

Chapter 32

They're Gonna Crucify Me

BIBLE

Great fear came on the whole assembly, and on all who heard these things.¹

John testified, saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending like a dove out of heaven, and it remained on him."² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.³

"For first of all, when you come together in the assembly, I hear that divisions exist among you, and I partly believe it."⁴ If anyone among you thinks himself to be religious while he doesn't bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this man's religion is worthless.⁵

"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."⁶

"Now, you priests, this commandment is for you."⁷

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and as a pretense you make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."⁸

COMMENTARY

¹ **Acts 5:11**[*The "assembly" is the church*] In the Sixties, organized religion was in decline. The traditional, historical Christian doctrine was being questioned, and people were beginning to explore alternative spiritual ideas and practices. Church leaders felt threatened by the influence that rock and roll and the Beatles were having on young people.

² **John 1:32** In 1966, John made his famous remarks about Christianity: "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that. I'm right and will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now."

³ **Revelation 3:22**

⁴ **1 Corinthians 11:18**

⁵ **James 1:26**

⁶ **James 1:27** Paul Swift, *The Beatles and Philosophy* (2006): "By undermining the idea that institutionalized religions have a privileged access to divinity (above and beyond the individual) John Lennon suggested a new path in the quest for knowledge of God and self."

⁷ **Malachi 2:1**

⁸ **Matthew 23:13**

He said to them, “Full well do you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.⁹ For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”¹⁰

“You have devised shame to your house, by cutting off many peoples, and have sinned against your soul,¹¹ making void the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. You do many things like this.”¹²

He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.¹³ The God who made the world and all things in it, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, doesn't dwell in temples made with hands.”¹⁴

“Every priest indeed stands day by day serving and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹⁵ I hate, I despise your feasts, and I can't stand your solemn assemblies.”¹⁶

He said to them, “It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers!¹⁷ You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the platter, that its outside may become clean also.”¹⁸

⁹ **Mark 7:9** H. Jackson Browne Jr.: “Your religion is what you do when the sermon is over.”

¹⁰ **Hosea 6:6** True worship is going beyond religion and having a direct experience of God's love.

¹¹ **Habakkuk 2:10** Jon Stewart: “Religion. It's given people hope in a world torn apart by religion.”

¹² **Mark 7:13** Gandhi: “God has no religion.”

¹³ **Mark 2:27**

¹⁴ **Acts 17:24** The Dalai Lama: “This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.”

¹⁵ **Hebrews 10:11** In “Eleanor Rigby,” the priest, after serving at a funeral, “walks from the grave, no one was saved.”

¹⁶ **Amos 5:21** Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe: “People have a peculiar pleasure in making converts, that is, in causing others to enjoy what they enjoy, thus finding their own likeness represented and reflected back to them.”

¹⁷ **Matthew 21:13** Steve Maraboli: “The world is my church. My actions are my prayer. My behavior is my creed.”

¹⁸ **Matthew 23:26** Shakespeare: “God has given you one face, and you make yourself another.”

He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Don't you perceive that whatever goes into the man from outside can't defile him?¹⁹ Don't you know that you are a temple of God, and that God's Spirit lives in you?”²⁰

“You foolish ones, didn't he who made the outside make the inside also?”²¹ A fool has no delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own opinion,²² always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.²³

“For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.”²⁴

“They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.”²⁵ They have mouths, but they can't speak. They have eyes, but they can't see.”²⁶

This is John's testimony, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”²⁷

¹⁹ **Mark 7:18** Benjamin Franklin, from *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1757): “How many observe Christ's birthday! How few his precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep holidays than commandments.”

²⁰ **1 Corinthians 3:16** In “Hey Bulldog” John reminds us that “some kind of solitude is measured out in you. You think you know it but you haven't got a clue.”

²¹ **Luke 11:40**

²² **Proverbs 18:2** John F. Kennedy: “Too often we... enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”

²³ **2 Timothy 3:7**

²⁴ **Jeremiah 6:13** John: “Jesus was all right, but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me.”

²⁵ **Titus 1:16** Bertrand Russell: “We have two kinds of morality side by side: one which we preach but do not practice and another which we practice but seldom preach.

²⁶ **Psalms 135:16** “Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see,” John warns us in “Strawberry Fields Forever.”

²⁷ **John 1:19** Among his fellow bandmates, John had by far the most exposure to organized religion while growing up. He was involved with his local church for at least ten years, singing in the choir and attending bible study, and was confirmed at the age of 15.

He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land.²⁸ I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me."²⁹

"You have not known him, but I know him. If I said, 'I don't know him,' I would be like you, a liar. But I know him, and keep his word.³⁰ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."³¹

They were all filled with wrath in the synagogue as they heard these things,³² and said "Full of all deceit and all cunning, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"³³

Likewise, also the chief priests mocking among themselves with the scribes said, "He saved others. He can't save himself."³⁴ For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who don't confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist.³⁵

"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are dying, but to us who are saved it is the power of God."³⁶

²⁸ **Jonah 1:9**

²⁹ **John 7:29**

³⁰ **John 8:55**

³¹ **John 9:5**

³² **Luke 4:28**

³³ **Acts 13:10**

³⁴ **Mark 15:31**

³⁵ **2 John 1:7**

³⁶ **1 Corinthians 1:18** The "word of the cross" refers to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement: Jesus died for our sins. According to this doctrine, God sacrificed his only Son to atone for the sins of mankind. Since no sacrifice that man could provide was good enough to satisfy Divine justice, a perfect sacrifice was needed to save us from damnation. Thus, God became flesh, and Jesus died on our behalf, as our substitute.

The historical Christian faith dictates that if we believe that Jesus died for our sins and accept him as our personal savior, we will go to Heaven. But if we do not believe this, we will go to Hell. This seems harsh, and certainly, God does not want anyone to suffer eternal punishment, but His law is perfect and just, and since all of us are guilty, a price must be paid. We certainly cannot enter God's Heaven based on our own good works. Jesus has paid our penalty for us, and it is our choice to accept or reject this free gift.

“For Jews ask for signs, Greeks seek after wisdom,³⁷ but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Greeks.³⁸

“For while we were yet weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.³⁹ And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world.⁴⁰

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned.⁴¹ And there isn’t another ‘good news.’ Only there are some who trouble you, and want to pervert the Good News of Christ.⁴²

³⁷ **1 Corinthians 1:22** [*The religious leaders continue to defend the traditional church doctrine*]

³⁸ **1 Corinthians 1:23** The sacrificial death of Jesus replaced the insufficient animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, which had been a central part of worship. Animals were routinely slaughtered and their blood was smeared upon the sacrificial altar. The sacrifice of Jesus, the “lamb of God”, helped to end this primitive practice. The idea of substitutionary atonement made sense to the people living in that era, and helped to grow the new religion, setting Christianity apart from other faiths. Jesus became more than just another good moral teacher. Salvation was now possible simply by taking on a new belief system, and this was definitely a step in the right direction. Without the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the teachings of Jesus, and Christianity itself, may not have survived.

³⁹ **Romans 5:6** Jesus demonstrated to us that death has no spiritual reality. We are more than a body; we are infinite spiritual beings.

⁴⁰ **1 John 2:2**

⁴¹ **Mark 16:16** Voltaire: “The man who says to me ‘Believe as I do, or God will damn you,’ will presently say ‘believe as I do, or I will assassinate you.’”

⁴² **Galatians 1:7**

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”⁴³

“For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”⁴⁴ One who believes in the Son has eternal life, but one who disobeys the Son won’t see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.⁴⁵

“There is salvation in none other, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, by which we must be saved!”⁴⁶ For God didn’t appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁷

“As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,”⁴⁸ ‘Where I go, you know, and you know the way.’⁴⁹ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?’⁵⁰

⁴³ **John 3:16** When we believe in the teachings of Jesus and follow his example, we wake up to the Christ presence. As we learn to follow its guidance rather than rely on our own human will and emotion, our “flesh” is crucified. Our separation from God has been healed, and our “sin” problem has been dealt with. We are now at one with the Divine, experiencing substitutionary *at-one-ment*, having substituted God’s will for our own will.

⁴⁴ **2 Corinthians 5:21** Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias: “Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world.”

⁴⁵ **John 3:36** The Son is the Christ.

⁴⁶ **Acts 4:12** Faith in Christ saves us.

⁴⁷ **1 Thessalonians 5:9** In a 2008 survey of 35,000 Americans by the Pew Foundation, 70% of respondents agreed that “many religions can lead to eternal life.” Even a majority (57%) of evangelical Christians felt that their path might not be the only one that leads to salvation.

⁴⁸ **Matthew 20:17** (Anonymous) “If we don’t sin then Jesus died for no reason.”

⁴⁹ **John 14:4** Jesus is reminding his disciples that he has already showed them the way to reach the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁵⁰ **John 14:5** “Let me know the way,” Paul pleads in “The Long And Winding Road.”

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.’”⁵¹

As John was fulfilling his course, he said, “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. But behold, one comes after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.”⁵²

“For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.”⁵³ In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world.”⁵⁴

He said to them, “You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world.”⁵⁵ You will seek me, and won’t find me; and where I am, you can’t come.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ **John 14:6** Jesus is speaking here as the fully anointed Christ, or the “I am” presence. The only way to reach “the Father,” or our own innate spiritual identity, is through the Christ, the mind of God that is individualized in each one of us. The Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. “I am” is the way, “I am” is the truth, “I am” is the life. This verse is similar to a passage in the Bhagavad Gita, where Lord Krishna tells his followers “I am the way, come to Me.” *Christ* and *Krishna* are derived from the Greek word *Christos*, which means “the anointed one.” Interestingly, Jesus and Krishna are both said to have been born of a virgin.

⁵² **Acts 13:25** John, clarifying himself after his controversial remarks on religion: “I’m not saying that we’re better or greater, or comparing us with Jesus Christ as a person or God as a thing or whatever it is.”

⁵³ **1 Thessalonians 4:2**

⁵⁴ **1 John 4:17** Once love is perfected in us, we are like Jesus.

⁵⁵ **John 8:23** John: “My mother was of the sky, my father was of the earth, but I am of the Universe” (“Yer Blues”)

⁵⁶ **John 7:34** In “Strawberry Fields Forever,” unenlightened people may seek out John but will be unable to find him at their ordinary level of awareness: “You can’t you know tune in, but it’s alright.”

“Oh that you would be completely silent! Then you would be wise.⁵⁷ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”⁵⁸

Then the high priest tore his clothing, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy.”⁵⁹

As soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes, and they led him away into their council, saying,⁶⁰ “Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are defenses of clay.”⁶¹

They spoke many other things against him, insulting him⁶² saying “this man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”⁶³ Now I beg you, brothers, look out for those who are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and turn away from them.”⁶⁴

They said one to another, “Behold, this dreamer comes.”⁶⁵ For those who are such don’t serve our Lord, Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the innocent.”⁶⁶

⁵⁷ **Job 13:5** Becoming silent can open us up to a higher level of wisdom.

⁵⁸ **John 14:20** “I am you as you are me and we are all together,” John reminds us in “I Am The Walrus.”

⁵⁹ **Matthew 26:65**

⁶⁰ **Luke 22:66**

⁶¹ **Job 13:12**

⁶² **Luke 22:65** In 1969, John would elaborate further on his comment that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus (whom he refers to by his title, the Christ): “It’s just an expression meaning the Beatles seem to me to have more influence over youth than Christ...I wasn’t saying that was a good idea because I’m one of Christ’s biggest fans...and if I can turn the focus of the Beatles on to Christ’s message, then that’s what we’re here to do.”

⁶³ **Acts 18:13** Amiel: “A belief is not true because it is useful.”

⁶⁴ **Romans 16:17** Ronnie McBrayer, *Leaving Religion, Following Jesus*: “When ‘doctrinal integrity’ (a term usually defined by those using it) trumps kindness and grace, faith has wandered out of bounds.

Anything claiming to be truth that does not lead to compassion for our neighbors cannot rightfully be called the truth.”

⁶⁵ **Genesis 37:19** John: “You may say I’m a dreamer” (From “Imagine,” his 1971 solo composition).

⁶⁶ **Romans 16:18**

Some stood up, and gave false testimony against him, saying,⁶⁷
 “Behold, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they don't do them.”⁶⁸

“They come to you as the people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but don't do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their gain.”⁶⁹

“Those who see you will stare at you. They will ponder you, saying ‘Is this the man who made the earth to tremble, who shook kingdoms?’”⁷⁰

Then spoke the priests and the prophets to the princes and to all the people, saying, “This man is worthy of death; for he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.”⁷¹

“Who put him in charge of the earth? or who has appointed him over the whole world?”⁷²

The chief priests and the scribes stood, vehemently accusing him.⁷³
 They cried out again, “Crucify him!”⁷⁴

⁶⁷ **Mark 14:57**

⁶⁸ **Ezekiel 33:32**

⁶⁹ **Ezekiel 33:31**

⁷⁰ **Isaiah 14:16**

⁷¹ **Jeremiah 26:11**

⁷² **Job 34:13**

⁷³ **Luke 23:10** Christian psychologist and author Dr. James Dobson, once called "the nation's most influential evangelical leader" by Time Magazine, from his book *When God Doesn't Make Sense* [1983]: “When I think of arrogance and contempt for God, for example, I am reminded of the deceased rock star, John Lennon. He and his fellow Beatles rebelled against everything holy and clean...Lennon was also an outspoken atheist. He said this in 1966: ‘Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink’...As it turned out, Lennon was the one to go, succumbing in 1980 to five bullets fired by a psychopath on the streets of New York City. The wages of John’s sin turned out to be death. Now he must deal with the One who said ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord’. Any man is a fool, regardless of his intelligence or accomplishments, if he fails to reckon with the God of the universe. It’s that simple.”

⁷⁴ **Mark 15:13** In “The Ballad of John and Yoko,” John predicts “they’re gonna crucify me.”

When he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.⁷⁵ For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁷⁶ Don't touch my anointed ones! Do my prophets no harm!"⁷⁷

⁷⁵ **Matthew 27:12** David Noebel, *The Legacy of John Lennon* (1982): "Lennon's legacy, is one giant, multi-media portrait of degradation- a sleazy world of immorality, venereal disease, anarchy, nihilism, cocaine, heroin, marijuana, death, Satanism, perversion, and orgies."

⁷⁶ **2 Peter 1:17** John, in his last interview: "People always got the image I was an anti-Christ or anti-religion, I'm not. I'm a most religious fellow. I was brought up a Christian and I only now understand some of the things that Christ was saying in those parables. Because people got hooked on the teacher and missed the message."

⁷⁷ **Psalms 105:15** The Buddha: "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."