

“SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE”
A STUDY OF JOHN



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LESSON 1: WHAT WE BELIEVE

JOHN 1.1-18



Opening questions:

1. What do you learn about Jesus from John 1.1-18?
2. Why are these truths about Jesus so important?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

That belief is the major theme of John's gospel is beyond doubt. The Greek term *pisteuō* is found 98 times in the book, translated as "believe" 97 times and once as "entrust" (John 2.24) in the ESV. Furthermore, the importance of believing is stressed throughout:

- » Believing in Jesus is how we can attain eternal life (John 3.15-16).
- » Believing in Jesus is the work God has given us (John 6.29).
- » Failure to believe in Jesus means dying in one's sins (John 8.24).
- » Believing in Jesus assures us of life after death (John 11.25).
- » Believing in Jesus is to believe in God (John 12.44).

Given the essential nature of believing in Jesus, we shouldn't be surprised to read John's purpose in writing the gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31, ESV)

But what are we supposed to believe about Jesus? It's a crucial question, and John does not keep us in suspense about its answer. The prologue found in John 1.1-18 provides the essential facts we must come to believe about Jesus, facts which will reappear and receive fuller explanations throughout the book.

We must believe that He is Deity (vss. 1-2)

It is unfortunate that this passage has been the subject of debate and division through the centuries, for its message is really quite simple: Jesus is Deity. Everything in the passage emphasizes that point. The use of "in the beginning" takes our minds back to Genesis 1.1, emphasizing to us that just as God was there at the

beginning (and so was always there), so was the Word (note also John 17.5). “The Logos did not then begin to be, but at that point at which all else began to be He already was. In the beginning, place it where you may, the Word already existed. In other words, the Logos is before time, eternal.” (Expositors Greek New Testament)

The reference to Jesus as “the Word” emphasizes His relationship to God throughout time. Just as words are the verbal expressions of our minds, so Jesus (the Word) is the expression of God’s mind and purpose in creation (Genesis 1.3; Psalm 33.6), revelation (Jeremiah 1.4) and salvation (Psalm 107.20). Thus, “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This unity of being, but distinction in “person”, is taught in this book and throughout the Scriptures (see John 10.30; 5.17-18; Phil. 2.6; Psalm 45.6-7; Hebrews 1.8). As another has rightly said, “what God was the Word also was” (Kruse quoting Moloney in the Tyndale commentary).

This passage is essential to understanding the rest of the book, for to see Jesus (the Word) is to see God. Thus, when Jesus cleanses the Temple (chapter 2), it is God repudiating the Jewish system. When Jesus extends mercy to the Samaritans (chapter 4), it is God extending mercy to them. When Jesus forgives the sinful woman (chapter 8), it is God forgiving her. “the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” (John 5.19).

We must believe that He is the source of life (vss. 3-4)

Harkening again to the Genesis account, we see the essential role of Jesus in creation. As the Word, He created all things (Psalm 33.6; cf. Colossians 1.16; Hebrews 1.2). But while vs. 3 may emphasize Jesus’ role in the physical creation of all things, vs. 4 emphasizes His essential role in the spiritual creation. If all things were made by Him (vs. 3), then He can give new life to them (vs. 4)! His ability to give this life will be emphasized throughout the book:

- » He is living water (John 4.10,14).
- » He is the bread of life (John 6.35,48).
- » He is the good shepherd, giving life abundantly to His sheep (John 10.10-11).
- » He is the resurrection, providing life from death (John 11.25).
- » He is the way, truth and life, giving the only access to God (John 14.6).

We must believe that He is the Light, showing the way to become children of God (vss. 5-13)

As the Light, He is contrasted with darkness. Light illuminates and leads to God, darkness seeks to conceal evil deeds and thus hides one from the ways of God. But, the good news is that the darkness did not overcome (better translation than “comprehend”) the Light! And if the Light conquers darkness, those who follow the light can be victorious as well (John 12.35)! Next, we are introduced to John who was faithful in his charge to bear witness to the Light (cf. Malachi 3.1). John’s witness (i.e. testimony) was important, but Jesus would rely on the testimony of One

greater (John 5.31ff).

The purpose of the Light is to enlighten, to show the way to God. Jesus came into the world to illuminate man's way, but the world rejected Him. Even His own people refused to receive Him. As Jesus says in John 3.19-20, the Light was rejected because the world loves darkness. But some would receive Him, and these would be given the right to become children of God. This relationship with God would not depend on any physical heritage, but would come by the will of God. God's will was to send His Son to enlighten men, and these who receive Him have truly followed the will of God.

We must believe that He became flesh and "tabernacled" among men (vss. 14-18). Here is another passage which has been subject to intense debate through the years, but again the message is not hard to understand. The key to our understanding is found in the phrase "dwelt among us", literally "tabernacled". God once dwelt with His people in a tabernacle, and His glory filled it (cf. Exodus 40.34-38). It was also during this time that God proclaimed to Moses that He abounded in lovingkindness and truth (Exodus 34.6).

But in the Word, God dwelt among men in the flesh. When the Word became flesh, the glory of God truly "tabernacled" among men. And since Jesus was the "fullness" of God's grace, it was through Him that God's "grace and truth were realized." Thus, while no one has seen God (see Exodus 33.20), Jesus fully explains Him to us. He alone can do this because He is both "the only begotten God" and "in the bosom of the Father"... which is another way of saying He was "with God" and "was God".

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 1: in the OT, God's "word" accomplished creation (Genesis 1.3; Psalm 33.6), revelation (Jeremiah 1.4; Isaiah 9.8) and deliverance (Psalm 107.20). The Word being designated as "with God" and "was God" shows His divine nature while maintaining the uniqueness of both Father and Son.
- » Vs. 5: darkness is more than the absence of light, it is the realm of evil and the wicked one (see John 3.19; 8.12; 12.35,46).
- » Vs. 6: see Malachi 3.1.
- » Vs. 7: the word translated as "witness" (*martureoœ*) occurs 33 times in the book.
- » Vs. 9: "The 'world'... is not the universe, but the created order (especially of human beings and human affairs) in rebellion against its Maker (e.g. John 1:10; 7:7; 14:17, 22, 27, 30; 15:18-19; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14). Therefore when John tells us that God loves the world (3:16), far from being an endorsement of the world, it is a testimony to the character of God" (DA Carson).
- » Vs. 11: "His own" distinguishes the Jews from the rest of the world. The very people who had testimony from the Scriptures concerning the Messiah (John 5.39-47) rejected Him when in their midst.
- » Vs. 14, the word translated as "became" is the same as was translated

ed “made” in vs. 3.

» * Vs. 15: John was conceived 6 months before Jesus (Luke 1), yet he would proclaim that Jesus was “before me”.

» * Vs. 16: correct translation would seem to be “grace instead of grace”. The point would be that the “grace and truth” found in Jesus has replaced the grace under the Law.

LESSON 2: JOHN'S TESTIMONY

JOHN 1.19-51



Opening questions:

1. What do you find compelling about John's testimony (John 1.19-34)?
2. John 1.35-51 records how men first became disciples of Jesus. How do these accounts bolster your faith?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

John the Baptist was introduced in the prologue, being referred to as a “a man sent from God” who came “to bear witness about the Light” (vss. 6-8). A portion of his testimony was given in vs. 15, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’” In our study of John's prologue (vss. 1-18) we spent little time on John the Baptist's role, but the importance of his testimony is emphasized throughout John 1.19-51. So, let's note how John testified about Jesus.

John testified by fulfilling his role (vss. 19-23)

While the other gospel accounts show that large crowds went out to John (see Luke 3.7f), John's account focuses on the Jewish leaders who went to question this strange figure in the wilderness. Note: “John, in the Gospel, distinguishes between the multitude and the Jews. By the former he means the aggregate of the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, the mass of the people, chiefly Galilaeans; by the latter, more particularly Judaeans, the leaders of Judaism in opposition to Jesus.” (Vincent). Their questions show a pointed interest in the authority John used to justify his preaching and baptizing. Was he claiming to be the Christ, Elijah (Malachi 4.5) or the Prophet (cf. Deut. 18.15-18)? While we would expect John to deny being the Christ / the Prophet, his denial of being Elijah is interesting. In the other gospel accounts, John is identified as being Elijah (see Luke 1.17; Matthew 11.13-14). It may be that John was refuting a popular misconception that the first Elijah would walk the earth again, or he could have been making the point that “while anyone could imitate Elijah's dress (cf. Zech. 13:4), no mere imitation could reproduce the note of judgment and the call to repentance which sounded both in his message and in John's.” (F.F. Bruce).

John's answer in vs. 23, quoting Isaiah 40.3, shows that he did identify himself with God's Messianic purpose. No, he was not the Messiah, but he was sent by God to prepare the way for Him! "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" Isaiah, who had prophesied so often that the people would be punished by God, foretold that a way back to God would be made. However, this promise didn't apply only to the literal return from captivity, but also to the deliverance made possible by the Lord's suffering Servant (Isaiah 52.13-53.12). John's role was to straighten the way so that people could come to the Lord.

John testified by baptizing (vss. 24-34)

The Jewish leadership had particular interest in John's baptism (vs. 25). Baptism wasn't an unknown practice in John's day, for many Jewish groups used baptism as a means of induction. However, a significant difference was that in most Jewish groups initiates baptized themselves, whereas John baptizing others. Why was he doing this, what authority did he possess?

John's baptism played a significant role in preparing the way for Jesus. First, as the other gospel accounts recount, John's baptism demanded repentance (Luke 3.3, 10-14). This emphasized to the people that physical descent from Abraham would not insure their status as God's people, rather they must "bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3.8). Second, as important as John's baptism was, he was quick to point out that it paled in comparison with what the Messiah would do (John 1.26-27; Luke 3.16). John's words were likely in reference to the prophecy of Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:25-27, ESV) John could baptize others for the remission of their sins (contingent on the death of Christ, Hebrews 9.15), but he could not grant a new Spirit. Only God could do that, so John was pointing the people to Jesus who would baptize with both water and the Spirit (cf. vs. 33; John 3.5; Acts 2.38).

Finally, John's baptizing Jesus is what "proved" to him that Jesus is the Son of God (vss. 29-34). As Matthew 3.13-14 indicates, John already understood the superiority of Jesus, but it was the events at His baptism which allowed John to testify that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (vs. 29; cf. Isaiah 53.7; 1Peter 1.18-19) and "that this is the Son of God" (vss. 32-34; cf. Isaiah 11.1-5; 42.1; 61.1). We cannot minimize the importance of John's baptism, the testimony it provides for Jesus being the Christ!

John testified by pointing others toward Jesus (vss. 35-51)

This section has two outstanding features. First, numerous Messianic titles



are attributed to Jesus by different people.

- » John refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God for the second time (vs. 36; cf. vs. 29).
- » Andrew tells his brother Simon that he has found the Messiah (vs. 41).
- » Philip tells Nathanael that Jesus is “Him whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote” (vs. 45). Later, Jesus would rebuke the Jews for not believing in Moses, for if they had “believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5.46).
- » Nathanael confesses Jesus to be both the Son of God and the King of Israel (vs. 49). It is likely that Nathanael did not understand the true importance of his confession. He likely thought of Jesus in political terms, the king of the Jews and thus God’s “son” (cf. Psalm 2.7). Jesus would later emphasize the spiritual nature of His kingdom (John 18.36).
- » Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man (vs. 51). This is the preferred “title” that Jesus will use for Himself throughout the gospels. While we might see it as emphasizing His humanity, it has clear Messianic importance (see Daniel 7.13-14). Furthermore, Jesus equates Himself with the vision Jacob had of the ladder in Genesis 28.12. Jesus, the Son of Man, is the mediator between God and man!

The second outstanding feature is how men were instrumental in bringing others to Jesus.

- » John the Baptist directed two of his disciples (Andrew and probably John) to look to Jesus (vss. 35-36).
- » Andrew finds his brother Simon and takes him to Jesus (vss. 40-42).
- » Philip, upon being summoned by Jesus to “follow” Him, goes and finds his brother Nathanael (vss. 43-45).

The point of this section is clear: those who have come to believe in Jesus want others to believe in Him as well! Thus, they go and bring others to Him.

LESSON 3: THE EVIDENCE OF JESUS' EARLY SIGNS JOHN 2



Opening questions:

1. Why did Jesus's miracle in John 2.6-11 leave such an impact on the master of the feast?
2. What is the significance of Jesus's statement in John 2.19?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

When we refer to Jesus' mighty works on the earth, whether healing the sick, calming the stormy sea or raising the dead, we typically call them "miracles". It's a good term, one which denotes His power to control all that He created. Yet, when John refers to these mighty works he always calls them "signs", a term emphasizing how these works pointed to a greater truth about Jesus. "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him." (John 2:11, ESV) The signs revealed His glory; the signs prompted faith in Him.

Signs play an integral role in John 2. First, there is the record of Jesus' first sign, the turning of water into wine (vss. 1-11). Then, there is the demand of the Jews that Jesus perform a sign thereby showing His authority to cleanse the Temple, which is a type of sign itself (vss. 13-18). Jesus responded to their demand by prophesying of the greatest sign of His glory: the resurrection (vss. 19-22). The chapter concludes with a statement of how many began to believe in Jesus based on His signs, although He understood the fickle nature of their faith (vss. 23-25). What do these signs reveal about His glory?

Turning Water Into Wine (vss. 1-11)

We do not know why Jesus and His disciples were present at the wedding in Cana, although we might assume it was a family relative or friend given the presence of Jesus' mother, Mary. What we do know is that the wine ran out, an awful embarrassment to the groom and his family. If Mary were related to the groom it would explain her concern. Some questions have been raised by Jesus' calling His mother, "woman" in vs. 4, but Jesus' use of the same term in John 19.26 shows that

no disrespect was intended. More significant was Jesus' words, "my hour has not yet come." As D.A. Carson relates, "Mary wants the wedding to end without embarrassment; Jesus remembers that the prophets characterized the messianic age as a time when wine would flow liberally (e.g. Je. 31:12; Ho. 14:7; Am. 9:13-14; cf. 2 Baruch 29:5; 1 Enoch 10:19).²⁸ Elsewhere he himself adapts the wedding as a symbol for the consummation of the messianic age (e.g. Mt. 22:1-14; Mt 25:1-13). Treating the developing circumstances as an acted parable, Jesus is entirely correct to say that the hour of great wine, the hour of his glorification, has not yet come."



It is unfortunate that our approach to this sign has often been to discuss the potency of the wine. That is NOT why John recorded this sign; it is NOT the lesson we are to learn. It is significant that the pots which were filled with water were used "for the Jewish custom of purification." Jesus takes that water and turns it into something better! The point is fairly simple: Jesus came to give something better and He does so abundantly (see John 1.16-17)!

Cleansing the Temple (vss. 12-22)

While selling animals and providing a money exchange might seem to be a benefit for the pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem to worship, it is likely that the location of these activities explains Jesus' reaction. The money changing and selling of animals would have taken place in the Court of the Gentiles, the outermost court and largest by far. When Jesus cleansed the Temple again at the end of His ministry He said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." (Mark 11.17). The Temple was meant to be a place where the nations could learn about God, but the Jews had made that more difficult by making the Court of Gentiles a marketplace! Jesus' command "do not make my Father's house a house of trade." in John 2.16 would indicate the same concern. The Jews had no interest in the world (the Gentiles), but Jesus came to save them (John 1.10-12; 3.16)! His cleansing of the Temple was a "sign" of His desire to save the nations.

No doubt incensed, the Jews demanded to know what authority Jesus had to cleanse the Temple. What sign could He show to back up His actions? Jesus said a sign would be given: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The

Jews mocked Him, thinking He was speaking of the Jerusalem Temple, a building which Herod had begun renovating in 19 B.C. and would not be completed until A.D. 63. But Jesus' disciples would come to understand that Jesus was referring to His resurrection.

Many Believe (vss. 23-25)

The signs achieved their purpose; they showed His glory and prompted faith. However, we are given an indication that the faith of many who witnessed His signs would not last. Just as the Father searches the hearts of men (Jeremiah 17.10), so Jesus "knew what was in man." No doubt He knew that many would turn back (John 6.66), thus He did not entrust Himself to them. Or, as another put it, "He had no faith in their faith" (Vincent quoting Godet).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 3: "A wedding celebration could last as long as a week, and the financial responsibility lay with the groom (cf. 2:9-10). To run out of supplies would be a dreadful embarrassment in a 'shame' culture; there is some evidence it could also lay the groom open to a lawsuit from aggrieved relatives of the bride." (Carson).
- » Vs. 4: "the word 'time', literally 'hour' (hoœra), constantly refers to his death on the cross and the exaltation bound up with it (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1)" (Carson).
- » Vs. 6: each jar held 18-27 gallons, thus a total of 108-162 gallons. The Jews believed that stone would not contract uncleanness.
- » Vs. 10: the length of wedding feasts (up to 7 days) explain who participants could have "drunk freely" yet Jesus had not provided the means for drunkenness.
- » Vs. 12: Capernaum was ~16 miles NE from Cana.
- » Vs. 13: John mentions three Passover celebrations (John 2.13; 6.4; 11.55).
- » Vs. 17: see Psalm 69.9.
- » Vs. 19: Jesus' words would later be used against Him (Matthew 26.61; 27.40).
- » Vs. 20: "The reconstruction of the temple in the form which it had at this time was begun by Herod the Great early in 19 BC. The main part of the work was completed and consecrated in ten years, but other parts were still being carried out; in fact, the finishing touches were not put to the whole enterprise until AD 63, only seven years before its destruction" (FF Bruce).

LESSON 4: WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE JOHN 3



Opening questions:

1. What reasons did Jesus give to Nicodemus for why he should believe / trust in Jesus (vss. 9-17)?
2. What is the faith-building value of John's testimony in vss. 27-36?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

When we think of John 3 our minds often turn to Jesus' well known words in vs. 16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Sadly, a verse full of so much grace has become a battle ground for various doctrines regarding salvation. The purpose of this lesson is not to go over all of the controversies that have arisen over the years, rather we want to examine the crux of the verse: what does it mean to believe? John 3 reveals much about what believing in Jesus involves, and if we understand what it means to "believe in Him," we can know that we "have eternal life".

Believing in Jesus starts with being convinced about who He is (vss. 1-2).

The chapter begins with Nicodemus, noted as both a member of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews, coming to Jesus. Some have speculated that his coming by night was out of fear, but there is nothing in the text which demands that assumption. What is significant is his conviction that Jesus is both a rabbi and that He came from God. No, Nicodemus did not yet believe in the true nature of Jesus as revealed in John 1, rather he believed that God was with Jesus much as He had been with Moses (cf. Exodus 3.12). Yet, even this admission from Nicodemus is significant given that he was of the same class who questioned the qualifications of John the Baptist (John 1.19, 24-25).

What convinced Nicodemus? "no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." We noted in John 2.23 that many were beginning to believe in Jesus based on the "signs" He performed. Truly, the signs of Jesus accomplished their

purpose (cf. John 20.30-31). However, we noted at the end of John 2 that while many were beginning to believe in Jesus, their faith would not prove to be genuine. And so at this early stage we can see that Nicodemus' faith needed to grow. Yes, he was convinced about some things regarding Jesus, but true faith is comprised of more.

Believing in Jesus requires us to trust Him and what He says (vss. 3-17).

Jesus, who "knew all people" (2.24), knew that Nicodemus' faith needed to grow and mature. Thus, Jesus began by addressing the means of entering the Kingdom. Nicodemus likely believed that all Jews would be part of the promised Kingdom, but Jesus said it would require one to be born again (better translated "from above" cf. vs. 31; 19.11). This new birth had been prophesied in passages like Ezekiel 36.25-27 and Jesus was confirming that entrance into His Kingdom could be found only by spiritual means (vss. 5-8).

Nicodemus' responses in vss. 4 and 9 show that while he believed some things about Jesus, he was not yet to the point where he fully trusted everything Jesus said and taught. So, while Jesus chided Him for not understanding these heavenly truths (vss. 10-12), He also gave Nicodemus profound reasons to trust Him:

- » Only Jesus had descended from heaven, thus He was qualified to reveal these heavenly truths (vs. 13).
- » Like the bronze serpent in the wilderness (see Numbers 21.8-9), Jesus was going to be "lifted up" so that those who believed could have eternal life (vss. 14-15).
- » Jesus came because of God's great love for us; not to condemn us, but to save us (vss. 16-17).

Believing in Jesus means we surrender our will to His (vss. 18-21).

Even though Jesus did not come into this world to condemn it, much of the world will be condemned because of their love of the darkness. That is, they have a choice to do "what is true" and come "to the light" vs. 21, but most love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, vs. 19. They do not wish to surrender. This is where so many discussions regarding faith and works go astray. The Scriptures do not contrast faith and obedience, rather they show that obedience is the result of faith. "Whoever believes in Him" (vs. 16) are the ones who "comes to the light" and these show that their "works have been carried out in God" (vs. 21). As John states later in the chapter, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3.36).

John's Exaltation of Jesus (vss. 22-36)



While Jesus had begun His ministry and was baptizing those who came to Him, John’s ministry was ongoing as well (vss. 22-24). This led to discussion between “some of John’s disciples and a Jew over purification” (vs. 25). The discussion may have centered on which baptism (Jesus’ or John’s) purified more, or could have been in relation to Jewish purification practices (see 2.6). We do not know the specifics, but we do know that John took the opportunity to exalt Jesus (vss. 27-30). Jesus would say that “among those born of women none is greater than John” (Luke 7.28), but this servant of God understood his role: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (vs. 30).

John proceeded to explain why Jesus was superior and should be exalted:

- » Jesus is from above, thus He is above all (vss. 31-33).
- » Jesus utters the words of God because He has given “the Spirit without measure”. Thus, true purification (eternal life) comes only through Jesus and not John or the Jews’ purification rites (see vs. 25).

Jesus is superior; He is exalted. The only question is if we will receive His testimony (vs. 33) and obey Him (vs. 36).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 1: Nicodemus will appear in the narrative again in John 7.50; 19.39.
- » Vs. 3: the Jews anticipated the establishment of God’s complete rule on the earth (Daniel 2.44; 7.14,27).
- » Vs. 8: the word translated as “wind” is the same translated as “spirit” elsewhere in the chapter.
- » Vs. 13: “The Judaism of Jesus’ day

circulated many stories of bygone saints who had ascended into heaven and received special insight into God’s ways and plans. Many of these stories focused on Moses (cf. Meeks, pp. 110–111, 192–195, 235–236; Odeberg, pp. 72–94). Jesus insists that no-one has ascended to heaven in such a way as to return to talk about heavenly things” (Carson).

- » Vs. 14: In John “lifted up” always speaks of Jesus’ crucifixion (see John 8.28; 12.32,34).
- » * Vs. 16: “only begotten” has the sense of “unique”. All Christians are children of God, but Jesus has a unique relationship to the Father.
- » * Vss. 17-18: not denying final judgment (see John 5.26-29), but points to the fact that those who reject Christ have chosen their judgment.

LESSON 5: HELPING OTHERS BELIEVE JOHN 4



Opening questions:

1. What reactions do people have when interacting with Jesus in this chapter?
2. What does this chapter teach you about the power of belief?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

Spirit & Truth (vss. 1-26)

Scrutiny from the Jews (vs. 1, see 3.25) prompted Jesus to leave Judea and return to Galilee. However, rather than taking the circuitous route that most Jews would take, Jesus “had to pass through Samaria” (vs. 4). As we will see, this was the Father’s will because there was a great harvest about to take place (vss. 34-38). And that harvest would come from an unlikely source: the Samaritans.

The Samaritans were the descendants of the remnant of Israel who intermarried with Gentile settlers following the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 BC (see 2Kings 17.24). The Old Testament records that hostility existed between the Jews and Samaritans almost immediately following the Jews’ return from captivity (see Ezra 4.1-6; Nehemiah 2.20). That hostility would continue throughout the intertestamental period and Roman rule. It’s important to note that the Samaritans had a different view of their history: “The Samaritans have always believed that they are the direct descendants of a faithful nucleus of ancient Israel. From their perspective, Israel’s apostasy began as early as the time of Eli (eleventh century B.C.), when the nation’s cultic center was removed from Gerizim to Shiloh (and thence eventually to Jerusalem); in the Middle Ages they thus would have regarded themselves not as the remnant of the old northern kingdom of Israel, but rather as original Israel, whereas the Jews descend from a splinter group” (IVP Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels).

While the Samaritans had similar religious practices to the Jews, they had a couple notable differences. They held that Gerizim was the holiest of mountains (it was the site where Abram first ventured into Canaan, Genesis 12.6-7). Also, they

believed that only the five books of Moses were inspired. However, like the Jews, they anticipated the coming of the Messiah, the prophet whom Moses had foretold (see Deuteronomy 18.15-18).

As Jesus' disciples went into the city of Sychar to buy provisions, Jesus rested by the well located on the land Jacob had purchased from the men of Shechem (see Genesis 33.19). There He encountered a woman who had come to draw water, and little did she know that she was about to find much more!



At first, she could not believe that a Jewish man would ask a Samaritan woman for water (vss. 7-9). As we've noted already, hostility had long existed between Jews and Samaritans. Furthermore, Jews would have viewed Samaritan women as perpetually unclean, thus adding to her bemusement that Jesus would speak to her. Jesus' offer of living, or flowing, water causes the woman to wonder if Jesus is greater than Jacob (vss. 10-12). But Jesus wasn't offering a fresh source of physical water, rather His offer was of eternal life (vss. 13-14)! Significantly, Jesus uses the same terminology of "living water" to refer to the Spirit in John 7.38-39.

The woman wants what Jesus is promising, but the gift of eternal life cannot be received lightly. Thus, Jesus pointed out that the woman had five husbands and that the man she currently lived with was not her husband (vss. 16-18). The woman did not deny the truth of Jesus' statement, but concluded that He must be a prophet (vs. 19). And if Jesus were a prophet, surely He could settle the debate of which was the proper place to worship the Lord (vs. 20). Jesus' answer deserves close consideration:

- » Recall that Jesus had already referred to His body as "this temple" (John 2.19). The day was coming when worship would not be centered in any location, but in Jesus (vs. 21).
- » Jesus' statement that "salvation is from the Jews" does not mean that salvation originated with the Jews, but rather God had purposed to bring the savior through them (vs. 22).
- » True worship will take place "in spirit and truth" (vss. 23-24). Jesus was not saying that proper worship would be one of feeling and correct practice, rather He was pointing to the new reality which would take place in Him. Since God is spirit, He can only be worshipped in spirit and truth. Jesus is truth (John 14.6) and He provides the Spirit (John 7.38-39). In Him we can now worship in spirit and truth!

Jesus' words caused the woman to wonder what relation Jesus has to the Messiah. Jesus proclaimed, "I who speak to you am he" (vs. 26).

Lessons In Evangelism (vss. 27-42)

The return of the disciples gives us a glimpse into the dedication of Jesus. They brought food, but Jesus was not hungry because "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (vs. 34). Jesus came to do the work of the Father and the disciples would also take part in that work (vss. 35-38). We also "to reap that for which you did not labor" as we continue in the labor of the prophets, John, apostles and Jesus Himself. How blessed we are to enter their labor!

Jesus' words were proven true by the reception of the Samaritans. The woman had returned to the town urging the people to go out and see Jesus (vs. 29). This they did and Jesus stayed with them for two more days (vs. 40). "And many more believed because of his word" (vs. 41). This powerful text contains many powerful lessons in evangelism:

1. Jesus was willing to proclaim the good news to anyone, because this was His Father's work (vs. 34). He urges us to have the same mindset and continually labor in the harvest.
2. The woman faithfully told others what she knew about Jesus (vss. 29,39). She didn't know everything about Jesus, but what she was willing to share what she did know!
3. The people came to Jesus and came to faith because of His word (vss. 41-42).

The Importance of Signs (vss. 43-54)

Jesus' journey to Galilee began what we refer to as "The Great Galilean Ministry." He first went to Cana, the site of His first miracle (ch. 2). An official from Capernaum, located 20 miles away, went to petition Jesus on behalf of his dying son. Rather than travelling the 20 miles to see the boy, Jesus simply said, "Go, your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said and returned home. As he approached the house one of his servants came to tell him that his son had improved. He was cured when Jesus spoke the word!

Jesus' remark that "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" (vs. 48) should not be read as a rebuke, but as confirmation of their purpose. "The reply of Jesus was designed to make him and all who observed His miracles to look more deeply into their purpose. Jesus was not just a "super doctor" whose mission was physical healing. He was not a "magician" who could perform wonders no one else could do. The purpose for all of His miracles was to produce belief in Himself as God's Son. (cf. Acts 2:23)" (Harkrider).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 2: note 3.22. John's note here likely provides an explanatory note for both passages.
- » Vs. 4: the word translated as "had to" (dei) is translated "must" in vs. 24. "normally in John's Gospel its use involves God's will or plan" (NET notes).
- » Vs. 5: Sychar was near the ancient city of Shechem.
- » Vs. 10: the word translated as "living" also means "flowing". The woman thinks Jesus is offering a different water source. Significantly, Jesus uses the same terminology to refer to the Spirit (see John 7.38-39).
- » Vs. 14: see Isaiah 49.10; John 6.35; 7.37-38; Revelation 7.16.
- » Vs. 19: "The Samaritans were looking for the coming of 'the Prophet' (Deut. 18:15), whom they identified as the Taheb, the Samaritan Messiah. Maybe the woman was wondering whether Jesus might be this prophet/ Messiah" (Kruse).
- » Vs. 34: "accomplished" is cognate with the word used for "finished" in (John 19.30).
- » Vs. 36: see Amos 9.13.
- » Vs. 42: contrast with John 1.11. Jesus was rejected by "His own", but the Samaritans acknowledged that He is "the Savior of the world".
- »

LESSON 6: THE EVIDENCE OF THE FATHER'S TESTIMONY JOHN 5



Opening questions:

1. What do we learn about Jesus' power/authority in this chapter?
2. What do you find compelling about the Father's testimony (vss. 30-47)?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

John 1.10-11 spoke of how the world did not know Jesus, even His own did not received Him. Thus far in our study of John we haven't seen much rejection of Jesus, aside from the Jews questioning Jesus about His actions in the Temple (see John 2.18-20). This changes with John 5-7. We now begin to see why the Jews rejected Jesus and even why many of His own followers forsook Him. Chapter 5 focuses on why the Jews began seeking a reason to kill Jesus (vss. 16,18), but as Jesus encountered their opposition He was given opportunity to expound on the greatest evidence for His claims: the testimony of His Father.

The Healing (vss. 1-9)

Many get hung up over the details of this story, but the most important detail (aside from the awesome power of Jesus) is that Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath (vs. 9). It is possible that this was not Jesus' first Sabbath controversy (vs. 16, see also Mark 2.23-3.6). The setting was "a feast of the Jews", possibly referring to the Passover, and Jesus had come to the pool of Bethesda (or Bethsaida. Literally means "house of mercy") where there were many who were "blind, lame and paralyzed" (vs. 3). One man in particular drew Jesus' attention. This man had been lame for thirty-eight years, so Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be healed?" The man's response in vs. 7 likely reflects a legend that had developed around the pool over time. Jesus healing the man showed that true life and the grace of God aren't found in legends, but in Jesus!

The Jews Respond To Jesus Healing On The Sabbath (vss. 10-16)

The lame man had not violated any prohibition in the OT, only those of the rabbis. “The assumption in the Scripture seems to be that ‘work’ refers to one’s customary employment; but judging by Mishnah (Shabbath 7:2; 10:5), dominant rabbinic opinion had analyzed the prohibition into thirty-nine classes of work, including taking or carrying anything from one domain to another (except for cases of compassion, such as carrying a paralytic)” (Carson). This account provides a clear picture of how blind the Jews were. A true “sign” had been performed by Jesus. This should have been an occasion to glorify God and come closer to His Chosen One. But, they were blinded by their tradition and thus hardened against Jesus.

Jesus’ exhortation to the healed man in vs. 14 is significant. There are certainly things worse than physical sickness, even ailments as horrible as being an invalid for 38 years. Tragically, by rejecting Jesus the Jews were insuring that something worse would happen to them (see John 12.48).

The Jews Respond To Jesus’ Claim That God Is His Father (vss. 17-18)

Jesus’ answer in vs. 17 was both clever and bold. It was clever, because the Jews had debated the matter and concluded that God did in fact work on the Sabbath. “The consensus amongst the rabbis, too, was that God works on the Sabbath, for otherwise providence itself would weekly go into abeyance. About the end of the first century, four eminent rabbis (Rabban Gamaliel II, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba) discussed the point, and concluded that although God works constantly, he cannot rightly be charged with violating the Sabbath law, since (1) the entire universe is his domain (Is. 6:3), and therefore he never carries anything outside it; (2) otherwise put, God fills the whole world (Je. 23:24); and in any case (3) God lifts nothing to a height greater than his own stature (Exodus Rabbah 30:9; cf. Genesis Rabbah 11:10). Whether he breaks the Sabbath or not, God works continuously: all were agreed on that point. Assuming it, Jesus applies it to himself” (Carson).

Jesus’ answer was bold because His claim that Jehovah was His Father was a claim to equality with the Father (see John 10.30-33). The Jews certainly understood Jesus’ claim, and sought to kill Him for it. Jesus thus made the assertion found in John 1.1, and the Jews rejected it... despite evidence to the contrary!

Jesus Asserts His Unity With The Father (vss. 19-30)

This passage may offer the best explanation of John 1.1 we will find. How is it that Jesus is both with God and is God? In this passage Jesus emphasized the absolute unity that exists between Him and the Father, all the while recognizing the distinction of “persons”. While the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus based on His statement in vs. 17, Jesus offered a fuller explanation:

- » The ONLY reason Jesus could do His work (even those works on the Sabbath) was because He does what the Father does (vs. 19).

- » He can do the work of the Father because the Father loves the Son (vs. 20).
- » The Father would show the Son greater works, including:
 - Raising the dead to life (vs 21)
 - Committing judgment into the hands of the Son (vss. 22-23; cf. Acts 17.30-31; 2Corinthians 5.10).
 - Since the Father would show the Son these greater works, both a spiritual resurrection (vss. 24-27; cf. Ephesians 2.1-5) and a physical resurrection would take place (vss. 28-29; cf. Revelation 20.11-15).
- » Vs. 30 sums up all that Jesus has said. He works because it is the will of the Father. If it were not the Father's will, He could not do it... He would not do it!

Of particular importance in this section are Jesus' words in vs. 23: "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." The Jews' rejection of Jesus was a rejection of the Father, and thus they would be subject to judgment because God had given that to the Son (vs. 27).

The Testimony Of The Father (vss. 31-47)

How could Jesus substantiate the claims He made? Likely in reference to the Law, Jesus stated that His testimony alone was not sufficient (vs. 31; cf. Numbers 35.30; Deut. 19.15). The Father was also testifying on Jesus' behalf (vs. 32)! Jesus provided several ways in which the Father bore testimony for His Son:

- » The ministry of John (vss. 33-35). While Jesus said His testimony was not from man, John's testimony was still powerful for he was sent by God (1.6-8).
- » The works of the Father (vs. 36). The works Jesus had already done, like healing the lame man (vss. 1-9) and the greater works Jesus would do (vs. 20), all testify that the Father was with Him.
- » Through the Scriptures (vss. 37-47). Jesus dwelt on this area of testimony because the Jews believed a knowledge of the Scriptures would give them eternal life (vs. 39). However, while the Jews might have searched the Scriptures, they did not allow God's word to abide in them (vss. 37-38). If they had, they would have believed in Jesus because the Scriptures spoke about Him (vss. 45-47; cf. Genesis 12.3; 22.18; 49.10; Numbers 24.17; Deuteronomy 18.15-18; etc.).

Jesus had come in His Father's name and if they were to receive glory from the Father, they must believe in Him (vss. 43-44).

LESSON 7: THE EVIDENCE FIVE THOUSAND FED JOHN 6.1-24



Opening questions:

1. Why do you think all four gospels include this miracle? What truth is this sign conveying about Jesus?
2. Why do you think Jesus first asked His disciples about what should be done?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

Setting of the Miracle (vs. 1-4)

It is significant that this is the only one of Jesus' miracles (aside from the resurrection) recorded in all four gospel accounts (John 6.1-14; Mark 6.30-44; Matt. 14.13-21; Luke 9.10-17). Taken together, the gospel accounts provide a detailed picture of what had been going on in Jesus' ministry before this notable sign:

- » John the Baptist had recently been beheaded (Matt. 14:1-13; Mark 6:14-30).
- » Jesus had been in Jerusalem for a feast (unknown) and faced increasing opposition (John 5, note particularly John 5:18)
- » The apostles had just returned from their limited commission (Luke 9:1-10).
- » Jesus' hoped to escape the multitude and spend time with His closest disciples (Mark 6:30-32).

Vss. 1-4 provide some interesting background for the miracle. In chapter 5 Jesus had attended a feast in Jerusalem, but in chapter 6 He had returned to Galilee. According to vs. 4, the Passover was quickly approaching, which places this miracle one year before His death (see John 12.1;13.1;19.14). However, the most significant detail was that a large crowd followed Jesus "because they saw the signs" (vs. 2). While the purpose of Jesus' signs was to instill belief (John 20.30-31), we will see that the crowd missed the point and did not come to faith (compare John 2:23-25).

The Miracle (vs. 5-13)

Before noting the miracle, consider what vs. 6 says about Jesus: "He Himself knew what He was intending to do" (NASB95). Why not just send the crowd away? John had just been beheaded. Jesus would want to communicate with His disciples, to learn about their journeys (recall they just returned from the limited

commission). He had not eaten anything Himself (Mark 6:31). Jesus' greatness is not simply that He performed an astounding sign, but the very fact that He did anything!

Even though Jesus "knew what he would do" (vs. 6), He first tested His disciples (vss. 5-9). Why? Philip's response was a hopeless one (vs. 7). It is unlikely they possessed 200 denarii (200 days wages). Even if they did, it wouldn't have been enough for such a large crowd. Andrew focused on what they did have: 5 barley loaves (the inexpensive bread of the poor) and two fish. "But what are these for so many?" (vs. 9). Both Philip and Andrew's responses revealed a lack of faith. According to Mark 6:30 the apostles had just returned from their limited commission where they had done many wonderful signs (cf. Matt. 10:8). Also, the apostles had witnessed the many wonderful signs of Jesus, even healing the people that very day (see Luke 9.11)!

Not only did Jesus meet the need, He did so abundantly (vs. 10-13)! The abundance of Jesus' provision may be why each gospel writer recorded this miracle. His provision of physical bread pointed to the greater truth that "from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1.16). The abundance was intended to show that it was in Christ where God's promise that "my people shall be satisfied with my goodness" (Jeremiah 31.14) would be fulfilled.

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The Effect of the Miracle (vs. 14-15)

Remember that this miracle occurred well into Jesus' public ministry. His reputation was well established and His signs were why many followed Him (vs. 2). Feeding the large crowd with so little confirmed to many what they had likely already been thinking:

- » Jesus is the Prophet foretold in Deut. 18.15-18.
- » Jesus is the coming King, cf. Jeremiah 23.5-6.

Note that the idea of the Prophet and king were tied together. While not a king, Moses had been Israel's leader in the wilderness. No doubt the Prophet "like him" would do the same.



The people's desire for "bread" (vss. 26-27, 30-31) was connected with their hope that Jesus was the "Prophet who is to come". After all, Moses gave their fathers bread in the wilderness (or say they said). They took the promises found in such passages as Jeremiah 23:5-6 to mean they would experience physical safety and security, along with freedom from their oppressors (the Romans). This was the hope cherished by many.

Jesus Walks On Water & The People Follow (vss. 16-24)

In John's account, the importance of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee would seem to be tied to the people's surprise in not finding Jesus and their search for Him (vss. 22-24). However, this account in the synoptic gospels further demonstrated the weakness of the disciples' faith (see Mark 6.45-52; Matthew 14.28-33).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 5: Mark 6.33-35 records that the people ran around the lake and that Jesus taught them.
- » Vs. 9: note 2Kings 4.42-44 where Elisha fed 100 with 20 barley loaves.
- » Vs. 14: "Toward the end of the third century AD, Rabbi Isaac argued that 'as the former redeemer caused manna to descend...so will the latter Redeemer cause manna to descend' (cited in Ecclesiastes Rabbah on Ec. 1:9); perhaps the same sentiment coursed through some circles in the first century" (Carson).
- » Vs. 15: note John 18.36.
- » Vs. 17: Matthew 14.22-23 records that Jesus went into the mountain to pray. Jesus sent the disciples ahead so he could pray in private.
- » Vs. 19: "The Sea of Galilee was at its widest point 7 mi (11.6 km) by 12 mi (20 km). So at this point the disciples were in about the middle of the lake" (NET Notes). Note that this occurred during the "4th watch of the night", i.e. between 3-6AM (see Matthew 14.25).

LESSON 8: WHY MANY DO NOT BELIEVE (PART 1)

JOHN 6.25-71



Opening questions:

1. Why did the same crowd who proclaimed Jesus to be “the Prophet” and tried to make Him king (vss. 14-15), turn on Jesus and stop following Him?
2. A major emphasis of this passage is that Jesus is “the bread of life.” What does that mean and why is it important?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

The Work of God (vss. 25-34)

One might assume that the people’s search for Jesus demonstrated a sincere desire to know and follow Him. But Jesus, knowing the hearts of man (2.24), knew that the people had not looked past the “signs” to discover the deeper truths about Himself. They had come to be filled with food, not filled by Him. Thus, Jesus challenged them to not work for temporary food, but for the food only He could offer: “the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you...” (vs. 27).

The people seized on Jesus’ use of the word “work” and asked how they could do the works of God, i.e. tell us what God wants us to do so we can do it (vs. 28). This was probably tied to their conclusion that Jesus was the Prophet (vs. 14). Moses had given them the Law, now they wanted Jesus to tell them what works God required.

Jesus has been pointing the people to Him, but they did not grasp His point. So, He spoke plainly: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent” (vs. 29). But belief in Jesus is more than mental acceptance of who He is, for if that were the case many would have been on the way to salvation (cf. 2.23; 6.14). True belief in Jesus is full acceptance of Him, trusting that only through Him can eternal life be found (note vss. 68-69). Belief in Him prompts one to do all that He asks (14.15).

Jesus asked for true faith in Him, but the people responded by asking for a sign. Some rabbis had predicted that the Messiah would call down manna from

heaven, just as Moses had done. Perhaps, if Jesus performed this sign the people would believe in Him. However, Moses had not given the people manna from heaven. That gift had come from God, and now the Father had sent “true bread from heaven” and this bread “gives life to the world” (vss. 32-33). Just as Jesus offered living water to the woman at the well, He now offered bread that gives life. The offer in both cases is Himself, the One who has life in Himself (1.4; 5.26). While the people requested for Jesus to “always give us this bread” (vs. 34), by the end of the discussion they will have rejected the true bread from heaven (vs. 66).

Rejecting The Bread of Life (vss. 35-71)

After Israel left Egypt the Lord provided manna from heaven for their physical sustenance (see Exodus 16.15; Numbers 11.7-9). However, while manna could sustain their physical bodies, it could do nothing more. By contrast, Jesus identified Himself as the “bread of life” (vs. 35). He offers true sustenance:

- » He satisfies both hunger and thirst (vs. 35).
- » He came to keep all of those given to Him. Not even death would cause Jesus to lose those who belong to Him, because He will “raise it up on the last day” (vs. 39).
- » Jesus came to fulfill the Father’s will, “that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life” (vs. 40).

Jesus is much greater than the bread Israel ate in the wilderness, yet He knew that the people did not believe in Him (vs. 36).

The Jews were not willing to accept Jesus’ claim to be the bread of life. After all, wasn’t He the Son of Joseph? How could He be from heaven? (vss. 41-42). Jesus urged them to not grumble, but to come to Him in faith. Vs. 44 has been a much contested passage, used by some to mean that man has no part in his salvation; he can only be saved if God irresistibly draws him. However, that takes the verse out of both its immediate and general context. Jesus had already urged the people to do the true work of God: “believe in him whom he sent” (vs. 29). They had the choice to believe or not; they were forced into either belief or disbelief. Also, vs. 45 clarifies exactly how the Father “draws” people: “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (see also 5.39). They had the opportunity to partake of the bread much greater than the manna which their fathers ate in the wilderness (vss. 48-50); they had the opportunity to partake of Jesus’ flesh (vs. 51)!

The Jews could only wonder, how could Jesus give them His flesh? But Jesus boldly asserted that unless one eats His flesh and drinks His blood, he cannot have eternal life (vss. 53-56)! But what did Jesus mean? “Verses 54 and 40 are closely parallel: ‘Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day’ (v. 54); ‘...everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day’ (v. 40). The only substantial difference is that one speaks of eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking Jesus’ blood, while the other, in precisely the same conceptual location, speaks of

looking to the Son and believing in him. The conclusion is obvious: the former is the metaphorical way of referring to the latter.” If the people would truly believe in Jesus, they would be taking Him in as their true sustenance; they would have eternal life (vss. 57-58).

The crowd complained because of the difficulty of Jesus’ message. However, even harder truths were coming, including Jesus’ ascension... by means of the cross (vs. 62)! Jesus was trying to impart a spiritual message, one that would result in life (vs. 63). Tragically, many were still hung up on physical food and signs, thus they departed and no longer followed Jesus (vs. 66).

In contrast to the multitude, the apostles would not leave Jesus so quickly. Speaking for the twelve, Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (vss. 68-69). Yet, Jesus knew that among the twelve there was one who would betray Him (vss. 70-71). The stage was being set for the sacrifice of Jesus.

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 25: note that the people refer to Jesus as “Rabbi”, but they are about to dispute His teaching.
- » Vs. 34: harkens back to the wilderness where manna was given daily. What they don’t understand is that the true bread (Jesus) was given once and for all.
- » Vs. 35: “Jesus is the bread of life, but it is the person who comes to him who does not hunger, not the person who eats him; similarly, it is the person who believes in him who does not thirst,¹¹³ not the person who drinks him. Thus, when the language becomes more rigorously metaphorical in vv. 49ff., and we read of eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood, the meaning of the metaphors has already been established.” (Carson)
- » Vs. 37: see vs. 45 for how the Father “gives” them to Jesus.
- » Vs. 40: “Notice that here the result (having eternal life and being raised up at the last day) is produced by looking on the Son and believing in him. Compare John 6:54 where the same result is produced by eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood. This suggests that the phrase in 6:54 (eats my flesh and drinks my blood) is to be understood in terms of the phrase here (looks on the Son and believes in him).” (NET Notes)
- » Vs. 41: they “grumbled” just like their ancestors in the wilderness (see Exodus 16.2,8-9; Numbers 11.4ff).
- » Vs. 51: note John 1.14. The Word became “flesh”. That “flesh” is now shown to be how the world could receive life.

- » Vs. 60: “They had sought Him for the wrong reasons (v. 26); they had challenged His authority by the wrong standard (v. 30,31); they had rejected Him as being from heaven by the wrong logic (v. 42); therefore they objected to the truths of His spiritual lesson (vv. 52,60).” (Harkrider)
- » Vs. 63: note the contrast between Spirit and flesh in John 3.6.
- » Vs. 66: “many of his disciples went back to what lay behind.” (NET Notes)
- » Vs. 69: see Isaiah 12.6; 30.12,15; 41.20; etc.

LESSON 9: WHY MANY DO NOT BELIEVE (PART 2)

JOHN 7.1-53



Opening questions:

1. What barriers to belief can you identify in the text?
2. How was Jesus' teaching different from the teachings of others?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

Jesus' Brothers Do Not Believe (vss. 1-13)

The Feast of Booths was approximately six months after the Passover (see John 6.4), thus at the start of chapter 7 it was only about six months until Jesus' crucifixion. During that time Jesus stayed in Galilee, knowing that the Jews were seeking to kill Him (see John 5.18). However, as the Feast of Booths approached, Jesus' brothers mockingly told Him that He should go to Jerusalem. Vs. 5 explicitly tells us that they did not believe, and their words to Jesus in (vss. 3-4) were likely spoken with the knowledge that He had lost many of His followers (see John 6.66). In essence, they were saying that if Jesus wanted to regain His following, He should go to Jerusalem and amaze the crowd.

Jesus refused His brothers' request because "My time has not yet come" (vs. 6, repeated in vs. 8). Jesus' was not here to do His will, but the Father's (see John 4.34). Thus, He was operating on the Father's time schedule, and the time for His death had not yet come. Jesus' brothers were free to go up to the feast because they were of the world (vs. 7) and would be loved and accepted (see John 15.19). But Jesus had the hatred of the world because He declared its works to be evil.

While Jesus did go up to the Feast at a later time (vs. 10), we should not conclude that Jesus had vacillated in His thinking. Going to Jerusalem after the Feast had started had allowed Jesus to arrive without fanfare, as is evident by the questioning of both the Jews and the people in vss. 11-13.

Division Over Jesus' Teaching (vss. 14-36)

We can only assume that Jesus teaching in the Temple was according to the Father's will and timeline. "We must recall, however, that the focus of Jesus' con-

cern was not privacy but obedience to his Father. Even so, had he gone publicly with the other pilgrims at the beginning of the Feast, it is not unlikely that a premature ‘triumphal entry’ might have been forced on him, an event the authorities would have judged all the more destabilizing if this Feast occurred shortly after the slaughter of the Galileans in the temple courts (Lk. 13:1)” (Carson).

Vs. 15 is key to understanding the passage. Trained rabbis would normally appeal to precedent and previous rabbinical teachings when discussing the Law. By contrast, Jesus declared, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me” (vs. 16). The people could know that Jesus’ teaching came from God ONLY if they desired to do God’s will (vs. 17), but their willingness to violate the Law by seeking to kill Jesus had shown that they were not seeking to follow the Father’s will (vs. 19). Jesus then referenced the healing which led the Jews to seek and kill Him (vs. 21; see John 5.1-17) and pointed out both their ignorance of God’s will and their hypocrisy. “The Rabbis counted 248 parts to a man’s body. In the Talmud (b. Yoma 85b) R. Eleazar ben Azariah (ca. A.D. 100) states: ‘If circumcision, which attaches to one only of the 248 members of the human body, suspends the Sabbath, how much more shall the saving of the whole body suspend the Sabbath?’” (NET Notes). If they circumcised on the Sabbath to keep the Law, how could they not see that Jesus was doing the Father’s work on the Sabbath (see John 5.17)?

Jesus’ teaching only further divided opinions regarding His identity (vss. 25-27). “the Jerusalemites hold the view... that the Messiah would be born of flesh and blood yet would be wholly unknown until he appeared to effect Israel’s redemption” (Carson). Jesus’ countered that while they may know where He came from (see John 1.45), they didn’t truly know Him because they didn’t know the One who sent Him (vss. 28-29). Again, opinion was divided, but Jesus was not yet arrested “because his hour had not yet come” (vs. 30). Even though further efforts were made to apprehend Him, Jesus revealed that He would only be present for a short time before returning to the Father (vs. 33). Regarding Jesus’ statement that “You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come” (vs. 34) note that Jesus would repeat this to both opponents (John 8.21) and to His disciples (John 13.33). However, to the disciples it was promised that they would “follow afterwards” (John 13.36).

Division Over Jesus’ Promise (vss. 37-52)

Some background information on the last day of the feast will help us to better understand Jesus’ words. “The eighth, the close of the whole festival, and kept as a Sabbath (Leviticus 23:36). It was called the Day of the Great Hosanna, because a circuit was made seven times round the altar with “Hosanna;” also the Day of Willows, and the Day of Beating the Branches, because all the leaves were shaken off the willow-boughs, and the palm branches beaten in pieces by the side of the altar. Every morning, after the sacrifice, the people, led by a priest, repaired to the Fountain of Siloam, where the priest filled a golden pitcher, and brought it back

to the temple amid music and joyful shouts. Advancing to the altar of burnt-offering, at the cry of the people, “Lift up thy hand!” he emptied the pitcher toward the west, and toward the east a cup of wine, while the people chanted, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” It is not certain that this libation was made on the eighth day, but there can be no doubt that the following words of the Lord had reference to that ceremony” (Vincent).

Jesus’s words in vss. 37-38 were significant for a couple of reasons. First, He was proclaiming that He was the fulfillment of God’s promises found in Isaiah 55.1; Zech. 13.1; 14.16-17; see John 4.14. Second, John adds the note that Jesus was speaking of the Spirit (vs. 39). It is significant that Jesus’ promise of the Spirit came on the heels of His declaration that He was going away (vss. 33-34), since the Spirit would only come after His glorification.

However, the people remained divided over Jesus (vs. 43). Some continued to believe that Jesus was the Prophet whom Moses had foretold (Deut. 18.15-18; see John 6.14), some thought He was the Christ, while others thought it impossible, not knowing that Jesus had in fact been born in Bethlehem (Micah 5.2; Luke 2.1-7). There was even divided opinions amongst the Jewish leaders (vss. 44-52). While most wanted Jesus apprehended, the temple guard was unwilling to do so because “No one ever spoke like this man!” (vs. 46). Of the Jewish leaders, only Nicodemus spoke up on Jesus’ behalf, but his efforts were met with ridicule (vss. 51-52).

Textual Notes:

- » Note Matt. 15-18; Mark 7-9; Luke 9:18–50 for what events transpired during this six month window.
- » Vs. 2: see Leviticus 23.34-43; Deuteronomy 16.13-15. This feast occurred in September or early October. “According to Josephus, this Feast was the most popular of the three principal Jewish feasts that brought the faithful flocking to Jerusalem (‘especially sacred and important’, Jos., Ant. viii. 100). People living in rural areas built makeshift structures of light branches and leaves to live in for the week (hence ‘booths’ or ‘tabernacles’; cf. Lv. 23:42); town dwellers put up similar structures on their flat roofs or in their courtyards. The Feast was known for a water-draw-
- ing rite and a lamp-lighting rite to which Jesus quite clearly refers (cf. 7:37ff.; 8:12).” (Carson)
- » Vs. 5: see also Mark 3.21,31-35; Acts 1.14.
- » Vs. 6: see also John 2.4; 7.30; 8.20; 12.23; 13.1; 17.1.
- » Vs. 20: note that the crowd was unaware of the schemes of the Jews (i.e. the leaders)
- » Vs. 32: “The temple guards were a kind of temple police force, drawn from the Levites, with primary responsibility for maintaining order in the temple area. But since the Sanhedrin governed the internal affairs of the country in all matters of little interest to the Roman prefect, the temple police could be used at the pleasure of that high court in matters quite removed from the

sacred precincts” (Carson).

- » Vs. 35: in an ironic twist, it would be Greeks seeking Jesus that signaled “the hour” had arrived (see John 12.20ff).
- » Vs. 39: see John 12.16; 14.16-17,26; 15.26-27; 16.12-15.
- » Vs. 51: see Deut. 17.6; 19.15; 1.16.
- » Vs. 52: “They proved their own ignorance by this question because prophets had come from Galilee (cf. Jonah, 2 Kgs. 14:25; Elijah, 1 Kgs. 17:1; Nahum, Nah. 1:1), but they succeeded in dispelling any attempt to defend Jesus on a legitimate basis. Prejudice is a thief of the truth!” (Harkrider)

LESSON 10: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

JOHN 8.1-30



Opening questions:

1. What do we learn about Jesus' purpose in vss. 1-11?
2. What do we learn about Jesus' relationship with the Father?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

Jesus Came To Save, Not Condemn (vss. 1-11)

Because vss. 1-11 are not found in many of the ancient manuscripts, several translations do not include them or place them in brackets. While there is some uncertainty on whether they should be included or not, we will treat them as canonical. As we will see, this episode in the ministry of Jesus reinforces a truth He proclaimed earlier: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:17, ESV)

That the scribes and Pharisees acted out of insincerity is clearly shown by the fact that only the woman is brought to Jesus. If she were "caught in the act of adultery" then a man was also caught, but he was not apprehended. Their aim was likely to cause further divide public opinion over Jesus (see John 7.25-27,40-44) or cause Jesus to run afoul of the Roman authorities who reserved the right to mete out capital punishment.

There is no question that the Law declared that those found guilty of adultery (both man and woman) were to be stoned (see Leviticus 20.10; Deuteronomy 22.22). But Jesus' response in vs. 7 also pointed to the Law: those who witnessed the transgression were to cast the first stone (see Deuteronomy 17.7; Leviticus 24.14). A plausible interpretation of "without sin" is that Jesus was speaking of sexual sin, the very sin the woman was guilty of. In this case, Jesus was pointing out their hypocrisy in the area of sexual sin. After all, where was the guilty man?

Jesus' final words to the woman are significant. Jesus did not condemn her, not because He condoned her actions or that He would never render judgment. Rather, it points to Jesus' purpose in coming into the world; He came to save, not

condemn (see John 3.17). Furthermore, Jesus had the power on earth to forgive sin (Matthew 9.1-8) which He exercised in this case. But Jesus said more: “go, and from now on sin no more.” Those who’ve experienced forgiveness honor that gift with changed lives!

The Light Of The World (vss. 12-30)

The key to understanding Jesus’ words in this passage are to remember that they were given in the setting of the Feast of Booths (see John 7.2,37). “He who has not seen the joy of the place of water-drawing has never in his life seen joy”: this extravagant claim stands just before the description of the lighting of the four huge lamps in the temple’s court of women and of the exuberant celebration that took place under their light (Mishnah Sukkah 5:1–4). ‘Men of piety and good works’ danced through the night, holding burning torches in their hands and singing songs and praises. The Levitical orchestras cut loose, and some sources attest that this went on every night of the Feast of Tabernacles, with the light from the temple area shedding its glow all over Jerusalem” (Carson). Throughout the Old Testament God was associated with light (see Psalm 27.1; Proverbs 6.23; Habakuk 3.3-4; etc.), but during the Feast of Booths the people would have been reminded of God leading the people in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13.21-22). It was against this backdrop that Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8.12).

Jesus’ main point in vss. 12-20 is the unity He shares with the Father.

- » Jesus’ testimony was true because of where He came from and where He would return (vs. 14).
- » His judgment was true because He judged with the Father (vs. 16).
- » Jesus bore witness about Himself, but the Father also bore witness about His Son (vs. 18).

By contrast, the Pharisees judged “according to the flesh” (vs. 15). In other words, while they saw Jesus in the flesh they were failing to comprehend the greater truth that He is the Word made flesh (John 1.14). Note: Jesus’ statement that “I judge no one” (vs. 15) is not to be taken in the absolute sense (vs. 16), rather He did not judge as they judged. “* He was guided by the Father and did not judge by carnal and worldly motives like they did, i.e “according to the flesh” (cf. Jn. 7:24)” (Harkrider). And because the Pharisees judged by the flesh, they failed to comprehend both Jesus AND His Father (vs. 19).

Jesus’ elaborated further on His connection to the Father in vss. 21-30:

- » Jesus was going away, back to the Father, because He was from above (vss. 21,23).
- » Jesus declares what He heard from the Father (vs. 26).
- » Jesus acted according to the Father’s authority and “always do the things that are pleasing to him” (vss. 28-29).

By contrast, because the Jews failed to believe in Jesus they would not be able to

go where Jesus was going because while He was from above, they were from below (vss. 22-23). Rather than follow Jesus, they would die in their sins (vs. 27).

Particular attention needs to be given to Jesus' statement in vs. 28: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me." Jesus' had already spoken of His being lifted up (John 3.14) and now states this event (the crucifixion and exaltation) would be what allows them to "know that I am he". Earlier in vs. 24 Jesus had stated that "unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." Jesus' opponents did not yet comprehend (they would in vss. 58-59) that Jesus is claiming to be God, for "I am he" was a self-designation of the Lord in Isaiah 41.4;43.10,13,25; 46.4; 48.12; etc. The crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus, His being lifted up by means of the cross to return to the Father, would prove once and for all that "I am he".

Vs. 30 states that "many believed in him", but this faith was not genuine. Many had believed in Jesus' because of His signs (John 2.23-25), but when His teachings became too difficult they turned away (John 6.66). As we will see in our next lesson, those who believed in Jesus on this occasion would not be true disciples, for they would not abide in His word.

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 1: the Mount of Olives lay east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley.
- » Vs. 13: note John 5.31. As Jesus' shows in vss. 17-18, His testimony is true because the Father also testifies with Him.
- » Vs. 16: while Jesus came to save and not condemn (John 3.17), all judgment has been given to Him (John 5.27).
- » Vs. 17: Deuteronomy 17.6; 19.15.
- » Vs. 20: "The Treasury was in the Court of the Women, so called, not because it was appropriated to the worship of women exclusively, but

because they were not allowed to proceed further, except for sacrificial purposes. The court covered a space upwards of two hundred feet square, and was surrounded by a colonnade, within which, and against the wall, were the thirteen trumpet-shaped chests, called "trumpets" from their shape, for charitable contributions. This court was the most public part of the temple." (Vincent)

- » Vs. 24: note that "sin" is singular in vs. 21, but plural in vs. 24. The great "sin" of unbelief means one would die guilty of all their "sins".
- » Vs. 29: see John 4.34; 5.30; 6.38.

LESSON 11: THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

JOHN 8.31-59



Opening questions:

1. Why did the people who believed in Jesus (vs. 30) ultimately wish to stone Him (vs. 59)?
2. What do we learn about Jesus' relationship with the Father?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

The Truth Will Set You Free (vss. 31-38)

Jesus's words in vss. 31-32 need to be understood in context. Vs. 30 stated that "many believed in him", but by the time we get to vs. 38 Jesus was already stating that these "believers" had a different father than He. So, vs. 31 was a challenge to those who professed faith in Him; only by abiding in His word could they truly be His disciples. We should also note the connection with vss. 28-29: the Father was always with Jesus because Jesus both spoke the Father's words and did the things pleasing to Him. Likewise, our connection with Jesus depends on "abiding in" His word.

The promise that we "will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" must be understood in the context of John's gospel. John's point is not that we will know some truths about Jesus, rather truth is Jesus Himself (John 14:6), the One who can truly set us free. "Judaism taught that study of the law makes a man free (e.g. Pirke Aboth 3:5); the Fourth Gospel insists that the law points to Jesus (5:39, 46), himself the truth (14:6) and the one who is full of grace and truth (1:14), if true freedom is to be enjoyed" (Carson).

The Jews' statement in vs. 33 may strike us as ludicrous at first. After all, they had been in bondage to Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Greeks in their history, and currently were subservient to Rome. However, it is likely that they were speaking of spiritual servitude; as Abraham's descendants they were sons of the kingdom and free. What they didn't realize was that by practicing sin they had become enslaved to sin. Note the contrast with vss. 31-32: "abiding" in Jesus' words results in freedom, but "practicing" sin results in slavery. Both verbs denote continuous action; we either devote our lives to Him or to sin. In the

context of John, the chief sin is failing to believe in Jesus (see John 6.29).

The Jews descent from Abraham made them part of God's house, but not in the way they envisioned; they were not sons, but slaves used for a purpose (vs. 35). They would not remain in the house forever, because that privilege is reserved for sons. But the Son had the ability to set them free (vs. 36)! Yet, they sought to kill the Son (vs. 37)! Their animosity toward Jesus revealed two truths: first, they weren't His disciples because "my word finds no place in you" and second, they had a different father than Jesus (vs. 38).

Spiritual Heritage (vss. 39-47)

The dominant theme of this passage is spiritual heritage. The Jews were offended at Jesus' remark in vs. 38 and countered that Abraham was their father. Jesus replied that this couldn't be because they didn't follow in the works of Abraham; i.e. they did not share in the patriarch's faith (vss. 39-40; cf. Genesis 15.6). No, their actions revealed a different spiritual heritage (vs. 41)! Note, their reply that they "were not born of sexual immorality" may have been a not-so-subtle reference to the mysterious circumstances around Jesus' birth; who was He to comment on their parentage?

The Jews may have insisted that God was their father, but Jesus revealed that was impossible because they did not love the One sent from the Father (vs. 42) and they were resistant to His word which came from the Father (vs. 43; cf. vss. 28-29). No, they had a different spiritual heritage! Jesus' comments about the devil likely refer to the Genesis 3 where we find that Satan's lies resulted in the death of man. Thus, from the beginning the devil has been a liar and a murderer (vs. 44). Thus, because they were descendants of Satan they would not accept the truth of Jesus (vs. 45). If they had been "of God" they would have heard Jesus. "The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (vs. 47).

"I Am" (vss. 48-59)

Matters continued to escalate. Those who had believed in Jesus (vs. 30) were now accusing Jesus of not only being a Samaritan, but having a demon (vss. 48, 52; see 7.20; 10.20). In doing so they not only dishonored Jesus (vs. 49) but the Father as well (see 5.23). Jesus honored the Father (vs. 49) and thus the Father would glorify the Son (vs. 50; see 17.5). And if they would truly become His disciple and abide in His word, they too would find glory: they would never see death (vs. 51)!

But how could Jesus make such a promise? Abraham had died, so had the prophets. Was Jesus making Himself out to be greater than these paragons of faith (vs. 53)? Jesus' response was that He did not need to glorify Himself. Rather, His Father (their God) glorified Jesus (vss. 54-55) as did Abraham who "rejoiced that he would see my day" (vs. 56). Opinions vary on what this verse means, and the fact is that we cannot be certain. The best solution is that Jesus was referencing the

promise of Genesis 12.3 that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” in Abraham. While the patriarch did not live to see the actual fulfillment of the promise, he saw it fulfilled by faith (see Hebrews 11.13).

The people continued to misunderstand Jesus, not thinking of the heavenly/spiritual possibilities, but fixating on the physical realities (see John 3.11-12). Jesus was not even fifty years old (He was much closer to thirty, see Luke 3.23), so how could He have seen Abraham (vs. 57). “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (vs. 58). Jesus had already used the phrase, “I am he” (vss. 24,28), a designation of God Himself (Isaiah 41.4). It would seem that reference did not register with the Jews, but this one certainly did, for it was the same way in which God identified Himself to Moses (see Exodus 3.14). To the Jews this was blasphemy, thus the very people who earlier “believed” in Him (vs. 30) now sought to stone Him (vs. 59; see Leviticus 24.16).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 39: see Galatians 3.7-9, 26-29.
- » Vs. 46: there were certainly those who thought Jesus was guilty of sin (see John 5.18), but what proof did they offer?
- » Vs. 51: see John 5.24; 6.63,68.

- » Vs. 58: “It is important to observe the distinction between the two verbs. Abraham’s life was under the conditions of time, and therefore had a temporal beginning. Hence, Abraham came into being, or was born (γενέσθαι). Jesus’ life was from and to eternity. Hence the formula for absolute, timeless existence, I am (ἐγώ εἰμι).” (Vincent)

LESSON 12: THE SEEING & THE BLIND JOHN 9



Opening questions:

1. What contributed to the spiritual blindness found in this chapter?
2. How does the sign of Jesus restoring the sight of blind man increase your faith?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

Several times in chapter 8 Jesus promised freedom to those who would truly believe in Him:

- » Vs. 12: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- » Vss. 31-32: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
- » Vs. 51: “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

Chapter 9 provides a narrative demonstrating the promises He made in chapter 8. Those who believe in Him would find freedom, while those who refused would remain in darkness and death. Truly He would say, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (vs. 5).

The Sign (vss. 1-7)

Upon seeing a man who was blind from birth, Jesus’ disciples made one of the judgments Jesus had warned about (see 8.15). Their question about who’s sin caused the man’s blindness reflected the thinking of the rabbis. So, Rabbi Ammi was quoted, “There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity.” But Jesus corrected them, revealing that this man’s affliction only served as an opportunity for the work of God to be done.

The way most of our English versions translate vss. 3-4 might leave the impression that God caused suffering so that His grace could be manifest. However, it’s important to remember that punctuation was absent in the original Greek manuscripts. Thus, an alternate translation would be: “Neither this man sinned nor his

parents. But so that the works of God may be revealed in him it is necessary for us to work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no-one is able to work” (Colin G. Kruse). Regardless of translation, Jesus’ point remains the same: He is the light of the world, and this would furnish an opportunity to demonstrate what that means!

The idea of “sent” is significant in this passage. After anointing the man’s eyes with mud (vs. 6) Jesus sent the man to the pool of Siloam, which means “sent” (vs. 7). But in vs. 4 Jesus sated that “We must work the works of him who sent me.” The point is that this wondrous miracle wasn’t effected by the mud or the water of the pool, but by the One sent by the Father.

Jesus would use saliva in other acts of healing (see Mark 7.38.23), but on this occasion attention was drawn to His making mud with the saliva (vs. 6). Vs. 14 shows why this is significant: “Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.” Pharisaic tradition would have regarded Jesus’ actions as kneading, and thus a violation of their Sabbath traditions. And as we will see, their love of their traditions would contribute to their spiritual blindness.

Responses To The Sign (vss. 8-34)

Most of the chapter is concerned with the responses to the work of Jesus. The man’s neighbors, his parents and the Pharisees are all considered, and tragically none of them truly see what Jesus had done!

The neighbors (vss. 8-12) were nothing more than curious. Some were unwilling to acknowledge that a great deed had been done while others were skeptical (vss. 8-9). Others were curious to know “how” this man was made to see, but they were not motivated enough to find Jesus (vss. 10-12). Interestingly, their opinions about the man were just as divided as their opinions about Jesus (see John 7.25-27,40-44). And rather than going to the source, Jesus, for answers, they took the man to the Pharisees.

The Pharisees (vss. 13-18,24-34) could have changed their perception of Jesus, after all “never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind” (vs. 32). Since Jesus went against their religious traditions they concluded that He could not be from God (vs. 16). They ignored the obvious and insisted that Jesus was a sinner (vss. 24-25). For them, being disciples of Moses was enough (vss. 28-29) so they ignored the facts of what Jesus actually did! Their ridicule and casting out of the man (vs. 34) reflected the same bad theology we noted in vs. 2. The man must have been born in sin, so who was he to teach them anything? Just as Israel had once rejected the waters of Siloam (Shiloah, Isaiah 8.6), they were now rejecting the One sent by God (vs. 16).

Of all people, the man’s parents (vss. 19-23) should have rejoiced and sought Jesus to praise Him. Yet, when asked how this great deed occurred, their constant refrain was “he is of age; ask him” (vss. 21, 23). Rather than put their faith in Jesus, they gave way to fear (vs. 22).

The Seeing & The Blind (vss. 35-41)

However, there was one person who did come to see Jesus for who He is: the man who had been born blind. While he immediately regained his sight (vs. 7), his understanding of who Jesus is grew throughout the chapter:

- » “the man called Jesus” (vs. 11)
- » “He is a prophet” (vs. 17)
- » must be from God (vs. 33)
- » Confessed Jesus as the “Son of Man” and worshiped Him (vss. 35-38; note John 1.51;3.13).

This man, who was blind at the beginning of the story, but who had “the works of God... displayed in him” (vs. 3) now fully beheld Jesus as the “light of the world” (vss. 5,39; John 8.12). By contrast, the Pharisees remained lost (vss. 39-41). Their misplaced pride in their status as Abraham’s descendants (John 8.33) and disciples of Moses (John 9.28-29) had caused them to reject the One whom God sent (vs. 4). They may have claimed to see, but they were in fact blind... and therefore lost (John 3.19-20).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 1: according to vs. 21 this man was “of age”, thus 13 or older. The fact that this man’s parents felt it necessary to say this may indicate that the man was still very young.
- » Vs. 7: “Water for the Pool of Siloam was channelled through Hezekiah’s tunnel from the Gihon spring. The Pool of Siloam was the source of the water used in the water-pouring ceremonies during the Feast of Tabernacles” (Kruse).
- » Vs. 16: they wrongly applied Deut. 13.1-5 to Jesus.
- » Vs. 17: OT prophets, particularly Elijah and Elisha, were known for the signs and wonders they performed.
- » Vs. 22: see John 12.42; 16.2.
- » Vs. 24: note Joshua 7.19-20. Acknowledging the truth about sin would acknowledge the glory of God.
- » Vs. 28: see John 5.45-46; 6.32; 7.19-23.
- » Vs. 30: one of the signs of the Messianic age was to be the restoring of sign (Isaiah 29.18; 35.5; 42.7).
- » Vs. 31: “The Jews’ had rightly insisted that God spoke to Moses; the man born blind pointed out that God listens to Jesus! That God listened to Jesus was evident from the fact that he granted him the power to give sight to one who was congenitally blind” (Kruse).
- » Vs. 38: “That he ‘worshipped’ him shows he identified Jesus as the glorious Son of Man of Daniel 7:13-14. The man born blind had been blessed with spiritual as well as physical sight” (Kruse).
- » Vs. 41: see Proverbs 26.12.

LESSON 13: THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOHN 10



Opening questions:

1. What qualities does Jesus possess that allow Him to be the “good shepherd”?
2. What benefits do we receive from being His sheep?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

The Good Shepherd (vss. 1-21)

Psalms 23 is one of the best known and loved passages in the entire Bible. The depiction of God as a loving and caring shepherd has comforted His people throughout the generations. And while God was the true shepherd of His people, the leaders of Israel also bore the responsibility of shepherding the Lord’s sheep. Sadly, Israel’s shepherds failed to keep their charge! In the prophets, the Lord issued several indictments against these worthless shepherds:

- » The people would be pillaged because the shepherds had no understanding and were consumed with drink (Isaiah 56:9-12).
- » Israel’s shepherds did not obey the Lord (Jeremiah 2:8).
- » Since the shepherds did not seek the Lord, their flock was scattered (Jeremiah 10:21).
- » The shepherds were both negligent of and actively harming the sheep (Jeremiah 23:1-2; 50:6; Ezekiel 34:1-6).
- » The shepherds would be destroyed (Jeremiah 25:34; Ezekiel 34:1-10)!

But God was going to rectify the situation. Thus, He promised to shepherd the flock Himself (Ezekiel 34:15) and to “set up over them one shepherd, my servant David” (Ezekiel 34:23). It’s against that backdrop that the Lord declared, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11).

Context is important to understand why Jesus began this discourse on shepherding in John 10. As we’ve noted in recent chapters, the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders had stepped up their opposition to Jesus (John 7:32,45-52; 9:16,24,34), culminating with their casting out the man whose sight Jesus had restored (John 9:40-41). The Pharisees weren’t shepherds, rather they were robbers

bent on killing the sheep (vss. 1,10), strangers whom the sheep would not follow (vs. 5) or hired hands who would sacrifice the sheep in order to save their own lives (vss. 12-13).

In contrast to these false shepherds, Jesus came as the fulfillment of God's promise to shepherd His flock (Ezekiel 34.15,23). John 10 elaborates on how Jesus is in fact the "good shepherd":

- » Opposed to thieves who must find a way to break in, Jesus can enter through the door (vss. 1-2). He has the right to shepherd the sheep!
- » The sheep won't follow a stranger, because they don't recognize his voice. But the sheep know the voice of Jesus and thus will follow where He leads (vss. 3-4).
- » Hirelings run at the sign of danger, but not the good shepherd; He gives His life for the sheep (vs. 11,15,17-18). While it was the will of the Father that Jesus sacrifice His own life, He did so willingly. His protection of the flock is also why He is described as "the door" (vs. 9), for shepherds would lay in the door of the sheepfold at night, keeping the sheep safe and accounted for at night.
- » Thieves and hirelings are concerned with themselves, but Jesus "came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (vs. 10), echoing the sentiment found in Psalm 23.1, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." There is nothing the sheep need that the shepherd will not provide!
- » Jesus knows His sheep, and they know Him. So intimate is the relationship that Jesus it is the same "as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (vss. 14-15; see 15.4).
- » And Jesus came to shepherd all of God's sheep! "I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd" (vs. 16; 12.32; see Ephesians 2.11-22; 3.6).

Sadly, Jesus' revelation that He is the good shepherd did not inspire the people to seek His care and provision. Rather, they remained divided with many claiming that Jesus either possessed by a demon or insane (vss. 19-21).

Oneness of Father & Son (vss. 22-42)

We can't be certain how much time elapsed between Jesus' teaching in vss. 1-21 and the events recorded here, but we will see how they are thematically related. The Feast of Dedication celebrated the Maccabean victories over the Greeks in 165-164 B.C. and was held annually in the months of November or December. Interestingly, the Jews chose the occasion of celebrating one of their last military successes to ask Jesus if He was the Christ (vs. 24).

The synoptic accounts record Jesus specifically acknowledging that He is the Christ (see Matthew 16.13-17) and while He had not uttered those specific words in John's account, He had plainly told them that He was from the Father (cf. John 5:16-47; 6:32-59; 7:14-30). Jesus' works bore witness that He was from the Father,

thus the Christ. However, they would not believe because they would not listen to His voice, thus could not be His sheep (vss. 26-27, see vss. 3-4). And the Jews did not understand just how tragic it was that they were not part of Jesus' flock (vs. 28).

It is unfortunate that Jesus' words in vs. 28 have been misconstrued to support false doctrines such as Calvin's "preservation of the saints" and the modern "once saved always saved". We must not divorce Jesus' words here from the rest of His teaching. Recall that ONLY those who abide in His word are truly disciples and thus free (John 8.31-32). But we must not miss the comfort of this passage: those who follow Jesus, listen to His voice, are safe! The Good Shepherd will not allow them to be taken away; the Good Shepherd has the Father on His side (vs. 29). No one is strong enough to snatch the sheep away from the Father and Son!

In vs. 30 Jesus confirmed the opening assertion of the gospel: "the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1.1). The Jews did not misunderstand Jesus' meaning, but rather than appreciating that Jesus' works came from the Father (vs. 32), they accused Jesus of blasphemy (vs. 33).

Jesus' responded with a quotation from Psalm 82.6. "The statement 'You are gods' was understood in later rabbinic exegesis to be God's word to the Israelites at Sinai when they received the law. God said to them, 'You are gods,' because in receiving the law and living by it they would be holy and live like gods. But because they departed from the law and worshiped the golden calf while still at Sinai, he said to them, 'you will die like mere men'. The opening words of Jesus' argument, 'If he called them "gods", to whom the word of God came', suggest that he interpreted the quotation from the psalm in relation to the Sinai events as did later rabbinic scholars" (Kruse). So, if the Jews were willing to think of themselves as sons of God because they had received the Law, how could they accuse Jesus of blaspheming for claiming to be one with God? All they needed to do was honestly examine His works to see the validity of Jesus' claim: "the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (vs. 38).

Jesus escaped their efforts to arrest Him and departed from Jerusalem, returning to Bethany across the Jordan (vss. 39-40; see 1.28). Once again we see that "many believed in him" having been convinced from the testimony of John and the signs Jesus performed. However, we've seen before that many who believed did not continue abiding in His word (see John 6.66; 8.30-32).

Textual Notes:

- » * Vs. 4: note Moses' prayer in Numbers 27.16-17.
- » * Vs. 9: as the door, Jesus is the only way to salvation (see John 14.1-6).
- » * Vs. 18: see Matthew 26.53-54.
- » * Vs. 20: see John 7.20; 8.48,52.
- » * Vs. 22: "The feast of the Dedication (also known as Hanukkah) was a feast celebrating annually the Maccabean victories of 165–164 B.C. — when Judas Maccabeus drove out the Syrians, rebuilt the altar, and rededicated the temple on 25 Kislev (1 Macc 4:41–61). From a historical standpoint, it was the last great deliverance the Jewish people had experienced, and it came at a time when least expected. Josephus ends his account of the institution of the festival with the following statement: "And from that time to the present we observe

this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving this name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it" (Ant. 12.7.6 [12.325])" (NET Notes).

- » * Vs. 30: "Describing this oneness, the evangelist does not use the masculine form of the adjective 'one' (heis), which would suggest that Father and Son are one person. Instead, he uses the neuter form (hen), suggesting that the oneness of Father and Son here is oneness in mission and purpose. Father and Son are at one in their commitment to prevent anyone from snatching believers out of their hands" (Kruse).
- » * Vs. 41: note that John was also "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1.15). Being filled with the Spirit should not be equated with performing miraculous signs.

LESSON 14: THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE

JOHN 11



Opening questions:

1. What do you learn about how believers can struggle with their faith?
2. How did raising Lazarus from the dead glorify both Jesus and the Father?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

One of the opening claims about Jesus was “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (John 1.4). Throughout the gospel, Jesus amplified this claim in a variety of ways: He has/is the water of life (4.14; 7.37-38); He is the bread of life (6.48-51); He gives life abundantly to His sheep (10.10). But how do His claims stand in the face of death? John 11 provides an emphatic answer to that question.

Jesus had already promised that one day all the dead would rise (5.28-29), but in John 11.25-26 He claimed even greater power and authority over death. This victory over death is promised to those who believe in Him, yet the chapter records the doubts and disbelief of Jesus’ closest followers.

The Disciples Struggled To Believe (vss. 1-16)

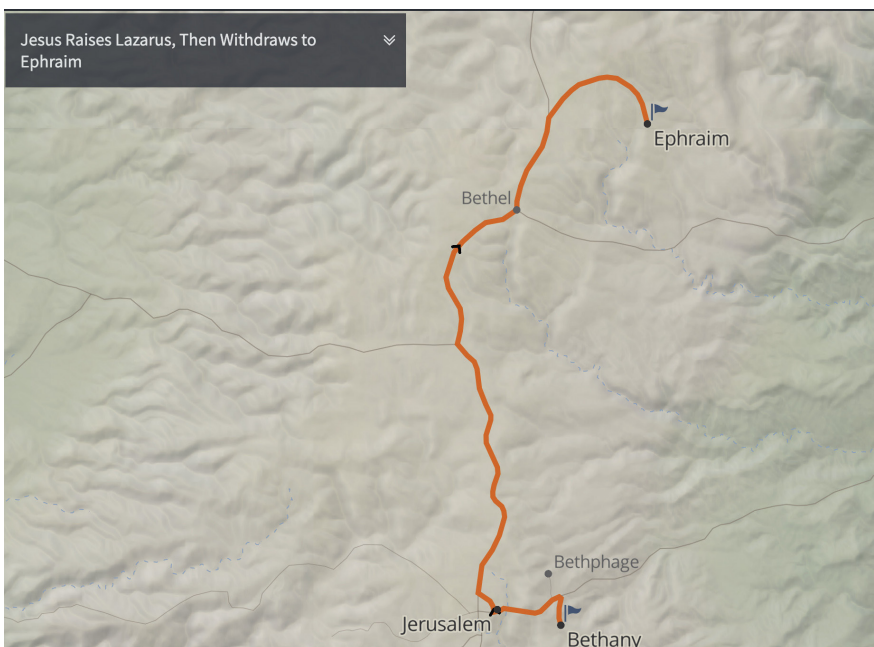
Jesus and His disciples had recently departed Jerusalem and withdrawn to the other side of the Jordan River because of the increased opposition of the Jews (10.39-40). Bethany was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem (vs. 18), so the disciples believed that Jesus traveling so close to Jerusalem would result in His death (vss. 8,16). Everything Jesus did in this section was meant to bolster their faith...

- » He revealed that the result would be the glorification of God and His Son (vs. 4). Recall that it is in the Son that God’s glory is revealed (1.14) and His works were meant to glorify the Father (17.4). Jesus’ raising Lazarus from the dead would reveal the glory of the Father and would furnish His disciples with reason to believe (vs. 15).
- » His reference to 12 hours in the day (vs. 9) would emphasize the importance of carrying on the Father’s work (see John 9.4-5). “The daylight period of his ministry may be far advanced, but it is wrong to quit before the twelve hours have been filled up. The time will come soon enough when he will not be able

to work” (Carson).

- » Saying that Lazarus is “asleep” in vs. 11 points to a deeper truth (see vss. 25-26). Of significance is the fact that Jesus calls Lazarus “our” friend, but “I go” to awake him. Only Jesus is the resurrection (vs. 25), only He could call Lazarus forth.
- » Jesus’ delaying 2 days may have significance. Given that Lazarus was dead 4 days by the time Jesus arrived (vss. 17,39), an immediate departure would not have brought Jesus to Bethany in time. However, “From a slightly later date there are sources attesting the rabbinic belief that the soul hovers over the body of the deceased person for the first three days, ‘intending to re-enter it, but as soon as it sees its appearance change’, i.e. that decomposition has set in, it departs (Leviticus Rabbah [a rabbinical commentary] 18:1 [on Lv. 15:1];” (Carson).

Martha & Mary Struggled To Believe (vss. 17-27)



Martha possessed faith in Jesus (vss. 21-22) and the faith that her brother will rise on the last day (vs. 24). But did she believe that Jesus IS the resurrection and the life (vss. 25-26)? While her response would affirm Jesus’ words (only the Christ, the Son of God could be the resurrection and the life), she clearly did not fully comprehend Jesus’ claim (see vs. 39).

Mary also possessed faith in Jesus (vs. 32), but her faith

did not go so far as to believe that Jesus offered immediate hope. She did not comprehend the full impact of Jesus being “the resurrection and the life”. This passage paints a picture of despair. All are weeping (vs. 33) and some seem to question why Jesus had not come before (vs. 37). None believe Jesus could or would do anything after Lazarus’ death!

This backdrop must shape our understanding of Jesus’ actions in vss. 33-35:

- » The phrase “deeply moved” in vss. 33,38 typically suggests anger and indignation (see Mark 14.5). “It is lexically inexcusable to reduce this emotional upset to the effects of empathy, grief, pain or the like.” (Carson).
- » Note the NLT reading: “When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.”

Thus, Jesus' weeping in vs. 35 was not mere sympathy, but a deep emotional response to the unbelief surrounding Him.

Jesus Proved His Mastery Over Death (vss. 38-44)

Jesus' words to Martha in vs. 40 form a connection between vs 4 and vss. 25-26: raising the dead to life was the means by which the glory of God was manifest in the Son. Furthermore, Jesus' prayer in vss. 41-42 amplified the truth already stated in John 5.19-21: what the Son does is because the Father both hears Him and is with Him. And Jesus' desire was that those who witnessed this marvelous act would know this!

Jesus' command of Lazarus to "come forth" was proof that the dead give heed to His voice (John 5.25,28-29). "Though it is not John's point, it has often been remarked that the authority of Jesus is so great that, had he not specified Lazarus, all the tombs would have given up their dead to resurrection life" (Carson). Furthermore, it furnished proof of Jesus being "the resurrection and the life" and all that entails (vss. 25-26).

Finally, a contrast might be made between the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus (see 20.7). "Lazarus was called to a restoration of mortal life. Small wonder he groped blindly for the exit, and needed to be released from the graveclothes that bound him. Jesus rose with what Paul calls 'a spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15), leaving the graveclothes behind, materializing in closed rooms. Though his resurrected body bore the marks of his five wounds and was capable of eating and of being touched, it was raised with the power of endless life, the firstfruits of the resurrection at the end. Those who hear Jesus' shout on the last day will participate in his resurrection; the resurrection of Lazarus, occurring before that of Jesus, could only be a pale anticipation of what was yet to come. It was, in fact, a 'sign'... rightly the climactic sign" (Carson).

Jesus' Mission To Give Life Resulted In His Death (vss. 45-57)

We have noted the increasing hostility of the Jewish leadership (5.16-18; 7.25,32; 8.59; 10.31,39). Chapter 11 began with the disciples reluctant to travel to Bethany which was so near to Jerusalem (vss.8,16) and concludes with the Jewish Council agreeing to put Jesus to death (vs. 53). Jesus' travels to Bethany to restore life to Lazarus hastened His death. Jesus' coming to the World to restore life brought about His death.

Fittingly, the chapter concludes with Jesus in Ephraim (~12 miles from Jerusalem) and the Passover drawing near. The people anticipated the arrival of Jesus and were aware that their leaders were seeking to kill Him.

LESSON 15: BLIND EYES & HARD HEARTS

JOHN 12



Opening questions:

1. John 12 records Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem when the crowds heralded His arrival. However, the same crowd would demand His crucifixion. How does John 12 prepare us for the peoples' rejection of Jesus?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

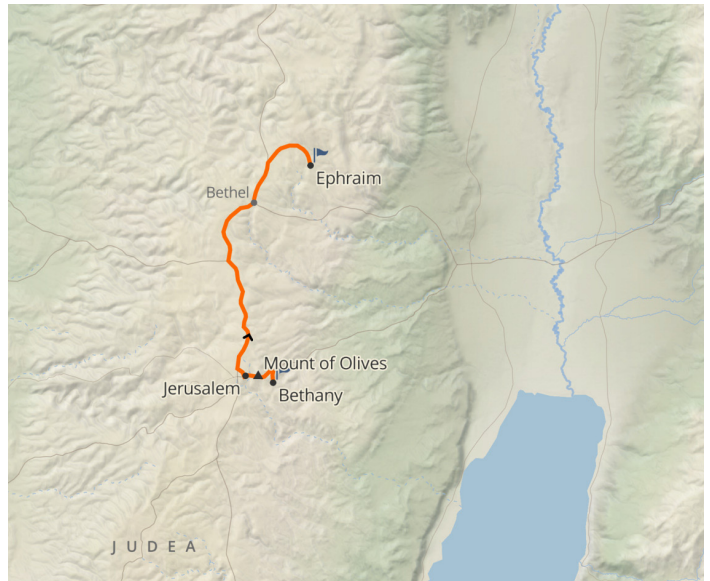
The raising of Lazarus from the dead was a truly notable sign, but as we noticed this great work did not result in all people putting their faith in Jesus. The leaders of the Jews continued in their opposition (John 11.47-53) and while many of the people were looking for Jesus (John 11.55-56), we will soon discover that they were not willing to put their full faith in Him. Chapter 12 contains the account of Jesus' "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem, the moment when it seemed like the people were ready to believe in Him. Yet, in the same chapter we find John describing the people as having blind eyes and hard hearts (vs. 40). What caused their blindness and hardened hearts?

Judas was hardened by sinful desire (vss. 1-8)

Following the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus had withdrawn into a wilderness area near the city of Ephraim (John 11.54). However, the Passover was near and so was Jesus' appointed hour. Six days before the Passover, Jesus returned to Bethany and attended a dinner given in His honor. Note that the parallel accounts in Matthew 26.6-13 and Mark 14.3-9 give additional details, including the fact that the dinner was held at the home of Simon the leper. However, the focus of the account is twofold. First, there is Mary's act of devotion. Nard was a very expensive perfume, being extracted from a Nepalese plant. She used a vast quantity as the Roman pound weighed approximately 11.5 pounds. Second, there is Judas' reaction; while he feigned concern for the poor, he was motivated by greed. The seeds had been planted for Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

Jesus' words in vs. 7 deserves further consideration. While it may be that Mary understood better than other disciples that Jesus' death was approaching, there is no clear evidence that Mary or anyone else understood before the cross

that Jesus had to die. She meant this to be an act of costly, humble devotion, but like Caiaphas (11:49–52) she signaled more than she knew. In the culture of the day, it was not thought inappropriate to spend lavish sums at a funeral, including the cost of the perfumes that were designed to stifle the smell of decay (cf. notes on 11:39). But here was Mary, lavishly pouring out perfume on Jesus while he was yet alive. Small wonder Jesus sees it as a prefiguring of the anointing that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus performed (19:38–42).



Jewish leaders were hardened by jealousy (vss. 9-11)

The chief priests are singled out for good reason. “The chief priests (mostly of the Sadducean party) had most to lose. They cooperated with the Romans in the administration of the province of Judea, and Jesus’ rapidly increasing fame was a growing threat to their position. Earlier the Sanhedrin, of which the chief priests were a most influential part, decided to kill Jesus to remove the threat. Now Lazarus too was adding to that threat, so the simple solution was to kill him as well” (Kruse, Colin G). The jealousy of the Pharisees is noted in vss. 18-19 as they incredulously note that “the world has gone after” Jesus.

People would be hardened by failed expectations (vss. 12-36)

Expectations had been building among the people, and when Jesus made His way to Jerusalem on the following day, there was an explosion of Messianic fervor. While the Law specified that palm branches were to be used in the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23.40), their significance had increased greatly during the intertestamental time. “When Simon the Maccabee drove the Syrian forces out of the Jerusalem citadel he was fêted with music and the waving of palm branches (cf. 1 Macc. 13:51, 141 BC), which had also been prominent at the rededication of the temple (2 Macc. 10:7, 164 BC)...Palms appear on the coins struck by the insurgents during the Jewish wars against Rome (AD 66–70, 132–135); indeed, the use of the palm as a symbol for Judea was sufficiently well established that the coins struck by the Romans to celebrate their victory also sported it. In short, waving of palm branches was no longer restrictively associated with Tabernacles. In this instance, it may well have signaled nationalist hope that a messianic liberator was arriving on the scene (cf. 6:14–15)” (Carson). The peoples’ Messianic hope was made clear in their cry: “Hosanna (literally ‘O Lord, Save’)! Blessed is He who come in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12.14)

While Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on donkey was the fulfillment of Scripture (Zechariah 9.9), this action was meant to subvert the peoples' nationalistic hope. Zechariah 9.10 continues, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a war horse, Jesus was once again emphasizing the spiritual nature of the Kingdom.

Jewish nationalistic expectations were subverted further when Greeks requested to see Jesus (vss. 20-21). Throughout John's gospel Jesus had declared that His hour had not yet come (see John 2.4; 7.6,8,30; 8.20), but the Gentiles seeking Jesus signaled that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (vs. 23). Recall that in John 10.16 Jesus revealed, "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." Now Jesus revealed that His death would result in much fruit; that anyone (Jew or Gentile) who would forsake their life for Him and follow wherever He leads, would be honored by the Father (vss. 24-26).

Finally, Messianic expectations were subverted by Jesus' teachings about His death. Recall from John 10.17-18 that Jesus' life was in His own control, but that He was committed to fulfilling the Father's will. Thus, even though Jesus' soul was troubled at the prospect of His death, His desire was that the Father's name be glorified (vss. 27-28). In response, the Father declared that He had glorified His name (in Jesus' ministry) and that He would glorify it again (in Jesus' death and resurrection). The crowd was once again divided by what happened, but Jesus stated "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (vss. 30-32). The crowd understood that Jesus was speaking of His death, but that was contrary to their expectation of the Messiah (vs. 34). "Rather than replying directly to their quibble, Jesus directed them to open their hearts to believe the truth. The Light of the world would be with them only a few hours more, and if they continued their attitude of rejection they would remain in darkness and be lost" (Harkrider).

Some had misplaced affections (vss. 37-43)

It was clear that the crowd's enthusiastic reception of Jesus had cooled. In vss. 37-41 John reveals how the people had failed to truly believe in Jesus. It wasn't because they lacked opportunity, for Jesus had done many signs (vs. 37). Rather, the people had fulfilled the indictment of Isaiah 53.1; 6.9-10. The same sun which melts butter also hardens clay! God's word is His power to salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16), and all who seek the truth can be saved (cf. John 7:17; 1 Tim. 2:4,6; Rev. 22:17). But those who of their own accord choose to reject the truth will be hardened by it and will accept a lie instead (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-12)" (Harkrider).

Vss. 42-43 serves as an example of how the people were blinded to the truth.

Again, it wasn't that they couldn't believe in Jesus, but rather their own desires prevented them. In this case, even some of the leaders were convinced by Jesus' signs, but they refused to confess Him because "they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

The urgency of belief (vss. 44-50)

This chapter has been filled with reasons why people did not believe in Jesus (greed, jealousy, unfulfilled expectations and misplaced affections), but concludes with the Lord urging all to put their faith in Him. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the Father (vs. 44-45; see John 1.14; 5.23; 7.16; 8.19, 42.). Believing in Jesus is how one escapes darkness and judgment (vss. 46-47; John 3.17). But to reject Jesus brings judgment because you rejects the Father's words (vss. 48-50).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 3: "The word for 'pound', *litra*, denotes a Roman pound weighing 11.5 ounces or 326 grams. That much perfume was a very large amount indeed. Nard is an extract from an aromatic Nepalese plant, *Nardostachys jatamansi*. The perfume was expensive because it was imported from a great distance, as well as having to be extracted from plant material. The process of extraction usually involved large amounts of plant material yielding only a little aromatic oil. Just how expensive this perfume was is revealed in 12:5. Anointing Jesus' feet with so much expensive perfume was an act of great devotion" (Kruse, Colin G).
- » Vs. 4: The parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark seem to indicate that after this incident Judas went away immediately and made his deal with the Jewish authorities to deliver up Jesus. Losing out on one source of sordid gain, he immediately went out and set up another.
- » Vs. 28: see John 7.18; 11.4,40; 17.4.
- » Vs. 31: Hebrews 2.14-15.
- » Vs. 32: see John 3.14; 8.28.
- » Vs. 34: Psalm 89.36; 110.4; Isaiah 9.7; Daniel 7.14. "The same sort of incredulity is found in the statement of Trypho the Jew to the Christian apologist Justin: 'According to scripture the Son of man is to be full of honour and glory and establish the eternal kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14), but your so-called Christ was without honour or glory and was struck by the worst curse in the law of God by being crucified' (Dialogue with Trypho xxxii.1)"

LESSON 16: JESUS PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES FOR HIS DEPARTURE

JOHN 13



Opening questions:

1. What was the significance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (hint: it was significant for more than one reason)?
2. Why did Jesus reveal that Judas would betray Him and that Peter would deny Him?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

All four gospel accounts record Jesus' celebrating the Passover with His closest disciples. However, while the synoptic accounts focus on Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper (see Matthew 26.17-30; Mark 14.12-26; Luke 22.7-39), John's focus is on the various ways the Lord sought to prepare the disciples for His departure: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come'" (John 13.33). Accordingly, John devotes significant attention to Jesus' final discourse to His disciples (spanning John 13-17). The aim of this lesson is to examine how the Lord began to prepare His disciples for His departure.

Vss. 1-17, By Teaching Them About Service

Chapter 13 is best known for the example of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet. Three aspects of this act stand out in the text. First, Jesus was motivated by love (vss. 1-4). John sets a somber scene with Jesus' knowing that His hour had come, the time when He would return to the Father by means of the cross, and that Judas had already determined to betray the Lord. Yet, "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Jesus' actions in this chapter were out of love and concern for others, even Judas. When everyone else would have been solely focused on their own needs, Jesus demonstrated selfless love.

Second, vss. 5-11 reveal that Jesus washing the disciples' feet foreshadowed the greatest act of service: His crucifixion. Jesus donned the attire of a slave (vs. 4) and then did for the disciples what they never would have done for each other:

He washed their feet (vss. 4-5). “Doubtless the disciples would have been happy to wash his feet; they could not conceive of washing one another’s feet, since this was a task normally reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. Peers did not wash one another’s feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love. Some Jews insisted that Jewish slaves should not be required to wash the feet of others; this job should be reserved for Gentile slaves, or for women and children and pupils” (Carson). However, it’s Jesus’ conversation with Peter in vss. 6-10 that show the true significance of Jesus’ action. After Peter’s initial refusal of Jesus washing his feet, the Lord responded, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (vs. 8). That statement wasn’t fulfilled by the washing of feet, but the true washing that comes from Jesus’ blood (Revelation 7.14). And when Peter then insisted that the Lord also wash his hands and head, the Lord replied that “you are clean, but not every one of you” (vs. 10). Jesus would later clarify that “you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you” (John 15.3). Thus, Jesus’ act of washing the disciples feet signified that complete cleansing comes from His word and His sacrifice.

Finally, Jesus instructed His disciples to learn from His example (vss. 11-17). “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13.14). While some insist that obedience to Jesus’ teaching requires institutionalizing the practice of footwashing, the better understanding is that Jesus was emphasizing the attitude of service. Serving each other permeates the New Testament (Matthew 20.26-28), while footwashing is hardly mentioned in the early church. “Two factors have prevented most Christians, rightly, from so institutionalizing footwashing. First, nowhere else in the New Testament, or in the earliest extra-biblical documents of the church, is footwashing treated as an ecclesiastical rite, an ordinance, a sacrament. The mention of footwashing in 1 Timothy 5:10 is no exception: there it is not introduced as a universal rite, but is placed in a list of good deeds of open-hearted hospitality that qualify a widow to be included in the support list. Wise theologians and expositors have always been reluctant to raise to the level of universal rite something that appears only once in Scripture. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the heart of Jesus’ command is a humility and helpfulness toward brothers and sisters in Christ that may be cruelly parodied by a mere ‘rite’ of footwashing that easily masks an unbroke spirit and a haughty heart” (Carson).

Vss. 18-30, By Revealing His Betrayer

After serving all of His disciples, Jesus turned His attention to Judah, His betrayer. Already John had revealed that “the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him” (vs. 2). Now Jesus declared that Judas’ betrayal was the fulfillment of prophecy (vs. 18; see Psalm 41.9). Later in the text we are told that “Satan entered into” Judas. However, the text is not telling us that Judas was just a pawn with no responsibility for his actions. John had already pointed out that Judas was a thief (John 12.6), thus Satan was able to tempt Judas through greed to betray his master (see James 1.13-15).

Significant for our purpose is why Jesus revealed that Judas would betray Him: “I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he” (John 13.19). Jesus knew that the upcoming events were going to be hard for them to understand. Their Lord was about to die, and He would be betrayed by one of them! Jesus revealing this beforehand meant that this terrible event would one day bolster their faith. That they had difficulty fathoming that one of themselves could possibly betray Jesus is on full display in vss. 21-30. Even though Jesus plainly indicated that Judas was His betrayer (vss. 25-26), they still failed to grasp that Judas left to betray the Lord (vss. 28-29). The final statement, “And it was night” was more than a time indicator; Judas had completely left the light (cf. John 12.35-36).

Vss. 31-35, By Giving A New Commandment

This section began with Jesus proclaiming that He and the Father were about to be glorified (vss. 31-32; see John 12.27-28). But His glorification meant that Jesus would be leaving them (vs. 33). Note that while Jesus had previously informed the Jews that they would not be able to follow Him (see John 7.34), Jesus would soon promise that He would be reunited with His followers (John 14.1-6). But it was Jesus’ leaving that gave greater significant to His commandment in vss. 34-35; the Master was leaving and He expects His disciples to love each other as He loves them.

Vss. 36-38, By Foretelling Their Denial

The chapter concludes with Jesus’ foretelling that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. The immediate reason for Jesus’ prediction was the misplaced boast of Peter (vs. 37). However, it would seem that Jesus also wanted this to be an opportunity for their faith to grow (see vs. 19). The fact that Peter denied Jesus, and all of the apostles forsook Him, could have been a cause for enduring shame. But Jesus foretelling the denial before it occurred would allow the disciples to grow in their faith and furnish opportunity for Peter’s growth (see John 21).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 1:
 - “The “feast” began on the fourteenth day of the first month when the paschal lamb was killed (cf. Lev. 23:5; Luke 22:7, 13-14). On the evening of that day the Passover “supper” was eaten (Lk. 22:15).” (Harkrider)
 - “His hour” see John 12.23.
 - “His own” see John 1.11-13.
- » Vs. 3: see John 10.17-18.
- » Vs. 12: “We need to read Luke 22:24-30 and Matt. 20:20-28 to fully realize that Jesus was doing this at a time when the disciples had just displayed attitudes of pride and jealousy. Jesus knew that if these attitudes prevailed, their work for Him would be greatly hindered (cf. James 3:16).” (Harkrider)
- » Vs. 20: see Matthew 10.40.
“Though Judas would betray Jesus, assurance is given to the other apostles that their work would not be affected. All who receive the apostles receive Jesus Christ;
- and all who receive Jesus Christ receive the Father. To reject any of these is to reject all!” (Harkrider)
- » Vs. 23: The “disciple whom Jesus loved” is never specifically identified in this book, but generally it is agreed that John, the writer, is meant (cf. 21:20-24; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7). Otherwise he is not once named in this book. Jesus loved all of His disciples, but He evidently had a closer relationship with Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1; 26:37; Luke 8:51).
- » Vs. 26: “The regular sop of the Paschal supper consisted of the following things wrapped together: flesh of the Paschal lamb, a piece of unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. The sauce into which it was dipped does not belong to the original institution, but had been introduced before the days of Christ. According to one authority it consisted of only vinegar and water (compare Ruth 2:14); others describe it as a mixture of vinegar, figs, dates, almonds, and spice” (Vincent).

LESSON 17: COMFORT FOR DISCIPLES

JOHN 14-15.17



Opening questions:

1. How did Jesus seek to comfort His disciples in John 14.1-15.17?
2. How does a vine and its branches represent our relationship with Jesus (John 15.1-11)?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

As Jesus' hour approached, John recorded on two occasions that the Lord's spirit was troubled. The first was after Greeks requested to see Jesus, the signal that "the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12.20-23). But His glorification would come via means of the cross, thus Jesus cried out, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour" (John 12.27). The second came as Jesus was celebrating the Passover with His closest disciples, because while He "loved them to the end" (John 13.1), His spirit was troubled because "one of you will betray me" (John 13.21).

Jesus' glorification meant that He would be leaving the disciples and going to where they could not yet go (John 13.33,36). The Lord knew this would distress His faithful followers, so He twice urged them to "let not your hearts be troubled" (John 14.1,27). John 14.1-15.17 records how Jesus sought to comfort those He loved.

Jesus promised to return (14.1-7).

Jesus was leaving (12.33), but His departure was so that He could "prepare a place" in His Father's house. Because of the KJV's translation of "mansions" the unfortunate image of individual palaces on clouds has dominated the concept of heaven. But there is actually only one house, and that is the Father's. Jesus' going to the Father by means of the cross has gained us access to the Father's house, where there are rooms for all who will believe in His Son and abide in His word (John 3.16; 8.31-32). But Jesus would not remain gone; "if I go and prepare a place

for you, I will come again and will take you to myself” (vs. 3). And of course that would mean being joined to the Father as well (vss. 6-7). Jesus’ proclamation to Thomas that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” is the summation of the entire gospel: He is the Way (John 1.9-13), He is the Truth (John 8.31-32), He is the Life (John 1.4; 6.33; 10.10; 11.25).

Jesus going to the Father meant they would be able to do “greater works” (14.8-14).

The idea of abiding with the Father was too grand, so Philip said “show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (vs. 8). But what Philip and the other disciples failed to realize was that to see Jesus is to see the Father (vs. 9; see John 1.18). Both Jesus’ works and His words showed His oneness with the Father (vs. 10; see John 5.19-20; 10.38); those should prompt faith that Jesus is “in the Father and the Father is in me” (vs. 11). But then Jesus revealed that His disciples would be able to do “greater works” because 1) He was going to the Father and 2) He would do whatever they asked in His name. It’s important to remember that Jesus’ remarks were made to His apostles, so while there is application for all disciples (see 1John 5.14) the primary application was for the apostles. But how would they do “greater works”? The apostles didn’t perform any miracles greater than those of Jesus, but the book of Acts records how they added thousands of Jews and Gentiles to the Lord’s Kingdom. “When the early chapters of Acts are examined, it is clear that, from a numerical standpoint, the deeds of Peter and the other Apostles surpassed those of Jesus in a single day (the day of Pentecost). On that day more were added to the church than had become followers of Jesus during the entire three years of his earthly ministry. And the message went forth not just in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, but to the farthest parts of the known world” (NET Notes).

Jesus would send a Helper (14.15-31)

While Jesus said much to His disciples in this section including how love for Him would be seen by obeying His commands (vss. 15,21), the chief comfort was His promise to send “another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (vss. 16-17). The Greek term for “helper” is *paraklete*, and was the term used for a legal advocate. Furthermore, the term for “another” denotes another of the same type, thus “the advocate who is to be sent is not different from Christ, but another similar to Himself” (Vincent). This Helper would be instrumental for the disciples doing the “greater works” Jesus promised (vs. 12) because “he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (vs. 26).

Vss. 28-31 further show why the coming of the Helper was so essential. Jesus was going to the Father, thus He would “no longer talk much with you” (vs. 30). His coming would allow Jesus’ followers to have peace, even though Jesus’ departure coincided with the fact that “the ruler of this world is coming” (vs. 30; see John 12.31; 16.11). However, Jesus who is not of this world (John 8.23) and is free from sin (John 8.46), is not under the Devil’s dominion, thus outside of His claim. Their

hearts could be without trouble or fear, for Jesus was returning to the Father.

Jesus would abide in His disciples (15.1-11)

Jesus promised His disciples that He would “not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (14.18), a likely reference to His post-resurrection appearances. But then Jesus made an even greater promise: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (14.23). Abiding with the Lord isn’t something disciples only anticipate in the future (cf. 14.1-6), but the present reality of those who love the Lord. That is at the heart of the picture found in 15.1-11. In the Old Testament God’s people were described as His vineyard (see Isaiah 5.1-7; 27.2-6), but the picture Jesus uses here is much more intimate: He is the vine and as the branches we are part of Him; we abide in Him and He abides in us (vs. 4)! Furthermore, it is essential that Jesus’ disciples abide in Him, otherwise they cannot bear fruit (vss. 4-5).

Naturally, we ask how does this abiding occur; how can we abide in Jesus and He in us when He has gone to the Father and we remain on the earth (cf. 14.1-6)? First, it’s important to note that Jesus is saying we can have the same relationship with Him that He has with the Father. Recall that Jesus urged His disciples to “believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (14.11). If Jesus, while on the earth, could still be one with the Father, then we can also abide in Him and He in us. Furthermore, Jesus reveals specific ways that His disciples abide in Him and He in them:

- » By abiding in His word (John 8.31-32).
- » By keeping His commandments and abiding in His love (John 14.23; 15.9-10).
- » The Spirit abiding in us (John 14.17; note while the primary application is to the apostles receiving the Spirit, we must remember the promise of the Spirit to all disciples, see John 3.5).

Jesus’ disciples would be called His friends (15.12-17)

In the Old Testament two figures were characterized as friends of God: Abraham (2Chron. 20.7; James 2.23) and Moses (Exodus 33.11). But now Jesus revealed to His disciples that they were His friends if they follow His commands (vs. 14). As His friends they would experience the ultimate manifestation of His love (vs. 13), know the will of the Father (vs. 15) and have their requests fulfilled (vs. 16). But being His friend carries with it the obligation to bear fruit for Him (vs. 16) and to love each other (vss. 12,17).

Textual Notes:

- » 14.2: “The English translation “mansions” can be traced back to Tyndale, but in Middle English the word simply meant “a dwelling place” (not necessarily large or imposing) with no connotation of being temporary” (NET Notes).
- » 14.18: there is some debate on whether Jesus was referencing His post resurrection appearances, or the coming of the Helper (vss. 16-17,26).
- » 14.22: also known as Thaddaeus, see Mark 3:18. “Implying that Judas thought that some change had taken place in Jesus’ plans. He had assumed that Jesus would, as the Messiah, reveal Himself publicly” (Vincent).
- » 14.23: note that while Jesus was going to the Father to prepare a place for His disciples (vs. 2), the promise here is that He and the Father would come to them.
- » 14.27: in the Old Testament peace was a characteristic of God’s Kingdom and the promised Messianic Kingdom (Nu. 6:26; Ps. 29:11; Is. 9:6-7; 52:7; 54:13; 57:19; Ezk. 37:26; Hg. 2:9).
- » 15.3: “there is a play on the words *kathairō* and *katharos* (‘to clean’ and ‘clean’). The disciples have already been rendered ‘clean’ through the word Jesus spoke to them. Now the Father also cleansed/pruned the disciples/branches so that they would bear more fruit. He ‘pruned/cleansed’ them through ‘the word’ Jesus spoke to them. It is as we hear and respond to the teaching of Jesus that we become more fruitful” (Kruse, Colin G).
- » 15.4: “Three basic lessons must be observed in this allegory: One must be in Christ for spiritual life (v. 4; Gal. 3:26-27). One must either bear fruit or be cut off (v. 2; Matt. 25:41-46; Gal. 5:22-23); (3) Individual disciples (not denominational churches) are the branches in this allegory (v. 5; 1 Cor. 1:10-13)” (Harkrider).
- » 15.7: “The expression is altered from that of vv. 3 and 5, instead of “and I in you,” we now have “and my words abide in you”; it is by means of His teaching and His commandments that Christ abides in His people, and by His word they are fitted for fruit-bearing, ver. 3. Not that His words are a substitute for His personal presence, but its medium” (Expositors Greek New Testament).
- » 15.8: Jesus glorified the Father (John 12.28) and we glorify the Father by proving disciples.
- » 15.9-10: “If we are the recipients of Jesus’ love in a way analogous to his own reception of the Father’s love, we must remain in Jesus’ love by exactly the same means by which he has always remained in his Father’s love: obedience, that total obedience which finds Jesus testifying, “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him” (8:29)” (Carson).

LESSON 18: OVERCOMING THE WORLD

JOHN 15.18-16.33



Opening questions:

1. How did Jesus prepare His disciples for the hatred of the world?
2. Why was the coming of the Helper so important?
3. What questions do you have from the text?

As Jesus continued His discourse with the apostles, the tone shifted slightly. Whereas the first part of the discourse focused on how the disciples would abide with both Jesus and the Father, the second part focused on how they would be received by the world. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (John 15.18). However, Jesus was still seeking to comfort His disciples, because even though they would be hated by the world, they could also “take heart” because “I have overcome the world” (John 16.33).

The world’s hatred of Jesus & His people (15.18-16.4).

The opening of John’s gospel prepares us for the reality that Jesus would be rejected by the world (John 1.9-11), even though He came because of God’s love for the world (John 3.16). As we’ve seen, the world’s rejection was not passive, but resulted in Jesus’ own people seeking to kill Him (see John 10.31,39; 11.53). And if the world hated the very Son of God, it will certainly hate those who are His disciples.

Jesus goes on to show the real tragedy of the world rejecting Him: “Whoever hates me hates my Father also” (15.23). Jesus had manifested the Father to the world (see John 1.18) as was evident by His signs (15.24; see John 5.36). But because they refused to believe the Father’s testimony, they were guilty of sin (15.22,24). “Jesus was not saying that if he had not come and spoken to these people they would be sinless; rather he was saying that if he had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of the sin of rejecting him and the Father he came to reveal. Rejecting Jesus is the one ultimate sin for which there can be no forgiveness, because the one who has committed this sin has at the same time rejected the only cure that exists” (NET notes). And if the world doesn’t know the

Father or His Son, there will certainly be repercussions for His people (16.2-3).

But Jesus offered two comforts to His disciples. First, He told them what to expect: “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away” (16.1). There is comfort in knowing that our Master knew we would suffer for Him; that knowledge means He is still in control. Second, Jesus reminded the disciples that the Helper would come, enabling them to bear witness for Him (15.26-27). The point: the world may be against the disciples of Jesus, but He is still with them!

The work of the Spirit (16.5-15).

The work of the Holy Spirit takes center stage in this section. Already Jesus had revealed that the Helper would dwell with them (14.16) and bring to their remembrance His words (14.26). Now, Jesus revealed several more truths about the promised Helper:

- » Jesus going away was necessary for the Helper to come (16.7). “The thought is not that Jesus and the Holy Spirit cannot, for unarticulated metaphysical reasons, simultaneously minister to God’s people, or any other such strange notion. Rather, the thought is eschatological. The many biblical promises that the Spirit will characterize the age of the kingdom of God (e.g. Is. 11:1-10; Is 32:14–18; Is 42:1–4; Is 44:1–5; Ezk. 11:17-20; Eze 36:24–27; Eze 37:1–14; Joel 2:28-32; cf. notes on Jn. 3:5; 7:37–39) breed anticipation. But this saving reign of God cannot be fully inaugurated until Jesus has died, risen from the dead, and been exalted to this Father’s right hand, returned to the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the world began.”
- » The Spirit would “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (16.8-11). Jesus is referencing how the Spirit would bear witness through the apostles (see 15.26-27). The Spirit’s words convicted the world of the sin of rejecting Jesus, the righteousness of God in keeping His promise and the judgment on “the ruler of this world” and by extension all of those in his sway.
- » The Spirit would “guide you into all truth” (16.12-15). It is essential to remember that Jesus was speaking directly to His eleven remaining apostles. They received the mind of God through the promised Spirit (see 1Cor. 2.11-13), and while we benefit from “all truth” being revealed through the apostles, Jesus’ promise is NOT that the Spirit would continue revealing truth through all disciples through the ages.

Joy because Jesus has overcome the world (16.16-33).

The focus of this passage seems to be on the events that would transpire in the next few days. They were going to have sorrow because He was going away. At the same time the world would rejoice. But the sorrow of the disciples would turn to joy because “again a little while, and you will see me” (16.16). Furthermore, Jesus’ return to the Father would allow the disciples to make their petitions to the Father in Jesus’ name (16.23-28). A connection should be made back to Jesus’

words in John 14.20, “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Jesus’ return to the Father means the Father dwells with the disciples, so petitions can be made directly to Him... but they must be in Jesus’ name. “This is the last of four places in the farewell discourses (14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:23–26) where Jesus makes promises to his disciples concerning prayer. In every case but one the answer to the prayer is conditional upon asking ‘in his name’. The exception is 15:7, where the condition is that the disciples ‘remain’ in him and his words ‘remain’ in them. Here in 16:23 it is again prayer in Jesus’ name that is guaranteed a positive answer. As suggested above, to pray in Jesus’ name means to pray for things ‘for his sake’, or in line with his purposes. So in this verse Jesus is saying that after his resurrection, the disciples will begin approaching the Father directly in their prayers, and whatever they ask the Father, which is in line with Jesus’ purposes for humankind and the glory of God, will be given to them” (Kruse, Colin G).

The disciples professed to understand Jesus’ words and to believe in Him (16.29-30), but Jesus knew that they had not fully comprehended or put their full trust in Him; they would be scattered (vs. 32). But the Lord left them with a final word of comfort: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (16.33).

Textual Notes:

- » 15.18: recall that the world hated Jesus because He testified that its works are evil (John 7.7).
- » 15.22: see John 9.41.
- » 15.23: this is true because Jesus came to reveal the Father (John 1.18) and because His works were from the Father (John 14.10).
- » 15.25: Psalm 69.4.
- » 16.1: “The greatest danger the disciples will confront from the opposition of the world is not death but apostasy” (Carson).
- » 16.2: see John 9.22.
- » 16.3: see John 8.19,55.
- » 16.4: “It is their hour because it will appear that the oppressors have the upper hand; from the perspective of faith, it is their hour only in the most ephemeral way, and ultimately the oppressors are working their own defeat. Indeed, because hour is so regularly tied up with Jesus’ appointment with his death/exaltation (cf. notes on 2:4), it is hard not to see that the Evangelist has introduced another irony: what appears to be their hour has been introduced by Jesus’ hour, but in his case, he seems to be suffering defeat in the very moment when he is winning the greatest of all victories, while at their hour they seem to be winning when they are suffering the greatest of all defeats” (Carson).
- » 16.11: see John 12.31.
- » 16.13: “This complete revelation leaves no place for claims of “latter day revelation” (cf. Jude 3; 1 Cor. 2:11-13; Gal. 1:6-8; 1 Pet. 1 :23-25)” (Harkrider).
- » 16.21: “The combination of intense suffering and relieved joy at child-birth is in the Old Testament a common illustration of the travail God’s people must suffer before the immense relief and joy brought about by the advent of the promised messianic salvation (e.g. Is. 21:2-3; Is 26:16–21; Is 66:7–14; Je. 13:21; Mic 4:9-10)” (Carson).
- » 16.32: see Zechariah 13.7.
- » 16.33: note John 1.5. “Jesus’ point is that by his death he has made the world’s opposition pointless and beggarly. The decisive battle has been waged and won. The world continues its wretched attacks, but those who are in Christ share the victory he has won. They cannot be harmed by the world’s evil, and they know who triumphs in the end. From this they take heart, and begin to share his peace” (Carson).

LESSON 19: THE LORD'S PRAYER

JOHN 17



Opening questions:

1. What do you learn about prayer from Jesus' prayer in this chapter?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

The gospels attest that Jesus was a man of prayer (see Luke 3.21; 5.16; 6.12; 9.18,28; 11.1; 22.42; 23.34,46). However, we rarely see the contents of His prayers (Matthew 6.9f is an example of how to pray), and when we do see the contents of Jesus' prayers they are very short (see John 11.41-42). Thus, John 17 stands out as a notable example of Jesus praying to His Father, and as such deserves the title of "the Lord's prayer".

John 17.1 begins with the words, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said..." The prayer was preceded by His discourse to the disciples in John 13-16, a discourse that concluded with Jesus saying "in the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16.33). Those two thoughts, Jesus overcoming the world but His disciples being in the world, form the basis of Jesus' prayer in John 17. Significantly, Jesus' overcoming the world was tied to His "hour" coming (17.1; contrast with John 2.4; 7.6,8,30; 8.20). The hour of His death had come, but His death would bring about His glorification and His overcoming the world. Thus, it was a time for prayer.

Jesus prays for Himself (vss. 1-5).

Jesus' prayer opens with the reason He was praying to the Father: "Father, the hour has come" (vs. 1). "That God's appointed hour has arrived does not strike Jesus as an excuse for resigned fatalism, but for prayer: precisely because the hour has come for the Son to be glorified, he prays that the glorification might take place. This is God's appointed hour; let God's will be done" (Carson). Jesus prayed that the hour would result in the mutual glorification of the Father and the Son, but how would that take place? Vs. 2 would seem to provide the answer to Jesus' request in vs. 1:

- » "glorify your Son" (vs. 1) = "given him authority over all flesh" (vs. 2).
- » "Son may glorify you" (vs. 1) = "give eternal life to all whom you have given

him” (vs. 2).

The main point in this section is Jesus desired to have the same glory He possessed “with you before the world existed” (vs. 5). But, that could only come because Jesus glorified the Father, “having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (vs. 4). The point: glorification comes via obedience.

Jesus prays for the apostles (vss. 6-19).

This part of Jesus’ prayer is notable first for how His disciples are identified (vss. 6-10):

- » They grasp the revelation of the Father in the Son (vs. 6)
- » They are given to the Son by the Father / they received His word, believed it and kept it (vss. 6-8).
- » They are distinguished from the world (vs. 9).
- » They bring glory to the Son (vs. 10).

Having identified those who belong to Himself, Jesus then prayed that they would be protected by the Father (vss. 11-19). First, Jesus prayed that the Father would protect them by keeping them united in His name (vss. 11-12). “They cannot be one as Jesus and the Father are one unless they are kept in God’s name, i.e. in loyal allegiance to his gracious self-disclosure in the person of his Son” (Carson). Second, Jesus prayed that the Father would protect them from the evil one (vss. 14-19). They needed this protection because they would remain in this world; a world that would hate them and is ruled by the evil one (see John 12.31). But the Father could “sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (vs. 17). “Jesus is the one whom the Father ‘set apart [i.e. “sanctified”]; the verb is *hagiazō*] as his very own and sent into the world’ (cf. notes on 10:36). That is, the Father reserved the Son for his own purposes in this mission into the world. Otherwise put, the Son sanctified himself (cf. v. 19, below)—i.e. he set himself apart to be and do exactly what the Father assigned him. Now he prays that God will sanctify (*hagiazō*) the disciples. In John’s Gospel, such ‘sanctification’ is always for mission. The mission of the disciples is spelled out in the next verse; the present verse focuses on the means of the sanctification: ‘Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.’” (Carson)

Vs. 19 deserves more consideration: “And for their sake I consecrate (*hagiazō*) myself, that they also may be sanctified (*hēgiasmenoi*) in truth.” Earlier, Jesus had referred to God as “Holy (*hágios*) Father”. Clearly, there’s something we are supposed to pick up from the holiness/sanctification wording in the text. It’s a picture of the Old Testament sacrificial system where the high priest was sanctified in order to offer sacrifices that would sanctify the people before Holy God. Jesus is both the High Priest and the sacrifice that sanctifies His people, allowing them to be with the Father. This adds further significance to Jesus’ use of the Father’s “name” (see vss. 6,11,12), for as High Priest Jesus was to bless the people with the Father’s name: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give

you peace.’ So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them” (Numbers 6.24-26).

“He is entrusting the disciples to the father he has known and loved throughout his own earthly life, the father who, he knows, will care for them every bit as much as he has done himself. He is very much aware that the disciples are at risk. The world, which hates them as it hated him, will threaten and abuse them. They don’t belong to it, but they are to be sent into it, and they need protecting. That’s what the prayer is about” (NT Wright, NT Pray for Everyone).

Jesus prays for us (vss. 20-26).

We must never downplay the significance of this passage; Jesus prayed for you and He prayed for me! “Imagine some great figure of the past. Shakespeare, perhaps. George Washington, possibly. Socrates. Think of someone you respect and admire. Now imagine that the historians have just found, among old manuscripts, a letter from the great man himself. And imagine that it was talking about ... you. How would you feel? That is how you should feel as you read verse 20. Jesus is talking about you. And me” (Wright in NT Prayer for Everyone).

And what did our Lord pray for us? First, that our unity would bear witness to the world (vss. 20-23). Not just our unity together, but our unity with the Father and Son (see John 14.21,23)! Second, that we would see His glory (vs. 24; see John 14.2-3; 1John 3.2). Finally, that God would dwell among His people (vss. 25-26; John 14.20). “The crucial point is that this text does not simply make these followers the objects of God’s love (as in v. 23), but promises that they will be so transformed, as God is continually made known to them, that God’s own love for his Son will become their love. The love with which they learn to love is nothing less than the love amongst the persons of the Godhead” (Carson).

Textual Notes:

- » Vs. 2: fulfillment of Daniel 7.13-14.
- » Vs. 3: fulfillment of Jeremiah 31.33-34. “God’s people are destroyed from lack of knowledge (Ho. 4:6); conversely, Habakkuk foresees a time when ‘the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea’ (Hab. 2:14)” (Carson).
- » Vs. 4: fulfillment of Isaiah 42.1-9; 53.
- » Vs. 5: fulfillment of Isaiah 52.13; 53.12. “the incarnation entailed a forfeiture of glory” (Carson). See Philippians 2.6-7.
- » Vs. 6: fulfillment of Isaiah 52.6; see Exodus 3.13-15.
- » Vs. 9: note that while Jesus came for the sake of the world (John 3.16), His prayer was only for those who would belong to Him.
- » Vs. 11: fulfillment of Isaiah 2.2-4; Zechariah 2.11.
- » Vs. 12: see Psalm 41.9-10; 109.8.
- » Vs. 13: see John 15.11.
- » Vs. 15: “The death/exaltation of the Master spells the principal defeat of the ruler of this world

(12:31; 14:30; 16:11), but that does not rob him of all power to inflict terrible damage on the Lord’s followers, if they are left without succour. Until the consummation, when the last enemy is destroyed, ‘the whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1 Jn. 5:19). The Christians’ task, then, is not to be withdrawn from the world, nor to be confused with the world (hence the reminder of v. 16, repeating the thought of v. 14b), but to remain in the world, maintaining witness to the truth by the help of the Paraclete (15:26–27), and absorbing all the malice that the world can muster, finally protected by the Father himself, in response to the prayer of Jesus” (Carson).

- » Vs. 22: “Glory commonly refers to the manifestation of God’s character or person in a revelatory context; Jesus has mediated the glory of God, personally to his first followers and through them to those who believe on account of their message. And he has done all of this that they may be one as we are one” (Carson).

LESSON 20: THE HOUR ARRIVES

JOHN 18



Opening questions:

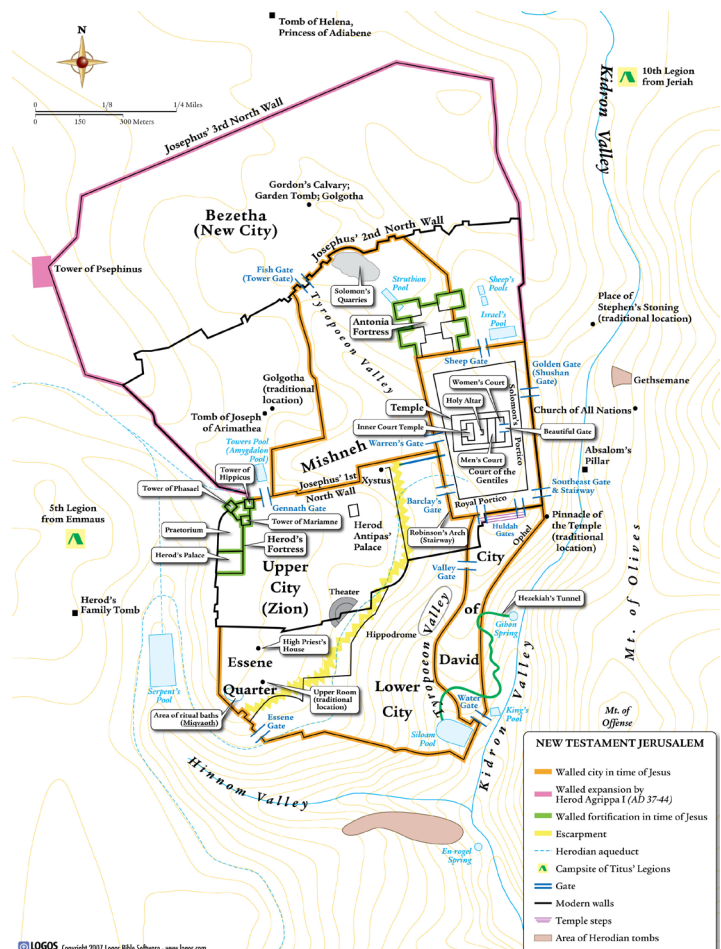
1. What do we learn about the King and His Kingdom in this text?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13.1). Our last few lessons have focused on Jesus’ final discourse with His apostles, the comfort and instructions He gave to them because He knew His hour had come. John 18-19 detail the events of that awful hour.

The approach of the lessons for John 18-19 will be different from the lessons for the earlier chapters. Those chapters were discourse heavy, while the events of Jesus’ trials and crucifixion feature more narrative. These lessons will show how John’s account fits with the synoptic records and provide explanatory notes.

In the garden (vs. 1; Matt 26.30,36-46; Mark 14.26,32-42; Luke 22.39-46).

- » vs. 1: the Kidron Valley bordered the east side of Jerusalem, separating the city from the Mount of Olives. * Note that David crossed the Kidron when he fled from Absalom (2Samuel 15.23).



Betrayed by Judas (vss. 2-11; Matt 26.47-56; Mark 14.43-52 Luke 22.47-53).

- » Vs. 2: note that Jesus stayed on the Mount of Olives during the last week (see Luke 21.37).
- » Vs. 3: likely refers to the Temple guard, and not to Roman soldiers. “Rome allowed local aristocracies to use local watchmen as their police force. Roman troops would not be used for a routine police action like this one, would not be lent to the chief priests, and Romans would not have taken Jesus to the house of Annas (18:13), whom they had earlier deposed from office” (ZIBBC).
- » Vs. 9: see John 17.12.
- » Vs. 11: note that Jesus had recently prayed that the Father would let the cup pass from Him (Matt 26.39). Jesus was resolved to do the Father’s will!

Trial before Annas (vss. 12-14, 19-23).

- » Vs. 13: “The governor Quirinius installed Annas as high priest in AD 6, but Valerius Gratus deposed him in AD 15, some fifteen years or so before the present scene. According to Jewish law, the high priest was entitled to rule for life; thus some Jews no doubt considered this deposition invalid, and Annas continued to command great respect. He was father-in-law of Caiaphas, and all five of Annas’s sons became high priests at some point (Jos. Ant. 20.198). He retained enormous influence until his death in AD 35” (ZIBBC).
- » Vs. 14: see John 11.49-51.
- » Vs. 20: note John 7.26 where the people in Jerusalem affirmed that Jesus was “speaking openly, and they say nothing to him!”

Trial before Caiaphas (vs. 24; Matt 26.57-68; Mark 14.53-65; Luke 22.63-65).

- » Note that it was during this trial that false testimony was brought in against Jesus and He confessed to being the Son of God (see Mark 14.53-65).
- » Also note that Jesus was mocked and beaten during this trial (see Luke 22.63-65).

Peter denies Jesus (vss. 15-18, 25-27; Matt 26.69-75; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 22.54-62).

- » Vs. 15: while some believe the “another disciple” refers to John, that seems unlikely. John was from Galilee and thus unlikely to be known by the high priest. This disciple was most likely from Jerusalem.
- » Vs. 17: since the other disciple was known to the servant girl, her question is quite natural since Peter accompanied this nameless disciple.
- » Vs. 26: Peter’s actions had drawn attention to himself, making his denial even more absurd (cf. vs. 10).
- » Vs. 27: see John 13.38. “Both for John’s readers, and for the early church generally, this is not Peter’s final scene. As serious as was his disowning of

the Master, so greatly also must we esteem the grace that forgave him and restored him to fellowship and service. And that means—both in John’s Gospel and in our lives—that there is hope for the rest of us” (Carson).

First trial before Pilate (vss. 28-38; Matt 27.11-14; Mark 15.1-5; Luke 23.1-5).

» Vs. 28

- Governor’s headquarters: “The Roman governor came to Jerusalem from Caesarea to maintain order during festivals. When he came, he stayed in Herod the Great’s old palace” (ZIBBC).
- So they would not be defiled: Jews who entered the dwelling places of Gentiles were considered ceremonially unclean. “The Jews take elaborate precautions to avoid ritual contamination in order to eat the Passover, at the very time they are busy manipulating the judicial system to secure the death of him who alone is the true Passover” (Carson).
- Passover: the best explanation is the Jews viewed the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as one feast. Thus, their concern was that they would become unclean and unable to continue participating in the Passover festivities which extended through the week long Feast of Unleavened Bread.

» Vs. 29: Pilate was appointed as governor of Palestine in AD 26. He was notorious for disregarding Jewish customs and provoking them on numerous occasions. Significantly, one of Pilate’s offenses caused the Jewish leaders to send a letter to Emperor Tiberius, resulting in a reprimand of Pilate. Pilate may have hated the Jews, but his precarious position with Rome meant he would need to placate them.

» Vs. 31: “Rome apparently did not permit Jewish courts to exercise the death penalty, except in the case of a Gentile intruding into an inner court of the temple. They could flog and probably decree a person worthy of death; but executions not authorized by the Romans were illegal. The Romans had to try all other capital offenses” (IVPBBC).

» Vs. 32: See John 12.32-33.

» Vs. 33: now we see what charge the Jews made against Jesus (see vss. 29-30). Important to note that the Jews framed the charge as a political one.

» Vs. 35: “It is just possible that under Pilate’s question ‘Am I a Jew?’ the Evangelist finds lurking deeper ironies. Pilate despises and distrusts the Jews, yet in the course of the narrative he is eventually forced to adopt their position. Insofar as the Jews here represent the ‘world’, Pilate joins them. And in any case, the reader knows that in a profound sense Pilate’s question really means (though certainly not intended this way by Pilate), ‘Are you my king?’” (Carson).

» Vs. 36: while Jesus had earlier avoided the peoples’ attempt to make Him king (John 6.15), He had already revealed that He came to establish a King-

dom not of this world (John 3.3; 8.23; see Daniel 2.44; 7.14).

- » Vs. 37: what “truth” did Jesus bear witness to in the world? Recall that while on earth men were able to see “his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1.14). Furthermore, while “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1.18). Jesus revealed the Father (John 14.9); no greater truth could be revealed! Those who honestly desire the truth listen to Jesus (see John 3.16-17).
- » Vs. 38: “Pilate abruptly terminates the interrogation with a curt and cynical question: What is truth?—and just as abruptly turns away, either because he is convinced there is no answer, or, more likely, because he does not want to hear it. He thus proves he is not amongst those whom the Father has given to the Son” (Carson).

Trial before Herod Antipas (Luke 23.6-12).

- » We cannot be certain where Jesus’ trial before Herod Antipas fits in John’s account, but this is a likely place. Pilate’s statement that “I find no guilt in him” (vs. 38) parallels with Luke 23.4 and shows his reluctance to condemn Jesus.
- » When the crowd responded that Jesus was teaching throughout Galilee (Luke 23.5), Pilate seized on the opportunity to have Jesus examined by Herod.

Second trial before Pilate (18.39-19.16; Matt 27.15-26; Mark 15.6-15; Luke 23.13-15).

- » Vs. 39: “During local festivals Romans sought to show particular benevolence to local populations even with respect to executions (Philo Flaccus 83). Roman governors were not obligated to follow local (or other) customs, but out of political prudence often did so, especially at crowded festivals, and especially well-liked precedents such as pardons” (Carson).
- » Vs. 40: the term “robber” refers to an insurrectionist (see Mark 15.7). Thus, Barabbas was the type of person the Romans would have wanted to execute. “The irony here cuts deeply: the people preferred a real revolutionary to Jesus, who was denounced for treason as a would-be king but had no actual record of participation in insurrection” (IVPBBC).
- » The lesson covering John 19 will cover the rest of Jesus’ trial before Pilate.

LESSON 21: IT IS FINISHED

JOHN 19



Opening questions:

1. How does the account of Jesus' crucifixion increase your faith in the Son of God?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

Shortly after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus asked the Father to “glorify your name.” The Father immediately responded, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (John 12.28). Later, as Jesus was beginning His prayer for His current and future disciples, He proclaimed “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do” (John 17.4). However, the work of the Son would not be fully complete until He endured the cross. Only then could He say, “It is finished” (John 19.30).

The Innocent Pronounced Guilty (Vss. 1-16; Matt 27.15-26; Mark 15.6-15; Luke 23.13-25).

- » Vs. 1: “Jesus was beaten both before being sentenced (19:1) and after being sentenced to death (e.g., Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15). Some interpreters think this first beating is the same as the severe “scourging” that Jesus received in Matt. 27:26 and Mark 15:15. However, it seems unlikely that Pilate would have administered so violent and severe a punishment to someone who had not yet been condemned to death (see John 19:16) and whom Pilate was still trying to release (see vv. 4, 10, 12). It seems more likely, therefore, that this flogging was what the Romans called *fustigatio*, the lightest form of flogging administered for minor crimes. Thus John 19:1 and Luke 23:16 use the verbs *mastigoō* and *paideuō* (respectively) to refer to this lighter flogging, whereas Matt. 27:26 and Mark 15:15 use a different word, *phragelloō* (“scourged”) to refer to the much more severe beating that Jesus received after Pilate pronounced the sentence of death” (ESV Study Bible).
- » Vs. 2: significant that thorns, a result of man’s sin against the Creator (Genesis 3.18), would be used to inflict pain on and humiliate the One who came to redeem us from the curse (Genesis 3.15).
- » Vs. 3: what the soldiers proclaimed in mockery, was in reality true (John

18.36).

- » Vss. 4-5: Pilate “presents Jesus as a beaten, harmless and rather pathetic figure to make their choice of him as easy as possible. In his dramatic utterance Here is the man! (in Latin, Ecce homo!), Pilate is speaking with dripping irony: here is the man you find so dangerous and threatening: can you not see he is harmless and somewhat ridiculous?” (Carson)
- » Vs. 7: see John 10.30-39.
- » Vs. 8: “As cynical as many senior Roman officials were, many of them were also deeply superstitious. To a Jewish ear, the charge that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God would be taken as a messianic pretension, and perhaps also, in the light of the continuing debate between Jesus and Jewish officials, as a blasphemous excuse to claim prerogatives that belong to God alone; but to a Graeco-Roman ear, the charge sounded quite different. It had nothing to do with blasphemy, and presented no threat to the Roman Empire; rather, it placed Jesus in an ill-defined category of ‘divine men’, gifted individuals who were believed to enjoy certain ‘divine’ powers. If Jesus was a ‘son of God’ in this sense, Pilate might well feel a twinge of fear; he had just had Jesus whipped” (Carson). Note also the dream of Pilate’s wife (see Matthew 27.19).
- » Vs. 11: a reference to Caiaphas, who handed Jesus over to Pilate (see John 18.28-30).
- » Vs. 12: remember that the Jews had already reported Pilate to Caesar on a prior occasion. This was a true threat to Pilate. However, hypocritical of the Jews to feign reverence for Caesar at this time when they had just demanded the release of Barabbas, an insurrectionist (see John 18.40).
- » Vs. 14: “Pilate is no fool. He is perfectly aware that the ostensible allegiance of the Jewish authorities to Caesar (v. 12) is no more than political hypocrisy deployed to ensure that he will condemn Jesus to the cross. By this acclamation of Jesus, he simultaneously throws up with bitter irony the spurious charge of sedition in their face, and mocks their vassal status by saying that this bloodied and helpless prisoner is the only king they are likely to have” (Carson).
- » Vs. 15: again the Jews speak a truth they do not realize, for in rejecting Jesus they have rejected their true King (see 1Samuel 8.7).

The King Crucified (vss. 17-37; Matt 27.33-50; Mark 15.22-37; Luke 23.22-46).

- » Vs. 17
 - went out: according to the Law, executions were to take place outside the camp or city (see Lev. 24.14,23).
 - Place of a Skull: in Latin, translated as “Calvary”.
- » Vs. 18:
 - “In the ancient world, this most terrible of punishments is always associated with shame and horror. It was so brutal that no Roman citizen could be

crucified without the sanction of the Emperor. Stripped naked and beaten to pulpy weakness the victim could hang in the hot sun for hours, even days. To breathe, it was necessary to push with the legs and pull with the arms to keep the chest cavity open and functioning. Terrible muscle spasm wracked the entire body; but since collapse meant asphyxiation, the strain went on and on. This is also why the sedecula prolonged life and agony: it partially supported the body's weight, and therefore encouraged the victim to fight on" (Carson).

- The other two victims were also referred to as "robbers" (see Matthew 27.38), i.e. insurrectionists like Barabbas.
- » Vss. 19-22: Pilate spoke better than he knew. In writing the proclamation in three languages, Pilate was unknowingly testifying to the universal lordship of Jesus.
- » Vss. 23-24: see Psalm 22.18.
- » Vs. 25: Note the importance of the women in Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Also, Jesus' disciples had forsaken Him (Mark 14:50) but these women came near the cross.
- » Vss. 26-27: see Matthew 19.28-30.
- » Vss. 28-29: see Psalm 69.21.
- » Vs. 30: "The cry, *τετέλεσται*, 'it is finished, was not the gasp of a worn-out life, but the deliberate utterance of a clear consciousness that His work was finished, and all God's purpose accomplished (John 17:4), that all had now been done that could be done to make God known to men, and to identify Him with men" (EXGNT). Note Psalm 22.31.
- » Vss. 31-32: "The normal Roman practice was to leave crucified men and women on the cross until they died—and this could take days—and then leave their rotting bodies hanging there to be devoured by vultures. If there were some reason to hasten their deaths, the soldiers would smash the legs of the victim with an iron mallet (a practice called, in Latin, *crurifragium*). Quite apart from the shock and additional loss of blood, this step prevented the victim from pushing with his legs to keep his chest cavity open. Strength in the arms was soon insufficient, and asphyxia followed. By contrast, the Mosaic law insisted that anyone hanged on a gibbet (usually after execution) should not remain there overnight (Dt. 21:22, 23). Such a person was under God's curse, and to leave him exposed would be to 'desecrate the land'. Presumably this would be viewed as doubly offensive if the day on which the desecration took place was a 'special Sabbath'" (Carson).
- » Vss. 34-35: "In tests performed on cadavers, it has been shown that where a chest has been severely injured but without penetration, hemorrhagic fluid, up to two litres of it, gathers between the pleura lining the rib cage and the lining of the lung. This separates, the clearer serum at the top, the deep red layer at the bottom. If the chest cavity were then pierced at the bottom, both layers would flow out" (Carson). See 1John 5.6-8.

- » Vs. 36: Psalm 34.20; see Exodus 12.46.
- » Vs. 37: Zechariah 12.10.

The Dead Buried (vss. 38-42; Matt 27.57-61; Mark 15.42-47; Luke 23.50-56).

- » Vs. 38: Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15.43); rich (Matthew 27.57) and was looking for the Kingdom of God (Mark 15.43; Luke 23.51).
- » Vs. 39: see John 3. “The Jews did not practice embalming, so these materials were used to cover the stench of decay and slow decomposition” (NET Notes).
- » Vs. 41: the detail “in which no one had yet been laid” is significant, insuring that there was no mistaking the absence of Jesus’ body at the resurrection.

LESSON 22: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

JOHN 20



Opening questions:

1. How does the resurrection provide the ultimate reason to believe in Jesus?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

As Jesus was revealing to His disciples that He would be leaving them and returning to the Father, He told them, “I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe” (John 14.29). The events of the crucifixion and resurrection would provide not only the evidence the apostles needed to fully believe in Jesus, but for all disciples through the ages. As Jesus said following His resurrection, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20.29). Two thousand years since these events, the resurrection continues to provide reasons to believe.

Before we proceed to the text we should note that each gospel account presents different details regarding the resurrection and Jesus’ post resurrection appearances. While skeptics have argued that the various accounts contradict each other, those arguments do not hold up under scrutiny (see <https://tinyurl.com/3tdthxe2>). The reality is each gospel writer shared the stories that 1) they knew and 2) conveyed the essential truth of the gospel: Jesus rose from the dead, furnishing proof that He is the Son of God.

The resurrection (vss. 1-10).

» Vs. 1:

- First day of the week: “It is remarkable that all four Gospels (cf. Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1) introduce their respective resurrection accounts by specifying the first day of the week, rather than ‘the third day’ after the crucifixion (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4), despite Jesus’ passion predictions (Mk. 8:31 par.). The reason is disputed, but it may have to do with the desire to present the resurrection of Jesus as the beginning of something new” (Carson).
- Mary Magdalene: Note that while other gospel accounts mention other women, Mary Magdalene was listed first (see Matthew 28.1; Mark 16.1). “Magdalene” means that Mary was from the town of Magdala, on the west

side of the Sea of Galilee.

- Stone taken away: note that the women had been worried about how they would roll the stone away (see Mark 16.3-4).
- » Vs. 2: “Seeing the tomb empty, she assumed ‘they’ (probably Jesus’ enemies) had taken his body. Stealing bodies from tombs was a serious offence. An inscription found at Nazareth records a decree by the emperor Claudius making it a capital offence” (Kruse, Colin G).
- » Vs. 3: their trip was referenced by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24.24).
- » Vss. 6-7: contrast with the resurrection of Lazarus (see John 11.44). “The first circumstance was evidence that the body had not been hastily snatched away for burial elsewhere. Had the authorities or any one else taken the body, they would have taken it as it was. The second circumstance gave them even stronger proof that there had been no hurry” (EXGNT).
- » Vss. 8-9: while the gospel accounts generally show that the disciples did not believe until after they saw the resurrected Jesus, the disciple whom Jesus loved seems to be the exception. However, even his faith did not come until after he saw the clear evidence of the resurrection, and even then he had not comprehended that this was what the Scriptures had foretold (see Psalm 16.10).

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (vss. 11-18).

- » Vs. 12: “Mark mentions ‘a young man dressed in a white robe’ (Mark 16:5), Luke refers to ‘two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning’ (Luke 24:4), Matthew speaks of ‘an angel of the Lord’ whose ‘clothes were white as snow’ (Matt. 28:2–3) and John here refers to ‘two angels in white’. The overall impression is of angels in appearance like men stationed at the place where Jesus’ body had lain, the first at one end of the rock ledge in the tomb where the head of Jesus’ body had been, the second at the other end where the feet had been. The presence of angels at the tomb testifies to the fact that the disappearance of Jesus’ body has been caused by divine, not human, intervention” (Kruse, Colin G).
- » Vs. 14: it’s significant that while Jesus’ body could be touched (vs. 27) and bore the marks of the crucifixion (vss. 20,25,27), it was also different. It could appear in a locked room (vs. 19) and was not at first recognizable (see Luke 24.16).
- » Vs. 16: significant that Mary recognized Jesus’ voice (see John 10.3-4).
- » Vs. 17: Jesus’ point seems to be that He was not yet ascending to the Father (that would soon come, see John 13.33; 14.12,28). She did not need to cling to Him, now was the time to spread the good news of His resurrection.

Jesus appears to His disciples (vss. 19-23).

- » Vs. 19
 - The setting is one of disbelief. Mark records that the apostles did not be-

lieve the early resurrection reports (Mark 16.9-13) and John adds that they were hiding, fearful that they would experience the same death as their Master.

- “Prior to his death, Jesus told his disciples they would all be scattered and leave him alone (16:32). When he was arrested he told the soldiers to let his disciples go (18:8–9), and he was taken alone to the high priest and eventually to Pilate to be condemned to death. The disciples, and especially Peter who had denied him three times (18:17–18, 25–27), would have felt deeply ashamed that they had abandoned Jesus in his hour of need. When Jesus appeared to them behind locked doors, his greeting of ‘Peace be with you!’ showed he was not holding their failures against them; rather, he was offering a restored relationship” (Kruse, Colin G).
- » Vs. 21: Jesus had been sent by the Father on a mission of salvation (see John 3.17). Jesus would send His apostles on the same mission (Mark 16.15-16).
- » Vs. 22
 - breathed: “ἐνεφύσησθε; the same word is used in Gen. 2:7 to describe the distinction between Adam’s “living soul,” breathed into him by God, and the life principle of the other animals. The breathing upon them was meant to convey the impression that His own very Spirit was imparted to them” (EXGNT).
 - Just as God “breathed” life into man, Jesus’ was giving new life. This act assured them that what had been promised (John 14.16,26; 16.13) would be fulfilled (Acts 2.1-4).
- » Vs. 23: see John 16.8-11.

Thomas’ confession (vss. 24-29).

- » Vs. 25: Thomas professed the same disbelief that had typified the other disciples (see Mark 16.9-11).
- » Vs. 26: note that the doors are still locked. They are still afraid (vs. 19); their faith is not yet complete.
- » Vs. 28: Thomas’ confession would have made him guilty of blasphemy in the eyes of the Jews (see John 10.33). His confession shows the progress of his faith.
- » Vs. 29: 1Peter 1.8; 2Cor. 5.7.

Purpose of the book (vss. 30-31).

- » The Lord had just declared that “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (vs. 29). Now John tells us how that is possible.
- » We can believe because John and other faithful witnesses recorded what they saw (see Luke 1.1-4). Significantly, they also recorded the struggles of the first disciples to believe, but how they were convinced by the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection.
- » Because of what John wrote, we have firm reason to believe; and through faith in Jesus we have eternal life (John 3.16; 17.3).

LESSON 23: YOU FOLLOW ME!

JOHN 21



Opening questions:

1. This chapter records a series of very personal interactions between Jesus and His disciples. Why are they so important?
2. What questions do you have from the text?

Shortly before His arrest, Jesus made this statement to His apostles: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15.5). Just a few hours after Jesus uttered those words His disciples would abandon Him (cf. Mark 14.50) and one of His closest apostles would deny Him (John 18.17-18,25-27). How could they possibly bear fruit when they were clearly not abiding in Him? The events of John 21 not only show how Jesus renewed fellowship with His disciples, but prepared them for the work they would engage in. If they would follow Him, they would indeed bear fruit!

Jesus provides for His disciples (vss. 1-14).

- » Vs. 1: according to Mark’s account, Jesus had told the apostles to go into Galilee (see Mark 14.28; 16.7).
- » Vs. 2: this is the first time that the “sons of Zebedee” (James and John) are mentioned in John’s gospel.
- » Vs. 3: There are some who view Peter’s desire to go fishing as a desire to return to his old life, but that cannot be determined from the text. A likelier scenario may be that at this point Peter was unsure if the Lord would take Him back; had his denial severed the relationship?
- » Vs. 4: while they caught nothing that night (vs. 3), the case would be quite different during the day (see John 9.4-5).
- » Vs. 7: This event was strikingly similar to their earlier call (see Luke 5.4-9) that the “disciple whom Jesus loved” knew that the man was the Lord.
- » Vs. 9: recall that Jesus had earlier asked if they had any fish (vs. 5). This would seem to be a miraculous meal, hearkening back to when Jesus had fed 5000 (see John 6). Jesus had provided for the needs of the crowd, now He was again providing for the needs of those whom He loved.
- » Vss. 10-11: this may hearken back to the fact that Jesus had previously told

them that they would be “fishers of men” (see Mark 1.17). Jesus had done His work, now they would continue to bring more souls into the kingdom (see John 17.20).

- » Vs. 12: “these disciples know it is the Lord, and yet are still so uneasy, so hesitant, so uncertain, that they apparently long to ask him, in effect, ‘Is it really you?’, yet dare not do so” (Carson).
- » Vs. 13: “If they were to be free from care as His Apostles, they must trust Him to make provision for them, as He had this morning done.”

Jesus gives Peter work (vss. 15-19).

- » Peter had demonstrated his love for the Lord, throwing himself into the sea and swimming to meet Jesus (vs. 7). Now the Lord lovingly showed Peter that he was in fact fully restored to His fellowship. And so whereas Peter had previously denied the Lord three times, now he is three times given the charge to lovingly care for those who belong to Jesus (see John 10.16; 14.15).
- » MUCH has been made of the two words used translated as “love” in this passage (agape and phileo).
 - “the fact is that agapaō and phileō are used synonymously in the Fourth Gospel. For example, both agapaō and phileō are used of the Father’s love for the Son (10:17; 15:9; 17:23, 24, 26/5:20), Jesus’ love for Lazarus (11:5/11:3, 36), the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20/20:2), and the Father’s love for the disciples (14:23/16:27)” (Kruse, Colin G).
 - The two words do not differ in intensity of feeling or what actions would spring from them. Rather, they differ in motivation. Phileo is the love of kindred or tribe, while agape is a love that is not based on affiliation, but by choice. It may be that is why Jesus asked Peter if he loved (agape) Him, and Peter responded with (phileo).
- » Vs. 15: “‘Lambs’ is used instead of ‘sheep’ to bring out more strongly the appeal to care, and the consequent complete confidence shown in Peter” (EX-GNT).
- » Vs. 17: “The record of Peter’s reinstatement stands as an encouragement for all who might crack under pressure and deny their Lord. This is not the same as cold-blooded apostasy, and is not regarded as such by the Lord... Two other things call for comment. First, Jesus’ reference to ‘my sheep’ has a parallel in 10:27, where Jesus refers to believers as ‘my sheep’. Here, then, Jesus was giving Peter a pastoral role towards the believers. Second, similar terminology is used in 1 Peter 5:1–4 and Acts 20:28–29 to urge elders to shepherd God’s flock, suggesting that Jesus’ commission to Peter to feed his sheep here in 20:15–17 was not understood to be restricted to Peter in an exclusive way” (Kruse, Colin G).
- » Vss. 18-19: Peter would never deny his Lord again, rather he would suffer and die for Him (see John 15.18-20).

Jesus issues the call: “you follow Me!” (vss. 20-25).

- » Vs. 21: “the episode at the last supper (John 13.24-25) calls to mind that Peter signaled to John to get him to ask Jesus a question: i.e. it assumes a certain intimacy between the beloved disciple and Peter. That intimacy makes Peter’s question more comprehensible, if not more justifiable. His own prognosis is not very good: for Peter the cost of discipleship will be high. What about him?” (Carson)
- » Vs. 22: Jesus did not belittle either disciple. Peter might die a martyrs death, while John might remain as a faithful witness for many years. Both had work to do for the Lord. Thus, each needed to heed the call; “You follow me!”
- » Vs. 23: John is careful to point this out, lest disciples lost their confidence in the Lord’s return when John did ultimately die.
- » Vs. 24: see 1John 1.1-4.

“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

(John 21:25, ESV)