comes down upon somebody else, He stays for a while and then leaves. With Jesus, He remained upon Him. So He's greater than anybody else. In fact, He's so much greater, "He existed before me. Though I was born before Him, He existed before me because He is the preexistent Son of God. He is the eternal God Himself." John is saying that. He goes so far to say, "He's so much greater than me," in Verse 27:

***John 1:27 ~ It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.***

John says, "I'm not worthy to be the lowliest slave in the house where Jesus is. He's so much greater than me that I'm not worthy to touch the thong of His sandal. I am not worthy. That's how great Jesus is." Now, do you see the flavor of John's ministry? It's not about John. It's about Jesus, and that's the way it continues to be. When he sees Him in Verse 29:

***John 1:29 ~ "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

In Verse 36 he says again:

***John 1:36 ~ "Behold, the Lamb of God!"***

In Verse 34:

***John 1:34 ~ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."***

"Stop looking at me. Look at Him." When he says that second, "Behold, the Lamb of God," in Verse 36, two of his disciples leave him and follow Jesus. Then in Chapter 3 we meet John again, in John 3:22-36. In Chapter 3, John's disciples come to tell him, "Do you realize that Jesus is now baptizing more people than you are?" and they're really upset about it. "Our popularity is down. Attendance is down. What are we going to do?" So John says to them, "Have you all not been listening to me? I am not the bridegroom. He is the bridegroom. I am merely the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices in the bridegroom's joy. I'm so glad that

He's becoming more and more front and center, because I came only to point to Jesus, and to say He's the One. Look at him."

That's the measure of what Christian ministry should be for all of us, is not look at me. When you evangelize someone, when you share Christ with him, the effect should not be look at me and what God has done for me. It's a small part of look what God has done, but it's look at Jesus Christ who can do such things. Look at such a glorious, wonderful Savior who left the glory of Heaven, came to this world, and lived in this sin-sick world. In His holiness, He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief because He lived amidst all of this death and destruction. He, the author of life who's completely holy, was surrounded by sin, and He came into that ugliness, that filth, and He walked through it for 33 years.

He lived a perfect life so that He could then offer a spotless sacrifice and then give you and me who believe in Him and His atoning death, give you a perfect righteousness. He was tempted in every way yet without sin so that He can be a great Savior to everyone who repents and believes. He rose again on the third day to prove death had nothing on Him, because the sting of sin is death, and there was no sting because there was no sin. He lives forever, and so when you come and you say, "It's all about Jesus. Look at this Savior," that is what John was continually doing. "I must decrease. He must increase," John said. So when Jesus comes here to that same area and people began to say to Him, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true," Jesus was pleased. You're seeing him. You're listening to the prophet and you're hearing it. God has granted you eyes to see and ears to hear.

I love a story I heard that I mentioned earlier. Charles Spurgeon, who said, "Let the beast loose," the tremendous man of God he was, said one time that a pastor from America went to England, and when he was in London he went to hear two great preachers of the day. He heard the first preacher whose name I don't remember, and he said he left that sermon and he was blessed and encouraged, and then later that day he went and heard Charles Haddon Spurgeon preach, and he said this is the effect of those two messages. He said, "When I left the first service, I said to myself what a magnificent sermon. When I heard the second message, I said what a magnificent Savior." That should be the fragrance of all that we do. We should strive that that would be what people would take away, that we might decrease, that He might increase. That's the testimony of John that was living on after his death. People were saying, "Yes, what he said is true, everything he said," because why? He was constantly talking about Jesus. May God help us be people like that.

Let's pray together...

*Our Father, we come to You with hearts that are awed by Your incredible mercy and compassion, hearts that are amazed by the glorious revelation that You have made in Jesus Christ. Lord, we pray that we might not be so easily distracted from what really matters. We confess our own ability to be mindful of so many things that are so unimportant, preoccupied with those things that are passing away, and all that will last, all that matters is Jesus. God, help Your people to keep our eyes ever more upon Him, glorying in Him and Him alone, loving Him and loving Him alone, and making us more like Him every day. We pray for those that are here that need to repent and believe today, that You might show them the sweetness of the Savior, and they might run to His loving embrace and follow Him all the days of their lives. We pray this in His marvelous Name, Amen.*

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