

The Gospel of John – Some Final Thoughts

New Testament Survey – Lesson 13

When I began law school, one of my professors warned me: law school changes the way you think. It also changes the way you approach issues in life. In some ways that is a good thing. Law school should prompt clarity of thought, distillation of issues, and discernment of chains that connect one thing to another. In some ways it is a bad thing. Law school can make one so focused on such things, that normal conversation becomes a thing of the past. In some ways it is neither good nor bad, but simply bizarre. This, the professor warned, would start in obscure ways like when you find yourself at breakfast reading the warranty on the toaster – and enjoying it.

Over my three decades of law, life has confirmed the professor's insight. The journey has been a mental one as much as one of a career, which continues to lead to some interesting roads, especially in my Biblical studies. As we finish our New Testament survey in the Gospel of John, I pause for some moments of reflection that I am not sure would have occurred to me but for my legal training. Now that may be a good thing, a bad thing, or simply a bizarre thing! That is up to you to decide as I venture into some ideas that have occurred to me.

I want to explore some ideas that I think valid and interesting, even though they are not found in the popular scholastic works I have studied. They come from a set of suppositions that I will set forth first. If these suppositions are wrong, it does not necessarily dispel truth of my musings, but I set them forth as a road map of what prompted me to ask the questions behind this final lesson on John.

SUPPOSITIONS

My core beliefs about the composition of John have brought me to ask some questions I will set out momentarily. First, I offer these basic ideas:

1. *The Gospel of John was written between 70 and 90AD.* I personally think that the Gospel was put into written form later in that two-decade span, likely around 85AD. But for purposes of this lesson, any date in this time period “works.” Some scholars have placed the Gospel earlier, but those are in the minority. The idea for earlier authorship generally centers on an argument that John seemed unaware of the synoptic gospels. I think that idea is dispelled by a close study of John. I suspect the early church had its opinion right – that John wrote a supplementation to the synoptics, not a rogue gospel written unaware of what else was in circulation. The later date of John makes more sense to me, in large part, because of John's

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content and format. The theology in John seems so developed and the book seems so carefully structured in form, that it must be the fruit of decades of teaching and reflection.¹

2. *The Gospel of John was written from Ephesus.* The early church tradition is unanimous in teaching that John's gospel was written from Ephesus (Asia Minor) a city which took on special importance in the early church because of John's presence and work there.² We have noted in earlier lessons the testimony of Polycarp and Irenaeus to this effect. Early church history also affirmed John's death in Ephesus, after a very long life, around 98AD, after the accession of Trajan as Roman Emperor.³ Church history does not tell us when John left Jerusalem, but we read in Acts 15 that Paul met with the "apostles" (perhaps including John) at the Jerusalem conference that is generally dated in 50AD. By the time Paul made his last

¹ In the 19th century, it became academically vogue to challenge the authenticity of most, if not all, of the New Testament writings. In the area of John studies, these scholars advocated authorship of John as late as 160-170AD (Baur and Schwengler); 150AD (Zeller and Scholten); 130-140AD (Hilgenfeld); and 125-130AD (Renan). Of course, those scholars had their skeptical scholasticism in hand, but were missing the 20th century discovery of the John Rylands fragment of John's Gospel found in Egypt and reasonably dated around 125AD. For a fragment of his gospel to make it to Egypt and be copied by then, relegated the opinions of these cynics to the "interesting but false" group of writings. Like so many theories over the centuries challenging integrity of the Scriptures, these writings had their fashionable day, but did not withstand the truths revealed through time. An interesting treatment of their opinions arguing against them *before* the discovery of the Rylands fragment is found in Abbot, Ezra *The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, (Geo. Ellis 1880), republished by Wipf&Stock 2000, at 11ff.

² Irenaeus cited the Ephesian church's strong apostolic tradition writing from Lyon around 185AD, writing, "Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles."

Church historian Philip Schaff noted, "Jerusalem was approaching its downfall; Rome was not yet a second Jerusalem. Ephesus, by the labors of Paul and of John, became the chief theater of church history in the second half of the first and during the greater part of the second century." *History of the Christian Church* (Eerdmans 1989), Vol. 1, at 425.

Irenaeus, noted John's residence and his authorship of the fourth gospel after the synoptics were composed, "Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia." *Against the Heresies*, 3.1:1.

³ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 2.22:5 "...those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord, [affirming] that John conveyed to them that information. And he remained among them up to the times of Trajan. Some of them, moreover, saw not only John, but the other apostles also." The church historian Eusebius (263-339) had the now lost writings of the Ephesian Bishop Polycrates (c.130-196) before him when he wrote that John was both a "witness and a teacher" who died (actually "sleeps") in Ephesus. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.3:31.

visit to Jerusalem noted in Acts (likely dated around 58AD), he met with James, but none of the apostles (Acts 21:8). Beyond this, there is no precision on when John left Jerusalem, or when he finally made it to Ephesus. Based on point three below, I suspect John did not arrive in Ephesus prior to 63AD. Schaff supposes that the martyrdom of Paul caused John to move into Asia Minor to “take charge of the orphan churches” that Paul had established and nurtured so carefully.⁴

3. *Paul wrote what we call “the Epistle to the Ephesians” around 61-63AD.*⁵ We know from the book of Acts that Paul started the church in Ephesus, lived there ministering for several years, and kept close emotional ties to the believers there (Acts. 18:19-21; 19:1-20:1; 20:17-38). The letter to the Ephesians begins,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:1).

Because Ephesians does not have any personal greetings (unusual in Paul’s letters), in spite of the first verse, many have seen Ephesians as authored by someone other than Paul. It is important to note, however, that a number of early manuscripts do not include the words “in Ephesus” in the first verse, perhaps indicating that this was written as a regional letter.⁶ In other words, it was a letter not just to the Ephesian church, but to the churches that met in the entire region, of which Ephesus was the hub. For purposes of this lesson on John, those conclusions make no difference. The key to this supposition is that the church at Ephesus clearly took possession of this Epistle and historically maintained it as their own. Whether they inserted “in Ephesus” to leave no doubt or whether that was in the original, the result is the same. This letter was an important testimony to and authority for the life of the Ephesian church. The date we tie to the letter is based on Paul’s authorship of the “prison epistles” (which includes Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon) from his Roman imprisonment of 61-63AD.

⁴ Schaff, at 425.

⁵ This recognizes Ephesians as a “prison epistle” based on Eph. 3:1, “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...” Some scholars think Paul might have written this during his captivity in the jail at Philippi. If that is so, it would not change any of this analysis.

⁶ Goodspeed termed its form that of an “encyclical letter.” Goodspeed, Edgar, *The Meaning of Ephesians*, (University of Chicago Press 1933), at 3.

MY QUESTIONS

Set aside the scholastic debate about Paul's authorship of Ephesians and of the precise timing and authorship of the Gospel of John. Regardless of whether one agrees with me on that or not, we have in the Gospel of John, a text written from a location (Ephesus) that also treasured and maintained as uniquely inspired a writing we know as Paul's letter to the Ephesians. That letter surely circulated among the many Ephesian believers, was used for understanding and maintaining core church beliefs, ethics, and more. The Ephesian epistle likely influenced the church's vocabulary as much as its ideology. This letter would have been copied, used as a text for teaching, admonition, and to measure sound doctrine.

Here is where my lawyer thinking goes to work. *If* the gospel of John were written amidst a church where the Ephesian letter was so valued and used, we should expect to see evidence to that affect in the gospel. If we accept the writings of church history, we could phrase the issue more directly in question form:

Question: Since Paul wrote the Ephesians a letter in the early 60's, would not John's gospel, written a decade or two later in the same church, show some remnants of Paul's letter? Should we not see evidence of Ephesians in the thought and vocabulary of the Gospel of John?

This seems sensible to me as a lawyer. I would expect to find echoes of Paul's thoughts and language in John. John would use the language known to his readers. After all the time Paul spent in Ephesus, and having received the valuable letter setting out profound truths, we should be shocked if we cannot find evidence of Ephesians in the Gospel of John!

That is the point of this lesson. Trying to answer this question, I first quizzed my friends in the academy. They looked at me a bit strangely, and had no treatment of this question to refer to me. I then searched the library up and down for a treatment of this, but the closest I came to finding it was a book by Thomas Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel – A Source Oriented Approach*. Brodie does find evidence of Ephesians in John's High Priestly prayer of John 17, but his analysis is fairly brief and limited. Even with that limited analysis, Brodie was confident to speak of "John's systematic use of Ephesians."⁷

Failing an ability to critically analyze the work of others, I had to use a different tact. My approach was two-fold. I first studied both John and Ephesians with an eye toward common themes, doctrines, and ideas. I then focused on a vocabulary

⁷ Brodie, Thomas, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel – A Source Oriented Approach*, (Oxford 1993), at 128.

level, reading Ephesians in the Greek and referencing it to the Greek of John's Gospel. From my study, I am convinced that we have in John's Gospel, a writing that gives historical information of Jesus in thought forms and words that would have held special significance to the Ephesian readers. I think that it is not determinative as the basis for understanding what John said, but I do think it is illustrative and informative. I also think it ripe for more study by those who are not simply lawyers!

MY FINDINGS

1. *Salvation by Grace Through Faith (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:8)*

On a surface level, if one tries to find similarities in content and ideas in the Gospel of John with the letter to the Ephesians, the immediate thought might be of the two verses most frequently quoted from each. From John, the best known verse must be John 3:16,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

If one were to ask the most often quoted verses from Ephesians, it might be open to a bit more debate, but a likely candidate would surely be Ephesians 2:8,

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

It is readily apparent that both books are known for their affirming verses that salvation comes from faith or belief in Jesus. This is even truer if one understands that the word John used for "believes" (*pisteuo* – πιστεύω) is simply the verb form of the word Paul used for "faith" (*pisteos* – πίστειος). Furthermore, if we understand that when Paul spoke of the "grace" of God here, he was not using an adjective, as if he meant the "gracious" nature of God. Paul wrote of "the grace" of God as a "gift" or "favor" God did for us. In Paul-speak, the "grace" or gift of God was simple: it was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf. That is the gift God gave his people. It is the favor God did for his people. It is the "grace" of God that saves his people. Paul made this point abundantly clear in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4,

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel...by which you are saved...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (RSV).

So we have in Paul's focal verse for many in Ephesians a simple teaching that salvation comes by the death of Christ through faith. This is the identical core teaching most take away from John's Gospel.

Of course, this is a central theme in Scripture, so the fact that it is so memorable in both books is hardly a determinative answer to the question posed. We should appropriately look for more subtle themes and language that seem unique to John and Ephesians (or more broadly to Paul's writings altogether.) We will address themes and vocabulary shared between John and Ephesians, starting in the first chapter of Ephesians and working through the book, commenting on each in order.

2. *Heavenly Vocabulary (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12 Jn. 3:12)*

We often speak of God as the God of "heaven." The Lord's Prayer begins "Our Father in heaven." Matthew uses the same word for "heaven" (*ouranos* – οὐρανός) 82 times in his gospel. In his short gospel, Mark uses the same Greek word for "heaven" 18 times. Luke used the word 35 times, and it was not a foreign word to John, for he used it almost as much as Mark. There is nothing unique about this word, as it was used by Paul and all gospel writers.

Yet if we are reading Paul in the Greek, we find another word he called upon at certain times. It is the word "heavenly." In the Greek, this word is related to the word for "heaven." It is "*ouranos*" with a prefix "*epi*" added (*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος). It is always plural in form and denotes the idea of "heavenly" or "celestial" as an adjective, contrasting "heavenly bodies" to "earthly bodies" (1 Cor. 15:40). In Paul we read it, for example, as the image of Christ that we will bear, as he is now a man "of the heavenlies" (1 Cor. 15:48-49). In Philippians Paul used it to acclaim that the knees of those in the "heavenlies" will bow to Jesus as will those on earth and under the earth (Phil. 2:10). This word Paul uses repeatedly in his letter to the Ephesians. It is a word with which the church there would have been fully familiar:

- **Eph. 1:3** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] places."
- **Eph. 1:20** "...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] places."
- **Eph. 2:6** "...and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] in Christ Jesus."

- **Eph. 3:10** “...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] places.”
- **Eph. 6:12** “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] places.”

Interestingly, we do not find this word used by any other gospel writer. Outside of Paul, the word *epouranios*/ἐπουράνιος is used only by the writer of Hebrews and one other – John. John chose this word in his gospel when putting a part of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus into Greek. In John 3:12, Jesus explained the difficulty Nicodemus would have trying to understand anything about Jesus and the “heavenlies”:

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly [*epouranios* - ἐπουράνιος] things?

To a church steeped in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, this would have magnified the image painted by John in his Gospel. How could an unregenerate man like Nicodemus, even knowing Judaism as he did, understand the “heavenlies,” the place from where Christ has blessed the church with all spiritual blessings, where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, where we are destined to be also, even as we struggle now against the spiritual forces of evil.

Again, this is not in itself determinative, but it is more evidence that John’s gospel not only contains Pauline themes, but also vocabulary.

3. *Chosen Before the Foundation of the World* (Eph. 1:4; Jn. 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19; 17:24)

Early in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul makes the bold theological statement that,

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4).

We were chosen to be “holy and blameless,” and were “predestined for adoption as sons” also through Jesus Christ. Here we see both a theme and vocabulary that ties John’s Gospel to Ephesians. John carries out the theme that the apostles were not people who found Jesus and followed him. They were not simply “in the right place at the right time.” The followers of Jesus were also chosen or “called out” (*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι). This is a word that Matthew

never uses, and Mark uses only once. It is frequently found in John, however, and not simply when referring to the apostles:⁸

- **John 6:70** Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose [*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι] you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.”
- **John 13:18** I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen [*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι]. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’
- **John 15:16** You did not choose [*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι] me, but I chose [*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι] you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
- **John 15:19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose [*eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι] you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

We can readily see the choosing of the apostles in John 6:70 and 13:18, but John 15:16,19 portray the very things Paul wrote in his letter. Paul said that the Ephesians were “chosen to be blameless” while John quoted Jesus pointing out that he chose his followers to “bear fruit.” Paul also adds that the Ephesians were chosen to be “holy” or “separate” from the world while John quoted Jesus explaining that his followers were chosen “out of the world,” a very similar thought.

Again, these words from Jesus were no doubt very reassuring to Ephesian readers of John’s Gospel. They were affirmations that decades before Paul’s preaching, the words of Christ confirmed the same message Paul preached. For these words to come from John in a way that indicates God chose his followers in the same way he chose his twelve apostles must have added even more significance to the message. John himself was affirming to the people that they were no less important to God and his plans than the apostles themselves.

Paul added to his writing to the Ephesians that this choice of God was made “before the foundation of the world.” This is a Greek phrase of three words, found again in no other gospel save the Gospel of John (*pro kataboles kosmou* – πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου).⁹ John’s passage almost reads like the conversation behind

⁸ Luke also uses *eklegomai* - ἐκλέγομαι fairly frequently, but since Luke was also a companion of Paul. It is not extraordinary that Luke would use Paul’s terms.

⁹ The only other place this phrase is found in the New Testament is in 1 Peter 1:20.

the event described by Paul. Paul said that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, but as John related the story, it comes from the mouth of Christ in his High Priestly prayer of John 17:24,

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

God not only chose us before the foundation of the world, but it was an act of love that proceeded from before the foundation of the world.

If this were the only place we saw similarities in thought and language, we again might dismiss this as coincidence. However, in this case the similarities seem remarkably direct.

4. *The Riches of Jesus' Grace (Eph. 1:7-8; Jn. 1:14, 16-17)*

In Ephesians 1:7-8 Paul spoke of our redemption through the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of our trespasses,

according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us.

For Paul, it was not simply “grace,” but “riches” of grace that were “lavished” out. We might even see this as grace piled upon grace, or grace overflowing. This abundant grace is what Paul said produced our “forgiveness” and “redemption.”

I suspect that believers who treasured this writing of Paul’s would have immediately associated this abundance of grace that brought “forgiveness” and “redemption” when they heard John’s Gospel. Near the very start of the Gospel, John affirmed Jesus as not only being “full of grace,” but out of that fullness, giving “grace upon grace” to his believers.

And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:16-17).

If the Ephesians made this link, it must have made great sense to them and heightened the contrast John was making between Moses and Jesus. Moses did indeed bring the law to the Israelites, but missing was true “forgiveness” and “redemption” which came from the riches of God’s grace.

It is also worth noting that while we readily associate “grace” as a New Testament concept, the actual word (*charis* - χάρις) is not found in either Matthew or Mark.

It is found in the gospels only from the pen of Paul's companion Luke and from John. We can add this to the building list as we turn to another word found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, but only in Luke and John among gospel writers.

5. *Making known the mystery of uniting all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9; Jn. 17:26)*

Paul taught the Ephesians that God was "making known" his will of uniting all things in Christ.

...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1:9-10).

Paul used a word for "making known" (*gnorizo* - γνωρίζω) that is absent also from Matthew and Mark. Among John's usage of the word, we find a passage that echoes Paul's Ephesian idea quite closely in John 17:26. Jesus is praying his High Priestly Prayer before his arrest and says to the Father,

I made known [*gnorizo* - γνωρίζω] to them your name, and I will continue to make it known [*gnorizo* - γνωρίζω], that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

For Paul, the mystery made known was the uniting of all things in Christ. For Christ, he was making known the same, but in a more specific vein. Specifically, Christ was making known that both God's love for Christ and Christ himself would be found in his followers. The core expressed by Christ is unity expressed by the love of God, Christ and his church!

6. *God's Seal (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Jn. 6:27)*

One thing that undoubtedly meant a lot to the Ephesian believers in a post-Paul time frame would have been Paul's assurance that they were "sealed" with the Holy Spirit. Paul's letter twice references this:

In him [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

Paul uses the Greek word for “sealed” (*sphragizo* – σφραγίζω) in the sense of a “means of identification, mark, seal...denoting ownership [and]... the protection of the owner.”¹⁰

This word is not used referring to people in the New Testament by anyone else except John.¹¹ John’s usage is found in Jn. 6:27,

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.

Some scholars debate what John was referencing when he wrote of Jesus receiving God’s seal. Was it a reference to Jesus’ baptism? Was it a reference to the testimony of John the Baptist to the Spirit descending as a dove (Jn 1:33)? Or perhaps John the Baptist’s affirmation to Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 1:34)? Perhaps it was a reference to Jesus being consecrated and sent by God (Jn. 10:36)?¹² I like the approach instead of those scholars who do not look for a moment where God “placed his seal” on Jesus. Instead, they see this as a reference like Paul made repeatedly in Ephesians,

But a seal could also authenticate a document or the like; the seal showed that the seal’s owner approved. This is the meaning here. The Father has set the seal of his approval on the Son.¹³

7. *Jesus as a light giver (Eph. 1:18; 3:9; Jn. 1:9)*

Twice in Ephesians, Paul wrote of wanting the believers “enlightened.” In Eph. 1:17-18, Paul prayed that God would bless the believers with the “Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of” Jesus. This a prayer that they would have, “the eyes of your hearts enlightened.” This was important to Paul because this enlightenment led to many positive results:

¹⁰ “σφραγίζω,” Bauer, Danker, Aland, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (U. of Chi. 2001), 3d ed.

¹¹ The only other usage in the New Testament beyond Paul and John is one time in Matthew. But Matthew does not use it in reference to a person. He uses it to refer to the sealing of the stone on the tomb of Jesus in Matt. 27:66.

¹² See, e.g., the discussion in Michaels, J. Ramsey, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of John*, (Eerdmans 2010), at 363.

¹³ Morris, Leon, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of John*, (Eerdmans 1995), at 283.

that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

This is a marvelous prayer of Paul, and one that has guided my prayer life for 30 years. It is one I repeatedly pray for my children and loved ones. I suspect that the Ephesians used this prayer individually and corporately much the same way. So when some twenty years later, John writes from the same venue that Jesus was the one giving this light to people, it must have not only confirmed Paul's message, but added greater appreciation and understanding of Jesus as God's unique Son. It would not be lost on the Ephesians when John proclaimed that Jesus,

...the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world (Jn 1:9).

Matthew and Luke both often referred to Jesus as the light, but this nuanced difference in Paul and John is the idea that Jesus is the "enlightener." Jesus gives light to all who look to him.

Between Paul and John, if I were an Ephesian, I would diligently seek to make sure I lived looking to Jesus, the enlightener, rather than the darkness that exists outside of him!

8. *More?*

Yes, we have much more to cover, but will pause this lesson at this point and wait for next week to continue. As a preview, we will suggest you read the following and see what conclusions you might draw from the examples:

-- *The "prince of this world"* (Eph. 2:2; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Distinguish Paul and John's usage from that of Matthew (Mt. 9:34; 12:24), Mark (Mk 3:22), and Luke (Lk 11:15).

-- *"Wrath" as a present concept* (Eph. 2:3-4; Jn. 3:36). Again, seek to find the distinction between Paul/John's usage and that of Matthew (Mt. 3:7) and Luke (Lk 3:7; 21:23).

-- *The theme and usage of the word "peace"* (Eph. 2:14-15, 17; 6:15; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26). Distinguish the verses using the word "peace" in Matthew (Mt. 10:34) and Mark (Mk 5:34). Luke uses the term a lot (13 times), but his usage also has distinctions, can you find them?

- *Access to the Father (Eph. 2:18; Jn. 14:6).*
- *The role of the Spirit in revelation (Eph. 3:4-6; Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27).*
- *The implications of Eph. 3:9-10 on someone reading John 1*
- *Do you find echoes of Eph. 3:11-13 in Jn. 16:33?*
- *How does Eph. 3:17 fit with Jn. 14:20?*
- *The word “agape.” Paul is well known for writing about agape love. We read about it in the famous 1 Cor. 13 chapter, but also in Eph. 3:19; 4:23. Could this add to the understanding of John’s repeated usage? (Matthew uses the noun once as does Luke, but John uses it repeatedly in Jn. 5:42; 13:35; 15:9, 10; 15:13; 17:26).*
- *Compare Eph. 3:14-21 to the Lord’s High Priestly Prayer found in Jn. 17, especially the first five verses.*
- *The unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3-6; Jn. 17:21-23)*

CONCLUSION

This lesson and approach may be an aberration from the nutty mind of a lawyer, but it is one that makes sense to me. It is only a cursory lesson, and one I think worthy of thought and studies beyond what is offered here. There are other windows I think opened by the historical narratives of Scripture and history. For example, it seems a reasonable inference that many scholars accede to, that Paul wrote both Galatians and 1 Corinthians while at Ephesus from 54-57 (Acts 19). If he did, it seems likely that the Ephesian churches would have kept copies of those letters as well. It would be interesting to investigate these letters in comparison to John’s Gospel.

Regardless, I would encourage each of you to know the value of reading Scripture carefully, looking at usages of words and ideas across a broader spectrum than you might ordinarily use. We always need to be careful about just using one word in one place and then assuming it has the precise same meaning in another. For example, as we will see next week, in Matthew, Jesus says he did not come to bring peace. Yet to Paul and John, that is exactly what he did come to do. This is not a Scriptural “contradiction.” These are two different ideas and messages about “peace.”

We have here a wonderful illustration of how one writer builds on what another has written. We see it on a bigger scale with how many New Testament writers

will build upon their readers' foundational knowledge of the Old Testament. It is another level of intricacy and blessing in Scripture, illustrating how it was not simply one composite written at one time from A to Z. Instead, it was a living and growing production that met real needs at the time, even as it secured God's truth for the ages. How magnificent is the Lord!

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"his grace, which he lavished upon us... grace upon grace"* (Eph. 1:8; Jn. 20:30).

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is the turning point in history. It was not simply that God was killed, but could not remain dead. It is that God allowed himself to become man. The man Jesus, truly God and truly man went to the cross *on our behalf* but then rose again to reign eternally. This is not an ordinary gift. It is not an extraordinary gift. It is an incomprehensible gift. It is embarrassing to some, and foolish to others. But from this lavish gift comes all spiritual blessings in Christ, including eternity in the fellowship of God. Amen! May it never be foolish or embarrassing to me. May it feed my life and those around me!

2. *"...chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world... I chose you out of the world"* (Eph. 1:4; Jn. 15:19).

I have always been taken aback when I realize the Biblical doctrine that God has not simply chosen "some special people" like Abraham or the apostles. His call is specific and genuine to *me* and to you too! He has chosen us in love and compassion. He has pursued us in love. He has done so with the express purpose of changing who we are and how we live. I am ready! I want to be changed!

3. *"...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened... the true light, which gives light to everyone"* (Eph. 1:18; Jn. 1:9).

I know some smart people. I know some super smart people. I know a few absolutely and stunningly brilliant people! Yet no matter how smart anyone is, the enlightenment that Jesus brings can be found nowhere else. No one is going to discover it or come up with it on their own. This is why I continue Paul's prayer for the many in my life who need it:

I do not cease ... remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to

which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Amen!