

## **When Kingdoms Collide**

A study in the dynamics of human reaction to the presence of the Kingdom of God as captured by the Gospel according to John.

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The struggle Jesus had in fulfilling his earthly mission in this world is well-documented in the Gospel according to John. It was a struggle between two kingdoms – God’s kingdom of love and compassion versus the collective dysfunctional egos of certain groups of mankind. This paper explores how the tension created by the intersection of these two kingdoms eventually led to the arrest and execution of Jesus. The analysis below suggests that this result was not planned, required or pre-ordained by our loving God, but one that was highly predictable given the circumstances into which Jesus made his appearance, including the free-will decisions by key players. Nevertheless, God would prevail against these actions of mankind, as He always will; this time by resurrecting Jesus as the Christ, thereby proving that Jesus was, in fact, sent by God to testify to God’s deep love and compassion for the world.

Note: The research and views of this paper are solely those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Community. There is great room for many perspectives in appreciating and understanding scripture. This paper merely hopes to stimulate thinking and discussion to broaden our awareness and strengthen our capacity for dialog and exploration surrounding the life of Christ and its meaning for us.

Bible verses are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

## In the Beginning

Let's begin our journey at the opening of the Gospel according to John where we find a number of proclamations regarding the two kingdoms. These opening words also set the stage for the drama that was going to play out in the Holy Land (and still occurs today in every land!).

<sup>John 1:1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

First, these words proclaim the divine nature of Jesus, and his relationship with God. Jesus is the “Word,” and he was with God from the beginning of time. It was through him that God effected all of creation, and it all belongs to God. This is the first of the two kingdoms – God’s people, all of nature, and the spiritual Light that sustains it and transforms it. This Light, as we shall see later, is the love and wisdom as taught by Jesus so that the people of the earth could live together in peace and harmony, reaching a state of full enjoyment of the riches of the kingdom.

In verses 5, 10, and 11, another kingdom is revealed. It’s a world of darkness, or “non-enlightenment.” Although the Light enters this realm, it can be rejected by the people through their own free will.

How is free will possible? Why does God let this happen?

God is love itself, and His realm is run on this love. But love must be a choice, or it is not love; rather, it would be like computer programming. A robot can perform what we would call loving acts, but if they are done because there is no choice, is it really love? (Perhaps we could say that the programmer wrote the

software with the intent of creating loving acts, but that would still be a free-will choice made on the part of the programmer.) The power in love is that it *is* a choice, made freely and willingly. (Certainly, there may be cases where the loving act is performed under duress, or grudgingly – could these instances still be considered loving?)

So, here are the two great players in the arena of life. The love of God versus the free will of mankind. It is important to remember here that although we're talking about "kingdoms" and "realms," this is actually a struggle that takes place on an individual basis within the human heart of each person. Collectively, members of both kingdoms tend to coalesce into their respective groups – churches, causes, gangs, power groups, clubs, communities, unions, political parties, armies – just to name a few. But to change a group, people must change individually first.

It's into this setting that Jesus appears as the key representative of God's kingdom, testifying to the truth of God's love and wisdom, setting in motion a movement that would bring great peace on the one hand, but deep conflict on the other. His ministry had to be completed for the sake of the world, but would come at a price.

## **Cleansing of the Temple**

The first recorded clash between the two kingdoms occurs when Jesus enters the temple and clears out the courtyard:

John 2:13The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'<sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?'<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'<sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?'<sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

It seems that secular activities of mankind's kingdom had gradually worked their way into sacred space. In doing so, the spiritual flow that was supposed to be present had been thwarted. Jesus knew that this had to be corrected, so he set about it in an assertive way. Perhaps he did so to bring certain recognition to his new ministry, leaving no doubt that something new was happening. He had "zeal" for the true temple of God.

There is some good symbolism in this encounter, too, that should speak to us about our own, personal, sacred space. If we clutter our minds and our lives with things that do not matter, or that can be detrimental to our true self, we may have to assertively remove them to get back on track. This is similar to Jesus's emphatically telling us that if our eye offends us, it should be plucked out! (Remember that he was speaking symbolically!) Jesus may be stressing that the two worlds should not be blended – they do not go well together! (We cannot be servants to mankind's kingdom *and* God's kingdom, because a servant cannot serve two masters.)

Of course, his actions would draw protests from the people who were servants to the kingdom of man. "How can you do this?" they were indignant about what he did. "What proof of your authority do you have?"

The greatest proof, the foundations of the Christian belief, would be the Resurrection. Jesus brought this to the table quickly. "I will raise this temple up in three days," he responded, speaking of his own body, a temple of God.

So, the movement had become public. Jesus was now on stage, interacting with the other characters in the early scenes of this drama. What course would it take? How fast would things develop? There was no sure way of knowing how, or when, things would unfold – there was only the certainty that they would.

## Seeing Deeply

The two kingdoms are so different that conflict is inevitable. The reason is illustrated in the next passage:

<sup>John 3:19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be

exposed. <sup>21</sup>But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

The Light has come into the world. And who is this Light? None other than Jesus himself, sent by God to proclaim the saving truth.

But some people loved “darkness” rather than the Light. And what is this darkness? It is the way of mankind when God is excluded. It is when mankind establishes its own set of values, its own gods, and turns its back on the loving truth. Why do some people do this? Primarily, they have relinquished control of their minds and hearts to the growing dysfunction of their ego through fear, greed, power, lust, or other attachments of the mind. They become attracted to ideas, material goods, and relationships that provide safety, security, a sense of belonging, and power over others. They seek the privileges that mankind’s system has to offer.

It needs to be pointed out here that the passage condemns these people’s *deeds* as being “evil,” but not the people themselves. People who turn from God are not evil in themselves, but are lost to the truth. They need understanding and healing – not punishment and condemnation. John tells us in chapter 3 that Jesus came to the world to save it, not condemn it.

“Seeing deeply” is a skill that we all need to develop as children of God. It means to be able to look past the overt behavior and words of a person, directly into their inner true self. It’s there in everyone, if we are willing to look deeply enough. Far too often, we stop and judge a person but what we see on the surface; and yet this is often nowhere near who this person really is! Everyone carries with them the burden of life. It’s not easy being alive in this world – an often-dangerous place to be! So, we sometimes do things to preserve our life, our image, our position, merely based on the need to survive and be safe. This is deeply engrained into our psyche, so let’s give people a little slack and try to understand why they do what they do, and say what they say. See deeply – listen deeply.

## **A Balanced Ministry**

You may have heard that it is wise to choose your battles. There is a time and place for everything, and it is important to know when to engage, and when to avoid. We see this many times in Jesus's ministry when he decides to circumvent a potentially tense situation:

<sup>John 4:1</sup>Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John'—<sup>2</sup>although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—<sup>3</sup>he left Judea and started back to Galilee.

Jesus was becoming a public figure. People were aware of his message, and were undoubtedly spreading the word about his activities. This news would reach the ears of the Jewish leaders in the area, who already were concerned about John the Baptist. Now, they may have a bigger problem with Jesus.

By clearing the temple, Jesus was positioning himself against the current religious establishment and, in particular, the Pharisees. The Pharisees were members of an ancient Jewish sect, who believed that the way to God was through a strict observance of both traditional and written law. The better that one followed the law, the greater was God's favor toward that person. This led to ego-concepts of superiority and greater sanctity, something which was more a part of mankind's kingdom than it was God's.

But Jesus had to balance his confrontations with these groups against the need to reach the people with his message of love and compassion. If he got too tied up in arguments with the establishment, he may lose any momentum to deliver his message to the people. He would choose the time and place of his encounters.

As monastics, we realize the little value debating usually offers, as debates often turn into word fights with no clear winners. This does not mean that confrontation should be avoided, however, as we will see from the ministry of Jesus.

## **Conflict at Bethesda**

Many of the Jesus's conflicts with the "establishment" happened when he healed people. One of these incidents occurred at the Bethesda pool as recorded early in chapter 5. Jesus met a man who had been trying to enter the healing waters of the pool, but for many years kept getting pushed away. Jesus healed this man, and sent him on his way. But because it was the Sabbath day, some of the Jews began to criticize the man because he was healed and then carried his mat, which was unlawful to do on the Sabbath:

<sup>John 5:15</sup>The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup>Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' <sup>18</sup>For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

This time, Jesus chose to respond directly to them, thereby laying the groundwork for his authority:

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. <sup>20</sup>The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. <sup>21</sup>Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomsoever he wishes. <sup>22</sup>The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. <sup>25</sup>'Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup>For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; <sup>27</sup>and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

The link between Jesus and God the Father was clear and strong. Initially proclaimed in the first chapter of John, a more intimate revelation about this relationship was now offered. Jesus does what the Father does; there is a love and

a sharing between them; the Son would be honored as the Father is honored; and judgment is passed to the Son. Of course, this declaration drives the religious establishment nuts, because in their eyes this is blasphemy – deserving of death! They have found an enemy in Jesus, and to have an enemy is a unifying factor for the darkness, which makes them stronger in their minds. They have discovered a cause to justify their position of self-righteousness.

## **The Bread of Life**

But Jesus does not stop there. His momentum is growing, and he is willing now to further his message. While teaching at the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus explained:

John 6:53 ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.<sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day;<sup>55</sup> for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.<sup>56</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.<sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.<sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.’

Some of the Jews continued their complaints about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were (naturally) somewhat confused, and refuted what he had been saying: “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

They were gathering further evidence of his so-called blasphemy, as much as Jesus was willing to provide it. They felt threatened by this man, as he was shaking the status quo – turning their lives upside down! The tension between the two kingdoms continued to grow, heading on a collision course a short distance away.

## **The Tension Grows**

Chapter 7 of the Gospel of John highlights the increasing tension between Jesus and the local leaders. To protect and grow his ministry, Jesus sometimes chose to avoid trouble spots:

<sup>John 7:1</sup>After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him.

Tensions had reached a point where Jesus's life was in danger. Leaders of the local establishment were threatened enough that they wanted Jesus dead. Often in their weakness, worldly groups who are totally possessed by dark egos do whatever is necessary to survive. Values and morals disappear, and opponents are perceived as enemies which must be destroyed. Terrible things can happen at this point, and often do. Free will decisions are commandeered by a highly defective thought process.

Jesus was often torn between furthering his ministry, and pulling back to avoid conflict. During one of the Jewish festivals, Jesus was encouraged by his disciples to attend and show others what he could do and what he had to say so that the others believed in him. As we'll see in the following passage, at first Jesus decides not to go, but ends up going anyway. (And, while he starts out in secret, he ends up preaching in a synagogue!)

<sup>John 7:7</sup>The world doesn't hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come.' <sup>9</sup>After saying this, he remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret. <sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, 'Where is he?' <sup>12</sup>And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, 'He is a good man', others were saying, 'No, he is deceiving the crowd.' <sup>13</sup>Yet no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews.

The Jews were actively pursuing Jesus (but remember, this was not *all* Jews, just some of those running the establishment and those loyal to it), hoping to find an opportunity to confront him and arrest him. In verse 7, we see the underlying reason for this attitude toward Jesus – he was testifying against mankind's system,

pointing out the evil it produced. This was not everything mankind did – many things mankind does supports and spreads the kingdom of God. It is only those things controlled by the collective dysfunctional egos of mankind that he opposed. Things that were unfair, mistreated people, created inequalities, or were unloving all in the name of preserving special privileges and power for a select few people.

It's also important to note that many people were confused about Jesus – some saying he was a good man, and others saying he was deceiving the crowds. Truth can be a slippery thing, especially when the ego keeps applying grease to it. Those that don't want the truth to be known will deny it, color it, water it down, or use only part of it to sway the opinions of others. Even good people can be led astray when they don't have sufficient and truthful information. Do we see examples of this happening in today's world?

Reports of confusion within the crowd continue. This is particularly dangerous in a time of change, because without adequate information, people often tend to fill in any gaps with negative perspective. This is a natural consequence of self-preservation, creating an alert response to uncertain conditions:

John 7:25 Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? <sup>26</sup>And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? <sup>27</sup>Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.' <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, 'You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. <sup>29</sup>I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.' <sup>30</sup>Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. <sup>31</sup>Yet many in the crowd believed in him and were saying, 'When the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?'

Was Jesus a bad guy? Then why wasn't he arrested? Maybe he really is the Messiah? And yet we know where this guy is from, and if he was the Messiah, we will not know where he was from, would we? But look at all the good things he has done – surely this *must* be the Messiah!

Jesus tried to address this confusion, "You know me, and you know where I am from." Because the people could not, or refused, to see that he was the

Messiah, he said that they didn't know God as he did (or else they would believe him). This claim, however, made him vulnerable to charges of blasphemy – an act for which he could be arrested and killed.

The Pharisees acted on their threat, sending the temple police to arrest Jesus. But even the temple police were not sure whether or not Jesus was actually the Messiah. When they heard him speak they were confused, and they noticed that others thought he might be the Messiah, too. So, they returned to the Pharisees empty-handed trying to explain their predicament:

<sup>John 7:32</sup>The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering such things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus then said, “I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. <sup>34</sup>You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

<sup>35</sup>The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup>What does he mean by saying, ‘You will search for me and you will not find me’ and, ‘Where I am, you cannot come’?”

<sup>37</sup>On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, <sup>38</sup>and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup>Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. <sup>40</sup>When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” <sup>41</sup>Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some asked, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? <sup>42</sup>Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?”

<sup>43</sup>So there was a division in the crowd because of him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. <sup>45</sup>Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him?” <sup>46</sup>The police answered, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” <sup>47</sup>Then the Pharisees replied, “Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? <sup>48</sup>Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup>But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.”

The uncertainty of the crowd was diverse. Some believed right away the he was the Messiah, others looked at scripture and tradition to validate Jesus's claim. Still others disbelieved quickly.

This is not unlike what might happen today among people faced with a challenge to their beliefs. A lot of it depends upon the degree to which they have relinquished control of their reason to their ego. The greater the threat to the ego, the harder it will be to convince someone of the truth.

This should give us a bit more compassion and understanding when we face someone with strongly opposing views. Directly confronting them with 'evidence' that should be believed usually just results in greater resistance. Unless you can get past the ego and appeal to the inner true self, your effort will be useless. The Pharisees, deeply embedded within their own power structure, had a lot to lose if people followed Jesus. Therefore, they would be the hardest to convince, if they could be convinced at all. They grew more impatient with Jesus, and watched carefully for the right moment to strike.

## **The Pharisees Confront Jesus**

In Chapter 8 we see the Pharisees trying to build a case against Jesus so that his arrest would be justified – more agreeable to the people and to the Roman authorities. They bring to him a woman accused of adultery, who, according to the law, should be stoned to death. But Jesus climbs above the law into the realm of Light, where everything can be seen for what it truly is. Jesus usurps the law with love and understanding:

John 8:2Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. 3The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, 4they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. 5Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus

was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

What was Jesus writing in the dirt? I read an insightful idea once that Jesus was writing several types of sins in the dirt, sins that may have been committed by those standing around with rocks in their hands ready to stone the woman. Jesus probably wrote big enough that they could read these sins, letting them know that Jesus probably knew what sins they, too, have committed. If any of them threw a stone, they knew that they should be hit by one, too. Personal awareness was raised to a compassionate level. They turned, one by one, and walked away.

Through this lesson, Jesus also showed the Pharisees how to fulfill the law, not use it to satisfy personal biases and acquire privileges. The law was designed to bring people greater awareness and compassion. Sins do not require punishment – they require healing! Yes, sometimes amends have to be made, or restitution enacted, and that’s where the law can help. But for those that used the law to shape their power and prestige, this new philosophy was a definite threat.

Jesus grows bolder, seeing an opportunity to further advance his case. He once again lays claim to the sanctity of his ministry, to which the Pharisees immediately respond:

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’ <sup>13</sup>Then the Pharisees said to him, ‘You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.’ <sup>14</sup>Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. <sup>15</sup>You judge by human standards; I judge no one. <sup>16</sup>Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. <sup>17</sup>In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. <sup>18</sup>I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.’ <sup>19</sup>Then they said to him, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ <sup>20</sup>He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

The exchange continues, growing in intensity:

John 8:21 Again he said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.’<sup>22</sup> Then the Jews said, ‘Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, “Where I am going, you cannot come”?’<sup>23</sup> He said to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.’<sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.’<sup>25</sup> They said to him, ‘Who are you?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Why do I speak to you at all?’<sup>26</sup> I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.’<sup>27</sup> They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father.<sup>28</sup> So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me.’<sup>29</sup> And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.’<sup>30</sup> As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Jesus knows that sometimes debating with an opposition group is futile. Their mental armor is riveted over their hearts with fear, greed, power, and special interests. Nothing will get through – except perhaps a dramatic event. He indicates to them that they will not understand until Jesus has been “lifted up.”

Some people feel that this “lifting up” refers to the crucifixion when Jesus is nailed to the beams of wood. Others, myself included, believe this refers to the Resurrection, when Jesus is lifted up from the grave to a new life – the first born of many. It is the Resurrection that is the cornerstone of Christianity. It is God’s way of validating the ministry and message of Jesus of Nazareth. He was *indeed* the Son of God, and his message and power was *indeed* righteous and true. It was through the Resurrection that Jesus became the Christ, renewed with evermore power. The crucifixion was mankind’s response to Jesus. The Resurrection was God’s response to mankind.

## Further Encounters with the Community Leaders

In the next few chapters in John, we see the tension between Jesus and the community leaders continue to grow, eventually leading up to his arrest. Let's briefly look at some of these. Near the end of chapter 8 we see that Jesus was well aware that his life was in danger. But he continues to confront the Jewish leaders and those who are loyal to their power:

[Jesus speaking] <sup>John 8:37</sup>I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. <sup>38</sup>I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.'

<sup>39</sup>They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, <sup>40</sup>but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. <sup>41</sup>You are indeed doing what your father does.'

They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.' <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. <sup>44</sup>You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. <sup>46</sup>Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup>Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God.'

<sup>48</sup>The Jews answered him, 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?' <sup>49</sup>Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. <sup>50</sup>Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. <sup>51</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.'

<sup>52</sup>The Jews said to him, 'Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, "Whoever keeps my word will never taste death." <sup>53</sup>Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?'

<sup>54</sup>Jesus answered, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, "He is our God", <sup>55</sup>though you do not know him. But I know him; if I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a

liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup>Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.'

<sup>57</sup>Then the Jews said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' <sup>58</sup>Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.' <sup>59</sup>So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The arguments on both sides are clear. Jesus acknowledges that the Jews are true descendants of Abraham, but he also stresses that they are not doing what they were supposed to be doing. Their actions should be more loving and understanding, but instead, they are the actions of children of the devil. This is a graphic way of stating that these Jewish leaders are not in their right minds. In modern terms, we could say that they have been enveloped in their own dysfunctional egos. Their true selves were buried under layers and layers of illusion.

The Jewish leaders could not contain themselves any longer against this threat. They picked up stones to dispatch Jesus right without delay. Running out of good arguments and a lack of deep reasoning to support them, their frustration boiled over into violence. Jesus slipped away, avoiding the violence, and escaping death this time.

## **Chapter 9 – Jesus’s Ministry in Miniature**

John 3:16 has been called the Gospel in miniature, but chapter 9 of John could be referred to as Jesus’s ministry in miniature. If one wanted to get a sense for what Jesus was trying to do, and the resistance he encountered in doing it, then I would send them right to chapter 9. Let us take a closer look:

<sup>John 9:1</sup>As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.'

Jesus took a fresh approach to the concept of sin. As we saw earlier when the woman accused of adultery was about to be stoned, Jesus taught that a sin was something to be healed and not punished. In Jesus’s day, it was believed that if

someone sinned, he or she would suffer some punishment which could manifest itself in physical injury or disease. The punishment may even be passed on down through one or more generations. So, it was natural for the disciples to wonder whether it was the blind man who sinned, or his parents.

Certainly, people may suffer because of their sins, but it was not God who punished them. There are often natural consequences of sin that need no expeditor. If you step off the roof of a tall building, you will likely be hurt. If you eat tainted food, you will likely get sick. If you lie, steal, or kill, there are some natural consequence for it.

What might this mean for the concept of “original sin”? If it exists, would God strive to heal it, or seek punishment for it?

Jesus was a healer. We see in the next few verses one example of the many healings he performed during his ministry:

<sup>John 9:6</sup>When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

Even though the man gained his eyesight, there were those who could not believe in the miracle:

<sup>8</sup>The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, ‘Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?’ <sup>9</sup>Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the man.’ <sup>10</sup>But they kept asking him, ‘Then how were your eyes opened?’ <sup>11</sup>He answered, ‘The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, “Go to Siloam and wash.” Then I went and washed and received my sight.’

People see and hear what they want to see and hear. Often their egos create filters to protect ideas and biases that are not always founded in reality. Other people, like the Pharisees, will object to the good that has been done because it violates their concepts of righteousness. Here is how they reacted to the healing:

<sup>14</sup>Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees also began to ask the man how he had received his sight. He said to them, ‘He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.’ <sup>16</sup>Some of

the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.’

But others weren’t so sure, thinking that Jesus was from God: “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” Where the defenses of the ego are not as strong, there is room for the beginnings of enlightenment. But in that place of uncertainty between beliefs, there is often confusion – a natural consequence of change.

Still others want more proof before they believe. But this may be a good sign, too, as they are open to new ideas, and to the change that usually follows. But they may also just be looking for more ways to challenge the new ideas, too. Some of the Jews now went to the man’s parents in hopes that they could find something to debunk this healing. But they were turned away, so they confronted the healed man again:

<sup>18</sup>The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?’ <sup>20</sup>His parents answered, ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.’ <sup>22</sup>His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>Therefore his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’

<sup>24</sup>So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, ‘Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.’ <sup>25</sup>He answered, ‘I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’ <sup>26</sup>They said to him, ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’ <sup>27</sup>He answered them, ‘I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?’

They argue for a while, but the healed man makes his point:

<sup>30</sup>The man answered, ‘Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup>Never

since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man was not from God, he could do nothing.’

Unable to respond to the healed man’s argument, the opponents revert back to their original position, incapable of venturing forth into what might be possible:

<sup>34</sup>They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’ And they drove him out.

As Jesus often does, he goes past the healing of the body to the heart of the person to heal the spirit as well. He asks the healed man, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The healed man gains deeper sight and says, “Lord, I believe.”

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’ <sup>40</sup>Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’ <sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see”, your sin remains.

The blind man in this story received both physical *and* spiritual sight. This is why Jesus came to us – to give us the really important sight of the heart. Those who cannot as yet see the peace and prominence of God’s love in this life are spiritually blind. The illusion of power, privilege, prejudice, pride, and position blind them; residue of a dysfunctional egoic system that permeates not only their soul, but spreads into their social and political systems as well.

The Pharisees still claimed “to see,” but they couldn’t see the truth. Therefore, they were still spiritually blind, and in a state of sin (separation from God by choice). They have yet to be healed. Key points to ponder:

- Sins are not always the cause of troubles; sometimes it is simply fate, accident, or the intentions of others
- Healing, even on the Sabbath, is more important than Sabbath rules
- Jesus *is* from God because he does and says what God tells him to do and say
- Jesus came to help people see deeply, and to understand what harm the dysfunctional ego can do
- The establishment does not like to be threatened; they wanted to be rid of Jesus and eventually succeeded (for a few days)

## The Tension Grows

As with any group, the depth of understanding (“deep seeing”) varies greatly among the people. Some people “get it,” while others don’t have a clue. Much of this depends on a complex set of influences and experiences in one’s life, so it shouldn’t be too surprising that such a variation exists:

<sup>John 10:19</sup> Again the Jews were divided because of these words. <sup>20</sup>Many of them were saying, ‘He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?’

<sup>21</sup>Others were saying, ‘These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’

Jesus’s claim that he is the Messiah has gotten him into trouble with the establishment. In fact, they want to use this claim as one of the charges against Jesus. They challenge him once again at the festival of the Dedication in Jerusalem:

<sup>John 10:24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.’ <sup>25</sup>Jesus answered, ‘I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; <sup>26</sup>but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.

Jesus tries once again to convince them, but (probably in exasperation) explains that because they cannot see past their own false self, they are not part of “the flock.” He then reaffirms that “The Father and I are one” in verse 30. The Jewish leaders have had enough and pick up stones to stone him:

<sup>31</sup> The Jews took up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup>Jesus replied, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?’ <sup>33</sup>The Jews answered, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.’

Despite Jesus’s efforts to reach them, they try to arrest him again, but he slips away.

## The Council Plans His Death

It is important to keep in mind that many of the Jews believed in Jesus. Others did not, and supported the work of the Council, who met to discuss what they should do next. One of their concerns was that the occupying Roman army would assume that this man Jesus had his sights on becoming the king of Israel. To ensure that there would be no uprising, it is quite probable that they would come with force to suppress any insurgency:

<sup>John 11:45</sup>Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. <sup>46</sup>But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. <sup>47</sup>So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, ‘What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.’

The solution, they reasoned, was that it was better for one person to die (i.e., Jesus) than for a whole nation to suffer. The death of Jesus would save the nation from the Roman wrath, and may re-unite the people once again under the current establishment. (Making a martyr, however, often backfires resulting in the exact opposite of the intended goal.)

<sup>John 11:49</sup>But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup>You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.’ <sup>51</sup>He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. <sup>53</sup>So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

Jesus knew that things were getting tense, so he no longer walked about openly, but went to Ephraim in the wilderness with his disciples. The Council meanwhile put out what we might call today an “all-points bulletin” to find Jesus:

<sup>John 11:56</sup>They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, ‘What do you think? Surely, he will not come to the festival, will he?’

<sup>57</sup>Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

The establishment was getting desperate. Things were reaching a boiling point. They even extended their wrath toward Lazarus since he was winning people to Jesus:

<sup>John 12:10</sup>So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup>since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

## Holy Week

We now enter the final week of Jesus's earthly ministry. Jerusalem was to become the stage upon which one of history's greatest events would occur. Two opposing forces were on a collision course – on the one hand, Jesus had gained great popularity among both Jews and Gentiles, many believing him to be the long-awaited Messiah, others simply enraptured by his message of love; on the other hand, there were those forces that wanted very much to eliminate him because he threatened their *status quo*.

The forces opposed to Jesus were hesitant to act against him, however, because of the extent of Jesus's popular appeal. Voices in the streets and a show of support for Jesus weakened the resolve of the establishment. (Perhaps this is something that can be used in today's world, too!)

<sup>John 12:17</sup>So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. <sup>18</sup>It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. <sup>19</sup>The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!'

At one point, Jesus prayed that the Father's Name would be glorified by the work and mission of Jesus. A voice resounded from heaven, but was heard differently among the people:

John 12:28 'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.'

Depending upon what filters each person has, she or he will hear different things. Some heard the voice of God, some thought it was just thunder, and still others heard an angel. How can we develop our sense of hearing? Does it have to do with our skill at present moment awareness, and knowing how to tame our ego filters? These filters affect the hearing, but also one's sight and reason:

John 12:37 Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him.

But those who believed in Jesus could be found in many places, sometimes even within the establishment. And yet, they kept to themselves, because of the fear of what they might lose in mankind's world:

12:42 Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

Human glory is very appealing. Applause, awards, public recognition, status, power, prestige, privilege – what more could one ask for? Is it a case of not truly understanding the rewards of the Kingdom of God? Do we have a good sense of what it would mean to become our true selves in the Light of God? How would that feel? What would that be like?

12:46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. 47 I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

Now, even within the inner circle of Jesus's disciples, betrayal was sprouting from the soils of evil, and Jesus knew it:

John 13:2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. 13:21 After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.'

Why did Judas betray Jesus? Some would say it was preordained, as an accuser was needed to set the crucifixion in motion. But a simpler explanation would be that Judas himself first felt betrayed by Jesus. Judas may have been expecting Jesus to take physical control over the earthly powers, set up his own government as military Messiah, and appoint his disciples to positions of power – everything needed to feed the ego of Judas. But now he realized that Jesus was not that kind of Messiah, and his dreams would not be realized with Jesus.

With time running out, Jesus counsels his disciples one last time. In an intimate discussion, he strives to reach the heart of his closest friends, explaining once again some of the key differences between the two kingdoms:

*John 14:27*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

*John 15:18*‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.

In mankind’s kingdom, it is generally held that “ignorance of the law is no excuse.” In other words, if you break a law, even though you didn’t know that a law existed, you are still guilty of breaking that law. Jesus, however, would hold no one accountable who wasn’t aware of the true kingdom of God. A sin is founded in intent, but without the knowledge of the wrong, there would be no sin:

*John 15:24*If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.”

*John 16:2*They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. <sup>3</sup>And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.

Throughout history, and even in today’s world, atrocities are committed in the name of God. This is a serious error, as Jesus himself says, “they do this because they have not known the Father or me.”

And then, in the agony of the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays to God:

<sup>17:14</sup>I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup>I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but I ask You to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

## **The Arrest**

The conflict now reaches a climax. Judas, the betrayer, finalized his plans with the establishment, and put them in motion that evening:

<sup>John 18:2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, ‘For whom are you looking?’ <sup>5</sup>They answered, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus replied, ‘I am he.’ Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said to them, ‘I am he’, they stepped back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, ‘For whom are you looking?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he. So, if you are looking for me, let these men go.’ <sup>9</sup>This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, ‘I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.’ <sup>10</sup>Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave’s name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup>Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?’ <sup>12</sup>So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.

Jesus was now out of circulation, in the hands of those who wanted him gone. Now they had to present their case against Jesus, so they ran him past the cadre of officials.

## The “Trial”

First, the initial interrogation by Annas, the high priest:

<sup>John 18:13</sup>First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. <sup>14</sup>Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

<sup>19</sup>Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. <sup>21</sup>Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.’ <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, ‘Is that how you answer the high priest?’ <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?’ <sup>24</sup>Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Seeking to further build their case against Jesus, they send him to the high priest for further interrogation. Believing they had sufficient reason to pursue their charges, the next step would be to involve the occupying government, so they sent Jesus to Pilate:

<sup>John 18:28</sup>Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup>So Pilate went out to them and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this man?’ <sup>30</sup>They answered, ‘If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.’ <sup>31</sup>Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.’ The Jews replied, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death.’ <sup>32</sup>(This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

<sup>33</sup>Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ <sup>34</sup>Jesus answered, ‘Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?’ <sup>35</sup>Pilate replied, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?’ <sup>36</sup>Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’

<sup>37</sup>Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ <sup>38</sup>Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, ‘I find no case against him. <sup>39</sup>But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’ <sup>40</sup>They shouted in reply, ‘Not this man, but Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Why didn’t Pilate get more involved in this case and directly order Jesus’s execution? Why did he seem to avoid convicting Jesus? Normally, Pilate probably would have Jesus executed being the ruthless dictator that he was – but historians tell us that there was some political turmoil within the Roman Empire at the time. Local political leaders may have been vying for position or power, or just looking to stay alive. The Gospel according to Luke records that even Herod wouldn’t make a firm commitment to the execution of Jesus. Any unwanted attention from Rome could mean the end of a political career, so they “washed their hands” of it and let happen what would happen.

*John 19:*<sup>1</sup>Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup>And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup>They kept coming up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and striking him on the face. <sup>4</sup>Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.’ <sup>5</sup>So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Here is the man!’ <sup>6</sup>When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.’ <sup>7</sup>The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.’

<sup>8</sup>Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. <sup>9</sup>He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, ‘Where are you from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>Pilate therefore said to him, ‘Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?’ <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.’ <sup>12</sup>From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you

release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.’

<sup>13</sup>When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. <sup>14</sup>Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, ‘Here is your King!’ <sup>15</sup>They cried out, ‘Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!’ Pilate asked them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but the emperor.’ <sup>16</sup>Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

## The Crucifixion

<sup>John 19:16b</sup>So they took Jesus; <sup>17</sup>and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup>There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup>Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ <sup>20</sup>Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup>Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”, but, “This man said, I am King of the Jews.”’ <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’ <sup>23</sup>When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. <sup>24</sup>So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.’ This was to fulfil what the scripture says, ‘They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ <sup>25</sup>And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

<sup>28</sup>After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), ‘I am thirsty.’ <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Who killed Jesus? Some say it was the Jewish leaders, others say it was actually the Romans. But when we look deeply, seeing some of the root causes of Jesus's death, we see that it was collective dysfunctional egos that killed Jesus. It was the failure of people to see and understand the truth about the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of mankind. And this failure is not limited to any one ethnicity – we are all susceptible to it.

But God had a response to this horrific crime – not an angry response that we might expect, but one that would reveal even more about the love God has for this planet and the people on it, regardless of who they are – the resurrection!

## The Resurrection

<sup>John 20:1</sup>Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' <sup>3</sup>Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. <sup>4</sup>The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples returned to their homes.

<sup>11</sup>But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' <sup>14</sup>When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!'

(which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’ <sup>18</sup>Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity. Why? Because it is a loving response to a horrific crime that reveals much about Our Creator. Instead of an angry response, God raised Jesus to be the Christ. As I mentioned earlier, the crucifixion was mankind’s response to Jesus. But the Resurrection was God’s response to mankind. It proved beyond a doubt that that Jesus was indeed a gift from God. What Jesus taught was true; his wisdom for us was the path to salvation. His ministry and message would be delivered at any cost (even if it cost him his life) because it was a loving message and could not be stopped. It is clear that in this sense his life was a sacrifice for us.

One final note: This analysis of John’s Gospel doesn’t disprove the theological concept that Jesus’s death on the cross was a ransom payment for the sins of all mankind to appease a demanding God seeking retribution. However, the Gospel of John, for one, doesn’t appear to directly support this concept either. It does, however, offer another perspective on the reasons for the results when these two opposing kingdoms collided.

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