

Chapter 6: Believers or Disciples:

Which is First? (John 5)



The Apostle John had the last word on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently also the last word on believing, discipleship, and God's plan of salvation. While we are reconstructing by exegesis in seven chapters this Gospel of Jesus built around seven miracle-signs, we find we must modify some of our fundamental concepts that we have built up through the years in our churches of superficial and simple Bible teaching and preaching, more often the result of the pragmatic practices of Americans, on believing and discipleship. For example, have you noticed that in the stated purpose of John's Gospel as recorded in John 20:30,31 rather than finding anything about discipleship or disciples, except at the beginning where all these recorded miracle-signs were done "in the presence of the disciples", we find first "in order that you may believe" and second "that by believing you might have everlasting life." What we will decided in this study of the scriptures in John centered around the third miracle-sign of John is that the continuous process of believing takes precedence over discipleship; and rather than write a title for this chapter like "Believers created into Disciples", it would come closer to being a title like "Disciples turned into Believers".

NOTE: All text in brown as shown below is as much in support of the prime thrust of "Den of Thieves" or "Hideout for Bad Habits" as it is for the second thrust of Reports for Believing based on the seven miracle-signs of the Gospel of John.

And we may find this a very key to what we have struggled with in the Bible on the thesis of "Den of Thieves"; that is, obviously there are selected God's People, even called God's people, who with time--sometimes even 40 years or more--who turn out

not to be God's people at all. Could it then be that first certain men and women of any generation are called to be disciples, then when it is obvious that their initial belief does not pass into the continuous believing of John, they also cease to be disciples of Christ {perhaps still disciples of some earthly leaders and churches and denominations, sad yes}, and these are the called that are also not chosen. And unexpected with this the only the third in the series of seven on the miracle-signs of John with the primary thesis of, up to this point which may need to be modified slightly based on exegesis, of REPORTS to create believers, we have perhaps come closer to an integration with the simultaneous theme of "Hideout for Bad Habits", that based on Jeremiah and Jesus that many of our churches have clearly become a "Den of Thieves" in the same sense meant by Jeremiah and Jesus in the two cleansings of the temple. {This last week I heard another man of extensive education spouting his real ignorance of personal experience with the Scripture, as dealing with the Resurrection of Christ, and I'm sure many of you saw it on television, said the Bible was confused on the records of the cleansing of the temple and when it happened, not realizing that there were two cleansings of the temple, one near the beginning of Christ's ministry and the other closer to the end. } The first recorded in John 2, and the second in Matthew 21. Oh ye of so much wisdom in the world and of so little in the real Bible, you can easily distinguish between these two separate cleansings of the temple by the quotes that Jesus used and which Matthew and John so faithfully and accurately recorded, with the help of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus and the Apostles so habitually quoted with faithfulness. In the second cleansing the emphasis of Jesus was on the quote of Jeremiah 7:11 where there is the "Den of Thieves", in the first it was on how "the zeal of your house has eaten me up", a quote from Psalm 69:9. I just hope you will use such Bible ignorance on the part of those educated in religion to see the difference often pointed out in the books of SunGrist_Bible between study "OF" the Bible versus study "ABOUT" the Bible.

6-1: Believing in Context of the Gospel of Christ.

Before we can proceed to the third miracle-sign, and the larger context of John 5, we need to clarify some teachings on the Gospel of Christ in the Gospel of John that make it very unique among the four Gospels. I think you know, or you should know, that in the famous "Harmony of the Gospels" written years ago by A.T. Robertson the other three gospels are harmonized closely and then John is listed separate, quite often with completely different content than that of the other three. This uniqueness of content proceeds beyond the simple fact that the Apostle John chose only seven of the many miracles of Christ around which to weave the teachings and doings of Jesus, for it goes to both the inclusion of many unique events in the life of Christ which are included and the more common ones of the other three Gospels which are excluded.

You would naturally expect a unique emphasis from the Apostle John as near the end of the first century, and with the experiences of the growth of Christianity in the first century in spite of oppositions behind him, and with in hand the other three Gospel

accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as most of the 27 books of the New Testament from which he would teach and preach each week. Goodness, even the Apostle John was different among the disciples, and those differences inevitably became evident in this version of the Gospel Story.

You have noticed how different are the very first words of the Gospel of John in John 1:1-3 on the part of Jesus in the Creation of the Universe where it sounds more like Genesis 1:1 than it does like the beginnings of the other three Gospels. And I hope by now from the two previous chapters on the miracle-signs of John, that you have recognized how important a conviction of Christ as Co-Creator is for a consideration of the miracles of Christ and of John. What is meant by this: well, once you consider that this is the Christ, the Word of God or "Logia", that existed with God in the eternity of before the Creation of the Universe and through Whom all the things of the Universe were made, then you come also to readily realize and accept that even with some limitations of being in human flesh, that He could do anything with the universe which He had helped make.

Jesus according to John 1 was the Pre-Existent and Co-Creating Christ, but also, He was "The Word made flesh who dwelt among us" on this earth. This eternal and co-creating "Word" was made the God-man by the power of God as the Spirit of God moved over the virgin Mary and Jesus was created by God the Father as the God-man.

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

We would keep in the context of the start of the Gospel in the first chapter with the three distinct emphasis of (1) Christ as the Co-Creator, (2) The Word made the Son of God; and (3) still to come from John 1:12,13 of the power God gave through Christ for humans to become sons of God by the power God puts within them; also in the context of the stated purpose near the end where what the disciples all witnessed was just as important as here at the beginning where it was these same disciples who "beheld His glory"; also in with the context of the 7 miracle-signs around which teachings and doings of Christ are wrapped; and also in the context of many incidents in the life of Christ unique to the Gospel of John like the challenging "Friends of Jesus" teachings just before the Crucifixion of John 13-17.

As we wrestle with John 5 and with "disciples versus believers", even while we are getting closer to the real meaning of "believe" and "believing" in the Gospel of John, and hence in the total agreement of the Word of God **{you will find with experience is that one of the most convincing proofs of the Bible as the Word of God is the complete agreement between John and Paul, between the Gospels and the epistles, indeed among all the books of the Bible}**, that John along with Christ as Co-Creator and the Word as the Son of God gives us another clue to understand and practice faith

in the life-giving power of God as He makes the few who believe also Sons of God, much like Christ. John first sadly admits that most of his own nation rejected Christ, also many of his own hometown and his own province; however, with joy the Apostle John admits as he continues to finish a century of work with the Gentiles in Ephesus that “as many as received him to them he gives power to become sons of God.”

Unfortunately these are not the same words we hear most often from Christian theology, from the pulpits of our churches, and from books; and no doubt, that is part of our present problem with a proper understanding of John and the Gospel of Christ. **{Perhaps you do not know of the Jesus Seminar and with a book of the Fifth Gospel, where such sceptics with high degrees in leading colleges and seminaries advocate that most of the words of John were not really taught by Jesus Christ, and even vote every year, as if we should put any weight with their little majority because of their worldly wisdom, as to whether Jesus even claimed to be the Son of God.}** Well, we could startle them today by sayings that we also claim based on John 1:12,13 to also be Sons of God, not like the sinless very singular Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, but in many ways re-created in His likeness. And primarily it is the same power of God working in us to make us believers and keep us believing than worked in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ when God Him back from the grave on the third day.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13)

What is being said as introductory to John 5 and the third miracle-sign, introductory and fundamental to an understanding of the first two chapters on John and the first two miracle-signs, to belief and believing and salvation, is these four foundations listed above. You will find them often in John 5 and in the other miracle-signs of the seven miracles. Another unique characteristic of the Gospel of John is the pains that John took to integrate the first chapter with the purpose of John 20:30,31, with the total uniquely chosen context of this Gospel life of Christ. You will come to love it from the disciple of love.

6-2: Christ in the third Miracle Healed the Man Helpless for 38 years.

Once again this is not necessarily the third miracle of Christ, only the third miracle-sign that John chose to present in his gospel; and even as there are far more than 7 miracles in the life of Christ on earth, just like John says in the purpose of John 20:30,31, I would not contribute to the ignorance of men like on the Jesus Seminary who might take this, with their hasty generalizations, to mean that John claimed only 7 miracles for Christ; or that John in any way by presenting the gaps in the previous three gospels which could not be presented because, as he writes, “even the world could not contain the books which should be written”, was claiming truth for only his gospel and less than that for the other gospels. In the presence of these other Apostles

like Matthew, Peter, and Paul was important to John even as in the presence of the disciples was important in the way he wrote about the life of Christ.

For those who miss in this incident at the pool of Bethesda, where at certain times an angel went down periodically to stir the waters and heal the first into the pool, John is reminding us that even as God was at work and healing throughout the previous long history and that is where Jesus learned to heal, God has been and is always in the healing business quite independent of faith healers. **{It is questionable to what extent Jesus or God needs these so-called faith healers to intervene between the believing individual and God, who tend to take more the glory to themselves anyway and the money.}**

A certain man, and we don't even know his name, was there to get into the pool when the angel stirred the water; and we also know little about his condition except that he "had an infirmity thirty-eight years". It would seem that John sought to protect the personal information of the man and the details of his illness. Perhaps as the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, and as Jesus had warned the inhabitants to flee ahead of time, as the Apostle John departed Jerusalem for the Gentile and Roman province of Ephesus, this man of the 38 year infirmity went with him as well as Mary, the mother of Jesus, and were long standing members of his church. Can you imagine the faith in Jesus that this man would have testified to, much like the love for Jesus that continued in the life of John?

Jesus saw the man and knew that he had been in that same condition for a long time. Jesus said to the man, "Do you want to be made well?" knowing full well that often people use their illness for conversation and excuses. If they really wanted to be healed, they would be individually praying to God and getting the healing that God is always so quick and apt to provide.

This man almost made excuses, but it was true that he had no friend or relatively close enough to put him in the water when it was stirred by the angel, and remember it was first come, first serve. Numerous times was the story he told Jesus, when he was crawling to keep in the water others would step in front of him.

Well, enough. Jesus said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." (John 5:8)

Immediately the man was made well. Not only did he take up his bed to carry it, but he walked.

Uh, oh, trouble in the land. John warns us that this healing took place on the Sabbath Day, a no no among the religious leaders who dominated the religion of Judaism of that day. And when John writes in 5:10, "The Jews therefore said to him who was cured," it is the leaders and the people that he is talking about.

Well, the man had the supreme excuse to be healed on the Sabbath. The same man **{in reality God-man}** that had the power to heal him was the one who also commanded him to take up his bed and walk. The power to heal, everybody knowing that healing is power from God, was also the power to command.

The Jews would not buy it. **{Seemingly John has separated himself and the other disciples present from this category of the Jews, although John knew full well that he and the disciples, like Jesus Himself, were born Jews.}** Just tell us “WHO” is this man that told you to take up your bed and walk. In this was implied that they had the authority and would talk to him.

This is the amazing part, the man healed from the infirmity of 38 years, did not know WHO Jesus was or is. Jesus had withdrawn from the location at the pool of Bethesda and only a multitude was there in the place where Jesus and His disciples had been.

Later Jesus found the man, just like Jesus does for us today as He continues to find and work with all that He has initially touched. Jesus found him in the temple, one of the good things that happened in the temple after the cleansing of the temple Jesus had done earlier (John 2) or the one that He would do later (Matthew 21), and taught him about “sin and salvation”.

11. Even as we recognize in the power to become sons of God as an aspect of believing, and with different words from most of our church words, we find Jesus uniquely presents the theology of sin and salvation to the healed man. Of course, after healing the man and as he walked and carried his bed, Jesus had his complete attention; and much like with the woman by the well of Samaria, who Jesus started teaching uniquely with words about “living water”, Jesus here spoke of original sin and the habit of sin.

“See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” (John 5:14)

What could be worse than being completely helpless for 38 years, impotent to step quickly into the pool or carry ones own bed? Obvious, right, complete servitude to sin and Satan, without everlasting life, and a life damned to eternity in hell. That would indeed be worse. The man knew and recognized this!

The man could now also answer the WHO which tells us that John does not record all that was said between the man and Jesus, or all that occurred on that day in the temple and with the disciples. It was Jesus that healed him and saved him, and it was Jesus that commanded him to walk with his bed. The man told the Jews that it was Jesus.

This is all we discuss on this third miracle-sign occasion, except to mention one thing that is pertinent to the next section. And that is from these straightforward words

from the Apostle John, perhaps the first indication of persecution of Jesus to be recorded in this book, certainly a significant one: "For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus." (John 5:16)

6-3: The Reason the Jews Persecuted Jesus.

Why did the Jews start persecuting Jesus? John wants this to be clear, even as if he had in his days at Ephesus among the learned of that Gentile city also those of the Jesus Seminar who would distort everything in the life and teachings of Jesus for their own prejudiced benefits.

1. The Reason the Jews started persecuting Jesus was because not only did He claim to be and represent the power of God, but He showed it to be true by the acts of healing from God which He performed. And worse than that, it was becoming known in the public that it was Jesus who performed these works of God. People like the simple man who had been flat on his back for 38 years were believing about sin and salvation from Jesus, even testifying as to what Jesus could do!

2. John went far beyond that in the honest and faithful telling of the story as it actually happened in that John says also in John 5:16 that "the Jews sought to kill Jesus." Now don't you know the Jesus Seminar would try to have a hay day with that even as Jews and Judaism would today, vehemently denying that any of the Jewish leaders, people, or nation actually sought to kill Jesus. Of course in this verse, the reason given by John and I am sure the real reason or excuse used by the Jews was not because of the healing, or even the teachings, but that Jesus "had done these things on the Sabbath." (John 5:16)

6-4: Jesus, "My Father and I Have Been Working" (John 5:17)

We will make this short, but still important that you are reminded by this miracle-sign and the teaching of the context where Jesus plainly said that in the past before His life on earth both He and the Father had been working; and that obviously in the context this means that Jesus, the Word, and the Father have been working right here on earth in human affairs, one of those way as clearly indicated in John 5 is in the process of healing. **{Another hopefully of which we are increasing away as we see the series of calamities that God has brought on our nation since 9/11 in the storms and droughts and floods and so on, the numerous acts of grace God performs though His angels as so many are protected during these acts of God on our nations because we do not pray, listen to Him and be humble in His sight.}** In the next chapter, "God Works", we will discuss just some of the ways in which God has worked from the beginning of Creation, and that Jesus worked with Him from the beginning of Creation.

6-5: Judgement. Life, and Everlasting Life Teachings of Jesus (John 5:24-30)

Yes, in the sections above, the teachings of Jesus were in answer to the Jews in the Temple (John 5:16-23), while now Jesus gets into less reactive teachings, to give the very heart of His teachings from God the Father on judgment, life, and everlasting life. It is here in this passage of these 7 verses of John that we come to learn much about “believing” and the real implications of believing.

It is the believer of the God who sent Jesus, who when he hears words from Jesus, that has everlasting life. (John 5:24)

Such a believer in God and Jesus does not come into judgment. **{Isn't that good news, that you do not need to experience the judgment of the unbeliever?}**

NOTE: You should see Judgment here in the context of the famous passage of John 3:16 and following in that “he that believes not is under condemnation all ready.” There is no need to wait for any judgment day as the unbeliever is already condemned, directly as a consequences of his failure to believe in Jesus as the Son of God in spite of all the wooing the Holy Spirit does in his heart every day and has for years, condemned to eternity without God and in torment where “the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched”.

Such a believer passes from “death” into “life”. Many do not realize that with such believing in God and Jesus, the reality in the sight of God becomes an actuality while that believer is still on this earth of passing from eternal death into eternal life.

Jesus states to these Jews that the hour has now come and is coming more as He continues His ministry where: (a) the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and (2) these that hear will live. I hope that reminds you of the well known among the Jews prophetic prediction by Moses that God would raise up a Prophet like Himself. They would not hear him would be cut off from among the people of God, and those that heard would live! (Deuteronomy)

Since God has life itself in Himself, God the Father has granted to the Son to also have life in Himself. Jesus is life, remember how He will teach later in John 14 how He is “the way, the truth, and the life.

With all that God has endowed on Jesus as His Son, the Father has also given Jesus the authority to execute judgment. (John 5:27) It is not only because Jesus is the Son of God, but also because He is the famous “Son of Man”, the Messiah promised often in the book of Isaiah, as these Jews also knew.

You can marvel at the wonder of this all, but the day is coming about which you will marvel more when all the voices in the grave will hear voice of Jesus: (a) they will come forth from death and the grave in two categories; (b) the category of those who

have done good to experience the call of the resurrection of the body to join the spirit; (c) and the category of those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.

NOTE: We can marvel today at some of our simple leaders with their definitions of good and evil, but why not adopt the wording and teachings of Jesus Himself as the those who do good with the resurrection of life and those who have done evil as with the resurrection of condemnation.

There is one resurrection: the dead in Christ shall rise first, the dead of both categories with some to the resurrection of life and others to the resurrection of condemnation; and then those that are alive in remain shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air.

The reason that Jesus Judges Righteous Judgment (John 5:30).

It all depends on God the Father. As Jesus heard from God the Father in the long years since Creation, and before, He also learned the proper way to judge people; and this is what makes the judgment of Jesus the same "righteous judgment", contrasted to appearance that the rest of the Bible advocates for us followers of Jesus. Bottom line, it is righteous because Jesus does not seek His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him; and we can practice righteous judgment also as we practice concern for the will of God over our own will.

6-6: Four Legitimate Witnesses to Him as the Son of God. (John 5:31-39)

Not only does Jesus teach us here in this chapter four witnesses to truth about Him but also to four truths: (1) Jesus as Truth itself; (2) Jesus as the One sent by God the Father; (3)

John the Baptist was a Witness to Jesus. (John 5:33) as Truth.

The Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

The One before him, and coming after him, more worthy than him.

The works the Father gave Jesus to do bear witness that God sent Him. (John 5:36)

God the Father testified to Jesus that this is His Beloved Son (John 5:37)

The Old Testament Scriptures, also Prophecies, testify of Jesus to be the way of Eternal Life. (John 5:39)

6-7: Jews (Judaism) as a Prototype of Bad Leadership in Religion.

NOTE: As John and Jesus used "Jews", especially in the Gospel of John, it considered the original definition of Jews as residents of Jerusalem. Paul as a

Hebrew of the Hebrews somewhat expanded this definition to include all Hebrews and those of Israel, especially in Romans. Of course, he established a new definition based on what the Ascended Christ told Him in Saudi Arabia, and from the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the writing of Romans where a Jew is not one outward, but inward, and Jews are the new group of God's people of a few Jews and many other Gentiles.

We would be unfair and superficial on an exegesis of John 5, by the way from the Apostle of love, that is John, if we did not acknowledge that over half of the chapter is to identify the lifelong clash between Jesus and the Jews. We would also fail to properly apply with intellectual honesty and courage the implications of the teachings of Jesus centered around this clash if we did not recognize in the religious leaders of Jesus' time a prototype of bad leadership in religion for today. In other words, what was rotten to the core in those religions leaders, which John called the "Jews" and we need to explain shortly, is the same that is rotten to the core of Christianity today with the Falling Away in churches and denominations.

Of course Paul also talked about the Jews in Romans, deciding that the real profit of the Jews to the work and will of God was that "to them were committed the oracles of God." Paul also admitted that he was a Jew and a Hebrew, but not in the sense of which the Apostle John is using the word in the book of John. Yes, John was born a Jew; and Jesus was born of the Jewish nation although at the very beginning of the Gospel John starts an underlying theme of truth that "He {Jesus} came unto His own and His own received Him not." (John 1:11) Jesus was rejected by the majority of the Jewish nation, and it is this majority of the Jewish nation that John labels as "Jews". You can not be fair to John if you do not face up to these realities about the Jews, the rotten to the core nature of their leaders, and these bad aspects of the religion of Judaism.

By the way, although the whole world recognize all the bad things that have happened in history in the name of religion, and even today, there is nothing wrong with "pure religion" as defined by Pastor James in the book of James.

**"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."
(James 2:27)**

May I offer right up front, and before we get into the details of Jesus' opinion for the clash with the Jews of John 5, and to follow in the rest of John and even stronger in the synoptic Gospels where Jesus called the religious leaders as "full of dead men's bones", that the Jews did not show an example of "pure" religion and they certainly did not show an example of "undefiled" religion. Later Jesus would tell the people to listen to these religious leaders as they taught the law of Moses, but not to follow their examples because they would not lift one little finger to relieve the burdens of the

poor. {And Jesus, calling this same group of religious leaders “hypocrites” that John calls Jews in the Sermon on the Mount characterizes them as: (1) praying in the synagogue and on street corners to be seen of men; (2) use vain repetitions in prayer thinking they will be heard for the number of words which they pray; (3) they pray like the heathen--of course, this would be the Muslims and well as other unbelieving Gentiles, and I hope you have heard some of this vain and repetitious prayer by the Muslims several times a day and over the loud speakers--where it sounds like a man dying; and (4) they disfigure their faces with a sad countenance in order to appear to men to be fasting--in other words for appearance before men and “honor” from other men like Jesus will talk about in John 5:44, “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?”

Now that we have brought up some of the teaching content of Jesus in John 5, in particular the difference between honor, praise, applaud, or pats on the back from other men as compared to the honor from God **{alone not doctrine easy to understand at first}**, we should list some of these convictions from Jesus about the Jews as examples not to follow today as we ease deeper and deeper into the Falling Away in our churches. **{Please do not every forget as part of the very basic nature of the Falling Away is that it is not a Falling Away from churches and church attendance as there the attendance may actually go up in the churches of itching ears Bible teachings like you are see in the Olsten church of Houston.}** It is rather a Falling Away from the sound doctrine of the Bible, a Falling Away from the Christ of the Bible as according to what He predicted as “sin abounds the love of many **{church members}** will grow cold”, and a Falling Away from God Himself. The only difference with these bad leaders of the Jews is that they never really had anything to speak of to fall away from in the first place, at least internally. Of course in the finer sense they did fall away from the examples of so many good leaders that preceded them in the nation of Israel such as Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon; and priests like Samuel and Isaiah, and leaders of the nation as Prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Elijah, and Elisha just to mention a few. Spiritual and government leaders like Joshua, David, and Solomon; and we could go on and on with good examples of Hebrews and religious leaders that preceded these hypocrites that John calls the “Jews”.

However back to the honor from men compared to the honor from God, and John 5:44 above. Well, first of all the honor from men is obvious. The religious leaders of then, and now, were and are doing what they do in prayer and other religious practices to give applause, congratulations, and the praise of other men. While the honor that comes from God is a little more difficult. Primarily in the context of John 5, that honor is of “life” and of all those benefits from God that come with life. Recall at the beginning of this chapter as a similar contrast was made of those who received Christ and those of the Jews who rejected Christ, there was the glorious assurance that “as many as received Him **{Christ}** to them gave He the power to become Sons of God.”

(John 1:12) It is all this honor from God that we are talking about that Jesus taught in John 5: it is life, it is an internal power, to is the adoption as sons of God just like the firstborn from the dead; it is election and justification **{much of this you can read about in the first two chapters of the book of Ephesians}**; and of course beyond “life” is the implied everlasting life; and so on and on with the many benefits that come with LIFE. Whereas in the last sign from John 4, and in the conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus taught that LIFE as the gift from God of “living water”. Later we will see the same LIFE as bread, and blood, and as a vine of fruit attached to the living Branch, all metaphors that Jesus used to get the attention of people and to teach how that He is and was the “way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and the “true vine” (John 15:1).

John writes is so casually as the true incident and teaching that it was that often we fail to realize how serious it was when Jesus told the religious leaders as in John 5:38 that “you do not have His Word **{the Word of God}** abiding in you.” With all their religious and government authority **{the Romans allowed them to retain both, and in Israel as in no other nation the laws of the land were also religious laws--you will recall how that Paul before conversion, and as a lawyer, was involved in both religion and law as he dragged early Christians into prison}**, still they were minus the most important thing in a life of pure and undefiled religion, that of the Word of God actually being in their life.

Can we find in our churches and denominations today also many who can talk about religion and the Bible, like the Jews of Jesus’ day with much training and tradition in religion, but minus the real Word of God in their hearts and life?

The reason Jesus who knew the hearts of all men made this conclusion is because the Jews would not receive the One sent by that God the Father. If they had the inward motivations to reject the very Messenger sent by God the Father, the very Son of God Himself, had could they previously have had any Word of that same God within them. Even as a fruit tree is known by it’s fruit, so the inward condition of any leader of religion and Christianity is known by the acceptance or rejection of the very Son that God sent to earth. (John 5:38)

4. Further Jesus said of the Jews, and therefore of their religion, that they had neither heard the voice of God at any time nor had seen the form of God. You see Jesus, and Moses, and Abraham and all these previous religious leaders of the Jews and forefathers had either heard the voice of God and seen His form, or both. Do you see the significance and implications of this for these the majority of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day and the implications for our leaders during this present Falling Away? True, there were a few religious leaders among the Jews like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and John and the other Gospel writers acknowledge them; but in the majority and right down to the core they were rotten. And there is no way you can accept the book of John as Word of God with all the hard teachings of Jesus about

religious leaders such as here in John 5, without taking them at the face value of what they have to say. Like one practical Bible scholar said, "Just let the Word of God say what it is trying to say." In other words, just take the Word of God at face value: the Jews as typical majority religious leaders, and as bad examples for the Falling Away of today were so bad that: (1) they had never heard the voice of God; (2) they had never seen the form of God **{by the way Jesus had in heaven and often}**; (3) they had no Word of God inside them; (4) they rejected Jesus as the Son of God and all that He taught; (5) they chose the honor of men over the honor that comes from God, an appearance of religion over "righteous judgment".

They were not willing to come to Jesus as the Son of God in order that they might have life (John 5:40). The Apostle John, as last surviving Apostle and as he wrote near the end of the first century the last books of the Bible, knew that future generations would wonder what although he and Jesus and the other Apostles were of the Jewish nation, why the majority of the Jews would reject Jesus. John is partially dealing with that as this Apostle of love and one who personally at meals would lean against Christ, calling this typical majority of his own nation by birth **{who by the way also crucified Christ to the extent God allowed them}** "Jews".

Jesus acknowledge their scholarship with the Old Testament Scriptures as they both "searched" the 39 books of the Old Testament, in a non-spiritual, formal, and superficial manner without understanding, and they also had the false hopes and claims to eternal life. (John 5:39) How far and how quickly any religious people, of that day and today, can get from the real truth of the Bible! They actually believed that they had eternal life, because they all owned Bibles, they daily and weekly would search through those Bibles much more than our church members with daily Bible readings and short excerpts of Sunday school lessons. Is it possible, one might ask, then and today for religious leader to think they have eternal life, have the conviction that they have eternal life, and yet be so far from the truth, and God, and Jesus? Well, you read it here; and I hope you read it in the book of John.

It gets worse in John 5:42. Jesus calls a spade a spade; Jesus was and never has been to call a spade a spade. Point blank when faced with this opposition to Himself and His work, work from God the Father Himself, He says "You do not have the love of God in you." Can you imagine us today saying that to some of our fundamentalists leaders when they are in the middle of fighting's and splits that have torn asunder the SBC? Saying to them even as in the nature of advice from John in I John of testing the spirits (I John 4:1), that you do not have the love of God inside you. **{Read carefully the book of I John to know which groups today with all the splits are part of the fellowship of the Apostles, and hence of Jesus also, and which are not!}**

The reason Jesus could label the Jews as religious leaders without the love of God in their hearts, that is religion without love, and you know what Paul wrote about that in I Corinthians 13, is because Jesus knew what was in the hearts of all men. Time

and time again, you will find in John and the other Gospels the statement that Jesus as the Son of God, and still possessing all the characteristics of God, could read the insides of men. This is such strong and sound doctrine that some still fail to face up to it as if Jesus was reading their body language, or just took it personally, instead of accepting the simple fact and truth that Jesus like God Himself could read what was in the hearts and minds of all men.

6-8: Believing and Disciples and Life in the Gospel of John.

Unfortunately as expected in the introduction to the chapter, we did not get into which comes first, being a disciple or being a Believer. Much of that is because this chapter is already very long, and we did not get into the details of chapter 6 where “many disciples turned away from Jesus.” We will in the next chapter of the seven on the miracle-signs of John because what we will find in chapter 6 of John is two miracle-signs, that of the walking on the Sea by Christ and that of the feeding of the five thousand. **{Also we have the famous teaching of Jesus on Himself as the Bread of Life. See how John relates the miracle-sign to the teachings of Jesus.}** We will get there, and here is a warning of what is going to be found by exegesis in the Gospel of John: you are going to find that being a disciple or learner is first, just like today being a learner after Christ in the churches comes before believing. It would seem, and we will check it as we go along, that the sequence goes like this: (1) believe; (2) disciple; and (3) “believing” where “believing” is much stronger than initial belief, where believing is a continuous process that continues throughout life and grows, and where it is this “believing” and leads to life and everlasting life. Read again the purpose of John as recorded in John 20:30,31. You will find both “believe” and “believing” mentioned; and it is the believing that leads to life and everlasting life.

Also in the other miracle-sign book chapters of this “Den of Thieves”, we will find many more teachings of Jesus on what is meant about this “life”. Of course, you know where in John 10:10 it is called both everlasting life and “the abundant life” so that we are challenged to know the full implications of this life which is received when God gives us power to become sons of God. **{Sorry, due to the length of this chapter, this is all we can do for now! However, in the reading of this book on “Den of Thieves”, and realizing that two simultaneous themes are pursued throughout its chapters with an integration of the two in the final chapter of this book, “Called versus Chosen”, where we try to clarify God’s people as used in the Bible, you may wish to read all seven chapters that come from the Gospel of John and centered around the seven miracle-signs separate from the rest of the book. They flow about every other chapter, and most generally have the word “believe”, like often found in John, in the chapter title.}**

