

Gospel of John

Study Guide

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Gospel of John:

Introduction

Author

THE TITLE OF THIS GOSPEL (ALSO frequently called “the Fourth Gospel”) indicates that its author was John. Early church fathers like Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria attributed authorship to the apostle John, the son of Zebedee. Some modern critical scholars have attempted to argue that the Fourth Gospel was penned by a different John (or someone else entirely), but this is speculation lacking genuine proof.

In addition to the testimony of the early church, the internal evidence from the Gospel itself supports the idea that it was written by John the son of Zebedee. Not only was the author an eyewitness to Jesus (1:14; 19:35), but he also identifies himself in 21:20 as “the disciple Jesus loved” (see 13:23; 19:26; 20:2). This disciple was present at the Last Supper (13:23), a meal that Jesus shared with the Twelve (see Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). Moreover, since this disciple is not named in the Fourth Gospel, he can’t be any of the disciples who are named (Andrew, Nathanael, Peter, Philip, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, or Judas the son of James).

We also see that this disciple whom Jesus loved was one of those present when the resurrected Jesus appeared to Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, Zebedee’s sons (James and John), and two other disciples (see 21:2; 21:20). That means he must be James, John, or one of the two unnamed disciples. James, however, died an early martyr’s death in AD 42—a date too early for him to have written the Gospel. And there’s no historical support for the Gospel being written by any of the remaining disciples. We thus have good reasons for believing that John the son of Zebedee authored the Fourth Gospel.

Historical Background

The author is aware of Peter’s martyrdom (21:19), which happened in AD 65/66. The church historian Jerome claims that John died in about AD 98; thus, the Gospel was written sometime between these dates. Many evangelical scholars think a date in the 80s is most likely. Testimony from the church fathers indicates that the apostle John ministered in Ephesus during the latter years of his life. Therefore, he likely wrote it from there.

Message and Purpose

John was the beloved disciple of Jesus, with whom he had a close relationship.

He wanted the readers of his Gospel to know Jesus Christ and become intimate with him as well. *To only know Jesus for heaven tomorrow is to miss the joy of heaven on earth in a growing, living relationship with Christ today.* John brings both of these concepts together in his book.

He says Jesus is the divine Messiah—God dwelling in our midst—who has a kingdom that is not of this world. John records eight miracles to show that Jesus is no ordinary man. He is a man, to be sure, but he is the God-Man, the Word who became flesh (1:14). He wept at a grave one moment, and raised Lazarus from the dead the next. John also records seven “I am” statements of Jesus, showing him to be the one who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush.

John conclusively demonstrates that Jesus is the Christ so that by believing in him you may have eternal life (20:31). But the Gospel of John is also about how to have abundant life (10:10), the fruitful, fulfilling, kingdom life that Jesus offers those who follow him.

The overall theme of John is **BELIEVE**! John uses the words **believe**, **believes**, or **believers** over 100 times! More than the Old Testament and more than any other book in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE

1 In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word** was with God, and the word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning.

3 All things were created through him, and apart from him, not one thing was created that has been created. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of men. **5** That light shines in the darkness and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify about the light so that all might **believe** through him. **8** He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. **9** The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who **believe** in his name, **13** who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15** John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said; the one coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me. **16** Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, **17** for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son who is himself God and is at the Father's side – he has revealed him.

Discussion:

1:1-2 The Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with Jesus conception by the Holy Spirit and born to Joseph and Mary. The Gospel of John reaches back further to the beginning when God created the heavens and earth. "**the Word**"; **means - the son of God, the eternal expression of God who "became flesh**. See John 1:14 – (The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.) **John is telling us that Jesus was with God in the beginning**, God the son, shared an eternal intimate father-son relationship starting in Genesis. The Father, Son, and Spirit are co-equal members of the Trinity.

1:3-5 Nothing in creation exists outside of the sovereign power of Jesus. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, including life. Since in Him, there is divine life, he is able to create life, both physical and spiritual.

Jesus gives life that provides light to men. Light is needed because darkness exists. Because of the temptation of Satan, humankind has fallen into the darkness of sin. Satan has blinded the minds of people to keep them from seeing the glory of Christ. But Jesus has come to bring illumination so that people can see things as they truly are. John shows us how Jesus was continually rejected; nevertheless, the darkness did not overcome his light. Though his enemies crucified him, he was actually glorified in his death on the cross and victorious in his resurrection, resulting in the provision of salvation for all people.

1:6-9 Here John, the apostle, introduces John the Baptist, sent on a mission from God. He came as a witness to testify about the light of Jesus, so that all might believe through him. Although John the Baptist was the first to bear witness to Christ, he is not the last. **All Christians have the responsibility to "testify about" him, to declare the truth of Jesus Christ "so that all might believe" in him. That's the foundation of evangelism and missions.**

1:10-13 Sin blinds people so that they don't know their Creator. Even his own people, the Jews, those who were waiting for the Messiah, those who should have recognized him, did not receive him. By and large, the Jewish people rejected Jesus during his earthly ministry. To receive Christ, is not passive, you must seek him and welcome him into your life. Those who do so are adopted into the family of God as his children. To believe in Jesus's name is to believe in his person (who he is) and work (what he has done). When someone receives and believes in Jesus for the free gift of eternal life, he undergoes a supernatural birth, the impartation of spiritual life. He is born of God – what Jesus would call being "born again".

1:14-18 This verse testifies to the glory of the incarnation. Conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary (Matt1:20), the divine Son of God became a man. Only person with a fully divine nature and a fully human nature. Our God fully experienced what it is to be human, yet without sinning. He faced hunger, pain, temptation, grief, hardship, and rejection. We face no category of human experience that our Savior has not endured.

John the Baptist confirms the superiority of Jesus. What does it mean to receive grace upon grace? John explains: The law was a good gift to Israel, revealing God's righteous character and his will for their lives. The problem was the law couldn't enable people to keep it. It highlighted their sin, but couldn't transform their sinful hearts. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

When we personally receive Christ, through his atoning death on the cross, our sins are forgiven and eternal life is imparted. That's amazing grace! The gospel does what the law could not do. Through Jesus, we have access to the unmerited and unlimited favor of God. Grace is the inexhaustible supply of God's goodness, doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. God will provide believers with a never-ending supply of "grace upon grace" through Christ.

No one can see God. Yet, since Jesus is fully God, to know Jesus is to know God.

Review:

- Jesus was with God at the creation (the Word)
- Jesus gives life through his death
- John the Baptist was sent as a witness to testify about the light of Jesus, to declare the truth of Jesus Christ so that all might believe in him. (the foundation of evangelism and missions)
- We have to pursue Jesus; when someone receives and believes in Jesus they receive the free gift of eternal life, they undergo a supernatural birth, the impartation of spiritual life. They are born of God – what Jesus would call being "born again".
- Jesus faced hunger, pain, temptation, grief, hardship, and rejection. We face no category of human experience that our Savior has not endured.
- The law couldn't enable people to keep it. It highlighted their sin, but couldn't transform their sinful hearts. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- No one can see God. Yet, since Jesus is fully God, to know Jesus is to know God.

John the Baptist's Testimony

19 This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He didn't deny it but confessed: "I am not the Messiah." **21** What then? They asked him. "Are you Elijah?" "I am not", he said. "Are you a Prophet?" "No," he answered. **22** "Who are you then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent up. What can you tell us about yourself?" **23** He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord" – Just as Isaiah", the prophet said.

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. **25** So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet? **26** "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. **27** He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." **28** All this happened in Bethany across from Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Discussion:

1:19:22 John had been preaching and baptizing, so the Jews wondered if he thought he was the Messiah, the coming King foretold in the scriptures. (Referring to the prophecy that Elijah would return.) John did confess that he was the voice of one crying out in the wilderness that Isaiah had predicted – the one that would prepare the way of the Lord.

John recognized his inferiority to the one coming after him; untying the sandals was the most menial job of a slave.

1:23:28 John confessed that he was the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness that Isaiah had predicted – the one that would prepare the way for the Lord. The word Lord in this quotation from Isaiah refers to God, thus identifying the deity of Jesus. Though John was not the King, he was getting things ready for him by calling people to be baptized and confess their sins (see Matt 3:5-6). John recognized his inferiority to the one coming after him. He wasn't even worthy to untie his sandals, which was the most menial role of a slave.

The Lamb of God

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I told you about; "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me. **31** I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. **33** I didn't know him, but he who sent me to

baptize with water told me, “The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on – he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. **34** I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

35 The next day John was standing with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. **38** When Jesus turned and noticed them following him he asked them, “**What are you looking for?**” They said to him, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” **39** “**Come and you’ll see,**” he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. **41** He first found his own brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah”, **42** and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, “**You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Peter**”.

Discussion:

1:29-42 This was the first time that John saw Jesus and refers to him as the “Lamb of God”. This was a reference to the Old Testament practice of animal sacrifice in general and specifically to the Passover offering of a lamb. Animals could not take away sin, only the sacrifice of Jesus could truly address the sin “of the whole world”. **For unbelievers, the problem is not that their sin hasn’t been atoned for; the problem is that they are unwilling to receive the atonement that Jesus has already made. The sacrificial death of Jesus removes the barrier caused by sin so that all people are savable.**

John said that he was sent to baptize with water; **Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit!**

John the Baptize pointed out Jesus to Andrew. Andrew then wanted his brother, Simon Peter, to meet Jesus. Notice the domino effect; John the Baptize pointed out Jesus to Andrew, who wanted his brother Simon Peter to experience him to. **When you understand who Jesus is, you’ll want others to know him.**

PHILIP AND NATHANAEL

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “**Follow me.**”

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. **45** Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

46 “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him.

“Come and see,” Philip answered.

47 Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “**Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.**”

48 “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. “**Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,**” Jesus answered.

49 “Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!”

50 Jesus responded to him, “**Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.**” **51** Then he said, “**Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**”

Discussion:

43-45 Jesus told Philip, “Follow me.” An invitation to follow Jesus is an invitation to become his disciple. Philip immediately went to find his friend Nathanael, and told him that he had met the Messiah, the one Moses wrote about. **When you are serious about Jesus, it doesn’t take long to become a witness for him.**

46 Nathanael was appalled that Jesus was from Nazareth! Nazareth, a town in Galilee, had a poor reputation. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but had been raised in Nazareth.

47-51 Jesus immediately shows his knowledge of all things. He knows Nathanael’s character and where he was when Philip found him. Nathanael hailed Jesus as the Son of God. **Jesus responded that because he believed, he would see greater things than this. When we exercise faith in what God reveals to us, he will grant us an even greater experience with himself.**

Jesus would tell his disciples later, “**No one comes to the father except through me.**” John 14:6

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God Review:

- When you understand who Jesus is, you'll want others to know him.
- Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit
- When you are serious about Jesus, it doesn't take long to become a witness for him.
- When we exercise faith in what God reveals to us, he will grant us an even greater experience with himself.
- No one comes to the father except through Jesus.

Chapter 2

The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine

1 On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus's mother was there, **2** and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding as well. **3** When the wine ran out, Jesus's mother told him, "They don't have any wine."

4 "What has this concern of yours to do with me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."

5 "Do whatever he tells you," his mother told the servants.

6 Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained twenty or thirty gallons.

7 "Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. **8** Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the headwaiter." And they did.

9 When the headwaiter tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from — though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom **10** and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people are drunk, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples **believed** in him.

12 After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

Discussion:

Context: Back in Bible days, people would get married to join together families to help build wealth and power. Jesus, His mother and disciples were invited to the wedding. They were not limiting the guest list; must have been a power couple getting married. They even hired a master of the banquet. The family wouldn't want anything to go wrong; such as running out of wine. The families' reputation would be blemished.

2:4-5 Jesus said that it was not yet time to publicly manifest his supernatural activity for all to see. His mother told the servants to do whatever he tells you. Notice that **Mary did not beg Him, didn't tell Him why it was important, and didn't tell Him a way to fix it. Her reply was, do whatever He tells you to do. We need the same reply! We need to be obedient and trusting that He already knows our situation and needs.** We need to be seeking His guidance and wisdom; not presenting solutions to Him, like He wasn't already aware of the situation. Also, Mary was talking to the servants. **We need to be like servants and just do what He says. All the servants have to do is obey.**

The Master is responsible for providing for the servants. All they have to do is be obedient. Don't underestimate the importance of that statement!

So, Jesus solved the dilemma without advertising his identity. We too should do whatever he tells us. **The Lord doesn't explain how he intends to deal with our problems, He simply calls upon us to believe and obey his revealed Word. Once we do that, we will have the opportunity to experience him at a deeper level.**

2:6-7 The jars were huge, holding almost 30 gallons each. Approximately 240 lbs each; six (6) jars = 1,440 lbs! The servants performed their task to the fullest, even though they did not know what was going to happen next. We need to do the same. Work hard for the Lord. Trust that He is going to do a miracle out of our simple obedience to a very simple task.

2:8=10 **The miracle of transformation of water into wine, points to the drastic change in people's lives that take place when we believe in Jesus and obey his Word.**

What does this tell us about Jesus? **When Jesus moves in your life, you can count on it being the best thing for you. If you position yourself rightly through obedient submission to his agenda, he can flip the script and give you his best - even when you thought the best was a thing of the past. Jesus is the new wine, and some of his best work comes in the midst of our emptiness.**

Jesus does things the opposite of the way the world thinks. **Jesus came and taught lessons that flipped the Jewish belief system on its head.** That's why we can't put God in a box and think that a miracle is going to be coming in a certain way. We must be obedient and let God do His thing. **God wants to do it different so that it is known that only He could have accomplished the miracle. He gives us miracles that become a testimony that no one can ever take from us.**

When we walk with Jesus, when we walk in the Spirit, when we walk hand-in-hand with the Master; then we will see more tangible evidence of His glory.

The jars were originally used for ceremonial washing. They used it for washing their hands, feet, dishes, etc. to be clean for eating. It was part of their law and custom.

Jesus is saying that ceremonial stuff just doesn't cut it. You need to be transformed! You need God's touch, not human tradition to witness His glory.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

13 The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. **15** After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. **16** He told those who were selling doves, **"Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"**

17 And his disciples remembered that it is written: Zeal for your house will consume me. **18** So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"

19 Jesus answered, **"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."** **20** Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?" **21** But he was speaking about the temple of his body. **22** So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they **believed** the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

23 While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many **believed** in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. **24** Jesus, however, would not entrust himself to them, since he knew them all **25** and because he did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man.

Discussion:

2:13-25 During the Passover, Jews made animal sacrifices. Those who traveled from far away would need to buy an animal to offer as sacrifices. However the sellers were charging an exorbitant amount; they were lining their pockets at the expense of the worshipers. Jesus made a whip and drove them all out of the temple.

When the Jews saw the ruckus Jesus had caused, they demanded, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?" In other words, by what authority are you doing these things? Jesus replied, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." They assumed he was speaking about the temple complex, the one constructed by Herod the Great and had taken 46 years to build; they thought he was crazy. Jesus was talking about the temple of his body. Later the Jewish leaders would deliver Jesus over to the Romans to be put to death. Then in three days, he would indeed demonstrate his authority for cleansing the temple. Interestingly, the disciples did not comprehend everything Jesus said either. It would take Jesus' resurrection for them to grow in their faith and understanding.

Jesus was not ready to reveal more of himself to the disciples because of their spiritual immaturity. They were not yet ready for full commitment to discipleship and public identification with him.

Jesus knew what was in their hearts and he can see into our hearts. **Spiritual growth is important because it expands our capacity to experience more of God. Jesus does not relate to all believers the same way.**

CHAPTER 3

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

1 There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “**Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

4 “How can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked him. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “**Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

6 **Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. **8** The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”**

9 “How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus.

10 “Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these things?” Jesus replied. **11** “**Truly I tell you, we speak what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not accept our testimony. **12** If I have told you about earthly things and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven — the Son of Man.**

14 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18** Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. **19** This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. **21** But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

Discussion:

3:1-2 The Pharisees were a group of conservative Jews devoted to keeping the law (and often adding to the law). Nicodemus considered Jesus a Rabbi and teacher, however his colleagues did not feel the same way. So, Nicodemus went to see Jesus under the cover of darkness to avoid the scorn of his fellow Pharisees.

3:3-8 Jesus prefaced his response with, “*Truly I tell you*”. Jesus frequently began important statements with this phrase, *emphasizing the spiritual significance of what he was about to say.*

Truly I tell you, “Unless someone is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand that *entering the kingdom required an individual to be spiritual rebirth; they had to believe! Simply being a religious leader wouldn’t cut it.*

Truly I tell you, “Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Summary: To enter the kingdom of God you must:

- Be born again; “Believe”
- Be born of water and Spirit; Baptized by water

3:9-13 Nicodemus was confused; he was thinking of a physical rebirth. Jesus was speaking of a spiritual rebirth.

The only way to experience spiritual birth is to be born of the spirit. Jesus said that the spirit is like the wind. You hear it, but you don’t see it; you can’t control it all you can do is see its effect.

It’s the same way when someone is ‘Born of the Spirit; God’s spirit invisibly does its work inside the heart, we can’t see it happening, all we see are the results.

Nicodemus did not understand that *God in grace can give people a new heart.*

3:14–21 The mention of Moses and the snake in the wilderness is a reference to an incident in the book of Numbers. The people of Israel were complaining that God and Moses had only brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness.

The Lord sent venomous snakes that bit and killed many. But God made a means of deliverance. He had Moses make a bronze snake and tell the people to look at it. If they trusted God and looked at the bronze snake, they would be healed.

Similarly, **the Son of Man would also be lifted up on a cross so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**

John 3:16 is perhaps the most well-known verse in the Bible. God gave his one and only Son as a substitute for sinful humans. Jesus would die in their place, bearing their sins. However, **salvation from sin through the Son requires faith. Everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** When you trust in Jesus alone as your personal sin-bearer, **divine judgement is removed and eternal life is freely given.**

God's purpose in sending his Son into the world was to bring salvation, not condemnation. Motivated by love, God acted to save the world. Condemnation only comes to the one who does not believe in the one and only Son of God. Salvation from sin and judgement is free for the taking.

Those who love darkness rather than the light, so they can hide their sinful ways, will experience eternal judgement for rejecting the free gift of God. Nicodemus was being challenged to come out of the darkness and into the light.

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, where he spent time with them and baptized.

23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were coming and being baptized, **24** since John had not yet been thrown into prison.

25 Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. **26** So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing — and everyone is going to him."

27 John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' **29** He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

Discussion:

3:22-30 Jesus and John the Baptist were preaching and baptizing in the same area. John's disciples were concerned because everyone was going to Jesus. John's pride was not wounded. **John acknowledged that no one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.** John's job had been given to him by God and understood that he was not the Messiah. He had been sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for the Messiah.

THE ONE FROM HEAVEN

31 The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. **33** The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. **34** For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands. **36** The one who **believes** in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

Discussion:

3:31-36 **John understood that to believe in the Son is to receive eternal life; reject him and experience divine wrath.**

JESUS AND NICODEMUS Review:

- To enter into the kingdom of God, one must:
 - Be born again; "Believe"
 - Be born of water and Spirit; Baptized by water
- When someone is 'Born of the Spirit; God's spirit invisibly does its work inside the heart, we can't see it happening, all we see are the results.
- The Son of Man would also be lifted up on a cross so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

- Salvation from sin through the Son requires belief.
- Everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.
- When you believe in Jesus alone as your personal sin-bearer, divine judgement is removed and eternal life is freely given.

CHAPTER 4

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

1 When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard he was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were), 3 he left Judea and went again to Galilee. 4 He had to travel through Samaria; 5 so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her, 8 because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

9 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

11 "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" 12 You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

13 Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. 14 But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."

15 "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

16 "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here."

17 "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,' " Jesus said. 18 "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

19 "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

21 Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

25 The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Jesus told her, "I, the one speaking to you, am he."

Discussion:

4:1-6 Now that Jesus and his disciples were baptizing more than John the Baptist, the Jewish leaders turned their attention to Jesus. So, Jesus left Judea in the south and went to Galilee in the north. To get there he had to travel through Samaria. The Jews disliked the Samaritans, considering them an unclean race. Samaria applied to the northern kingdom. When the Assyrians conquered it, they deported many Israelites, but left others in the land. Then the Assyrians settled other conquered people there who intermarried with the Israelites. This mixture of peoples also involved the mixture of various false gods. The Samaritans were their descendants with mixed ancestry and religious practices; thus the Jews despised them.

4:7-14 Going through Samaria would not be the normal route for an orthodox Jew, who sought to avoid contact with Samaritans. By going to Samaria, Jesus was taking a stance against that racist practice.

Jacob's well represents common ground, since both Jews and Samaritans revered Jacob.

Jesus was alone because his disciples had gone into town. Their absence implies that Jesus knew he couldn't effectively minister to the women with the presence of the racial and gender biases of the disciples.

Jesus sat down at the well around noon. Typically people wouldn't draw water during the heat of the day. So why would she arrive at a time when no one would be around? Perhaps because she was a person of questionable character.

Jesus willingness to engage her socially by drinking water from her cup opened the door for him to reach her spiritually. We too should seek to connect with different people as we share with them the good news of the gospel.

The woman was shocked when Jesus asked her for a drink; since Jews did not associate with Samaritans.

Jesus told her that if she understood who he was, she would be asking him for a drink of living water. He used the conversation about something physical to introduce her to a spiritual reality. Jesus did not use his culture or racial identity to minister to her; rather Jesus engaged her socially by drinking water with her, opening the door to reach her spiritually.

Jesus continued down the spiritual road; anyone who drinks from this water would be thirsty again; anyone who receives a drink from Jesus doesn't have to come back for another. His living water becomes its own everlasting well; thirst no more.

4:15-26 Still not grasping the point, the woman smugly asked for some of this water so that she would no longer get thirsty. So Jesus made the conversation a little more personal, "Go call your husband."

Her answer was only half true. Jesus knew that she had been married five times and the man she was currently living with was not her husband. Because Jesus was willing to drink from her cup, he could now address her sin.

She acknowledged Jesus' divine insight by calling him a prophet; then changed the topic to worship. The Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim, while the Jews worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus explained that the hour was coming when true worship of the Father wouldn't involve a specific location. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave would transform worship for God's people.

The woman had a genuine messianic expectation, "when the Messiah comes, he will explain everything to us."

Their conversation had reached the destination Jesus had intended. He introduced himself, "I am he."

Jesus can deal with your sin and he can straighten out your confusion. What's needed is an openness to receive him.

THE RIPENED HARVEST

27 Just then his disciples arrived, and they were amazed that he was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

28 Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They left the town and made their way to him.

31 In the meantime the disciples kept urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But he said, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

33 The disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?"

34 "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work," Jesus told them. 35 "Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest'? Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ready for harvest. 36 The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. 37 For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap what you didn't labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor."

Discussion:

4:27-30: The woman went into town, told everyone about Jesus, and asked, "Could this be the Messiah?" Her testimony was so effective that the locals turned out in droves to see Jesus!

The woman hadn't attended seminary; she had no theological training. She had simply met Jesus. In fact, she had only just met Jesus. But she knew enough to want to share him with others. New believers should be encouraged to share their faith as soon as possible.

4: 31-35: Jesus' greatest satisfaction was not in filling his belly, but in obeying God. For us too, the spiritual must come first before the physical.

4: 36-38: Jesus compared gospel ministry to sowing seeds and reaping a harvest. Sometimes one sows and another reaps. It may take several encounters with the gospel delivered through more than one messenger before a person believes.

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

39 Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of what he said. 42 And they told the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, since we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world.”

Discussion:

4:39-42 Through her faith in Jesus, the Samaritan woman testified, and many Samaritans from town believed in Jesus. They came to Jesus because of the woman’s witness; they stayed because they encountered Jesus personally.

There is no telling what God can do with your passionate, genuine testimony about how the grace of God transformed your life.

A GALILEAN WELCOME

43 After two days he left there for Galilee. 44 (Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) 45 When they entered Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him because they had seen everything he did in Jerusalem during the festival. For they also had gone to the festival.

THE SECOND SIGN: HEALING AN OFFICIAL’S SON (John 4:46-54)

46 He went again to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded with him to come down and heal his son, since he was about to die.

48 Jesus told him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”

49 “Sir,” the official said to him, “come down before my boy dies.”

50 “Go,” Jesus told him, “your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed.

51 While he was still going down, his servants met him saying that his boy was alive. 52 He asked them at what time he got better. “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him,” they answered. 53 The father realized this was the very hour at which Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” So he himself believed, along with his whole household.

54 Now this was also the second sign Jesus performed after he came from Judea to Galilee.

Discussion:

Context: Jesus is in the middle of his ministry. He has changed the water into wine and chased the money changers out of the Temple courts. Nicodemus has come to visit Jesus at night, wanting to know more. Jesus says that you must be born again. Jesus makes his way back up to the Galilee area and decides to go through Samaria, which Jews normally avoid. Jesus talks to the woman at the well; she believes; she tells others in her town; they come to see Jesus. They ask Jesus to stay with them; Jesus agrees to stay for two days. This is where we pick up today’s story. . .

4:43-45 After his brief trip to Samaria, Jesus went to Galilee, the region where he had grown up. Nazareth is in the Galilee region, along with Capernaum and Cana, where Jesus turned the water into wine.

Jesus had done some healings and miracles in Jerusalem. Some people have been following Him from the beginning. Imagine their excitement; their expectation. What will He do next? Where will he go? Who will He defy next?

4:46-54 A royal official, who was rich and powerful, had a problem. His son was sick, close to death. He went to Jesus to beg him to come and heal his son. His son was in Capernaum, which was about two days away. The official believes and knows that Jesus is the answer! He has heard all that Jesus has done.

Imagine the people gathered around. Yes!!! We want to see another miracle. We’ll make the two day trip with you!

Jesus mercifully healed his son from a distance at the moment the man believed. The official asked for “come”; Jesus said “go”. The official’s servants met him with the news that his son was living. When he inquired as to the time when

his son got better, they said, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” The official knew that was the exact time at which Jesus told him that his son would live. We know this because his faith was put into action.

When the official shared what had happened with his whole household, they all believed in Jesus as the Messiah and not just as a miracle worker.

Early Ministry and Signs Review:

- The miracle of transformation of water into wine, points to the drastic change in people’s lives that take place when we believe in Jesus and obey his Word.
- If you position yourself rightly through obedient submission to his agenda, he can flip the script and give you his best
- Spiritual growth is important because it expands our capacity to experience more of God.
- When someone is ‘Born of the Spirit; God’s spirit invisibly does its work inside the heart, we can’t see it happening, all we see are the results.
- The Son of Man would also be lifted up on a cross so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.
- Salvation from sin through the Son requires faith. Everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Divine judgement is removed and eternal life is freely given.
- Jesus can deal with your sin and can straighten out your confusion. What’s needed is an openness to receive him.
- There is no telling what God can do with your passionate, genuine testimony about how the grace of God transformed your life.

CHAPTER 5

THE THIRD SIGN: HEALING THE SICK

1 After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. 3 Within these lay a large number of the disabled, blind, lame, and paralyzed.

5 One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. 5 When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, **“Do you want to get well?”**

7 “sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. But while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

8 **“Get up,”** Jesus told him, **“pick up your mat and walk.”** 9 Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat.”

11 He replied, “The man who made me well told me, “Pick up your mat and walk.” 12 “Who is this man who told you, “Pick up your mat and walk?” they asked. 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, **“See you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.”** 15 The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well. 16 Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Discussion:

Context: Setting the stage before the miracle healing of the man that been waiting 38 years at the Bethesda pool:

- John is the only gospel writer to tell of this miracle.
- The miracle occurs very early in Jesus’ ministry.
- Jesus has called his disciples, turned water into wine, told Nicodemus about the concept of being born again in the spirit.
- He has talked to the Samaritan woman at the well and told her that He was the Messiah. The Samaritans asked Jesus to stay with them for 2 days. Jesus did, which went against the culture of the day. Remember, Jews and Samaritans hated each other.
- Jesus went back to Galilee and healed the official’s son.

5:1-6 Jesus saw a man there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years and asked him an interesting question:

Do you want to get well?

It suggests that some people have been stuck in their negative circumstances for so long that they have given up hope that things can ever change. God’s work occurs in cooperation with our will.

5:7 In response, the man told Jesus that every time there was a healing opportunity he never had anyone to help him into the pool. The healing was so near and yet so far away. The man’s situation was hopeless, and he had no one to offer him aid.

Personal: What is the thing that you have been dealing with the longest? Something physical, something spiritual, a relationship problem? An addiction that no one knows about? That’s how this man felt; this illness had been his life. However the sickness would not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s son may be glorified through it.

Notice that the man doesn’t ask to be helped. The rest of the miracles in the Bible, Jesus is asked to do a healing / miracle. This time, Jesus is the one that searches him out. Jesus is the one that asks about his story. You can best believe God is interested in our pain and struggles.

5:8-9 Jesus doesn’t allow the man to dwell on the past. Jesus calls him to action! Jesus told the man, “Get up . . . pick up your mat and walk. At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The man had not walked in 38 years, don’t you think it would have been a tough task to get up, walk and carry a mat. No! When Jesus brings life and healing it can be immediate! It can happen now! Jesus has that power! We must believe that and obey the command (action).

When we are feeling sorry for ourselves, Jesus will show up with an action, with something for us to do. Something for us to gain healing.

This was Jesus first healing in Jerusalem. Jesus is not popular and the man doesn't know who Jesus is. Jesus is the one that finds him, not the other way around. God is always checking up on us. Or checking-in with us. Wanting to know how we are doing. Of course, He already knows everything, but He makes the attempt to start the conversation to make sure we don't blow it. That we don't squander the opportunity / blessing that He bestowed upon us.

Jesus told the man to get right. He tells us the same today. God wants us to follow Him. Obey His commands. Trust that His way is best.

5:10 The Jewish religious leaders considered "picking up a mat" to be work; which was forbidden on the Sabbath. They had taken a divine command that provided physical rest for God's people and erroneously turned it into a human restriction on acts of mercy.

The healed man preferred to listen to the one with the miraculous power, not the leaders who were just practicing religion! He had lain there for thirty-eight years, and the religious leaders had never aided in his healing.

5:14 Later Jesus found the man in the temple and said, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you. It's possible then, that the man had been stuck because of unaddressed sin in his life. Sin carries long-term consequences.

5:15-16 Having encountered Jesus again, the man who had been healed found the Jewish leaders and pointed out to them the man who had done the healing. One would think that they would have been excited to meet Jesus. Instead they began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. While Jesus was changing lives, the leaders were playing religion. No matter how much religious activity you are engaged in, if you're not in the business of changing lives, then you're not in the business of Jesus.

HONORING THE FATHER AND THE SON

17 Jesus responded to them, "My Father is still working, and I am also." 18 This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him. Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father; making himself equal to God. 19 Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does these things. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing, and he will show him greater works than these so that you will be amazed. 21 And just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom he wants. 22 The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son, 23 so that all people 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."

Discussion:

5:17-18 Jesus justified his actions by stating, My Father was still working and I am working also. "God the Father was engaged in kingdom business and so was his Son. When the Pharisees heard this, they wanted to kill Jesus – not only because he was breaking the Sabbath, but because he was calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.

They hadn't misunderstood Jesus; they knew exactly what he was saying. The Son shared the Father's divine nature. He had the DNA of deity. As John himself has already said, "The Word was with god, and the Word was God". But as far as the leaders were concerned, Jesus's claims were blasphemy.

Anyone who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him. To reject Jesus is to reject God. There's no true religion without Jesus Christ.

LIFE AND JUDGEMENT

24 "Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life and will not come under judgement but has passed from death to life. 25 Truly I tell you, an 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. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has granted to the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he has granted him the right to pass judgement, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice 29 and

come out – those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation.

30 I can do nothing on my own. I judge only as I hear; and my judgement is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me.”

Discussion:

If Jesus is the judge of humanity, how does one escape divine judgement on sin? Jesus gives the answer: Anyone who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. To believe in the Son, is to pass from death (eternal separation from God) to life (eternal relationship with God). That’s eternal security. Faith in God’s promise through Jesus Christ guarantees eternal life to all who believe in Him. Assurance is the essence of saving faith.

One day, all who are in the graves will hear the Son’s voice and come out – either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation. There will be no exceptions. It depends entirely on their response to Jesus in this life. If they believe in Jesus, they will have done good things because of the eternal life in them. If they did not believe in Jesus, they will have done wicked things because of the lack of life in them.

Everything Jesus did, he did at the initiative of his Father. He did not seek his own will, but the Father’s. That, in fact, is what a life looks like when it is completely yielded to God.

WITNESS TO JESUS

31 “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony he gives about me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 I don’t receive human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 John was a burning and shining lamp and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

36 But I have a greater testimony than John’s because of the works that the Father has given me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about me that the Father has sent me. 37 The Father who sent me has himself testified about me. You have not heard his voice at any time, and you haven’t seen his form. 38 You don’t have his word residing in you, because you don’t believe the one he sent. 39 You pore over the scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. 40 But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.

41 I do not accept glory from people, 42 but I know you – that you have no love for God within you. 43 I have come in my Father’s name, and yet you don’t accept me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How can you believe, since you accept glory from one another but don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. 47 But if you don’t believe what he wrote, how will you believe my words?”

Discussion:

5:31-47 In fulfillment of the Scripture, John the Baptist testified to the truth about Jesus.

But there was a greater witness than John that testified to Jesus’s identity. That witness was Jesus’s works. The miraculous signs he performed were evidence that he was the Messiah sent from the Father. Jesus told the religious leaders, “My deeds are my validation.”

A person can diligently study the Bible (the written Word) and still miss Jesus (the living Word). Knowing God’s written Word is essential, but if your knowledge of it doesn’t lead you to the living Word, then you have completely missed the point. This sad fact was illustrated when Jewish leaders told the wise men that Scripture foretold the Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem, but they never bothered to make the trip to worship him.

CHAPTER 6

THE FOURTH SIGN: FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

1 After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee. **2** A huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick. **3** Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples.

4 Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near. **5** So when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him, he asked Phillip, “Where will we buy bread so that these people can eat?” **6** He asked this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

7 Phillip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn’t be enough for each of them to have a little.”

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, **9** “There’s a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish – but what are they for so many?”

10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, so they sat down. The men numbered about five thousand. **11** Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated – so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

12 When they were full, he told his disciples, “Collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted.” **13** So they collected them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces from the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten.

14 When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, “This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

15 Therefore, when Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Discussion:

6:1-6: Jesus was testing Phillip. Teachers give students test to allow them to apply what they have learned. When God test us, he grants us opportunity to apply spiritual truth to the challenging circumstances we face. With thousands of hungry people gathering, Jesus gave Phillip a pop quiz he’d never forget.

6:7-9: Phillip didn’t have a solution and Andrew pointed out a food source. However, how could a boy’s basket feed so many? Neither Phillip nor Andrew could see a solution to the dilemma.

6:10-11: Jesus took insufficiency, thanked God for it, and provided more than enough! Don’t let your lack of resources limit what God can do! Offer prayers of thanksgiving even in the midst of your insufficiency.

6:12-13: Jesus had the disciples collect the leftovers, which filled twelve baskets! That’s one for each disciple; a reminder of God’s supernatural provision for each disciple.

6:14-15: The people recognized that Jesus’s miracle pointed to his identity. But when Jesus realized that they wanted to take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. The people only wanted the physical benefits he offered. They wanted the blessings without the blessing.

THE FIFTH SIGN: WALKING ON WATER

16 When evening came his disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. Darkness had already set in, but Jesus had not yet come to them. **18** A high wind arose, and the sea began to churn. **19** After they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He was coming near the boat, and they were afraid. **20** But he said to them, “It is I, don’t be afraid.” **21** Then they were willing to take him on board, and at once the boat was at the shore where they were heading.

Discussion:

6:16-21 During the midst of a storm, the disciples saw Jesus and thought he was a ghost. Jesus calmed their fears and they took him on-board and at once they were at the shore. Once Jesus was in the boat, he dealt with their problem and delivered them where they needed to go.

When believers recognize and respond to the presence of Jesus in the midst of their struggles, they invite Him into their negative circumstances where Jesus takes control.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

22 The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw there had been only one boat. They also saw that Jesus had not boarded the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone off alone. **23** Some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. **24** When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. **25** When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

26 Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. **27** Don't work for food that perishes, but for the food that lasts for eternal life. Which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him."

28 "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.

29 Jesus replied, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the One He has sent."

30 "What sign then are you going to do so we may see and believe you?" they asked. "What are you going to perform? **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

32 Jesus said to them, "I assure you: Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the real bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always!"

35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again. **36** But as I told you, you've seen me, and yet you do not believe. **37** Everyone the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will never cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39** This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day. **40** For this is the will of My Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

41 Therefore the Jews started complaining about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

42 They were saying, "Isn't this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

43 Jesus answered them, "Stop complaining among yourselves. **44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. **45** It is written in the Prophets: And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to me- **46** not that anyone has seen the Father except the One who is from God. He has seen the Father. **47** I assure you: Anyone who believes has eternal life. **48** I am the bread of life. **49** Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

52 At that, the Jews argued among themselves, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

53 So Jesus said to them, "I assure you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. **54** Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, **55** because my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **56** The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I in him. **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of Me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your fathers ate-and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever."

59 He said these things while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Discussion:

6:22-25 The next day, the crowd that had been left behind was puzzled. The disciples had departed in a boat, but Jesus hadn't been with them. Yet Jesus was nowhere to be found. So they sailed to Capernaum and found Jesus on the other side of the sea. How was that possible? Jesus hadn't left in the boat, so they asked him. When did you get here? They suspected Jesus had arrived in some supernatural way.

6:26 In spite of their pursuit of him, Jesus could see the motivation of their hearts. You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. They hadn't sought him for who he was, they sought him for what he could give them. **They did not want Jesus, they wanted his blessings.**

God isn't opposed to blessing people. However, he is opposed to people who simply want to use him for his blessings – people who only want him for the stuff he can provide. Jesus is looking for those who don't want the blessings without Him.

When the Israelites sinned against the Lord by constructing a golden calf, he told Moses that though he would give them the land of Canaan, that God would not accompany them. But Moses would have none of that. He didn't want the Promised Land unless God would go with them.

6:27 Jesus urged them to give the spiritual priority over the physical: Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. **When you want God more than you want his blessings, you will receive him – as well as whatever he graciously plans to give you.** We are to pursue more of God not just more from God. They were striving for miraculous physical food, when **the Son was offering the free gift of spiritual food – that is, eternal life.**

6:28-29: They wanted to know what works God required of them. Jesus answered that **the only thing God demands of those wanting to receive the free gift of eternal life is belief in his Son, Jesus Christ.**

6:30-35: This was not good enough for the crowd, they wanted to know what sign Jesus would perform. They pointed to the Old Testament miracle when Moses supplied Israel with mana. Jesus corrected them, Moses hadn't given them any bread, God was their source, not Moses. In fact, God was offering them something greater than mere bread, he was offering them true bread – the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. But the crowd was still thinking about food. Jesus made himself clear, "I am the bread of life... No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who **believes** in me will ever be thirsty again.

We must consider Jesus our source of life. If we "feed" on him as the bread of God, we "will never die". This eternal life is permanent, secure, and irrevocable.

6:36-40: Though the people had seen Jesus's works, they refused to **believe**. They desired physical blessings over spiritual ones. Jesus told the crowd, that whoever **believes** in the Son is a gift from the Father to the Son. When they come to Jesus and he will never cast them out. It's God's will that the Son lose none of those whom the Father gives to him. This means that **when you trust in Jesus Christ, you are eternally secure.** If you come to him for salvation, you cannot be lost again. Not only does the Son vow not to lose you, but **he also promises to give you eternal life and raise you up on the last day. As Jesus was raised from the dead, believers will also be raised.**

6:41-46: Rather than **believe** in Him, the Jews started complaining. How could this guy call himself bread that came down from heaven? We know him. He's not from heaven, he's from Nazareth!

Jesus rebuked them for their complaints and spoke of God's ministry of drawing people to himself. **No one can come to the Son unless the Father ... draws him.** Jesus is the true light that gives light to everyone. **It's what a person does with that light that determines whether or not he will come to Jesus, who is the only one who has seen the Father. This drawing is universal and can be rejected.**

6:47-51: The beautiful promise of the gospel is that anyone who **believes** in Jesus has eternal life. When Jesus said, "I am the bread of life", it was the first of his seven "I am" statements recorded in John's Gospel. He would also say "I am" in an absolute sense to emphasize his divine identity.

The Jews were looking for physical bread. Jesus was offering living bread; **believe** in Him and live forever.

The bread I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. Jesus was speaking of the sacrifice of his body on the cross for the sins of the world. On the basis of this sacrifice, **those who trust in Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for their sins will receive eternal life.**

Jesus wasn't asking for their opinion. He is stating truth and fact. He is telling them what the Father wants to reveal, so they can draw closer to Him.

This guy is Joseph's son, how could He come down from heaven? How can we eat His flesh? Lots of questions! Too much talking and not enough listening and believing and trusting and obeying.

6:52-59: They want to live forever. They want to be eternally with the Father, but they don't want to be cannibals. It doesn't add up. Since the people had not made the mental jump from the physical to the spiritual, they thought Jesus was talking nonsense.

Just as you die without physical food, **you also cannot have spiritual life apart from Jesus. You must eat him – that is, receive him, trust him, believe in him, have faith in him, partake of him.** The one who feeds on him will live because of

him. Also, it is the believer's continuous act of faith through partaking spiritually of the body and blood of Christ in Communion that the benefits, power, and blessings of the new covenant are increasingly accessed.

Jesus wanted to be crystal clear on HIS expectations!

How do we deal with things / situations when our expectations don't line up with HIS expectations? When we have doubts, God usually sends another word / person to confirm what we've heard.

Jesus said they can only live forever if you feed on Me. Manna was temporary; your physical food now is temporary. I am the REAL MEAL. I'm all you need. Me + nothing = EVERYTHING!

Jesus says these things while in the synagogue, a holy place where the Word of God and prophecy is spoken. Where people come to feel the presence of the Lord and fellowship with others so they can be united. But Jesus' words are getting ready to divide the crowd. Jesus is always the dividing line.

MANY DISCIPLES DESERT JESUS

60 Therefore, when many of His disciples heard this, they said, "This teaching is hard! Who can accept it?" No one was figuring it out! Why, because they were trying to figure it out! Forget the figuring and add the faith! I'm sure it didn't make sense to Abraham when God said to take Isaac up the mountain and sacrifice him to Me. What? If I do this how will God fulfill the promise to make my descendants as numerous as the sand and stars? Abraham could have done lots of figuring, but he DIDN'T! Instead, the next morning he got up and took Isaac up for the sacrifice. He was obedient! Let God figure out the details. And we know how that story ends. God provides another sacrifice and Abraham calls God, Jehovah, Jireh, the God who provides. We can get to the point too . . . by obeying.

It's not too hard. God gives us tests that we can pass, by His grace.

61 Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were complaining about this, asked them, "Does this offend you? **62** Then what if you were to observe the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? **63** The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. **64** But there are some among you who don't believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who would not believe and the one who would betray Him.) **65** He said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father."

66 From that moment many of His disciples turned back and no longer accompanied Him. **67** Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve, "You don't want to go away too, do you?"

68 Simon Peter answered, "Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. **69** We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God!"

70 Jesus replied to them, "Didn't I choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is the Devil!" **71** He was referring to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, one of the Twelve, because he was going to betray Him.

Discussion:

6:60-63: Many of his disciples were confused and didn't comprehend what he was talking about. Jesus asked them, "What would you think if they saw him returning to heaven? Would that change their minds?"

The flesh does not give life. Only the Holy Spirit gives life. The Holy Spirit takes a person's belief in Jesus's words and activates Jesus's life in that person to give them a spiritual life. Salvation cannot be attained through human effort.

We say, I'll believe it when I see it! But Jesus says, you will see it after you believe it!

Think about the order of things. . . What comes first? Jesus rising to Heaven (which the disciples will see) or the Last Supper??? Ah, last supper first. . . then death, resurrection and then Ascension into Heaven. But they don't see any of that if they quit at the hard lesson.

What things does God want to reveal to us after the hard lesson?

6:64-65: Jesus knew those who did not believe in him as well as the one who would betray him. Therefore he said, "No one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father." In other words, God only grants to Jesus those who are willing to respond to him. The Father cooperates with a person's decision to believe in his Son.

6:66-69: Only those who continue with Christ in the school of discipleship will receive more understanding from him. Those who drop out will not.

6:70-71: Jesus had chosen these twelve followers to travel and minister with him. Yet he chose one of them, knowing that he was a devil – an unbeliever who would hand him over to his enemies for money. John was letting his readers know in advance that Jesus was talking about Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, who would betray him.

None of this took Jesus by surprise and God's plan would be fulfilled even though it involved using Satan and his followers to accomplish it.

There is no Plan B; Jesus is it! Every time they roll with Jesus He blows their minds. The feeding of the 5,000; Turning water into wine; Raising of the dead; Miracle healings.

They have come to KNOW. No one can take away what they've seen. How else does the Gospel survive 2,000 years? People don't die for a lie. They die for truth! They die for freedom! They die to save others!

CHAPTER 7

THE UNBELIEF OF JESUS'S BROTHERS

1 After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since he did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill him.

2 The Jewish Festival of Shelters was near. 3 So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples can see your works that you are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he's seeking public recognition. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." 5 (For not even his brothers **believed** in him.)

6 Jesus told them, "My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it — that its works are evil. 8 Go up to the festival yourselves. I'm not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come." 9 After he had said these things, he stayed in Galilee.

Discussion:

7: 1-6 Like others who encountered Jesus, his brothers got excited about miraculous signs but were unwilling to embrace his true identity. The same is true today. **Many only want what Jesus can do for them, but are unwilling to believe in him for eternal life and follow him as disciples.**

JESUS AT THE FESTIVAL OF SHELTERS

10 After his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up, not openly but secretly. 11 The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, "Where is he?" 12 And there was a lot of murmuring about him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "No, on the contrary, he's deceiving the people." 13 Still, nobody was talking publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

14 When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. 15 Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How is this man so learned, since he hasn't been trained?"

16 Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't mine but is from the one who sent me. 17 If anyone wants to do his will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. 18 The one who speaks on his own seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. 19 Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

20 "You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?"

21 "I performed one work, and you are all amazed," Jesus answered. 22 "This is why Moses has given you circumcision — not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers — and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses won't be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment."

Discussion:

7:10:16 Jesus said, "My time has not arrived." It was not the time for his public presentation as the Messiah. Jesus knew that His death would follow soon after that open acknowledgement.

Jesus does things according to his Father's way and timetable, not ours. And, God's ways and timing are perfect.

Jesus made it very clear that His teachings were from the one who sent me.

7:17 Jesus also made it clear what was necessary for true spiritual insight. If anyone wants to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God. **A willingness to receive God's word and obey them must proceed understanding.** If we approach God with a mindset of obedience, he will give us clarity into his Word and discernment. Clarity comes through commitment.

THE IDENTITY OF THE MESSIAH

25 Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? 26 Yet, look, he's speaking publicly and they're saying nothing to him. Can it be true that the authorities know he is the Messiah? 27 But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where he is from."

28 As he was teaching in the temple, Jesus cried out, “You know me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the one who sent me is true. You don’t know him; 29 I know him because I am from him, and he sent me.”

30 Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come. 31 However, many from the crowd **believed** in him and said, “When the Messiah comes, he won’t perform more signs than this man has done, will he?” 32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about him, and so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent servants to arrest him.

33 Then Jesus said, “I am only with you for a short time. Then I’m going to the one who sent me. 34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

35 Then the Jews said to one another, “Where does he intend to go that we won’t find him? He doesn’t intend to go to the Jewish people dispersed among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does he? 36 What is this remark he made: ‘You will look for me, and you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come’?”

Discussion:

7:30 An angry mob wanted to seize Jesus. But nothing happened, because their plans were not God’s plans. Similarly, **no matter how bad your circumstances appear, nothing can harm you outside of God’s will and timing!**

7:33-36 The Jews were still thinking on a physical level rather than the spiritual, and they wondered where Jesus was going. Approaching God’s Word at the purely physical level will inevitably result in confusion. We need our antennae tuned to God’s heavenly broadcast.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 The one who **believes** in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” 39 He said this about the Spirit. Those who **believed** in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

Discussion:

7:37-39 On the last day of the festival, the Jews engaged in a water-pouring ritual. While this was happening, Jesus called out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” There is only one oasis for those who are in a spiritual desert. If you’re spiritually parched, go to Jesus. He won’t merely quench your thirst, He’ll provide internal streams of living water. But it gets better. **Jesus living water is actually the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within believers to give them eternal life.** Yet, Jesus would first have to be glorified – that is crucified and resurrected.

THE PEOPLE ARE DIVIDED OVER JESUS

40 When some from the crowd heard these words, they said, “This truly is the Prophet.” 41 Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some said, “Surely the Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee, does he? 42 Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Messiah comes from David’s offspring and from the town of Bethlehem, where David lived?” 43 So the crowd was divided because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to seize him, but no one laid hands on him.

Discussion:

7:40-44 The crowd did not know that Jesus was fulfilling prophecy. Jesus was born from the line of David in Bethlehem (Matt 1:1-17) as Scripture had foretold and grew up in Galilee, which the Scripture also foretold (Micah 5:2 and Matt 2:19-23)

DEBATE OVER JESUS’S CLAIMS

45 Then the servants came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him?”

46 The servants answered, “No man ever spoke like this!”

47 Then the Pharisees responded to them, “Are you fooled too? 48 Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in him?”

49 But this crowd, which doesn’t know the law, is accursed.”

50 Nicodemus — the one who came to him previously and who was one of them — said to them, 51 “Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he’s doing, does it?”

52 “You aren’t from Galilee too, are you?” they replied. “Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”

Discussion:

7:45-53 The servants intended to seize Jesus, however changed their mind. Jesus’ sermon was so mesmerizing that it prevented them from obeying wicked men.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, had been secretly captivated by Jesus teaching, spoke up that, “Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears from him. He calmed everyone down to urge them against condemning someone without proper investigation. But the Pharisees had no need for investigation since they knew that no prophet arises from Galilee. They were wrong! Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Chapter 8

AN ADULTERESS FORGIVEN

2 At dawn he went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to him. He sat down and began to teach them.

3 Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. 4 “Teacher,” they said to him, “this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. 5 In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” 6 They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him. Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. 7 When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, **“The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.”** 8 Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. 9 When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. 10 When Jesus stood up, he said to her, **“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”**

11 “No one, Lord,” she answered.

“Neither do I condemn you,” said Jesus. **“Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”**

Discussion:

8:1-5 While Jesus was teaching in the temple the Pharisees brought before Him a woman caught in adultery. Jewish law required that both parties involved be judged. Where was the man? This smells like a set up. If Jesus opposed stoning, he would be opposing the law Moses commanded. If he advocated her death, he would be in trouble with the Romans because the Jews were not permitted to execute anyone.

8:6 Clearly the Pharisees had no interest in a righteous application of the law. They were deceitfully trying to trap Jesus so that they might have evidence to accuse him. They did not know who they were dealing with!

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his figure. Just as the Ten Commandments had been “inscribed by the finger of God”, whatever Jesus was writing was a subtle way of communicating to the Pharisees that he was the divine author of the law. Writing on the dirt was also an allusion to the fact that the law had been given to mankind who had been created out of dust and were therefore vulnerable to weakness and sin.

8:7-8 When the Pharisees persisted in questioning him, Jesus proposes a test of his own. The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her. Jesus wanted to know which one of the Pharisees was qualified to judge her. The obvious answer; none of them! Their hypocrisy was revealed because they had failed to produce the man. Then Jesus stooped down a second time to write with his finger, just as God had written the Ten Commandments on two tablets. Moses smashed the first tablet after the Israelites had sinned. The second giving of the law meant God was giving his people a second chance just as he was about to do with this woman; something the hypocritical Pharisees were unwilling to do.

8:9-11 Each of the Pharisees knew that he himself was guilty of the same or similar sin, which disqualified him from acting as a judge. Because of their malicious intent, they would be subject to the same judgement they were seeking to impose on the woman. (Deut 19:16-19) They all walked away.

Jesus asked the woman if any accusers remained. When she said, No, Jesus made a staggering statement. Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on do not sin anymore.

Notice that **Jesus demonstrated grace and mercy to her; removing her condemnation before he told her to start living right.** A true understanding of grace and mercy does not endorse or promote sin; rather it's designated to produce gratitude and holiness.

We do not obey God in order to earn forgiveness. Rather, grace and mercy are to motivate our obedience. **When we truly understand God's amazing grace, we do not go out and merely sin less – we go out and seek to sin no more.**

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

12 Jesus spoke to them again: **“I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”**

13 So the Pharisees said to him, “You are testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not valid.”

14 “Even if I testify about myself,” Jesus replied, “My testimony is true, because I know where I came from and where I’m going. But you don’t know where I come from or where I’m going. 15 You judge by human standards. I judge no one. 16 And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. 17 Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. 18 I am the one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me.”

19 Then they asked him, “Where is your Father?”

“You know neither me nor my Father,” Jesus answered. “If you knew me, you would also know my Father.” 20 He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple. But no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

Discussion:

8:12-16 Jesus declared the second of his seven “I am” metaphors (see John 6:48, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:4, 15:1)

I am the light of the world. Those who follow Him, His true disciples, will never walk in the darkness. The Pharisees accused Him of simply bragging on himself, therefore, his testimony was not valid. On the contrary, Jesus told them, My testimony is true, because I know where I came from (heaven) and where I’m going. The divine Son of God isn’t capable of giving false testimony. Nor is he capable of rendering false judgement. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lacked spiritual perception, judging Jesus according to human standards.

8:17-18 Jesus pointed to the law of Moses, which declared the testimony of two witnesses to be true (8:17). Jesus’s words passed this requirement. He testified about himself through his messianic claims, and the Father also testified about him through his miraculous deeds (8:18; see also commentary on 5:36-40).

8:19-20 When they asked about his Father, Jesus said, You know neither me nor my Father. Thus, he publicly condemned them: the religious leaders of Israel did not know God. Then he explained that knowledge of the Father is intertwined with knowledge of the Son: If you knew me, you would also know my Father (8:19). **Anyone who rejects Jesus cannot know God because the former provides access to the latter.**

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEPARTURE

21 Then he said to them again, “I’m going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I’m going, you cannot come.”

22 So the Jews said again, “He won’t kill himself, will he, since he says, ‘Where I’m going, you cannot come?’”

23 “You are from below,” he told them, “I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not **believe** that I am he, you will die in your sins.”

25 “Who are you?” they questioned. “Exactly what I’ve been telling you from the very beginning,” Jesus told them. 26 “I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the one who sent me is true, and what I have heard from him — these things I tell the world.”

27 They did not know he was speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own. But just as the Father taught me, I say these things. 29 The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.”

Discussion:

8:21-24 Once again, Jesus told them that he would be going somewhere they couldn’t go. Instead, they would die in their sin because of their rejection of him. When they heard this, the religious leaders assumed that Jesus was talking about suicide, demonstrating that their spiritual insight hadn’t improved. So Jesus got straight to the point: You are from below. . . . I am from above. He and his interlocutors were approaching their debate from two different realms, the physical and the spiritual. Unless the Jewish leaders could see Jesus from a heavenly perspective, they would experience eternal judgment. Unless they believed that Jesus was the Messiah and received his payment for their sins, they would die in [their] sins.

8:25-27 When they asked Jesus, “Who are you?” he responded, exactly what I’ve been telling you from the very beginning. In essence he said, “You keep asking me the same old question. I answer it. And you refuse to listen.” **Jesus had been speaking the Father’s word, but they didn’t even know he was speaking to them about the Father. These people weren’t making a spiritual connection because they were rejecting what had already been revealed. This is an important spiritual principle. When you reject what God has revealed, spiritual truth becomes even more difficult to**

understand. On the other hand, when you are willing to receive what God has revealed, he provides further spiritual clarity.

8:28-29 Though the Father had sent the Son into the world, he had not left [him] alone. Jesus affirmed that the Father was with him because he always [does] what pleases him. In response to these words, many believed in him. Those who likewise place their faith in Jesus can have confidence that God will receive them—not because of their perfect faith but because of Jesus’s perfect obedience. He always does what pleases the Father.

TRUTH AND FREEDOM

30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him. 31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. 32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 “We are descendants of Abraham,” they answered him, “and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?” 34 Jesus responded, “Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free. 37 I know you are descendants of Abraham, but you are trying to kill me because my word has no place among you. 38 I speak what I have seen in the presence of the Father; so then, you do what you have heard from your father.”

39 “Our father is Abraham,” they replied. “If you were Abraham’s children,” Jesus told them, “you would do what Abraham did. 40 But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You’re doing what your father does.” “We weren’t born of sexual immorality,” they said. “We have one Father — God.”

42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn’t come on my own, but he sent me. 43 Why don’t you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to my word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out 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 tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. 46 Who among you can convict me of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? 47 The one who is from God listens to God’s words. This is why you don’t listen, because you are not from God.”

Discussion:

Context: The Pharisees continue to challenge Jesus on who He is. Who gives you the authority to do these things (like heal on the Sabbath, overturn money tables, forgive sins)? How did you get these miraculous powers to cast out demons? Explain the mystery surrounding yourself. Who gave you such wisdom and authority in your teachings?

The Pharisees were not asking to prove that Jesus is from God. Their intent is to prove that Jesus is the devil, false prophet, phony, and dangerous for the people to follow. The Pharisees don’t want to celebrate Jesus, instead they want to embarrass Him. They were looking for evidence to kill Him.

8:30 To those who had believed in him, Jesus said, If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. So notice that you can believe in Jesus but not continue in his word and, thus, not function as a true disciple. Justification does not automatically result in continuous discipleship.

8:32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Knowing the truth, means becoming intimate with it, like becoming one with it. That’s how real freedom, real sin, and struggles come... from a close relationship with the Lord. You can overcome minor things on your own. But the big stuff (Strongholds, sexual sin, unforgiveness, anger, fear, and depression) requires a close relationship with the Lord.

Note two things. First, there is such a thing as truth. Truth is the absolute standard by which reality is measured. We live in a relativistic society that denies absolute truth, claiming, “What’s true for you may not be true for me.” But truth is not based on our feelings, experiences, or desires. Truth is God’s viewpoint on every matter, and it is not subject to redefinition. Pilate would ask, “What is truth?”, and the answer to that question is “Jesus”. Second, knowing the truth results in genuine freedom. Don’t be confused. Truth alone doesn’t liberate; rather, the knowledge of the truth liberates. Deliverance comes when we know the truth—that is, when we hang out in what God says. When this happens, we will experience the truth setting us free from illegitimate bondage.

8:33-36 Hearing him, the Jews appealed to their lineage from Abraham and denied that they needed to become free. They were basing their spiritual status on their physical link to Abraham. However, Jesus corrected them: Everyone who

commits sin is a slave of sin. But if the Son sets you free, you really will be free—that is, delivered experientially. Only the Son can set a person free from enslavement to sin. But remember what the Son requires for freedom: “continue in my word”. For true freedom, we need the living Word and the written Word. The living Word (Jesus) provides us with legal freedom from sin through his atoning death on the cross; thus, we no longer stand condemned before God. But we must continue in his written Word (Scripture) in order to enjoy freedom from the sin to which we can be enslaved in our daily lives.

When Jesus sets you free, it’s for REAL! No turning back! Are we so filled with worldly things that we have no room for His word?

8:37-43 Jesus and the Jews who opposed him engaged in a paternity dispute. Because they were trying to kill him, Jesus said they were following the counsel of their father. They claimed that Abraham was their father. However, Jesus insisted that they weren’t behaving like him but like their father. What “father” did Jesus have in mind? Next the Jews claimed that God was their Father and also jabbed at Jesus with a low blow: We weren’t born of sexual immorality. In other words, they said, “We know all about your illegitimate birth, Jesus! Your mother was pregnant before she was married” (see Matt 1:18). But Jesus said, “if God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God”. Thus, he denied their accusation; his birth wasn’t immoral but supernatural. Moreover, he denied that God was their Father. God had sent Jesus, yet they refused to listen to [his] word.

Sin creates a distortion when trying to read or discern God’s word. Sin blocks clear transmission!

8:44-47 But if Abraham wasn’t their father, and God wasn’t their Father, who was? Jesus didn’t pull any punches: You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. These Jews had lied about Jesus’s mama, but he was telling the truth about their daddy! The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and they wanted to kill Jesus. The devil is the father of lies, and they rejected Jesus because he told the truth. In other words, their opposition to Jesus was Satanic in origin. They wanted to do whatever their father did. Like father, like children. This explained all of their actions. Their religion was a fiction, and their allegiance was to the wrong kingdom. They were not from God.

JESUS AND ABRAHAM

48 The Jews responded to him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you’re a Samaritan and have a demon?”

49 “I do not have a demon,” Jesus answered. “On the contrary, I honor my Father and you dishonor me. 50 I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and judges. 51 Truly I tell you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

52 Then the Jews said, “Now we know you have a demon. Abraham died and so did the prophets. You say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died. Who do you claim to be?”

54 “If I glorify myself,” Jesus answered, “My glory is nothing. My Father — about whom you say, ‘He is our God’ — he is the one who glorifies me. 55 You do not know him, but I know him. If I were to say I don’t know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.”

57 The Jews replied, “You aren’t fifty years old yet, and you’ve seen Abraham?”

58 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.”

59 So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.

Discussion:

8:48-50 Instead of repenting, the Jews fired more insults at Jesus, claiming that he was a Samaritan and demon possessed. While they dishonored the Son, the Son steadfastly honored his Father, and the Father glorified the Son.

8:51 If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. Every person who believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior will escape death. When a Christian dies, he or she is immediately ushered into the presence of the Lord. Have no fear. Physical death is merely a transition into eternity. Jesus says the he is not here for my own glory! He is being obedient and pointing all glory to God.

Jesus is talking eternal life with the Father, as opposed to eternal separation. Obedience is part of that package.

8:52-53 Still thinking purely from the perspective of the physical rather than the spiritual, they were now certain that Jesus was crazy. How could he say that those who keep his word won't die? After all, Abraham died and the prophets died. Did he think he was greater than them?

8:54-56 Again, Jesus denied that they knew the one whom they claimed as their God. **Jesus goes back to God getting the glory. What if we gave glory to God in everything we do! Family, work, etc.**

8:57-58 Then, since they brought up Abraham, Jesus made an amazing claim: Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad; see Gen 22:1-4; Heb 11:19). What? That sent the Jews reeling. How could Abraham have encountered Jesus? They said, you aren't fifty years old yet, and you've seen Abraham? If that statement upset them, his follow-up would really send them over the edge: Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. This is one of Jesus's most profound claims to deity in the Gospels. He didn't say, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am." The former wording could be ambiguous and misunderstood, but not the latter. Not only was he claiming to have existed in Abraham's day, but he was also claiming divine identity. When Moses asked God his name so that he could tell the Israelites who had sent him to them, God responded, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you" (Exod 3:14). Thus, Jesus identified himself as the God who had spoken to Moses. That is an astounding assertion. Now they really have evidence to kill Him! But it simply confirms what John has already said: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

8:59 The Jews understood exactly what Jesus was saying. They thought he was speaking blasphemy. That's why they picked up stones to throw at him. But, once again, it wasn't Jesus's time, so he was hidden from them and went out of the temple.

Chapter 9

THE SIXTH SIGN: HEALING A MAN BORN BLIND

As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth.

2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him. 4 We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

6 After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. 7 “Go,” he told him, “wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). So he left, washed, and came back seeing.

8 His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit begging?” 9 Some said, “He’s the one.” Others were saying, “No, but he looks like him.”

He kept saying, “I’m the one.”

10 So they asked him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

11 He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed I received my sight.”

12 “Where is he?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he said.

Discussion:

9:1-5 Jesus spotted a man who had been blind from birth. Many at that time believed such serious birth defects were the product of personal sin. Therefore, his disciples wondered whether it was the man’s sin or his parents’ sin that had resulted in his condition. But Jesus corrected their thinking: Neither this man nor his parents sinned. . . . This came about that God’s works might be displayed in him. Sickness, disease, and defect are not necessarily the result of personal sin (consider Job!). Sometimes God allows negative conditions and circumstances in our lives in order to accomplish positive goals: our good, his glory, and bringing benefit to others (see Gen 50:19-20; Rom 8:28). God had granted blindness to this man so that he could do amazing works in his life. As the light of the world, Jesus had come to do the works of God. The disciples didn’t ask, how or when are you going to heal him. They are more concerned with why/how did he get in this situation. Unfortunately, we have those same questions as believers when we are helping others. Notice Jesus’ answer. Not all bad situations are caused by sin. However, all things work together for the good of those who love God (see Romans 8:28)

9:6 Jesus spit in the dirt (the substance from which man was made; see Gen 2:7), made some mud from it, and put it on the blind man’s eyes. Thus the word of God (i.e., spit from Jesus’s mouth) mixed with humanity (i.e., dirt from which man was created) provided the basis for the miracle. By using his saliva, Jesus was imparting divine DNA to the human defect in order to bring about a supernatural transformation of his humanity. This was to serve as a physical illustration of the supernatural spiritual transformation Jesus came to bring (see Isa 35:4-5)

Jesus doesn’t ask for the disciples’ opinions on His statement. He leads by example. He gets to work; He gets his hands dirty. The earthly way would be to remove a layer of something to being sight. But Jesus puts another layer on top of the eyes. Anything Jesus touches can heal.

9:7 Then he told the man to wash. Thus, his healing required an act of faith on his part. Jesus gave the man something to do, and the man did it. When his face was washed, he could see for the first time in his life. There is a 2-step process. Be faithful and willing to let the Master put mud on you. Then you still have to be more faithful and willing to go wash. Sometimes we stop at step 1, waiting for the miracle, when God has additional steps for us. Trust! Be obedient. See it through to the end. Naaman was told to dip/wash seven time to heal his leprosy. What if he stopped at #6? Each step is an opportunity to quit which makes the enemy happy. Each step is an opportunity to be faithful, makes God happy.

9:8-12 At first his neighbors didn’t believe this was the same man they knew. So he had to keep saying, “It’s me!” They pelted him with more questions. Though he gave credit to the man called Jesus for healing him, he didn’t know where he had gone. After all, he had never seen him! So the crowd took the man to the Pharisees, where the moment of rejoicing would turn sour.

Everyone sees the evidence of the healing. They might not have witnessed the mud session or the washing, but they see that this man can now see. Now he gets a chance to tell his testimony of his encounter with Jesus. How Jesus healed him. How his life is now changed because of Jesus personal touch on his life. Oh, what a wonderful story to tell. Are we telling our story? Your story should have so much passion, that people tell you to calm down. Maybe they've heard the story before, but you keep telling it!

THE HEALED MAN'S TESTIMONY

13 They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. 14 The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight.

"He put mud on my eyes," he told them. "I washed and I can see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

17 Again they asked the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?" "He's a prophet," he said.

18 The Jews did not believe this about him — that he was blind and received sight — until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight.

19 They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

20 "We know this is our son and that he was born blind," his parents answered. 21 "But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. 23 This is why his parents said, "He's of age; ask him."

24 So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

25 He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"

26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

27 "I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?"

28 They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man — we don't know where he's from."

30 "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. 32 Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."

34 "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

Discussion:

9:13-16 When you were healed, the Pharisees had to inspect you and give the final blessing (sign-off) that made it official. But Jesus needs no sign-off, no approval by man. His Word, His actions STAND ON TRUTH and cannot be denied. The man gives his testimony to the Pharisees, but they are more concerned about what day of the week that the healing occurs.

As it turns out, Jesus had healed the man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees had already tangled with Jesus previously regarding his healing activity on a Sabbath day. So it's really not surprising that they were unwilling to celebrate. Instead of rejoicing over the miraculous healing of a man who had been born blind, in fact, the Pharisees complained about the day of the week on which he'd been healed. After the man explained what happened, some of the Pharisees scoffed: This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath. Others insisted that a sinner couldn't perform such signs. So they were divided over Jesus.

9:17-23 They asked the man who had been healed what he thought, and he hailed Jesus as a prophet. But, since they were unwilling to accept this praise of Jesus, they tried to obtain evidence to deny that the miracle even happened. The Pharisees already had their mind made up. Like talking to a brick wall. They see evidence, they have testimony of many witnesses. Still they don't believe.

So they summoned [his] parents and asked them. But the parents were too interested in self-preservation. They were afraid because they'd heard that the Jews planned to ban from the synagogue anyone who confessed [Jesus] as the Messiah. They acknowledged that their son was previously blind. But they claimed to know nothing else and instead said, Ask him. Nothing much has changed today. If you publicly confess Christ, you will likely experience some form of ridicule or ostracism. Believing in a generic "God" is safe; confessing Christ will earn you mockery.

The parents provide more evidence that the man was blind. The parents are afraid of being kicked out of the church. Is that how God wants us to fellowship? Is that unity in the Spirit? Is that how God wants His leaders to receive Him? We need to be wise about anything that hinders us from giving God glory.

9:24-25 The Pharisees turned again to the man who had been healed. They urged him to give glory to God because they were convinced that Jesus was a sinner, and they wanted the man to agree. Given the man's limited experience with Jesus, he simply confessed the one thing he knew to be true: I was blind, and now I can see!

9:26-29 When they asked him to give another account of his healing, it was clear that they hadn't believed him the first time. So the man was blunt: I already told you . . . and you didn't listen. He wondered whether they wanted to hear his story again in order to become Jesus's disciple. That riled them up! They ridiculed the man, claimed to be followers of Moses, and said they didn't even know where this man (Jesus) had come from.

The Pharisees go back to Moses, the Law. Not, God the Father, but the Law. They worship the Law and not the Father, that is how they get their marching orders. Law, law, law, they've memorized it. There's no room for the spirit. There's no room for God to get a word/whisper in.

9:30-34 This is an amazing thing! Though the man's parents may have feared the religious leaders, he himself boldly challenged the illogical thinking of the Pharisees. He laid out the facts: They didn't know where Jesus was from; Jesus had granted sight to a blind man. The man was bold! He's preaching the TRUTH to the Pharisees! God doesn't listen to sinners but to those who do his will; no one has heard of someone opening the eyes of the blind. How do you explain such supernatural activity, if it's not from God? The man could only reach one conclusion: If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything. In going toe-to-toe with the Jewish religious leaders, he had bested them. Humiliated by this humble, once-blind beggar, they told him he was born entirely in sin, rebuked him for trying to teach them, and kicked him out of the synagogue to limit his influence on others.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

36 "Who is he Sir that I may believe in him?" he asked.

37 Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

38 "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him.

39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind."

40 Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?"

41 "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

Discussion:

9:35-38 When Jesus heard that the man had been persecuted in this way, he showed up. Whatever negative consequences you experience for confessing Christ are not the last word. He knows what you've been through. Jesus was aware of the blind man's circumstances, and he tracked him down. Then Jesus asked him, Do you believe in the Son of Man? Remember: the man had never even seen Jesus. He wanted to believe in the Son of Man, but he didn't know who he was. That's when Jesus introduced himself: You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you. So the man confessed, I believe, Lord, and worshiped him. There's only one being in the universe worthy of worship, and Jesus didn't stop the man. As John says at the beginning of his Gospel, "The Word was God" (1:1). Accepting worship was a declaration of deity. Were Jesus not divine, it would be an endorsement of idolatry.

9:39 Jesus articulates his purpose for coming into this world. Jesus didn't come to JUDGE, but came to PREPARE us for the Judgement. He came to teach, warn, heal, explain, reveal, manifest the Father, so that we would CHANGE our ways.

He preached repentance. Jesus had come into the world to give spiritual sight to those who desperately acknowledge their spiritual blindness.

Jesus did everything possible to sway our minds and hearts to think like Him. God wants no one to perish. Every day is a new opportunity to get it right. It shows His patience with us. God can bring plague and end life any time He wants; but are we ready.

9:40-41 When the Pharisees heard this, they smugly asked Jesus in essence, “Are you calling us blind?” If they had been willing to admit their blindness—their lostness, their sinfulness—Jesus would have shown them grace. But since they claimed to see, their sin remained. Their treatment of the Son of God confirmed their lack of sight. When you think that nothing is wrong with you, everything is wrong.

The Pharisees were being sarcastic; we know the Law, we aren’t blind. Jesus says I wish you KNEW you were blind, so you would seek help. You should be begging me to reveal the Father to you. But your arrogant pride and trust in the Law keeps you from seeing the light.

The Law is a mirror, it reveals sin. It does not fix sin. It does not give victory. Only the Holy Spirit, only God, only Jesus Himself brings grace and true victory / sight.

Chapter 10

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“Truly I tell you, anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber.

2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus gave them this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

7 Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. 9 I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. 11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them. 13 This happens because he is a hired hand and doesn’t care about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

19 Again the Jews were divided because of these words. 20 Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and he’s crazy. Why do you listen to him?” 21 Others were saying, “These aren’t the words of someone who is demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Discussion:

Context: Jesus is speaking during the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It is an eight (8) day feast, occurring in September (time of harvest). The Israelites build a hut and eat all their meals during the feast in the huts. It was created to celebrate God’s provision for the Israelites while they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after the Exodus from Egypt. Candles and lights are an important symbol of this feast.

Jesus is continuing the conversation with the Pharisees from chapter 9.

10:1-5 After highlighting the spiritual blindness of the Jewish religious leaders—those who should have been Israel’s spiritual shepherds—Jesus explained the difference between shepherds and thieves. The one who climbs the fence of the sheep pen is a thief and robber, but the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd. Satan and his followers have no concern for the well-being of the sheep. They enter the sheep pen for their own gain. But a true shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them. In return, the sheep follow their shepherd only and flee from strangers. **Jesus was using this imagery to describe himself and to emphasize the importance of his followers (his sheep) having a personal knowledge of and relationship with him (their shepherd).**

A gate back in those days was not a swinging gate that you would think of today. It was an opening in the fence, where the watchman or shepherd would sit or lay in order to block the entrance. The shepherds lead from the front and the sheep follow. Notice when Jesus calls his disciples, he says “Come, Follow me”. It’s easier to follow someone when you can see them. God led the Israelites with a cloud by day and fire by night. These objects were in front of the people. He clears a way for them.

Back in those days, the sheep pens were like co-ops. Many shepherds put their sheep in the pen, so when the shepherd shows up and talks, only the sheep that recognize the voice will follow.

10:6-10 Since the people couldn’t grasp the meaning of Jesus’s illustration, he made it plain: Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. To enter the safety of the pen or to go out and find pasture, the sheep have to go through the gate. Jesus is “the way” to safety and life. We must go through him to be saved. Thieves come to destroy, but Jesus came to give life and to give it in abundance. Jesus doesn’t want you merely to possess eternal life but also to possess the full experience of life. **Following the shepherd leads to blessing and joy and a growing experience of eternal life. It allows**

him to rebuke and reverse the enemy's attempts at blocking the blessings, purpose, and spiritual fulfillment God has for your life (see Joel 2:25; Mal 3:11).

10:11-15 Not only is Jesus the gate for the sheep to pass through, but he is the one who protects and provides for them: I am the good shepherd. Notice he's no mere shepherd but a good one. What does a good shepherd do? He lays down his life for the sheep. A hired hand, by contrast, is only there to earn a living. He doesn't care about the sheep because they aren't his. So when a wolf attacks, the hired hand runs away, while the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep. But the good shepherd knows his sheep, and they know him. Jesus confessed, I lay down my life for the sheep.

Though it wouldn't have been clear to his listeners at that moment, Jesus was speaking of his substitutionary atonement when he would sacrifice his life on the cross for the sins of the world. As he would tell his disciples later, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends". Though the Pharisees cared only for themselves, Jesus was prepared to sacrifice everything to save the sheep he loved. **No matter how far you stray, Jesus will search for you and carry you back when you can't carry the load anymore.**

10:16 Jesus did not come to give his life for Jews only. God the Father gave his one and only Son because he loved the world—all mankind, without exception (see John 3:16; Heb 2:9; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 John 2:2). The other sheep that Jesus would save are Gentiles who would believe in him so that the church would consist of both Jewish and Gentile believers (see Eph 2:11-22). There will be one flock, one shepherd. Jesus knows that the gentiles need a savior and will listen to his voice.

10:17-18 I lay down my life . . . No one takes it from me. Notice two things in this statement. First, Jesus was under no obligation to sacrifice himself for sinners. That's why it's called grace. Second, though the Jews would hand him over and the Romans would crucify him, this was only possible because he let them. No one takes the life of the Son of God. He lays it down voluntarily. And this is why the Father loves [him]—because he is willing to give his life in obedience to the Father's command and in love for sinners. **Believers benefit from this divine love between Father and Son, as we live in obedience.**

Jesus didn't go to the cross hoping that resurrection was going to happen. He MADE it happen! You don't get resurrection without crucifixion; you don't get redemption without messing up. The devil wanted Adam and Eve to die when they ate the fruit, but God said I am going to show GRACE, Redemption and have a FINAL victory thru my Son.

10:19-21 The Jews continued to be divided over him. Some thought he was demon-possessed and crazy; others thought his miracles proved that he was the genuine article. But no one was on the fence about him.

Jesus was a divider back then and He still is today. He divides families, nations, etc. You have to choose. Like Moses at the foot of the mountain. He said all those that choose God, come stand by me. All those that choose Korah, go stand on Korah's side. Then the earth opened up and swallowed all those standing on Korah's side. Choose wisely!

When we are trying to

JESUS AT THE FESTIVAL OF DEDICATION

22 Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter. 23 Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's Colonnade. 24 The Jews surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

25 "I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me. 26 But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Discussion:

10:22-26 Today the Festival of Dedication is commonly known as Hanukkah, which celebrates the rededication of the temple in 165 BC after its desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 BC. During this particular festival, a group of Jews accosted Jesus and demanded, If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. Yet, he had already told them in word and deed, and they refused to believe. The works he did in the Father's name were his proof. They had all the evidence they needed, but they had no interest in listening to him because they had no interest in being his sheep.

10:27-30 What happens to those who do want to be Jesus's sheep? He gives them eternal life so that they will never perish. How secure are those who receive eternal life through Jesus? No one can snatch them out of Jesus's hand or the Father's. Thus, believers are not eternally secure because of their grip on God but because of his grip on them. If you come to Jesus by faith, he's got you. When you're too weak and your hands go limp, he'll still be hanging on to you.

RENEWED EFFORTS TO STONE JESUS

31 Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him.

32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me?"

33 "We aren't stoning you for a good work," the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because you — being a man — make yourself God."

34 Jesus answered them, "Isn't it written in your law, I said, you are gods? 35 If he called those to whom the word of God came 'gods' — and the Scripture cannot be broken — 36 do you say, 'You are blaspheming' to the one the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God? 37 If I am not doing my Father's works, don't believe me. 38 But if I am doing them and you don't believe me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father." 39 Then they were trying again to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

Discussion:

10:31-33 I and the Father are one—in essence and in purpose. You don't get a clearer claim to deity than that. And the Jews knew it. So they picked up rocks to stone him for what they considered blasphemy. This man was claiming to be God. But, though they couldn't accept it, he was telling the truth. Our Creator is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ is one person with two natures (divine and human).

10:34-38 Jesus pointed to Psalm 82:6: I said, you are gods. In this psalm, God referred to human rulers, who were made in God's image and responsible to imitate God's character, as "gods." So if sinful men in honored positions could be called "gods," what about a perfect man?

If Jesus was doing the Father's works—and clearly he had been—how could they accuse him of blasphemy? If they had trouble with his words, all they had to do was look at his works. Where had he fallen short? Why hadn't they believed him? Jesus declares that Scripture cannot be broken—that is, canceled or annulled (10:35). This means that Scripture is inerrant, authoritative, and binding.

10:39 They were trying again to seize him, but he eluded their grasp. You'd think that by this point they would realize that seizing Jesus is a dead end street. No one could take his life from him. But soon he would lay it down. Jesus was sovereign over his own death.

MANY BEYOND THE JORDAN BELIEVE IN JESUS

40 So he departed again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there.

41 Many came to him and said, "John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true." 42 And many believed in him there.

Discussion:

10:40-42 Given the hostility directed against him in Jerusalem, Jesus departed again across the Jordan. But that didn't put a damper on his ministry. The crowds simply followed him there, and many believed in him.

Chapter 11

LAZARUS DIES AT BETHANY

Now a man was sick, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. 3 So the sisters sent a message to him: “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

4 When Jesus heard it, he said, **“This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”** 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that he was sick, he stayed two more days in the place where he was. 7 Then after that, he said to the disciples, **“Let’s go to Judea again.”**

8 “Rabbi,” the disciples told him, “just now the Jews tried to stone you, and you’re going there again?”

9 **“Aren’t there twelve hours in a day?”** Jesus answered. **“If anyone walks during the day, he doesn’t stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him.”**

11 He said this, and then he told them, **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I’m on my way to wake him up.”**

12 Then the disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.”

13 Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought he was speaking about natural sleep. 14 So Jesus then told them plainly, **“Lazarus has died. 15 I’m glad for you that I wasn’t there so that you may believe. But let’s go to him.”**

16 Then Thomas (called “Twin”) said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go too so that we may die with him.”

Discussion:

11:1-3 A certain man named Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, were followers of Jesus. They appear several times in the Gospels (see Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8). But on this occasion, there was a problem. Lazarus was sick and dying. Knowing that Jesus had power to heal their brother, Mary and Martha sent a message to Jesus, urging him to come.

11:4 When he received the message, Jesus vowed that the sickness [would] not end in death but would end in the glory of God. As in the case of the blind man (see 9:1-3), these negative circumstances were not the result of sin; they were for the purpose of glorifying Jesus. **If someone says that a Christian walking with the Lord can’t become ill or contract a disease, that person is simply wrong. Lazarus’s sickness was not a means of punishment, not a sign of rebellion. Rather, it had a spiritual purpose.**

11:5-6 John tells us that Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus, and they knew of his love for them. They shared an intimate relationship with him. But, in spite of this, Jesus stayed two more days in the place where he was. His delay appeared to contradict his promise of healing. However, it was because he loved them that he delayed his arrival. This passage demonstrates an important theological truth regarding prayer. In our times of struggle, we want God to respond immediately. When he doesn’t, we’re tempted to assume he doesn’t care. But the reality is that we don’t understand his timing or his purposes because his ways are not our ways (see Isa 55:8-9). There’s a method to his (apparent) contradictions. **He responds as he does because he loves us and because he’s seeking his glory. Trust him in his delays.**

11:7-8 Finally, Jesus said, Let’s go to Judea again. His disciples looked at one another and wondered if their Rabbi was losing it. Judea was where people had wanted to kill him. But, though one can understand their concern, the disciples apparently hadn’t noticed that a lot of folks were having trouble seizing Jesus (see 7:30-32, 44-46; 8:20; 10:39). The Son of God—not the angry religious leaders—was sovereign over his ministry timetable.

11:9-10 Jesus told them that the day—the time of his public, earthly ministry—was the opportunity for action. While Jesus, the light of this world, was with them, they could walk and not stumble. Later, they would have the light of the Holy Spirit’s presence. **But to function apart from Jesus is like walking around at night. Operating without his illumination will cause you to trip and wind up on your face.**

11:11 The reason they needed to return to Judea was because Lazarus [had] fallen asleep and needed waking. For those who trust in the Lord, the Bible describes death as sleep (i.e., a new level of spiritual consciousness), from which we will one day be physically raised (see 1 Thess 4:13).

11:12-15 The disciples were confused, thinking that Jesus was speaking about natural sleep. So he said, Lazarus has died. But the most startling thing he said was that he was glad! However, Jesus was not glad concerning Lazarus's death but glad concerning what he was about to do. Sometimes God will let things get worse before they get better. That's often because he has something in mind that's even better than what we requested.

11:16 Later, Thomas would express doubt over Jesus's resurrection. But for now, he was ready to die with [Jesus]. Those who are spiritually confident today may find themselves in the depths of despair and doubt tomorrow.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem (less than two miles away). 19 Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.

20 As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. 22 Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

23 "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her.

24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. 26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

Discussion:

11:17-22 When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. Though the funeral was over, many friends were present who had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them. Martha met Jesus and said, Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Translation: "This is all your fault, Jesus! I called you, but you didn't come. If you had listened to me, none of this would have happened." Yet this doesn't mean she had lost all hope, because she adds, even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Thus, Martha was filled with both faith and doubt. She is like the man who cried out to Jesus in desperation, "I do believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24).

Sometimes doubt comes when we least expect it. When it does, bring your doubts to God in prayer (he's omniscient and knows about them anyway!). Believe that he can deal with your disappointment and spiritual struggle.

11:23-27 Jesus responded to Martha's faith in spite of her doubts: Your brother will rise again. Martha's theology was sound. She knew that her brother would be raised in the resurrection at the last day. But Jesus wanted her to know that the resurrection isn't just an event; the resurrection is a person. He told her, I am the resurrection and the life. The Son of God has "life in himself" and can give life so that a person may "live forever". He himself is the basis of eternal life. That's how he can say that the one who believes in me will never die—that is, he will pass from physical life immediately into eternal life (see Phil 1:23). The present tense ("lives and believes in me") also shows that Jesus is a right now deliverer, not just a future one.

JESUS SHARES THE SORROW OF DEATH

28 Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

29 As soon as Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. They followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.

32 As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and told him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!"

33 When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you put him?" he asked. "Lord," they told him, "come and see."

35 Jesus wept.

36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Couldn't he who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?"

Discussion:

11:28-30 Though she still didn't comprehend everything or know what exactly was going to happen, Martha trusted Jesus and confessed him as the Messiah, the Son of God. Then she went to call her sister Mary. Whereas Martha's sorrow and disappointment had driven her to Jesus, Mary's had kept her from him. But when she heard that Jesus was calling for [her], she immediately went to him.

11:31-35 The first words out of Mary's mouth were the same as her sister's: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died! Jesus was deeply moved by her crying and asked to see the tomb. Then, we read the shortest, yet one of the most profound, verses in all of the Bible: Jesus wept. Jesus is fully God, but he is also fully human. Two natures in one person, unmixed forever. Even though he knew he was about to perform the miracle, he grieved with the pain and sorrow as well as the death-dealing effects of sin on those he loves. "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Jesus was agitated as he stirred up the work of the Spirit within him for the miracle he was about to perform.

11:36-37 Those with Mary and Martha could see how much Jesus loved Lazarus. But some were confused, wondering why a man who could give sight to the blind couldn't keep a sick man from dying. If they thought keeping a man from dying would be spectacular, they were in for the shock of their lives.

THE SEVENTH SIGN: RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD

38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

41 So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. 42 I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." 43 After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

Discussion:

11:38-40 Jesus commanded them to remove the stone from the mouth of the burial cave. At this, Martha objected. After all, Lazarus had been dead four days. She no doubt appreciated Jesus's desire to pay his last respects to her deceased brother, but the stench of decay would be awful. Jesus replied by telling her that she hadn't been paying attention: Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God? He called her to demonstrate her faith in him by her action—allowing the stone to be removed. Jesus didn't want her explanations about bodily decay; he wanted her to walk by faith, putting one foot in front of the other. Faith is acting like God is telling the truth. Then, demonstrating the "glory of God" would be up to Jesus. Faith must precede sight if we want to see God's supernatural intervention in our circumstances. We can never know what God plans to do in secret until we obey what he has clearly revealed.

11:41-42 When the stone was removed, Jesus looked to heaven and prayed. He thanked the Father that he always hears him. He acknowledged the reason that the Son had delayed coming to see Lazarus in the first place: so that the crowd standing there might believe that the Father had sent Jesus. He could've showed up on time and conducted a private miracle to heal Lazarus. Instead, he arrived late to put on a public, supernatural display, validating his messianic identity and sparking faith in a mass gathering of people. The latter, though it resulted in temporary grief, would produce tremendous spiritual impact and bring God greater glory. Jesus's prayer for his Father's supernatural intervention also illustrates his current intercessory work of deliverance for believers when we respond in faith and obedience (see Heb 7:25). This is why we pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. The Father responds to what the Son endorses.

11:43-44 Jesus addressed the dead man and called, Lazarus, come out! Then, from out of the tomb, a living man walked, still bound and wrapped in burial cloths. The dead had been raised to life! This is a foretaste of what is to come. One day, Lazarus would physically die again. But those who believe in Jesus will take part in the everlasting resurrection and live forever.

THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

45 Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did **believed** in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, “What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs? 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will **believe** in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

49 One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! 50 You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.” 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. 53 So from that day on they plotted to kill him.

54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples.

55 Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. 56 They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will he?” 57 The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him.

Discussion:

11:45-48 As a result, many of the Jews . . . believed in him. One would think that there couldn’t possibly be any other response! But, unfortunately, some of them went and tattled to the Pharisees. When the news reached them, the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin, the council of the Jewish religious leaders. Notice that they didn’t deny his miraculous signs. Rather, they lamented them. Instead of cheering his raising of the dead, they worried that his winning of followers would cause the Romans to think there was an insurrection, thus bringing the Roman hammer down on their nation.

11:49-53 Caiaphas the high priest had a solution. He said it was better that one man should die than that the whole nation perish. In other words, he wanted to ensure that Jesus was silenced once and for all. That would solve their problem. But John tells us that, unknown to Caiaphas, he had actually prophesied. This wicked high priest was merely thinking on the physical level, but his words providentially foretold a spiritual reality. Indeed, the one man would die for the sins of the many. Jesus was going to die for the nation. And not only for Israel, but for Gentiles too. So they plotted to kill him. But what they planned for evil, God planned for good (see Gen 50:20).

11:54-57 Since the religious leaders were conspiring to kill him, Jesus stopped walking openly among the Jews. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders to arrest him if anyone spotted him. But everything would happen according to God’s sovereign timing. Jerusalem began filling with people because it was time for the Passover celebrating God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery (see Exod 12:1-28). Soon God would provide a new and ultimate means of deliverance from slavery to sin.

CHAPTER 12

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead.

2 So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 He didn't say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

7 Jesus answered, **"Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."**

Discussion:

12:1-3 Less than a week before the Passover, Jesus and his disciples were in Bethany again, having dinner with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, who had recently been raised from the dead. While Martha served, Mary anointed Jesus's feet with costly perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. This was an act of amazing devotion and love. But, as we'll see, some didn't appreciate such extravagant sacrifice for Jesus. The same is true today.

12:4-6 Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would betray Jesus, was indignant regarding Mary's gift. He chastised her for wasting perfume that could have been sold for three hundred denarii (about a year's wages) and donated to the poor. But John tells his readers the truth, something that the disciples apparently didn't know until after the fact: Judas didn't care about the poor. He was a thief. He was in charge of the disciples' money-bag and used to steal from it. Adding three hundred denarii to the piggybank would've meant more cash in Judas's pocket.

12:7-8 Jesus rebuked Judas, telling him to leave Mary alone. Her actions had prepared his body for burial, which was only a few days away. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. Providing for the poor is a biblical mandate for God's people (see Lev 19:9-10; Deut 15:10; Prov 14:31; 19:17; 28:27; 2 Cor 9:7; Eph 4:28). (Of course, **the Bible is talking about those who are legitimately poor, not those who are poor through their own laziness;** see 2 Thess 3:10.) But **Jesus reminded them that dealing with poverty is an unending reality in this sinful,** fallen world. And this reality was not to prevent them from honoring their long-awaited Lord and Messiah who would only be with them a short while longer.

THE DECISION TO KILL LAZARUS

9 Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also, 11 because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

Discussion:

12:9-11 When they learned that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, crowds of people wanted to get a glimpse of the ex-corpse. Because of Jesus's miraculous deed, many of the Jews were deserting the Jewish religious leaders and believing in Jesus. How did the chief priests respond to this? They decided to kill Lazarus too! Their wickedness knew no bounds.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

12 The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 they took palm branches and went out to meet him. They kept shouting: **"Hosanna!" Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!** "

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: 15 **do not be afraid, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.**

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

17 Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. 18 This is also why the crowd met him, because they heard he had done this sign. 19 Then the Pharisees said to one another, “You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

Discussion:

12:12-13 A large crowd . . . heard that Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem. With palm branches in hand, they met him, shouting in language from Psalm 118:25-26: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel! Hosanna is Hebrew for “save us”—it’s a cry of deliverance. By applying the psalm to Jesus and identifying him as their King, they were hailing Jesus as the Messiah who would deliver them from Roman domination.

12:14-16 In fulfillment of the messianic prophecy written hundreds of years before in Zechariah 9:9, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey. The prophet “saw” Zion’s King . . . coming . . . on a donkey’s colt. Jesus fulfilled Scripture and entered Jerusalem in exactly the manner foretold. His disciples did not understand what he was doing. But after he was glorified, they remembered and understood. Fulfilled prophecies like this one testify to the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. The many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah were written hundreds of years before his birth, yet they were fulfilled in his life accurately and in detail. This should encourage all believers to trust that the Bible is indeed the authoritative Word of God.

12:17-19 Those who had witnessed Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead were testifying to the rest of the crowds, so Jesus’s following grew even larger. All of this made the Pharisees furious. More followers for Jesus meant fewer followers for them! The Gospels make clear that the religious leaders in Jerusalem were motivated in their hatred of Jesus by jealousy (see Matt 27:18; Mark 15:10).

JESUS PREDICTS HIS CRUCIFIXION

20 Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied to them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. 25 The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me. Where I am, there my servant also will be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

27 “Now my soul is troubled. What should I say — Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. 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 it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

30 Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for me, but for you. 31 Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die.

34 Then the crowd replied to him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

35 Jesus answered, “The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light.” Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them.

Discussion:

12:20-21 Also in Jerusalem for the Passover were some Greeks—that is, Gentile proselytes who worshiped the God of Israel. Earlier Jesus had said, “I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also”. By “other sheep” he meant Gentiles. Jesus came to be the Savior of the world. And now the world was starting to come to him, saying, we want to see Jesus.

12:22-23 We’ve seen repeatedly in John’s Gospel that it was not Jesus’s time or that his hour had not yet come (see 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). Jesus operated on a divine clock. But when his disciples told him that these Greeks wanted to see him, Jesus finally said, “It’s time”—the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. The Son’s glorification involves his death, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father.

12:24 Jesus used an agricultural illustration to teach a spiritual principle: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. Jesus had come into the world to die, to give his life as a substitutionary atonement for sinners. In the same way that a single grain produces much wheat, Jesus's death would yield much spiritual fruit—salvation and eternal life for all who will trust him.

12:25 The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Thus, if you live a self-centered existence, you will lose the very thing you are trying to hold on to. If your life is all about you and finding yourself, you will not find the "you" that you're looking for. To hate your life means not living in a self-centered way but being a servant of others. The one who lives a life of service in the name of the Lord Jesus will be rewarded in this life and in the life to come.

12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me. . . . If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. To serve the King, we must follow the King. If he serves, we must serve (see Mark 10:45). The first responsibility of a follower of Christ is to his people. We are to love those whom he loves and gave himself for. And if we love and serve sacrificially, the Father promises to honor us with a reward—some of which may come in this life, though most will come in eternity.

12:27-28 Jesus's soul was troubled because he knew the suffering that would be required. He would die for the sins of the world, enduring separation from his Father. Nevertheless, his grief didn't cause him to flee from his task. To suffer and die for sinners is why [Jesus] came. He was committed to the will of God, so he prayed aloud: Father, glorify your name. After this, a voice responded from heaven: I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again. Throughout the Son's ministry, the Father had been glorified through the miraculous signs. But the ultimate glorification was coming in the cross and resurrection.

12:29-30 The crowds had been divided over Jesus before. Now they were even divided over the voice from heaven. Some thought it was an angel; others claimed it was only thunder. Jesus told them that this voice was for their sake, not his. The Father validated the Son so that they might believe.

12:31 Jesus's death on the cross would be an act of judgment on the devil, the ruler of this world. In the garden, Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to rule the world on God's behalf. Instead, they chose to sin against God and thereby granted rule of the world to Satan (see 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 1 John 5:19). So the Son of God became a man to defeat the devil. The cross guarantees the enemy's defeat because Satan achieves victory through accusing sinners. But through the cross, Jesus Christ would deal with sin once and for all (see Heb 7:26-27; 9:12; 10:10).

12:32-33 The cross drew all judgment for all people to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world (1 John 2:2). The death of Christ saved all humankind from the consequences of original sin (Rom 5:18) and made all people savable for their personal sin when they place personal faith in him. This is why we are to share the gospel with everyone in the world.

12:34-36 Still the crowd was confused. Their minds needed enlightening. So Jesus encouraged them to receive the light and walk in the light while it was still with them, for Jesus himself is the light. If you reject him, your life will consist of darkness. This, in fact, is why we live in such a dark and sin-scarred world. But if you believe in the light (that is, trust in Jesus Christ), you will become a child of light. God will grant you understanding so that you may walk in his ways.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES FULFILLED

37 Even though he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said:

Lord, who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said:

40 He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they would not see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.

41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke about him.

42 Nevertheless, many did believe in him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, so that they would not be banned from the synagogue. 43 For they loved human praise more than praise from God.

Discussion:

12:37-41 In spite of all the miraculous signs Jesus performed, many people did not believe in him. This fulfilled the words spoken by Isaiah the prophet, which John quotes (see Isa 53:1) and (see Isa 6:10). Isaiah said that God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. Why? Because they had rejected the light. When Pharaoh repeatedly and willfully hardened his heart against God, the Lord eventually cooperated with Pharaoh and hardened his heart further (see commentary on Exod 4:21). **If a person persists in pursuing darkness, eventually God will confirm his desire. Be careful what you wish for.**

12:42-43 Nevertheless, many did believe in him even among the rulers. However, these rulers did not confess Jesus because the Pharisees had threatened to kick Jesus's followers out of the synagogue. **They were unwilling to go public with their belief in Jesus because they loved human praise more than praise from God. We must not remain silent about our faith.**

A SUMMARY OF JESUS'S MISSION

44 Jesus cried out, "The one who **believes** in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me. 45 And the one who sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who **believes** in me would not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears my words and doesn't keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and doesn't receive my sayings has this as his judge: The word I have spoken will judge him on the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father himself who sent me has given me a command to say everything I have said. 50 I know that his command is eternal life. So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me."

Discussion:

12:44-50 In these verses, Jesus summarizes why he came into the world. He did not come to judge the world but to save it. Those who reject him will experience judgment on the last day. To reject Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is to reject the Father who sent him. And the opposite is also true: The one who believes in [him] believes in the one who sent [him]. It's a package deal. You cannot say you believe in God while simultaneously rejecting Jesus. **We only truly come God through the Son, for he has truly spoken the words of the Father, words that lead to eternal life.**

Chapter 13

JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God. 4 So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. 5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."

8 "You will never wash my feet," Peter said. Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

10 "One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you." 11 For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Discussion:

13:1-2 Jesus's hour had finally come; it was time for him to be glorified and depart from this world to the Father. John tells us that Jesus loved his own—his disciples—to the end. He had spent three years with the Twelve—teaching them, leading them, praying for them, loving them. He had done everything for them that he had come to do. Yet one of the men, Judas Iscariot, was going to betray him. In intending to do this, he had opened the door for the devil to put a specific idea into [his] heart.

13:3-5 Knowing that he, the Son of God, had come from God and was going back to God, Jesus took a towel and a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet. Notice that Jesus understood his identity and where he'd come from. He himself is God, the Creator of the universe. He is the King of kings, having legions of angels standing poised to do his bidding. And yet, as the apostle Paul would write, Jesus "did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant" (Phil 2:6-7). Jesus took that humble role to wash the dirty feet of those who should have been washing his, because he came to serve (see Mark 10:45). To this servanthood mindset, the Lord calls each one of us.

13:6-9 The Lord made it clear that though they didn't understand what he was doing, later they would. However, Peter would have none of it: You will never wash my feet. But unless Jesus washed him, he could have no fellowship with him. "In that case," Peter essentially said, "forget the foot wash. Give me a shower!" With this statement, Peter revealed his heart. He was willing to do anything to show Jesus that he didn't want to be disconnected from him.

13:10-11 Jesus assured Peter that if one has bathed, he only needs to wash his feet. In other words, if you're already saved, you don't need to be saved again. You just need to address the dirty areas in your life so that you can stay clean. To maintain fellowship with the Lord, we must regularly come to him in confession and repentance. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). All of Jesus's disciples were completely clean except one. That one disciple was Judas. Jesus knew who would betray him. Nothing takes him by surprise.

THE MEANING OF FOOT WASHING

12 When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

16 Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

18 “I’m not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats my bread has raised his heel against me. 19 I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. 20 Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me.”

Discussion:

13:12-17 After he had washed their feet, he exhorted his disciples to do the same. He should serve as their example. If he, their Lord and Teacher, washed their feet, then they should wash one another’s (that is, serve one another; see 1 Tim 5:10), because a servant is not greater than his master. Our Lord Jesus is a model of servanthood, and one that we should follow. How does Jesus’s foot-washing command apply in our modern context? To put it simply, we are to serve people in the family of God—especially by helping them when things get dirty. Our service is most needed in the messiness of life where people are hurting and suffering.

13:18-19 I’m not speaking about all of you. Once again, the reader is reminded that Jesus knew which of his disciples was about to betray him, all in fulfillment of Scripture. Importantly, those he had chosen is a reference to those chosen for service, not for salvation. The Scripture Jesus quotes is from Psalm 41:9. Just as David was betrayed, so also the Messiah—the Son of David—would be betrayed. Jesus wanted them to know that he knew the future and was in control. When everything happened just as he foretold, it would be further evidence of his divine identity.

13:20 Whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives the Son of God receives God the Father because the Son is the way to the Father. But Jesus added, “Whoever receives anyone I send receives me.” When we go into the world in the name of Jesus and proclaim his gospel and his teachings, we go as his and the Father’s authorized representatives.

JUDAS’S BETRAYAL PREDICTED

21 When Jesus had said this, he was troubled in his spirit and testified, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

22 The disciples started looking at one another — uncertain which one he was speaking about. 23 One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. 24 Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was he was talking about. 25 So he leaned back against Jesus and asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

26 Jesus replied, “He’s the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it.” When he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son. 27 After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. So Jesus told him, “What you’re doing, do quickly.”

28 None of those reclining at the table knew why he said this to him. 29 Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival,” or that he should give something to the poor. 30 After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night.

Discussion:

13:21-30 Jesus became troubled, knowing what was about to occur. Then he prophesied: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me. Thus, something that the readers of John’s Gospel have been told for some time was finally revealed to the disciples. And they were in shock, looking at one another in bewilderment. Peter told John, the author of this Gospel and the one Jesus loved, to ask Jesus who this betrayer was. So Jesus told John that it was the disciple to whom he would give a piece of bread. Then he handed bread to Judas. To offer food was a sign of friendship; therefore, Jesus was extending a final offer of grace and mercy to the one who was about to betray him. Judas took the bread, but he rejected the offer of friendship: Satan entered him. Yet Satan only entered him because Judas had invited him by rejecting Jesus and intending to betray him. Essentially, Jesus told Judas, “What you’re planning to do—get it over with”. The other disciples were confused by the exchange, thinking that Jesus was telling Judas to make preparations for the Passover feast. They didn’t realize that Judas would not only betray their Master, but would do so that very night. So Judas left to carry out his evil deed.

THE NEW COMMAND

31 When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’”

34 “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Discussion:

13:31-32 With the betrayal set in motion, the events leading up to the crucifixion had begun. Now the Son of Man is glorified refers to why Jesus had come into the world. He would offer himself as a substitutionary atonement and then be raised from the dead. The Son would glorify the Father, and the Father would glorify the Son; they would mutually advertise one another’s glory. Highlighting the greatness of God, in fact, is what Christians are called to as well. Everything we do—in thought, word, and deed—is to be done for the glory of God (see 1 Cor 10:31).

13:33-34 In a little while, Jesus would be gone and ascend to God the Father (see Acts 1:9). In light of this impending departure, he gave them a new command: Love one another. It was new because it related to what was about to happen within the family of God. Biblical love is the decision to compassionately, responsibly, and righteously pursue the well-being of another person. It’s not the same as liking someone. To like someone or something is to express a feeling. By contrast, loving someone may or may not have feelings connected to it. Love is a decision to seek another’s best, regardless of your feelings.

13:35 Through loving one another, Jesus told them, everyone will know that you are my disciples. Notice that he didn’t say everyone would recognize his disciples by how much of the Bible they knew. Knowing the Bible is essential, but knowledge means nothing without love (see 1 Cor 13:1-3). A loveless Christian actually undermines the gospel. Why? Because, as John says elsewhere, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). How can people come to know the God who perfectly expresses love—both within the Trinity and to humanity—if his representatives don’t demonstrate love?

PETER’S DENIALS PREDICTED

36 “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?”

Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.”

37 “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

38 Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.”

Discussion:

13:36-38 In response to Jesus’s comments about leaving them, Peter asked, Where are you going? When Jesus told him that he couldn’t follow, Peter decided to set him straight. The rest of the disciples might not be ready to follow, but Peter was confident that he was prepared. I will lay down my life for you. But that’s when Jesus poured cold water on this fiery disciple. He said. A rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times. Jesus wanted Peter to put his pride to death. He was talking a good game, but he wouldn’t be able to back it up with action. Too often we’re exactly like Peter. In our minds we envision ourselves as better disciples than we actually are. Pride will cause us to think too highly of ourselves and then fall flat on our faces.

Chapter 14

THE WAY TO THE FATHER

“Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. 4 You know the way to where I am going.”

5 “Lord,” Thomas said, “we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the way? ”

6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Discussion:

Context: Jesus is having His last meal before His crucifixion. He has washed their feet, predicted His betrayal, said that He is going to be killed, says that all the disciples are going to leave Him, says that Peter is going to deny Him three times. Then Jesus comforts them!

14:1-2 Don’t let your heart be troubled. You can’t control your circumstances, environment or situation, but you CAN control your response. Do not let your heart worry, be anxious, fear, fret... If it starts to do any of these, then you stop it. How? When we feel worried, we need a reminder that God is in control. .

Jesus compassionately sought to calm his disciples’ fears over his impending departure. What words of comfort did he offer to give them confidence? First, he said, Believe in God; believe also in me. In other words, “Place your full trust in me, just as you trust in the Father. We are unified, sharing the same divine nature and the same divine purpose.” Second, he told them that they had heavenly real estate waiting on them: In my Father’s house are many rooms . . . I am going away to prepare a place for you. According to Jewish wedding custom, the father would add rooms onto his house for his newly married son. Jesus wasn’t abandoning them but heading out to get their eternal home ready. When your time comes, have no fear. Heaven has been prepared for you.

Be prepared for trouble. Fortify yourself. Put on the armor of God; be armed with the truth of God. Stay in His word daily! Be armed with the gospel of peace. God has a plan! When we are uncertain of things, we can rest in the fact that He has a plan. Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

14:3 Jesus promised them, I will come again and take you to myself. This return of which Jesus prophesied is what we call the rapture, the time when he will return to receive his saints and take them to heaven (see 1 Thess 4:16-17). This will happen prior to his return to earth to establish his millennial kingdom.

14:4-7 Jesus promised his disciples that they knew the way to where he was going. However, Thomas wasn’t so sure: How can we know the way? It was as if he said, “You haven’t given us a map, Lord!” But Thomas had misunderstood. “The way” isn’t a path; it’s a person: I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. The Lord Jesus Christ is the universal point of access to God. There is no other entrance into heaven. If you want to know the Father, you must come to him through his Son. Jesus assured Thomas that if he knew the Son, he knew the Father.

Way, truth, life... that is all we will ever need. The journey, the process, THE WAY is what builds character. For every sports superstar, there are thousands of hours of hours of practice, being alone in the gym. That is the journey. The journey prepares us for the destination. It rained 40 days/40 nights, but Noah actually stayed on the ark for a whole year, that is the process. After Moses kills an Egyptian, he goes on the run, and becomes a shepherd for 40 years before he sees the burning bush.

JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER

8 “Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.”

Discussion:

14:8-9 Then it was Philip's turn to sound dissatisfied: Show us the Father, and that's enough for us. Philip wanted to be like Moses, who got to catch a glimpse of God (see Exod 33:12–34:9). But he didn't understand that fully revealing God the Father was exactly what Jesus had come to do. "No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him". Whereas Moses only saw a hint of the glory of the invisible God, Jesus said, the one who has seen me has seen the Father. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the God-Man.

14:10-11 I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Jesus emphasized the unity of Father and Son. As he'd told the Jews previously, "I and the Father are one". He is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

PRAYING IN JESUS'S NAME

12 "Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

Discussion:

14:12 This is an amazing promise! That we can do more amazing things than Jesus did on earth. The only thing holding us back is our lack of faith! We need that mustard seed faith. The kind that moves mountains. The kind that brags on God's power, just like David did when he bragged on God before killing Goliath.

Ask for anything in my name. But there is one condition; So that the Father be glorified in the Son. Are we really asking for God to be glorified in our lives, or are we asking that we are more comfortable, more peaceful, more whatever. Is it about us or Him?

Jesus's works confirmed his divine identity. But he affirmed to his followers, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. And he will do even greater works than these. Now, obviously, he's not saying that his followers will do every work that he did. We aren't God and never will be. Rather, Jesus was talking about scope of impact. His travels were limited, as were the number of people who heard his voice. But in the years since, the church has carried his message to billions all over the world.

14:13-14 When we are rightly connected to the Father through the Son, more prayers in [Jesus's] name get answered. How do we ensure that we are rightly connected to the Trinitarian God? Jesus provided the answer: If you love me, you will keep my commands. You can talk all day about your love for God. But, according to Jesus, obedience is the proof of love. If we truly love him, we will seek to obey him. Why? Because love is first and foremost a decision, not an emotion. Our relationship with him drives our desire to please him. God wants your obedience, but he wants it to be motivated by love—not law.

ANOTHER COUNSELOR PROMISED

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you."

Discussion:

14:15-17 If you love me, obey me. God knows what's best for us. He knows that the actions we take say more about us than what we say we believe. Action always speaks louder than words!

Where would the disciples look for help when Jesus was gone? Jesus told them: I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. In Greek there are two words that could be used to mean "another." One means "another of a different kind"; the other means "another of the same kind." The latter is used here. The Holy Spirit is another Counselor, but one who shares in the divine nature. Therefore, God would still be with them in the person of God the Holy Spirit. The same sovereign love and power they enjoyed in Jesus, then, would be present in their lives. As a "Counselor" or "Helper," the Holy Spirit enables believers to pull off the will of God in their lives. He is "the Spirit of truth" because he only deals in truth; as God, he operates according to divine, holy standards. The world is unable to receive [the Holy Spirit] because it doesn't . . . know him. The only way to know and receive the Spirit of God, in fact, is through knowing and receiving the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And when the Spirit comes, he remains with you forever—not merely alongside you, but in you. Importantly, this promise wasn't simply for those first

disciples: it's for everyone who calls on the name of Jesus. When you trust in Christ to take away your sins and give you eternal life, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you, ministering the presence of God to you.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. 21 The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it you're going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"

23 Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me."

25 "I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you."

Discussion:

14:18 Jesus comforted his disciples with the promise, I will not leave you as orphans. He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them. And one day the Son will return to take his followers to the place prepared for them.

14:19-20 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will. Though he would be executed on a Roman cross, Jesus would rise bodily from the grave and show himself to his disciples. Because I live, you will live too. Jesus shares his resurrection life with his followers through the Holy Spirit, who connects us to the Trinitarian God: I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.

14:21 Again, obedience is equated with love. Jesus explained that love is the motivation for keeping his commands. If you want to know whether someone really loves Jesus, watch to see whether he does what Jesus said. When you are connected to the love of the Father and Son in obedience, Jesus promises to reveal more of himself to you. If you listen to a radio station in your car, you know that the further you get from the broadcast station, the worse your reception of the signal gets. Many people have difficulty connecting with God because they've wandered too far away to pick up his signal. But if you come back home in obedience, relating to God through Christ in love, he will disclose more of himself to you.

14:22-25 Judas (not Iscariot) wanted to know why he promised to reveal himself to them but not to the world. But Jesus insisted that his love is available to all: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. And those willing to come to Jesus in love and obedience will find the Father and Son coming to make their home with them. It's the one who doesn't love Jesus or his words who will lose out on a relationship with him.

Jesus is going to die and be resurrected so that the Holy Spirit will come. It's part of the master plan. Jesus isn't killed, he lays down His life down in obedience, for the Father's glory.

14:26 When Jesus returned to heaven, the Father would send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit to be with his disciples. Jesus said that the Spirit would come in [his] name because he would represent Jesus and testify about him. He also said that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of everything he told them. This applies to the first disciples because the Holy Spirit helped them to recall Jesus's words, sharing them with others and recording them in the pages of Scripture (see 2 Pet 1:21). But the Spirit also helps believers today, enabling us to recall Scripture at the appropriate time and helping us to understand its meaning and its application to our lives, as he activates "the mind of Christ" in us (1 Cor 2:10-16).

JESUS'S GIFT OF PEACE

27 "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful. 28 You have heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe. 30 I will not talk with you much longer, because the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me. 31 On the contrary, so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do as the Father commanded me. Get up; let's leave this place."

Discussion:

14:27 Jesus brings order, brings peace to comfort His disciples. They are going to be scared, but He is saying, don't worry, I'm still in control. Not one hair of your head will fall to the ground unless God knows about it and allows it to happen.

Jesus promised, Peace I leave you. My peace I give to you. Please understand what Jesus is and is not promising here. He is not promising the absence of a storm. Anyone can be at peace when nothing is wrong. Rather, he promises peace in the midst of a storm. He's talking about peace in the midst of tribulation—at a time when you shouldn't have any peace. This, of course, doesn't come from the world. It's the peace of God, "which surpasses all understanding, [and guards] your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7). Next Jesus said, "Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful". In the coming hours, the disciples would have good reason to be troubled. Likewise, you will have experiences that prompt you to fear. But with a sovereign God ruling the world and "the peace of Christ" ruling in your heart (see Col 3:15), you can overcome trouble and fear.

14:28-29 Rather than being fearful, the disciples should have been filled with joy over the fact that Jesus was going to the Father. For Jesus loves the Father, and his imminent departure to be with him meant that his mission—the reason for which he'd come into the world—was almost complete. Jesus was explaining all these things to them in advance so that when the time of suffering arrived, they would believe that he was truly the Messiah, the Son of God.

14:30-31 The ruler of the world is coming. When Adam and Eve sinned, they gave up their role as king and queen, ruling creation on God's behalf, and turned it over to Satan. Therefore, the devil is appropriately called "the ruler of this world," "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4), and "the ruler of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). He holds "the power of death" and keeps people in slavery by "the fear of death" (see Heb 2:14-15). But Satan had no power over Jesus (14:30) because Jesus is without sin. The Son of God became a man so that he might defeat the devil as a man and restore God's kingdom rule. And this he would do through his love for the Father and his obedience to what the Father commanded.

Chapter 15

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

Discussion:

15:1 Jesus frequently used agricultural imagery in his teaching. On this occasion he told his disciples, I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. But he didn't pull this imagery out of thin air. The prophet Isaiah had spoken of Israel as the Lord's vineyard. God expected his vineyard to bear fruit, but it produced nothing but worthless grapes (see Isa 5:1-7). In contrast, the Son of God came as the authentic vine, perfectly obeying the Father and revealing his will to the people.

15:2 Every branch in [Jesus] that does not produce fruit [the Father] removes. And every branch that produces fruit the Father prunes . . . so that it will produce more. "Every branch" refers to Christians because they are in Jesus. The vine (the Son) feeds the branches, and the gardener (the Father) tends the branches. **God's goal for every Christian is to increase in fruit bearing.** We are to progress from producing no fruit to some fruit to more fruit to much fruit to remaining fruit. Fruitfulness is a life of spiritual usefulness and productivity for the good of others and the glory of God. It's the proof of true discipleship. Fruit has three characteristics. First, it reflects the character of its tree. Apples come from apple trees; oranges grow on orange trees. The fruit in your life should reflect Christ—his attitudes and actions, his character and conduct. Second, fruit is visible. The presence of fruit lets you identify a tree's kind and whether it's healthy. An authentic follower of Christ is a visible follower of Christ, not a secret-agent saint. Third, fruit is always for the benefit of others. If you're always serving yourself instead of others, your fruit is going to rot on the tree. The Greek verb translated "removes" in this verse can also be rendered "takes away" or "lifts up." The branches in a vineyard could become large and drag on the ground easily. So God the gardener "takes them away" from the ground by lifting them up. God will, therefore, seek to make you fruitful by lifting you up, encouraging you, and motivating you—for example, through his Word and through the people of God. Those who are fruitful God also prunes so that they bear more fruit. **Sometimes God will bring challenges and trials into our lives to enable us to grow in our faith and cast off anything hindering full productivity.**

15:3-5 The disciples were clean through the washing of Christ's word. This is how we stay clean too; nevertheless, we must remain in Jesus. A branch that's disconnected from the vine is useless. So also we can't produce fruit unless we remain in Jesus. The idea of "remaining" or "abiding" in Christ has to do with intimacy and relationship. Jesus Christ is our source, the only one who can provide the spiritual sustenance and vitality we need to be useful believers. Thus, we need to hang out with him. **You can't avoid Jesus all week and then show up on Sunday morning expecting growth. We only produce much fruit when we remain in him.**

CHRISTLIKE LOVE

9 "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 "I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. 12 "This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 17 "This is what I command you: Love one another."

Discussion:

15:12-14 Jesus repeated the command he gave them earlier: Love one another as I have loved you. Biblical love involves more than mere emotions and personal preferences. Love is the decision to compassionately, righteously, responsibly, and sacrificially seek the well-being of another. You can love people whom you may not necessarily like because love is not dependent on your feelings. That's why Jesus can command you to "love your enemies" (Matt 5:44). It's true that love may include feelings of affection, and such feelings may develop over time. But it's not driven by them. Love is driven by sacrifice for the welfare of others. And the greatest expression of love is to lay down one's life for . . . friends. That's the kind of love Jesus modeled for us.

15:15 Jesus told his disciples that they were not mere servants to him. They were his friends. A master doesn't reveal things to a servant, but friends do. Jesus had made known to his disciples everything he had heard from his Father.

15:16-17 When the Bible refers to God's choice (or election) of people, it's a choosing for service, not salvation. Jesus chose his disciples so that they would produce fruit that would be useful to his kingdom and reflect God's character.

Jesus didn't simply save them for heaven only; he appointed them to a mission on earth that would involve winning people to Christ and growing them in the faith—a mission that involves keeping his commands, loving him, and loving one another. When that happens, the Father answers prayer.

PERSECUTIONS PREDICTED

18 "If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. **19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. **20** Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. **21** But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don't know the one who sent me. **22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. **23** The one who hates me also hates my Father. **24** If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. **25** But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: They hated me for no reason."

Discussion:

15:18-21 The world system headed by Satan hates Jesus. Therefore, followers of Jesus who identify with his person and character will face hatred and opposition from the world. As servants of Christ, we should not expect to be treated better than he was. If they persecuted [him], they will also persecute you. But, similarly, if they kept [his] word, they will also keep the word spoken by his disciples. When you faithfully represent Jesus, the world will relate to you as it related to him.

15:22-25 The Son of God came personally into the world to reveal the Father; so those who rejected him have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates me, he told them, also hates my Father. That's strong language, but there's no way around it. People can't talk about their love for God while simultaneously rejecting his Son. They fulfilled the Scripture spoken by David in Psalm 69:4: They hated me for no reason. As the wicked showed their disdain for King David, so they showed disdain for the Son of David.

THE COUNSELOR'S MINISTRY

26 "When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father — he will testify about me. **27** You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning."

Discussion:

15:26-27 Again Jesus told his disciples about the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, the Spirit of truth. Jesus said that when the Spirit comes, he will testify about Jesus. Since the role of the Holy Spirit is to testify about the Son of God, the Spirit has a Christocentric ministry. He does not merely draw attention to himself; he draws attention to Jesus. Therefore, we should be wary of those who claim the Spirit's involvement in a ministry that ignores Jesus. If the Spirit makes much of Jesus, then his disciples should too.

Chapter 16

“I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling.

2 They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 They will do these things because they haven’t known the Father or me. 4 But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I am going away to him who sent me, and not one of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6 Yet, because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: 9 About sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; 11 and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

12 “I still have many things to tell you, but you can’t bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. 15 Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.”

Discussion:

16:1-4 Jesus had told his disciples these things to keep [them] from stumbling—that is, to keep them from abandoning the faith due to persecution. In the days to come, followers of Jesus would face being banned from the synagogues and put to death—often by those who would think they were serving God by doing so. However, such people haven’t known the Father or [Jesus]. Jesus wanted them—and us—to be prepared. We should not be shocked when we experience some form of rejection or censure for our Christian beliefs and standards. This could come from family, friends, employers, customers, coworkers, the government—and the list goes on. As Paul told Timothy, “All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). But the Holy Spirit is available to empower us in our time of need.

16:5-7 Jesus told them he was going away and sorrow had filled his disciples’ hearts. They had been with him for three years of ministry. They wanted to see him reign as King; they wanted to be with him. But he assured them that his departure was for their benefit. How could that be possible? Well, unless he left, the Counselor [would] not come—that is, the Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son into the world, and the Son would send the Spirit into the world. Thus, the Trinitarian God is at work, each Person carrying out the next phase of his kingdom program. The coming of the Holy Spirit would benefit the disciples because his presence would not be physically limited (as Jesus’s was). He would dwell within each of them and go with them wherever they traveled (see Eph 1:22, 23). If you have trusted Jesus Christ and received the Holy Spirit, you are never alone.

16:8-13 The role of the Holy Spirit would be to convict (that is, convince concerning the truth) the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. People would be convicted about sin because of their failure to believe in Jesus for forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. They would be convicted about righteousness because Jesus would no longer be physically present.

The resurrection and ascension are proof of the righteousness of Christ because he was crucified as one who was unrighteous. With Jesus gone, people would think that his righteous standard no longer applied, but the Spirit would demonstrate otherwise. Finally, the world would be convicted about judgment, because the ruler of this world—Satan—has been judged. Therefore, his followers will also be judged. The death of Christ condemned and defeated Satan (see Col 2:15), and—like a condemned criminal—he is waiting for his coming execution (see Rev 20:2, 7-10).

16:12-13 Though Jesus yet had many things to tell his disciples, he knew they were unable to bear them. But when the Spirit of truth came, he would help them and guide [them] into all the truth. He would declare to them things that were yet to come (such as the prophecies in Revelation). The Spirit would ensure that the apostles’ writings were true, guaranteeing that they wrote Scripture, the very words of God.

16:14-15 The Holy Spirit’s role is to glorify the Son, receiving the Son’s words and disclosing them to his followers. Once again we see the Trinity in action in that the Son took revelation from the Father and would declare it to his disciples through the Holy Spirit. Though the Spirit provided the apostles with perfect revelation in order that they might write Scripture, this does not mean that we are excluded from his ministry. This text applies to us in two ways. First, we are

recipients of the Scriptural revelation that the apostles received. Second, the Holy Spirit provides us with personal illumination, enabling us to understand Scripture and to see how it applies in the details of our lives. This work of the Spirit in the life of the believer is called “the anointing” (see 1 John 2:20, 27).

SORROW TURNED TO JOY

16 “In a little while, you will no longer see me; again in a little while, you will see me.”

17 Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this he’s telling us: ‘In a little while, you will not see me; again in a little while, you will see me’ and, ‘Because I am going to the Father’?” 18 They said, “What is this he is saying, ‘In a little while’? We don’t know what he’s talking about.”

19 Jesus knew they wanted to ask him, and so he said to them, “Are you asking one another about what I said, ‘In a little while, you will not see me; again in a little while, you will see me’? 20 Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. 21 When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. 22 So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you.

23 “In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.”

Discussion:

16:16-19 The time of Jesus’s crucifixion was drawing near. In a little while, the disciples would no longer see him because he would be dead and buried. But in another little while, they would see him again when he rose from the grave. However, the disciples weren’t getting it. They said quietly to one another, We don’t know what he’s talking about. Yet Jesus knew they were confused. They couldn’t hide anything from him. He knows your private conversations and thoughts, too. Don’t be upset when you don’t understand what Jesus is doing in your life. After all, Jesus’s first disciples were confused, and they had Jesus right there with them! Choose to pursue him in the midst of your confusion.

16:20-22 Jesus foretold the great sorrow that they would soon experience at his crucifixion (while the world rejoiced), but he also foretold that their grief would turn to joy at his resurrection. To explain how they could go from mourning to elation in such a brief span of time, he gave them an illustration. A woman experiencing labor goes through great pain. But when her child is born, her suffering is forgotten and replaced by rejoicing. In the same way, the disciples’ pain would lead to joy. And, Jesus told them, No one will take away your joy from you. Why? Because it is rooted in the presence and work of Christ on the inside—not on the ever-changing circumstances of life (i.e., happiness).

16:23-24 Once again, Jesus told them, Anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. No matter what sorrow you experience, remain in Jesus because God is still in the prayer-answering business when we love and seek to honor the Son. In fact, Jesus encouraged his disciples to take advantage of the opportunity to ask of him so that they might experience joy. There’s nothing like the joy that comes when the Creator of the universe answers your personal prayer. This joy does not depend on what happens; rather, it can be chosen based on our confidence in and commitment to God.

JESUS THE VICTOR

25 “I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. A time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 On that day you will ask in my name, and I am not telling you that I will ask the Father on your behalf. 27 For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

29 His disciples said, “Look, now you’re speaking plainly and not using any figurative language. 30 Now we know that you know everything and don’t need anyone to question you. By this we believe that you came from God.”

31 Jesus responded to them, “Do you now believe? 32 Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33 I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

Discussion:

16:25 Jesus had been using figures of speech with them (e.g., the vine, 15:1-8; the woman in labor, 16:21). But in time, he would tell [them] plainly about the Father. There is a principle at work here for believers in Christ: **God only explains what you are ready and able to handle. You may not understand the circumstances that you're experiencing, but God loves you and is taking you through a growth process.** He calls for your trust and obedience now. Further understanding will come later, when you're prepared to receive it.

16:26-28 On that day when the disciples would ask the Father in Jesus's name, they would not need Jesus to ask on their behalf. Why? Because the Father himself loved them due to their relationship to his Son.

16:29-32 After this, the disciples affirmed their belief in Jesus. He had known and answered their private questions. They were certain that he was the Messiah who had come from God. However, Jesus knew them better than they knew themselves. He said, Do you now believe? Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered . . . and you will leave me alone. Translation: "You don't believe as strongly as you think you do. Now, while all is quiet and safe, this is easy for you to say. But very soon you're going to forget your fragile faith and run for your lives." Have you ever made a vow to God during a church service only to back away from it later—perhaps as quickly as when you left the church parking lot? It's easy to boast about our faith; it's harder to live it, as Peter would soon discover. This is one of the reasons why God causes us to experience challenges. Through them, we come to see how brittle our faith is and how mighty our Savior is, and thus our faith is made a little stronger. Though the disciples would abandon him, Jesus was not alone. His Father was with him. He was "sent" from the Father, is "in the Father", and would return "to the Father". The Son and the Father "are one".

16:33 Jesus revealed all of these things to his disciples, not to fill them with fear, but so that they might have peace in him. Peace is not mere serenity and the absence of crisis. The peace that Jesus was talking about is something that only he can give, and it's something that believers can experience in a crisis. In reality, you can't know if you truly have peace until conflict strikes. **A Christian's peace is found in his or her connection to Jesus Christ based on his Word. No matter what suffering you endure in this life, Jesus exhorts you to be courageous.** How can we have courage to pursue God's agenda in the midst of tribulation? Jesus gave us the answer: I have conquered the world. Regardless of how the world beats you down, you have reason to live with bold faith because Jesus is the sovereign King over the world. He has defeated sin, Satan, and death. **If you're a believer, your eternity is secure. And Jesus has the power to overrule your earthly circumstances. Knowing this truth and maintaining an intimate relationship with the Lord (in me) will radically change your perspective as you face whatever obstacles come your way. His peace gives you peace in the midst of life's crises.**

Chapter 17

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,

2 since you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. 3 This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ. 4 I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.”

Discussion:

Context: Jesus ministry is coming to an end. He has finished teaching the disciples about the Vine and Branches, apart from Me, you can do nothing. Stay attached. Jesus says that he will send the Holy Spirit to them and that they must testify about Him. Jesus has told the disciples things so that they will have peace in Him. In this world you will have TROUBLE, but take heart! I have overcome the world! Then Jesus goes into prayer.

The timeframe is after the Last Supper and before going to the garden.

17:1 In chapters 13–16, John presents Jesus’s “Farewell Discourse,” the final teachings and exhortations he gave to his disciples in the upper room after the Passover supper. In chapter 17, John records the prayer Jesus spoke at the conclusion of their time together—just before his betrayal. Jesus recognized that the hour had come for the Son and the Father to glorify each other. The Father and Son love one another and desire to make much of one another before a watching world. Those who come to God through Jesus Christ are called to participate in this intra-Trinitarian love, bringing glory to God through our faith in and obedience to the Son.

17:2 As John has already made clear, everyone who believes in Jesus receives eternal life. The Father loves the Son so much that he desired to give this redeemed humanity to him as a gift. The Father gave the Son authority over all flesh and then gave us to him so that the King would have a people to rule.

17:3 In his prayer, Jesus gave a definition of eternal life. This is important because it does not merely refer to an existence that lasts forever. After all, everyone will live eternally, either in heaven or in hell. Eternal life, then, is not merely the continuation of life but the experience of God’s reality. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ. To receive eternal life is to enter into the divine realm with the goal of experiencing an intimate relationship with God through Jesus, a relationship that will grow throughout eternity. It is the uninterrupted, deepening knowledge and experience of God. This is the purpose for which we were created.

17:4 Jesus glorified the Father on the earth by completing the work he gave him to accomplish. Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”. We bring glory to God in the same way—by pursuing his will for our lives. Do you consider doing the will of God to be as desirous and life-sustaining as eating?

17:5 Jesus prayed the Father would glorify him in [his] presence with that glory he had with the Father before the world existed. Notice that Jesus clearly affirmed his pre-existence. Before the incarnation, before Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, before the creation week even began, God the Son eternally existed in the glorious presence of God the Father. And to this glory he would soon return.

All Jesus wants is God to be glorified and to be with the Father. We should want the same. Not just our minds, but in our prayers. Voice it!

What is eternal life? Knowing God; knowing Jesus. To know means to have a personal, intimate relationship. Like He’s my only daddy. I run to Him when I am hurt. I run to Him when I have joy. Talk about anything and everything, no off-limits!

How do we bring God glory? By FINISHING His work. It takes preservice and stamina to finish something. Rely on God and He will give us the strength, resources, wisdom and patience to finish! Finish strong!

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

6 “I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, 8 because I have given

them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have **believed** that you sent me.”

9 “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they are yours. 10 Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled. 13 Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them. 14 I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

Discussion:

17:6-8 Jesus confessed that he had faithfully revealed the Father to his disciples, those who had kept [his] word. As a result, they believed that Jesus had been sent by God. He really was the Messiah, just as he claimed.

17:9-11 Next Jesus prayed, not . . . for the world, but for his disciples whom the Father had given him. Jesus was glorified in them because they had received everything he revealed to them. As Jesus prepared to leave the world, he prayed that the Father would protect his disciples by his name—that is, by the Father’s name. In Scripture, names do not merely identify people but speak of their character. Therefore, Jesus was asking that God would protect them by keeping them connected to their holy and righteous Father. Specifically, **Jesus asked that God would grant that Jesus’s followers might be one, as the Father and Son are. In other words, he prayed for the unity of his disciples—that they’d be unified in love in the same way that the persons of the Godhead are unified in love.**

17:12 While Jesus was with his disciples, he protected them. None of them was lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture could be fulfilled. God knew far in advance that Judas would betray the Messiah. Nevertheless, Judas’s rebellion could not thwart the divine plan. On the contrary, it facilitated it. **Understand that even wickedness falls under the sovereignty of God—not because God prescribes it, but because he uses it. How much better would it be for you to fulfill God’s purposes through your obedience than through your rebellion?**

17:13-16 Jesus spoke these things to his disciples so that they would have his joy completed in them. Notice that it’s his joy. To experience peace in the midst of suffering is for Jesus to share his joy with you, and this comes by means of confidence in his word.

Jesus wants the disciples to have Joy. That’s a fruit of the Spirit. Why? Because they are going to need it. Things are going to get tough, confusing, scary, and lonely, doubts will creep in. Joy and peace lead to faith and help kick fear out the door!

But when one receives God’s word through Jesus, one also receives the hatred of the world. The world hates the followers of Jesus because they are not of the world, just as [Jesus] is not. Yet Jesus does not pray that the Father would take them out of the world but that he would protect them from the evil one. Christians must function in this world—in our families, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, marketplaces, and civic arenas. Yet, we are not to adopt the world’s perspective or let it dictate our values. We must operate on earth from a heavenly perspective, God’s perspective. God’s Word is to determine our understanding of right and wrong. **Though we are in the world, we must not be of it.**

Jesus doesn’t say take them home; he says PROTECT them. Why? Because there is still work for them to do! Jesus invested three (3) years in them. Lots of lessons; lots of victories. Now it is time for them to spread the Gospel!

17:17 Then Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth”. To be sanctified is to be set apart for God’s purposes. This process happens through internalizing the eternal truth of God’s Word. Think of the Word like food. You can chew it all day, but unless you swallow it, you receive no health benefits from it. **You internalize God’s Word, not by merely hearing or reading it, but by trusting and obeying it. Then its work of spiritual transformation is activated in your life** (see 2 Cor 3:17-18).

17:18-19 **Jesus was sending his disciples into the world—that is, sending them on a mission.** They would not be cloistered in a monastery but making their God-glorifying presence known in the culture. **Jesus said, “I sanctify myself for**

them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth". In other words, Jesus had set himself apart to God's will so that he might enable his followers to do the same.

We are made a little lower than the angels, but God wants us to be just like Him. He wants if NOW, on earth, so others can see what a life is like that is dedicated to God.

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

20 "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. 21 May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. 22 I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation. 25 Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. 26 I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them."

Discussion:

17:20 Not only did Jesus pray for the eleven disciples in front of him, but also for those who believe in [him] through their word. The disciples / apostles with him that night would proclaim the gospel through their preaching and through their Holy-Spirit-inspired writings, which would become the New Testament. Therefore, "those who believe in [him] through their word" includes all those who have trusted in Christ down through the ages. This means that Jesus was praying here for you and me.

17:21 He prayed that all believers would all be one—that is, experience unity. Legitimate unity is not uniformity or sameness. Rather, Jesus was talking about being unified in God and his purposes. That's why he prayed, May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. A football team consists of different players filling different positions with different roles. But the entire team has one purpose: reaching the goal line. Their unity consists of pursuing that one goal according to the rules of the game. The church of Jesus Christ is composed of people from every race, ethnicity, gender, and walk of life. But we have the common purpose of proclaiming the gospel and pursuing God's kingdom agenda. Our effectiveness is determined by our unity. That's why Satan works so hard at causing division among Christians and within churches. Unity in truth is critical to experiencing the presence and power of God (see Acts 2:1-2, 43-44; 4:24-31). Illegitimate disunity disconnects us from God and causes us to be ineffective in our lives and in our prayers (see 1 Pet 3:7).

17:22-23 When legitimate unity is present, God's glory is manifested—that is, he advertises himself to the world through us, so that even more people might come to know, love, and serve him. Our unity makes it possible for the world to know that God the Father loved and sent Jesus. Our involvement in the church is not trivial, then. We are caught up in something much bigger than us. We are called to serve the Lord in unity so that the love and glory of our Trinitarian God is visibly and powerfully manifested to a watching world.

17:24-26 Jesus concluded his prayer, acknowledging that the world had not known God. That's why the Father sent the Son, and that's why the Son came. Jesus Christ made the name of God known so that God's intra-Trinitarian love might be known and experienced by the world. (intra-Trinitarian love is **the love that God the Father has for both God the Son and God the Holy Spirit**. It is also the love that God the Son has for the Father and the Spirit, and the love that the Spirit has for the Father and Son)

Chapter 18

JESUS BETRAYED

After Jesus had said these things, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.

4 Then Jesus, knowing everything that was about to happen to him, went out and said to them, “Who is it that you’re seeking?”

5 “Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered. “I am he,” Jesus told them.

Judas, who betrayed him, was also standing with them. 6 When Jesus told them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground.

7 Then he asked them again, “Who is it that you’re seeking?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they said.

8 “I told you I am he,” Jesus replied. “So if you’re looking for me, let these men go.” 9 This was to fulfill the words he had said: “I have not lost one of those you have given me.”

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)

11 At that, Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword away! Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me?”

Discussion:

18:1-2 At the conclusion of Jesus’s discourse and prayer, he and his disciples went across the Kidron Valley (which lay between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives) to a garden. But Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place. So, clearly, Jesus wasn’t hiding from his enemies. He went to a location where he knew Judas could find him. Jesus was ready to complete his mission in obedience to the Father.

18:3 Judas showed up with a company of soldiers and some officials from the Jewish religious leaders. The latter were willing to work together with their Roman overlords to deal with Jesus.

18:4-6 Once again, John makes clear to his readers that nothing caught Jesus by surprise. He knew everything that was about to happen to him. After all, he’s the Son of God. When Jesus asked whom they were looking for, they said, Jesus of Nazareth. His disciples had fallen asleep; (see Luke 22:45-46.) When he merely replied, “I am he”, they all fell to the ground. Jesus’s words sure do pack a punch! The Greek words behind the translation “I am he” can simply be rendered as “I am”—the divine name, the self-designation that God revealed to Moses. Jesus is no mere man. He’s the God-Man. He’s the Word who was with God, was God, and became flesh. Jesus spoke the divine name using the same voice that had spoken the world into existence. And it knocked the betrayer and his accomplices off their feet.

18:7-9 When he asked them again and they gave the same reply, Jesus again said, “I am he”, and told them to let the disciples go. John tells us that Jesus said this to fulfill the words he had just prayed: I have not lost one of those you have given me. **When Jesus intervenes to protect you, his intervention is always effective.**

18:10-11 At that moment, Simon Peter took his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant. Yet Jesus didn’t praise Peter for his zeal but rebuked him for stepping between Jesus and God’s will: Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me? Though John doesn’t tell us anything further about the servant’s injury, we learn in Luke’s Gospel that Jesus healed his ear before they led him away (see Luke 22:51).

JESUS ARRESTED AND TAKEN TO ANNAS

12 Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus and tied him up. 13 First they led him to Annas, since he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be better for one man to die for the people.

Discussion:

18:12-14 Since the soldiers and Jewish officials had been knocked over by Jesus's mere words and then watched him reattach a severed ear, you might assume that they would be rethinking their plans to arrest him. But apparently they were so determined to do evil that it didn't matter. They led him to Annas. Though Caiaphas was the high priest, Annas was Caiaphas's father-in-law and the former high priest (so he retained the title). John reminds us that Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews on the expediency of killing Jesus so that the Romans wouldn't punish them for the disturbance Jesus was causing.

PETER DENIES JESUS

15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, as was another disciple. That disciple was an acquaintance of the high priest; so he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard. 16 But Peter remained standing outside by the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the girl who was the doorkeeper and brought Peter in. 17 Then the servant girl who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" "I am not," he said. 18 Now the servants and the officials had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold. They were standing there warming themselves, and Peter was standing with them, warming himself.

Discussion:

18:15-18 Simon Peter was following at a distance, along with another disciple. This unnamed disciple was John, the author of the Gospel. John never identifies himself by name but typically calls himself "the disciple Jesus loved". Since John knew the high priest, he was able to get himself and Peter into the high priest's courtyard. Earlier, Peter had declared emphatically that he would lay down his life for Jesus but Jesus predicted that he would, in fact, deny him. This was the time of reckoning. A servant girl saw Peter and asked if he was one of Jesus's disciples. He denied it. John then tells us that the servants in the courtyard were warming themselves by a charcoal fire. The Greek word translated "charcoal fire" appears only one other time in John's Gospel. When it shows up, it will be significant (see John 21:9).

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS

19 The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.

20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus answered him. "I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews gather, and I haven't spoken anything in secret. 21 Why do you question me? Question those who heard what I told them. Look, they know what I said."

22 When he had said these things, one of the officials standing by slapped Jesus, saying, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?"

23 "If I have spoken wrongly," Jesus answered him, "give evidence about the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit me?"

24 Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Discussion:

18:19-21 The scene switches to Jesus standing before the high priest Annas, who asked him about his disciples and about his teaching. He wanted Jesus to tell him what he had been doing to get everyone so riled up. But Jesus wasn't about to recount everything he'd done and said. He had spoken openly both in the synagogue and in the temple. He had done nothing in secret, nor did he lead any secret organization. Why didn't the high priest simply ask the people who heard him?

18:22-24 For his response to the high priest, Jesus received a slap in the face. But he was unfazed. If he had spoken wrongly, he demanded that they give evidence about the wrong. Otherwise, the slap was an unjust assault. If this trial were to be legitimate, they would have to bring forward witnesses to testify about what he had done wrong. Jesus requested that the high priest do so. Instead, someone simply hit him! When they refused to answer his query and instead sent him bound to Caiaphas, they merely confirmed that they had no interest in justice. They wanted blood.

PETER DENIES JESUS TWICE MORE

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" 27 Peter denied it again. Immediately a rooster crowed.

Discussion:

18:25-27 The scene returns to Peter, outside in the courtyard warming himself by the fire. He had denied a direct question about whether he was a disciple of Jesus. Here he denies twice more having any relationship with Jesus. One of those who accused him of being with Jesus was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off. Surrounded by the stares of an inquisitive crowd, Peter was asked in essence, "Aren't you the one who drew my kin's blood?" In spite of his former boasting that he would die for Jesus, Peter wasn't ready to put his life on the line. And immediately after his third denial, a rooster crowed—just as Jesus had predicted.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

29 So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

30 They answered him, "If this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law."

"It's not legal for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. 32 They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die.

33 Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 Jesus answered, "**Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?**"

35 "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

36 "**My kingdom is not of this world,**" said Jesus. "**If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.**"

37 "You are a king then?" Pilate asked.

"**You say that I'm a king,**" Jesus replied. "**I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.**"

38 "What is truth?" said Pilate.

Discussion:

18:28 Next they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. However, the Jewish officials refused to enter this Gentile arena because it would make them unclean and unable to eat the Passover. They had rejected God's Messiah and were seeking to put to death an innocent man, but they were worried about being ceremonially unclean! They couldn't see that their wicked actions had already made them filthy.

18:29-31 Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor over Judea. Typically, he governed in Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean Sea. But during the Passover when large crowds were present in Jerusalem, Pilate was on the scene to squelch any Jewish disturbances. He was a ruthless man with no affection for the Jews, and they had no fondness for him either. But since the Romans alone had the power of execution, the Jewish leaders needed Pilate to condemn Jesus. When Pilate insisted that they judge Jesus themselves according to their own law, they made their intentions clear: It's not legal for us to put anyone to death. Importantly, it was necessary for the Romans to be involved so that the Gentiles would be included in the guilt of the matter (see Acts 2:23; 4:27).

18:32 Again John interrupts his narrative to let us know that these actions were fulfilling Jesus's words. He had foretold the kind of death he was going to die. Previously, Jesus had spoken of being "lifted up" to indicate the kind of death he would die. The Old Testament teaches that a person under God's curse was to be displayed by hanging on a tree as a sign of divine judgment on sin (see Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). Clearly, Jesus was not a victim of fate; he is the sovereign Lord who proceeded toward his death according to plan.

18:33-35 Apparently, the Jews had told Pilate that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah and a king in opposition to Caesar, because when Jesus stood before him, he asked, Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus asked Pilate if he wanted

to know the answer himself or if he were asking because his accusers put him up to it. Pilate sounds disgusted with the whole thing: I'm not a Jew, am I? . . . Your . . . chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done? He wasn't interested in this religious squabble. He just wanted to get the case over with.

18:36 So, Jesus answered Pilate's question about whether he was a king: My kingdom is not of this world. Or, "Yes, I'm a King. But not from here." Was he the King of the Jews? Of course. He was also King of the Romans. In fact, he is King of the entire world. But the source of his kingship and authority is in heaven. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight. Actually, one of them (Peter) tried! And Jesus scolded him and healed the man he attacked (Luke 22:51). But those were earthly methods—not the methods of Jesus's kingdom. This is a good reminder that if you're going to be a kingdom disciple, you've got to use kingdom methods—not the methods of this world. Earthly means won't work when your source is spiritual.

18:37-39 Pilate followed the logic. If Jesus claimed to have a kingdom, then he must be claiming to be a king. Jesus affirmed his response: I was born for this. Indeed, he had come into the world . . . to testify to the truth. In fact, he said, everyone who is of the truth listens to me. This was Jesus's way of saying, "If you want the truth—if you care about the truth—then you'll listen to me, too." But Pilate brushed Jesus's assertion aside by asking, "What is truth?" Sadly, Pilate's question is repeated by this fallen postmodern world today. Many in our culture reject the notion of absolute truth. "Truth" to them is relative—that is, what's true for one person isn't necessarily true for another. But this is preposterous. Truth is the absolute standard by which reality is measured. It's not something that changes based on feelings or perspective. A person can deny that gravity is true, but if he decides to jump off a building to prove it, he's going to find that truth doesn't care about his feelings or perspective. Truth exists whether you embrace it or not. So Pilate told the Jews that he found no grounds for charging Jesus with a crime. The Roman governor concluded that he wasn't worthy of death, so he reminded them of the custom in which he would release one prisoner during the Passover. Then he proposed releasing the King of the Jews.

JESUS OR BARABBAS

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. 39 You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" 40 They shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Discussion:

18:40 But the Jewish leaders would have none of it: Not this man, but Barabbas! As it turned out, Barabbas was a revolutionary. He was an insurrectionist who had created havoc for Rome because he wanted the Jews out from under Roman rule. Whatever his specific crime was, he had earned the death penalty. Don't miss that the leaders preferred a criminal who had fought for physical deliverance from Rome because that's all they cared about. The Jewish leaders wanted political deliverance from Gentile rule; what they needed was spiritual deliverance from sin.

Chapter 19

JESUS FLOGGED AND MOCKED

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

2 The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and clothed him in a purple robe. 3 And they kept coming up to him and saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” and were slapping his face.

4 Pilate went outside again and said to them, “Look, I’m bringing him out to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging him.” 5 Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

Discussion:

19:1-3 Seeking to pacify the Jewish leaders, Pilate had Jesus flogged. Flogging involved the use of a whip of leather strips with bits of bone or metal tied to the ends. The resulting vicious beating would rip the skin from the victim’s back. The soldiers then mocked Christ’s claim to be a king by putting a crown of thorns on his head, dressing him in a purple robe, and shouting, Hail, King of the Jews! Then they slapped him in the face. Though Pilate and the soldiers no doubt thought they were merely exercising the might of Rome over a simple Jew, they were actually fulfilling biblical prophecy about the Messiah in detail (see Isa 50:6; 53:5).

19:4-5 Pilate then put Jesus on display for the Jews to see. He had found no grounds for charging him. Nevertheless, he had thoroughly humiliated him and inflicted great pain on him. Here is the man, he said.

PILATE SENTENCES JESUS TO DEATH

6 When the chief priests and the temple servants saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

Pilate responded, “Take him and crucify him yourselves, since I find no grounds for charging him.”

7 “We have a law,” the Jews replied to him, “and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He went back into the headquarters and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus did not give him an answer. 10 So Pilate said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?”

11 “You would have no authority over me at all,” Jesus answered him, “if it hadn’t been given you from above. This is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”

12 From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!”

13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge’s seat in a place called the Stone Pavement (but in Aramaic, ‘Gabbatha’). 14 It was the preparation day for the Passover, and it was about noon. Then he told the Jews, “Here is your king!”

15 They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests answered.

16 Then he handed him over to be crucified.

Discussion:

19:6 Pilate surely thought they would be satisfied with the brutality and humiliation that Jesus had experienced. But only one thing would satisfy them. The chief priests and the temple servants called out, Crucify! Crucify!

19:7 Jesus had done more than claim to be a mere human Messiah. He had made claims that only God could make. The Jews therefore accused him of blasphemy, saying, “You—being a man—make yourself God”. They demanded death and gave their reasoning: He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

19:8 Hearing this, Pilate was more afraid than ever. What would make Pilate fearful? Jesus had told Pilate that he ruled a kingdom that was “not of this world”. Now the Jews were telling Pilate that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. In Matthew 27:19 we learn that Pilate’s wife told him she had dreamed about this “righteous man” and that he should

have nothing to do with him. Pilate was a brutal ruler, but he was probably also a superstitious pagan who feared the gods. He was perhaps thinking, “Who is this guy standing before me?”

19:9-10 Pilate asked Jesus, Where are you from? Now clearly Pilate knew the answer to that question; Jesus was “from Galilee” (see Luke 23:5-7). But, given Pilate’s rising fear, he was essentially saying, “Where are you from, really?” However, Jesus refused to answer, fulfilling Scripture yet again (see Isa 53:7). Pilate, probably with a mixture of anger and dread, demanded that Jesus say something: Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you? But when someone insists on shouting, “Don’t you know that I’m in charge here?” it usually means he’s uncertain himself.

19:11 Finally, Jesus spoke. Pilate had no authority except what had been given to him from above. God grants authority and takes it away. Two important truths are wrapped up in Jesus’s statement. First, if a person exercises any authority on earth, ultimately that authority has been granted by God. So, will that authority be wielded for his kingdom purposes or not? How you answer that question has serious consequences because you will one day be called to give an account for your own use of authority. Second, remember to maintain a heavenly perspective: God is your ultimate authority. Anyone who seeks to rule over you illegitimately will not have the final say. He may be a boss, but he isn’t the boss. The one who handed me over to you has the greater sin. God would hold Pilate accountable for his gross violation of justice. Like a coward, he delivered Jesus over to be crucified. But at least Pilate acknowledged that Jesus wasn’t guilty. The sin of the Jewish high priest was much worse since he had the Scriptures available to him and was aware of Jesus’s teachings and miracles, yet closed his eyes to the truth.

19:12 Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. Pilate was nervous. But the Jews wouldn’t let him off the hook: If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. With that statement, the Jewish leaders had won because they had pitted Pilate against the Roman emperor. What would Caesar think if he heard one of his governors was setting free some would-be revolutionary who claimed to be a rival king in the Roman Empire? Caesar didn’t mind religion—as long as it didn’t compete with his absolute authority.

19:13 So, Pilate sat down on the judge’s seat to proclaim his verdict. One day every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ so that he may render a verdict, not regarding salvation, but regarding each person’s service and faithfulness to him. What will he say to you?

19:14-15 It was the preparation day for the Passover. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God had commanded them to slaughter a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts of their homes. Then, when he struck down the firstborn of Egypt, he “passed over” the homes with a blood covering. By means of this, God rescued his people from slavery (see Exod 12:1-28). Jesus, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” was about to shed his blood so that all those who believe in him would be saved from slavery to sin. His death at this particular moment wasn’t due to chance, then, but due to the sovereign timing of God. Though the Jewish leaders had gotten their way, Pilate got in one last dig at them: Here is your king! But they wanted nothing to do with Jesus: Take him away! Crucify him! Again Pilate referred to Jesus as their king. But they rejected any such notion: We have no king but Caesar. Notice that they didn’t say, “We have no king but God.” Their hatred of Jesus was so great that they were willing to disregard their divine ruler and align themselves with a pagan king. Placing human government above God never ends well.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Then they took Jesus away. 17 Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called 'Golgotha'. 18 There they crucified him and two others with him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. 19 Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The king of the Jews,’ but that he said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’”

22 Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.”

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24 So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it.” This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing. This is what the soldiers did.

Discussion:

19:16-18 Pilate handed him over to be crucified. Crucifixion was a horrific form of execution that the Romans had perfected. It was typical for the condemned to carry the crossbar for his own cross, as Jesus was made to do. The place of crucifixion was called Place of the Skull, which meant Golgotha in Aramaic. The Latin translation is Calvaria, from which we get the English rendering Calvary. There they crucified him between two others, criminals according to Luke 23:33.

19:19-22 Pilate had a sign hung on Jesus's cross that said, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. It was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, so that everyone could read it. Thus, the sign displayed the charge for which he was put to death. But it made the chief priests furious. Pilate had made the sign read as a title, a fact. The Jewish leaders wanted it to clearly indicate that this was merely Jesus's claim. But Pilate rebuffed them, saying, What I have written, I have written. **Pilate meant for the sign to sting the Jews. But, in his sovereignty, God meant it to declare to the world the truth about his Son.**

19:23-24 As Jesus writhed in agony above them, the soldiers pitilessly divided his clothes among them and gambled to see which of them would get to keep his tunic. John tells us that this too fulfilled Scripture, quoting Psalm 22:18 (19:24).

JESUS'S PROVISION FOR HIS MOTHER

25 Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, **"Woman, here is your son."** 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Discussion:

19:25-27 Standing by the cross were four women who had followed Jesus, including his mother Mary. Jesus saw the disciple he loved—that is, John the son of Zebedee, the author of the Gospel, and told his mother that John was now her son, and he told John that Mary was now his mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. Even as he hung dying on a cross, then, Jesus fulfilled his obligation to care for his widowed mother. **Jesus entrusted the well-being of his mother to John rather than to one of her biological sons because they had not yet believed in him. Spiritual relationships are to take precedence over biological and physical relationships** (see Matt 12:46-50).

THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS

28 After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, **"I'm thirsty."** 29 A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth.

30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, **"It is finished."** Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

Discussion:

19:28-30 When Jesus knew that his mission was complete, that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, that he had endured the wrath of God and fully atoned for the sins of the world, he said, I'm thirsty. So they put a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth. Hyssop was the very plant used to brush lamb's blood on the doorposts during the Passover (see Exod 12:21-23). As the apostle Paul says, "Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). Then Jesus declared, "It is finished". His work of atonement for sin was done. The demands of the law had been met. The debt for sin had been paid in full. Jesus had proclaimed, "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down on my own". Here the truth of that claim was verified: Bowing his head, he gave up his spirit. Jesus was not robbed of his life; he voluntarily laid it down. "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends".

JESUS'S SIDE PIERCED

31 Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men's legs broken and that their bodies be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with him. 33 When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 He who saw this has testified so that you also

may **believe**. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. 36 For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of his bones will be broken. 37 Also, another Scripture says: They will look at the one they pierced.

Discussion:

19:31 It sometimes took crucifixion victims days to die. Normally, then, the Romans would have left the men on the crosses. But since it was the preparation day for the Passover, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath. Moreover, for a cursed man to remain hanging on a tree overnight would defile the land (see Deut 21:22-23). So they requested that Pilate have the men's legs broken so that they would die and could be buried. Victims hanging on a cross had to put weight on their legs in order to lift themselves to breathe. Without the use of their legs, they would die of asphyxiation.

19:32-37 When the soldiers arrived to break Jesus's legs, they found him already dead. Therefore, a soldier pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out. This indicated that his heart was no longer beating. In the early years of the church, a heresy arose claiming that Jesus was totally divine and only pretended to be human (see 1 John 4:1-2). But John wants his readers to know that such talk is a complete lie. As sure as Jesus was fully God, he was fully human: he bled and died on a Roman cross. In fact, John himself was an eyewitness to this, and his testimony is true. All that happened, John tells us, was fulfillment of biblical prophecy. He quotes from Psalm 34:20 and Zechariah 12:10, proving it was no accident that Jesus was pierced rather than having his legs broken. Our sovereign God was fulfilling his Word.

JESUS'S BURIAL

38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus — but secretly because of his fear of the Jews — asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus's body. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and took his body away. 39 Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes. 40 They took Jesus's body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 There was a garden in the place where he was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it. 42 They placed Jesus there because of the Jewish day of preparation and since the tomb was nearby.

Discussion:

19:38-42 Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple of Jesus because he feared the Jews. The other Gospels inform us that he was wealthy and a prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin (see Matt 27:57; Mark 15:43). In spite of his fears, he boldly went forward to ask Pilate if he could bury Jesus's body. Joining Joseph was Nicodemus, another secret disciple who had previously spoken with Jesus at night. He also came into the light to assist Joseph with his task. They prepared the body and laid it in a new tomb in a garden near the place of his crucifixion. No one had been previously placed in the tomb. This is a very significant detail because later, when Jesus's body was gone, no one was able to point to any bones in the tomb to claim them as Jesus's remains. His was the first corpse to lie there.

Chapter 20

THE EMPTY TOMB

On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

2 So she went running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him!”

3 At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. 5 Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then, following him, Simon Peter also came. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. 7 The wrapping that had been on his head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. 8 The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then also went in, saw, and **believed**. 9 For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Discussion:

20:1-2 On the first day of the week—Sunday—Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning. Jesus had cast seven demons from her (see Luke 8:2), so she was a devoted follower. The Synoptic Gospels inform us that Mary had gone to the tomb with other women to anoint Jesus’s body (see Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55–24:1). She saw that the large stone sealing the tomb had been removed, and she had also seen an angel (see Mark 16:5). So she ran to tell Simon Peter and John (the disciple . . . Jesus loved) that the Lord’s body had been taken.

20:3-7 Thus, Peter and John ran for the tomb. John was faster and arrived there first, but Peter entered the tomb ahead of him. They saw the linen cloths lying there, which had been used to wrap Jesus’s body. And the wrapping that had been on his head was folded and set aside by itself. One of the many theories that men have concocted to explain away the resurrection is that Jesus was merely resuscitated. This theory proposes that after enduring the intense brutality of being beaten and crucified, Jesus was revived by the cool interior of the tomb. But this doesn’t explain why a half-dead man would remove his head cloth, neatly fold it, and place it separate from his intact linen wrappings! Nor does it explain how he could have had the strength to move the heavy stone blocking the entrance. As with other attempts by unbelievers to deny the resurrection, this one fails to adequately explain the evidence. One thing is clear: When the disciples saw Jesus later, he didn’t look like a man who had been merely resuscitated from a near death experience!

20:8-10 John believed. Previously he had believed in Jesus’s identity. Now he believed in the resurrection. Though Jesus had predicted his resurrection (see Luke 9:21-22; 18:31-34), and Scripture foretold that the Messiah must rise from the dead (see Acts 2:24-31), the disciples had not understood. They returned to the place where they were staying, no doubt still trying to piece things together and figure out exactly what had happened.

MARY MAGDALENE SEES THE RISEN LORD

11 But Mary stood outside the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus’s body had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“Because they’ve taken away my Lord,” she told them, “and I don’t know where they’ve put him.”

14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. 15 “Woman,” Jesus said to her, **“why are you crying? Who is it that you’re seeking?”**

Supposing he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you’ve carried him away, tell me where you’ve put him, and I will take him away.”

16 Jesus said to her, **“Mary.”**

Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, “‘Rabboni!’”—which means “Teacher.”

17 **“Don’t cling to me,”** Jesus told her, **“since I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”**

18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what he had said to her.

Discussion:

20:11-13 But Mary was still standing there crying. She couldn't grasp what had happened. Then inside the tomb she saw two angels . . . sitting where Jesus's body had been lying, asking her why she was crying. The only thing she could conclude was that someone had taken away Jesus's body, and it had broken her heart. Resurrection was not an option she had considered.

20:14-16 Then she saw another person—only this one turned out to be Jesus! He also asked her why she was crying. But she didn't recognize him and supposed he was the gardener (since the tomb was in a garden. She even wondered if he'd moved the body. The Son of God, the King of creation, had risen from the dead. And he was mistaken for a gardener! But when she heard the man say, Mary, she finally knew this was her Teacher. She hadn't recognized him. But when he spoke her name, her eyes were opened. "The sheep follow [the shepherd] because they know his voice".

20:17-18 Once Mary had Jesus, she didn't want to let him go. But he told her not to cling to him because he had not yet ascended to the Father. In other words, he said, "I haven't gone anywhere yet. There's no need to hang on to me." Instead, he wanted her to go tell the good news to his disciples. The risen Lord Jesus gave Mary Magdalene the privilege of going to his disciples on that first resurrection morning and telling them, I have seen the Lord! Don't overlook that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was first announced by a woman. In first-century Judaism, a woman's testimony wasn't considered credible. So if the disciples were going to invent a resurrection story, they wouldn't choose women to be the first to see and declare it. Such testimonies would have been rejected by the Jews. Thus, the fact that the first witnesses were women (see Matt 28:1-10) provides evidence for the historicity of the resurrection. It also affirms the communication gifting of women as long as the gift is exercised under the legitimately authorized spiritual authority and covering of the home and the church (see 1 Cor 11:5, 10).

THE DISCIPLES COMMISSIONED

19 When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

20 Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." 22 After saying this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Discussion:

20:19 That evening . . . the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked. They were in hiding because they were afraid of what the Jews might do to them. But at that moment, Jesus came and stood among them. Don't miss what John tells us: the doors were shut and locked. Nevertheless, Jesus joined them. Now, clearly, Jesus had a physical body. Mary touched him; Thomas would touch him; later he would eat with his disciples. He was no mere phantom (see Luke 24:39). He had risen bodily from the grave. But his resurrected body no longer had material limitations. Apparently, he could pass through locked doors if he wanted. And later he would ascend on a cloud into heaven (see Acts 1:9). The apostles tell us that our resurrection bodies will be like his (see 1 Cor 15:45-57; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

20:20 The disciples were surely reeling as Jesus stood before them alive. But Jesus showed them his hands, with nail wounds, and his side, which had been pierced by a Roman spear (see 19:34). Those scars had not been removed from his resurrection body. One day, then, all believers will see them. They will serve as eternal reminders of the cost of our redemption, and they will forever give us reason to praise him. Jesus will be the only scarred person in eternity, a perpetual reminder of the price paid for our redemption.

20:21 He said, Peace be with you. Why? Because they were terrified of the Jews. That's why they had locked the doors. Yet Jesus gave them his peace. Notice that their situation hadn't changed. The Jewish leaders would still oppose them in the days ahead (see Acts 4:1-24; 5:17-42). But Jesus can speak peace into trouble. Though your circumstances are unstable, he can provide the internal stability your heart needs. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. The Father had sent the Son on a kingdom mission to atone for the sins of the world so that all who believe would receive eternal life. Now the Son was sending his disciples on a kingdom mission to proclaim that message and make other disciples throughout the world (see Matt 28:16-20).

20:22-23 Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. Most interpreters recognize this as an anticipatory act. The Holy Spirit would come to dwell within the apostles on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-21), enabling them to accomplish the mission on which Jesus was sending them. Here, then, Jesus was visibly and physically preparing them for what was spiritually to come. They would be granted kingdom authority, so he told them, If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. **The Holy Spirit would enable them to authoritatively declare that God had indeed forgiven the sins of any who believe in Jesus.**

THOMAS SEES AND BELIEVES

24 But Thomas (called “Twin”), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples were telling him, “We’ve seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “If I don’t see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never **believe.**”

26 A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

27 Then he said to Thomas, **“Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but **believe.**”**

28 Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said, **“Because you have seen me, you have **believed.** Blessed are those who have not seen and yet **believe.**”**

Discussion:

20:24-25 One of the disciples, Thomas, had not been present on that evening. When they told him about what happened, he refused to believe unless he could put his finger into the mark of the nails and put his hand into Jesus’s side. This is why, in church history, he earned the nickname “Doubting Thomas.” But this isn’t a fair appraisal of his character. **Previously, Thomas was prepared to go into hostile territory and die with Jesus. So it’s clear that a believer can be spiritually strong one moment and spiritually deflated the next.**

20:26-28 Jesus responded to Thomas’s unbelief with grace. He gave the struggling disciple the opportunity to do exactly what he had wanted: to touch the wounds of his risen Savior. Then Thomas made a profound confession: My Lord and my God! He acknowledged Jesus’s deity. As John says at the beginning of his Gospel, “The Word was God”.

20:29 Notice that Jesus did not correct Thomas but accepted his worship, saying, Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. **God wants you to believe in him before you see him work in your life.**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GOSPEL

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. 31 **But these are written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Discussion:

20:30-31 Jesus performed many other signs . . . that are not written in this book. In other words, John tells his readers that the things he has written down in his Gospel are merely the highlights! Nevertheless, these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Here John gives us the **evangelistic purpose for his book**. He wrote it **“so that”** readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah—the God-Man—who died as a substitutionary atonement for sins and that, **by believing, they will receive eternal life**—that is, an eternal relationship with God and an ever-expanding experience of his reality in our lives. That’s what salvation is all about.

Chapter 21

JESUS'S THIRD APPEARANCE TO THE DISCIPLES

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way:

2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples were together.

3 "I'm going fishing," Simon Peter said to them.

"We're coming with you," they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. 5 "Friends," Jesus called to them, **"you don't have any fish, do you?"**

"No," they answered.

6 **"Cast the net on the right side of the boat,"** he told them, **"and you'll find some."** So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish. 7 The disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer clothing around him (for he had taken it off) and plunged into the sea. 8 Since they were not far from land (about a hundred yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. 10 **"Bring some of the fish you've just caught,"** Jesus told them. 11 So Simon Peter climbed up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish — 153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

12 **"Come and have breakfast,"** Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Discussion:

21:1-3 In the final chapter, John describes how **Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias**, another name for the Sea of Galilee. Seven of the disciples were together: **Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, Zebedee's sons (James and John), and two others**. Simon Peter told them, I'm going fishing. He had a family to support, and he was still reeling from his denial of the Lord. They joined him for an all-night fishing expedition but caught nothing. Before Jesus had called them, Peter and the Zebedee brothers had been fishermen. With Jesus gone, Peter returned to his old line of work. But he was proving to be unsuccessful.

21:4-6 Jesus was standing on the shore, but they didn't recognize him because it was only daybreak and they were still some distance away. He called to them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, and they caught so many fish that they were unable to haul them. **Peter had been a fisherman all his life. Nevertheless, he had failed without the Lord's enablement**—something that Jesus had shown him previously (see Luke 5:4-11). **Peter was not ultimately self-sufficient but entirely dependent on God**, even to accomplish work that had been his whole life. As **Jesus told his disciples, "You can do nothing without me"**.

21:7-8 This miraculous catch of fish opened the eyes of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. When he said, It is the Lord! Peter plunged into the sea and headed for shore. The impetuous disciple couldn't wait. Then the rest of the disciples followed, dragging the net full of fish behind them.

21:9-11 When they arrived on the beach, they saw that Jesus had cooked a breakfast of fish and bread on a charcoal fire. The Greek word for "charcoal fire" appears two times in John's Gospel: here and at 18:18, when Peter was warming himself by another such blaze. **On that occasion, Peter had denied three times that he knew Jesus. Thus, the Lord was reminding Peter of his recent past.** We can be certain of this because of the conversation that follows in 21:15-19. **Peter never forgot this meal; he even mentioned it in his preaching** (see Acts 10:41).

21:12-14 Jesus invited them to join him for breakfast. John tells us that the disciples didn't ask, Who are you? They all recognized that this was their risen Lord. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. John describes the first time in 20:19-23 and the second in 20:24-29. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was neither a fairytale nor a hallucination. He "presented himself alive to [his disciples] by many convincing proofs . . . over a

period of forty days" (Acts 1:3). As Jesus himself told them, "It is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have" (Luke 24:39).

JESUS'S THREEFOLD RESTORATION OF PETER

15 When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs," he told him. 16 A second time he asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you."

"Shepherd my sheep," he told him.

17 He asked him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said. 18 "Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go." 19 He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, "Follow me."

Discussion:

21:15 After breakfast, Jesus had a talk with Simon Peter. He asked him, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?—that is, "more than these other disciples do?" Why would Jesus ask this? Because when he had predicted that the disciples would fall away, Peter had vowed, "Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away" (Matt 26:31-33). Peter had wanted Jesus to know that though the devotion of the other disciples might waver, he could count on Peter remaining steadfast. He would be the one disciple that Jesus could trust. But here, after Peter had shamefully denied Jesus three times, Jesus basically asked Peter, "Are you still the most committed disciple?" Yes, Lord . . . you know that I love you. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, the Greek verb used is *agapaō*, often used to describe self-sacrificial love. But when Peter affirmed his love for Jesus, the Greek verb is *phileō*, a brotherly kind of love and affection—a love between good friends. Previously, Peter had claimed that his love for and commitment to Jesus was superior to that of the others. But after his failure and denial, he wasn't willing to arrogantly say that he loved Jesus with a sacrificial love. In light of Peter's humble response, Jesus told him, Feed my lambs. In other words, "Since you're not thinking so highly of yourself anymore, I can use you to lead and care for my people."

21:16-17 A second time, Jesus asked, Simon, son of John, do you love me? (using *agapaō*). Peter responded again, Yes, Lord . . . you know that I love you (using *phileō*). And again Jesus commanded him to look after his people: Shepherd my sheep. Then, for a third time, Jesus asked, Simon, son of John, do you love me? This time the verb is *phileō*. So, seeing Peter humbled, Jesus came down to Peter's level and met him where he was. Peter was grieved. His three denials of his Lord had now been matched by a question from his Lord repeated three times: "Do you love me?" It broke Peter's heart. All he could do was say, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. When Peter was proudly self-assured about his ability to stand fast at a critical moment, Jesus knew that he would actually crack under pressure. He knew Peter's heart better than Peter did. The grieving disciple understood that now. And since Jesus knew all things, Peter was convinced that Jesus also knew that Peter loved him in spite of his prior failure. Again, Jesus told him, "Feed my sheep". Thus, Jesus was restoring his humbled disciple to ministry. Peter's repentance allowed for restoration. Though Peter had previously thought highly of himself, he had come to adopt Jesus's view of leadership in ministry. Peter understood that being a leader of God's people is not about arrogantly exercising power. Therefore, he could later write to other church leaders, "Shepherd God's flock among you . . . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3). Peter had taken to heart Jesus's command, "Shepherd my sheep." Sometimes God lets his people fail in order to develop them spiritually and prepare them for greater usefulness (see Luke 22:31-32).

21:18-19 After this restoration, Jesus prophesied about Peter's future: When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go. John explains Jesus's mysterious prophecy: He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. According to tradition passed down in the early church, Peter was martyred in Rome under Emperor Nero for his faith in Jesus Christ: he was crucified upside down. In spite of what was to come, Jesus urged Peter, "Follow me". And the New Testament shows that Peter did

indeed humbly follow his Lord and devote himself to gospel ministry. Are you prepared to follow Jesus in good times and bad, at whatever the cost?

CORRECTING A FALSE REPORT

20 So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, “Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray you?” 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?”

22 “If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

23 So this rumor spread to the brothers and sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

Discussion:

21:20-22 Peter turned around and saw John, the disciple Jesus loved, following them. So Peter asked Jesus, What about him? Peter accepted that he had a martyr’s death awaiting him, but he wanted to know what Jesus’s plans were for John. Jesus’s response was short and to the point: If I want him to remain until I come . . . what is that to you? As for you, follow me. So in essence, Jesus said, “That’s none of your business, Peter. If I want him to remain alive until my second coming, what difference does that make to you? You worry about yourself, and follow me.” God has a general will for all of his people. This is expressed in his biblical commands for all of his followers. But God also has a specific will for each individual Christian. Jesus graciously revealed to Peter his will for him. But he wasn’t about to tell Peter his specific will for John. We are called to follow Jesus corporately as the church and personally as individuals. Each of us is to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus and seek to discern how he wants us to serve and glorify him. You are not to use God’s specific will for you to measure anyone else, nor are you to take his specific will for another and use it to measure your own circumstances. We are not to sit as judges regarding how God chooses to use other believers.

21:23 As a result of Jesus saying this, rumor spread . . . that this disciple would not die. But this was a misinterpretation. Jesus was being hyperbolic in order to make a point. He wasn’t saying that John would remain alive until his second coming. He was simply saying, “Whatever my specific will is for John, it doesn’t concern you.” We must read and interpret the Bible carefully. Poor interpretation leads to erroneous conclusions!

EPILOGUE

24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.

Discussion:

21:24-25 This disciple—the one Jesus loved—is the one who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. The Gospel of the apostle John, then, is based on his eyewitness testimony. And we know that his testimony is true. But this Gospel contains only a small sample of what Jesus did and taught. There are also many other things that could have been written. If every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written. The apostle John has only given us a highlight reel! But God providentially determined that what we have in Scripture is enough. You don’t need to know everything that Jesus did and said. But, John says, you do need to “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”. Amen.

The Chronological Gospel: The Life and Seventy Week Ministry of the Messiah

Introduction

Each of the Gospel authors records a different facet of the life and ministry of Jesus. However, no single Gospel account paints the entire picture. To properly understand the chronology of Jesus ministry, one must have a fundamental understanding of both the instructions in the Torah (the instructions given by the Almighty to Moses) and the man-made laws of first century Judaism as they were developed by the Pharisee-ruled Sanhedrin. It is likewise impossible to establish the order of events in Jesus ministry without an accurate understanding of both the Feast of the LORD and the Creator's celestial calendar.

In a chronological journey through the Gospels, you will discover that each one of the Creator's Feasts is embedded with detailed prophetic shadow pictures that the Messiah must fulfill. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John detail how the Messiah fulfilled the Spring Feasts of the LORD as the Suffering Servant, the picture of the substitutionary Lamb of God, the acceptable sin offering. Without a knowledge of the Feasts of the LORD, the fifth Gospel, the book of The Revelation, will remain to the Western mind an indecipherable time-wrap continuum. What has eluded the gentile Christian world is the basic recognition that the book of Revelation details how the Messiah will fulfill the Fall Feasts of the LORD as the Almighty Judge, who rules the earth with absolute justice.

Establishing the Chronology of Jesus Ministry

The feeding of the 5,000 is the one miracle that is found in all four Gospels. Using this single event, in the middle of Jesus ministry, it is possible to chronologically align the events proceeding and succeeding this propitious miracle.

Every event recorded during Jesus's ministry is captured within the precise framework of Jesus going to each of the Feasts of the LORD (Leviticus 23) and either fulfilling the prophetic shadow pictures embedded within them or interpreting their future fulfillment (Colossians 2:16-17, Hebrews 10:1). Each of the Feasts was reckoned according to the Creator's lunar calendar, which was still in use 288 years after the destruction of the Temple and now can be accurately reverse calculated and synchronized with the Julian calendar system instituted more than forty years before the birth of Jesus.

The restoration of the Creator's original calendar was accomplished with the indispensable help of Sir Isaac Newton, the national Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Robert Scott Wadsworth, the Israeli New Moon Society, and Nehemia Gordon with the Israel Aviv Search Team.

We can finally understand the things that were deliberately "sealed up" until the last days. Now the "leaven-free" Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus and his disciples taught can be understood with clarity and preached throughout the world with integrity.

Chronological Error

Before beginning the Chronological Gospels, there is one problem that must be addressed. Most of the Christian world grew up with the concept that Jesus's ministry was 3 ½ years in duration. However, no scholar has been able to prove this hypothesis; in fact the plain text of the Gospel narrative proves that a 3 ½ year ministry is a mathematical impossibility. For the first 300 years after the resurrection, church leaders and historians clearly stated or never contradicted, that Jesus ministry was about a year. It was Eusebius who first proposed his undocumented assertion that Jesus ministry was 3 ½ years as a fulfillment of Daniel's 70 week prophecy.

Here's the issue:

- In all four Gospels, the feeding of the 5,000 takes place at the end of summer when the twelve apostles return from their paired assignments throughout the villages of Galilee.
- The sixth chapter of John records that the feeding of the 5,000 took place two days before Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum on the Sabbath day. On that Sabbath, Jesus's exposition was on the subject of the Last Day and the Resurrection, the perpetual theme of Yom Teruah (Day of Trumpets), which begins when the first sliver of the seventh new moon of the year is sighted.

This event occurred on the very day that Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum. At sunset, the new moon appeared, and the trumpets were blown throughout the land of Israel to herald the Day of Trumpets.

- The seventh chapter of John opens with Jesus making plans to go up to the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), which begins on the 15th day of the 7th month, exactly two weeks after the Day of Trumpets.

- According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the feeding of the 5,000 occurred thirteen days before the “Mount of Transfiguration” incident, which transpired on the 10th day of the 7th month, Yom Kippur (day of Atonement), the most holy day of the year (Matthew 14:22-17:9, Mark 6:45-9;10, Luke 9:17-36). John is the only author who does not record this event.
- Hence, every Gospel record confirms that the feeding of the 5,000 took place at the end of the summer, exactly 18 days before the Feast of Sukkot.

However, a fatal error was introduced into an otherwise flawless timeline. In John 6:4, the following words were inserted into later copies of the Greek text in order to artificially lengthen the ministry of Jesus. These eight words were appended to the very section of Scripture that guaranteed that the forgery would eventually be exposed. After the miraculous event of feeding the 5,000, modern versions of the Gospel of John reads:

“And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.” (John 6:4 KJV)

Passover occurs in the spring, on the 14th day of the 1st month (the month of the aviv barley, Exodus 23:15) The eating of the Passover lamb also begins the 7 day Feasts of the LORD, which Israelites were commanded to keep forever (Leviticus 23:14).

The Gospel narratives clearly show that Jesus did not go to Jerusalem for the “passover” referred to in the modern version of John 6:4. Instead, Jesus assembled thousands of Israelites on a hillside in the Galilee and fed them with leavened barley loaves (John 6:9), which would have been a blatant violation of Torah if this were truly the time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread.

Two days later, Jesus taught another large assembly in the Capernaum synagogue, who also did not go to “passover” in Jerusalem. Instead of delivering a message relevant to Passover on that Sabbath, Jesus taught them about the prophetic significance of the Day of Trumpets (John 6:28-59). That year Yom Teruah (the Day of Trumpets) coincided with the close of the Sabbath at the end of the 6th month. Jesus was expounding of the prophetic significance of the Feast of Trumpets that would commence at sunset that very day.

Why was the Chronological Error Introduced

The addition of those eight words in the later texts of John’s Gospel artificially extended the ministry of Jesus to build a foundation for replacement theology and preterist eschatology. In brief, replacement theology is the concept that Jesus started a new religion that mysteriously replaced the external covenants with Israel. Preterist eschatology goes on from there to teach that all scripture and prophecy (including The Revelation) were fulfilled by 70 CE, opening the door for “the vicar of Christ” to rule from his millennial throne in Rome. To support this position, it was necessary to artificially fulfill all seventy sevens of Daniel’s messianic prophecy, and it would take exactly seven more years after Jesus ministry began to make this invented replacement Christology work. So a 3 ½ year ministry of Messiah was invented by Eusebius and an additional 3 ½ year period was inserted-by-interpretation from the book of The Acts to give Eusebius dogmas theological credence. The support of this doctrine, however brilliant, was manufactured out of thin air of 4th century Constantinian theology.