JOHN

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



Come and see who Jesus is: the Word made flesh,
the Light of the world, the Son of God

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John. My purpose in writing this Study Guide is to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk. John wrote his Gospel so that people would come to know Jesus and believe in Him. That is my purpose too.

When I was a boy in Victorville, Pastor Jimmy Carter lived down our street. I mowed his lawn, and he took me to church and led me to Christ. He did not start with a lecture. He spent time with me and invited me along. John wrote so that we may believe, and someone made sure I heard.

There are many books available on the Gospel of John, and some of them teach false doctrine. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on John. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and know His Son better. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66; James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's Kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

When we don't understand the context of a verse, we can easily get it wrong. Many of us have heard a passage taken out of context and misused. John 3:16 may be the best-known verse in the Bible, yet many people who can quote it have never read the conversation with Nicodemus that comes before it. It is up to each of us to gently correct those who quote God's Word out of context, doing so with love and understanding, since not everyone realizes how important context is.

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are adapted from www.merriam-webster.com.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of drawing out what a passage says, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In its wider sense, Hermeneutics also looks at other factors, like verbal and non-verbal communication. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (SLB)

"20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation; 21 for prophecy was never borne by ***the*** will of man, but being borne by ***the*** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

These passages tell us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came directly from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

There are two ways language is used in the Bible: figurative and literal.

Figurative language uses a word or phrase with a meaning different from its basic meaning, to make a point in an interesting way. It is not meant literally. An allegory or metaphor is a figure of speech where a term is used for something it doesn't literally mean, often with a hidden meaning inside the text.

Literal interpretation means taking words in their plain, ordinary sense, without treating them as metaphor or allegory, based on the context of the passage.

I read the Bible as it is written: literally. The Bible defines its own terms within the context of the book or passage where they appear. This study of John will take a literal approach unless I say otherwise.

John gives us a good test case. Jesus says, "I am the door" and "I am the true vine." Nobody thinks Jesus is made of wood or grows grapes. The context tells us these are figures of speech, and each one points to something real: Jesus really is the only way in to God, and we really cannot bear fruit apart from Him. At the same time, when John tells us Jesus turned water into wine, fed five thousand people, and walked out of His own tomb, he means exactly what he says. Those things happened.

John tells us plainly why he wrote his Gospel:

John 20:31 (SLB)

"31 But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

I tried to set aside what I had been taught and let the text speak first, and where I hold a conviction from my study of Revelation, I say so. My goal is to find out what God's Word is telling me. If I leaned on other people's interpretations, my conclusions would be swayed by them. Before writing any part of this study, I prayed for the Holy Spirit to open my eyes, my heart, and my understanding of God's Word.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew and Greek, I also used The Interlinear Bible (J.P. Green, ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

I used a face-value approach, seeking the plain, literal meaning of the text. I know that the meaning of some words has changed since Biblical times, so I leaned on The Interlinear Bible for help with those. Martin Luther championed this principle of literal interpretation, the *sensus literalis*.

I look forward to walking with you through the Gospel of John. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern. First comes the full Scripture text of that chapter of John, so you can read it straight through. Then a short Preview tells you what to watch for. The Study section walks through the chapter verse by verse, with each verse printed in italics before my comments on it. A Summary pulls the chapter together, and some chapters add a short section on a topic that helps explain the passage, such as the Feast of Booths or the trials of Jesus. Each chapter ends with ten Study Questions. The first question is a warm-up anyone can answer, the middle questions go back to the text, and the last ones ask you to apply what you have learned.

Old and New Testament links: after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

If you are using this study with a group, I suggest taking one chapter of John each week. Read the Scripture section aloud together, talk through the questions, and leave time to pray for one another. Most questions give a verse reference, so the group can look up the answer together. It is fine if you do not get through all ten.

Overview of John

The Gospel of John is the fourth book of the New Testament and the last of the four Gospels. The word "gospel" means "good news." Each of the four Gospels tells the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often called the Synoptic Gospels. "Synoptic" means "seeing together," because those three books tell many of the same events in much the same order. John is different. Most of what John records is not found in the other three Gospels.

John does not tell us about Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, His baptism, His temptation in the wilderness, or His parables. Instead, John opens before the creation of the world and tells us who Jesus is: the eternal Word of God who became a man. John spends much of his book on long conversations and teachings, many of them in Jerusalem at the Jewish feasts, and he slows down dramatically for the last week of Jesus' life. Chapters 13 through 17 cover a single evening.

When this study uses the word "man," it means all of mankind (men, women, and children), not just one gender, unless stated otherwise.

John connects to many other books in the Bible. Some of these are:

- Genesis (John 1:1 opens with the same words as Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning")
- Exodus (the Passover lamb, the manna in the wilderness, the tabernacle, and God's name "I AM")
- Isaiah (the voice crying in the wilderness, and the Servant who suffers for His people)
- The other three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John
- Revelation

John wrote to bring people to faith in Jesus and to strengthen the faith of those who already believe. He tells us so in John 20:31. Throughout this study, where Christians hold different views on a passage, I include the common interpretations, and I also share which one I believe.

I often call John the "believing" Gospel. You might ask, "Why do you think that?" It's simple: John uses the word "believe" nearly a hundred times, more than Matthew, Mark, and Luke put together. He never uses the noun "faith" at all. For John, faith is not a thing you have. It is something you do. You believe in Jesus, you trust Him, and you keep on trusting Him.

John has 21 chapters and 879 verses total. Many people say it is simple enough for a child to read and deep enough that a scholar never reaches the bottom. Here is its structure:

Chapter 1: The Word Became Flesh

- The Prologue: The Word Who Was God (1:1-18)
- The Witness of John the Baptist (1:19-34)
- The First Disciples (1:35-51)

Chapter 2: The First Sign

- Water Turned into Wine at Cana (2:1-12)
- Jesus Cleanses the Temple (2:13-25)

Chapter 3: You Must Be Born from Above

- Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-21)
- John the Baptist: He Must Increase (3:22-36)

Chapter 4: The Woman at the Well

- The Samaritan Woman and Living Water (4:1-42)
- The Royal Official's Son Healed (4:43-54)

Chapter 5: The Healing at Bethesda

- The Man at the Pool (5:1-18)
- The Son's Equality with the Father (5:19-29)
- Witnesses to Jesus (5:30-47)

Chapter 6: The Bread of Life

- Feeding the Five Thousand (6:1-15)
- Jesus Walks on the Water (6:16-21)
- I Am the Bread of Life (6:22-59)
- Many Disciples Turn Away (6:60-71)

Chapter 7: Jesus at the Feast of Booths

- Teaching in the Temple (7:1-36)
- Rivers of Living Water (7:37-39)
- Division Among the People (7:40-53)

Chapter 8: The Light of the World

- The Woman Caught in Adultery (8:1-11)
- I Am the Light of the World (8:12-30)
- The Truth Will Set You Free (8:31-47)
- Before Abraham Came into Being, I Am (8:48-59)

Chapter 9: The Man Born Blind

- A Blind Man Sees (9:1-12)
- The Pharisees Investigate (9:13-34)
- Spiritual Blindness (9:35-41)

Chapter 10: The Good Shepherd

- The Door and the Good Shepherd (10:1-21)
- I and the Father Are One (10:22-42)

Chapter 11: The Raising of Lazarus

- Lazarus Dies (11:1-16)
- I Am the Resurrection and the Life (11:17-44)
- The Plot to Kill Jesus (11:45-57)

Chapter 12: The Hour Has Come

- Mary Anoints Jesus (12:1-11)
- The Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)
- The Grain of Wheat (12:20-36)
- Unbelief and Belief (12:37-50)

Chapter 13: The Servant Washes Feet

- Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (13:1-20)
- Jesus Predicts His Betrayal (13:21-30)
- A New Commandment (13:31-38)

Chapter 14: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

- Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled (14:1-14)
- The Promise of the Holy Spirit (14:15-31)

Chapter 15: The True Vine

- Remain in Me (15:1-17)
- The World's Hatred (15:18-27)

Chapter 16: The Promise of the Helper

- The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:1-15)
- Sorrow Turned to Joy (16:16-33)

Chapter 17: The Prayer of Jesus

- Jesus Prays for Himself (17:1-5)
- Jesus Prays for His Disciples (17:6-19)
- Jesus Prays for All Believers (17:20-26)

Chapter 18: Betrayal and Trial

- The Arrest in the Garden (18:1-11)
- Before Annas and Peter's Denials (18:12-27)
- Before Pilate (18:28-40)

Chapter 19: The Crucifixion

- Condemned to Die (19:1-16)
- The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (19:17-37)
- The Burial (19:38-42)

Chapter 20: The Empty Tomb

- The Resurrection (20:1-10)
- Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)
- Jesus Appears to the Disciples and to Thomas (20:19-29)
- Why This Book Was Written (20:30-31)

Chapter 21: Breakfast by the Sea (Epilogue)

- The Miraculous Catch of Fish (21:1-14)
- Jesus Restores Peter (21:15-19)
- The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved (21:20-25)

Background of the Book

Author: The book never names its author. It calls him "the disciple whom Jesus was loving" and tells us he was an eyewitness (John 21:20-24). Tradition from the early church holds that this disciple is John, one of the twelve apostles, the son of Zebedee and brother of James. John was a fisherman from Galilee, and he was one of the three disciples closest to Jesus, along with Peter and James. He also wrote the three letters of John and the book of Revelation. I hold this traditional view, and it is the view I took in my earlier book, *Revelation Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study*. Now and then I mention that study for readers who want more on the end times. You do not need it to use this one.

Where it was written: Early church tradition places John in the city of Ephesus, in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), in the later years of his life. Most believe he wrote his Gospel there.

When it was written: Several dates have been proposed for when this book was written:

- Most interpreters date it between A.D. 85 and 95, late in John's life.
- Some scholars date it earlier, before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.

Purpose: "So that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). John chose a handful of signs and teachings out of many more (John 20:30; 21:25), and he arranged them to show us who Jesus is and to call us to believe in Him.

Why Study the Gospel of John?

Many pastors tell new believers to start reading the Bible with the Gospel of John. I agree with them. But John is not only for beginners. I have read it many times, and I still find something new every time I open it.

Here are six reasons why studying the Gospel of John matters:

1. John shows us who Jesus is. From the first verse, John tells us that Jesus is God. He is not just a good teacher or a prophet. He is the eternal Word who made all things and then became a man to live among us.

2. John shows us how to be saved. No book in the Bible lays out the way of salvation more plainly. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

3. John gives us eyewitness testimony. John was there. He walked with Jesus for about three years, leaned against Him at the Last Supper, stood at the foot of the cross, and ran to the empty tomb. He wants us to know that his testimony is true (John 19:35; 21:24).

4. John teaches us about the Holy Spirit. In chapters 14 through 16, Jesus tells His disciples about the Helper He will send after He goes back to the Father. If you want to understand how the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life, start here.

5. John shows us how to love one another. Jesus washed His disciples' feet, including the feet of the man who would betray Him, and then told them to do the same. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another" (John 13:35).

6. John gives us hope. Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He promises that He is preparing a place for us and that He will come again (John 14:2-3). The empty tomb in chapter 20 is the proof that He can keep that promise.

The Seven Signs

John never uses the usual word for "miracles." He calls them "signs." A sign points to something beyond itself. Each sign in John shows us something about who Jesus is. John numbers only the first two himself (2:11; 4:54), but most Bible teachers count seven signs during Jesus' public ministry:

1. Turning water into wine at Cana (2:1-11). Jesus is the Lord over creation, and He brings a joy the old ways could not give.

2. Healing the royal official's son (4:46-54). Jesus' word has power over distance. The man believed Jesus' word before he saw the result.

3. Healing the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-18). Jesus has power over time. The man had been sick for thirty-eight years.

4. Feeding the five thousand (6:1-14). Jesus is the Bread of Life who satisfies our deepest hunger.

5. Walking on the water (6:16-21). Jesus is the Lord over nature, and He comes to His people in the storm.

6. Healing the man born blind (9:1-41). Jesus is the Light of the World who opens blind eyes, both physical and spiritual.

7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44). Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, with power over death itself.

The greatest sign of all is Jesus' own resurrection (2:18-22; 20:1-29). After the resurrection, John also records the miraculous catch of fish (21:1-14).

The Seven "I Am" Statements

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He gave His name as "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). In John's Gospel, Jesus takes that same name on His lips. Jesus joins "I am" to seven pictures of what He is to us, and He repeats several of them:

1. "I am the bread of life" (6:35, 48)

2. "I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5)

3. "I am the door" (10:7, 9)

4. "I am the good shepherd" (10:11, 14)

5. "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)

6. "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6)

7. "I am the true vine" (15:1, 5)

Jesus also uses "I am" with nothing added, as a plain claim to be God. "Before Abraham came into being, I am" (8:58). The crowd understood exactly what He meant; they picked up stones to kill Him for blasphemy, the crime of insulting God or claiming to be God. When the soldiers came to arrest Him in the garden and He said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground (18:5-6).

Who Is Jesus?

This is the most important question any person will ever answer. John answers it in his first verse: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Then, in verse 14, he tells us that the Word "became flesh and dwelt among us." Jesus is fully God and fully man.

Some groups today teach that Jesus was a created being, a lesser god, or only a good man. John will not allow any of those ideas. Look at what he records:

- Jesus existed before creation, and all things came into being through Him (1:1-3).
- Jesus called God His own Father, "making Himself equal to God" (5:18).
- Jesus said that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father (5:23).
- Jesus said, "Before Abraham came into being, I am" (8:58).
- Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (10:30), and the crowd picked up stones because, as they said, "You, being a man, make Yourself God" (10:33).
- Thomas saw the risen Jesus and said, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28). Jesus did not correct him. He blessed those who would believe the same thing without seeing.

John also gives us a clear picture of Jesus as a real man. He was tired and thirsty at the well (4:6-7). He wept at the tomb of His friend (11:35). He was troubled in His soul and in His spirit (12:27; 13:21). He thirsted on the cross, and real blood and water flowed from His side (19:28, 34).

The Witnesses to Jesus

Under the Law of Moses, a matter had to be confirmed by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). John is written like a courtroom case, and he calls witness after witness to the stand:

- John the Baptist (1:7, 34; 5:33)
- The works Jesus did (5:36; 10:25)
- God the Father (5:37; 8:18)
- The Scriptures (5:39, 46)
- The Holy Spirit (15:26)
- The disciples (15:27)
- The author himself (19:35; 21:24)

Every one of them points to the same verdict. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Believing and Eternal Life

John's two favorite words may be "believe" and "life." In John, eternal life does not only begin when we die. It begins the moment we believe. "The one who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). Notice the tense: "has eternal life."

Jesus defines eternal life for us in His prayer in chapter 17: "And this is the eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You sent" (John 17:3). Eternal life is more than living forever. It is knowing God, starting now, and never ending.

Throughout John, people respond to Jesus in one of two ways. Some believe, and some refuse. Nicodemus came at night and later stood up for Jesus. The Samaritan woman ran to tell her whole town. The man born blind worshiped Him. But many others saw the same signs and turned away. John wrote this book so that you and I would be on the believing side.

Chapter 1: The Word Became Flesh

Scripture: The Word, the Witness, and the First Disciples

1:1-5 In ***the*** beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in ***the*** beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one ***thing*** came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.

1:6-13 There came a man sent from God; his name ***was*** John. He came for testimony, that he might testify concerning the Light, that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but ***came*** that he might testify concerning the Light. ***That*** was the true Light, which enlightens every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own ***things***, and His own ***people*** did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born not of bloods, nor of ***the*** will of ***the*** flesh, nor of ***the*** will of a man, but of God.

1:14-18 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from ***the*** Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning Him and has cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'The ***One*** coming after me has come to be ahead of me, because He was before me.'" And from His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made ***Him*** known.

1:19-28 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem that they might ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he says, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." Therefore they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I ***am*** a voice of ***one*** crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of ***the*** Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." And those who had been sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him and said to him, "Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but in ***the*** midst of you One has stood whom you do not know. He is the ***One*** coming after me, who has come to be ahead of me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These things took place in Bethabara across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

1:29-34 On the next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who has come to be ahead of me, because He was before me.' And I did not know Him; but that He might be revealed to Israel, for this reason I came baptizing with the water." And John testified, saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. And I did not know Him; but the ***One*** who sent me to baptize with water, He said to me, 'Upon whomever

you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is the ***One*** who baptizes with ***the*** Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

1:35-42 On the next day again John was standing, and two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus as He walked, he says, "Look, the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples heard him speaking, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus, having turned and having beheld them following, says to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), "where are You staying?" He says to them, "Come and see." They went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. Now ***the*** hour was about ***the*** tenth. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard from John and followed Him. He first finds his own brother Simon and says to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is, being translated, the Christ). And he led him to Jesus. Now Jesus, having looked at him, said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated, Peter).

1:43-51 On the next day Jesus wanted to go forth into Galilee, and He finds Philip, and says to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, from the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, "We have found ***Him*** of whom Moses wrote in the law, and the prophets: Jesus the son of Joseph, the ***one*** from Nazareth." And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing be out of Nazareth?" Philip says to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and He says concerning him, "Look, truly an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael says to Him, "From where do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, while you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and says to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you underneath the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He says to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, from now on you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Chapter 1 Preview

John does not open his Gospel in a manger in Bethlehem. He opens it before time began. Before we ever meet Jesus walking the roads of Galilee, John wants us to know who He really is: the eternal Word of God, who was with God and who was God. Everything else in this book rests on that foundation.

From there John brings us down to earth. We meet John the Baptist, the man sent to point people to the Light. We hear him call Jesus "the Lamb of God," and we watch the first handful of men leave what they were doing to follow Him. By the end of the chapter, Jesus has been called Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, King of Israel, and Son of Man. John is building his case from the very first page.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 *In **the** beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

This is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible. John chose his opening words on purpose. "In the beginning" takes us straight back to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created

the heavens and the earth." Before anything was created, the Word already *was*. He did not come into being at some point. He simply existed.

The Greek word for "Word" is *logos*. It means a word, a message, or the expression of a thought. A word is how we make our hidden thoughts known to someone else. In the same way, Jesus is how God makes Himself known to us. John tells us three things about the Word in this one verse: He existed in the beginning, He was with God (a distinct person, in close relationship with the Father), and He was God (fully divine, sharing the very nature of God).

You may have heard someone say this verse should read "the Word was a god." That reading does not hold up. It would make John, a Jew who believed in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), teach that there are two gods. The rest of this Gospel settles the question. Thomas will look at the risen Jesus and call Him "My Lord and my God!" (20:28), and Jesus will accept it.

Old Testament links: Genesis 1:1 (alluded to)

1:2 *He was in **the** beginning with God.*

John repeats himself so we cannot miss it. The Word was not created at the beginning. He was already there, face to face with God. This verse guards against any idea that Jesus is a lesser being who came later. The relationship between the Father and the Son is eternal.

1:3 *All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one **thing** came into being that has come into being.*

Everything that exists was made through the Word. John says it two ways, positive and negative, so there is no loophole: all things came into being through Him, and nothing came into being apart from Him. If Jesus made everything that was made, then He Himself was not made. He is the Creator, not part of the creation. Paul teaches the same thing in Colossians 1:16-17 and the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 1:2.

1:4 *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

The Word is the source of life. This is not only the physical life that God breathed into Adam, but the eternal life that runs all through this Gospel. John uses the word "life" more than any other Gospel writer. That life becomes "the light of men." Light lets us see what is true. When Jesus comes into a person's life, He shows us who God is, and He shows us who we really are.

1:5 *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.*

The Light keeps on shining. It shone at creation, it shone in Jesus' ministry, and it still shines today. The word translated "grasp" can mean to understand, and it can also mean to overpower or seize. Both ideas fit. The darkness of this world did not understand Jesus, and for all its trying, it could not put Him out. Even the cross did not put out the Light.

1:6 *There came a man sent from God; his name **was** John.*

Now John introduces a man. This is John the Baptist, not John the apostle who wrote this book. Notice the contrast with verse 1. The Word *was*; John the Baptist *came*. The Word is eternal; John was a man sent from God on a mission. In this Gospel, the writer never calls himself by name, and whenever he uses the name John for someone in the story, he means the Baptist.

1:7 *He came for testimony, that he might testify concerning the Light, that all might believe through him.*

John the Baptist's job was to be a witness. A witness tells what he has seen and heard. "Testify" and "witness" are key words in this Gospel, and they come up again and again. The goal of his testimony is the goal of this whole book: "that all might believe through him." John the Baptist pointed people to Jesus so they would believe in Jesus, not in John.

1:8 *He was not the Light, but **came** that he might testify concerning the Light.*

John was a great man. Jesus Himself said there was no one greater born of women (Matthew 11:11). Even so, John was not the Light. Some people in the first century were following John the Baptist as if he were the Messiah (Acts 19:1-4 shows his followers were still around years later). The apostle makes it plain. John was the signpost, not the destination.

1:9 ***That** was the true Light, which enlightens every man coming into the world.*

Jesus is the true Light. There are many false lights in this world, people and ideas that promise to show us the way and leave us in the dark. Jesus is the real thing. "Enlightens every man" does not mean every person is saved. It means the Light is offered to everyone, and every person will stand in that Light one way or another, either to be drawn to Him or to be exposed by Him (3:19-21).

1:10 *He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and the world did not know Him.*

The Creator came into His own creation, and His creation did not recognize Him. The "world" in John usually means mankind in rebellion against God. The very people He made, and the very world He holds together, looked at Him and did not know who He was.

1:11 *He came to His own **things**, and His own **people** did not receive Him.*

It gets more personal. "His own" the first time means His own home or property, and "His own" the second time means His own people, Israel. He came to the nation God had prepared for Him for centuries, through the promises, the prophets, and the temple. As a whole, they did not receive Him. That rejection is the dark thread that runs through this Gospel until the cross.

1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name,*

But not everyone rejected Him. Here is the good news in a single verse. Anyone who receives Jesus, which John explains as believing in His name, is given "authority to become children of

God." We are not born children of God in this sense. We are created by God, but we become His children by receiving His Son. To believe in His name means to trust everything that His name stands for: who He is and what He has done.

1:13 *Who were born not of bloods, nor of **the** will of **the** flesh, nor of **the** will of a man, but of God.*

This new birth does not come from family line ("blood"), or from human desire or decision ("the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man"). It comes from God. You cannot inherit salvation from your parents, and no one can decide it for you. God does the work of making us new. Jesus will explain this to Nicodemus in chapter 3.

1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from **the** Father, full of grace and truth.*

John has told us that the Word was God. Now he tells us the most amazing thing of all: the Word became flesh. God did not just appear to be human. He became a real man, with a real body, who got hungry, tired, and thirsty. He did not stop being God; He added humanity to His deity.

"Dwelt" means He pitched His tent among us. It reminds us of the tabernacle in the wilderness, where God's glory lived among Israel (Exodus 40:34). Now God's glory lived among men in the person of Jesus. The phrase "only begotten" means one of a kind, unique. There is no one else like Him. He came "full of grace and truth," giving us what we do not deserve and telling us what we need to hear.

1:15 *John testifies concerning Him and has cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'The **One** coming after me has come to be ahead of me, because He was before me.'"*

John the Baptist was born about six months before Jesus (Luke 1:26, 36), and he began his ministry first. In human terms, Jesus came after him. Yet John says Jesus outranks him because "He was before me." John is telling us he understood that Jesus existed before He was ever born in Bethlehem.

1:16 *And from His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace.*

"Grace for grace" is like waves on the shore. One wave of God's kindness rolls in, and before it is gone, another one comes behind it. Every believer has received from the fullness of Christ. He never runs short, and we never use Him up.

1:17 *For the law was given through Moses; the grace and the truth came through Jesus Christ.*

The Law that came through Moses was good and holy. It showed Israel what God required. But the Law could not give the power to keep it. Grace and truth came in full through Jesus Christ. Notice this is the first time John uses the name "Jesus Christ" in his Gospel. The Word now has a name.

1:18 *No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made **Him** known.*

No one has seen God in all His glory and lived to tell about it (Exodus 33:20). Then how can we know what God is like? Jesus, "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," has "made Him known." The Greek word for "made Him known" gives us our English word "exegesis," which I covered in the Introduction. Jesus is the exegesis of God. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. "In the bosom of the Father" describes the closest, most loving relationship there is.

1:19 *And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem that they might ask him, "Who are you?"*

Now the story moves to the Jordan River. The religious leaders in Jerusalem heard about this wild preacher in the wilderness and sent a delegation of priests and Levites to check him out. When John writes "the Jews" in this Gospel, he usually means the religious leaders who opposed Jesus, not the Jewish people as a whole. John himself was Jewish, as were Jesus and every one of the disciples.

1:20 *And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

John's first answer is blunt: "I am not the Christ." "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Messiah," and both mean "Anointed One." Israel was waiting for God's promised King. John could have taken the attention and run with it. He did the opposite.

1:21 *And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he says, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

They kept guessing. Malachi 4:5 promised that Elijah would come before the great day of the Lord, so they asked if he was Elijah. John said no. You might ask, "Didn't Jesus say John was Elijah?" The angel told Zechariah that John would go "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), and Jesus said John fulfilled that role for those willing to accept it (Matthew 11:14). John was not Elijah come back from heaven in person, so he answered honestly. "The Prophet" refers to the prophet like Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15. That prophet is Jesus (Acts 3:22).

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 18:15 (alluded to); Malachi 4:5 (alluded to)

1:22 *Therefore they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"*

The delegation needed something to take back to their bosses. They had been told no three times, so they asked him straight out to describe himself.

1:23 *He said, "I **am** a voice of **one** crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of **the** Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."*

John answered with Scripture. He quoted Isaiah 40:3 and said, in effect, "I am just a voice." In ancient times, before a king traveled, workers would go ahead and clear the road, filling holes and straightening the path. John's job was to prepare people's hearts for the King by calling them to repent. He did not claim any title for himself at all, only "a voice."

Old Testament links: Isaiah 40:3 (quoted)

1:24 *And those who had been sent were from the Pharisees.*

John adds that the delegation came from the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a strict religious party who were careful about the Law and the traditions built around it. They will become some of Jesus' strongest opponents in this Gospel.

1:25 *And they asked him and said to him, "Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"*

Their question shows what was bothering them. Many scholars believe Jews already baptized Gentiles (people who were not Jewish) who converted to Judaism, but John was baptizing Jews, telling them they needed to repent and be cleansed just like outsiders. If he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet, by what authority was he doing this?

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 18:15 (alluded to)

1:26-27 *John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but in **the** midst of you One has stood whom you do not know. He is the **One** coming after me, who has come to be ahead of me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."*

John keeps turning the attention away from himself. His baptism in water was only preparation. Someone far greater was already standing among them, and they did not know Him. Untying a person's sandals was the lowest job a servant could do. John said he was not even worthy to do that for Jesus. This is a man who knew exactly who he was and who he was not.

1:28 *These things took place in Bethabara across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

John gives us the location so we know this really happened in a real place. The translation in this study reads "Bethabara across the Jordan." Many Greek manuscripts read "Bethany" here instead. Either way, the place was on the east side of the river, and it is not the same Bethany near Jerusalem where Lazarus lived (Chapter 11).

1:29 *On the next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Every Jew listening would have thought of the lambs sacrificed at the temple and the Passover lamb whose blood saved Israel in Egypt (Exodus 12). Isaiah 53:7 pictured the Messiah as a lamb led to slaughter. John the Baptist was saying that Jesus was the sacrifice all of those lambs pointed to. Notice the scope: not just the sin of Israel, but the sin of the world. The Lamb we meet here is the same Lamb we see on the throne in Revelation 5.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:7 (alluded to)

1:30 *This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who has come to be ahead of me, because He was before me.'*

John repeats what he said in verse 15. Jesus came after John in time, but He ranks above John because He existed before John. John the Baptist never wavered on this point.

1:31 *And I did not know Him; but that He might be revealed to Israel, for this reason I came baptizing with the water."*

"I did not know Him" probably means John did not know Jesus as the Messiah until God showed him. John and Jesus were relatives (Luke 1:36), so he likely knew Him as a man. But God had to reveal who Jesus really was. The whole point of John's baptizing was so the Messiah would be revealed to Israel.

1:32 *And John testified, saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.*

John saw the Holy Spirit come down on Jesus like a dove, and the Spirit stayed on Him. The other Gospels describe this at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon prophets and kings for a time. On Jesus, the Spirit remained.

1:33 *And I did not know Him; but the **One** who sent me to baptize with water, He said to me, 'Upon whomever you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is the **One** who baptizes with **the** Holy Spirit.'*

God had given John a sign to watch for. The One on whom the Spirit came down and remained would be the Messiah, the One who "baptizes with the Holy Spirit." John could put people in water. Only Jesus can put the Holy Spirit inside a person. That promise was fulfilled at Pentecost (the Jewish feast fifty days after Passover), when the Holy Spirit came on the first believers (Acts 2), and is fulfilled every time someone believes (Acts 2:38-39).

1:34 *And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

This is the climax of John the Baptist's testimony. He saw it, and he testified to it: Jesus is the Son of God. That is the very thing this Gospel was written to convince us of (20:31).

1:35-36 *On the next day again John was standing, and two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus as He walked, he says, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

The next day John saw Jesus walking by and said it again: "Look, the Lamb of God!" This time two of John's own disciples were standing with him. John knew what would happen if he pointed them to Jesus. He did it anyway. A faithful teacher points his students past himself.

1:37 *And the two disciples heard him speaking, and they followed Jesus.*

The two disciples heard and followed. That is the right response to hearing about Jesus. They did not just admire Him from a distance. They got up and went after Him.

1:38 *Then Jesus, having turned and having beheld them following, says to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), "where are You staying?"*

Jesus' first words in this Gospel are a question: "What are you seeking?" It is still a good question for each of us. What are you really looking for? They answered with a question of their own, "Where are You staying?" They did not want a quick word in passing. They wanted time with Him. John translates "Rabbi" for his readers, which tells us he was writing for people outside of Israel as well.

1:39 *He says to them, "Come and see." They went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. Now **the** hour was about **the** tenth.*

"Come and see." Jesus did not hand them an argument. He invited them to spend time with Him. They stayed the rest of the day. The hour "was about the tenth," most likely about four in the afternoon, counting the hours from sunrise as the Jews did. It is the kind of small detail an eyewitness remembers years later.

1:40 *Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard from John and followed Him.*

One of the two was Andrew. The other is not named. Many believe the unnamed disciple was John himself, the writer of this Gospel, who never names himself. He would later call himself "the disciple whom Jesus was loving" (21:20).

1:41 *He first finds his own brother Simon and says to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is, being translated, the Christ).*

The first thing Andrew did was find his brother. He did not wait until he understood everything. He had found the Messiah, and he could not keep it to himself. Andrew shows up three times in this Gospel, and every time he is bringing someone to Jesus (6:8-9; 12:22). That is a good reputation to have.

1:42 *And he led him to Jesus. Now Jesus, having looked at him, said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah; you will be called Cephas" (which is translated, Peter).*

Jesus looked at Simon and gave him a new name: Cephas, which is Aramaic for "rock." "Peter" is the Greek form of the same name. Simon was anything but a rock at this point. He was impulsive and up and down. Jesus named him for who He would make him to be. Jesus does that with us too. He sees not only who we are but who we will become in Him.

1:43 *On the next day Jesus wanted to go forth into Galilee, and He finds Philip, and says to him, "Follow Me."*

This time Jesus did the finding. He found Philip and gave him the simplest call in the Bible: "Follow Me." Everything about being a disciple is packed into those two words.

1:44 *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, from the city of Andrew and Peter.*

Bethsaida was a fishing town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Andrew, Peter, and Philip all came from the same town. God often uses ordinary relationships, neighbors and family members, to spread the good news.

1:45 *Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, "We have found **Him** of whom Moses wrote in the law, and the prophets: Jesus the son of Joseph, the **one** from Nazareth."*

Philip did the same thing Andrew did. He went and found someone. Notice how he described Jesus: "Him of whom Moses wrote in the law, and the prophets." The whole Old Testament points to Jesus. Philip called Him "the son of Joseph" because that is how people knew Him. Philip did not yet understand the full truth about Jesus' birth, but he knew enough to bring his friend.

1:46 *And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing be out of Nazareth?" Philip says to him, "Come and see."*

Nathanael's response is honest and a little funny. Nazareth was a small, unimportant village, and nothing in the Scriptures pointed to it. Philip did not argue. He gave the best answer there is to an honest skeptic: "Come and see." You do not have to win every debate. Introduce people to Jesus and let Him do the rest.

1:47 *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and He says concerning him, "Look, truly an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit!"*

Jesus called Nathanael "truly an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit." The ancestor of Israel, Jacob, was known for his deceit (Genesis 27:35-36). Nathanael was a straight shooter. He said what he thought, even about Nazareth, and Jesus respected that.

1:48 *Nathanael says to Him, "From where do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, while you were under the fig tree, I saw you."*

Nathanael was stunned. How could a stranger know him? Jesus told him He had seen him under the fig tree before Philip ever called him. A fig tree was a common place for shade, rest, and

prayer. Whatever Nathanael was doing or praying about under that tree, Jesus knew. He knows us just as well.

1:49 *Nathanael answered and says to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!"*

Nathanael went from doubter to believer in one conversation. He called Jesus Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel. Honest seekers who come and see find that Jesus is more than they expected.

1:50 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you underneath the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."*

Jesus gently told Nathanael that he had seen nothing yet. If knowing about a fig tree was enough to convince him, wait until he saw what was coming. Faith that starts small grows as we walk with Jesus.

1:51 *And He says to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, from now on you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*

"Truly, truly" is a phrase only John records, and Jesus uses it to introduce something very important. In Genesis 28:12, Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with angels going up and down on it. Jesus says He is that ladder. He is the connection between heaven and earth, between God and man. "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite way to describe Himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13-14, where one like a son of man receives an everlasting kingdom from God, the same picture John gives in Revelation 1:13.

Old Testament links: Genesis 28:12 (alluded to)

Chapter 1 Summary

John opens his Gospel by taking us back before creation. Jesus, the Word, existed with God and was God. Everything was made through Him, and He is the source of life and light. That eternal Word became a real man and lived among us, full of grace and truth, so that we could see what God is like. Many rejected Him, but everyone who receives Him and believes in His name is given the right to become a child of God. John the Baptist was sent to point people to Him, and he never once took the spotlight for himself. He called Jesus the Lamb of God and the Son of God. Then the first disciples came: Andrew, an unnamed disciple, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. Each one either met Jesus personally or was brought by someone who had. By the end of the chapter we have heard Jesus called by many titles, among them the Word, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, King of Israel, and Son of Man.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. Who first told you about Jesus, and how did they do it?
2. What three things does John tell us about the Word in the very first verse? (1:1)
3. What did the Word have to do with creation? (1:3)

4. What right does God give to those who receive Jesus? (1:12)

5. What does it mean that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"? (1:14)

6. How did John the Baptist describe himself when the leaders asked who he was? (1:23)

7. What did John the Baptist mean when he called Jesus "the Lamb of God"? (1:29)

8. What did Andrew do as soon as he met Jesus? (1:41)

9. How did Philip answer Nathanael's doubt about Nazareth? What can we learn from that? (1:46)

10. Who in your life could you invite to "come and see" Jesus this week?

Chapter 2: The First Sign

Scripture: The Wedding at Cana and the Cleansing of the Temple

2:1-12 And on the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding. And when ***the*** wine ran out, the mother of Jesus says to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus says to her, "What ***is that*** to Me and to you, woman? My hour has not yet come." His mother says to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do ***it***." Now there were six stone water jars standing there according to the purification of the Jews, holding approximately 20 or 30 gallons (two or three metretes) apiece. Jesus says to them, "Fill the water jars with water." And they filled them up to ***the*** brim. And He says to them, "Draw out now, and carry ***it*** to the master of the feast." And they carried ***it***. Now when the master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it was from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast calls the bridegroom and says to him, "Every man sets out the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine until now." This beginning of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and He revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples, and they stayed there not many days.

2:13-22 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting. And having made a whip of cords, He drove all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned the tables. And to those selling the doves He said, "Take these things from here; do not make the house of My Father a house of trade." And His disciples remembered that it is written, "The zeal of Your house has consumed Me." Therefore the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show us, that You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." Therefore the Jews said, "In forty and six years this sanctuary was built, and You will raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking concerning the sanctuary of His body. Therefore when He was raised from ***the*** dead, His disciples remembered that He was saying this to them, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

2:23-25 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, at the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus Himself was not entrusting Himself to them, because He knew all ***men***, and because He had no need that anyone should testify concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.

Chapter 2 Preview

Chapter 2 gives us two very different scenes. The first is a small-town wedding where the wine runs out and Jesus quietly turns water into wine. It is the first of the signs John has chosen to show us who Jesus is. The second scene is loud and public. Jesus walks into the temple in Jerusalem, makes a whip, and drives out the people who have turned His Father's house into a marketplace.

In both scenes Jesus is replacing the old with something better. The water set aside for religious washing becomes the best wine anyone has tasted. The temple made of stone will be replaced by the temple of His own body. The old ways were pointing forward. Jesus is what they were pointing to.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1 *And on the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.*

"On the third day" most likely means three days after Jesus called Philip and Nathanael at the end of chapter 1. Cana was a small village in Galilee, a few miles from Nazareth. Nathanael was from Cana (21:2). Weddings in that culture were big community events that could last several days, and the groom's family was responsible for hosting the guests. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was already there. John never calls her by name in this Gospel; he always calls her "the mother of Jesus" or "His mother."

2:2 *Now Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.*

Jesus and His new disciples were invited. I love that Jesus' first sign happened at a party. He was not a grim, joyless figure. He went to weddings, ate with people, and enjoyed their company. He cared about ordinary life.

2:3 *And when **the** wine ran out, the mother of Jesus says to Him, "They have no wine."*

Running out of wine would have been a real embarrassment for the bridegroom and his family. In a culture built on hospitality, it would be remembered for years. Mary noticed the problem and brought it to Jesus. She did not tell Him what to do. She simply told Him what was wrong. That is a good pattern for our own prayers.

2:4 *Jesus says to her, "What **is that** to Me and to you, woman? My hour has not yet come."*

"Woman" sounds cold to our ears, but it was a respectful way to address a woman in that day. Jesus used the same word from the cross when He lovingly put His mother into John's care (19:26). Still, Jesus was gently setting a boundary. From now on, His mission would be directed by His Father, not by His family.

"My hour has not yet come" is a phrase that runs through this whole Gospel (7:30; 8:20). Jesus' "hour" is the time of His death, resurrection, and return to the Father. In chapter 12 He will finally say, "The hour has come" (12:23). Everything Jesus did was on His Father's schedule.

2:5 *His mother says to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do **it**."*

Mary did not argue or push. She turned to the servants and said, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Those are the last words of Mary recorded in the Bible, and they are still good advice for every believer. Whatever Jesus tells you to do, do it.

2:6 *Now there were six stone water jars standing there according to the purification of the Jews, holding approximately 20 or 30 gallons (two or three metretes) apiece.*

These were large stone jars, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Together they held well over a hundred gallons. They were used for the ceremonial washing the Jewish people did to stay ritually clean, washing hands and dishes according to tradition (Mark 7:3-4). Stone jars were used because, by their tradition, stone did not become unclean the way clay pots did. Jesus was about to take the water of religious ritual and turn it into something far better.

2:7 *Jesus says to them, "Fill the water jars with water." And they filled them up to* ***the*** *brim.*

Jesus gave the servants a simple instruction, and they obeyed completely. They filled the jars "to the brim." There was no room left for anything to be added. Nobody could say later that the servants slipped something into the jars.

2:8 *And He says to them, "Draw out now, and carry* ***it*** *to the master of the feast." And they carried* ***it****.*

Imagine being one of those servants. You know you just poured plain water into those jars. Now you are told to dip some out and carry it to the man in charge of the banquet. It took faith to obey. Sometimes Jesus asks us to take a step before we see how it will work out.

2:9-10 *Now when the master of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it was from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast calls the bridegroom and says to him, "Every man sets out the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely, then the inferior; you have kept the good wine until now."*

Somewhere between the jar and the cup of the master of the feast, the water became wine. The master of the feast had no idea where it came from, but the servants knew. People who obey Jesus often get to see what He is doing when others miss it.

The master of the feast was amazed. Normally a host served the best wine first and brought out the cheaper wine later, once the guests would not notice. This wine was better than anything served earlier. When Jesus provides, He does not give us second best. Notice too how much He provided: over a hundred gallons, far more than the party needed. God's grace is like that. It is "grace for grace" (1:16).

2:11 *This beginning of the signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and He revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

John calls this the "beginning of the signs." John never calls Jesus' miracles "miracles." He calls them signs, because a sign points to something beyond itself. This miracle was not just about saving a wedding. It "revealed His glory," showing who Jesus really is. Most Bible teachers count seven signs in the first half of this Gospel, and I list them in the section "The Seven Signs" near the front of this book.

The result was that "His disciples believed in Him." They already believed enough to follow Him. Now their faith grew deeper. That is what the signs are for (20:30-31).

2:12 *After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples, and they stayed there not many days.*

After the wedding, Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee that became His home base during His ministry in Galilee. His brothers went along. These were sons born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus. We learn later that they did not believe in Him at this point (7:5). After the resurrection, they did (Acts 1:14), and His brother James became a leader in the church at Jerusalem.

2:13 *And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

The Passover was the yearly feast remembering how God brought Israel out of Egypt, when the blood of a lamb on the doorposts protected each family from the angel of death (Exodus 12). Every Jewish man was expected to go up to Jerusalem for it. John mentions at least three Passovers during Jesus' ministry (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), which is why we often say His public ministry lasted about three years.

2:14 *And He found in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting.*

Picture the scene. The outer court of the temple, the Court of the Gentiles, was supposed to be a place where non-Jews could come and pray. Instead it was full of animals, noise, and business. Travelers needed animals for sacrifices, and they needed to change their money into the coins accepted for the temple tax. Those services could have been handled outside. Instead they had taken over the one place where Gentiles were allowed to worship, and many believe the prices took advantage of the worshipers.

2:15 *And having made a whip of cords, He drove all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned the tables.*

Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove them out, animals and all. He scattered the money changers' coins and turned over their tables. This was not a loss of temper. Jesus took the time to make the whip. It was a deliberate act of holy anger. Some people picture Jesus as only gentle and mild, but He also stood up for His Father's honor. Love and holiness go together.

2:16 *And to those selling the doves He said, "Take these things from here; do not make the house of My Father a house of trade."*

Notice who He spoke to: those selling doves. Doves were the sacrifice that poor people could afford (Leviticus 5:7; Luke 2:24). Jesus did not drive the doves out with a whip; He told the sellers to take them away. And notice what He called the temple: "the house of My Father." Jesus was claiming a unique relationship with God. The temple was His Father's house, and He had every right to clean it.

2:17 *And His disciples remembered that it is written, "The zeal of Your house has consumed Me."*

The disciples remembered Psalm 69:9. Zeal is a burning passion. Jesus' love for God's house would consume Him, and in the end it did. His actions here put Him on a collision course with the temple leaders that ended at the cross.

Old Testament links: Psalm 69:9 (quoted)

2:18 *Therefore the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show us, that You do these things?"*

The leaders did not argue that the temple should be a marketplace. They challenged His authority instead. "Who gave You the right to do this? Show us a sign." Jesus had just given them a sign by cleansing the temple, as the prophets said the Lord would do (Malachi 3:1-3). They wanted a show.

2:19 *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up."*

Jesus gave them a sign, but in a way they could not understand at the time: "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." Notice He said *you* destroy, and *I* will raise. They would put Him to death, and He would rise again. Years later, at His trial, false witnesses twisted these words and claimed He threatened to tear down the temple (Mark 14:57-58).

2:20 *Therefore the Jews said, "In forty and six years this sanctuary was built, and You will raise it up in three days?"*

The leaders thought He meant the stone building. King Herod the Great had started rebuilding and enlarging the temple decades earlier, and work was still going on. Forty-six years of construction, and this man from Galilee says He will rebuild it in three days? It sounded crazy to them.

2:21 *But He was speaking concerning the sanctuary of His body.*

John explains what Jesus meant. He was talking about His body. The temple was where God lived among His people. Now God was living among His people in the body of Jesus (1:14). The stone temple was a picture; Jesus is the reality. The stone temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and has never been rebuilt. The temple of His body was destroyed on the cross and raised three days later, never to die again.

2:22 *Therefore when He was raised from **the** dead, His disciples remembered that He was saying this to them, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.*

The disciples did not understand this at the time. After the resurrection, they remembered what He said, and it all came together. That happens to us too. Some things God says to us only make sense later. Their faith rested on two things: "the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken." God's written Word and Jesus' own words carry the same authority.

2:23 *Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, at the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing.*

During the Passover feast, many people saw the signs Jesus was doing and believed in His name. That sounds wonderful, but the next two verses tell us their belief was not the real thing. They believed in the miracles more than in the Man.

2:24-25 *But Jesus Himself was not entrusting Himself to them, because He knew all **men**, and because He had no need that anyone should testify concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.*

Jesus did not entrust Himself to these people. The Greek word for "entrust" is the same word used for "believed" in verse 23. They "believed" in Him, but He did not "believe" in them. He knew them all. He did not need anyone to tell Him what was in a person's heart. He knew who was following Him for the show and who would stay when things got hard (6:66).

This should make us stop and think. Jesus knows exactly what is in each of our hearts. We cannot impress Him, and we cannot fool Him. The good news is that the One who knows us best is also the One who loves us most. The next chapter opens with a man who came to Jesus by night, and we will see what Jesus does with a heart that is honestly searching.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter 2 shows Jesus beginning His public ministry with two very different acts. At a wedding in Cana, when the wine ran out, Jesus turned more than a hundred gallons of water into the best wine of the feast. John calls this the first of His signs. It showed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. Then at Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus drove the merchants and money changers out of the temple, calling it "the house of My Father." When the leaders demanded a sign to prove His authority, He told them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." They thought He meant the building, but He was speaking of His body and His coming resurrection. In both scenes Jesus brings something new and better than the old: wine for ceremonial water, and Himself as the true temple where God meets man. The chapter ends with a warning. Many believed because of the signs, but Jesus knew their hearts and did not entrust Himself to them.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What is the best celebration you have ever been part of, and what made it special?
2. What did Mary do when the wine ran out, and what did she tell the servants? (2:3-5)
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "My hour has not yet come"? (2:4)
4. Why did John call this miracle a "sign"? What did it show about Jesus? (2:11)
5. What was going on in the temple that made Jesus so angry? (2:14-16)
6. Is it ever right to be angry? How was Jesus' anger different from ours?
7. What temple was Jesus really talking about? (2:19-21)

8. Why did Jesus not entrust Himself to the people who believed because of His signs? (2:23-25)

9. Is there anything in your life that needs to be cleaned out so that it can be a place of worship?

10. Mary said, "Whatever He says to you, do it." What is Jesus asking you to do right now?

Chapter 3: You Must Be Born from Above

Scripture: Nicodemus, the New Birth, and John's Final Witness

3:1-8 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus ***was*** his name, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God ***as*** a teacher; for no one is able to do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus says to Him, "How is a man able to be born when he is old? Is he able to enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and ***the*** Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit."

3:9-15 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How are these things able to come about?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, what we know we speak, and what we have seen we testify, and you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you the earthly ***things*** and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you the heavenly ***things***? And no one has gone up into heaven except the ***One*** who came down out of heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

3:16-21 For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; but the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their works were evil. For everyone who practices wicked ***things*** hates the Light and does not come to the Light, so that his works may not be exposed. But the one who does the truth comes to the Light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God."

3:22-30 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the Judean land, and there He was staying with them and was baptizing. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there were many waters there; and they were coming and were being baptized. For John had not yet been cast into the prison. Then a debate arose from the disciples of John with Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you have testified, look, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him." John answered and said, "A man is able to receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves testify to me that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I am sent before Him.' The one who has the bride is ***the*** bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and listens to

him, rejoices with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom. Therefore this joy of mine has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I ***must*** decrease.

3:31-36 The ***One*** coming from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is from the earth and speaks from the earth. The ***One*** coming from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, this He testifies, and no one receives His testimony. The one who has received His testimony has set his seal that God is true. For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

Chapter 3 Preview

Chapter 3 holds the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16. But that verse comes in the middle of a late-night conversation between Jesus and one of the most respected religious teachers in Israel. Nicodemus came with compliments. Jesus answered with the one thing Nicodemus needed to hear: no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born from above.

In the second half of the chapter, John the Baptist gives his last testimony about Jesus. His own followers were upset that people were leaving John to follow Jesus. John's answer is one every believer should take to heart: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *Now there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus **was** his name, a ruler of the Jews.*

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, part of the strict religious party we met in chapter 1. He was also "a ruler of the Jews," which means he sat on the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jewish people. In Jesus' words in verse 10, he was "the teacher of Israel." If anyone could earn his way into God's kingdom by religion and good behavior, it was Nicodemus. We will meet him again in 7:50-51 and 19:39, and each time he is a little bolder for Jesus.

3:2 *He came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God **as** a teacher; for no one is able to do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

Nicodemus came "at night." Maybe he was afraid of what the other leaders would think. Maybe he just wanted a quiet conversation without the crowds. Either way, he came. He started politely, calling Jesus "Rabbi" and admitting that Jesus must have come from God because of His signs. Notice the "we." Nicodemus was not the only leader thinking this. He was right as far as he went, but saying Jesus had "come from God as a teacher" was not nearly enough. Jesus is far more than a good teacher.

3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God."*

Jesus skipped the small talk and went straight to the heart. "Truly, truly" tells us this is serious. The Greek word translated "from above" can also mean "again." Both meanings are true. The new

birth is a second birth, and it comes from above, from God. Without it, a person "is not able to see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus had spent his life studying and keeping the Law. Jesus told him none of that was enough. He needed to start over completely.

3:4 *Nicodemus says to Him, "How is a man able to be born when he is old? Is he able to enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born?"*

Nicodemus took Jesus at the most physical level. How can a grown man go back into his mother's womb? I do not think Nicodemus was being foolish. He was a teacher; he knew Jesus was using a figure of speech. I think he was saying, "How can a man my age start all over? I can't undo my whole life." That is a question many of us have asked.

3:5 *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and* ***the*** *Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Jesus explained that a person must be "born of water and the Spirit" to enter God's kingdom. Christians have understood "water" in a few different ways. Some say it means physical birth, since a baby is born in water. Some say it means baptism. I believe the best reading comes from what Nicodemus, as a teacher of Israel, should already have known. In Ezekiel 36:25-27, God promised a day when He would "sprinkle clean water" on His people to cleanse them, give them "a new heart," and put His Spirit within them. Water and Spirit go together there, just as they do here. To be born again means to be cleansed from sin and made new by God's Spirit. That is why Jesus could say in verse 10 that Nicodemus should have understood.

Baptism is an important act of obedience for every believer, and it pictures this cleansing. But it is the cleansing and the new life from the Spirit that saves, not the water itself.

Ezekiel spoke this promise to the nation of Israel, and in the same passage God promises to gather them from the nations and bring them back to their own land (Ezekiel 36:24, 28). Some teachers believe the promise is now fulfilled in the church. I believe it still belongs to Israel and will be kept when Jesus returns and God restores the nation in the thousand-year kingdom. Jesus uses its picture of water and Spirit here to show Nicodemus the new birth every person needs now.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 36:25-27 (alluded to)

3:6 *That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.*

Like produces like. Human parents give birth to human children. Flesh produces flesh. Only the Spirit can produce spiritual life. Our good works, religious background, and best efforts are all "flesh." They cannot make a dead spirit come alive. Only God can do that.

3:7 *Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'*

Jesus said "you" (plural) must be born from above. This is not a message just for Nicodemus or just for really bad sinners. It is for everyone. The most religious man in the room needed it. So do

you, and so do I. "Do not marvel" tells us this should not have been a shock. The Old Testament prophets had already promised it.

3:8 *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit."*

In Greek, and in Hebrew, the same word can mean "wind" or "spirit." Jesus used that on purpose. You cannot see the wind, and you cannot control it, but you can hear it and see what it does. The Spirit works the same way. We cannot explain exactly how God makes a person new, but we can see the results in a changed life.

3:9 *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How are these things able to come about?"*

"How are these things able to come about?" Nicodemus is still asking "how." This is the last time he speaks in this conversation. From here, Jesus does all the talking.

3:10 *Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?*

Jesus' question is a gentle rebuke. Nicodemus was "the teacher of Israel," a top Bible scholar. He knew Ezekiel and the other prophets. Yet he did not recognize what they promised when it was standing in front of him. It is possible to know a lot about the Bible and still miss its main point.

3:11 *Truly, truly, I say to you, what we know we speak, and what we have seen we testify, and you do not receive our testimony.*

Jesus speaks as an eyewitness. He was not passing on someone else's opinion. He was telling what He knew from heaven itself. The "we" may include His disciples, or John the Baptist, who also testified. The sad part is the end of the verse: "and you do not receive our testimony." Jesus had told them plainly, and they still would not take His word for it.

3:12 *If I have told you the earthly **things** and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you the heavenly **things**?*

The new birth happens here on earth, in real people's lives. If Nicodemus could not believe that, how could he believe the deeper truths about heaven, about the Father and the Son and God's eternal plan? Faith starts with believing what God has said about the things we can see.

3:13 *And no one has gone up into heaven except the **One** who came down out of heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

Why should we trust what Jesus says about heaven? Because He is the only One who has come from there. No human being has gone up to heaven and come back to report on it. Jesus came down from heaven. He is not guessing about God. He knows Him.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 30:4 (alluded to)

3:14-15 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Jesus pointed Nicodemus to a story he knew well. In Numbers 21:4-9, the people of Israel complained against God, and God sent poisonous snakes among them. Many died. When the people repented, God told Moses to make a bronze snake and lift it up on a pole. Anyone who was bitten could look at it and live. They did not have to earn it or fix themselves. They only had to look in faith.

Jesus said He must be "lifted up" the same way. This is the first of three times Jesus says He will be lifted up (8:28; 12:32-34). Each time He is talking about the cross. Sin has poisoned every one of us, and the cure is to look to Jesus, lifted up on the cross, and believe. Whoever believes in Him has eternal life.

Old Testament links: Numbers 21:8-9 (pictured)

3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, the only begotten, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

This is the best-known verse in the Bible, and for good reason. It is the whole gospel in one sentence.

"For God so loved the world." The word "so" means "in this way." God's love is shown by what He did. And He loved "the world," not just one nation, not just the good people, but the whole rebellious human race.

"That He gave His Son, the only begotten." Love gives. God did not send a messenger or an angel. He gave His only begotten Son, the Son we met in chapter 1, who was with Him from the beginning.

"That everyone who believes in Him." The invitation is open to anyone. "Everyone" means you. Believing is more than agreeing with facts. It means trusting Him, putting your whole weight on Him the way you trust a chair to hold you when you sit down.

"Should not perish but have eternal life." There are only two outcomes. Perishing means eternal separation from God. Eternal life is not just living forever. Jesus defines it in 17:3: knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. It begins the moment you believe, and it never ends.

3:17 *For God did not send His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

Jesus did not come the first time to condemn the world. He came to save it. The world was already lost; it did not need a judge to tell it so. It needed a Savior. Jesus will come again as Judge (5:22, 27; Revelation 19:11), but His first coming was a rescue mission.

3:18 *The one who believes in Him is not judged; but the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Here is the dividing line. The one who believes in Jesus "is not judged." His case is settled. The one who does not believe "has been judged already." Why? Not because God is eager to condemn, but because that person has turned down the only way to be saved. Rejecting the cure leaves a person with the disease.

3:19 *And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their works were evil.*

This is the reason for the judgment. The Light came into the world, and people preferred the darkness. Jesus names the deepest reason people turn away: not weak evidence, but a love for darkness. Honest questions deserve honest answers, and Jesus welcomes them (20:27).

3:20 *For everyone who practices wicked **things** hates the Light and does not come to the Light, so that his works may not be exposed.*

Think about turning on the lights in a dirty kitchen at night and watching the cockroaches scatter. People who do evil hate the light because it shows what they really are. They stay away from Jesus "so that his works may not be exposed."

3:21 *But the one who does the truth comes to the Light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God."*

The opposite is also true. The person who "does the truth" comes to the Light. Honest people are not afraid to have their lives examined, because they want to be right with God. When they come to Jesus, it becomes clear that whatever good is in their lives was worked in them by God, not by themselves. This may be a gentle invitation to Nicodemus, who came in the dark. Would he step into the light? By the end of this Gospel, he does (19:39).

3:22 *After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the Judean land, and there He was staying with them and was baptizing.*

After the time in Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples went out into the Judean countryside. He stayed there with them and baptized. John tells us in 4:2 that Jesus Himself did not baptize; His disciples did it under His authority.

3:23 *Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there were many waters there; and they were coming and were being baptized.*

At the same time, John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon near Salim. The exact location is uncertain today, but John gives the reason he chose it: "there were many waters there." That detail tells us John baptized people in enough water to need a good supply.

3:24 *For John had not yet been cast into the prison.*

John the apostle adds a note for readers who already knew the other Gospels. The other Gospels begin their story of Jesus' ministry in Galilee after John the Baptist was arrested (Mark 1:14). This verse tells us the events in John 1-3 happened earlier, before John was thrown into prison.

3:25 *Then a debate arose from the disciples of John with Jews about purification.*

John's disciples got into an argument with some Jews about purification. We are not told the details, but the subject was probably whose washing or baptism really cleansed a person. That argument led straight to the next verse.

3:26 *And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you have testified, look, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him."*

John's disciples were upset. The man John had baptized and testified about was now baptizing too, and "all are coming to Him." You can hear the jealousy. They felt their teacher was losing his crowd. It is easy in ministry, and in life, to start competing instead of cooperating.

3:27 *John answered and said, "A man is able to receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.*

John's answer shows real humility. Nobody receives anything unless God gives it. If people were going to Jesus, then God was sending them. John did not see Jesus' success as his loss. Everything we have, our gifts, our opportunities, and our influence, comes from God.

3:28 *You yourselves testify to me that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I am sent before Him.'*

John reminded his disciples of what he had said from the start: "I am not the Christ." He was sent ahead to prepare the way. A man who prepares the road does not complain when the King arrives and everyone looks at the King. That was the whole point.

3:29 *The one who has the bride is **the** bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices with joy because of the voice of the bridegroom. Therefore this joy of mine has been fulfilled.*

John used a wedding picture. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The "friend of the bridegroom" was like a best man, who helped arrange the wedding and then stepped back. When the best man hears the groom's voice with his bride, he does not get jealous. He is thrilled. Throughout Scripture, God's people are pictured as a bride, and Jesus is the Bridegroom (Revelation 19:7; 21:2). John was happy just to be the friend who brought them together. "Therefore this joy of mine has been fulfilled."

3:30 *He must increase, but I **must** decrease.*

"He must increase, but I must decrease." I think this is one of the best mottos a Christian could have. It is not about thinking poorly of ourselves. It is about thinking more about Jesus. The more

He fills our lives, the less room there is for pride. These are among the last recorded words of John the Baptist in this Gospel, and they sum up his whole life.

3:31 *The **One** coming from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is from the earth and speaks from the earth. The **One** coming from heaven is above all.*

Scholars debate whether verses 31-36 are still John the Baptist speaking or whether the apostle John is now adding his own comments. Either way, the message is the same. Jesus is "the One coming from above" and is above all. Every human messenger, even one as great as John the Baptist, is one who "is from the earth." Jesus speaks from heaven's point of view.

3:32 *And what He has seen and heard, this He testifies, and no one receives His testimony.*

Jesus testifies to what He has personally seen and heard in heaven. "No one receives His testimony" is a general statement. As a whole, people rejected Him, just as 1:11 said. The next verse shows there are exceptions.

3:33 *The one who has received His testimony has set his seal that God is true.*

The person who accepts Jesus' testimony "has set his seal that God is true." In those days, a seal on a document was like a signature. It said, "I stand behind this." When we believe Jesus, we are putting our signature on God's truthfulness. On the other hand, refusing to believe Jesus is calling God a liar (1 John 5:10).

3:34 *For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for God does not give the Spirit by measure.*

Jesus speaks the very words of God, because God gives Him the Spirit without limit. As the verse says, God "does not give the Spirit by measure." The prophets received the Spirit for certain tasks and times. Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit with no limit. That is why we can trust every word He says.

3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.*

The Father loves the Son and has put everything into His hands. Jesus is not a junior partner in God's plan. All authority belongs to Him (Matthew 28:18). Salvation, judgment, and the future of the world are all in His hand.

3:36 *The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."*

The chapter ends with the same choice we saw in verse 18. The one who believes in the Son "has" eternal life, right now, as a present possession. The one who "does not obey the Son" will not see life. John sets believing against not obeying, so unbelief and disobedience are treated as the same thing. Refusing to believe Jesus is refusing to obey God's command to trust His Son.

The last words are sobering: "the wrath of God remains on him." God's wrath is not an out-of-control temper. It is His settled, holy opposition to sin. It "remains on him." Apart from Christ, it is

already on us. The only way out from under it is to believe in the Son. That is why John 3:16 is such good news.

Chapter 3 Summary

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a member of the ruling council, and a respected teacher, came to Jesus at night. Before he could ask his question, Jesus told him that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born from above. This new birth is not something we can do for ourselves. It is a cleansing and a new life that comes from God's Spirit, just as the prophet Ezekiel promised. Jesus pointed Nicodemus to the bronze serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness. Just as anyone who looked at it lived, anyone who looks to Jesus lifted up on the cross and believes in Him will have eternal life. God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son to save it, not to condemn it. Those who believe are not judged, but those who refuse to believe stay in the darkness because they love it. In the second half of the chapter, John the Baptist's disciples were upset that people were going to Jesus instead. John answered that he was only the friend of the Bridegroom, and he was filled with joy. "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. Think of a time you had to start over at something. What was hard about it?
2. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? (3:2)
3. What did Jesus mean when He said a person must be "born from above"? (3:3, 5-7)
4. How does Ezekiel 36:25-27 help us understand "born of water and the Spirit"? (3:5)
5. How is the wind like the work of the Holy Spirit? (3:8)
6. What does the story of the bronze serpent teach us about how we are saved? (3:14-15)
7. Put John 3:16 in your own words. What does each part mean to you?
8. According to Jesus, why do people reject the Light? (3:19-20)
9. How did John the Baptist respond when his followers were jealous of Jesus' popularity? (3:26-30)
10. What is one area of your life where Jesus needs to increase and you need to decrease?

Chapter 4: The Woman at the Well

Scripture: Living Water, a Harvest in Samaria, and the Second Sign

4:1-6 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus makes and baptizes more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. Now it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria. Therefore He comes to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to Joseph his son. Now the spring of Jacob was there. Therefore Jesus, having been wearied from the journey, was sitting thus at the spring. ***The*** hour was about ***the*** sixth.

4:7-15 A woman comes out of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says to her, "Give Me ***something*** to drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy food. Therefore the Samaritan woman says to Him, "How do You, being a Jew, ask ***something*** to drink from me, being a Samaritan woman?" For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you had known the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me ***something*** to drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman says to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From where then do You have the living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will certainly never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life." The woman says to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not thirst nor come here to draw."

4:16-26 Jesus says to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I do not have a husband." Jesus says to her, "You have spoken well, 'I do not have a husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have spoken truly." The woman says to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship." Jesus says to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father also seeks such ***people*** worshiping Him. God ***is*** spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman says to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus says to her, "I am ***He***, the ***One*** speaking to you."

4:27-30 And at this His disciples came, and they marveled that He was speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went away into the city and says to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all things that I did. This is not the Christ, ***is it***?" Therefore they went forth out of the city and were coming to Him.

4:31-38 Now in the meantime the disciples were asking Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know." Therefore the disciples were saying to one another, "Has anyone brought Him ***something*** to eat?" Jesus says to them, "My food is that I may do the will of Him who sent Me, and may finish His work. Do you not say, 'It is yet four months, and the harvest comes'? Look, I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the fields, that they are white for harvest already. And the one who reaps receives a reward and gathers fruit into eternal life, so that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, 'One is the one who sows, and another the one who reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not toiled; others have toiled, and you have entered into their labor."

4:39-42 Now from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman testifying, "He told me all things that I did." Therefore when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word, and they were saying to the woman, "No longer do we believe because of your speech; for we ourselves have heard, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world, the Christ."

4:43-45 Now after the two days He went forth from there and went away into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. Therefore when He came into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all things that He had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also had gone to the feast.

4:46-54 Therefore Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son was sick in Capernaum. He, having heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, went to Him and was asking Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was about to die. Therefore Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will certainly not believe." The royal official says to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus says to him, "Go; your son lives." And the man believed the word that Jesus said to him, and he was going. And as he was already going down, his servants met him and reported, saying, "Your boy lives." Therefore he inquired from them the hour in which he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at ***the*** seventh hour the fever left him." Therefore the father knew that ***it was*** at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again ***is the*** second sign ***that*** Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee.

Chapter 4 Preview

In chapter 3, Jesus talked with Nicodemus, a respected teacher of Israel who came to Him at night. In chapter 4, He talks with a Samaritan woman with a painful past who comes to a well in the middle of the day. You could hardly pick two people further apart, and yet Jesus offers both of them the same thing: new life that only He can give.

This chapter shows us how Jesus breaks down walls. He crosses the line between Jews and Samaritans, between men and women, and between the respectable and the outcast. The woman goes from hiding to telling her whole town, and many Samaritans believe. The chapter closes

back in Galilee, where Jesus heals a royal official's son from miles away with a single word. That healing is the second sign John records.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1-2 *Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus makes and baptizes more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples),*

The Pharisees were watching. They had already sent people to question John the Baptist (1:19-24), and now they heard that Jesus was drawing even bigger crowds than John. John adds a small but helpful note: Jesus Himself was not doing the baptizing; His disciples were. I believe John includes this so no one would brag about being baptized by Jesus personally, which is the same kind of problem Paul dealt with in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:13-17).

4:3 *He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.*

Jesus did not run from the Pharisees out of fear. He left because His "hour" had not yet come (2:4; 7:30). He was working on His Father's timetable, not theirs. There was no reason to stir up a fight in Judea before the right time.

4:4 *Now it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria.*

"It was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria." Samaria sat right between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north, so going through it was the shortest route. Many Jews, though, avoided Samaria and took the longer road east of the Jordan River. The Greek word here, *dei*, means "it is necessary." John uses the same word for things God has planned (3:14, 30). I believe Jesus had to go through Samaria because there was a woman, and a whole town, His Father had sent Him to reach.

4:5-6 *Therefore He comes to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to Joseph his son. Now the spring of Jacob was there. Therefore Jesus, having been wearied from the journey, was sitting thus at the spring. **The** hour was about **the** sixth.*

Sychar was near the old city of Shechem, close to the land Jacob bought and later gave to Joseph (Genesis 33:18-19; 48:22). Joseph's bones were buried there (Joshua 24:32). This was holy ground in Israel's history, and the Samaritans were proud of it.

Jesus was tired. John says He sat down at the spring, "having been wearied from the journey." The same Word who made all things (1:3) got tired feet and needed to sit down. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He knows what it feels like to be worn out, and that should encourage us when we are worn out too (Hebrews 4:15).

"It was about the sixth hour." Counting the hours from sunrise, as the Jews did, the sixth hour was most likely about noon. That was the hottest part of the day. Most women drew water in the cool of the morning or evening, in groups. A woman coming alone at noon may well have been avoiding the other women.

Old Testament links: Joshua 24:32 (alluded to); Genesis 33:19 (alluded to)

4:7-8 *A woman comes out of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says to her, "Give Me **something** to drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city that they might buy food.*

Jesus starts the conversation by asking for a favor: "Give Me something to drink." He does not start with a sermon. He starts with a simple, human need. That is a good lesson for us when we share our faith. Sometimes the best way to open a door is to let someone help you.

The disciples had gone into town to buy food, so Jesus and the woman were alone at the well. That matters for what comes next.

4:9 *Therefore the Samaritan woman says to Him, "How do You, being a Jew, ask **something** to drink from me, being a Samaritan woman?" For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.*

The woman is shocked. Jews and Samaritans did not get along, and a Jewish man would not normally speak to a Samaritan woman in public, much less drink from her jar. John explains for his readers, "For Jews do not associate with Samaritans." (I cover who the Samaritans were at the end of this chapter.) The hatred ran deep on both sides, and it had been building for centuries.

4:10 *Jesus answered and said to her, "If you had known the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me **something** to drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."*

Jesus turns the conversation around. She thinks He is the One in need, but He tells her she is the one in need, and He is the One with the gift. "Living water" was a common phrase for fresh, running water from a spring, as opposed to standing water in a cistern. But Jesus means much more. In the Old Testament, God calls Himself "a spring of living water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus is offering her life from God Himself.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 2:13 (alluded to)

4:11-12 *The woman says to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From where then do You have the living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons and his livestock?"*

She takes Him at the plain level. He has no bucket, and the well is deep. Where is He going to get this water? Then she asks, "Are You greater than our father Jacob?" The way she asks in the Greek expects the answer "No." The irony is that the answer is "Yes." Jesus is far greater than Jacob. Jacob gave a well. Jesus gives eternal life.

4:13-14 *Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will certainly never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life."*

Here is the heart of the offer. Everyone who drinks from Jacob's well will be thirsty again. You can drink all day, and tomorrow you are back with your bucket. That is true of everything this world offers: money, pleasure, approval, relationships. They satisfy for a while, and then the thirst comes back.

The water Jesus gives is different. It becomes "a spring of water welling up into eternal life" inside the person who drinks it. It does not run dry. Later John tells us this living water is the Holy Spirit, given to those who believe in Jesus (7:37-39). When we come to Christ, we are not just given a drink. We are given a spring.

4:15 *The woman says to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not thirst nor come here to draw."*

She is interested, but she still does not understand. She wants water that will save her the daily walk to the well. Many people are like this with Jesus. They want what He can do for their everyday problems, but they have not yet seen their real need.

4:16 *Jesus says to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."*

So Jesus goes straight to her real need. "Go, call your husband." He is not being unkind. He is putting His finger on the place where she hurts the most. Before a person can receive living water, they have to admit they are thirsty, and that means being honest about sin.

4:17-18 *The woman answered and said, "I do not have a husband." Jesus says to her, "You have spoken well, 'I do not have a husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have spoken truly."*

She gives a half-truth: "I do not have a husband." Jesus tells her He already knows the whole story. She has had five husbands, and the man she lives with now is not her husband. We are not told why her marriages ended. It may have been death, divorce, or both. In that culture, a woman could not easily divorce her husband, so she may have been sent away more than once. Either way, her life was broken, and the town knew it.

Notice how gently Jesus handles this. He does not shame her. He even tells her twice that she has spoken the truth. Jesus knows everything about us, the worst parts included, and He still offers us living water. That is grace.

4:19-20 *The woman says to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship."*

"I perceive that You are a prophet." She knows only a prophet could know these things. Then she changes the subject to a religious argument. Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim, which

would have been in plain view from the well. Jews worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem. Which mountain was right?

You might ask, "Why did she bring this up?" It may have been a way to steer the conversation away from her personal life. People still do this. When the Lord gets close to a sore spot, it is easier to argue about churches than to deal with sin.

4:21 *Jesus says to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*

Jesus does not ignore her question. He answers it and goes beyond it. A time is coming when the place will not matter. Worship will not be tied to Gerizim or Jerusalem. When Jesus died and rose again, the way to God was opened to every believer anywhere. The temple in Jerusalem itself was destroyed in A.D. 70.

4:22 *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews.*

Jesus is also honest: the Samaritans were wrong. They accepted only the five books of Moses and rejected the rest of the Old Testament, so they worshiped with a partial picture of God. "Salvation is from the Jews" means God's promises, the Scriptures, and the Messiah Himself came through Israel (Romans 9:4-5). This was not about Jews being better people. It was about the line God chose to bring the Savior into the world.

4:23-24 *But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father also seeks such* ***people*** *worshiping Him. God* ***is*** *spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

This is one of the most important statements on worship in the whole Bible. True worshipers worship the Father "in spirit and truth."

"God is spirit." God is not a physical being bound to one place. He cannot be boxed into a building or a mountain. So worship has to come from our spirit, from the inside, not just from outward ritual. And it has to be "in truth," meaning it has to line up with who God really is, as He has shown Himself in His Word and in Jesus, who is the truth (14:6).

Both are needed. Spirit without truth turns into feelings with no anchor. Truth without spirit turns into cold, dead religion. And notice this: the Father is *seeking* worshipers like this. God is looking for people who will worship Him with all their heart and with a right understanding of who He is.

4:25 *The woman says to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when He comes, He will tell us all things."*

The woman knows enough to say that the Messiah "is coming." The Samaritans expected a coming prophet like Moses, based on Deuteronomy 18:15, who would explain everything. She may be thinking, "This is over my head. When the Messiah comes, He will sort it out."

4:26 *Jesus says to her, "I am **He**, the **One** speaking to you."*

Jesus answers plainly: "I am He, the One speaking to you." In the Greek, this is simply *ego eimi*, "I am." It is the first time in John's Gospel that Jesus openly says He is the Messiah, and He says it to a Samaritan woman with a broken past. He did not tell the religious leaders in Jerusalem this plainly. He told her. That tells us a lot about the heart of our Savior.

4:27 *And at this His disciples came, and they marveled that He was speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"*

The disciples come back and are amazed that Jesus is talking with a woman. Jewish teachers of that day were warned against talking much with women, and a rabbi seen speaking alone with a woman in public would have raised eyebrows. But nobody dared ask Him about it. They were learning that Jesus did not follow man's rules about who was worth His time.

4:28-30 *Then the woman left her water jar and went away into the city and says to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all things that I did. This is not the Christ, **is it**?" Therefore they went forth out of the city and were coming to Him.*

"Then the woman left her water jar." She came for water and forgot all about it. Something more important had happened. She went back to the same town she had been avoiding and spoke to the men. Her message was simple: "Come, see a man who told me all things that I did." She did not have a theology degree. She just told what Jesus did for her and invited people to come see for themselves. That is what a witness does.

Her question, "This is not the Christ, is it?" is careful. She is not forcing anyone. She is making them curious. And it worked. The people left town and came out to Jesus.

4:31-33 *Now in the meantime the disciples were asking Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know." Therefore the disciples were saying to one another, "Has anyone brought Him **something** to eat?"*

Meanwhile the disciples were back with lunch, urging Jesus to eat. He tells them He has food they do not know about. They take Him at the plain level, just like the woman did with the water, and wonder if someone else brought Him something. John often shows people misunderstanding Jesus this way, taking a spiritual truth and hearing only the physical side.

4:34 *Jesus says to them, "My food is that I may do the will of Him who sent Me, and may finish His work.*

Jesus explains: "My food is that I may do the will of Him who sent Me, and may finish His work." Doing the Father's will fed Him more than any meal. A few minutes earlier He was tired and thirsty. Now, after reaching this woman, He is so refreshed He does not even want lunch. Many of us know a little of this. When we serve God, He gives us strength we did not have before.

4:35 *Do you not say, 'It is yet four months, and the harvest comes'? Look, I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the fields, that they are white for harvest already.*

The disciples may have been looking at fields of young grain, with harvest still four months off. Jesus tells them to lift up their eyes and look again. The real harvest is ready right now. I believe He may have pointed at the Samaritans who were already coming out from the town toward Him across those fields. The fields were "white for harvest." People were ready to receive the gospel, and the disciples had not even noticed.

4:36-38 *And the one who reaps receives a reward and gathers fruit into eternal life, so that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, 'One is the one who sows, and another the one who reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not toiled; others have toiled, and you have entered into their labor."*

In God's harvest, the one who reaps and the one who sows get to rejoice together. One person plants the seed, another sees it come to life, and both share the joy. The disciples were about to reap a harvest they had not planted. Others had labored before them: the prophets, John the Baptist, and now this woman. This is a good reminder for us. We may plant seeds we never see grow, or we may reap where someone else planted. Either way, the work belongs to God, and the joy is shared (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

4:39 *Now from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman testifying, "He told me all things that I did."*

Many Samaritans believed because of the woman's testimony. Think about that. The person the town looked down on became the one who led them to the Messiah. God loves to use the people the world overlooks.

4:40-41 *Therefore when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word,*

The Samaritans asked Jesus to stay, and He stayed two days. A Jewish teacher staying as a guest in a Samaritan town was unheard of. During those two days, many more believed because they heard Jesus for themselves.

4:42 *And they were saying to the woman, "No longer do we believe because of your speech; for we ourselves have heard, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world, the Christ."*

This is how faith should grow. They first believed because of what the woman said, but now they believed because they had heard Jesus personally. Someone else's testimony can bring us to Jesus, but our faith has to become our own.

"The Savior of the world." What a title from Samaritans! They saw what many in Israel missed. Jesus did not come only for the Jews. He came for the whole world (3:16; 1 John 4:14).

4:43-44 *Now after the two days He went forth from there and went away into Galilee. For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.*

After two days, Jesus went on to Galilee. John adds that "a prophet has no honor in his own hometown." Bible teachers disagree on what "his own hometown" means here. Some say Judea, where He was born. Others say Galilee, where He grew up. Either way, the point is the same: the people who think they know Jesus best are often the slowest to really receive Him. The Samaritans, outsiders, had just honored Him more than His own people would.

4:45 *Therefore when He came into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all things that He had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also had gone to the feast.*

The Galileans welcomed Him, but John is careful to say why. They had seen the things He did in Jerusalem at the Passover (2:23). Their welcome was based on miracles. That kind of faith is shallow, as the next verses show.

4:46 *Therefore Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son was sick in Capernaum.*

Jesus returned to Cana, where He had turned water into wine (2:1-11). A royal official lived in Capernaum, about a day's walk away, down by the Sea of Galilee. "Royal official" probably means he served Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. He was a man of rank and power, but none of that could help his dying son.

4:47 *He, having heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, went to Him and was asking Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was about to die.*

This father went to Jesus himself and begged Him to come and heal his son. He was desperate. When it comes to the people we love, rank and pride go out the window. There is nothing like a sick child to bring a strong man to his knees.

4:48 *Therefore Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will certainly not believe."*

Jesus' answer sounds harsh at first: "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will certainly not believe." The "you" is plural in the Greek. Jesus is speaking to the crowd of Galileans as much as to this man. They wanted a show. Jesus wanted faith. Faith that depends on miracles will always need another one.

4:49 *The royal official says to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."*

The father does not argue. He just pleads again, "Come down before my child dies." He believes Jesus can heal, but he thinks Jesus has to be there in person to do it.

4:50 *Jesus says to him, "Go; your son lives." And the man believed the word that Jesus said to him, and he was going.*

Jesus does not go. He simply says, "Go," and, "Your son lives." Now this father has to make a choice: trust the word of Jesus with nothing to see, or keep begging. *"The man believed the word*

that Jesus said to him, and he was going." That is real faith. He walked home on nothing but a promise from Jesus. That is exactly what we are asked to do every day. We take God at His word before we see the result.

4:51-52 *And as he was already going down, his servants met him and reported, saying, "Your boy lives." Therefore he inquired from them the hour in which he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at* ***the*** *seventh hour the fever left him."*

On the way home, his servants met him with the news: his son was alive. He asked when the boy started to get better, and they said, "Yesterday at the seventh hour," most likely about one o'clock in the afternoon.

4:53 *Therefore the father knew that* ***it was*** *at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.*

That was the exact hour Jesus had said, "Your son lives." Distance means nothing to Jesus. He did not need to touch the boy or even see him. His word alone was enough. Then "he himself believed, and his whole household." His faith grew from trusting a promise to full belief in Jesus, and it spread to his whole family.

4:54 *This again* ***is the*** *second sign* ***that*** *Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee.*

John calls this the "second sign" Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee. The first was water into wine, also in Cana. John calls Jesus' miracles "signs" because each one points to who He is. This one shows us that Jesus is Lord over sickness and over distance, and that His word has the power of life.

Chapter 4 Summary

Jesus traveled from Judea to Galilee and went right through Samaria, a place many Jews avoided. At Jacob's well, tired and thirsty, He asked a Samaritan woman for a drink and then offered her living water that would become a spring of eternal life inside her. He gently brought her sin into the light, taught her that true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth, and told her plainly that He is the Messiah. She left her water jar and told her town, and many Samaritans believed, first because of her words and then because they heard Jesus for themselves. They called Him "the Savior of the world." Meanwhile, Jesus taught His disciples that the fields were already white for harvest. Back in Cana, a royal official begged Jesus to heal his dying son. Jesus spoke one sentence, the man believed it and went home, and his son was healed at that very hour. His whole household believed.

Who Were the Samaritans?

The bad blood between Jews and Samaritans explains much of this chapter.

Where they came from: After King Solomon, Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom, Israel, had its capital at Samaria. In 722 B.C., Assyria conquered the northern kingdom, carried off many of its people, and brought in people from other nations to settle the land (2 Kings

17:6, 24). These newcomers brought their own gods and mixed them with the worship of the Lord (2 Kings 17:29-33). Over time, the people who remained intermarried with them. Jews in the south saw the Samaritans as people of mixed blood and mixed religion.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem: When the Jews came back from exile in Babylon, the people of the land offered to help rebuild the temple. The Jews refused, and those people worked against them (Ezra 4:1-5; Nehemiah 4:1-2). The hostility only grew from there.

Their worship: The Samaritans accepted only the five books of Moses as Scripture. They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, and even after it was destroyed by a Jewish ruler more than a century before Jesus, they kept worshiping on that mountain.

Why it matters: When Jesus sat down with a Samaritan woman, asked her for a drink, and stayed two days in her town, He was tearing down a wall that had stood for centuries. Later, Jesus would tell His disciples to be His witnesses "in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), and Philip would preach in Samaria with great results (Acts 8:5-8). The seed planted at Jacob's well was just the beginning.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. When was a time you were really thirsty? What did that first drink of water feel like?

2. Why do you think "it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria"? (4:4)

3. What did Jesus mean by "living water"? (4:10-14; see also 7:37-39)

4. How did Jesus bring up the hard truth about the woman's life, and how did He treat her when He did? (4:16-18)

5. What does it mean to worship God "in spirit and truth"? (4:23-24)

6. Why do you think Jesus first told a Samaritan woman plainly that He was the Messiah? (4:25-26)

7. What was the woman's message to her town, and what can we learn from how she shared it? (4:28-29)

8. What did the Samaritans mean when they said they now believed because they had heard Jesus for themselves? (4:42)

9. How did the royal official's faith grow from the beginning of the story to the end? (4:47-53)

10. Who is someone in your life the world overlooks that Jesus might be reaching for? How can you be part of that?

Chapter 5: The Healing at Bethesda

Scripture: The Healing on the Sabbath and the Witnesses to the Son

5:1-9 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep ***Gate*** a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these were lying a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel was going down at a season into the pool and was stirring the water; whoever then stepped in first after the stirring of the water was becoming well of whatever disease he was being held ***by***. Now a certain man was there, having thirty and eight years in his infirmity. Jesus, having seen him lying ***there***, and having known that he had already ***been so*** a long time, says to him, "Do you want to become well?" The one who was sick answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred; but while I am coming, another goes down before me." Jesus says to him, "Rise, take up your mat and walk." And immediately the man became well, and took up his mat and was walking. Now it was ***the*** Sabbath on that day.

5:10-18 Therefore the Jews were saying to the one who had been healed, "It is ***the*** Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to take up the mat." He answered them, "The ***One*** who made me well, that One said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" Therefore they asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your mat and walk'?" But the one who had been healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away, a crowd being in the place. After these things Jesus finds him in the temple and said to him, "Look, you have become well; sin no more, so that something worse may not happen to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. And because of this the Jews were persecuting Jesus and were seeking to kill Him, because He was doing these things on ***the*** Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." Therefore because of this the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God.

5:19-29 Therefore Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is able to do nothing of Himself, unless ***it is*** something He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, these things the Son also does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises up the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wishes. For the Father does not judge anyone, but has given all the judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have heard will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to have life in Himself, and He gave Him authority also to execute judgment, because He is Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth, those who have done the good ***things*** to a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced the wicked ***things*** to a resurrection of judgment.

5:30-47 I am able to do nothing of Myself. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My will but the will of the Father who sent Me. If I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies concerning Me, and I know that the testimony which He testifies concerning Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But I do not receive the testimony from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for an hour in his light. But I have the testimony greater than that of John; for the works which the Father gave Me that I may complete them, the very works that I do, testify concerning Me that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He Himself has testified concerning Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How are you able to believe, receiving glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that ***is*** from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is ***one*** who accuses you, Moses, in whom you have hoped. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote concerning Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Chapter 5 Preview

Chapter 5 is a turning point in John's Gospel. Up to now, people have mostly been curious about Jesus. Here the opposition turns deadly. Jesus heals a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years, and because He does it on the Sabbath, the religious leaders begin persecuting Him. When Jesus calls God "My Father," they understand exactly what He means, and they start looking for a way to kill Him.

The rest of the chapter is Jesus' answer to them. It is one of the clearest places in the Bible where Jesus explains who He is. He says He does the same works as the Father, gives life like the Father, will judge the whole world, and deserves the same honor as the Father. Then He calls four witnesses to back up His claims. If you have ever been told that Jesus never claimed to be God, this chapter answers that.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

John does not tell us which feast this was. Bible teachers have guessed Passover, Pentecost, Booths, and Purim, but nobody knows for sure. What matters is that Jesus went up to Jerusalem as a faithful Jewish man, keeping the feasts God gave Israel.

5:2 *Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep **Gate** a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches.*

The pool of Bethesda was near the Sheep Gate on the north side of Jerusalem. "Bethesda" is usually understood to mean "house of mercy," which fits what happens here. For a long time, some critics said John made this place up, because no one had found a pool with five porticoes, or covered porches. Then in the late 1800s, a pool was found near the Church of St. Anne in Jerusalem, and later digs in the 1900s uncovered two pools side by side, divided by a wall. Most reconstructions show colonnades around the four sides and one more across the middle between them. That makes five. John knew exactly what he was talking about. God's Word holds up.

5:3 *In these were lying a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

Picture the scene. Under those porches lay a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed, all "waiting for the moving of the water."

5:4 *For an angel was going down at a season into the pool and was stirring the water; whoever then stepped in first after the stirring of the water was becoming well of whatever disease he was being held **by**.*

Verse 4 explains why the people were waiting: an angel went down into the pool at certain times and stirred the water, and the first person to step in after the stirring was made well. The sick man tells Jesus the same thing in verse 7. You should know that the earliest Greek manuscripts we have do not include the end of verse 3 and all of verse 4, so many modern translations move those words to a footnote. Older translations print them, and so does the translation used in this study. I read the verse as it stands, but no teaching in this chapter depends on it, because verse 7 tells us the same thing in the man's own words. Notice how hard that way of healing was. Only the fastest person could be helped, which meant the people who needed it most never had a chance. Jesus did not wait for the water at all.

5:5 *Now a certain man was there, having thirty and eight years in his infirmity.*

This man had been sick for thirty-eight years. That is longer than many people in that day lived. Some Bible teachers point out that Israel wandered in the wilderness for thirty-eight years after their unbelief at Kadesh (Deuteronomy 2:14). Whether John meant that connection or not, the point is plain: this man had been stuck a very long time, with no way out on his own.

5:6 *Jesus, having seen him lying **there**, and having known that he had already **been so** a long time, says to him, "Do you want to become well?"*

Jesus saw him and knew how long he had suffered. Out of that whole crowd, Jesus went to this one man. Then He asked a question that sounds strange at first: "Do you want to become well?"

You might ask, "Why would Jesus ask that? Of course he wants to get well." It is not that simple. After thirty-eight years, a person can lose all hope. Being sick can become who you are. Getting

well would mean a whole new life with new responsibilities. Jesus asks us the same question about our sin and our brokenness. Do we really want to be made well?

5:7 *The one who was sick answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred; but while I am coming, another goes down before me."*

The man does not say yes. He explains why it is hopeless. He has no one to help him into the pool, and someone else always beats him there. He is looking at the water and at other people for help. He does not yet realize that the One who can heal him is standing right in front of him. Many people today are the same way. They keep looking for help from every place except Jesus.

5:8 *Jesus says to him, "Rise, take up your mat and walk."*

Jesus does not help him into the pool. He bypasses the pool completely. "Rise, take up your mat and walk." His mat was a light pallet or bedroll that could be rolled up and carried. Jesus gives three commands, and each one would have been impossible a second earlier.

5:9 *And immediately the man became well, and took up his mat and was walking. Now it was **the** Sabbath on that day.*

"Immediately the man became well." No therapy, no recovery time, no slow progress. Thirty-eight years of weakness gone in a moment. He picked up his mat and walked. Jesus did not ask him for faith first. This healing was pure grace, given to a man who did not even know who Jesus was.

Then John adds the line that sets up the rest of the chapter: "Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

5:10 *Therefore the Jews were saying to the one who had been healed, "It is **the** Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to take up the mat."*

The religious leaders did not rejoice that a man who had not been able to walk for thirty-eight years was walking. They saw him carrying his mat and said, "It is the Sabbath." The Law of Moses did command rest on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11), and Jeremiah warned against carrying loads through the city gates on that day (Jeremiah 17:21-22). But over the centuries, the religious teachers had added a mountain of their own rules about what counted as work. Carrying a sleeping mat was on their list. They cared more about their rules than about a man made whole.

5:11 *He answered them, "The **One** who made me well, that One said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'"*

The man's answer is simple: "The one who made me well told me to." That makes sense. If someone has the power to heal you after thirty-eight years, you listen to what He says.

5:12-13 *Therefore they asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your mat and walk'?" But the one who had been healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away, a crowd being in the place.*

Look at their question. They do not ask, "Who healed you?" They ask, "Who told you to carry your mat?" They were not interested in the miracle at all. They wanted someone to blame. The man did not even know Jesus' name, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd.

5:14 *After these things Jesus finds him in the temple and said to him, "Look, you have become well; sin no more, so that something worse may not happen to you."*

Later Jesus found him in the temple. Jesus went looking for him. Then He told him, "Sin no more, so that something worse may not happen to you."

This does not mean every sickness is caused by a person's own sin. Jesus makes that very clear in John 9:1-3. But sin does have consequences, and some sickness does come from it. And something worse than thirty-eight years of illness is facing God's judgment. Jesus cared about this man's body, but He cared even more about his soul.

5:15 *The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.*

The man went and told the leaders that it was Jesus who healed him. Some readers think he was turning Jesus in. Others think he was simply answering their question, or even giving Jesus the credit. John does not say what was in his heart. We do know that the man never shows the bold faith we will see in the blind man in chapter 9, who stood up to these same leaders.

5:16 *And because of this the Jews were persecuting Jesus and were seeking to kill Him, because He was doing these things on* ***the*** *Sabbath.*

"And because of this the Jews were persecuting Jesus and were seeking to kill Him, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath." When John says "the Jews" in this Gospel, he usually means the religious leaders in Jerusalem who opposed Jesus, not every Jewish person. Jesus, His disciples, and John himself were all Jewish. The word "persecuting" is in an ongoing form in the Greek. This was not a one-time complaint. It became a pattern, and it would lead to the cross.

5:17 *But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."*

Jesus' answer is short, but it is huge. "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

God rested on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2-3). But God never stopped holding the world together. Babies are born on the Sabbath. The sun rises on the Sabbath. God keeps on giving life and keeping His creation going every day of the week. Jesus is saying, "I am doing what My Father does, and I have the same right to do it." Notice also that He says "My Father," not "our Father." He is claiming a relationship with God no one else has.

5:18 *Therefore because of this the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God.*

The leaders understood Him perfectly. John tells us they wanted to kill Him because He was "calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God." Some people today say Jesus never claimed to be God. His enemies did not think so. They heard His claim loud and clear, and they wanted Him dead because of it. Jesus never corrected them. If they had misunderstood Him, this would have been the time to say so. Instead, He goes on to explain His equality with the Father even more fully.

5:19 *Therefore Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is able to do nothing of Himself, unless* ***it is*** *something He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, these things the Son also does likewise.*

Jesus begins with "Truly, truly," which in the Greek is *amen, amen*. It means, "Listen carefully, this is the solemn truth." He says the Son can do nothing on His own, apart from the Father. This is not a confession of weakness. It is a statement of perfect unity. The Son never acts independently of the Father. Whatever the Father does, the Son does too, in the same way. No mere man could say that. Only someone who is one with God can do everything God does.

5:20 *For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.*

The Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing. There are no secrets between them. Then Jesus promises "greater works than these." If they were amazed that a lame man walked, wait until they see the dead raised (11:43-44) and Jesus Himself rise from the grave.

5:21 *For as the Father raises up the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wishes.*

In the Old Testament, giving life to the dead is something only God does (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6). Here Jesus says the Son gives life "to whom He wishes," just as the Father does. Jesus is not borrowing someone else's power. He has the authority to give life on His own choice.

5:22-23 *For the Father does not judge anyone, but has given all the judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

The Father has handed all judgment to the Son. Why? "So that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Think about how strong that is. Jesus is saying He deserves the same honor as God. If Jesus were only a good teacher or a prophet, this would be blasphemy. But He is God the Son.

Then comes a warning: "The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." No one can claim to love and worship God while rejecting Jesus. You cannot have the Father without the Son (1 John 2:23).

5:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

This is one of the greatest promises in all of Scripture. Read it slowly. The person who hears Jesus' word and believes the Father who sent Him:

- has eternal life, right now, not just someday,
- does not come into judgment, meaning condemnation, and
- has passed out of death into life.

Notice the tenses. "Has" eternal life. "Has passed out of death into life." It is already done. When we put our trust in Jesus, God moves us from the column of the dead to the column of the living. This is what gives a believer real assurance. Our hope does not rest on how good we have been this week. It rests on the word of Jesus.

Christians differ on what this means for someone who later turns away from Christ. Some believe a true believer can never lose eternal life, and they point to promises like this one and 10:28. Others believe a person can walk away from the faith and be lost, and they point to warnings like Hebrews 3:12-14 and 6:4-6. Both sides agree on what this verse plainly says: the one who hears and believes has eternal life right now.

5:25 *Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have heard will live.*

"An hour is coming, and now is." Jesus is talking about something happening already. The "dead" here are people who are spiritually dead in their sin (Ephesians 2:1). When they hear the voice of the Son of God through His Word and believe, they come alive. Every time someone is saved, this verse comes true again.

5:26 *For as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave also to the Son to have life in Himself,*

This verse goes deep. The Father has "life in Himself." He does not get life from anyone. He is the source of all life. And the Father has given the Son to have life in Himself too. You and I have borrowed life. Jesus has life in Himself, just like the Father. That is why He could say, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25).

5:27 *And He gave Him authority also to execute judgment, because He is Son of Man.*

The Father gave the Son authority to judge "because He is Son of Man." That title comes from Daniel 7:13-14, where one like a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven and is given everlasting dominion over all peoples. Because Jesus became a man and lived as one of us, He is the perfect Judge of mankind. No one will be able to say, "You don't know what it's like to be human."

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:13-14 (alluded to)

5:28-29 *Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth, those who have done the good* ***things*** *to a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced the wicked* ***things*** *to a resurrection of judgment.*

Now Jesus moves from the spiritual resurrection happening now to the physical resurrection still to come. "Do not marvel at this." If they were shocked that He gives spiritual life, here is something greater: one day every person in every grave will hear His voice and come out.

There are two outcomes: a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment. Every person who has ever lived will be raised bodily. No one simply disappears.

Does "those who have done the good things" mean we are saved by our works? No. Jesus has just said in verse 24 that eternal life comes by hearing and believing. Good deeds are the fruit that shows real faith, not the root that earns it (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:17-18).

The "hour" here is a period of time, not sixty minutes. Jesus has just used "an hour" in verse 25 for the whole time from His day until now. In Revelation 20:4-6, we learn that the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the rest of the dead are separated by the thousand-year reign of Christ. As I explain in my study of Revelation, I hold the premillennial view, which means Christ returns before the thousand-year reign. I also believe He will first come for His church before the Tribulation, the final time of great trouble on the earth, and the dead in Christ (believers who have died) will be raised then (1 Thessalonians 4:16). At the end of the Tribulation He returns to the earth, and those who died for Him during it are raised to reign with Him. The rest of the dead are raised to judgment after the thousand years. John 5:28-29 gives the big picture. Revelation 20 fills in the timeline.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:2 (alluded to)

5:30 *I am able to do nothing of Myself. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My will but the will of the Father who sent Me.*

Jesus repeats what He said in verse 19. He does nothing on His own initiative. His judgment is always right because He seeks only the will of the Father who sent Him. A human judge can be swayed by bias, bribes, or his own interests. Jesus never will be. That should comfort believers and warn everyone else.

5:31-32 *If I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies concerning Me, and I know that the testimony which He testifies concerning Me is true.*

Under the Law of Moses, a matter had to be confirmed by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). One person speaking for himself was not enough in court. Jesus agrees to play by their rules. "If I testify concerning Myself," His testimony would not hold up legally. So He calls witnesses. The first is "another who testifies concerning Me," and I believe that is the Father Himself, as verse 37 shows.

5:33-35 *You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But I do not receive the testimony from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for an hour in his light.*

The second witness is John the Baptist. The leaders had sent people to question John (1:19), and John had told them plainly that Jesus was the Lamb of God and the Son of God (1:29-34). Jesus does not need any man's testimony, but He mentions John for their sake, "so that you may be saved." Even while they plot to kill Him, Jesus is trying to save them.

Jesus calls John "the burning and shining lamp." A lamp is not the light itself. It carries the light. John was never the Light (1:8). And the people "were willing to rejoice for an hour in his light." They enjoyed the excitement of a new prophet, but when John pointed them to Jesus, many of them did not follow.

5:36 *But I have the testimony greater than that of John; for the works which the Father gave Me that I may complete them, the very works that I do, testify concerning Me that the Father has sent Me.*

The third witness is even greater than John: the works Jesus does. Every miracle was the Father's signature on Jesus' claims. A lame man walking after thirty-eight years was not a magic trick. It was the work of God, and it proved the Father had sent Him (10:25, 37-38).

5:37-38 *And the Father who sent Me, He Himself has testified concerning Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.*

The Father Himself has testified about Jesus. He did it out loud at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17), and He does it through His Word. But these leaders had never heard His voice or seen His form, and they did not have His word living in them. How do we know? Because they did not believe the One the Father sent. A person who truly knows God's Word will recognize God's Son.

5:39-40 *You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they that testify concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.*

The fourth witness is the Scriptures. These men studied the Scriptures harder than almost anyone. They memorized them and argued over every word. And they thought that studying the Scriptures itself would give them eternal life. Jesus tells them they missed the whole point: "These are they that testify concerning Me."

The Bible is not the goal. Jesus is. The Scriptures are a signpost, and they all point to Him (Luke 24:27, 44). You can know the Bible inside and out and still miss Jesus. And notice the reason they missed Him: "You are not willing to come to Me." Their problem was not a lack of evidence. It was their will. That is still the problem for many people today.

5:41-42 *I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.*

Jesus does not need the approval of men. But He knows these men's hearts. For all their religion, they did not have the love of God in them. You can be very religious and still not love God.

5:43 *I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.*

Here is a sad truth. Jesus came in His Father's name, with the Father's authority and the Father's works to prove it, and they rejected Him. But "if another comes in his own name, him you will receive."

History proved this true. In the years after Jesus, Israel followed several false messiahs. The most famous was Simon bar Kokhba, who led a revolt against Rome around A.D. 132 and was hailed by some as the Messiah. It ended in disaster. I also believe this points ahead to the final deceiver, the antichrist, who will come in his own name and be welcomed by the world (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-10; Revelation 13).

5:44 *How are you able to believe, receiving glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that **is** from the only God?*

How could they believe? They were too busy seeking praise from each other. When you care most about what people think of you, it is very hard to stand up for Jesus. Pride and faith pull in opposite directions. Real faith seeks "the glory that is from the only God."

5:45-47 *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is **one** who accuses you, Moses, in whom you have hoped. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote concerning Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"*

Jesus closes with a shock. He will not need to accuse them before the Father. Moses will do it. These men put all their hope in Moses and the Law, and the very Moses they trusted would be the one to condemn them.

"He wrote concerning Me." Moses wrote about Jesus in many places. God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses from among the people (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). The Passover lamb, the bronze serpent (3:14), the manna, and the sacrifices all pointed to Jesus. If they had truly believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus. And if they would not believe what Moses wrote, they would not believe the words of Jesus either.

Chapter 5 Summary

At the pool of Bethesda, Jesus found a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years and healed him with a word: "Rise, take up your mat and walk." Because it was the Sabbath, the religious leaders did not celebrate. They went after the man for carrying his mat and then went after Jesus. When Jesus answered, "My Father is working until now, and I am working," they understood He was making Himself equal with God, and they began seeking to kill Him. Jesus did not back down.

He explained that He does everything the Father does, gives life to whom He wishes, has been given all judgment, and deserves the same honor as the Father. Whoever hears His word and believes has eternal life now and has passed from death into life, and one day all the dead will hear His voice and rise. Then Jesus called four witnesses: the Father, John the Baptist, His works, and the Scriptures, including Moses, who wrote about Him.

The Four Witnesses to Jesus

The Law required two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). In John 5:31-47, Jesus calls four.

The Father (5:32, 37-38): The Father spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17) and again later in Jerusalem (John 12:28). He testifies through His Word and in the hearts of those who believe.

John the Baptist (5:33-35): The leaders sent people to question him, and he testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God and the Son of God (1:29, 34). He was a burning and shining lamp pointing to the Light.

The works of Jesus (5:36): The miracles the Father gave Jesus to do proved the Father had sent Him. John calls them "signs" because they point to who Jesus is.

The Scriptures (5:39-47): The whole Old Testament points to Jesus, from Moses' promise of a coming Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15) to the Passover lamb and the prophets. As Jesus told His disciples after He rose, everything written about Him "in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms" (Luke 24:44).

The evidence was there. What was missing was a willingness to come to Him (5:40).

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What is the longest you have ever waited for something? How did it feel when the wait was finally over?

2. Why do you think Jesus asked the man, "Do you want to become well?" (5:6)

3. Where was the sick man looking for help, and what does that teach us? (5:7)

4. Why were the religious leaders upset instead of happy about the healing? (5:10-16)

5. What did the leaders understand Jesus to be claiming when He called God "My Father"? (5:17-18)

6. List the things Jesus says the Son does just like the Father. (5:19-27)

7. According to 5:24, what does the person who hears and believes already have? How does that give you assurance?

8. Who are the four witnesses Jesus calls, and what does each one say about Him? (5:31-47)

9. Why did the religious leaders miss Jesus even though they studied the Scriptures so carefully? (5:39-40, 44)

10. Are there ways you seek praise from people more than from God? What would change if you sought God's approval first?

Chapter 6: The Bread of Life

Scripture: The Bread That Came Down from Heaven

6:1-15 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, of Tiberias. And a great crowd was following Him, because they were seeing His signs which He was doing on those who were sick. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He was sitting with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Therefore Jesus, having lifted up the eyes and having seen that a great crowd is coming to Him, says to Philip, "From where will we buy loaves, that these may eat?" Now He was saying this testing him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii ***worth*** of loaves are not sufficient for them, that each of them may receive a little." One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, says to Him, "There is one little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fish; but these, what are they for so many?" And Jesus said, "Make the men recline." Now there was much grass in the place. Therefore the men reclined, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and having given thanks He distributed ***them*** to the disciples, and the disciples to those reclining; likewise also of the small fish, as much as they were wanting. And when they were filled, He says to His disciples, "Gather together the fragments that are left over, so that nothing may be lost." Therefore they gathered ***them*** together and filled twelve baskets of fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over to those having eaten. Therefore the men, having seen the sign which Jesus had done, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world." Therefore Jesus, having known that they are about to come and seize Him, that they may make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain, Himself alone.

6:16-21 And when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, and having embarked into the boat, they were going over the sea to Capernaum. And darkness had already come, and Jesus had not come to them, and the sea, a great wind blowing, was being stirred up. Therefore, having rowed approximately three to three and a half miles (twenty-five or thirty stadia), they see Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were afraid. But He says to them, "I am ***He***; do not be afraid." Then they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

6:22-40 On the next day the crowd which was standing on the other side of the sea, having seen that no other small boat was there except one, that into which His disciples had embarked, and that Jesus had not gone in with His disciples into the small boat, but His disciples went away alone, but other small boats came from Tiberias near the place where they ate the bread, the Lord having given thanks, when therefore the crowd saw that Jesus is not there, nor His disciples, they themselves also embarked into the boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. And having found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were satisfied. Do not work ***for*** the food which perishes, but ***for*** the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you; for the Father, God, sealed Him." Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." Therefore they said to Him, "What sign then do You do, that we may see and believe You?

What do You work? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, even as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'" Therefore Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses has not given you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is the ***One*** coming down out of heaven and giving life to the world." Therefore they said to Him, "Sir, always give us this bread." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The ***one*** coming to Me will certainly not hunger, and the ***one*** believing in Me will certainly not thirst at any time. But I said to you that you have also seen Me, and you do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the ***one*** coming to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down out of heaven, not that I may do My own will, but the will of the ***One*** who sent Me. And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that all which He has given Me, I may lose none of it, but may raise it up on the last day. Now this is the will of the ***One*** who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

6:41-59 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down out of heaven." And they were saying, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then does this ***one*** say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" Therefore Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble with one another. No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught of God.' Therefore everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the ***One*** who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, the ***one*** believing in Me has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Therefore the Jews were arguing with one another, saying, "How is this ***man*** able to give us ***His*** flesh to eat?" Therefore Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The ***one*** feeding on My flesh and drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The ***one*** feeding on My flesh and drinking My blood abides in Me, and I in him. Even as the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, also the ***one*** feeding on Me, even that ***one*** will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna and died; the ***one*** feeding on this bread will live forever." He said these things in a synagogue, teaching in Capernaum.

6:60-71 Therefore many of His disciples, having heard, said, "This word is hard; who is able to hear it?" But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples are grumbling about this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? ***What*** then if you see the Son of Man ascending where He was before? The Spirit is the ***One*** giving life; the flesh profits nothing. The words which I speak to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from ***the*** beginning who they are who do not believe, and who it is who will betray Him. And He was saying, "Because of this I have said to you that no one is able to come to Me unless it has been granted to him from My Father." From this ***time*** many of His disciples went away back and were no longer walking with Him. Therefore Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not also want to go away,

do you?" Therefore Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And of you one is a devil." Now He was speaking of Judas Iscariot, ***son*** of Simon; for he was about to betray Him, being one of the twelve.

Chapter 6 Preview

Chapter 6 is the longest chapter in the Gospel of John, and it turns on one simple question: what are you really hungry for? It opens with the only miracle, other than the resurrection, recorded in all four Gospels: the feeding of the five thousand. That same night Jesus walks on the sea to His frightened disciples.

The next day the crowd chases Jesus across the lake, hoping for another free meal. Instead He gives them the "Bread of Life" teaching, the first of His seven "I am" statements in this Gospel. The teaching is hard, and many who had been following Him walk away. The chapter ends with a question Jesus asks the twelve, and that He still asks each of us: "You do not also want to go away, do you?"

Chapter 6 Study

6:1 *After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, of Tiberias.*

"After this" points back to the events of chapter 5 in Jerusalem. Some time has passed, and Jesus is back in Galilee. John gives the lake both of its names. The Sea of Galilee was also called the Sea of Tiberias, after the city Herod Antipas built on its western shore and named for the Roman emperor Tiberius. John was writing for readers across the Roman world, so he made sure they would recognize the place.

6:2 *And a great crowd was following Him, because they were seeing His signs which He was doing on those who were sick.*

The crowd was following Jesus because of the signs, the healings they had seen. That sounds good at first, but John is setting up a problem we will see in this chapter. People can follow Jesus for what He does for them without ever trusting Him for who He is. Ask yourself honestly: do I follow Jesus for His gifts, or for Himself?

6:3 *And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He was sitting with His disciples.*

Jesus went up on the mountain, or the hillside, above the lake and sat down with His disciples. In that culture a teacher sat down to teach. This is the same posture Jesus took before the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1).

6:4 *Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.*

This is the second Passover mentioned in John (the first was in 2:13, and the last comes in 11:55). Passover remembered how God brought Israel out of Egypt and fed them in the wilderness. That

detail matters. Moses, manna, and the wilderness will all come up in Jesus' teaching later in this chapter. John wants us to read the feeding of the five thousand with Passover and the Exodus in mind.

6:5-6 *Therefore Jesus, having lifted up the eyes and having seen that a great crowd is coming to Him, says to Philip, "From where will we buy loaves, that these may eat?" Now He was saying this testing him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do.*

Jesus already knew what He was going to do. He asked Philip anyway, to test him. Philip was from nearby Bethsaida (1:44), so he would know the area. God sometimes asks us questions, not because He needs the answer, but so that we will discover what is in our own hearts. The test was simple: would Philip look at the size of the problem, or at the One standing in front of him?

6:7 *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii **worth** of loaves are not sufficient for them, that each of them may receive a little."*

Philip failed the test, as most of us would. He ran the numbers. A denarius was about a day's wage for a laborer (Matthew 20:2), so two hundred denarii was roughly eight months of pay. Even that, Philip said, would only give each person a little. He was right about the math and wrong about the situation. He forgot who was asking the question.

6:8-9 *One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, says to Him, "There is one little boy here who has five barley loaves and two small fish; but these, what are they for so many?"*

Andrew does what Andrew always seems to do in John: he brings someone to Jesus (1:40-42; 12:22). He found a boy with five barley loaves and two fish. Barley bread was the cheap bread of poor people, and the fish were probably small, dried or pickled fish to go with the bread. Andrew had a little faith mixed with a lot of doubt: "But these, what are they for so many?" Still, he brought what little there was to Jesus. That is all God asks of us.

I love this little scene because it shows how God works. He could have made bread out of nothing at all. Instead, He chose to start with one boy's lunch. God still does that. He takes what we bring Him, our time, our skills, our money, even our weakness, and He multiplies it for His purposes. Never think what you have is too small to give Him.

6:10 *And Jesus said, "Make the men recline." Now there was much grass in the place. Therefore the men reclined, in number about five thousand.*

Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down on the grass. Mark tells us they sat in groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:40). The grass tells us it was spring, near Passover, just as verse 4 said. John counts "the men" at about five thousand. With women and children (Matthew 14:21), the crowd could easily have been more than double that.

6:11 *And Jesus took the loaves, and having given thanks He distributed **them** to the disciples, and the disciples to those reclining; likewise also of the small fish, as much as they were wanting.*

Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and handed out the food. Notice the order. He thanked the Father for what He had before it was enough. Then He gave "as much as they were wanting." This was not a snack or a symbolic taste. Everyone ate their fill. Our God is not stingy.

6:12-13 *And when they were filled, He says to His disciples, "Gather together the fragments that are left over, so that nothing may be lost." Therefore they gathered **them** together and filled twelve baskets of fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over to those having eaten.*

Jesus told the disciples to gather the leftovers "so that nothing may be lost." The One who could make bread out of nothing still did not waste what He had made. Twelve baskets were filled, one for each of the twelve disciples, men who had wondered how there could ever be enough. God gave more than was needed, and He wanted His disciples to see it with their own eyes and carry it with their own hands.

There is also a lesson here about how we treat God's blessings. When God provides, it is easy to take His gifts for granted or waste them. Jesus shows us that gratitude includes being a good steward of what He gives.

6:14 *Therefore the men, having seen the sign which Jesus had done, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet who is coming into the world."*

The people called Jesus "the Prophet who is coming into the world." They were thinking of Deuteronomy 18:15-18, where Moses promised that God would raise up a prophet like him. Moses fed Israel with manna in the wilderness; here was someone feeding them bread in the wilderness. They were right that He was the Prophet. They were wrong about what kind of Savior He came to be.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 18:18 (alluded to)

6:15 *Therefore Jesus, having known that they are about to come and seize Him, that they may make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain, Himself alone.*

The crowd wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king. They wanted a king who would fill their stomachs and throw off Rome. Jesus withdrew to the mountain alone. He is King, but He would not be crowned on man's terms or by man's timing. His path to the throne went through the cross. Matthew and Mark tell us He went up to pray (Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46).

6:16-17 *And when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, and having embarked into the boat, they were going over the sea to Capernaum. And darkness had already come, and Jesus had not come to them,*

When evening came, the disciples went down to the lake and started rowing toward Capernaum, on the northern shore. Mark tells us Jesus had sent them ahead (Mark 6:45). John adds a simple,

heavy line: "And darkness had already come, and Jesus had not come to them." Many of us have been in that boat, doing what Jesus told us to do, in the dark, wondering where He is.

6:18 *And the sea, a great wind blowing, was being stirred up.*

The Sea of Galilee sits low, surrounded by hills, and strong winds can rush down on it quickly and stir up the water. This was a real storm. The disciples were not in trouble because they disobeyed. They were in trouble while obeying. Storms are not always a sign that we are out of God's will.

6:19 *Therefore, having rowed approximately three to three and a half miles (twenty-five or thirty stadia), they see Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were afraid.*

After rowing about three miles, they saw Jesus walking on the water, coming toward the boat, and they were afraid. John states it plainly as a fact. The Creator who made the sea was walking on top of it. The same Jesus who multiplied bread on the hillside ruled the water at night.

6:20 *But He says to them, "I am **He**; do not be afraid."*

Jesus said, "I am He; do not be afraid." In the Greek, "I am He" is *ego eimi*, which means "I am." It is the same phrase Jesus will use for His "I am" statements, and the same phrase that echoes God's name in Exodus 3:14. On the open sea at night, Jesus told His disciples who He is, and knowing who He is drives out fear.

6:21 *Then they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*

Once they were willing to take Him into the boat, they were immediately at the shore where they were going. John may be describing another miracle here, or simply telling us how quickly the trip ended once Jesus was with them. Either way, the lesson is the same: when Jesus is in the boat, we arrive where He is taking us.

6:22-24 *On the next day the crowd which was standing on the other side of the sea, having seen that no other small boat was there except one, that into which His disciples had embarked, and that Jesus had not gone in with His disciples into the small boat, but His disciples went away alone, but other small boats came from Tiberias near the place where they ate the bread, the Lord having given thanks, when therefore the crowd saw that Jesus is not there, nor His disciples, they themselves also embarked into the boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.*

These verses explain how the crowd found Jesus. They had seen only one boat on the eastern shore the night before, and they knew Jesus had not gotten into it with His disciples. In the morning He was gone. Boats came over from Tiberias, and the people used them to cross to Capernaum, looking for Him. Notice John's words in verse 23: the place "where they ate the bread, the Lord having given thanks." John remembers the thanksgiving as much as the bread.

6:25 *And having found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?"*

The crowd asked, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" They wanted to know how He crossed the lake. Jesus never answers that question. He goes straight to the question they should have been asking.

6:26 *Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were satisfied.*

Jesus told them the hard truth. They were not looking for Him because they saw the signs and understood what the signs meant. They came because they ate the bread and were full. A sign points to something beyond itself. They looked at the sign and saw only lunch. "Truly, truly" (in Greek, *amen, amen*) is Jesus' way of saying, "Listen closely, this is solemn truth."

6:27 *Do not work **for** the food which perishes, but **for** the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you; for the Father, God, sealed Him."*

"Do not work for the food which perishes." Jesus is not telling us to quit our jobs (Paul says plainly in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that a man who will not work should not eat). He is talking about what we live for. Bread spoils; the life Jesus gives lasts forever. The Father "sealed" the Son. In those days a seal marked something as genuine and approved by its owner. God the Father has put His stamp of approval on Jesus.

6:28-29 *Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."*

The people asked what works they must do to please God. They were thinking of a list. Jesus gave them one "work": "that you believe in Him whom He sent." This is one of the clearest verses in the Bible on how a person is made right with God. Salvation is not earned by a pile of good deeds; it is received by trusting in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is not a work we do to earn God's favor. It is simply receiving what He offers.

6:30-31 *Therefore they said to Him, "What sign then do You do, that we may see and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, even as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.'"*

The crowd that had eaten the miracle bread the day before now asked for a sign! They pointed to Moses and the manna, quoting the idea of Psalm 78:24 and Exodus 16:4. Their thinking seems to have been, "Moses fed our fathers for forty years. You fed us one meal. What else can You do?" Unbelief always wants one more sign.

The same words appear in the prayer the Levites led after the return from exile: "bread from heaven You gave them for their hunger" (Nehemiah 9:15).

Old Testament links: Nehemiah 9:15 (quoted); Psalm 78:24 (quoted); Exodus 16:4 (alluded to)

6:32-33 *Therefore Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses has not given you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is the **One** coming down out of heaven and giving life to the world."*

Jesus corrected them on two points. First, it was not Moses who gave the manna; it was God. Second, the manna was not the "true" bread. It was a picture pointing ahead. The true bread out of heaven is "the one coming down out of heaven and giving life to the world." Manna fed one nation for a time. Jesus gives life to the whole world, forever.

Old Testament links: Exodus 16:4 (pictured)

6:34 *Therefore they said to Him, "Sir, always give us this bread."*

"Sir, always give us this bread." This sounds like the woman at the well asking for water so she would never have to come draw again (4:15). The crowd still thought Jesus was talking about something to eat. They wanted the gift, but they did not yet understand that the gift was Jesus Himself.

6:35 *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The **one** coming to Me will certainly not hunger, and the **one** believing in Me will certainly not thirst at any time.*

This is the first of the seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John: "I am the bread of life." Bread was the most basic food of that day, eaten at every meal. Jesus is saying that He is not an extra in life; He is life's most basic need. Notice the parallel. "The one coming to Me" is the same as "the one believing in Me." Coming to Jesus and believing in Jesus are the same thing. The promise is that the deepest hunger and thirst of the soul are met in Him.

Notice too that Jesus does not say, "I will give you bread," or, "I will show you where to find bread." He says, "I am the bread." He does not point us to a program, a set of rules, or a religious system. He points us to Himself. Christianity is not first about a list of things to do. It is about a Person to know and trust.

Bread is a figure of speech here, but it points to a literal truth. Jesus does not mean He is a loaf of bread. He means that He truly sustains spiritual life the way bread sustains physical life, and that without Him a person is spiritually starving.

6:36 *But I said to you that you have also seen Me, and you do not believe.*

The crowd had seen Jesus. They had seen His miracles, and they had eaten His bread. Yet they did not believe. Seeing is not the same as believing. Many people today know a great deal about Jesus and still have never trusted Him.

6:37 *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the **one** coming to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

This verse holds two truths side by side. First, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." God is in charge of salvation, and His plan will not fail. Second, "the one coming to Me I will certainly not cast out." No one who truly comes to Jesus will ever be turned away. If you are worried that

you are too far gone, too sinful, or too broken, this verse is for you. The words "certainly not" are a strong double negative in the Greek. Jesus is saying, "I will never, ever throw you out."

Some people struggle with how both of these truths can be true at the same time. How can God be in charge of who comes, and still invite everyone to come? I do not claim to understand how it all fits together. I simply believe both, because Jesus said both, in the same breath. God is sovereign, and every person who comes to Jesus is welcome. Our job is not to solve the mystery. Our job is to come, and to invite others to come.

6:38 *For I have come down out of heaven, not that I may do My own will, but the will of the **One** who sent Me.*

Jesus came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. Here we see both His heavenly origin and His perfect obedience. There is no competition inside the Godhead. The Son delights to do the Father's will.

6:39-40 *And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that all which He has given Me, I may lose none of it, but may raise it up on the last day. Now this is the will of the **One** who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

What is the Father's will? Verse 39 says Jesus will lose none of those the Father has given Him. Verse 40 says everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life. Both verses end with the same promise of resurrection "on the last day" (6:39, "raise it up"; 6:40, "I will raise him up"). Jesus makes that promise four times in this chapter (6:39, 40, 44, 54).

Eternal life begins the moment we believe, and it is completed at the bodily resurrection. "The last day" is the day Christ comes for His own. As I explained in my study of Revelation, I believe He will come for His church before the Tribulation, the final time of great trouble on the earth, raise the dead in Christ, and gather His people to Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). This is my conviction, but the main point of these verses is one every believer can stand on: Jesus will not lose one of His own.

6:41-42 *Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down out of heaven." And they were saying, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then does this **one** say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?"*

The Jews (John often uses this term for the religious leaders and the crowds who opposed Jesus, not for every Jewish person) grumbled the same way their fathers grumbled in the wilderness about the manna (Exodus 16:2, 8). Their objection was simple: "We know His family. How can He say He came down from heaven?" They thought they knew where Jesus came from. They knew Mary and Joseph, but they did not know His Father.

6:43-44 *Therefore Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble with one another. No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Jesus told them to stop grumbling, and then He said something humbling: "No one is able to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Left to ourselves, none of us would come. The Father has to draw us.

Christians have discussed this verse for centuries. Some believe God draws only those He has chosen, and that His drawing always succeeds. Others believe God draws everyone, pointing to Jesus' promise in 12:32 that He "will draw all men to Myself," and that a person can still resist. I take the verse as it stands: no one comes to Christ on his own strength, and anyone who comes has been drawn by God. That should make us humble about our salvation and bold in sharing the gospel, because God is already at work drawing people to His Son.

6:45 *It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught of God.' Therefore everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned comes to Me.*

Jesus quoted the prophets, drawing on Isaiah 54:13, which promises that God's people will be taught by the Lord Himself. God teaches the heart, and everyone who truly listens to and learns from the Father will come to the Son. The drawing in verse 44 is not forced. It happens through hearing and learning. God draws people by His Word.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 54:13 (quoted)

6:46 *Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the **One** who is from God; He has seen the Father.*

No one has seen the Father except the One who is from God (1:18). Jesus is not just one more teacher who learned about God. He came from the Father's presence. When we want to know what the Father is like, we look at Jesus (14:9).

6:47 *Truly, truly, I say to you, the **one** believing in Me has eternal life.*

"The one believing in Me has eternal life." Read that slowly. Not "will have someday" or "might have if he does enough," but "has," right now. Eternal life is a present possession for every believer.

6:48-50 *I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die.*

Jesus repeats, "I am the bread of life," and then makes a sharp contrast. Their fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, "and they died." Manna kept them alive physically for a while, but every one of them eventually died. The bread Jesus gives keeps a person from dying in the deepest sense. Physical death still comes, but it is not the end for those who eat this bread. Eternal death, separation from God, has no claim on them.

Old Testament links: Exodus 16:35 (alluded to)

6:51 *I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

Here the teaching turns in a direction that shocked the crowd. "The bread also which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Jesus is pointing ahead to the cross. He will give His own body, His flesh, as a sacrifice for the life of the world. The bread of life is not only His teaching. It is His death in our place. Notice the scope as well: "for the life of the world." His sacrifice is offered to all.

6:52 *Therefore the Jews were arguing with one another, saying, "How is this **man** able to give us **His** flesh to eat?"*

The Jews began to argue among themselves. "How is this man able to give us His flesh to eat?" They took Jesus' words in the crudest physical sense, as if He were talking about cannibalism. This is the same mistake Nicodemus made about being born again (3:4) and the woman at the well made about living water (4:11).

6:53 *Therefore Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves.*

Jesus did not soften His words. He made them stronger: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves." For a Jewish listener, drinking blood was forbidden by the Law (Leviticus 17:10-14). Jesus was saying something that would force His hearers to stop and think hard about what He meant.

So what does He mean? I believe the context gives us the answer. Earlier in this same teaching, Jesus said that coming to Him and believing in Him satisfy hunger and thirst (6:35), and that "the one believing in Me has eternal life" (6:47). Now He says that he who eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life (6:54). The promise is the same, so the meaning is the same. To eat His flesh and drink His blood is to receive Him by faith, to take in His death for us as our only life, as fully as we take food into our bodies.

Many Christians see a connection here with the Lord's Supper, and it is easy to see why. The bread and the cup picture the same truth: His body given and His blood shed for us. But the Lord's Supper had not yet been given when Jesus spoke these words, and He was speaking to a crowd of unbelievers. Some churches teach that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. I do not believe the text teaches that. I believe Jesus is speaking of a living faith in His sacrifice, which the Lord's Supper later pictured and proclaimed (1 Corinthians 11:26).

6:54-55 *The **one** feeding on My flesh and drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink.*

"The one feeding on My flesh and drinking My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Again, eternal life now and resurrection later. "My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink." Jesus is what our souls truly need. Everything else we feed on in this life, money, success, approval, pleasure, leaves us hungry again.

6:56 *The **one** feeding on My flesh and drinking My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*

To feed on Christ is to "abide" in Him, and He in us. "Abide" means to stay, remain, or make your home. The same Greek word, *meno*, becomes one of the great words of John's Gospel, especially in chapter 15 with the vine and the branches, where the translation in this study renders it "remain." Faith is not a one-time snack. It is a living, ongoing relationship where we make our home in Jesus and He makes His home in us.

6:57 *Even as the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, also the **one** feeding on Me, even that **one** will live because of Me.*

Jesus lives because of the Father, and the one who feeds on Jesus will live because of Jesus. Our spiritual life depends on Him the way His earthly mission depended on the Father. We were never meant to live the Christian life on our own power.

6:58-59 *This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna and died; the **one** feeding on this bread will live forever." He said these things in a synagogue, teaching in Capernaum.*

Jesus closes this teaching by bringing us back to the manna. Their fathers ate and died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. John tells us this was taught in the synagogue in Capernaum, the town Jesus had made His home base in Galilee (Matthew 4:13). This was a public teaching, given to a religious audience, in a place of worship.

6:60 *Therefore many of His disciples, having heard, said, "This word is hard; who is able to hear it?"*

Now the scene shifts from the crowd to "His disciples," meaning the larger group of followers, not just the twelve. They said, "This word is hard; who is able to hear it?" The word "hard" here means harsh or hard to accept, not just hard to understand. Their problem was less with their heads than with their hearts. They did not want what He was saying to be true.

6:61-62 *But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples are grumbling about this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? **What** then if you see the Son of Man ascending where He was before?*

Jesus knew they were grumbling. He asked, "Does this cause you to stumble?" Then He asked, "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" If they stumbled at Him saying He came down from heaven, what would they do when they saw Him go back up? His ascension (Acts 1:9-11) would prove He came from heaven in the first place.

6:63 *The Spirit is the **One** giving life; the flesh profits nothing. The words which I speak to you are spirit and are life.*

This verse is a key to the whole chapter. "The Spirit is the One giving life; the flesh profits nothing." Jesus Himself tells us that His words about eating and drinking are not about physical eating. Eating physical flesh would profit nothing. "The words which I speak to you are spirit and

are life." His words are how we feed on Him. When we take in His Word and trust it, the Spirit gives life.

6:64 *But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from **the** beginning who they are who do not believe, and who it is who will betray Him.*

Jesus knew that some of them did not believe. John adds that Jesus knew "from the beginning" who did not believe and who would betray Him. Nothing caught Jesus by surprise, not even Judas. That should comfort us. When people turn away, it does not mean God's plan has failed.

6:65 *And He was saying, "Because of this I have said to you that no one is able to come to Me unless it has been granted to him from My Father."*

Jesus repeats the truth of verse 44: no one can come to Him unless it has been granted by the Father. Coming to Christ is a gift. If you have come to Him, thank God for it. You did not figure it out on your own.

6:66 *From this **time** many of His disciples went away back and were no longer walking with Him.*

"Many of His disciples went away back and were no longer walking with Him." The day before, they had wanted to make Him king. Now that He had told them the truth, they walked away. Jesus did not chase them down and water down His message. Large crowds are not always a sign of true faith, and a smaller group that believes the truth is better than a crowd that wants a free lunch.

People still walk away from Jesus for the same reasons. Some follow Him for what they can get, and leave when He does not give it. Some leave when His teaching becomes uncomfortable, when He talks about sin, the cross, or surrender. If you have been tempted to walk away because something Jesus said is hard to accept, I encourage you to stay and keep listening, the way Peter did. Hard words from Jesus are still words of life.

6:67 *Therefore Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not also want to go away, do you?"*

Jesus turned to the twelve and asked, "You do not also want to go away, do you?" The way the question is worded in the Greek expects the answer "no." Still, Jesus gave them the dignity of answering for themselves. Faith that is forced is not faith.

6:68-69 *Therefore Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

Peter answered for the group, and his answer is one of the finest confessions in the Bible: "Lord, to whom will we go? You have words of eternal life." Peter did not claim to understand everything Jesus had said. He simply knew there was nowhere else to go. Every other road leads to death.

"We have believed and have known that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Notice the order: believing and then knowing. Faith comes first, and with it a growing, settled

understanding of who Jesus is. This is the same confession Peter made at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:16). Some Greek manuscripts read "the Holy One of God" here, the title even a demon used when it recognized Him (Mark 1:24). Either way, Peter knew who Jesus was.

6:70-71 *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And of you one is a devil." Now He was speaking of Judas Iscariot, **son** of Simon; for he was about to betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

Jesus answered with a sobering truth. He Himself had chosen the twelve, and yet one of them was "a devil." John tells us He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Judas walked with Jesus, saw His miracles, ate the bread from the five loaves, and heard every word of this teaching. Still, his heart was not with Jesus. Being close to Jesus on the outside is not the same as belonging to Him on the inside. Peter spoke for the twelve, but not every one of the twelve could say his words honestly.

Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter 6 begins with Jesus feeding more than five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets left over. The crowd wanted to make Him king, but Jesus withdrew alone. That night He walked on the sea to His frightened disciples and told them, "I am He; do not be afraid." The next day, in the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus explained what the sign meant. He is the true bread from heaven, better than the manna Moses' generation ate. He gives eternal life to everyone who comes to Him and believes, and He will raise them up on the last day. To eat His flesh and drink His blood is to receive Him and His sacrifice by faith. Many of His followers found the teaching too hard and walked away. When Jesus asked the twelve if they would leave too, Peter answered, "Lord, to whom will we go? You have words of eternal life." The chapter ends with a warning that even among the twelve, one would betray Him.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What is the best meal you have ever eaten, and what made it so memorable?

2. Why do you think Jesus asked Philip where to buy bread when He already knew what He would do? (6:5-6)

3. What did Andrew bring to Jesus, and what does that teach us about offering God what little we have? (6:8-9)

4. Why did the crowd want to make Jesus king, and why did He withdraw? (6:14-15)

5. What did Jesus say to His disciples on the sea, and why did it matter? (6:20)

6. According to Jesus, what is "the work of God"? (6:28-29)

7. What does Jesus promise to the one who comes to Him? (6:35, 37)

8. How does verse 63 help us understand what Jesus meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood? (6:53-58, 63)

9. Why did many disciples walk away, and what did Peter say when Jesus asked the twelve if they would leave too? (6:66-69)

10. What are you tempted to "feed on" in place of Jesus, and what would it look like to come to Him for that hunger this week?

Chapter 7: Jesus at the Feast of Booths

Scripture: Rivers of Living Water

7:1-9 And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was not wanting to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Now the feast of the Jews, the ***Feast of*** Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret and himself seeks to be in public. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For not even His brothers were believing in Him. Therefore Jesus says to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always ready. The world is not able to hate you, but it hates Me, because I testify concerning it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast; I am not yet going up to this feast, because My time has not yet been fulfilled." Now having said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

7:10-24 But when His brothers had gone up, then He Himself also went up to the feast, not openly, but as in secret. Therefore the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is that ***One***?" And there was much grumbling about Him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He is good"; but others were saying, "No, but He deceives the crowd." However, no one was speaking publicly about Him because of the fear of the Jews. Now the feast being already in its middle, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching. And the Jews were marveling, saying, "How does this ***man*** know letters, not having learned?" Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but ***that*** of the ***One*** who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or I speak from Myself. The ***one*** speaking from himself seeks his own glory; but the ***One*** seeking the glory of the ***One*** who sent Him, He is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him. Has not Moses given you the law? And none of you does the law. Why do you seek to kill Me?" The crowd answered and said, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. Because of this Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on a Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man healthy on a Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge the righteous judgment."

7:25-36 Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? And look, He speaks publicly, and they say nothing to Him. Can it be that the rulers truly have recognized that this is truly the Christ? But we know where this ***man*** is from; but the Christ, whenever He comes, no one knows where He is from." Therefore Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but the ***One*** who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." Therefore they were seeking to seize Him; and no one laid ***his*** hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. And many out of the crowd believed in Him, and were saying, "The Christ, when He comes, will not do more signs than these which this ***man*** has done, will He?" The Pharisees heard the crowd grumbling these things about Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers that they might seize Him. Therefore Jesus said to them, "Yet a little time I am with you, and I go to the ***One*** who sent Me. You will seek Me and will

not find ***Me***; and where I am, you are not able to come." Therefore the Jews said among themselves, "Where is this ***man*** about to go that we will not find Him? Is He about to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and to teach the Greeks? What is this word that He said, 'You will seek Me and will not find ***Me***; and where I am, you are not able to come'?"

7:37-44 Now on the last day, the great ***day*** of the feast, Jesus was standing, and He cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. The ***one*** believing in Me, even as the Scripture said, 'Rivers of living water will flow out of his belly.'" Now He said this concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him were about to receive; for ***the*** Holy Spirit was not yet ***given***, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many out of the crowd, having heard the word, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet." Others were saying, "This is the Christ." But others were saying, "For surely the Christ does not come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes out of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" Therefore a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. Now some of them were wanting to seize Him, but no one laid ***his*** hands on Him.

7:45-53 Therefore the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and those ***men*** said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" The officers answered, "Never did a man speak like this, as this man ***speaks***." Therefore the Pharisees answered them, "You have not also been deceived, have you? Has anyone of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees? But this crowd which does not know the law, they are accursed." Nicodemus says to them (the ***one*** who came to Him by night, being one of them), "Our law does not judge the man unless it first hears from him and knows what he does, does it?" They answered and said to him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and see that out of Galilee a prophet has not arisen." And each one went to his house.

Chapter 7 Preview

About six months have passed since the feeding of the five thousand. Opposition to Jesus is growing, and the religious leaders in Jerusalem now want Him dead. Even His own brothers do not believe in Him. Still, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths, one of the most joyful festivals of the Jewish year, and teaches openly in the temple.

Everyone has an opinion about Jesus in this chapter. Some say He is a good man. Others say He leads people astray. Some think He is the Prophet, others the Christ, and others say He cannot be the Christ because He comes from Galilee. On the greatest day of the feast, Jesus stands up and cries out an invitation that still rings today: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Chapter 7 makes one thing plain. No one can stay neutral about Jesus.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1 *And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was not wanting to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.*

"After this" covers some months after the events of chapter 6. Jesus stayed in Galilee because "the Jews," meaning the religious leaders in Judea, were looking for a way to kill Him (5:18). Jesus was

not afraid, but He was not reckless either. He knew His Father's timetable, and the time for His death had not yet come.

7:2 *Now the feast of the Jews, the **Feast of** Booths, was near.*

The Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot in Hebrew) was one of the three great feasts when Jewish men were expected to go up to Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). It came in the fall, after the harvest. For seven days the people lived in little shelters made of branches to remember how God cared for Israel in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:33-43). It was a happy, crowded, noisy celebration. I explain more about this feast at the end of the chapter, because what Jesus says at the feast makes much more sense when we understand it.

7:3-4 *Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret and himself seeks to be in public. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."*

Jesus' brothers urged Him to go to Judea and show off His works. "If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." This sounds like advice from a campaign manager. They may have been mocking Him, or they may have wanted Him to make a name for the family. Either way, they were asking Jesus to put on a show. They did not understand that Jesus did not come to impress people. He came to do His Father's will.

These were the sons of Mary and Joseph born after Jesus. Matthew 13:55 names them: James, Joses, Simon, and Jude.

7:5 *For not even His brothers were believing in Him.*

"For not even His brothers were believing in Him." What a painful sentence. The people who grew up in the same house with Jesus, who watched Him live a sinless life, did not believe. If you have family members who do not yet believe, Jesus understands that pain.

There is good news here, though. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:7), and His brothers were with the believers praying in the upper room (Acts 1:14). James became a leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James. Jude (Judas) wrote the book of Jude. Do not give up on your family.

7:6 *Therefore Jesus says to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always ready.*

"My time is not yet here, but your time is always ready." Jesus lived by the Father's schedule. His brothers could go to Jerusalem any time they wanted, because their lives were not on a divine mission and the world had no reason to hate them. Jesus' "time" pointed to the moment of His death and glory, the "hour" that John mentions again and again (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1).

7:7 *The world is not able to hate you, but it hates Me, because I testify concerning it that its works are evil.*

The world could not hate His brothers, because they belonged to it. It hated Jesus because He told the truth about it: "its works are evil." When the light shines, those who love the darkness do not thank the light (3:19-20). Jesus warned His followers that the world would hate them for the same reason (15:18-19).

7:8-9 *You go up to this feast; I am not yet going up to this feast, because My time has not yet been fulfilled." Now having said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.*

Jesus told His brothers, "I am not yet going up to this feast, because My time has not yet been fulfilled." Then a few days later He went up. Did Jesus change His mind or say something untrue? No. He was refusing to go the way they wanted, as a public show at their urging. When He did go, He went quietly and on the Father's timing, not His brothers'. (Notice the word "yet." Some ancient copies of John leave it out, but either way, Jesus did not lie.)

7:10 *But when His brothers had gone up, then He Himself also went up to the feast, not openly, but as in secret.*

After His brothers left, Jesus went up "not openly, but as in secret." He did not travel with the crowds of pilgrims, where He would have drawn attention. He was not hiding from danger out of fear; He was keeping to the Father's timing.

7:11-13 *Therefore the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is that **One**?" And there was much grumbling about Him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He is good"; but others were saying, "No, but He deceives the crowd." However, no one was speaking publicly about Him because of the fear of the Jews.*

The leaders were looking for Him: "Where is He?" The crowds were whispering about Him. Some said, "He is good." Others said, "He deceives the crowd." No one said He was ordinary. People were divided, but they were afraid to speak openly because of the religious leaders.

Many people today say Jesus was "a good man" or a great moral teacher. But a good man does not claim to be the bread from heaven or say He is one with God. Jesus is either who He said He is, or He is not good at all. The middle ground the crowd was looking for does not exist.

7:14 *Now the feast being already in its middle, Jesus went up into the temple and was teaching.*

Halfway through the seven-day feast, Jesus walked into the temple and started teaching. He did not sneak in and hide. He taught openly in the busiest place in Jerusalem, during the busiest week of the year, right under the noses of the men who wanted to kill Him.

7:15 *And the Jews were marveling, saying, "How does this **man** know letters, not having learned?"*

The leaders were amazed. "How does this man know letters, not having learned?" Jesus had never studied under one of the famous rabbis. He had no formal religious training. Yet He knew the

Scriptures better than all of them. They could not deny His knowledge, so they questioned His credentials.

7:16 *Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but **that** of the **One** who sent Me.*

Jesus answered that His teaching was not His own, but came from the One who sent Him. He did not need a famous teacher. His teacher was the Father. Jesus never claimed to be inventing something new. He was faithfully speaking what the Father gave Him to speak.

7:17 *If anyone wills to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or I speak from Myself.*

This is a wonderful promise. "If anyone wills to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God." The key is willingness. Many people want proof before they will obey God. Jesus says it often works the other way around. When our hearts are willing to obey, God makes the truth clear. People who truly want to do God's will, will come to know it.

Many believers have found this to be true. When we are unwilling to obey God in some area of life, the Bible can seem unclear in that area. When we become willing, it is as if the lights come on. God does not hide His truth from honest hearts.

7:18 *The **one** speaking from himself seeks his own glory; but the **One** seeking the glory of the **One** who sent Him, He is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.*

How do you tell a true teacher from a false one? Look at whose glory he is after. Someone who speaks on his own authority is after his own glory. Jesus sought only the glory of the Father who sent Him. That is why He was true, and there was no unrighteousness in Him. This is still a good test today. A preacher who keeps pointing to himself should make us careful.

7:19 *Has not Moses given you the law? And none of you does the law. Why do you seek to kill Me?"*

Jesus turned the tables. The leaders prided themselves on Moses and the Law, but none of them kept it. And then He named the sin they were hiding: "Why do you seek to kill Me?" The Law of Moses says, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). They claimed to defend the Law while planning to break it.

7:20 *The crowd answered and said, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"*

"You have a demon," the crowd replied. "Who seeks to kill You?" Many in the crowd, especially pilgrims from out of town, did not know about the plot. They thought Jesus was paranoid or out of His mind. The leaders knew exactly what He meant, and they said nothing.

7:21 *Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel.*

"I did one work, and you all marvel." Jesus was pointing back to the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (5:1-16). That one miracle had set off the leaders' anger and their plans to kill Him (5:16-18). They were still upset about it.

7:22-23 *Because of this Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on a Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man healthy on a Sabbath?*

Jesus reasoned with them using their own practice. The Law required a baby boy to be circumcised on the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3), a practice that went back to Abraham (Genesis 17:10-12), before Moses. If the eighth day fell on a Sabbath, they went ahead and circumcised the child, because the Law said to. So they already agreed that some work on the Sabbath was right.

Here is Jesus' point: if they would perform a ritual on one part of a man's body on the Sabbath to keep the Law, why were they angry that He made a whole man well on the Sabbath? The Sabbath was given for rest and restoration (Mark 2:27). Healing a man was not breaking the Sabbath. It was showing what the Sabbath was for.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 12:3 (alluded to); Genesis 17:10 (alluded to)

7:24 *Do not judge according to appearance, but judge the righteous judgment."*

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge the righteous judgment." This verse is often misused. Jesus is not saying we should never make judgments. He is saying we should judge rightly, by the truth and by God's standards, not by surface appearances or our own traditions. The leaders saw a man doing "work" on the Sabbath. Righteous judgment would have seen a crippled man restored by the power of God.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 16:18 (alluded to)

7:25-26 *Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? And look, He speaks publicly, and they say nothing to Him. Can it be that the rulers truly have recognized that this is truly the Christ?*

Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem knew about the plot. They were surprised to see Jesus teaching in public with no one stopping Him. "Can it be that the rulers truly have recognized that this is truly the Christ?" They wondered whether the leaders had secretly decided Jesus was the Messiah. "Christ" is the Greek word for the Hebrew "Messiah," meaning "the Anointed One," the King God had promised to send.

7:27 *But we know where this **man** is from; but the Christ, whenever He comes, no one knows where He is from."*

They had a reason to doubt, though. "We know where this man is from." Some people believed that when the Messiah came, no one would know where He came from. They thought they knew Jesus' story: a carpenter's son from Nazareth. Ironically, they did not know where He really came from at all. He came from heaven.

7:28-29 *Therefore Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but the **One** who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."*

Jesus "cried out," which means He spoke in a loud voice so everyone in the temple courts could hear. Yes, they knew His earthly hometown. But He had not come on His own. The One who sent Him is true, and they did not know Him. "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me." This was a bold claim. Jesus was telling the religious leaders of Israel that they did not know God, and that He did.

7:30 *Therefore they were seeking to seize Him; and no one laid **his** hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

They tried to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, "because His hour had not yet come." No mob, soldier, or plot could touch Jesus until the moment the Father had set. When that hour came, He would give up His life willingly (10:18). Until then, He was untouchable.

7:31 *And many out of the crowd believed in Him, and were saying, "The Christ, when He comes, will not do more signs than these which this **man** has done, will He?"*

Not everyone opposed Him. "Many out of the crowd believed in Him." They reasoned that no Messiah could do more signs than Jesus had already done. They were right. This is exactly why John wrote down the signs, "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31).

7:32 *The Pharisees heard the crowd grumbling these things about Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers that they might seize Him.*

When the Pharisees heard the crowd whispering, they and the chief priests sent the temple officers to arrest Jesus. These two groups often did not get along. The Pharisees were a strict religious party focused on keeping the Law and the traditions. The chief priests were mostly Sadducees, who controlled the temple. Their shared hatred of Jesus brought them together.

7:33-34 *Therefore Jesus said to them, "Yet a little time I am with you, and I go to the **One** who sent Me. You will seek Me and will not find **Me**; and where I am, you are not able to come."*

Jesus said He would only be with them a little while longer, and then He would go back to the One who sent Him. "You will seek Me and will not find Me; and where I am, you are not able to come." He was speaking of His death, resurrection, and return to the Father. There is a warning here as well. A day comes when the opportunity to believe is over. Today is the day to come to Him (2 Corinthians 6:2).

7:35-36 *Therefore the Jews said among themselves, "Where is this **man** about to go that we will not find Him? Is He about to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and to teach the Greeks? What is this word that He said, 'You will seek Me and will not find **Me**; and where I am, you are not able to come'?"*

The leaders misunderstood, as usual. They wondered if He planned to go "to the Dispersion among the Greeks." The Dispersion (in Greek, *diaspora*) meant the Jewish people living scattered among the Gentile nations outside Israel. They said it with scorn. Without meaning to, they said something true. After His resurrection, the message of Jesus would go out to the Jews scattered among the nations and to the Greeks themselves, through the apostles (Acts 1:8).

7:37 *Now on the last day, the great **day** of the feast, Jesus was standing, and He cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*

"On the last day, the great day of the feast." Each morning of the feast, a priest drew water from the Pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher, carried it up to the temple in a joyful procession, and poured it out at the altar. It was a prayer for rain and a reminder of the water God gave Israel from the rock in the wilderness. Bible teachers disagree on whether "the last day" means the seventh day or the eighth day of the feast, but either way, the people had just seen and celebrated the water ceremony.

Right then, Jesus stood up, which was unusual because teachers normally sat, and He cried out with a loud voice: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Imagine the scene. The people had just celebrated water poured out at the altar, and here is Jesus saying, "I am the One the water points to." The invitation is open: "if anyone." No one is left out who is thirsty.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 55:1 (alluded to)

7:38 *The **one** believing in Me, even as the Scripture said, 'Rivers of living water will flow out of his belly.'"*

"The one believing in Me, even as the Scripture said, 'Rivers of living water will flow out of his belly.'" No single Old Testament verse says these exact words. Jesus seems to be summing up several passages that promise God would pour out water and His Spirit on His people, such as Isaiah 44:3, Isaiah 58:11, Ezekiel 47:1-12, and Zechariah 14:8.

Notice what Jesus promises. The one who believes will not only have his own thirst satisfied. Living water will flow out of him to others. A believer is not meant to be a pond that only collects. He is meant to be a river that flows.

This is why a Christian's life should bless the people around him. When the Holy Spirit fills a person, it shows up in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Those are not things we can produce on our own. They flow from the Spirit living within us.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 44:3 (alluded to); Ezekiel 47:1 (alluded to); Zechariah 14:8 (alluded to)

7:39 *Now He said this concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him were about to receive; for **the** Holy Spirit was not yet **given**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

John explains what Jesus meant. The living water is the Holy Spirit, whom believers would receive. "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The Spirit was at work in the Old Testament, of course, but He had not yet been poured out to live in every believer. That happened after Jesus died, rose, and returned to the Father, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 33). When Jesus was glorified, the rivers began to flow.

7:40 *Therefore many out of the crowd, having heard the word, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet."*

The crowd was split. Some said, "This is truly the Prophet," meaning the prophet like Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Others said, "This is the Christ." Both groups were moving in the right direction. Jesus is the Prophet and the Christ.

7:41-42 *Others were saying, "This is the Christ." But others were saying, "For surely the Christ does not come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes out of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"*

Others objected. "For surely the Christ does not come out of Galilee?" They knew the Scriptures said the Messiah would come from the family of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13) and from Bethlehem, David's town (Micah 5:2). They were right about the Scriptures and wrong about Jesus. He was born in Bethlehem and was a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1; 2:1; Luke 2:4-7). They simply did not bother to find out. How many people reject Jesus today based on something they assume, without ever checking the facts?

Old Testament links: Micah 5:2 (alluded to); Psalm 132:11 (alluded to)

7:43-44 *Therefore a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. Now some of them were wanting to seize Him, but no one laid **his** hands on Him.*

"Therefore a division occurred in the crowd because of Him." Jesus still divides people. Some wanted to arrest Him, but again, no one laid a hand on Him. God's timing was protecting His Son.

You cannot stay in the middle with Jesus forever. Either He is who He says He is, or He is not. Each person in that crowd had to decide what he believed about Jesus, and so does each of us.

7:45 *Therefore the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and those **men** said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"*

The temple officers came back to the chief priests and Pharisees empty-handed. The leaders demanded, "Why did you not bring Him?" They had sent these men out in verse 32, and now they wanted answers.

7:46 *The officers answered, "Never did a man speak like this, as this man **speaks**."*

"Never did a man speak like this, as this man speaks." The officers had gone out to arrest Jesus, and instead Jesus arrested them with His words. These were not disciples. They were hired men under orders. Yet even they could tell there was something different about Jesus. He spoke with authority, not like the scribes (Matthew 7:28-29).

God's Word has that kind of power. Hebrews 4:12 tells us the word of God is living and active. People who come to argue with the words of Jesus have often found that His words end up arguing with them.

7:47-49 *Therefore the Pharisees answered them, "You have not also been deceived, have you? Has anyone of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees? But this crowd which does not know the law, they are accursed."*

The Pharisees were furious. "You have not also been deceived, have you?" Then they made their argument from authority: "Has anyone of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees?" In other words, "The experts don't believe, so neither should you." Then they looked down on the crowd: "This crowd which does not know the law, they are accursed." The leaders thought the common people were ignorant and under God's curse. Pride had blinded them. The ones who claimed to know the Law best were the ones refusing the One the Law pointed to.

7:50-51 *Nicodemus says to them (the **one** who came to Him by night, being one of them), "Our law does not judge the man unless it first hears from him and knows what he does, does it?"*

Nicodemus spoke up. John reminds us he had come to Jesus before, at night (3:1-2), and that he was "one of them," a Pharisee and a ruler. The leaders had just said that none of the rulers believed in Jesus. Here was one of their own, raising a question. He did not openly confess Jesus, but he asked for fairness: "Our law does not judge the man unless it first hears from him and knows what he does, does it?" The Law did require a fair hearing (Deuteronomy 1:16-17). Nicodemus was taking a small, brave step. We will see him again at the cross, taking a much bigger one (19:39).

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 1:17 (alluded to)

7:52 *They answered and said to him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and see that out of Galilee a prophet has not arisen."*

The leaders turned on Nicodemus with scorn. "You are not also from Galilee, are you?" Then they made a claim that was simply wrong: "out of Galilee a prophet has not arisen." The prophet Jonah came from Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25), a town in the territory of Zebulun in Galilee (Joshua 19:13). Even more, Isaiah 9:1-2 promised that a great light would shine in "Galilee of the Gentiles," which Matthew 4:13-16 shows was fulfilled in Jesus. In their anger, they ignored their own Scriptures.

7:53 *And each one went to his house.*

"And each one went to his house." The meeting broke up, and everyone went home. This verse begins the passage from 7:53 to 8:11, the account of the woman caught in adultery. Many Bibles mark this passage with a note, because the earliest manuscripts of John that we have do not contain it. I will explain more about this passage in the next chapter. I include it and teach it in this study, because I believe it is a true account of Jesus, and it fits everything else we know about Him.

Chapter 7 Summary

Six months before His death, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths, not with His unbelieving brothers or as a public show, but quietly, on the Father's timing. In the middle of the feast He taught openly in the temple. The crowds were divided: some called Him a good man, others a deceiver, some the Prophet, and others the Christ. Jesus said His teaching came from the Father, and that anyone willing to do God's will would recognize it. He exposed the leaders' plot to kill Him and their hypocrisy about the Sabbath. On the great day of the feast, right after the water ceremony, Jesus stood and invited anyone who was thirsty to come to Him and drink, promising rivers of living water, which John explains is the Holy Spirit. The temple officers sent to arrest Him came back saying, "Never did a man speak like this, as this man speaks." Nicodemus asked the council for a fair hearing and was mocked for it.

The Feast of Booths

The Feast of Booths is the setting for chapters 7 and 8, and it helps explain why Jesus said what He said, when He said it.

What it was: The Feast of Booths (Hebrew *Sukkot*, also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Ingathering) was the last of the yearly feasts God gave Israel (Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-15). It came in the fall, after the grain and grape harvests were gathered in.

How long: The feast lasted seven days, followed by an eighth day of holy assembly (Leviticus 23:36, 39).

Living in booths: For seven days the people lived in small shelters made of branches. This reminded them that God cared for Israel in the wilderness, when they lived in tents after leaving Egypt (Leviticus 23:42-43). It was a time of great joy (Deuteronomy 16:14-15).

The water ceremony: By Jesus' day, each morning of the feast a priest drew water from the Pool of Siloam and poured it out at the altar in the temple. It was a prayer for the coming rains and a reminder of the water from the rock in the wilderness. Jesus' invitation, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (7:37), was spoken in the middle of this celebration.

The lights: Large lamps were also lit in the temple's Court of the Women during the feast, lighting up the city at night. This is the background for what Jesus says next in 8:12: "I am the light of the world."

Looking ahead: Zechariah 14:16-19 says that the nations will go up to Jerusalem to worship the King and celebrate the Feast of Booths in the coming kingdom. The feast looked back to God's care in the wilderness, and it looks forward to the day when God will dwell with His people (Revelation 21:3).

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. Have you ever had family members who did not understand or support something important to you? How did it feel?

2. What did Jesus' brothers want Him to do, and why did He refuse? (7:3-8)

3. What does it tell you that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him at this time, and what happened to them later? (7:5; Acts 1:14)

4. What did the crowds say about Jesus, and why were they afraid to speak openly? (7:12-13)

5. According to Jesus, how can a person know whether His teaching is from God? (7:17)

6. How did Jesus use the practice of circumcision on the Sabbath to answer His critics? (7:22-23)

7. What invitation did Jesus give on the great day of the feast, and what did He mean by "living water"? (7:37-39)

8. Why did the temple officers come back without arresting Jesus? (7:45-46)

9. What step did Nicodemus take, and how did the other leaders respond? (7:50-52)

10. Where are you spiritually thirsty right now, and what would it look like to come to Jesus and drink?

Chapter 8: The Light of the World

Scripture: The Woman Caught in Adultery and the Light of the World

8:1-11 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and having sat down, He was teaching them. And the scribes and the Pharisees bring to Him a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in ***the*** midst, they say to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act, committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us that such ***women*** be stoned. You therefore, what do You say?" Now they were saying this testing Him, that they might have ***grounds*** to accuse Him. But Jesus, having stooped down, was writing with the finger on the ground, not making as though ***He heard***. But as they were continuing asking Him, having straightened up He said to them, "The sinless ***one*** among you, let him first cast the stone at her." And again having stooped down, He was writing on the ground. And those having heard, and being convicted by the conscience, were going out one by one, having begun from the older ones until the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in ***the*** midst. Then Jesus, having straightened up and having seen no one except the woman, said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" And she said, "No one, Sir." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."

8:12-20 Therefore again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. The ***one*** following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." Therefore the Pharisees said to Him, "You testify concerning Yourself; Your testimony is not true." Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is true, because I know from where I came and where I am going; but you do not know from where I come and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And even if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me. And also in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the ***One*** testifying concerning Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies concerning Me." Therefore they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." Jesus spoke these words in the treasury, teaching in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

8:21-30 Therefore Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you are not able to come." Therefore the Jews were saying, "He will not kill Himself, will He, because He says, 'Where I am going, you are not able to come'?" And He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are from this world; I am not from this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am ***He***, you will die in your sins." Therefore they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "***I am*** what I have also been speaking to you from the beginning. I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you; but the ***One*** who sent Me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these I say to the world." They did not understand that He was speaking to them ***about*** the Father. Therefore Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am ***He***, and I do nothing from Myself, but even as My Father taught Me, these things I

speak. And the ***One*** who sent Me is with Me; the Father has not left Me alone, because I always do the things pleasing to Him." As He was speaking these things, many believed in Him.

8:31-47 Therefore Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered Him, "We are seed of Abraham, and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How do You say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you that everyone who does sin is a slave of sin. Now the slave does not abide in the house forever; the son abides forever. Therefore if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are seed of Abraham; but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father; and you therefore do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Our father is Abraham." Jesus says to them, "If you were children of Abraham, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has spoken to you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You are doing the works of your father." Therefore they said to Him, "We have not been born of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came forth from God and am here; for I have not even come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear My word. You are of ***your*** father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from ***the*** beginning, and he has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks from his own ***things***, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me concerning sin? And if I speak ***the*** truth, why do you not believe Me? The ***one*** who is of God hears the words of God; because of this you do not hear, because you are not of God."

8:48-59 Therefore the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not rightly say that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is the ***One*** seeking and judging. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will certainly never see death." Therefore the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will certainly never taste death.' You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? And the prophets died. Whom do You make Yourself ***out to be***?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you. But I know Him and I keep His word. Abraham your father exulted that he might see My day, and he saw ***it*** and rejoiced." Therefore the Jews said to Him, "You do not yet have fifty years, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am." Therefore they took up stones that they might cast ***them*** at Him; but Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple, passing through the midst of them, and so He was passing by.

Chapter 8 Preview

Chapter 8 picks up right where chapter 7 left off, in Jerusalem at the end of the Feast of Booths. It opens with one of the best-loved stories in the Gospels: a woman dragged before Jesus, caught in

the act of adultery, and a crowd of men holding stones. Jesus answers the trap with one sentence, and the accusers walk away one by one.

The rest of the chapter is a long and heated debate in the temple. Jesus calls Himself the Light of the world. He tells the religious leaders that the truth will set them free, that they are slaves to sin, and that their real father is not Abraham at all. It ends with one of the boldest claims Jesus ever made: "Before Abraham came into being, I am." The crowd understood exactly what He meant, and they picked up stones.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1 *But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

Before we go further, I need to say something about this passage (7:53-8:11). The earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts we have do not contain it. In some later manuscripts it shows up in other places, such as after John 7:36 or after Luke 21:38. That is why most modern Bibles mark it with a note. Many scholars believe it is a true event from the life of Jesus that was passed down and later placed here. I include it and teach it, because it fits everything else we know about Jesus and contradicts nothing in Scripture. But I want you to know why your Bible marks it off, so no one can catch you off guard with it.

Verse 1 tells us that while everyone else went home (7:53), Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. This hill sits just east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley. Luke tells us Jesus often spent His nights there during His visits to the city (Luke 21:37).

8:2 *Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and having sat down, He was teaching them.*

Jesus was back in the temple early the next morning, and the people came to Him. He sat down to teach, which was the normal posture for a rabbi, or teacher, in that day. The crowds were hungry to hear Him, even while the leaders were plotting against Him.

8:3 *And the scribes and the Pharisees bring to Him a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in **the** midst,*

The scribes were experts in the Law of Moses, and the Pharisees were a strict religious party that prided itself on keeping that Law. They brought a woman caught in adultery and stood her in the middle of everyone. Think about how humiliating that was. Her sin was real, but they were not interested in her soul. She was a tool to them.

You might ask, "Where was the man?" It's a fair question. You cannot be caught in the act of adultery alone. The Law called for both the man and the woman to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). The fact that they brought only her tells us this was never about justice.

8:4-5 *They say to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act, committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us that such **women** be stoned. You therefore, what do You say?"*

They called Him "Teacher" with a show of respect, then laid the trap. Moses commanded stoning for this sin, so what did Jesus say? If He said, "Let her go," they could accuse Him of setting aside the Law of Moses. If He said, "Stone her," He would lose His reputation for mercy with the common people, and He could get in trouble with Rome, which did not allow the Jews to carry out death sentences on their own (18:31). Either answer looked like a loss.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 20:10 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 22:22-24 (alluded to)

8:6 *Now they were saying this testing Him, that they might have **grounds** to accuse Him. But Jesus, having stooped down, was writing with the finger on the ground, not making as though **He heard**.*

John tells us their motive plainly: they were testing Him, looking for grounds to accuse Him. Jesus did not answer right away. He stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger.

"He was writing on the ground." People have guessed for centuries what Jesus wrote. Some think He wrote the sins of the accusers. Others point to Jeremiah 17:13, which speaks of those who turn away from the Lord being written in the earth. The honest answer is that Scripture does not tell us. If it mattered for us to know, John would have told us. What matters is what He said next.

8:7 *But as they were continuing asking Him, having straightened up He said to them, "The sinless **one** among you, let him first cast the stone at her."*

They kept pushing, so Jesus stood up and gave His answer: "The sinless one among you, let him first cast the stone at her." He did not set aside the Law. Under the Law, the witnesses were to throw the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:7). Jesus simply turned the spotlight around. Every one of them had to look at his own heart before he could pick up a rock.

This verse does not mean that sin should never be judged or that the courts should never punish wrongdoing. It means that people who are guilty themselves should not use God's Law as a weapon while hiding their own sin.

8:8 *And again having stooped down, He was writing on the ground.*

Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. He gave them time to think, and He took the attention off the woman.

8:9 *And those having heard, and being convicted by the conscience, were going out one by one, having begun from the older ones until the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in **the** midst.*

They began to leave one by one, starting with the oldest. I think the older men left first because they had lived long enough to know their own hearts. Conviction did its work. In the end, only Jesus and the woman were left standing in the middle of the court.

8:10 *Then Jesus, having straightened up and having seen no one except the woman, said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"*

Jesus asked her two simple questions: "Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" The word "Woman" may sound harsh to us, but in that day it was a polite way to address a lady. Jesus used the same word for His own mother (2:4; 19:26).

8:11 *And she said, "No one, Sir." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more."*

"No one, Sir," she said. Then Jesus gave her two things. First, mercy: "Neither do I condemn you." The only One in that court who was without sin, the only One who had the right to throw a stone, chose not to. Second, a command: "go, and sin no more."

Notice the order. He did not say, "Clean up your life and then I will not condemn you." Grace came first, and then the call to a changed life. But do not miss the second half. Jesus did not excuse her sin or call it something else. Forgiveness is never permission to keep going. It is the power to walk away from sin.

8:12 *Therefore again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. The **one** following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Now the scene shifts back to Jesus teaching in the temple. During the Feast of Booths, huge lamps were lit in the temple courts, and it was said the light could be seen all over Jerusalem. Against that backdrop, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." This is the second of the seven "I am" statements in John (the first was "I am the bread of life" in 6:35).

Light is a theme John started with on page one: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:4). Light shows us the way and exposes what is hidden. Anyone who follows Jesus does not walk in darkness. Notice the promise is for the one who "follows." Admiring the light is not enough. We have to walk in it.

8:13 *Therefore the Pharisees said to Him, "You testify concerning Yourself; Your testimony is not true."*

The Pharisees objected on legal grounds. In their eyes, a man's testimony about himself was not enough to prove anything. They said, in effect, "That's just your word."

8:14 *Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify concerning Myself, My testimony is true, because I know from where I came and where I am going; but you do not know from where I come and where I am going.*

Jesus answered that His testimony was true because He knew where He came from and where He was going. He came from the Father and was returning to the Father. They did not know either one. You cannot judge a witness when you do not even know who He is.

8:15-16 *You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And even if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me.*

"You judge according to the flesh" means they judged by outward appearance and human standards. Jesus said, "I judge no one," meaning that was not the purpose of His first coming (3:17). But when He does judge, His judgment is true, because He and the Father are never apart in it.

8:17-18 *And also in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the **One** testifying concerning Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies concerning Me."*

The Law of Moses required two or three witnesses to establish a matter (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Jesus said He had two: Himself, and the Father who sent Him. The Father had already testified through the works Jesus did and through the Scriptures (5:36-39).

"I am the One testifying concerning Myself." Watch for the words "I am" in this chapter. They come up again and again, and they build toward verse 58.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 17:6 (alluded to)

8:19 *Therefore they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."*

"Where is Your Father?" they asked. They were thinking of an earthly father, and they may even have been taking a jab at the talk about His birth. Jesus answered that they knew neither Him nor His Father. If they knew Him, they would know the Father. This is a huge claim. To know Jesus is to know God (14:9).

8:20 *Jesus spoke these words in the treasury, teaching in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

John notes that Jesus said these things in the treasury, the part of the temple where the offering boxes stood. This was a public place, right in the middle of the leaders' own territory. Still, no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come. God's timetable, not the plans of men, decided when Jesus would go to the cross.

8:21 *Therefore Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you are not able to come."*

Jesus warned them a second time that He was going away (7:33-34). They would look for Him but would die in their sin, and where He was going, they could not come. This is one of the most serious warnings in the Gospel. Rejecting Jesus is not a small mistake. It means dying in your sin.

8:22 *Therefore the Jews were saying, "He will not kill Himself, will He, because He says, 'Where I am going, you are not able to come'?"*

They twisted His words and joked that He might be planning to kill Himself. They still did not understand that He was talking about going back to the Father.

8:23 *And He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are from this world; I am not from this world.*

Jesus drew a clear line. They were from below; He was from above. They were of this world; He was not. He was not just a good teacher who rose up from among men. He came down from heaven (3:13, 31).

8:24 *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am **He**, you will die in your sins."*

Here is the heart of it: "Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." The word "He" is not in the Greek text. Word for word, Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am." He was pointing back to the name God gave Moses at the burning bush: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Believing in Jesus means believing He is who He says He is. There is no other way out of our sins.

8:25-26 *Therefore they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "**I am** what I have also been speaking to you from the beginning. I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you; but the **One** who sent Me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these I say to the world."*

"Who are You?" they asked. Jesus answered that He had been telling them from the beginning. He had much more He could say in judgment against them, but He spoke only what He heard from the Father, who is true.

8:27 *They did not understand that He was speaking to them **about** the Father.*

John adds a sad note: they did not realize He was talking about the Father. They heard the words but missed the meaning.

8:28 *Therefore Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am **He**, and I do nothing from Myself, but even as My Father taught Me, these things I speak.*

"When you lift up the Son of Man" points to the cross (3:14; 12:32-33). When they nailed Him up, they would come to know that He is the "I am." That happened. At the cross, some saw the darkness, the earthquake, and the way He died, and confessed who He was (Matthew 27:54). After the resurrection, thousands of Jews in Jerusalem came to faith (Acts 2:41).

Jesus also said He did nothing on His own initiative. Everything He spoke came from the Father. The Son is equal with the Father, yet He chose to submit to Him.

8:29 *And the **One** who sent Me is with Me; the Father has not left Me alone, because I always do the things pleasing to Him."*

"The Father has not left Me alone, because I always do the things pleasing to Him." No other person in history could honestly say that. Jesus lived a sinless life. That is why He could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

8:30 *As He was speaking these things, many believed in Him.*

As He spoke, many came to believe in Him. Even in the middle of a hostile crowd, God's Word was doing its work. Never think a hard crowd means a wasted message.

8:31 *Therefore Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples,*

Jesus now turned to those Jews who had believed Him. He said, "If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples." True faith keeps going. The word "abide" means to remain or continue. A real disciple does not just agree with Jesus for an afternoon. He stays in His Word for life. The next verses show that the faith of many in this group was shallow, because within minutes they were arguing with Him.

8:32 *And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." This verse is quoted all over the place, often on university buildings, as if it is about education. In context, the truth is Jesus Himself (14:6) and His Word. The freedom He means is freedom from sin. No amount of book learning can do that.

8:33 *They answered Him, "We are seed of Abraham, and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How do You say, 'You will become free'?"*

They were offended. "We are seed of Abraham," they answered. "We have never been enslaved to anyone." That was a strange thing to say. Their people had been slaves in Egypt and captives in Babylon, and at that very moment they were under Roman rule. Pride has a short memory. They were trusting in their family line to make them right with God.

8:34 *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you that everyone who does sin is a slave of sin.*

"Truly, truly" comes from the Hebrew word amen, meaning "so be it" or "it is true." When Jesus says it twice, He is telling us to pay close attention. Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. Sin is not just something we do. It is a master that owns us until someone sets us free.

8:35-36 *Now the slave does not abide in the house forever; the son abides forever. Therefore if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

A slave in a household had no permanent place. He could be sold or sent away. A son belonged to the family forever. Jesus is the Son, and He has the authority to set slaves free and bring them into the family. "Therefore if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." That is real freedom, the kind no government or law can give.

8:37 *I know that you are seed of Abraham; but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.*

Jesus agreed they were Abraham's descendants by blood. But they were trying to kill Him, because His word had no place in them. Their bloodline was right, but their hearts were closed.

8:38 *I speak what I have seen with My Father; and you therefore do what you have seen with your father."*

Jesus spoke what He had seen with His Father. They did what they had heard from their father. He is setting up the contrast that comes in the next few verses. He has not yet said who their father is, but He is about to.

8:39-40 *They answered and said to Him, "Our father is Abraham." Jesus says to them, "If you were children of Abraham, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has spoken to you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham did not do this.*

"Our father is Abraham," they insisted. Jesus answered that if they were really Abraham's children, they would act like Abraham. Abraham believed God and welcomed God's messengers (Genesis 15:6; 18:1-8). They were trying to kill the One who told them God's truth. Abraham never would have done that. Being a child of Abraham is about faith, not just family (Galatians 3:7).

8:41 *You are doing the works of your father." Therefore they said to Him, "We have not been born of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God."*

"You are doing the works of your father," Jesus said. They shot back, "We have not been born of sexual immorality." This may have been a dig at Jesus, since rumors about His birth had likely followed Him. Then they claimed, "We have one Father: God."

8:42 *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came forth from God and am here; for I have not even come of Myself, but He sent Me.*

Jesus answered that if God were truly their Father, they would love Him, because He came from God. A child of God recognizes the Son of God. Their hatred of Jesus proved they did not belong to the Father.

8:43 *Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to hear My word.*

Why could they not understand Him? Because they could not hear His word. It was not that His words were too hard. Their hearts would not receive them. There is no one so deaf as the one who will not listen.

8:44 *You are of **your** father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from **the** beginning, and he has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks from his own **things**, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

Now Jesus said it plainly: "You are of your father, the devil." These are some of the strongest words Jesus ever spoke. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, bringing death to mankind in the Garden (Genesis 3). He does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Lying is his nature. He is the father of lies.

I want to be very careful here. Jesus was not talking about the Jewish people as a whole. Jesus Himself was Jewish, and so were all of His first disciples. He was speaking to a particular group of

men who were at that moment trying to kill Him. Anyone, of any background, who rejects God's truth and chooses lies is following the same father.

8:45-46 *But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me concerning sin? And if I speak **the** truth, why do you not believe Me?*

Because Jesus spoke the truth, they did not believe Him. Think about that. The problem was not that He lied. The problem was that He told the truth. Then He asked, "Which of you convicts Me concerning sin?" Nobody could answer. His enemies watched Him closely for three years and could not point to a single sin.

8:47 *The **one** who is of God hears the words of God; because of this you do not hear, because you are not of God."*

He who is of God hears the words of God. Here is a simple test for any of us. How do we respond to God's Word? Do we hear it and receive it, or do we argue with it?

8:48 *Therefore the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not rightly say that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"*

Out of arguments, they turned to insults. They called Him a Samaritan, which to them meant a half-breed and a heretic, and they said He had a demon. When people cannot answer the truth, they often attack the person speaking it.

8:49-50 *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is the **One** seeking and judging.*

Jesus answered calmly. He did not have a demon. He honored His Father, and they dishonored Him. He was not out for His own glory. The Father would seek His glory and judge those who refused Him.

8:51 *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will certainly never see death."*

Then came a stunning promise: "If anyone keeps My word, he will certainly never see death." Jesus was not saying believers will never die physically. He meant they will never experience death as God's final judgment, the second death (Revelation 20:6, 14). For the believer, physical death is a doorway into His presence.

8:52-53 *Therefore the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will certainly never taste death.' You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are You? And the prophets died. Whom do You make Yourself **out to be**?"*

They took His words in the most literal and physical sense. Abraham died. The prophets died. Who did He think He was, greater than Abraham? The answer, of course, is yes. That is exactly what He was claiming.

8:54-55 *Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you. But I know Him and I keep His word.*

Jesus said He did not glorify Himself. His Father glorified Him, the very God they claimed as their own. Yet they did not know Him. Jesus knew Him and kept His word. If Jesus pretended not to know the Father, He would be a liar just like them.

8:56 *Abraham your father exulted that he might see My day, and he saw **it** and rejoiced."*

"Abraham your father exulted that he might see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced." Abraham looked forward by faith to God's promise that through his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Hebrews 11:13 says the patriarchs saw the promises "from afar." Abraham saw the coming of the Messiah, and it made him glad.

8:57 *Therefore the Jews said to Him, "You do not yet have fifty years, and have You seen Abraham?"*

"You do not yet have fifty years, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus was probably in His early thirties (Luke 3:23 tells us He was about thirty when He began His ministry). Abraham had lived some two thousand years before. They thought they had caught Him in an absurd claim.

8:58 *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am."*

"Truly, truly, I say to you," Jesus declared, "before Abraham came into being, I am." Notice what Jesus did not say. He did not say, "Before Abraham came into being, I was." He said, "I am." Abraham came into being at a point in time. Jesus simply is, always has been, and always will be. This is the name of God from Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM." Jesus was claiming to be the eternal God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

Some groups today teach that Jesus was a created being, a lesser god. This verse will not allow that. Jesus did not claim to be old. He claimed to be eternal.

Old Testament links: Exodus 3:14 (alluded to)

8:59 *Therefore they took up stones that they might cast **them** at Him; but Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple, passing through the midst of them, and so He was passing by.*

They picked up stones to throw at Him. That tells us they understood exactly what He claimed. The Law said a blasphemer was to be stoned (Leviticus 24:16). Either Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, or He was telling the truth and He is God. There is no middle ground. But it was not yet His hour, and He hid Himself and left the temple.

Chapter 8 Summary

Chapter 8 begins with mercy and ends with stones. A woman caught in adultery is dragged before Jesus as a trap, and Jesus turns the accusation back on her accusers with one sentence. He forgives her and tells her to sin no more. Then, in the temple during the Feast of Booths, Jesus declares, "I

am the light of the world." In a long debate with the religious leaders, He tells them that the truth will set them free, that everyone who sins is a slave of sin, and that only the Son can make us truly free. The leaders claim Abraham and God as their father, but Jesus says their actions show they belong to the devil, the father of lies. The chapter closes with Jesus' clearest claim to deity so far: "Before Abraham came into being, I am." The crowd understood He was claiming the name of God, and they tried to stone Him. Every one of us has to decide what we will do with that claim.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been caught doing something you knew was wrong? How did you feel, and how were you treated?

2. Why do you think the scribes and Pharisees brought only the woman and not the man? (8:3-6)

3. How did Jesus answer their trap without setting aside the Law of Moses? (8:7)

4. Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you," and, "Go, and sin no more." Why are both halves of that sentence important? (8:11)

5. What does it mean to follow the Light of the world? (8:12)

6. What did Jesus say we must believe so that we will not die in our sins? (8:24)

7. According to Jesus, what is the mark of a true disciple, and what freedom does the truth bring? (8:31-32, 36)

8. Why did the crowd pick up stones when Jesus said, "Before Abraham came into being, I am"? (8:58-59)

9. Are there areas of your life where sin still feels like a master? What would it look like to let the Son set you free?

10. Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus' mercy the way the woman in this chapter received it?

Chapter 9: The Man Born Blind

Scripture: Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9:1-12 And passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this ***man*** or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this ***man*** sinned, nor his parents; but ***it was*** so that the works of God might be revealed in him. I must work the works of the ***One*** who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one is able to work. While I am in the world, I am ***the*** light of the world." Having said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay from the spittle, and He smeared the clay on the eyes of the blind ***man***. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). Therefore he went away and washed, and came seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who were seeing him before, that he was blind, were saying, "Is this not the ***one*** who sits and begs?" Others were saying, "It is he"; others, "He is like him." He was saying, "I am ***he***." Therefore they were saying to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A man who is called Jesus made clay and smeared my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' And having gone away and having washed, I received sight." Therefore they said to him, "Where is that ***One***?" He says, "I do not know."

9:13-23 They bring him who once ***was*** blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Therefore again the Pharisees also were asking him how he had received sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others were saying, "How is a sinful man able to do such signs?" And there was a division among them. They say to the blind ***man*** again, "What do you say concerning Him, that He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." Therefore the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of him who had received sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, of whom you say that he was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him; he will speak concerning himself." His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed together that if anyone confessed Him ***to be*** Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Because of this his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

9:24-34 Therefore a second time they called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." Then he answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one ***thing*** I know, that being blind, now I see." And they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not hear. Why do you want to hear ***it*** again? You do not also want to become His disciples, do you?" Therefore they reviled him and said, "You are a disciple of that ***One***, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but this ***man***, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "For in this is an amazing ***thing***, that you do not know where He is from, and He opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. Since the age ***began*** it has not been heard

that anyone opened ***the*** eyes of one born blind. If this ***man*** were not from God, He would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were entirely born in sins, and you teach us?" And they cast him out.

9:35-41 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and the ***One*** speaking with you is He." And he said, "I believe, Lord." And he worshiped Him. And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those not seeing may see, and those seeing may become blind." And those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and they said to Him, "We are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains."

Chapter 9 Preview

In chapter 8, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." In chapter 9, He proves it. He meets a man who has never seen a single ray of light, and He gives him his sight. This is the sixth of the seven signs John records in his Gospel.

What follows is almost a courtroom drama. The neighbors question the man, the Pharisees question him, his parents are hauled in and questioned, and then the man is questioned again. Through it all, a simple beggar grows bolder and clearer about who Jesus is, while the most educated religious men in Jerusalem grow blinder. By the end of the chapter, the man who was blind is worshiping Jesus, and the men who claim to see are left in their sin.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1 *And passing by, He saw a man blind from birth.*

As Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. Notice who saw whom. The blind man could not see Jesus, but Jesus saw him. The man did not ask for help. Jesus noticed him first. That is a picture of grace. God comes looking for us before we ever come looking for Him.

Being born blind made this case special. Healing someone who lost his sight later in life would be amazing enough. Giving sight to someone whose eyes had never worked at all was something no one had ever heard of (9:32).

9:2 *And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this* ***man*** *or his parents, that he should be born blind?"*

The disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Many people in that day believed that every illness or handicap was a direct punishment for a specific sin. If a man was born blind, either his parents had sinned, or somehow he had sinned before he was born. Job's friends made the same mistake when they told Job his suffering must be his own fault.

9:3 *Jesus answered, "Neither this **man** sinned, nor his parents; but **it was** so that the works of God might be revealed in him.*

Jesus answered that it was neither. This man's blindness was not a punishment for anyone's sin. It was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

This is an important truth. Sickness, disease, and death came into the world because of sin in general (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). Sometimes a specific sin does bring its own consequences. But we should never assume that a person's suffering is because of something they did. Sometimes God allows hardship so that His power and glory can be shown in a person's life. Some of the strongest testimonies of God's goodness come from people who have walked through the hardest roads.

9:4 *I must work the works of the **One** who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one is able to work.*

"I must work the works of the One who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one is able to work." Jesus had work to do, and He knew His time was short. Later He sent His disciples, and us, to carry on that same work (20:21). "Day" was the time of His earthly ministry. "Night" was coming, when He would be arrested and crucified. For each of us, there is a limited time to serve God in this life. We should not waste it.

9:5 *While I am in the world, I am **the** light of the world."*

"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Jesus repeats what He said in 8:12. He is about to show it by giving light to a man who has lived his whole life in darkness. The physical healing is a sign, a living picture, of the spiritual sight He gives to everyone who believes.

9:6 *Having said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay from the spittle, and He smeared the clay on the eyes of the blind **man**.*

Jesus spat on the ground, made clay, and put it on the man's eyes. Why would He do it this way? He healed others with just a word. Scripture does not tell us exactly why. Some see a connection to Genesis 2:7, where God formed man from the dust of the ground. The same hands that formed Adam were now forming new eyes. Whatever the reason, it gave the man something to feel and something to do. It also set up the conflict that follows, because in the eyes of the religious leaders, making clay on the Sabbath was work.

9:7 *And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). Therefore he went away and washed, and came seeing.*

Jesus told him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." John tells us Siloam means "Sent." Jesus is the One sent by the Father, a phrase John uses again and again. The man went, washed, and came back seeing.

He had to obey before he could see. He walked across the city with mud on his eyes, still blind, because Jesus told him to. Faith often looks like that. We take the next step God shows us before we see how it will turn out.

The pool of Siloam was a real place in the southern part of Jerusalem. In 2004, workers repairing a sewer line uncovered the steps of a large pool from Jesus' day, which archaeologists identified as the pool of Siloam. Every time a spade turns up something like this, it reminds us that the Gospels are describing real places and real events.

9:8-9 *Therefore the neighbors and those who were seeing him before, that he was blind, were saying, "Is this not the **one** who sits and begs?" Others were saying, "It is he"; others, "He is like him." He was saying, "I am **he**."*

The neighbors could hardly believe their eyes, so to speak. Was this the same man who used to sit and beg? Some said yes. Others said, "He is like him." The change was so great they could not be sure it was the same person. The man settled it: "I am he."

When Jesus truly changes a life, people notice. Some may even wonder if you are the same person.

9:10-12 *Therefore they were saying to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A man who is called Jesus made clay and smeared my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' And having gone away and having washed, I received sight." Therefore they said to him, "Where is that **One**?" He says, "I do not know."*

"How were your eyes opened?" The man told his story simply. He did not know much yet. He knew the name of the man who healed him ("A man who is called Jesus"), and he knew what happened. When they asked where Jesus was, he answered honestly, "I do not know."

At this point, he only knows Jesus as "the man." Keep an eye on how his understanding grows through the chapter. First Jesus is "the man" (9:11), then "a prophet" (9:17), then someone "from God" (9:33), and finally "Lord," whom he worships (9:38).

9:13 *They bring him who once **was** blind to the Pharisees.*

The neighbors took the man to the Pharisees. They may have been trying to do the right thing by reporting a miracle to the religious leaders. Or they may have sensed trouble because of the day on which it happened.

9:14 *Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.*

John tells us it was a Sabbath. The Sabbath was the seventh day, the day of rest God gave Israel (Exodus 20:8-11). Over the centuries, the religious teachers had built up a long list of rules about what counted as work. Kneading, which is what you do to make clay, was on that list. So was healing, unless a life was in danger. Jesus did not break God's Law. He broke the man-made rules that had been piled on top of it.

9:15 *Therefore again the Pharisees also were asking him how he had received sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."*

The Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. His answer was even shorter this time: "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." He stuck to the facts.

9:16 *Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others were saying, "How is a sinful man able to do such signs?" And there was a division among them.*

The Pharisees were divided. Some said, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others asked, "How is a sinful man able to do such signs?" The first group started with their conclusion and threw out the evidence. The second group at least let the evidence make them think. When we come to Jesus with our minds already made up, we will miss what is right in front of us.

9:17 *They say to the blind* ***man*** *again, "What do you say concerning Him, that He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."*

They turned to the blind man and asked what he thought. He said, "He is a prophet." His understanding was growing. In the Old Testament, prophets like Elijah and Elisha performed great miracles by God's power. The man knew that whoever opened his eyes was sent from God.

9:18-19 *Therefore the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of him who had received sight. And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, of whom you say that he was born blind? How then does he now see?"*

The Jewish leaders still did not believe he had really been blind. So they called in his parents. If they could prove this was a different man, or that he had never truly been blind, the problem would go away. They asked two questions: Is this your son, who you say was born blind? And how does he now see?

9:20-21 *His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him; he will speak concerning himself."*

The parents answered the first question clearly. Yes, this was their son, and yes, he was born blind. But they dodged the second. They did not know how he could see or who opened his eyes. "He is of age; ask him; he will speak concerning himself." Being "of age" meant he was a grown man, old enough to give legal testimony for himself.

9:22-23 *His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed together that if anyone confessed Him* ***to be*** *Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Because of this his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."*

John explains why they dodged. They were afraid. The Jewish leaders had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus as the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. This was more than

losing a seat at church. The synagogue was the center of Jewish community life. Being thrown out could cut a person off from friends, worship, and even work.

I do not want to be too hard on these parents. Fear is powerful. But it is sad to see a mother and father so afraid of losing their place that they would not stand with their own son on the greatest day of his life. Jesus warned that following Him would sometimes cost us our place among people (16:2). The question for us is whether we will confess Him anyway.

9:24 *Therefore a second time they called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."*

They called the man back a second time and said, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." "Give glory to God" was a solemn way of saying, "Tell the truth before God" (see Joshua 7:19). They were putting him under oath, but they also told him what answer they wanted to hear.

9:25 *Then he answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one **thing** I know, that being blind, now I see."*

His answer is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible: "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that being blind, now I see." He did not try to win a theological debate with the experts. He just told what happened to him. No one can argue you out of what Jesus has done in your life. You may not have all the answers, but you can always say, "I was blind, but now I see!" The hymn writer John Newton put these same words into "Amazing Grace."

9:26-27 *And they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not hear. Why do you want to hear **it** again? You do not also want to become His disciples, do you?"*

They asked him again, "What did He do to you?" They were looking for some new detail they could use against Jesus. The man had had enough. "I told you already, and you did not hear. Why do you want to hear it again? You do not also want to become His disciples, do you?" A beggar who had never seen a book in his life was now teasing the most powerful religious leaders in the city. The more they pushed, the bolder he became.

9:28-29 *Therefore they reviled him and said, "You are a disciple of that **One**, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but this **man**, we do not know where He is from."*

That question hit a nerve. They insulted him and said, "You are a disciple of that One, but we are disciples of Moses." They knew God had spoken to Moses. But Jesus? They said they did not even know where He came from. In 7:27 the crowd said they did know where He came from. Now, when it suits them, the leaders say they do not.

They set Moses against Jesus. But Moses wrote about Jesus (5:46). You cannot truly follow Moses and reject the One Moses pointed to.

9:30 *The man answered and said to them, "For in this is an amazing **thing**, that you do not know where He is from, and He opened my eyes.*

"For in this is an amazing thing." The man could not believe it. These were the experts, the men whose job it was to recognize the work of God, and they could not tell where a man came from who had just done what no one had ever done before.

9:31 *Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.*

"We know that God does not hear sinners." This was a common belief in that day, and there are Old Testament verses that say something close to it (Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 15:29). The man meant that God does not answer the prayers of people who are living in open rebellion against Him.

We should be careful with this verse. These are the words of the healed man, a new believer who did not yet know Jesus well, not a doctrine Jesus taught. God does hear the prayer of a sinner who turns to Him. The tax collector in Luke 18:13 prayed, "God, be propitious to me, the sinner!" and Jesus said he went home justified. Thank God He hears sinners, or none of us would ever be saved.

9:32-33 *Since the age **began** it has not been heard that anyone opened **the** eyes of one born blind. If this **man** were not from God, He would not be able to do anything."*

"Since the age began it has not been heard that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind." There is no record in the Old Testament of anyone ever doing this. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing. The beggar's logic was simple and airtight. The Old Testament spoke of a day when the eyes of the blind would be opened as a sign of God's coming salvation (Isaiah 35:5). The man may not have known that verse, but he was living proof of it.

9:34 *They answered and said to him, "You were entirely born in sins, and you teach us?" And they cast him out.*

The leaders had no answer, so they turned to insults again. "You were entirely born in sins, and you teach us?" They now admitted he was born blind, the very thing they had refused to believe. And they threw him out. He had been excommunicated, cut off from the synagogue.

Truth often gets that kind of response. When people cannot answer it, they try to silence it.

9:35 *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"*

Jesus heard they had thrown him out, and He went looking for him. I love this. The religious leaders threw him out, but Jesus took him in. When you are rejected for His sake, He will find you. Then Jesus asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" Some Greek manuscripts read "Son of Man" here, Jesus' favorite name for Himself, which comes from Daniel 7:13-14, where one "like a son of man" receives an everlasting kingdom from God. Either way, Jesus was asking the man to put his faith in Him.

9:36 *He answered and said, "Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?"*

"Who is He, Sir," he replied, "that I may believe in Him?" The man was ready. He did not know yet that the One in front of him was the One he was asking about. Remember, he had never seen Jesus' face. He was healed after he went away to wash. This may be the first time he had ever laid eyes on the man who healed him.

9:37 *And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and the **One** speaking with you is He."*

"You have both seen Him," Jesus answered, "and the One speaking with you is He." What a moment that must have been. The first face this man ever looked for was the face of the Son of God, and now he was seeing it.

9:38 *And he said, "I believe, Lord." And he worshiped Him.*

"I believe, Lord." And he worshiped Him. Here is the final step in his journey: from "a man who is called Jesus," to "a prophet," to "from God," and now to "Lord," the One he worships. Jesus accepted his worship. When people tried to worship apostles or angels, they refused (Acts 10:25-26; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). Jesus received it, because He is God.

9:39 *And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those not seeing may see, and those seeing may become blind."*

"For judgment I came into this world, that those not seeing may see, and those seeing may become blind." In 3:17, Jesus said He did not come to judge the world. Both are true. His purpose in coming was to save. But His coming also divides people. Those who admit they are blind and need Him receive sight. Those who think they already see, and do not need Him, end up blinder than before.

9:40 *And those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and they said to Him, "We are not also blind, are we?"*

Some Pharisees nearby heard this and asked, "We are not also blind, are we?" The way they asked in the Greek expected the answer "Of course not."

9:41 *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains."*

"If you were blind," Jesus replied, "you would not have sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." If they admitted their spiritual blindness, they could be healed and forgiven. But because they claimed to see perfectly well, they shut the door on the only One who could help them. Pride is the most dangerous kind of blindness, because the person who has it does not know it.

Chapter 9 Summary

Jesus meets a man who has been blind since birth. His disciples assume someone's sin caused the blindness, but Jesus says it happened so that the works of God would be displayed. He makes clay,

puts it on the man's eyes, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and the man comes back seeing. Because it is the Sabbath, the Pharisees launch an investigation. They question the man, then his parents, who are too afraid of being thrown out of the synagogue to say much, and then the man again. Through it all, the man sticks to his story: "being blind, now I see!" His understanding of Jesus grows from "a man who is called Jesus" to "a prophet" to a man "from God." The leaders throw him out, but Jesus finds him, reveals Himself as the Son of God, and the man worships Him. The chapter ends with a warning: those who admit they are blind can receive sight, but those who insist they see remain in their sin.

Healing on the Sabbath

Jesus healed on the Sabbath more than once, and again and again it stirred up the religious leaders. Here are some of the Sabbath healings recorded in the Gospels:

- The man at the pool of Bethesda, sick for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-18)
- The man born blind (John 9:1-41)
- The man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6)
- The woman bent over for eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17)
- The man with dropsy, a swelling of the body (Luke 14:1-6)

Why did Jesus keep doing this? I believe He did it on purpose, to show that the Sabbath was a gift from God, not a burden. He said, "The Sabbath was made for the sake of man, not man for the sake of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). He also said that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). The religious leaders had turned a day of rest and blessing into a day of rules and fear. Jesus showed that doing good, setting people free, and giving glory to God is exactly what the Sabbath is for.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. Have you ever had a moment when something you had looked at many times suddenly made sense? What was it?

2. What did the disciples assume about the cause of the man's blindness, and how did Jesus correct them? (9:2-3)

3. What did the man have to do before he could see? What does that teach us about faith? (9:6-7)

4. Trace how the man's description of Jesus changes through the chapter. (9:11, 17, 33, 38)

5. Why were the man's parents afraid to answer the Pharisees' questions? (9:22)

6. What was the man's simple testimony when the leaders pressed him? (9:25)

7. What did Jesus do when He heard the man had been thrown out of the synagogue? (9:35)

8. What does Jesus mean when He says those who see may become blind? (9:39-41)

9. What is one thing you know for certain that Jesus has done in your life, even if you cannot explain everything about it?

10. Is there any area where pride may be keeping you from seeing what God wants to show you?

Chapter 10: The Good Shepherd

Scripture: The Shepherd and His Sheep

10:1-6 "Truly, truly, I say to you, the ***one*** not entering through the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbing up from elsewhere, that ***one*** is a thief and a robber. But the ***one*** entering through the door is ***the*** shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger they will certainly not follow, but they will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus spoke this figure of speech to them, but they did not know what the things were which He was speaking to them.

10:7-18 Therefore Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All, as many as came before Me, are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and he will go in and will go out and will find pasture. The thief does not come except that he may steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have ***it*** abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the hired man, and not being a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the sheep. Now the hired man flees because he is a hired man and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and I am known by My own, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. Because of this the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, so that I may take it again. No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down from Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment I received from My Father."

10:19-21 Therefore a division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. And many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" Others were saying, "These declarations are not ***those*** of one being demonized. A demon is not able to open ***the*** eyes of ***the*** blind, is it?"

10:22-30 Now the ***Feast of*** Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the porch of Solomon. Therefore the Jews surrounded Him and were saying to Him, "How long do You hold our soul in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works which I do in the name of My Father, these testify concerning Me. But you do not believe, for you are not of My sheep, even as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they will certainly never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given ***them*** to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch ***them*** out of the hand of My Father. I and the Father are one."

10:31-39 Therefore the Jews again took up stones so that they might stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. Because of which work of them do you stone Me?" The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture is not able to be broken), do you say of ***Him*** whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, 'I am ***the*** Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, even if you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and believe that the Father ***is*** in Me, and I in Him." Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He went out of their hand.

10:40-42 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and He stayed there. And many came to Him and were saying, "John indeed did no sign, but all things, as many as John said about this ***man***, were true." And many believed in Him there.

Chapter 10 Preview

Chapter 10 flows straight out of chapter 9. Jesus has just healed a man born blind, and the religious leaders have thrown that man out of the synagogue. They were supposed to be the shepherds of Israel, but they cared more about their position than about the sheep. So Jesus draws a picture every listener in Israel understood: a sheepfold, a door, a shepherd, thieves, and wolves.

In this chapter Jesus gives two of His seven "I am" statements: "I am the door" and "I am the good shepherd." He tells us He will lay down His life for His sheep and take it up again, and He makes one of the clearest claims to deity in the whole Bible: "I and the Father are one." The crowd understood exactly what He meant, because they picked up stones to kill Him.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the **one** not entering through the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbing up from elsewhere, that **one** is a thief and a robber.*

Jesus opens with "Truly, truly," a phrase He uses when He wants us to pay close attention. A sheepfold in Israel was usually a stone pen with one opening. At night the sheep were brought inside for protection. Anyone who climbed over the wall instead of coming through the door had no business being there. He was there to take, not to care.

Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who had just thrown the healed man out (John 9:34). By their actions they showed which kind of leader they were. They had climbed into a place of authority over God's people, but they did not come by God's way, and they did not love the sheep.

10:2-3 *But the **one** entering through the door is **the** shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

The true shepherd comes in the right way, through the door. The doorkeeper knows him and opens for him. Several flocks were often kept in the same fold overnight, and in the morning each shepherd would call, and only his own sheep would come.

"He calls his own sheep by name." This is one of my favorite lines in the chapter. The Good Shepherd does not see a crowd. He sees you. He knows your name, your history, your struggles, and He calls you personally. That is exactly what Jesus had just done with the blind man in chapter 9. The leaders cast him out, but Jesus went and found him (9:35).

10:4-5 *And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger they will certainly not follow, but they will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."*

An Eastern shepherd did not drive his sheep from behind. He walked ahead of them, and they followed because they trusted his voice. A stranger could use the same words, but the sheep would run from him because the voice was wrong.

This is a lesson for every believer. The more time we spend with our Shepherd in His Word, the better we know His voice. When a false teacher comes along, even one who uses Bible words, something will sound off to a sheep who knows the real thing. You might ask, "How do I learn to tell the difference?" It's simple: spend time with the Shepherd. You learn a voice by hearing it often.

10:6 *Jesus spoke this figure of speech to them, but they did not know what the things were which He was speaking to them.*

The Greek word here, *paroimia*, means a figure of speech or an illustration. Jesus was not talking about farming. He was using a picture to teach a truth about Himself and His people, and the Pharisees missed it completely. They had eyes, but they could not see, which is the very point Jesus made at the end of chapter 9 (9:39-41).

10:7-8 *Therefore Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All, as many as came before Me, are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them.*

Now Jesus explains the picture. *"I am the door of the sheep."* This is the third of His seven "I am" statements in John. Many shepherds in the field would lie down across the opening of the pen at night. Nothing could get in or out without going past the shepherd himself. He was the door.

"All, as many as came before Me" does not mean the prophets of the Old Testament, who pointed to Him. It means those who came claiming to be the way to God while leading people away from Him: false messiahs and self-serving leaders. The true sheep did not follow them.

10:9 *I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and he will go in and will go out and will find pasture.*

This is one of the plainest statements of salvation in the Bible. There is one door, and that door is Jesus. "If anyone" means the invitation is open to everybody. "Will be saved" is the promise. "Go in and will go out and will find pasture" is a picture of the life that follows: safety, freedom, and everything we need to be fed and grow.

Jesus did not say He is one of many doors. People today like to say all roads lead to God. Jesus said there is one door. He will say the same thing again in John 14:6.

10:10 *The thief does not come except that he may steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have **it** abundantly.*

Here Jesus sets two missions side by side. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Ultimately that describes Satan and every leader who serves himself at the expense of God's people. Jesus came for the opposite reason: to give life.

"Have it abundantly." The Greek word *perissos* means more than enough, overflowing. This is not a promise of money or an easy life. Jesus Himself was poor and was crucified. Abundant life is life with God, full of meaning, forgiveness, and peace, and it begins now and never ends.

10:11 *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*

"I am the good shepherd." This is the fourth "I am" statement. The word for "good" here, *kalos*, means good in the sense of noble, beautiful, worthy. Jesus is the model shepherd, the One every other shepherd should look like.

What makes Him good? He lays down His life for the sheep. A hired shepherd might fight off a wolf, but no one expected him to die for the flock. Jesus did exactly that. In the Old Testament the Lord Himself is the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23:1; Ezekiel 34:11-16). When Jesus calls Himself the good shepherd, He is stepping into a role Scripture gives to God.

10:12-13 *But the hired man, and not being a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the sheep. Now the hired man flees because he is a hired man and is not concerned about the sheep.*

The hired hand works for a paycheck. When danger shows up, he runs, because the sheep are not his. The wolf scatters the flock while he saves himself.

Jesus is again pointing at the religious leaders of His day, but this is a warning to anyone in ministry. A pastor, teacher, or leader who is in it for himself will not stand up when the wolves come. I believe all of us who teach God's Word need to ask ourselves honestly whose sheep these are. They belong to Christ, and we will answer to Him for how we treat them.

10:14-15 *I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and I am known by My own, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Jesus describes a relationship, not just a job. He knows His sheep, and they know Him. Then He compares it to the closest relationship there is: the Father and the Son. That is how deeply Jesus wants to know you, and how deeply He wants you to know Him.

He repeats what He said in verse 11, this time in the first person: "I lay down My life for the sheep." The cross was not an accident or a tragedy that caught Him by surprise. It was the plan. He went to it on purpose, for us.

10:16 *And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will hear My voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

"I have other sheep which are not of this fold." The fold Jesus was speaking in was Israel. The "other sheep" are the Gentiles, the non-Jewish people of the world. That includes most of us reading this study. Jesus was already looking ahead to the day when people from every nation would hear His voice.

"One flock, one shepherd" is the church: Jew and Gentile together under one Lord. Paul describes the same thing when he says Christ broke down the dividing wall between the two (Ephesians 2:14). Revelation 7:9 shows us the end result, a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

10:17-18 *Because of this the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, so that I may take it again. No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down from Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment I received from My Father."*

These two verses make something very clear: no one took Jesus' life from Him. Not Judas, not the high priest, not Pilate, not the Roman soldiers. He laid it down "from Myself." He had the authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again.

Think about that. Only God has authority over life and death. Jesus is telling us in advance that He will die and that He will raise Himself back to life. Scripture says the Father raised Him (Acts 2:24), the Spirit was at work in His resurrection (Romans 8:11), and here the Son says He will take His life up again. All three Persons of the one God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whom Christians call the Trinity) were at work in the resurrection.

10:19-21 *Therefore a division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. And many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" Others were saying, "These declarations are not* ***those*** *of one being demonized. A demon is not able to open* ***the*** *eyes of* ***the*** *blind, is it?"*

Once again Jesus' words divide the crowd, just as they did in 7:43 and 9:16. Some said He was demon-possessed and out of His mind. Others said, "Wait a minute. A demon cannot open the eyes of a man born blind."

Jesus still divides people today. No one can stay neutral about Him for long. Either He is who He claimed to be, or He was not a good man at all. The works He did, like giving sight to the blind, are the evidence that settles it.

10:22-23 *Now the **Feast of** Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the porch of Solomon.*

The Feast of the Dedication is what we know today as Hanukkah, also called the Feast of Lights. It celebrates the rededication of the temple in about 164 B.C., after the Maccabees drove out the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had defiled the temple with pagan sacrifices. Daniel prophesied about this ruler hundreds of years earlier (Daniel 8 and 11), and many Bible teachers see him as a forerunner of the antichrist to come.

John tells us it was winter. Jesus was walking in Solomon's portico, a covered walkway along the east side of the temple courts. The early church would later meet in this same place (Acts 3:11; 5:12). It is fitting that Jesus, the true temple of God (John 2:19-21), was walking in the temple during the feast that celebrated its cleansing.

10:24 *Therefore the Jews surrounded Him and were saying to Him, "How long do You hold our soul in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."*

The leaders surrounded Him and demanded, "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." It sounds like an honest question, but it was not. They were looking for words they could use against Him. They wanted Him to say "I am the Messiah" so they could accuse Him to the Romans or stone Him for blasphemy.

10:25-26 *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works which I do in the name of My Father, these testify concerning Me. But you do not believe, for you are not of My sheep, even as I said to you.*

Jesus answered that He had already told them, by His words and by His works. Every sign He did, from the water turned into wine to the healing of the blind man, was testimony from the Father.

They had seen the signs and heard Him teach. What more did they need? "But you do not believe, for you are not of My sheep." Still they refused. Unbelief is not usually a head problem. It is a heart problem.

10:27-28 *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they will certainly never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*

Here is a simple description of a true believer: My sheep hear, I know them, they follow. And here is what Jesus gives them: eternal life. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of His hand.

The believer's safety rests on the Shepherd, not on the sheep. Sheep are not strong animals, and we are not strong either. Our safety comes from whose hand we are in. No one can read verse 28

and come away thinking that Satan, people, or circumstances can rip a child of God out of Jesus' hand.

Christians have debated for centuries what these verses mean for someone who later walks away from the faith. Some believe they teach that a true believer can never be lost, because Jesus said "never." Others note that the promise is for sheep who keep hearing and following, and they believe a person can choose to leave, pointing to warnings like Hebrews 3:12-14. Good people land on both sides. What no one should miss is the comfort Jesus meant to give: His sheep are held, and no outside power can take them from Him.

10:29 *My Father, who has given **them** to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch **them** out of the hand of My Father.*

Jesus adds a second hand. The sheep are held in the Son's hand and in the Father's hand. The Father gave them to the Son (John 6:37-39), and the Father is greater than all. Who could possibly pull a believer out of that grip? This is double protection from the only One who has all power.

10:30 *I and the Father are one."*

"I and the Father are one." These six words are among the strongest claims to deity Jesus ever made. In Greek the word for "one," *hen*, is neuter. It does not mean one person; Jesus and the Father are distinct Persons, and Jesus talks to the Father and about the Father throughout this book. It means one in nature, one in essence, one in power and purpose.

Some people today teach that Jesus was only claiming to agree with God, the way two friends are "one" in their thinking. The men standing there did not take it that way, as the next verse shows. They knew He was claiming to be God.

10:31 *Therefore the Jews again took up stones so that they might stone Him.*

For the second time the Jews picked up stones to kill Him (see 8:59). Stoning was the penalty the Law gave for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). Their reaction tells us exactly what they heard Jesus say. If He had only meant "God and I agree," nobody would have reached for a rock.

10:32 *Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. Because of which work of them do you stone Me?"*

Jesus calmly reminds them of the "many good works" He has shown them from His Father and asks, "Because of which work of them do you stone Me?" He had healed the sick, fed the hungry, and given sight to the blind. It is a sharp question, and it exposes how upside down their thinking was. They were ready to kill the One who had done nothing but good.

10:33 *The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God."*

They answered plainly: not for good works, but for blasphemy, "because You, being a man, make Yourself God." They were right about what He claimed. They were wrong about who He was. Jesus did not "make Himself" God. He is God, who became a man (John 1:1, 14).

10:34-36 *Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture is not able to be broken), do you say of* ***Him*** *whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, 'I am* ***the*** *Son of God'?*

Jesus answers them from their own Scriptures. He quotes Psalm 82:6, where God calls the judges of Israel "gods." The Hebrew word *elohim* can be used for human rulers and judges because they stood in God's place to judge the people. Those judges were unjust, and in the same psalm God says they will die like men.

Jesus is reasoning from the lesser to the greater. If Scripture could call mere human judges "gods" because God's word came to them, how can you call it blasphemy when the One the Father set apart and sent into the world says, "I am the Son of God"? He is not saying He is only a "god" like those judges. He is showing that their charge does not even hold up by their own Bible.

"The Scripture is not able to be broken." Notice Jesus' view of the Bible. He built His argument on one word in one psalm, and He said Scripture cannot be set aside or proven wrong. If that was Jesus' view of God's Word, it should be ours too.

Old Testament links: Psalm 82:6 (quoted)

10:37-38 *If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, even if you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and believe that the Father* ***is*** *in Me, and I in Him."*

Jesus again points to His works. "Don't take My word for it," He is saying. "Look at what I do." If His works were not the works of God, they should not believe Him. But if they were, then even if they struggled with His words, the works should lead them to the truth: the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father.

God never asks us for blind faith. He gives evidence, and then He asks us to trust Him based on what He has shown us.

10:39 *Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He went out of their hand.*

They tried to seize Him, and He slipped away. This happened several times in John (7:30, 44; 8:59). His "hour" had not yet come. No one could lay a hand on Jesus until the time the Father had set.

10:40-42 *And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and He stayed there. And many came to Him and were saying, "John indeed did no sign, but all things, as many as John said about this **man**, were true." And many believed in Him there.*

Jesus went back across the Jordan River to the place where John the Baptist first baptized (John 1:28). This is where His public ministry began, and now, near the end, He returned there. The people remembered John. John never performed a miracle, but everything he said about Jesus turned out to be true.

What a testimony for John the Baptist! He did no signs, but he pointed people to Jesus, and years later people were still coming to faith because of what he said. That is a good goal for any of us. We may never do anything spectacular, but if we tell the truth about Jesus, God can use it long after we are gone. "Many believed in Him there."

Chapter 10 Summary

In chapter 10, Jesus contrasts Himself with the false shepherds of Israel. He is the door: the only way into God's fold, where there is safety, freedom, and pasture. He is the good shepherd who knows each sheep by name, who walks ahead of them, and who lays down His life for them on His own authority and takes it up again. His flock will include "other sheep," Gentiles from every nation, joined with believing Israel into one flock under one shepherd. At the Feast of the Dedication, the leaders demanded that He say plainly whether He was the Christ. Jesus pointed to His works and promised that His sheep have eternal life and will never perish, held safe in both His hand and the Father's hand. When He declared, "I and the Father are one," they tried to stone Him for claiming to be God. Jesus answered from Psalm 82, escaped their grasp, and withdrew beyond the Jordan, where many believed in Him.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been lost and needed someone to lead you? How did it feel when someone who knew the way showed up?

2. How do the sheep recognize their own shepherd, and what does that teach us about knowing Jesus' voice? (10:3-5)

3. What does it mean that Jesus is "the door"? Why does it matter that He did not say "a door"? (10:7-9)

4. What is the difference between the thief's purpose and Jesus' purpose? (10:10)

5. What makes Jesus the good shepherd, and how is He different from the hired hand? (10:11-13)

6. Who are the "other sheep" Jesus spoke of? (10:16)

7. What do verses 17 and 18 teach about who was in control of Jesus' death?

8. What promises does Jesus make to His sheep in verses 27 through 29? How do those promises affect the way you face fear or doubt?

9. Why did the Jews pick up stones after Jesus said, "I and the Father are one"? (10:30-33)

10. John the Baptist did no miracles, yet people believed because of his words. How can you point someone to Jesus this week? (10:41-42)

Chapter 11: The Raising of Lazarus

Scripture: Lazarus Raised from the Dead

11:1-16 Now ***there*** was a certain ***man*** being sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and Martha her sister. Now Mary was the ***one*** who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, look, ***he*** whom You love dearly is sick." And having heard ***it***, Jesus said, "This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus was loving Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Therefore when He heard that he was sick, then He indeed remained two days in the place where He was. Then after this He says to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." The disciples say to Him, "Rabbi, just now the Jews were seeking to stone You, and You are going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said these things, and after this He says to them, "Lazarus our friend has fallen asleep; but I go so that I may wake him." Therefore His disciples said, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of the rest of sleep. Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus died. And I rejoice for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to the fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."

11:17-27 Therefore having come, Jesus found that he had already been four days in the tomb. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, approximately 1.7 miles (fifteen stadia) away. And many of the Jews had come to those around Martha and Mary, so that they might console them concerning their brother. Therefore Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, met Him; but Mary was sitting in the house. Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You may ask God, God will give You." Jesus says to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha says to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The ***one*** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone living and believing in Me will certainly never die. Do you believe this?" She says to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, the ***One*** coming into the world."

11:28-37 And having said these things, she went away and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, "The Teacher is here and calls you." She, when she heard, rises quickly and comes to Him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house and consoling her, having seen Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb so that she may weep there." Therefore Mary, when she came where Jesus was, having seen Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Therefore when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping, He was deeply moved in the spirit and troubled Himself. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They say to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Therefore the Jews were saying, "Look how He was loving him dearly!" But some

of them said, "Was not this ***man***, who opened the eyes of the blind ***man***, able to cause that this ***man*** also should not die?"

11:38-44 Therefore Jesus, again being deeply moved in Himself, comes to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus says, "Take away the stone." The sister of the ***one*** who had died, Martha, says to Him, "Lord, already he stinks, for he is four days ***dead***." Jesus says to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Therefore they took away the stone where the ***one*** who had died was laid. And Jesus lifted ***His*** eyes upward and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the crowd standing around I said ***it***, so that they may believe that You sent Me." And having said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And the ***one*** who had died came out, bound feet and hands with linen strips, and his face had been bound around with a cloth. Jesus says to them, "Unbind him and allow ***him*** to go."

11:45-57 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus did. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man does many signs. If we let Him alone like this, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest of that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is profitable for us that one man die for the people, and not the whole nation perish." Now this he did not say from himself, but being high priest of that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who have been scattered. Therefore from that day they took counsel together that they might kill Him. Therefore Jesus was no longer walking publicly among the Jews, but went away from there into the region near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there He stayed with His disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the region before the Passover, so that they might purify themselves. Therefore they were seeking Jesus and were saying among one another, standing in the temple, "What does it seem to you? That He will certainly not come to the feast?" Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command that if anyone knew where He was, he should report ***it***, so that they might seize Him.

Chapter 11 Preview

Chapter 11 tells the story of the seventh and greatest sign in John's Gospel before the cross: the raising of Lazarus. Jesus waits on purpose while His friend dies, then walks to the tomb, weeps with the grieving family, and calls a dead man back to life after four days in the grave.

This chapter shows us both sides of Jesus at once. He is fully man: He loves His friends, He is deeply moved, and He weeps. He is fully God: He declares, "I am the resurrection and the life," and death obeys His voice. The chapter ends on a dark note. This miracle is the final straw for the religious leaders, and from that day on they plan to kill Him. The One who gives life to Lazarus will soon give His own life for the world.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1-2 *Now **there** was a certain **man** being sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and Martha her sister. Now Mary was the **one** who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.*

Lazarus lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. We meet this family elsewhere in the Gospels. In Luke 10:38-42, Martha is busy serving while Mary sits at Jesus' feet. John tells us ahead of time that this is the same Mary who anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair, an event he describes in chapter 12. John assumes his readers already knew that story.

The name Lazarus is a Greek form of the Hebrew name Eleazar, which means "God has helped." That is a fitting name for a man God was about to help in the most amazing way.

11:3 *Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, look, **he** whom You love dearly is sick."*

Notice how the sisters word their message: "Lord, look, he whom You love dearly is sick." They do not ask Jesus to come. They do not tell Him what to do. They simply bring the need to Him and trust His love.

That is a good model for prayer. We can come to Jesus and say, "Lord, the one You love is hurting," and leave the answer with Him. The sisters knew Jesus loved Lazarus. Their confidence was in His love, not in their own worthiness.

11:4 *And having heard **it**, Jesus said, "This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*

Jesus said, "This sickness is not to death." Lazarus did die, so what did Jesus mean? Death would not be the final word. The purpose of this sickness was the glory of God and the glorifying of the Son.

We see the same thing in chapter 9 with the man born blind (9:3). Sometimes God allows suffering for reasons we cannot see in the moment. That does not mean He does not care. It means He is doing something bigger than we can understand right now.

11:5-6 *Now Jesus was loving Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Therefore when He heard that he was sick, then He indeed remained two days in the place where He was.*

These two verses belong together, and the word "so" connects them in a way that surprises us. Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. *So* when He heard Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days.

You might ask, "How can waiting be love?" It's simple: Jesus had something better in mind than what they asked for. If He had come right away, He would have healed a sick man. By waiting, He would raise a dead man and show them, and us, that He has power over death itself. God's delays are not God's denials. When He seems slow, He is often preparing a greater answer than we would have chosen. That does not mean every prayer for healing will be answered the way Martha and

Mary's was. Lazarus himself died again someday. But for those who belong to Him, death is not the last word (11:25).

11:7-8 *Then after this He says to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." The disciples say to Him, "Rabbi, just now the Jews were seeking to stone You, and You are going there again?"*

Jesus told the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." The disciples were alarmed. The last time they were near Jerusalem, the leaders tried to stone Him (10:31). Going back seemed like walking into a trap. They were thinking about safety. Jesus was thinking about His Father's plan and His friend.

11:9-10 *Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."*

Jesus answers with a picture. A day has twelve hours of daylight. As long as it is daytime, a person can walk without tripping because he can see. The point is that Jesus was walking in the light of the Father's will, and nothing could happen to Him before His time. His "day" was not yet over.

There is a lesson here for us as well. When we walk in God's light, following His will, we do not need to be ruled by fear. The one who stumbles is the one who walks in the dark, without the light of God in him.

11:11-13 *He said these things, and after this He says to them, "Lazarus our friend has fallen asleep; but I go so that I may wake him." Therefore His disciples said, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of the rest of sleep.*

Jesus told them Lazarus had "fallen asleep" and that He was going to wake him up. The disciples took Him at the surface level and thought, "Good, if he is sleeping, he will get better." But Jesus was speaking of death.

The Bible often calls the death of a believer "sleep" (Acts 7:60; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). This does not mean the soul is unconscious. Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). It means that, for the believer, death is temporary. Just as a sleeping person will wake up, the body of a believer will be raised. For Jesus, waking Lazarus from death was as easy as waking a friend from a nap.

11:14-15 *Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus died. And I rejoice for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

Now Jesus speaks plainly: "Lazarus died." Then He says something unexpected: "I rejoice for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe." Jesus was not glad that His friends were grieving. He was glad for what the disciples were about to see, because it would strengthen their faith for what was coming. In just a few weeks they would watch Him die. They needed to know He had power over the grave.

11:16 *Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to the fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him."*

Thomas, also called Didymus, which means "twin," usually gets remembered as "doubting Thomas" because of chapter 20. But look at him here. He is the one who says, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." It may have been a gloomy thing to say, but it was loyal and brave. Thomas was ready to follow Jesus even if it cost him his life. Let's give him credit for that.

11:17 *Therefore having come, Jesus found that he had already been four days in the tomb.*

By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. In that climate, burial usually took place the same day a person died. Four days in the tomb meant there was no question he was truly dead, and decay had already begun (11:39). Nobody would be able to say later that Lazarus was only unconscious. Jesus let the situation become humanly hopeless so that only God could get the glory.

11:18-19 *Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, approximately 1.7 miles (fifteen stadia) away. And many of the Jews had come to those around Martha and Mary, so that they might console them concerning their brother.*

Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, on the far side of the Mount of Olives. That is why many Jews from the city had come out to comfort the sisters. Mourning in that culture lasted several days, and friends and neighbors came to sit with the family. This detail also explains why so many witnesses were present for what happened next. God arranged a crowd.

11:20 *Therefore Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, met Him; but Mary was sitting in the house.*

Martha and Mary each act just as we would expect from Luke 10. Martha, the doer, goes out to meet Jesus as soon as she hears He is coming. Mary, the quieter one, stays in the house. Neither one is wrong. God made people differently, and He meets each of us where we are.

11:21-22 *Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You may ask God, God will give You."*

Martha's first words carry both faith and hurt: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." She believed Jesus could have healed him. She may also have wondered why He did not come sooner. Then she adds, "Even now I know that whatever You may ask God, God will give You."

I appreciate Martha's honesty. She did not hide her pain from Jesus. We can bring Him our questions and our "Lord, if only" moments. Faith and grief can live in the same heart.

11:23-24 *Jesus says to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha says to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

Jesus promised, "Your brother will rise again." Martha took this as a promise about the end of time, "the resurrection on the last day." Many Jews in her day, especially the Pharisees, believed in a future resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:2). Martha had good theology. She believed in a future resurrection, but she was not expecting anything that day.

The Bible does teach a resurrection on the last day. Jesus Himself said He will raise up His people on the last day (John 6:39-40). As I explain in my study of Revelation, I believe that happens when Christ comes for His church before the Tribulation, when the dead in Christ rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). But Jesus was about to show Martha that the resurrection is not only an event. It is a Person.

11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The **one** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone living and believing in Me will certainly never die. Do you believe this?"*

"I am the resurrection and the life." This is the fifth "I am" statement in John, and it is one of the most comforting verses in the Bible. Jesus does not say, "I will bring the resurrection" or "I know about the resurrection." He says, "I am the resurrection."

He then makes two promises. First, the one who believes in Him will live even if he dies. A believer's body may die, but he will be raised to life. Second, everyone who lives and believes in Him will never die. The real person, the soul, will never be separated from God. Physical death for a believer is not the end. It is a doorway into the presence of the Lord.

Then Jesus asks Martha straight out, "Do you believe this?" He asks you the same question today, and how you answer it shapes everything else.

11:27 *She says to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, the **One** coming into the world."*

Martha answers with one of the great confessions of faith in the Bible. She calls Jesus the Christ, which means the Messiah, the Anointed One. She calls Him the Son of God. And she calls Him "the One coming into the world," the One promised by the prophets.

This lines up exactly with John's purpose for writing his Gospel: "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). Martha, the busy, practical sister, gets it right. Faith does not belong only to the quiet types.

11:28-29 *And having said these things, she went away and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, "The Teacher is here and calls you." She, when she heard, rises quickly and comes to Him.*

Martha went back and quietly told Mary, "The Teacher is here and calls you." She said it secretly, probably because of the danger to Jesus with so many visitors from Jerusalem around. Mary got up quickly and went to Him. When Jesus calls, the right response is to go to Him right away.

11:30-31 *Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was in the place where Martha met Him. Then the Jews who were with her in the house and consoling her, having seen Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb so that she may weep there."*

Jesus stayed outside the village where Martha had met Him. When Mary left the house, the mourners followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to weep. Without knowing it, they were following her straight to Jesus and to the greatest miracle they would ever see.

11:32 *Therefore Mary, when she came where Jesus was, having seen Him, fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Mary fell at Jesus' feet, which is where we usually find her in Scripture (Luke 10:39; John 12:3). She said the same words Martha had said: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." The sisters had likely said this to each other many times over those four days.

Jesus answered Martha with teaching. He answers Mary differently, not with words but with tears. He gives each of us what we need.

11:33 *Therefore when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping, He was deeply moved in the spirit and troubled Himself.*

When Jesus saw Mary and the others weeping, He was "deeply moved in the spirit and troubled Himself." The Greek word here, *embrimaomai*, is a strong word. It can describe deep emotion and even anger or indignation. Jesus was not angry at Mary. I believe He was moved by the grief in front of Him and stirred against death itself, the enemy that sin brought into God's good world. Death was never part of God's original design, and it grieved and angered the Son of God to see what it does to the people He loves.

11:34 *And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They say to Him, "Lord, come and see."*

"Where have you laid him?" The God who knows all things asked a simple question. He was not asking for information as much as He was moving toward the tomb with them. They answered, "Lord, come and see." Back in chapter 1, Jesus invited His first disciples to come and see where He was staying (1:39), and Philip told Nathanael, "Come and see" (1:46). Now the mourners invited Jesus to come and see their sorrow.

11:35 *Jesus wept.*

"Jesus wept." This is the shortest verse in most English Bibles, and one of the deepest. The word John uses here means to shed tears quietly, not the loud wailing of the mourners around Him.

Why would Jesus weep when He knew He was about to raise Lazarus? Because He truly feels our pain. He is not a distant God who watches us hurt from far away. He came close enough to cry with us. Hebrews 4:15 tells us we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. If you are grieving today, know this: Jesus is not standing over you with His arms crossed. He weeps with you.

11:36-37 *Therefore the Jews were saying, "Look how He was loving him dearly!" But some of them said, "Was not this **man**, who opened the eyes of the blind **man**, able to cause that this **man** also should not die?"*

The crowd saw His tears and said, "Look how He was loving him dearly!" But others criticized: "Was not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, able to cause that this man also should not die?" Even at a moment like this, some people looked for something to complain about.

There will always be people who look at Jesus' love and find fault. Their question was really the same as Martha's and Mary's, but it came from doubt instead of faith. They were about to find out that He could do far more than keep a man from dying.

11:38 *Therefore Jesus, again being deeply moved in Himself, comes to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.*

Again Jesus was deeply moved as He came to the tomb. It was a cave, typical of family tombs of that time, with a large stone set against the opening. A body would be laid on a shelf inside, and the stone would keep out animals and robbers. That stone stood between Jesus and His friend. It would not stand there long.

11:39 *Jesus says, "Take away the stone." The sister of the **one** who had died, Martha, says to Him, "Lord, already he stinks, for he is four days **dead**."*

"Take away the stone." Jesus could have moved the stone Himself with a word, but He gave the people something to do. God often asks us to do our part, the part we can do, before He does the part only He can do.

Martha objected, and we can understand why. After four days the body would smell of decay. It was practical, honest, and very human. Her words also prove beyond doubt that Lazarus was truly dead. Jesus was not about to revive a man who had fainted. He was about to raise a man whose body had already begun to decay.

11:40 *Jesus says to her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"*

Jesus gently reminded Martha of His promise: "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" Faith is not ignoring the facts. Martha's facts were correct. Faith is trusting that God is bigger than the facts.

11:41-42 *Therefore they took away the stone where the **one** who had died was laid. And Jesus lifted **His** eyes upward and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the crowd standing around I said **it**, so that they may believe that You sent Me."*

They rolled away the stone. Then Jesus lifted His eyes and thanked the Father, before anything had happened. He thanked Him for already hearing His prayer. Jesus explained that He prayed out loud for the sake of the people standing there, so they would know the Father had sent Him.

This tells us something about Jesus' miracles. He never did them to show off or to bring attention to Himself apart from the Father. Everything He did pointed back to the One who sent Him. It is also a lesson in prayer: we can thank God in faith before we see the answer.

11:43 *And having said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"*

"Lazarus, come out!" Jesus shouted with a loud voice, and He called His friend by name, just as the Good Shepherd calls His own sheep by name (10:3). Death has no choice but to obey the voice of the Son of God.

Jesus told us in John 5:28-29 that an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out. Lazarus was a preview of that day.

11:44 *And the **one** who had died came out, bound feet and hands with linen strips, and his face had been bound around with a cloth. Jesus says to them, "Unbind him and allow **him** to go."*

Lazarus came out, still bound hand and foot in burial wrappings, with a cloth around his face. Picture that moment. The crowd must have gasped. The man who had been dead four days was standing in the doorway of his own tomb.

Then Jesus said, "Unbind him and allow him to go." Again, Jesus gave the people a job. He gave life; they removed the grave clothes. That is a picture of the church. Only Jesus can give new life to a person who is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 5), but He invites us to help new believers get free from the old habits and grave clothes of their former life.

Lazarus was raised, but he would die again someday. His body was restored to this life, not changed into a resurrection body like the one Jesus would have after Easter. Jesus' own resurrection was different: He rose never to die again (Romans 6:9).

11:45-46 *Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus did.*

The miracle produced two very different responses. Many of the Jews who had come to comfort Mary saw it and believed in Jesus. Others went to the Pharisees to report what He had done.

It is amazing to me that people could stand in front of a man raised from the dead and still not believe. But that is exactly what Jesus said would happen in His story of the rich man and Lazarus (a different Lazarus): "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Miracles alone do not change a heart that has already decided against God.

11:47-48 *Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man does many signs. If we let Him alone like this, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."*

The chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the council, the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jewish people. Notice what they admit: "This man does many signs." They did not deny the miracles. They could not.

Their real concern comes out in verse 48. If everyone believes in Jesus, the Romans will come and take away "our place and nation." "Our place" likely means the temple and their own positions of power. They were more worried about losing their place than about whether Jesus was telling the truth. Fear of losing power has led many people to reject God's truth. Ironically, the very thing they feared happened anyway. Rome destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

11:49-50 *But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest of that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is profitable for us that one man die for the people, and not the whole nation perish."*

Caiaphas was the high priest at that time. He served in that office for many years, from about A.D. 18 to 36. John calls him "high priest that year," meaning the high priest in that one fateful year when Jesus was crucified.

Caiaphas rudely told the council, "You know nothing." Then he gave his cold political calculation: it is better for one man to die than for the whole nation to be destroyed. In his mind, Jesus was a problem to be removed for the good of the country.

11:51-52 *Now this he did not say from himself, but being high priest of that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who have been scattered.*

John explains that Caiaphas spoke better than he knew. He was not speaking on his own. Because Caiaphas was high priest that year, God used his words as a prophecy. Caiaphas meant, "Let's sacrifice Jesus to save ourselves." God meant, "Jesus will die in the place of the people, to save them."

And not only for the nation of Israel. Jesus would die to "gather together into one the children of God who have been scattered." This is the "other sheep" of John 10:16. God can use even the words of wicked men to accomplish His purpose. He is in control, even when evil people think they are.

11:53 *Therefore from that day they took counsel together that they might kill Him.*

"From that day they took counsel together that they might kill Him." The raising of Lazarus did not soften their hearts. It hardened them. This is the turning point in John's Gospel. From here on, the road leads straight to the cross.

11:54 *Therefore Jesus was no longer walking publicly among the Jews, but went away from there into the region near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there He stayed with His disciples.*

Jesus stopped walking openly among the Jews and withdrew with His disciples to a town called Ephraim, near the wilderness. He was not running from the cross. He was waiting for the Father's time. The hour had to come at Passover, and He would not let them take Him a moment early.

11:55 *Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the region before the Passover, so that they might purify themselves.*

The Passover was near. This would be the third Passover John mentions (2:13; 6:4), and the last one of Jesus' life. Many people traveled to Jerusalem early to go through the ceremonies of purification so they could take part in the feast (Numbers 9:6-10). They were careful to be ceremonially clean, while their leaders were planning murder.

11:56-57 *Therefore they were seeking Jesus and were saying among one another, standing in the temple, "What does it seem to you? That He will certainly not come to the feast?" Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command that if anyone knew where He was, he should report **it**, so that they might seize Him.*

The crowds in the temple were talking about Jesus: "What does it seem to you? That He will certainly not come to the feast?" Meanwhile, the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where He was should report it so they could arrest Him. Jesus had become a wanted man.

The stage is set. The Lamb of God (John 1:29) would come to Jerusalem at Passover, the feast of the lamb. Chapter 12 opens with Him coming to Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, six days before the Passover.

Chapter 11 Summary

In chapter 11, Jesus receives word that His friend Lazarus is sick, but He waits two more days before going to Bethany. When He arrives, Lazarus has been dead four days. Martha meets Him with honest grief and faith, and Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life," asking her, "Do you believe this?" She confesses Him as the Christ, the Son of God. When Mary comes and falls at His feet weeping, Jesus is deeply moved, and He weeps. At the tomb He has the stone removed, thanks the Father aloud, and calls, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man walks out still wrapped in grave clothes. Many believe, but others report Him to the Pharisees. The council meets, and Caiaphas the high priest says it is better for one man to die for the people. John tells us this was an unknowing prophecy that Jesus would die for the nation and for God's scattered children. From that day the leaders plot to kill Him, and Jesus withdraws as the final Passover approaches.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. Think of a time you waited on something for a long time. Did the wait change how you felt when it finally came?

2. How did Mary and Martha word their message to Jesus? What can that teach us about prayer? (11:3)

3. Why did Jesus wait two more days before going to Bethany? (11:4-6, 15)

4. What did Thomas's words show about his loyalty to Jesus? (11:16)

5. What did Martha believe about the resurrection, and what did Jesus add to her understanding? (11:24-26)

6. What does it mean to you that Jesus wept at the tomb of His friend? (11:33-35)

7. Why did Jesus pray out loud before raising Lazarus? (11:41-42)

8. Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus after this miracle? What were they afraid of losing? (11:47-48)

9. How did God use Caiaphas's words in a way Caiaphas never intended? (11:49-52)

10. Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" How would you answer Him today, and how does your answer affect the way you face death and loss? (11:26)

Chapter 12: The Hour Has Come

Scripture: The Anointing, the King's Entry, and the Hour of Glory

12:1-8 Therefore six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had died, whom He raised out from ***the*** dead. Therefore they made a supper for Him there, and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining ***at table*** with Him. Therefore Mary, having taken approximately 12 ounces (a litra) of fragrant oil of pure nard, very costly, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Therefore Judas Iscariot, ***son*** of Simon, one of His disciples, who was about to betray Him, says, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to ***the*** poor?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money bag, and was carrying off what was being put into ***it***. Therefore Jesus said, "Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of My burial. For the poor you always have with you, but Me you do not always have."

12:9-11 Therefore a great crowd of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not because of Jesus only, but so that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised out from ***the*** dead. But the chief priests took counsel that they might kill Lazarus also, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

12:12-19 On the next day a great crowd that had come to the feast, having heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and were crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed ***is*** the ***One*** coming in ***the*** name of ***the*** Lord, the King of Israel!" And Jesus, having found a young donkey, sat on it, even as it is written: "Do not fear, daughter of Zion; look, your King comes, sitting on a colt of a donkey." Now His disciples did not know these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him, and ***that*** they had done these things to Him. Therefore the crowd which was with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him out from ***the*** dead was testifying. Because of this the crowd also met Him, because it heard that He had done this sign. Therefore the Pharisees said among themselves, "You see that you gain nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him."

12:20-26 Now there were certain Greeks among those coming up so that they might worship at the feast. Therefore these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and were asking him, saying, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip comes and tells Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man may be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat, having fallen into the ground, dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. The ***one*** loving his life will lose it, and the ***one*** hating his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant also will be. And if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

12:27-36 Now My soul has been troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But because of this I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Therefore a voice came out of

heaven: "I have both glorified ***it***, and I will glorify ***it*** again." Therefore the crowd that stood ***there*** and heard ***it*** was saying that thunder had occurred. Others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice has come not because of Me, but because of you. Now is ***the*** judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all ***men*** to Myself." Now He was saying this, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die. The crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how do You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" Therefore Jesus said to them, "Yet a little while the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness may not overtake you; and the ***one*** walking in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light." Jesus spoke these things, and having gone away, He was hidden from them.

12:37-43 But though He had done so many signs before them, they were not believing in Him, so that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he said: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of ***the*** Lord been revealed?" Because of this they were not able to believe, because Isaiah said again: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they may not see with the eyes and understand with the heart, and turn, and I should heal them." Isaiah said these things when he saw His glory, and he spoke concerning Him. Nevertheless, even of the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing ***Him***, so that they might not be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

12:44-50 Then Jesus cried out and said, "The ***one*** believing in Me does not believe in Me, but in the ***One*** who sent Me. And the ***one*** seeing Me sees the ***One*** who sent Me. I have come ***as*** a light into the world, so that everyone believing in Me may not remain in the darkness. And if anyone hears My declarations and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come that I might judge the world, but that I might save the world. The ***one*** rejecting Me and not receiving My declarations has the ***one*** judging him: the word which I spoke, that will judge him on the last day. For I did not speak from Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life. Therefore the things which I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak."

Chapter 12 Preview

Chapter 12 is a turning point in the Gospel of John. Up to now, Jesus has said again and again that His hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). In this chapter He says plainly, "The hour has come." Everything from here on moves toward the cross.

The chapter opens at a dinner in Bethany, where Mary pours out costly perfume on Jesus' feet. The next day He rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey while the crowd shouts "Hosanna." Some Greeks ask to see Him, and Jesus answers with a picture of a seed that has to die to bear fruit. The chapter closes John's account of Jesus' public ministry with a sad note: many saw His signs and still would not believe. It ends with Jesus' last public call to believe in the Light.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1 *Therefore six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had died, whom He raised out from **the** dead.*

Six days before the Passover, Jesus comes back to Bethany, a small village less than two miles from Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. This is the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. John reminds us right away who Lazarus is: the man Jesus had raised from the dead in chapter 11. That miracle is the backdrop for everything in this chapter. It drew the crowds, and it pushed the religious leaders to plan Jesus' death (11:53).

The Passover was the feast that remembered God bringing Israel out of Egypt, when the blood of a lamb on the doorposts caused judgment to pass over the house (Exodus 12). John wants us to keep that feast in mind. Jesus is the Lamb of God (1:29), and He is about to die at Passover.

12:2 *Therefore they made a supper for Him there, and Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining **at table** with Him.*

Friends gave a supper in Jesus' honor. True to form, Martha is serving, just as she was in Luke 10:38-42. Lazarus is reclining at the table with Jesus. In that culture, people ate lying on low couches, leaning on one elbow, with their feet stretched out away from the table. That detail helps us picture what happens next.

Think about this scene for a moment. A man who had been dead and buried for four days is now sitting at dinner, eating and talking. That is the kind of power Jesus has. Lazarus did not have to preach a sermon. His life was the testimony.

12:3 *Therefore Mary, having taken approximately 12 ounces (a litra) of fragrant oil of pure nard, very costly, anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

Mary takes about twelve ounces (a litra) of pure nard, a very expensive perfume made from a plant that grew in India, and pours it on Jesus' feet. Then she wipes His feet with her hair. In that day, a respectable woman did not let her hair down in public, and washing feet was the job of the lowest servant. Mary does not care what anyone thinks. She holds nothing back.

The whole house was filled with the fragrance. Real worship is like that. It cannot be hidden, and it affects everyone around it. Each time we see Mary in the Gospels, she is at Jesus' feet: listening to Him (Luke 10:39), weeping before Him (11:32), and here, worshiping Him.

12:4-5 *Therefore Judas Iscariot, **son** of Simon, one of His disciples, who was about to betray Him, says, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to **the** poor?"*

Judas Iscariot speaks up. John tells us up front that Judas was the one who was going to betray Jesus. Judas complains that the perfume could have been sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor. A denarius was about a day's wage for a laborer, so this was close to a year's pay.

On the surface, his complaint sounds reasonable, even godly. That is how sin often hides. It dresses itself up in good-sounding words.

12:6 *Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money bag, and was carrying off what was being put into **it**.*

John pulls back the curtain. Judas did not care about the poor. He was the treasurer for Jesus and the disciples, and he was a thief. He had been stealing from the money box. This is the only place in the Gospels that tells us this about Judas.

It is sobering to me that Judas spent about three years with Jesus. He saw the miracles and heard the teaching, and yet his heart never changed. Being close to Jesus is not the same as belonging to Jesus.

12:7-8 *Therefore Jesus said, "Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of My burial. For the poor you always have with you, but Me you do not always have."*

Jesus defends Mary. "Leave her alone." He says she kept this perfume for the day of His burial. Whether Mary fully understood or not, her act pointed ahead to His death. Bodies were anointed with spices for burial, and Jesus accepts her gift as preparation for His.

"The poor you always have with you" is sometimes misused as an excuse to ignore the poor. That is not what Jesus meant. He is echoing Deuteronomy 15:11, which commands God's people to be generous to the poor. His point is about timing: there will always be chances to help the poor, but Jesus was about to go to the cross. Worship of Him comes first, and true worship will lead us to care for the poor.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 15:11 (alluded to)

12:9 *Therefore a great crowd of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not because of Jesus only, but so that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised out from **the** dead.*

Word got out that Jesus was in Bethany, and a large crowd came. John is honest about their reasons: they came not only to see Jesus but also to see Lazarus. A man raised from the dead was quite a sight. Curiosity brought many of them, but curiosity alone does not save anyone.

12:10-11 *But the chief priests took counsel that they might kill Lazarus also, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.*

The chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus too. Think about how far their hearts had hardened. They could not deny the miracle, so they decided to get rid of the evidence. Lazarus had done nothing wrong except be raised from the dead.

Because of Lazarus, many of the Jews were leaving the old ways and believing in Jesus. A changed life is still one of the strongest witnesses for Christ. It can also bring opposition. Jesus told His followers that the world would hate them because it hated Him first (15:18).

12:12-13 *On the next day a great crowd that had come to the feast, having heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and were crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed **is** the **One** coming in **the** name of **the** Lord, the King of Israel!"*

The next day, the large crowd in Jerusalem for the feast heard that Jesus was coming. They grabbed palm branches and went out to meet Him. Palm branches were a symbol of victory and of the nation's hope. This day is what many churches remember as Palm Sunday.

They shouted "Hosanna," a Hebrew word that means "save now" or "save, we pray." It had become a shout of praise. Their words come from Psalm 118:25-26, a psalm sung at the great feasts. By adding "the King of Israel," the crowd was declaring that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the King in David's line. They were right about who He was. Most of them were wrong about what kind of King He came to be. Many wanted a king who would throw off Rome. Jesus came first to deal with sin.

Old Testament links: Psalm 118:26 (quoted); Psalm 118:25 (alluded to)

12:14-15 *And Jesus, having found a young donkey, sat on it, even as it is written: "Do not fear, daughter of Zion; look, your King comes, sitting on a colt of a donkey."*

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it. The other Gospels give more detail about how the disciples got the colt (Matthew 21:1-7; Mark 11:1-7). John goes straight to the meaning: this fulfilled Zechariah 9:9. A conquering king rode a war horse. A king coming in peace rode a donkey.

Jesus was making a clear statement. He was claiming to be Israel's King, but a humble King who comes in peace. In Revelation 19:11, John sees Jesus return on a white horse as the conquering King. The first time He came on a donkey to save. The next time He comes on a white horse to judge and to reign. It is the same King both times.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 9:9 (quoted)

12:16 *Now His disciples did not know these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him, and **that** they had done these things to Him.*

John is honest about the disciples. They did not understand these things at first. Only after Jesus was glorified, meaning after His death, resurrection, and return to the Father, did they remember and see that the Scriptures had been written about Him.

That should encourage us. The disciples did not get everything right away either. Understanding often comes later, as the Holy Spirit brings God's Word to mind (14:26). If you do not understand everything you read in this study the first time, you are in good company.

12:17-18 *Therefore the crowd which was with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him out from **the** dead was testifying. Because of this the crowd also met Him, because it heard that He had done this sign.*

The people who had been there when Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb kept telling others what they had seen. That is why so many came out to meet Him. John calls the raising of Lazarus a "sign." In John's Gospel, a sign is a miracle that points beyond itself to who Jesus is. This sign pointed to Jesus as the resurrection and the life (11:25).

12:19 *Therefore the Pharisees said among themselves, "You see that you gain nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him."*

The Pharisees were frustrated. "You see that you gain nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him." They meant it as an exaggeration, but without realizing it, they spoke the truth. In the very next verse, people from outside Israel come looking for Jesus. The whole world would one day go after Him.

12:20-21 *Now there were certain Greeks among those coming up so that they might worship at the feast. Therefore these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and were asking him, saying, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."*

Some Greeks had come up to worship at the feast. These were probably Gentiles who worshiped the God of Israel but were not full converts to Judaism. They came to Philip, maybe because Philip had a Greek name and came from Bethsaida, a town near Gentile areas. Their request was simple: "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

I love that request. It should be the prayer of every person who opens the Bible and every person who walks into a church. We do not come to see a preacher or a building. We come to see Jesus.

12:22 *Philip comes and tells Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

Philip told Andrew, and together they told Jesus. Andrew shows up in this Gospel three times, and each time he is bringing someone to Jesus: his brother Peter (1:41-42), the boy with the loaves and fish (6:8-9), and now these Greeks. Not everyone is called to preach to crowds, but every believer can do what Andrew did and bring people to Jesus.

12:23 *And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man may be glorified.*

Jesus' answer seems at first to have nothing to do with the request. He says, "The hour has come that the Son of Man may be glorified." Until now, His hour had not come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now it has. The arrival of Gentiles seeking Him was a signal that the time had come for Him to die for the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike.

To us, "glorified" sounds like a crown and a throne. To Jesus, being glorified meant the cross first, then the resurrection, then His return to the Father. The cross was not a defeat. It was the moment God's glory was shown most clearly.

12:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat, having fallen into the ground, dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

Jesus gives a picture from farming. A grain of wheat that stays in the bag stays alone. Only when it falls into the ground and dies does it produce a harvest. Jesus is talking about His own death. If He did not die, He would remain alone. Because He died and rose again, there is a great harvest of people from every nation (Revelation 7:9).

"Truly, truly" is the word *amen* said twice. It is a Hebrew word that John's Greek keeps as it is. Jesus uses it to mark something very important and very certain. John's Gospel is the only one that doubles it.

12:25 *The **one** loving his life will lose it, and the **one** hating his life in this world will keep it to eternal life.*

The same principle applies to us. "The one loving his life will lose it." If we hold on to this life as if it were all there is, we will lose what really matters. "Hating his life" does not mean we should despise ourselves. It is a way of saying we love Jesus so much more that our own comfort and plans look small next to Him (Luke 14:26). Those who let go of this life for His sake keep it for eternal life.

12:26 *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant also will be. And if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

Following Jesus means going where He goes. For Him, that path led to the cross, and then to glory. The promise is that where He is, His servant will be also. The Father Himself will honor those who serve His Son. The world may never notice your service, but the Father does.

12:27 *Now My soul has been troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But because of this I came to this hour.*

Here we get a look into Jesus' heart. "Now My soul has been troubled." Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully man. He felt the weight of what was coming. This is John's version of the struggle the other Gospels show in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus asks out loud, "What shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'?" Then He answers His own question: "But because of this I came to this hour." He did not drift into the cross. He came for it. When I think about that, it humbles me. He knew exactly what it would cost and He chose it anyway, for you and for me.

12:28 *Father, glorify Your name." Therefore a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified **it**, and I will glorify **it** again."*

Jesus prays, "Father, glorify Your name." That is the heart of His whole life: the Father's glory above everything. Then the Father answers out loud from heaven: "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The Father had glorified His name through Jesus' life and signs, and would glorify it again through His death and resurrection.

This is one of the times in the Gospels that the Father speaks from heaven. The other times were at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17) and at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5).

12:29 *Therefore the crowd that stood **there** and heard **it** was saying that thunder had occurred. Others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."*

The crowd heard the sound but did not agree on what it was. Some said it was thunder. Others said an angel had spoken to Him. People can hear the same thing and come away with very different conclusions. Those whose hearts are closed to God will often explain away what God is doing.

12:30 *Jesus answered and said, "This voice has come not because of Me, but because of you.*

Jesus tells them the voice was not for His sake but for theirs. Jesus did not need the reassurance. He already knew the Father heard Him (11:41-42). The voice was a witness to the people, a chance for them to believe.

12:31 *Now is **the** judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

"Now is the judgment of this world." At the cross, the world would be judged, and sin would be exposed for what it is. "The ruler of this world," Satan, would be cast out. The cross looked like Satan's victory, but it was his defeat. Colossians 2:15 says that at the cross Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities and triumphed over them.

Satan is still active (1 Peter 5:8), but his defeat was settled at the cross. Revelation 20:10 shows the final result, when he is thrown into the lake of fire forever.

12:32-33 *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all **men** to Myself." Now He was saying this, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." John explains in verse 33 that "lifted up" pointed to the kind of death Jesus would die: crucifixion, being raised up on a cross. Jesus said the same thing to Nicodemus (3:14) and to the crowds (8:28).

"All men" does not mean every single person will be saved. The rest of John makes clear that many will not believe (3:18, 36). It means all kinds of people, Jew and Greek, from every nation. The Greeks who came asking for Jesus were the first fruits of that harvest.

12:34 *The crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how do You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"*

The crowd is confused. They had been taught from the Scriptures that the Christ would remain forever (see Psalm 89:36; Isaiah 9:7). So how could the Son of Man be lifted up and die? "Who is this Son of Man?"

Their question is understandable. They had only half of the picture. The Old Testament taught both a suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) and a reigning King. The answer is that the same Messiah would do both. He would die and rise, and He does remain forever.

Old Testament links: Psalm 89:36 (alluded to)

12:35 *Therefore Jesus said to them, "Yet a little while the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness may not overtake you; and the **one** walking in the darkness does not know where he is going.*

Jesus does not argue. He gives them a warning. The Light, meaning Jesus Himself (8:12), would be with them only a little while longer. "Walk while you have the light." The time to respond to Jesus is limited. A person who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

12:36 *While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light." Jesus spoke these things, and having gone away, He was hidden from them.*

"While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light." To be a "son of" something in Hebrew thinking means to share its nature. Believers become people of the light. Then Jesus went away and hid Himself from them. His public teaching to the crowds was finished. That is a sad and serious moment.

12:37 *But though He had done so many signs before them, they were not believing in Him,*

Now John steps back and sums up Jesus' public ministry. He had done so many signs right in front of them, and they still were not believing in Him. Miracles alone do not change a heart. People who do not want to believe will find a reason not to, no matter what they see (Luke 16:31).

12:38 *So that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he said: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of **the** Lord been revealed?"*

John says this unbelief fulfilled Isaiah 53:1: "Lord, who has believed our report?" Isaiah 53 is the great chapter about the suffering Servant. Even the prophet saw ahead of time that the message about the Messiah would be rejected by many. The rejection of Jesus did not surprise God. It was foretold.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:1 (quoted)

12:39-40 *Because of this they were not able to believe, because Isaiah said again: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they may not see with the eyes and understand with the heart, and turn, and I should heal them."*

"Because of this they were not able to believe." John quotes Isaiah 6:10. God blinded their eyes and hardened their heart. This is hard to read. Does that mean they never had a chance? No. These people had seen sign after sign and kept refusing. Their hearts were hardened over time by their own choice, and God then confirmed the choice they had made. God said ahead of time that He would harden Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21), and Pharaoh also hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15). Scripture holds both together.

The warning for us is plain. Every time we hear God's truth and push it away, it gets easier to push it away the next time. That is why Hebrews 3:15 warns us not to harden our hearts on the day we hear His voice.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 6:9-10 (quoted)

12:41 *Isaiah said these things when he saw His glory, and he spoke concerning Him.*

John says Isaiah said these things because "he saw His glory, and he spoke concerning Him." In Isaiah 6, Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. John tells us that the glory Isaiah saw was the glory of Jesus. That is a clear statement that Jesus is the LORD of the Old Testament. He is fully God.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 6:1 (alluded to); Isaiah 6:2 (alluded to)

12:42-43 *Nevertheless, even of the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing **Him**, so that they might not be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.*

Not everyone rejected Him. Many even among the rulers believed in Him, but they kept it quiet because they were afraid of the Pharisees. Being put out of the synagogue meant being cut off from your community, your friends, and often your work (9:22).

John gives the reason in plain words: "they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." That is a temptation for every one of us, at work, with family, with friends. Two men who were likely in this group, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, later stepped forward at the cross (19:38-39). Fear does not have to have the last word.

12:44-45 *Then Jesus cried out and said, "The **one** believing in Me does not believe in Me, but in the **One** who sent Me. And the **one** seeing Me sees the **One** who sent Me.*

Jesus cried out, which means He raised His voice so all could hear. This is His last public call in John's Gospel. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the Father who sent Him. To see Jesus is to see the Father. You cannot separate the two. A person cannot say "I believe in God" and at the same time reject Jesus (14:9).

12:46 *I have come **as** a light into the world, so that everyone believing in Me may not remain in the darkness.*

Jesus came as Light into the world so that no one who believes in Him has to stay in darkness. Darkness in John stands for sin, ignorance of God, and separation from Him. Everyone starts out in darkness. The good news is that no one has to stay there.

12:47-48 *And if anyone hears My declarations and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come that I might judge the world, but that I might save the world. The **one** rejecting Me and not receiving My declarations has the **one** judging him: the word which I spoke, that will judge him on the last day.*

Jesus says that His first coming was not to judge the world but to save it (3:17). But that does not mean there is no judgment. The person who rejects Jesus and His words will be judged by those very words "on the last day." In other words, the message they heard and refused will stand as the evidence against them.

"The last day" points to the judgment that comes with Christ's return (5:28-29). Jesus came the first time to save. When He returns, He comes as Judge. In the view I hold, the dead in Christ are raised when He comes for His church before the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), He returns to the earth as Judge and King at the end of it (Revelation 19:11-16), and the rest of the dead stand before Him for judgment after the thousand years (Revelation 20:5, 11-15). Like the "hour" of 5:28, "the last day" here takes in the whole closing work of judgment that begins when He returns.

12:49-50 *For I did not speak from Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life. Therefore the things which I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak."*

Jesus did not speak on His own initiative. Everything He said came from the Father. The Father's commandment, His message, is eternal life. That is why rejecting Jesus' words is so serious. It is rejecting the Father's offer of life.

These verses close Jesus' public ministry in John. From chapter 13 on, He is alone with His disciples, preparing them for the cross.

Chapter 12 Summary

Chapter 12 is the bridge between Jesus' public ministry and His death. At a dinner in Bethany, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume, pointing ahead to His burial, while Judas, a thief at heart, complains about the waste. The next day Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, while the crowds wave palm branches and shout "Hosanna." When Greeks come asking to see Him, Jesus announces that His hour has come. Like a grain of wheat, He must die to bear fruit, and those who follow Him must hold this life loosely. His soul is troubled, yet He chooses the cross, and the Father speaks from heaven. Jesus says that when He is lifted up, He will draw all kinds of people to Himself. John then explains why so many did not believe: their hearts were hardened, just as Isaiah foretold. Some rulers believed but stayed silent out of fear. The chapter ends with Jesus' final public call to believe in Him as the Light of the world.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. What is the most costly or meaningful gift you have ever given someone?
2. How did Mary show her love for Jesus, and why did it bother Judas? (12:3-6)

3. Why did the chief priests want to kill Lazarus? (12:10-11)

4. What did the crowd mean by shouting "Hosanna," and what kind of king were they hoping for? (12:13)

5. Why is it important that Jesus rode on a donkey and not a war horse? (12:14-15)

6. What does the picture of the grain of wheat teach about Jesus' death and about our own lives? (12:24-25)

7. How did Jesus respond when His soul was troubled? (12:27-28)

8. Why did many people not believe, even after seeing so many signs? (12:37-40)

9. Why were some of the rulers afraid to confess their faith, and where do you face that same pressure? (12:42-43)

10. What is one way you can live more for the approval of God than the approval of people this week?

Chapter 13: The Servant Washes Feet

Scripture: The Last Supper and the New Commandment

13:1-11 Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who ***were*** in the world, He loved them to ***the*** end. And supper having come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, ***son*** of Simon, that he should betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and is going to God, rises from the supper and lays aside ***His*** garments, and having taken a towel, He girded Himself. After that He pours water into the basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe ***them*** with the towel with which He was girded. Then He comes to Simon Peter, and that ***one*** says to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not know now, but you will know after these things." Peter says to Him, "You will certainly never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also the hands and the head." Jesus says to him, "The ***one*** who has bathed has no need except to wash the feet, but is wholly clean; and you are clean, but not all." For He knew the ***one*** betraying Him; because of this He said, "You are not all clean."

13:12-20 So when He had washed their feet and taken His garments and reclined again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me 'the Teacher' and 'the Lord,' and you say rightly, for I am. If therefore I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example, so that even as I did to you, you also may do. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor ***is*** a messenger greater than the ***one*** who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I do not speak concerning all of you; I know whom I chose; but ***it is*** so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'The ***one*** feeding on the bread with Me lifted up his heel against Me.' From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am ***He***. Truly, truly, I say to you, the ***one*** receiving whomever I send receives Me; and the ***one*** receiving Me receives the ***One*** who sent Me."

13:21-30 Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in the spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray Me." Therefore the disciples were looking at one another, being at a loss about whom He was speaking. Now there was reclining in the bosom of Jesus one of His disciples, whom Jesus was loving. Therefore Simon Peter motions to this ***one*** to ask who it might be about whom He was speaking. And that ***one***, having fallen on the breast of Jesus, says to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answers, "It is that ***one*** to whom I shall give ***it***, having dipped the morsel." And having dipped the morsel, He gives ***it*** to Judas Iscariot, ***son*** of Simon. And after the morsel, then Satan entered into that ***one***. Therefore Jesus says to him, "What you are doing, do more quickly." But no one of those reclining knew for what ***purpose*** He said this to him. For some were thinking, since Judas had the money bag, that Jesus is saying to him, "Buy what we have need of for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. Therefore having received the morsel, that ***one*** went out immediately. And it was night.

13:31-35 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and He will glorify Him immediately. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, and even as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you are not able to come,' I also say to you now. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another."

13:36-38 Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going, you are not able to follow Me now; but you will follow Me afterward." Peter says to Him, "Lord, why am I not able to follow You now? I will lay down my life for You." Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will certainly not crow until you have denied Me three times."

Chapter 13 Preview

With chapter 13, the setting changes. The crowds are gone. Jesus is alone with His twelve disciples in an upper room on the night before He dies. Chapters 13 through 17 are often called the Upper Room Discourse. They hold some of the most tender teaching in all of Scripture.

The chapter opens with the King of kings on His knees, washing His disciples' dirty feet. Jesus then names His betrayer, and Judas walks out into the night. With Judas gone, Jesus gives His followers a new commandment: love one another as He has loved them. The chapter ends with Peter's bold promise to die for Jesus, and Jesus' sad prediction that Peter will deny Him three times before morning.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1 *Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who **were** in the world, He loved them to **the** end.*

John sets the scene. It is just before the Passover. Jesus knew His hour had come to leave this world and go back to the Father. Notice how John describes His death: not as an ending, but as a departure: "that He should depart out of this world to the Father."

"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." "His own" here means His disciples, the ones who belonged to Him. "To the end" can mean to the end of His life, and it can also mean to the uttermost, completely. Both are true. Jesus' love did not run out when things got hard. Everything in the next five chapters flows out of that love.

13:2 *And supper having come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, **son** of Simon, that he should betray Him,*

The meal was underway. John tells us the devil had already put it into Judas's heart to betray Jesus. Satan worked on a heart that was already open to him. We saw in chapter 12 that Judas was

a thief. Small sins left alone can grow into great ones. Ephesians 4:27 warns us not to give the devil an opportunity.

13:3 *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and is going to God,*

Before John tells us what Jesus did, he tells us what Jesus knew. Jesus knew the Father had given all things into His hands. He knew He had come from God and was going back to God. In other words, Jesus knew exactly who He was.

That matters for what comes next. Jesus did not wash feet because He thought little of Himself. He washed feet because He was completely secure in who He was. People who are insecure have a hard time serving others. People who know who they are in God are free to serve.

13:4-5 *Rises from the supper and lays aside **His** garments, and having taken a towel, He girded Himself. After that He pours water into the basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe **them** with the towel with which He was girded.*

Jesus got up from the table, took off His outer garments, and wrapped a towel around His waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. In that day, people walked dusty roads in sandals. Washing feet was a dirty job, usually done by the lowest servant in the house. Luke 22:24 tells us that on this same night, the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest. None of them had picked up the towel.

Picture it. The hands that made the universe (1:3) were washing the dirt off the feet of fishermen, a tax collector, and the man who was about to betray Him. Philippians 2:6-8 describes the same humility: Jesus, who existed in the form of God, emptied Himself and took the form of a servant.

13:6 *Then He comes to Simon Peter, and that **one** says to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"*

Jesus came to Simon Peter. Peter was shocked. "Lord, do You wash my feet?" In the Greek, the words "You" and "my" are side by side for emphasis. Peter could not stand the idea of his Lord serving him this way. His reaction is understandable. It feels backward.

13:7 *Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not know now, but you will know after these things."*

Jesus answered gently. Peter did not understand what was happening right then, but he would understand later. Some of what God does in our lives does not make sense in the moment. Later, looking back, we often see His purpose. Until then, we trust Him.

13:8 *Peter says to Him, "You will certainly never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."*

Peter refused. "You will certainly never wash my feet." It sounds humble, but it was really pride. Peter was telling Jesus what Jesus could and could not do.

Jesus' answer is serious: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." Now Jesus is talking about more than dirty feet. Unless Jesus cleanses us from our sin, we have no share in Him or His kingdom. No one can clean himself up enough to come to God. We have to let Jesus do the washing. That is grace.

13:9 *Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also the hands and the head."*

Peter swings to the other extreme. "Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not my feet only, but also the hands and the head." I appreciate Peter. He was all in, even when he did not fully understand. His heart was in the right place, even if his understanding was not there yet.

13:10 *Jesus says to him, "The **one** who has bathed has no need except to wash the feet, but is wholly clean; and you are clean, but not all."*

Jesus explains. A person who has bathed is clean all over and only needs to wash his feet. In that day, a guest would bathe at home, then walk to a dinner and only need his feet washed when he arrived.

The spiritual meaning is this. When a person trusts Jesus, he is washed clean. That is salvation. But as we walk through this world, we pick up the dirt of daily sin. We do not need to be saved again every time we sin. We need to confess our sins and be cleansed (1 John 1:9). That keeps our fellowship with God close.

Then Jesus adds, "You are clean, but not all."

13:11 *For He knew the **one** betraying Him; because of this He said, "You are not all clean."*

John explains what Jesus meant. Jesus knew who was going to betray Him. Judas had his feet washed by Jesus, but his heart was never washed. He went through the motions without the reality.

13:12 *So when He had washed their feet and taken His garments and reclined again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?*

When He finished, Jesus put His garments back on, reclined at the table again, and asked them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" Good teachers ask questions. Jesus wanted them to think about what had just happened, not just watch it.

13:13 *You call Me 'the Teacher' and 'the Lord,' and you say rightly, for I am.*

"You call Me 'the Teacher' and 'the Lord,' and you say rightly, for I am." Jesus did not give up His authority by serving. He stays their Teacher and their Lord. Serving others does not make us less. It makes us more like Jesus.

13:14 *If therefore I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

Here is the lesson. If their Lord and Teacher washed their feet, they also ought to wash one another's feet.

Some churches practice foot washing as an ordinance today, and that can be a meaningful reminder. But the main point is the attitude behind it. Jesus is calling us to humble, practical service to one another, even when it is dirty, unseen, and unthanked. Ask yourself: is there a "towel" job I have been avoiding because I think it is beneath me?

13:15 *For I gave you an example, so that even as I did to you, you also may do.*

"I gave you an example." The Greek word for example means a pattern or model to copy. Jesus did not only tell us to serve. He showed us how. Christianity is not just a list of beliefs. It is a life that follows the pattern Jesus set.

13:16 *Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor **is** a messenger greater than the **one** who sent him.*

"A slave is not greater than his master." If Jesus, the Master, was willing to serve, His followers cannot think they are too important to serve. "A messenger" (literally, "one who is sent") translates the word from which we get "apostle." The apostles were not greater than the One who sent them.

13:17 *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." Knowing is not enough. The blessing comes in the doing. James 1:22 says the same thing: be doers of the word, and not merely hearers. Many of us know far more of the Bible than we actually practice. I include myself in that.

13:18 *I do not speak concerning all of you; I know whom I chose; but **it is** so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'The **one** feeding on the bread with Me lifted up his heel against Me.'*

Jesus makes it clear He is not speaking of all of them. He knew whom He had chosen. Then He quotes Psalm 41:9: "The one feeding on the bread with Me lifted up his heel against Me." In that culture, sharing bread was a sign of friendship and trust. Lifting the heel was a picture of a violent kick, a betrayal by someone close. David wrote that psalm about a trusted friend who turned on him. Jesus said it would be fulfilled in Judas.

Old Testament links: Psalm 41:9 (quoted)

13:19 *From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am **He**.*

Jesus told them ahead of time so that when it happened, they would believe "that I am He." In the Greek, it is simply "I am" (*ego eimi*). This is the name God gave Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Jesus is not caught off guard by betrayal. He announces it in advance, so that the betrayal itself would become evidence that He is God.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 43:10 (alluded to)

13:20 *Truly, truly, I say to you, the **one** receiving whomever I send receives Me; and the **one** receiving Me receives the **One** who sent Me."*

Jesus links Himself, His messengers, and the Father together. Whoever receives the one Jesus sends receives Jesus. Whoever receives Jesus receives the Father. Even with a betrayer at the table, Jesus reminds the rest of them that their mission is real and important.

13:21 *Having said these things, Jesus was troubled in the spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray Me."*

Jesus became troubled in spirit. He was not a stone. Betrayal by a friend hurt Him deeply. Then He said it plainly: "One of you will betray Me."

13:22 *Therefore the disciples were looking at one another, being at a loss about whom He was speaking.*

The disciples looked at one another, puzzled. Not one of them pointed at Judas. That tells us how well Judas had hidden his heart. He had been with them for three years, and no one suspected him. Matthew 26:22 adds that each one asked, "Surely it is not I, Lord?"

13:23 *Now there was reclining in the bosom of Jesus one of His disciples, whom Jesus was loving.*

One disciple was reclining on Jesus' bosom, meaning he was next to Jesus, leaning back near His chest. This is the first time John uses the phrase "whom Jesus was loving." This disciple never names himself in the Gospel. Church tradition, and I believe the evidence of the Gospel itself, point to John the apostle, the author of this book (21:20-24).

I find it moving that John did not call himself "the disciple who loved Jesus." He called himself the one Jesus loved. His identity was not in his love for Jesus, which could fail, but in Jesus' love for him, which never does.

13:24-25 *Therefore Simon Peter motions to this **one** to ask who it might be about whom He was speaking. And that **one**, having fallen on the breast of Jesus, says to Him, "Lord, who is it?"*

Peter motioned to John to ask Jesus who He meant. John leaned back against Jesus and quietly asked, "Lord, who is it?" This seems to have been a private exchange that the others did not hear.

13:26 *Jesus answers, "It is that **one** to whom I shall give **it**, having dipped the morsel." And having dipped the morsel, He gives **it** to Judas Iscariot, **son** of Simon.*

Jesus answered that it was the one to whom He would give the morsel after dipping it. A morsel was a piece of bread dipped in the dish. For a host to hand someone a morsel was a sign of honor and friendship. Then Jesus gave it to Judas.

Even at this late hour, Jesus was reaching out to Judas with an act of friendship. It was one last offer of love. Judas took the bread, but he did not turn back.

13:27 *And after the morsel, then Satan entered into that **one**. Therefore Jesus says to him, "What you are doing, do more quickly."*

After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered into him. Judas had opened the door again and again, and now he gave himself over completely. Jesus said to him, "What you are doing, do more quickly." Jesus was in full control, even of the timing of His own betrayal. No one took His life from Him; He laid it down (10:18).

13:28-29 *But no one of those reclining knew for what **purpose** He said this to him. For some were thinking, since Judas had the money bag, that Jesus is saying to him, "Buy what we have need of for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.*

No one at the table understood what Jesus meant. Because Judas held the money box, some thought Jesus was sending him to buy what they needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor. This tells us that Jesus and His disciples had a habit of giving to the poor. It also tells us, once again, how well Judas hid what was going on inside him.

13:30 *Therefore having received the morsel, that **one** went out immediately. And it was night.*

Judas took the morsel and "went out immediately. And it was night." It was night outside, but it was also night in Judas's soul. He walked away from the Light of the world (8:12) and out into the dark. That is one of the saddest sentences in the Bible.

13:31-32 *Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. If God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and He will glorify Him immediately.*

As soon as Judas left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him." The betrayal had been set in motion, and the cross was now hours away. Jesus speaks of it as glory. Through the cross, the Father would be glorified in the Son, and the Father would glorify the Son by raising Him and taking Him back to Himself. And this would happen "immediately," that very weekend.

13:33 *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, and even as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you are not able to come,' I also say to you now.*

"Little children." The Greek word, teknia, is a tender word for little ones, and this is the only place in the Gospels it appears. John, the disciple who heard it, uses the same words over and over in his first letter (1 John 2:1, 12). Jesus tells them He will be with them only a little while longer. Where He is going, they cannot come, at least not yet.

13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." You might ask, "What's new about that? Leviticus 19:18 already told Israel to love your neighbor as yourself." It's simple: the new part is the measure. "As I have loved you." Jesus had just washed their feet, and within hours He would give His life for them. That is the standard. It is a love that serves and sacrifices.

13:35 *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another."*

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love among one another." The mark of a Christian is not a bumper sticker, a church sign, or how much Bible we know. It is love for other believers. The world watches how Christians treat each other. When we fight, gossip, and divide, the world notices. When we love the way Jesus loved, the world notices that too.

13:36 *Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going, you are not able to follow Me now; but you will follow Me afterward."*

Peter skipped right past the command to love and went back to what Jesus said about leaving. "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus said Peter could not follow Him now, but would follow later. Jesus was going to the cross and back to the Father. Peter would follow later, both in his own death (21:18-19) and into heaven.

13:37 *Peter says to Him, "Lord, why am I not able to follow You now? I will lay down my life for You."*

Peter pushed back. "Lord, why am I not able to follow You now? I will lay down my life for You." I believe Peter meant every word. Later that night, he even drew a sword in the garden (18:10). But Peter was trusting his own strength, and our own strength will fail us.

13:38 *Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will certainly not crow until you have denied Me three times."*

Jesus answered with a question that must have stung: "Will you lay down your life for Me?" Then He told Peter that before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny Him three times. That happened later that same night (18:15-27).

But the story does not end there. In chapter 21, the risen Jesus restores Peter by asking him three times, "Do you love Me?" Failure is not final with Jesus. And the same Jesus who knew Peter would fail also said Peter would follow Him later. That promise came true.

Chapter 13 Summary

On the night before He died, Jesus showed His disciples the full extent of His love. Knowing who He was and where He was going, He got up from supper, wrapped a towel around Himself, and washed their feet, the job of the lowest servant. When Peter objected, Jesus taught that unless He washes us, we have no part with Him. He then told them to follow His example of humble service. Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him, quoting Psalm 41:9, and quietly identified Judas by handing him the morsel. Satan entered Judas, and he went out into the night. With Judas gone, Jesus spoke of His coming glory and gave His disciples a new commandment: to love one another as He had loved them. That love would be the mark that shows the world who His followers are. The chapter ends with Peter promising to die for Jesus, and Jesus warning that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed.

The Upper Room Discourse (Chapters 13-17)

Chapters 13 through 17 take place on one night, the night Jesus was betrayed. John gives more space to this one evening than to almost any other part of Jesus' life. Here is how it flows:

- **Chapter 13:** Jesus washes the disciples' feet, Judas leaves, and Jesus gives the new commandment to love one another.
- **Chapter 14:** Jesus comforts His troubled disciples, promises to come again, and promises the Holy Spirit, the Helper.
- **Chapter 15:** Jesus teaches about the vine and the branches, remaining in Him, and the world's hatred.
- **Chapter 16:** Jesus explains the work of the Holy Spirit and promises that their sorrow will turn to joy.
- **Chapter 17:** Jesus prays for Himself, for His disciples, and for all who will believe through them, which includes you and me.

If you only had one night left with the people you love most, what would you tell them? These chapters show us what was on Jesus' heart.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. What is the most humbling job you have ever had to do?

2. What did Jesus know about Himself before He washed the disciples' feet, and why does that matter? (13:3)

3. Why did Peter refuse at first, and what did Jesus mean by "you have no part with Me"? (13:8)

4. What is the difference between being bathed and having your feet washed? (13:10)

5. What example did Jesus say He was giving His disciples? (13:14-15)

6. How did Jesus treat Judas, even knowing what Judas was about to do? (13:26-27)

7. What is new about the "new commandment"? (13:34)

8. According to Jesus, how will the world know who His disciples are? (13:35)

9. Peter promised to lay down his life for Jesus. Where are you most tempted to trust your own strength instead of the Lord's?

10. Who is one person you can serve this week in a humble, unseen way?

Chapter 14: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Scripture: Comfort for Troubled Hearts and the Promise of the Helper

14:1-7 "Let your heart not be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In the house of My Father are many dwelling places; but if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be. And where I am going you know, and the way you know." Thomas says to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how are we able to know the way?" Jesus says to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

14:8-14 Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus says to him, "Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? The ***one*** who has seen Me has seen the Father; and how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I ***am*** in the Father and the Father is in Me? The declarations which I speak to you I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who remains in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I ***am*** in the Father and the Father in Me; but if not, believe Me because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, the ***one*** believing in Me, the works which I do, that ***one*** also will do; and greater than these he will do, because I am going to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do ***it***.

14:15-24 If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may remain with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not see Him nor know Him; but you know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you. Yet a little while and the world no longer sees Me, but you see Me; because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I ***am*** in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. The ***one*** having My commandments and keeping them, that ***one*** is the ***one*** loving Me; and the ***one*** loving Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." Judas, not the Iscariot, says to Him, "Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make a dwelling place with him. The ***one*** not loving Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

14:25-31 These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and will remind you of all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let your heart not be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You heard that I said to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' because My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the

ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; but so that the world may know that I love the Father, and even as the Father commanded Me, so I do. Rise, let us go from here.

Chapter 14 Preview

The disciples had just heard three pieces of bad news. One of them would betray Jesus. Jesus was going away where they could not follow. And Peter, their leader, would deny Him three times. Their hearts were heavy and afraid.

Chapter 14 is Jesus' answer to troubled hearts. He promises that He is going to prepare a place for them and that He will come again. He tells them plainly that He is the only way to the Father. He promises that the Father will send another Helper, the Holy Spirit, to live in them. And He leaves them His peace. If you are going through a hard season right now, this chapter was written for you.

Chapter 14 Study

14:1 *"Let your heart not be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.*

"Let your heart not be troubled." Jesus says this on the night before His own death, while His own soul was troubled (12:27; 13:21). He was thinking about them, not about Himself.

The cure for a troubled heart is faith: "believe in God, believe also in Me." Jesus puts believing in Himself right alongside believing in God. No mere man could say that. Jesus is claiming to be worthy of the same trust we give to God, because He is God.

14:2 *In the house of My Father are many dwelling places; but if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

"In the house of My Father are many dwelling places." The older King James Version translated this "mansions," which has led to a lot of songs about mansions in heaven. The Greek word means a place to stay or remain. The point is not luxury but belonging. There is room in the Father's house, and there is a place for every one of His children.

"But if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Jesus never misled His disciples. If heaven were not real, He would have told them so. Instead, He told them He was going to prepare a place for them. We can trust Him on this.

"I go to prepare a place for you." Jesus was going to the cross, the grave, and back to the Father. His going is what makes our place possible.

14:3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be.*

"I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be." This is a clear promise of Jesus' return. He is not only coming for us in some spiritual sense. He is coming back in person (Acts 1:11).

Christians read this verse in different ways. As I explained in my study of Revelation, I hold the pre-tribulation view, and I see this verse as a description of the Rapture: Jesus comes for His church and takes us to be with Him before the Tribulation, the final time of great trouble on the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Those who hold the post-tribulation view believe Jesus comes once, after the Tribulation, gathers His people to Himself, and reigns on the earth. Whichever view you hold, do not miss the heart of the promise. The best part of heaven is not the place. It is the Person. Jesus is coming back "so that where I am, you also may be."

14:4 *And where I am going you know, and the way you know."*

"And where I am going you know, and the way you know." Jesus had been telling them for three years. They knew Him, and He was the way. They just did not realize it yet.

14:5 *Thomas says to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how are we able to know the way?"*

Thomas spoke up. "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how are we able to know the way?" Thomas is often called "doubting Thomas," but I appreciate his honesty. He said out loud what the others were probably thinking. If you do not understand something, ask. Thomas's honest question led to one of the greatest statements Jesus ever made.

14:6 *Jesus says to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." This is the sixth of Jesus' seven "I am" statements in John.

Jesus does not say He knows the way, or that He teaches the way. He says He is the way. He does not just tell the truth. He is the truth. He does not just give life. He is the life.

"No one comes to the Father except through Me." Today, this is one of the most unpopular verses in the Bible. Many people believe that all religions lead to God. Jesus did not leave that door open. If there were another way to God, the cross would not have been necessary. Acts 4:12 says the same thing: there is salvation in no one else. This is not narrow-mindedness. It is love. When there is only one way out of a burning building, the kindest thing you can do is point people to it.

14:7 *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." To know Jesus is to know the Father. "From now on you know Him and have seen Him." The disciples had been looking at the Father for three years every time they looked at Jesus.

14:8 *Philip says to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."*

Philip asks, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Philip wanted a vision, something like what Moses saw on the mountain (Exodus 33:18). He thought one look at the Father would

settle everything. It is a natural thing to want. Many people today say, "If God would just show Himself to me, then I would believe."

14:9 *Jesus says to him, "Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? The **one** who has seen Me has seen the Father; and how do you say, 'Show us the Father'?*

You can almost hear the sadness in Jesus' voice. "Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip?" Then the great statement: "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Jesus was not saying He and the Father are the same Person. They are distinct Persons. But Jesus is the exact picture of the Father (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15). If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus: how He treated sinners, how He touched lepers, how He wept at a grave, how He washed feet. That is what God is like.

14:10 *Do you not believe that I **am** in the Father and the Father is in Me? The declarations which I speak to you I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who remains in Me, He does the works.*

"I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me." This speaks of the perfect unity between the Father and the Son. The words Jesus spoke were not His own invention. The Father, living in Him, was doing His works. Everything Jesus said and did came out of that union.

14:11 *Believe Me that I **am** in the Father and the Father in Me; but if not, believe Me because of the works themselves.*

Jesus asks them to believe Him on His word. But if they struggle with that, they should believe because of the works themselves, the signs He had done. The miracles were evidence. God does not ask for blind faith. He gives us reasons to believe (20:30-31).

14:12 *Truly, truly, I say to you, the **one** believing in Me, the works which I do, that **one** also will do; and greater than these he will do, because I am going to My Father.*

"The one believing in Me, the works which I do, that one also will do; and greater than these he will do, because I am going to My Father." You might ask, "How could anyone do greater works than Jesus?" It's simple: Jesus means greater in reach, not greater in power. During His earthly ministry, Jesus stayed in a small area and never traveled far from Israel. After He returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit, His followers carried the gospel to the whole world. On the day of Pentecost alone, about three thousand people were saved (Acts 2:41). The greatest work of all is a soul brought from death to life, and that is happening all over the world because Jesus went to the Father.

14:13-14 *And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do **it**.*

"Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do." This is not a blank check, and "in Jesus' name" is not a magic phrase we tack onto the end of a prayer. To ask in someone's name means to ask by their authority and in line with their character and will. 1 John 5:14 says that if we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us. The purpose of answered prayer is "so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." When our prayers line up with what Jesus wants, He promises to answer.

14:15 *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Love for Jesus is not just a feeling. It shows up in obedience. We do not obey in order to earn His love. We obey because we already have it. A person who says he loves Jesus but has no interest in doing what He says should take a hard look at his heart.

14:16 *And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may remain with you forever,*

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may remain with you forever." The Greek word for Helper is parakletos, which means "one called alongside to help." It can mean a counselor, an advocate, a comforter, or a helper. Older translations say "Comforter."

"Another" in Greek here means another of the same kind. The Holy Spirit is not a different kind of helper than Jesus. He is just like Jesus. Jesus had walked beside them for three years. Now the Spirit would do the same, and not for three years but forever.

14:17 *The Spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive, because it does not see Him nor know Him; but you know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.*

The Helper is "the Spirit of truth." The world cannot receive Him because it does not see or know Him. But the disciples know Him. "He remains with you and will be in you." Before Pentecost, the Spirit was with them through Jesus. After Pentecost, He would live in them. Every believer today has the Holy Spirit living inside (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19). Notice also that Jesus speaks of the Spirit as a Person. He teaches, reminds, testifies, and guides (14:26; 15:26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force.

14:18 *I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you.*

"I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you." An orphan has no one to care for him or protect him. Jesus promises they will not be left alone. He would come to them after His resurrection, He would come to them through the Holy Spirit, and He will come again at the end of the age. All three are true.

14:19 *Yet a little while and the world no longer sees Me, but you see Me; because I live, you also will live.*

After a little while, the world would no longer see Him. He would die and be buried, and after the resurrection He showed Himself only to His followers (Acts 10:40-41). "But you see Me; because I live, you also will live." His resurrection guarantees ours. Because He conquered death, death has no final claim on anyone who belongs to Him.

14:20 *In that day you will know that I **am** in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*

"In that day," after the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit, they would understand: Jesus is in the Father, they are in Jesus, and Jesus is in them. This is the amazing truth of union with Christ. A believer is not just someone who agrees with Jesus' teaching. A believer is joined to Him.

14:21 *The **one** having My commandments and keeping them, that **one** is the **one** loving Me; and the **one** loving Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."*

Jesus comes back to love and obedience. The one who has His commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Him. That person will be loved by the Father, and Jesus will love him and disclose, or reveal, Himself to him. As we obey, we come to know Jesus more and more deeply. Obedience opens the door to closer fellowship.

14:22 *Judas, not the Iscariot, says to Him, "Lord, what has happened that You are about to manifest Yourself to us and not to the world?"*

Another disciple named Judas asks a question. John is careful to say, "not the Iscariot." This Judas is probably the same man called Thaddaeus in Matthew and Mark, and "Judas of James" (Judas the son of James) in Luke 6:16. He wanted to know why Jesus would reveal Himself to them and not to the whole world. Like many Jews of that day, he may have expected the Messiah to show Himself openly in power.

14:23 *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make a dwelling place with him.*

Jesus answers by repeating the condition. Those who love Him keep His word, and the Father and the Son "will come to him and will make a dwelling place with him." The word for dwelling place is the same word used in verse 2 for "dwelling places." Jesus is preparing a place for us in the Father's house, and in the meantime the Father and Son make their home in us. Notice the "We." Here, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (verses 16-17) are all at work in the believer.

14:24 *The **one** not loving Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.*

The flip side is also true. Whoever does not love Jesus does not keep His words. And the words they are rejecting are not just Jesus' words. They are the Father's. To reject Jesus is to reject God.

14:25-26 *These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and will remind you of all things that I said to you.*

Jesus had spoken these things while He was still with them. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in Jesus' name, would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance everything Jesus had said.

This is a key verse for how we got the New Testament. The Holy Spirit helped the apostles remember and understand what Jesus said and did. That is how John, writing many years later, could record these conversations so carefully. This is one of the reasons we can trust the Gospels. The same Spirit still teaches believers today as we read God's Word, although He does not add new Scripture to it.

14:27 *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let your heart not be troubled, nor let it be afraid.*

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you." In Jesus' day, "peace" (shalom in Hebrew) was the common greeting and farewell, much like we say "hello" or "goodbye." But Jesus' peace is not just a polite word. It is a deep, settled peace with God and in our hearts.

Then He adds, "not as the world gives do I give to you." The world's peace depends on everything going well. Jesus' peace holds even when everything is falling apart. He said this hours before His arrest. Then He repeats the opening command of the chapter: "Let your heart not be troubled, nor let it be afraid." We have a part to play. We choose whether to let fear rule our hearts or to trust Him.

14:28 *You heard that I said to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' because My Father is greater than I.*

Jesus reminds them that He told them He was going away and coming back. If they loved Him, they would rejoice that He was going to the Father. They were thinking of their loss. He wanted them to think of His gain: His return to the glory He had before the world began (17:5).

"Because My Father is greater than I." Some groups use this verse to argue that Jesus is not fully God. That is not what it means. Jesus is equal with the Father in His nature (1:1; 10:30). But in becoming a man, He took a humble position and submitted to the Father's will (Philippians 2:6-8). The Father was "greater" in position, not in nature. Going back to the Father meant leaving that humble, earthly life behind.

14:29 *And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe.*

Jesus told them all this ahead of time so that when it happened, they would believe. Fulfilled prophecy builds faith. When the disciples watched His words come true one by one, their faith grew stronger.

14:30 *I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;*

"I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming." Satan was about to make his move through Judas and the soldiers. But "he has nothing in Me." Satan had no claim on Jesus, no foothold, no sin he could point to. Jesus was going to the cross not because Satan had power over Him, but because He chose to go.

14:31 *But so that the world may know that I love the Father, and even as the Father commanded Me, so I do. Rise, let us go from here.*

Jesus went to the cross "so that the world may know that I love the Father." His obedience was an act of love: "even as the Father commanded Me, so I do."

Then He says, "Rise, let us go from here." It seems Jesus and the disciples got up and left the upper room at this point. Chapters 15 through 17 may have been spoken on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, across the Kidron Valley (18:1). Jesus did not wait for His enemies to come. He went out to meet what was coming.

Chapter 14 Summary

Chapter 14 is Jesus' word of comfort to His frightened disciples on the night before the cross. He tells them not to let their hearts be troubled but to trust in God and in Him. He is going to prepare a place for them in the Father's house, and He promises to come again and take them to be with Him. When Thomas asks the way, Jesus answers, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." When Philip asks to see the Father, Jesus tells him that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. Jesus promises that believers will do greater works because He is going to the Father, and that He will answer prayer asked in His name. He promises another Helper, the Holy Spirit, who will live in them forever, teach them, and remind them of all He said. Love for Jesus shows itself in obedience, and the Father and Son will make Their home with those who love Him. Jesus leaves them His peace, unlike anything the world can give, and then rises to go and meet the cross.

Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. When you are worried or afraid, where do you usually turn first?

2. What remedy did Jesus give for a troubled heart? (14:1)

3. What did Jesus promise about the Father's house and His return? (14:2-3)

4. What does it mean that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life? Why is "no one comes to the Father except through Me" both hard and loving? (14:6)

5. What did Jesus mean when He told Philip, "The one who has seen Me has seen the Father"? (14:9)

6. In what sense will believers do "greater works" than Jesus did? (14:12)

7. What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? (14:13-14)

8. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in this chapter? (14:16-17, 26)

9. How is the peace Jesus gives different from the peace the world gives? (14:27)

10. What is troubling your heart right now, and how can you bring it to Jesus this week?

Chapter 15: The True Vine

Scripture: The Vine, the Branches, and the World's Hatred

15:1-11 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes it away; and every ***branch*** bearing fruit, He prunes it, so that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Even as the branch is not able to bear fruit from itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither ***can*** you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you ***are*** the branches. The ***one*** remaining in Me and I in him, this ***one*** bears much fruit; for apart from Me you are not able to do anything. Unless someone remains in Me, he is thrown out as the branch and is dried up; and they gather them and throw ***them*** into ***the*** fire, and they are burned. If you remain in Me, and My declarations remain in you, you will ask whatever you wish, and it will happen for you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; and you will become My disciples. Even as the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, even as I have kept the commandments of My Father and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.

15:12-17 This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I loved you. Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things which I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, so that you may go and bear fruit, and your fruit may remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, so that you love one another.

15:18-25 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love ***its*** own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word which I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because they do not know the ***One*** who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. The ***one*** hating Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other ***one*** has done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But ***this is*** so that the word written in their law may be fulfilled, 'They hated Me without cause.'

15:26-27 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from the Father, He will testify concerning Me. And you also testify, because you are with Me from ***the*** beginning.

Chapter 15 Preview

Jesus and His disciples have left the upper room (14:31) and are likely walking through Jerusalem toward the Kidron Valley. Along the way, Jesus gives them one of the clearest pictures in all of

Scripture of what it means to belong to Him. He is the vine, His Father is the vinedresser, and His followers are the branches. A branch has one job: stay connected to the vine. The fruit takes care of itself.

The chapter then turns from the vine to the world. The same people who remain in Christ and love one another will be hated by a world that hated Him first. Jesus does not hide that from His disciples. He tells them plainly, and He promises them the Helper, the Spirit of truth, who will stand with them as they testify about Him.

Chapter 15 Study

15:1 *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

This is the last of the seven "I am" statements in John's Gospel. Jesus calls Himself the *true* vine. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel was pictured as God's vine or vineyard (Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7). Again and again, that vine failed to produce the fruit God was looking for. Now Jesus steps forward as the vine that does what Israel could not. He is the real thing, the One the old picture was pointing to.

The Father is the vinedresser, the farmer who owns, tends, and cares for the vineyard. Notice who is in charge here. Jesus does not picture His followers as the ones who plant, water, or manage the vineyard. That is the Father's work. Our part comes in the next few verses.

Like the other "I am" statements, this is a figure of speech. Jesus is not a plant. But the figure points to something real and literal: our spiritual life comes from Him and only from Him.

15:2 *Every branch in Me not bearing fruit, He takes it away; and every* ***branch*** *bearing fruit, He prunes it, so that it may bear more fruit.*

There are two kinds of branches here, and the vinedresser deals with both. The branch that does not bear fruit, He takes away. The branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so it will bear even more.

Anyone who has grown grapes knows that pruning looks harsh. Good wood gets cut away. But a vine left alone grows long and leafy and produces very little. Cutting it back sends the life of the vine into the fruit. God does the same with His people. The hard seasons, the losses, and the correction we go through are often His pruning shears. They hurt, but they are not punishment. They are the work of a Father who wants more fruit from us.

Who is the branch that is taken away? I will say more about that at verse 6.

15:3 *Already you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

Before Jesus says anything else about pruning, He tells the eleven that they are already clean. The Greek word for "prune" in verse 2 and "clean" here come from the same root. Jesus is saying, in effect, "You have already been through the first and most important pruning." That happened through His word, the message they heard and believed. Judas had left the room by now (13:30). The men who remained were truly His.

This echoes what Jesus said while washing their feet: "you are clean, but not all" (13:10). God's word is the tool He uses to cleanse us, then and now.

15:4 *Remain in Me, and I in you. Even as the branch is not able to bear fruit from itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither **can** you unless you remain in Me.*

The key word of this chapter shows up here: *remain*. The Greek word is *meno*, which means to remain, stay, or dwell (older translations say "abide"). It appears again and again in verses 1-10. To remain in Christ is to stay connected to Him: to keep trusting Him, keep listening to Him, keep living close to Him day after day.

It goes both ways: "Remain in Me, and I in you." We stay with Him, and He lives in us.

A branch cannot produce one grape on its own. Cut it off and lay it on the ground, and it will not bear fruit, no matter how hard it "tries." The same is true of us. Our fruit is not something we manufacture by willpower. It is what grows naturally when we stay connected to the vine.

15:5 *I am the vine; you **are** the branches. The **one** remaining in Me and I in him, this **one** bears much fruit; for apart from Me you are not able to do anything.*

Jesus repeats the picture and spells it out: He is the vine, and we are the branches. Then comes one of the most humbling statements in the Bible: "apart from Me you are not able to do anything."

That does not mean an unbeliever cannot build a house or run a business. It means nothing of eternal value, nothing that pleases God and lasts, comes from us apart from Christ. Most of us have learned this the hard way. When we try to serve God in our own strength, we wear out fast and have little to show for it. When we stay close to Him, the fruit comes, and it is far more than we could have produced on our own.

What is the fruit? The New Testament points to a changed character, the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). It also includes obedience, answered prayer, and other people coming to know Christ through us.

15:6 *Unless someone remains in Me, he is thrown out as the branch and is dried up; and they gather them and throw **them** into **the** fire, and they are burned.*

This is a sobering verse. A branch that does not remain in the vine is thrown away, dries up, and is burned.

Christians read this verse in a few different ways. Some believe it teaches that a true believer can lose his salvation. Others believe it describes the loss of reward, not salvation, for a believer whose life produced nothing (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Still others read it as describing people who appear to be attached to the vine but never truly were. Christians who disagree about eternal security tend to read this verse through their own view, and I will not try to settle that debate here. Judas shows how serious this is. He walked with Jesus for three years, heard every sermon, and saw every miracle, yet he did not remain in Christ, and he went out into the night (13:30).

The proof of a living branch is fruit. A branch that stays fruitless year after year is a warning sign. This verse should cause each of us to examine our own hearts (2 Corinthians 13:5), not to live in fear, but to make sure our faith is real.

15:7 *If you remain in Me, and My declarations remain in you, you will ask whatever you wish, and it will happen for you.*

Here is a wonderful promise, but notice the conditions. "If you remain in Me, and My declarations remain in you." When Christ's words live in us, they shape what we want. Our prayers start to line up with His will. Then we can ask whatever we wish, because what we wish is what He wants.

This is not a blank check for anything we might want. It is the natural result of a life so connected to Jesus that His desires have become our desires.

15:8 *In this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; and you will become My disciples.*

The Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. That is the purpose of the whole vineyard. A farmer is honored by a good harvest, and God is honored when His people grow, change, and serve.

Jesus says that when we bear much fruit, "you will become My disciples." Bearing fruit is how we show, and keep showing, that we are His disciples. Jesus said something similar in Matthew 7:20: we will know people by their fruits.

15:9 *Even as the Father loved Me, I also loved you; remain in My love.*

Jesus now tells us how much He loves us: just as much as the Father loves Him. Stop and think about that. The love between the Father and the Son is perfect and eternal. That is the measure of Christ's love for His people.

"Remain in My love." We do not earn His love, but we can stay in it, live in it, and enjoy it, the way a child stays close to a loving parent.

15:10 *If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, even as I have kept the commandments of My Father and remain in His love.*

How do we remain in His love? By keeping His commandments. Jesus is our example. He kept the Father's commandments perfectly and lived every moment in the Father's love.

This is not about earning salvation. It is about staying close. When a child disobeys, he is still his father's child, but something in the closeness is lost until it is made right. Obedience keeps the relationship close and warm.

15:11 *These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.*

Why is Jesus telling them all this? So that His joy may be in them, and their joy may be made full. The Christian life is not meant to be a grim duty. Jesus wants us to have the same joy He has.

Remember when He is saying this: on the night before His crucifixion. He knew what was coming, and He still spoke of joy. His joy did not depend on circumstances. It came from His relationship with the Father, and He offers that same joy to us.

15:12 *This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I loved you.*

Jesus repeats the new commandment He gave in 13:34. Love one another, just as I have loved you. The standard is not how others treat us, or how we feel on a given day. The standard is how Jesus loves us.

15:13 *Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

Jesus defines the greatest love there is: laying down your life for your friends. Within hours, He would do exactly that. Every one of us has heard stories of a soldier who threw himself on a grenade, or a parent who gave their life for a child. We honor those people because they showed the highest kind of love. Jesus went further still. Romans 5:8 tells us He died for us "while we were still sinners," before we were ever His friends.

15:14 *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*

You are My friends if you do what I command you. This does not mean we become His friends by obeying. It describes what His friends look like. A true friend of Jesus listens to Him and does what He says.

15:15 *No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things which I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

Here Jesus changes the relationship. A slave, or servant, just follows orders and is not told the reasons behind them. But Jesus calls His disciples friends, because He has shared with them everything He heard from the Father.

What an honor. In the Old Testament, Abraham was called the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Now Jesus extends that same friendship to every one of His followers. We still serve Him, and the apostles often called themselves bond-servants of Christ (Romans 1:1). But we serve as friends who know His heart, not as hired hands.

15:16 *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, so that you may go and bear fruit, and your fruit may remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Jesus reminds them that the choosing started with Him. "You did not choose Me but I chose you." In that culture, a student usually picked the rabbi he wanted to follow. Jesus did it the other way around. He went out and called His disciples (Mark 1:16-20).

He chose them for a purpose: to go and bear fruit that remains, fruit that lasts into eternity. And as they go, the Father will answer their prayers made in Jesus' name. Praying "in Jesus' name" means praying as His representatives, for His purposes, trusting in His authority, not tacking a phrase onto the end of a prayer.

15:17 *These things I command you, so that you love one another.*

Jesus closes this section where He began it (15:12): love one another. This is the command that ties everything else together.

15:18 *If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before you.*

Now the tone changes. The disciples have been told about the love they share with Jesus and with one another. Now they are told about the hatred they will face from the world.

In John's writing, "the world" (Greek *kosmos*) often means people organized in rebellion against God. Jesus says, if the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. When a believer is mocked or opposed for following Christ, it is not really about him. It is about the One he follows.

15:19 *If you were of the world, the world would love **its** own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*

Why does the world hate believers? Because we no longer belong to it. Jesus chose us out of the world. We still live here, work here, and raise our families here, but our loyalty and our citizenship are somewhere else (Philippians 3:20). The world loves its own. When someone stops living by its values, it notices, and it often pushes back.

15:20 *Remember the word which I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

Jesus quotes what He said back in 13:16: "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted the Master, they will persecute His servants. If some listened to His word, some will listen to ours too.

That is both a warning and an encouragement. We will face opposition, but not everyone will reject us. Some will hear and believe, just as some heard and believed Jesus.

15:21 *But all these things they will do to you on account of My name, because they do not know the **One** who sent Me.*

The root cause of this hatred is spiritual blindness. The world does not know the One who sent Jesus. People who reject Christ are, in the end, rejecting the Father who sent Him, even when they claim to worship God. Paul was one of those people before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus (1 Timothy 1:13).

15:22 *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.*

Jesus is not saying that people would have been sinless if He had never come. He means that His coming removed every excuse. Once the light came and spoke to them, rejecting Him became a deliberate choice. The more light we have, the more responsible we are for what we do with it.

15:23 *The **one** hating Me hates My Father also.*

There is no neutral ground. To hate Jesus is to hate the Father. Many people today say they believe in God but have no use for Jesus. According to Jesus Himself, that is not possible. The Father and the Son are one (10:30).

15:24 *If I had not done among them the works which no other **one** has done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.*

Jesus' miracles were unlike anything anyone had ever seen. He healed a man born blind (chapter 9) and raised a man who had been dead four days (chapter 11). These works were the Father's testimony that Jesus was sent from Him. Those who saw these works and still hated Jesus had no excuse left. They had seen the evidence and rejected both the Son and the Father.

15:25 *But **this is** so that the word written in their law may be fulfilled, 'They hated Me without cause.'*

Even this hatred was foretold. "They hated Me without cause" comes from the Psalms (Psalm 35:19; 69:4). Jesus calls it "their law," using the word in a broad sense for the Hebrew Scriptures. The religious leaders who prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures were fulfilling them without realizing it. Jesus had done nothing to deserve their hatred. He had only healed, taught, and loved.

Old Testament links: Psalm 35:19 (quoted); Psalm 69:4 (quoted)

15:26 *But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from the Father, He will testify concerning Me.*

In the middle of this hard news, Jesus gives a promise. The Helper is coming. "Helper" is the Greek word *parakletos*, meaning one called alongside to help, like an advocate or counselor. He is the Spirit of truth, and Jesus says two things about Him here: He proceeds from the Father, and Jesus Himself will send Him. This verse shows the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working together, which is one of the places in Scripture where we see the Trinity clearly.

The Spirit's job is to testify about Jesus. The Holy Spirit never points people to Himself. He always points them to Christ.

15:27 *And you also testify, because you are with Me from **the** beginning.*

The disciples will testify too. They had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry, and they were eyewitnesses of everything He said and did. The Spirit's witness and the apostles' witness work together. That is exactly what we have in the New Testament: the eyewitness record of the apostles, written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And today, every believer carries that same testimony to the people around us.

Chapter 15 Summary

On the way from the upper room, Jesus pictures His relationship with His followers as a vine and its branches. He is the true vine, the Father is the vinedresser, and believers are the branches. The branches have one task: remain in Him. When they do, fruit follows naturally, and the Father prunes fruitful branches so they bear even more. Branches that do not remain are thrown away and burned, a sobering warning that Christians read in different ways (see 15:6). Remaining in Him means keeping His words, obeying His commands, and loving one another as He loved us, a love He would prove within hours by laying down His life. Jesus calls His disciples friends, not slaves, because He has shared the Father's heart with them. Then He warns them that the world will hate them as it hated Him, without reason. But they will not stand alone. The Helper, the Spirit of truth, will come from the Father and testify about Jesus, and the disciples will testify alongside Him.

I have tended a garden, and I learned a good harvest takes time and careful attention. You cannot rush it, and you cannot ignore it. Jesus says the Father is the vinedresser. He gives that same patient care to us.

Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. Have you ever grown a garden or cared for a fruit tree? What did you learn about what it takes to get a good harvest?

2. What is the role of the Father in the picture of the vine and the branches? (15:1-2)

3. What does it mean to "remain" in Christ, and what happens to a branch that does not? (15:4-6)

4. What can we do apart from Jesus, according to verse 5? How have you seen that in your own life?

5. What conditions does Jesus attach to His promise about answered prayer? (15:7, 16)

6. What is the greatest kind of love, and how did Jesus show it? (15:13)

7. What is the difference between being Jesus' slave and being His friend? (15:15)

8. Why does the world hate those who follow Jesus? (15:18-21)

9. What does the Holy Spirit do, according to verse 26?

10. Where might God be pruning you right now, and what fruit do you think He wants to grow?

Chapter 16: The Promise of the Helper

Scripture: The Spirit's Work and Sorrow Turned to Joy

16:1-4 These things I have spoken to you so that you may not be caused to stumble. They will make you ***ones*** put out of the synagogue; but an hour is coming that everyone who has killed you may think ***that he is*** offering service to God. And these things they will do to you, because they did not know the Father, nor Me. But these things I have spoken to you so that when the hour comes, you may remember them, that I said ***them*** to you. Now these things I did not say to you from ***the*** beginning, because I was with you.

16:5-15 But now I am going away to the ***One*** who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have spoken these things to you, grief has filled your heart. But I say the truth to you: it is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And having come, He will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I am going away to My Father, and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear ***them*** now. But when He comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things ***that are*** coming. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what ***is*** Mine and will declare ***it*** to you. All things, as many as the Father has, are Mine; because of this I said that He will take from what ***is*** Mine and will declare ***it*** to you.

16:16-24 A little ***while***, and you do not see Me; and again a little ***while***, and you will see Me, because I am going away to the Father." Therefore ***some*** of His disciples said to one another, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little ***while***, and you do not see Me; and again a little ***while***, and you will see Me'; and, 'Because I am going away to the Father'?" Therefore they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'the little ***while***'? We do not know what He is speaking." Therefore Jesus knew that they were wanting to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you seeking among one another concerning this, that I said, 'A little ***while***, and you do not see Me; and again a little ***while***, and you will see Me'? Truly, truly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be grieved, but your grief will become joy. The woman, when she is giving birth, has grief, because her hour has come; but when she has brought forth the child, she no longer remembers the tribulation, because of the joy that a man has been born into the world. And you therefore now indeed have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

16:25-33 These things I have spoken to you in figurative sayings; but an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative sayings, but I will tell you plainly concerning the Father. In that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you dearly, because you have loved Me dearly and have believed that I

came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples say to Him, "Look, now You are speaking plainly, and You say no figurative saying. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need that anyone ask You; by this we believe that You came forth from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Look, an hour is coming, and has now come, that you will be scattered, each to ***his*** own ***things***, and will leave Me alone; and ***yet*** I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world."

Chapter 16 Preview

Jesus continues His last teaching before the cross. He has just told His disciples that the world will hate them. Now He tells them why He is warning them ahead of time: so they will not be caught off guard and fall away when it happens.

The disciples are full of sorrow. Their Master keeps talking about leaving, and they do not understand. Jesus tells them something that must have sounded impossible: it is better for them that He goes, because then the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will come. He explains what the Spirit will do in the world and in them. Then He promises that their grief will soon turn to joy, like a mother who forgets the pain of labor once her baby is in her arms. The chapter ends with one of the greatest promises in the Bible: "In the world you will have tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world."

Chapter 16 Study

16:1 *These things I have spoken to you so that you may not be caused to stumble.*

"These things" points back to what Jesus said at the end of chapter 15 about the world's hatred. He tells them now so they "may not be caused to stumble." The Greek word pictures a trap or snare that trips someone up. Persecution that comes by surprise can shake a person's faith. Persecution that was predicted ahead of time can actually strengthen it, because it proves Jesus knew exactly what was coming.

16:2 *They will make you **ones** put out of the synagogue; but an hour is coming that everyone who has killed you may think **that he is** offering service to God.*

Jesus gets specific. They will be put out of the synagogue. For a Jewish believer in the first century, that meant losing their place in the community, their friends, and sometimes their family and livelihood. We already saw this threat used against the parents of the man born blind (9:22).

Then it gets worse. Some will kill believers and think they are serving God by doing it. The best example is Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul. He approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1) and hunted down Christians, fully convinced he was doing God's will (Acts 26:9-11). Religious zeal without the truth is a dangerous thing.

16:3 *And these things they will do to you, because they did not know the Father, nor Me.*

Here is the root of the problem again (15:21). Those who persecute believers do not know the Father or the Son. They may be very religious, but they do not know God. It is possible to be sincere and still be sincerely wrong.

16:4 *But these things I have spoken to you so that when the hour comes, you may remember them, that I said* ***them*** *to you. Now these things I did not say to you from* ***the*** *beginning, because I was with you.*

Jesus wants them to remember, when the hard times come, that He told them in advance. That memory would be an anchor for their faith.

Why did He not tell them all this at the beginning? Because He was with them. As long as Jesus was physically present, the world's anger landed on Him. He protected them. Now that He is leaving, they need to be ready.

16:5 *But now I am going away to the* ***One*** *who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'*

Jesus is going back to the Father who sent Him. Then He says something that seems odd: "none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'" Peter did ask that very question back in 13:36, and Thomas asked something similar in 14:5. So what does Jesus mean? Their questions had been about what His leaving meant for them. None of them was asking about where He was going, to the Father, and the glory waiting for Him there. They were so focused on their own loss that they missed the big picture.

16:6 *But because I have spoken these things to you, grief has filled your heart.*

Sorrow filled their hearts. It is easy to understand why. They had left everything to follow Him, and now He was telling them He was leaving. Grief can fill a heart so full that there is no room left to hear the good news being offered.

16:7 *But I say the truth to you: it is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*

Jesus tells them the truth, and it is surprising: it is to your advantage that I go away. How could anything be better than having Jesus physically present? The answer is the Helper, the Holy Spirit.

While Jesus was on earth in His body, He could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit lives inside every believer, everywhere, all the time. Jesus had to finish His work, die, rise, and return to the Father before sending the Spirit. That happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 33).

The Greek word for Helper is *parakletos*, one called alongside to help. Jesus had been their Helper for three years. Now He would send "another Helper" (14:16) who would never leave them.

16:8 *And having come, He will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment:*

When the Spirit comes, He will "convict" the world. The Greek word, *elencho*, means to expose, to prove someone wrong, or to bring something into the light so it cannot be denied. It is what a prosecutor does in a courtroom when he lays out the evidence. The Spirit convicts the world in three areas, which Jesus explains in the next three verses.

16:9 *Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;*

First, the Spirit convicts the world concerning sin, "because they do not believe in Me." Notice which sin Jesus names. Not murder, theft, or adultery, though those are real sins. The root sin is unbelief, refusing to trust Jesus. Every other sin can be forgiven through Christ, but the person who rejects Christ rejects the only remedy for sin (3:18).

The Holy Spirit is the One who opens a person's eyes to see their own sin. No preacher can do that by himself. When someone feels that weight on their heart and realizes they need a Savior, that is the Spirit at work.

16:10 *And concerning righteousness, because I am going away to My Father, and you no longer see Me;*

Second, the Spirit convicts the world concerning righteousness, "because I am going away to My Father." The world judged Jesus to be a criminal and a blasphemer and put Him to death. But the Father raised Him and took Him back into heaven. That was God's verdict: Jesus is righteous. The Spirit shows people that true righteousness is not found in their own goodness but in Christ alone.

16:11 *And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*

Third, the Spirit convicts the world concerning judgment, "because the ruler of this world has been judged." The ruler of this world is Satan (12:31; 14:30). At the cross, where it looked like Satan had won, he was actually defeated. Jesus speaks of it as already done. If Satan has been judged, then everyone who follows him will be judged too. The Spirit warns the world that judgment is real and coming, as the book of Revelation shows in detail (Revelation 20:10-15).

16:12 *I still have many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear* ***them*** *now.*

Jesus had much more to say, but they could not bear it yet. They were already overwhelmed. A good teacher knows how much a student can take in at one time. Jesus did not hold back the truth from them. He was pacing it.

16:13 *But when He comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things* ***that are*** *coming.*

The Spirit of truth will guide them into all the truth. A guide does not make up the road. He leads you along a road that is already there. In the same way, the Spirit does not speak on His own initiative. He speaks what He hears.

This promise was given first to the apostles. It was fulfilled as the Spirit guided them to remember what Jesus said (14:26) and to write the New Testament. "He will declare to you the things that are coming" includes the prophetic parts of the New Testament, like the book of Revelation, which John himself received. In a secondary way, the Spirit still guides believers today as He helps us understand the Scriptures He inspired. He never leads anyone to a "truth" that contradicts the written Word.

16:14 *He will glorify Me, because He will take from what* ***is*** *Mine and will declare* ***it*** *to you.*

The Spirit's main purpose is to glorify Jesus. He takes what belongs to Christ and makes it known to us. Here is a simple test for any teaching or movement that claims to be "of the Spirit": does it lift up Jesus? The true Holy Spirit always points to Christ, never away from Him.

16:15 *All things, as many as the Father has, are Mine; because of this I said that He will take from what* ***is*** *Mine and will declare* ***it*** *to you.*

Everything the Father has belongs to the Son. This is a clear claim to equality with God. No mere man or prophet could say this. And the Spirit takes from what belongs to the Son and gives it to us. Here again we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working together as one God.

16:16 *A little* ***while****, and you do not see Me; and again a little* ***while****, and you will see Me, because I am going away to the Father."*

"A little while, and you do not see Me." Within a matter of hours, Jesus would be arrested, crucified, and buried. "And again a little while, and you will see Me." Three days later, He would rise from the dead and appear to them. I believe this refers first to His death and resurrection. It may also look ahead to His second coming, when all His people will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

16:17-18 *Therefore* ***some*** *of His disciples said to one another, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little* ***while****, and you do not see Me; and again a little* ***while****, and you will see Me'; and, 'Because I am going away to the Father'?" Therefore they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'the little* ***while****'? We do not know what He is speaking."*

The disciples were confused. They whispered among themselves, repeating His words and trying to make sense of them. "A little while" what? And what did He mean by going to the Father? I find this comforting. The apostles, who walked with Jesus every day, did not always understand Him either. It is okay to admit when we do not understand a passage. The key is to keep asking and keep listening.

16:19 *Therefore Jesus knew that they were wanting to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you seeking among one another concerning this, that I said, 'A little **while**, and you do not see Me; and again a little **while**, and you will see Me'?*

Jesus knew what they were thinking before they asked. He always does (2:24-25). He does not scold them for their confusion. He opens the subject for them and explains.

16:20 *Truly, truly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be grieved, but your grief will become joy.*

"Truly, truly" signals something important. Jesus tells them plainly that they will weep and mourn, and the world will rejoice. That is exactly what happened at the cross. His enemies celebrated, and His followers hid behind locked doors (20:19).

But notice what He says next: your grief will be *turned into* joy. Not replaced with joy, but turned into it. The very thing that caused their grief, the cross, would become the source of their greatest joy.

16:21 *The woman, when she is giving birth, has grief, because her hour has come; but when she has brought forth the child, she no longer remembers the tribulation, because of the joy that a man has been born into the world.*

Jesus uses a picture every mother understands. Labor is painful. But when the baby is born, the pain gives way to joy. The pain was real, but it served a purpose, and the joy is greater.

16:22 *And you therefore now indeed have grief; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy from you.*

That is how it would be for the disciples. They had grief now. But Jesus promised, "I will see you again," and they would rejoice. And no one would take that joy away. History bears this out. These same frightened men later went out and faced beatings, prison, and death with joy (Acts 5:41). The resurrection changed everything for them.

16:23 *And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you.*

"In that day" means after His resurrection and the coming of the Spirit. They would not need to keep asking Him questions the way they did now, because the Spirit would teach them.

Then Jesus gives a new privilege: ask the Father for anything in My name, and He will give it to you. Before this, they brought their requests to Jesus. Now they could go directly to the Father, on the basis of who Jesus is and what He has done.

16:24 *Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.*

Until now, they had never prayed in Jesus' name. This was something new. Jesus invites them to ask and receive, so their joy may be full. Prayer is not just a duty. It is one of God's ways of filling our lives with joy, as we see Him answer.

16:25 *These things I have spoken to you in figurative sayings; but an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative sayings, but I will tell you plainly concerning the Father.*

Jesus had been speaking in "figurative sayings," using pictures and comparisons like the vine, the shepherd, and the woman in labor. An hour was coming when He would speak plainly about the Father. That happened after His resurrection, when He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), and through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

16:26-27 *In that day you will ask in My name; and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you dearly, because you have loved Me dearly and have believed that I came forth from God.*

When they pray in Jesus' name, Jesus does not need to talk the Father into loving them. "The Father Himself loves you." Some people picture the Father as angry and reluctant, with Jesus pleading to calm Him down. That is not the picture Jesus gives. The Father loved the world so much that He sent His Son (3:16). He loves those who love His Son and believe that He came from God.

That does not cancel the truth that Jesus intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). It means His intercession is not to win over an unwilling Father. The Father and the Son are of one heart toward us.

16:28 *I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father."*

This one verse sums up the whole story of Jesus. He came from the Father, came into the world, is leaving the world, and is going back to the Father. It covers His eternal existence before He was born, His birth as a man, His death and resurrection, and His ascension. Only someone who is God could truthfully say, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world."

16:29-30 *His disciples say to Him, "Look, now You are speaking plainly, and You say no figurative saying. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need that anyone ask You; by this we believe that You came forth from God."*

The disciples think they finally understand. "Now You are speaking plainly." They are confident now: You know all things, and we believe You came from God. Their faith was real, but it was about to be tested in a way they could not imagine.

16:31 *Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?*

Jesus answers with a question: "Do you now believe?" It is not that He doubts their faith completely. He knows how fragile it is about to prove.

16:32 *Look, an hour is coming, and has now come, that you will be scattered, each to* ***his*** *own* ***things****, and will leave Me alone; and* ***yet*** *I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*

Within hours, they would all scatter and leave Him alone. This fulfilled Zechariah 13:7, which Jesus quoted that same night according to Matthew 26:31. Every one of them ran when the soldiers came.

And yet Jesus says, "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Even when every friend on earth abandoned Him, He had the Father. Some ask how that fits with His cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). On the cross, Jesus bore the full weight of our sin and the judgment it deserved. That was a separation we cannot fully understand. But it was for a short time, and it was for us.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 13:7 (alluded to)

16:33 *These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world."*

Jesus ends this long talk with peace. Everything He said was so that in Him they might have peace. Notice the contrast: *in Me* you have peace, *in the world* you will have tribulation.

The word "tribulation" here is the Greek word *thlipsis*, which means pressure, distress, or affliction. Jesus does not promise His followers an easy life. He promises the opposite. Believers in every age have faced tribulation, and many around the world face severe persecution today. Here "tribulation" means ordinary trouble and pressure. It is not the same as the Tribulation, the final time of great trouble before Christ returns. As I explained in my study of Revelation, I believe the church will be taken to be with Christ before that time begins. Whatever your view of that, this verse tells us that trouble in this world is normal for a Christian, not a sign that God has abandoned us.

But Jesus does not leave it there. "Take courage; I have overcome the world." He says it as if it has already happened, even though the cross is still ahead of Him. His victory is so certain that He speaks of it in the past tense. Whatever we face, we face it on the winning side.

Chapter 16 Summary

Jesus warns His disciples that they will be thrown out of the synagogues and even killed by people who think they are serving God. He tells them ahead of time so their faith will not be shaken when it happens. The disciples are filled with sorrow at the news that He is leaving, but Jesus tells them it is to their advantage, because then He will send the Helper, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, and He will guide the apostles into all the truth, always glorifying Jesus. Jesus then speaks of "a little while": they will not see

Him, and then they will see Him again. Their grief will be turned into joy, like a mother's pain giving way to joy at the birth of her child, and no one will take that joy away. He gives them the new privilege of praying to the Father in His name and assures them that the Father Himself loves them. The disciples claim to finally understand, but Jesus warns that they will soon scatter and leave Him alone. He ends with a promise of peace in Him, a frank warning of tribulation in the world, and a declaration of victory: "I have overcome the world."

The Work of the Holy Spirit in John 14-16

In His final teaching before the cross, Jesus tells His disciples more about the Holy Spirit than anywhere else in the Gospels. Here is what He promised the Spirit would do:

- He is another Helper who will be with believers forever (14:16).
- He is the Spirit of truth, who lives with believers and will be in them (14:17).
- He will teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus said (14:26).
- He proceeds from the Father, is sent by Jesus, and testifies about Jesus (15:26).
- He comes only after Jesus goes away, which is why Jesus' leaving is to our advantage (16:7).
- He convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8-11).
- He guides into all the truth and discloses what is to come (16:13).
- He glorifies Jesus by taking what belongs to Christ and making it known (16:14-15).

Jesus always speaks of the Holy Spirit as a Person. The Spirit is not a force or an energy. He is a Person, who teaches, testifies, guides, and speaks.

Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. Think of a time someone warned you about a hard situation before it happened. How did the warning help you when it came?

2. Why did Jesus tell His disciples about the persecution ahead of time? (16:1, 4)

3. How could it be to the disciples' advantage that Jesus went away? (16:7)

4. What three things does the Holy Spirit convict the world about, and what does each one mean? (16:8-11)

5. What does it mean that the Spirit "will not speak from Himself"? (16:13)

6. What is the main purpose of the Holy Spirit's work, according to verse 14?

7. How does Jesus use the picture of a woman in labor to describe what His disciples were about to go through? (16:20-22)

8. What does Jesus say about the Father's love for His disciples? (16:26-27)

9. What is the difference between having peace "in Me" and tribulation "in the world"? (16:33)

10. What tribulation are you facing right now, and how does Jesus' statement "I have overcome the world" change the way you look at it?

Chapter 17: The Prayer of Jesus

Scripture: Jesus Prays for Himself, His Disciples, and All Believers

17:1-5 These things Jesus spoke, and He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, so that Your Son also may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, so that all that You have given Him, He may give to them eternal life. And this is the eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You sent. I glorified You on the earth; I finished the work which You have given Me that I should do ***it***. And now You, Father, glorify Me with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

17:6-19 I revealed Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things, as many as You have given Me, are from You; for the declarations which You have given Me I have given to them; and they received ***them***, and knew truly that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I am asking concerning them; I am not asking concerning the world, but concerning those whom You have given Me, because they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours ***are*** Mine; and I have been glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, and ***yet*** these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as We ***are***. When I was with them in the world, I was keeping them in Your name; those whom You have given Me I guarded, and none of them perished except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world, so that they may have My joy made full in them. I have given them Your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth. Even as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. And on behalf of them I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

17:20-26 And I do not ask concerning these only, but also concerning those who will believe in Me through their word, that they all may be one, even as You, Father, ***are*** in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, so that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them and You in Me, so that they may be perfected into one, and so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them, even as You loved Me. Father, those whom You have given Me, I desire that where I am, they also may be with Me, so that they may see My glory which You gave Me; because You loved Me before ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world. Righteous Father, and the world did not know You, but I knew You, and these knew that You sent Me; and I made Your name known to them, and will make ***it*** known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Chapter 17 Preview

Many people call the prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 "the Lord's Prayer," but that was a prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray. John 17 is the Lord's own prayer. It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible, prayed on the night before His crucifixion, after He finished teaching His disciples. Some call it His "High Priestly Prayer," because in it Jesus stands between God and His people, the way the high priest did in Israel.

The prayer moves in three steps. First, Jesus prays for Himself (17:1-5). Then He prays for His disciples (17:6-19). Finally, He prays for everyone who would believe in Him through their message (17:20-26). That last part includes you and me. Reading this chapter is like being allowed to listen in on a conversation between the Father and the Son, and hearing your own name come up.

Chapter 17 Study

17:1 *These things Jesus spoke, and He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, so that Your Son also may glorify You,*

Jesus finished speaking to His disciples and lifted His eyes to heaven. This was a common posture of prayer for Jesus (11:41). Notice how He addresses God: simply "Father." Six times in this prayer He calls God Father. That word tells us everything about the closeness between them.

"The hour has come." All through John's Gospel, we have heard that His hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). In 12:23 Jesus announced that it had arrived. The hour is His death, resurrection, and return to the Father. Jesus asks the Father to glorify Him, but not for His own sake: "that Your Son also may glorify You." Even here, the goal is the Father's glory.

How could a cross bring glory? In John's Gospel, the cross is not a defeat. It is the place where God's love and justice are shown most clearly. The glory of Jesus shines brightest at the very moment the world thinks it has destroyed Him.

17:2 *Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, so that all that You have given Him, He may give to them eternal life.*

The Father gave the Son authority over all flesh, meaning all mankind. Jesus uses that authority to give eternal life to those the Father has given Him. This phrase, those "given" to Him by the Father, shows up again and again in this prayer (17:2, 6, 9, 24; see also 18:9). Salvation starts with God. The people who come to Jesus are a gift from the Father to the Son, and Jesus treasures them as a gift.

17:3 *And this is the eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You sent.*

Here Jesus defines eternal life. Many people think of eternal life only as living forever. That is part of it, but Jesus says the heart of it is knowing God: knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.

This is not just knowing facts about God. The Bible uses the word "know" for a close, personal relationship. Eternal life begins the moment a person comes to know God through Jesus, and it never ends. If you know Him, eternal life has already started for you.

Notice also that Jesus puts Himself right alongside "the only true God." He is not denying His own deity here. He is distinguishing the true God from the false gods of the world, and placing Himself as the One the true God sent.

17:4 *I glorified You on the earth; I finished the work which You have given Me that I should do* ***it****.*

Jesus says, "I finished the work." He speaks as though the cross were already finished, because He was so certain He would complete it. Before the next sunset, on the cross, He would cry out, "It has been finished" (19:30).

How many of us could look back on our lives and say we finished everything God gave us to do? Jesus could. He did everything the Father asked, perfectly, with nothing left undone.

17:5 *And now You, Father, glorify Me with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*

This is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that Jesus existed before He was born in Bethlehem. He asks the Father to restore the glory He had with Him "before the world was." Jesus did not begin to exist at His birth. He was with the Father from eternity, just as John told us in the very first verse of his Gospel (1:1).

When Jesus came to earth, He set aside the outward display of His heavenly glory (Philippians 2:6-8). He never stopped being God, but He took on the humble form of a servant. Now, with His work almost complete, He asks to return to the glory He had always shared with the Father. No created being, not even the highest angel, could pray this prayer. God says in Isaiah 42:8 that He will not give His glory to another, yet Jesus shares that glory. That only makes sense if Jesus is God.

17:6 *I revealed Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

Jesus now begins praying for His disciples. He has "revealed," or made known, the Father's name to them. In the Bible, a name stands for the whole character of a person. Jesus showed them who God really is.

The disciples belonged to the Father, and the Father gave them to Jesus. And they kept His word. That is a generous thing for Jesus to say about men who would run away within hours. Jesus looked at their hearts. In spite of their weaknesses, they had believed and held on to His word.

17:7-8 *Now they have known that all things, as many as You have given Me, are from You; for the declarations which You have given Me I have given to them; and they received **them**, and knew truly that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.*

The disciples had come to understand that everything Jesus had came from the Father. Jesus gave them the Father's words, and they received them. They understood that He came from God, and they believed that the Father sent Him.

Here is a simple picture of how faith works: the word is given, the word is received, and the word is believed. That is how it worked for the disciples, and that is how it works for us today when we read the Scriptures.

17:9 *I am asking concerning them; I am not asking concerning the world, but concerning those whom You have given Me, because they are Yours.*

Jesus is praying specifically for His disciples, not for the world. This does not mean He does not care about the world. He loved the world enough to die for it (3:16). It means this part of the prayer is a request only believers can receive: to be kept, protected, made holy, and united. The world needs salvation first. In fact, Jesus prays for the world indirectly in verses 21 and 23, asking that the world may believe through the witness of His people.

17:10 *And all Mine are Yours, and Yours **are** Mine; and I have been glorified in them.*

All that belongs to the Son belongs to the Father, and all that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son. Any believer could say to God, "All that is mine is Yours." But no mere man could say, "All that is Yours is mine." Jesus says both. Once again, He claims equality with the Father.

"I have been glorified in them." It is amazing to think that a handful of ordinary fishermen and a tax collector could bring glory to the Son of God. But they did, and through them, He is still glorified today.

17:11 *And I am no longer in the world, and **yet** these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as We **are**.*

Jesus speaks as if He has already left the world. His disciples would stay behind, surrounded by a hostile world. So He asks the "Holy Father" to keep them in His name. This is the only place in the Bible where God is called "Holy Father." The holiness of God is the reason they need protecting, and the reason they can be protected.

The goal of this keeping is unity: "that they may be one, even as We are." The unity between the Father and the Son is the model for the unity of believers.

17:12 *When I was with them in the world, I was keeping them in Your name; those whom You have given Me I guarded, and none of them perished except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

While Jesus was with them, He personally guarded them. Not one was lost, except "the son of destruction." The phrase means one marked for ruin, lost forever. This was Judas, the one whose whole course of life ended in destruction. His betrayal fulfilled Scripture (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18).

Christians read Judas differently depending on their view of eternal security. Some see him as one who was never truly given to Jesus. Others see him as a sobering warning that a disciple can turn away. John told us earlier that Judas was a thief (12:6). Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray Him (6:64, 70-71). Judas chose his own path, and God used even that wicked choice to fulfill His plan.

The same phrase, "son of destruction," is used by Paul for the man of sin, the antichrist, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. I covered the antichrist in my study of Revelation 13. It is sobering that the Bible uses the same title for both men.

17:13 *But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world, so that they may have My joy made full in them.*

Jesus prayed this prayer out loud in front of His disciples so that His joy would be made full in them. Imagine how it must have felt to hear Jesus pray for you by name to the Father. That is a source of deep joy. And we can share that joy today, because this prayer is written down for us.

17:14 *I have given them Your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Jesus gave them the Father's word, and because of it, the world hates them. They do not belong to the world anymore, just as Jesus does not belong to it. Receiving God's word changes a person. It sets them apart, and the world can tell the difference.

17:15 *I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil.*

This is an important verse. Jesus does not ask the Father to take believers out of the world. He asks the Father to keep them from the evil one, Satan.

God's plan is not to remove His people from trouble but to protect them in the middle of it. We are left in the world on purpose, to be a witness. Jesus prayed for our protection from the evil one, not our escape from hardship.

This prayer is about our everyday life in this world, not about the Tribulation, the final time of great trouble on the earth. As I explain in my study of Revelation, Revelation 3:10 is one of the main verses behind the pre-tribulation view I hold: Jesus promised to keep His church "from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world." Until He comes for us (14:3), He keeps us safe from the evil one while we live and serve here.

17:16 *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Jesus repeats what He said in verse 14. Believers are not of the world. Our values, our hope, and our home are found in Christ, not in this world system. We live in the world, but we are not supposed to be shaped by it (Romans 12:2).

17:17 *Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth.*

"Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth." To sanctify means to set apart for God, to make holy. How does God make His people holy? Through His word.

"Your word is truth." Not "contains truth" or "points toward truth." The word of God *is* truth. In a world where many people believe truth is whatever you want it to be, this is a solid rock to stand on. If you want to grow in holiness, there is no shortcut around the Bible. Read it, study it, and obey it.

Old Testament links: Psalm 119:160 (alluded to)

17:18 *Even as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world.*

The Father sent the Son into the world, and the Son sends His disciples into the world. We are not just saved out of the world. We are sent back into it with a mission. Jesus repeats this after His resurrection: "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (20:21).

17:19 *And on behalf of them I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.*

"I sanctify Myself." Jesus was already perfectly holy. Here "sanctify" means He was setting Himself apart for His special task, His death on the cross. He gave Himself completely to God's purpose so that we could be set apart, made holy in truth. His sacrifice is what makes our holiness possible.

17:20 *And I do not ask concerning these only, but also concerning those who will believe in Me through their word,*

Now Jesus widens His prayer to include everyone who would believe in Him through the disciples' word. If you have believed in Jesus through the message of the apostles, written in the New Testament, Jesus prayed for you that night. Long before you were born, Jesus had you on His heart.

17:21 *That they all may be one, even as You, Father, **are** in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

Jesus prays that all believers would be one, just as the Father and the Son are one. This is not about one big church organization, or about pretending we agree on everything. It is a unity of life: believers living in the Father and the Son, and so being joined to one another.

And there is a purpose: "so that the world may believe that You sent Me." When Christians love one another and stand together, the world sees something it cannot explain apart from God. When Christians fight and divide, the world sees nothing different from itself. Our unity is part of our witness.

17:22 *And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, so that they may be one, even as We are one:*

Jesus has given His people the glory the Father gave Him. That glory includes our relationship with the Father, our adoption as His children, and our share in His life. The purpose again is unity: "that they may be one, even as We are one."

17:23 *I in them and You in Me, so that they may be perfected into one, and so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them, even as You loved Me.*

"I in them and You in Me." The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in believers. That is how close God brings us. The goal is that we would be "perfected into one," brought to complete oneness.

Two results follow. The world will know that the Father sent the Son, and the world will know that the Father loves believers just as He loves Jesus. Read that again. God loves you as much as He loves His own Son. That is almost too much to take in, but it is what Jesus said.

17:24 *Father, those whom You have given Me, I desire that where I am, they also may be with Me, so that they may see My glory which You gave Me; because You loved Me before* ***the*** *foundation of* ***the*** *world.*

This is Jesus' great desire for His people: that we would be with Him where He is and see His glory. This is our future hope. One day every believer will see Jesus in His full glory, the glory John described in Revelation 1:12-16.

Jesus says the Father loved Him "before the foundation of the world." Before anything was created, the Father and the Son shared perfect love. God did not create us because He was lonely. He created us to share in a love that had existed forever.

17:25 *Righteous Father, and the world did not know You, but I knew You, and these knew that You sent Me;*

Jesus addresses the "righteous Father." The world has not known God, but Jesus has always known Him, and the disciples have come to know that the Father sent Jesus. There are only two groups here: those who know God through Jesus, and those who do not.

17:26 *And I made Your name known to them, and will make* ***it*** *known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*

Jesus has made the Father's name known, and He will continue to make it known, through His death and resurrection and through the work of the Holy Spirit. His goal is that the love the Father has for the Son would be in His people, and that Jesus Himself would be in them.

The prayer ends where it all began: with love, the love that has always existed between the Father and the Son, now poured into the hearts of everyone who believes.

Chapter 17 Summary

On the night before His death, Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and prays. First He prays for Himself, asking the Father to glorify Him so He can glorify the Father, and to restore the glory He had with the Father before the world existed. He defines eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Then He prays for His disciples. He has given them the Father's word, and they have believed. Because they are no longer of the world, the world hates them, so Jesus asks the Holy Father to keep them, not by taking them out of the world, but by protecting them from the evil one. He asks the Father to sanctify them in the truth, because God's word is truth, and He sends them into the world as the Father sent Him. Finally, Jesus prays for all who will believe through the apostles' message. He asks that they would be one, as the Father and Son are one, so the world will believe. And He asks that they would be with Him and see His glory.

Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. Has anyone ever told you that they were praying for you? How did that make you feel?

2. What does Jesus mean when He says "the hour has come"? (17:1)

3. How does Jesus define eternal life? How is that different from how many people think of it? (17:3)

4. What does verse 5 tell us about who Jesus was before He was born?

5. Why does Jesus not ask the Father to take His disciples out of the world? What does He ask instead? (17:15)

6. How does God sanctify His people, according to verse 17?

7. Who is included in Jesus' prayer in verses 20-26?

8. Why is the unity of believers important to the world? (17:21, 23)

9. What does Jesus desire for His people in verse 24?

10. Jesus prayed for you on the night before He died. How does that change the way you think about your relationship with Him?

Chapter 18: Betrayal and Trial

Scripture: The Arrest, Peter's Denials, and Jesus Before Pilate

18:1-11 Having said these things, Jesus went out with His disciples beyond the winter brook of Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples. Now Judas also, who was delivering Him up, knew the place, because Jesus was often gathered together there with His disciples. Therefore Judas, having received the cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, comes there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Therefore Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, having gone out, said to them, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus says to them, "I am ***He***." And Judas also, who was delivering Him up, was standing with them. Therefore when He said to them, "I am ***He***," they went backward and fell to the ground. Therefore He questioned them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am ***He***. Therefore if you are seeking Me, allow these to go away," so that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Those whom You have given Me, I lost not one of them." Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. Now the slave's name was Malchus. Therefore Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

18:12-14 Then the cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Now Caiaphas was the ***one*** who gave counsel to the Jews that it is profitable for one man to perish on behalf of the people.

18:15-18 Now Simon Peter was following Jesus, and another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door outside. Therefore the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in. Therefore the servant girl, the doorkeeper, says to Peter, "You are not also ***one*** of the disciples of this man, are you?" He says, "I am not." Now the slaves and the officers were standing ***there***, having made a fire of coals, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself.

18:19-24 Then the high priest questioned Jesus concerning His disciples and concerning His teaching. Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews always come together, and in secret I spoke nothing. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; look, these know what I said." And when He had said these things, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a slap, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like this?" Jesus answered him, "If I spoke wrongly, testify concerning the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" Therefore Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

18:25-27 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also ***one*** of His disciples, are you?" He denied ***it*** and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of

the high priest, being a relative ***of the one*** whose ear Peter cut off, says, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Therefore Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

18:28-32 Then they lead Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium; now it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but so that they might eat the Passover. Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered and said to him, "If this ***man*** were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you." Therefore Pilate said to them, "You take Him, and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," so that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He was about to die.

18:33-40 Therefore Pilate entered into the Praetorium again, and called Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you saying this from yourself, or did others say ***it*** to you concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what did You do?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My officers would be fighting, so that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I may testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate says to Him, "What is truth?" And having said this, he went out again to the Jews, and says to them, "I find no cause in Him. But you have a custom that I release one to you at the Passover; do you wish therefore ***that*** I release to you the King of the Jews?" Then they all cried out again, saying, "Not this one, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Chapter 18 Preview

The teaching is over and the prayer has been prayed. Now the events Jesus has been speaking about begin to unfold. He crosses the Kidron Valley with His disciples and enters a garden, where Judas arrives with a crowd of soldiers and temple officers. What follows is not the arrest of a helpless victim. Jesus steps forward, asks who they are looking for, and when He answers "I am He," the whole crowd falls to the ground. He goes with them because He chooses to, after making sure His disciples are let go.

John then weaves two scenes together. Inside, Jesus stands calm and truthful before the high priest. Outside, by a charcoal fire, Peter denies three times that he even knows Him. The chapter ends in the headquarters of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, where Jesus speaks of a kingdom not of this world, Pilate asks "What is truth?", and the crowd chooses a robber named Barabbas over the King of the Jews.

Chapter 18 Study

18:1 *Having said these things, Jesus went out with His disciples beyond the winter brook of Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples.*

After His prayer, Jesus left the city with His disciples and went "beyond the winter brook of Kidron," which runs along the east side of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives. On the other side was a garden. Matthew and Mark tell us it was called Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32), a name that means "oil press." It was probably an olive grove.

There is a striking parallel here. Hundreds of years earlier, King David crossed the same brook Kidron, weeping, as he fled from Jerusalem after his trusted friend and counselor turned against him (2 Samuel 15:23, 31). Now the Son of David crosses it, about to be betrayed by a trusted friend.

18:2 *Now Judas also, who was delivering Him up, knew the place, because Jesus was often gathered together there with His disciples.*

Judas knew this place well, because Jesus often met there with His disciples. Jesus did not hide. He went to the place where He knew Judas would find Him. That tells us Jesus was not caught off guard. He walked straight toward the cross.

Think about how much it must have hurt that Judas used a place of prayer and fellowship as the place of betrayal.

18:3 *Therefore Judas, having received the cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, comes there with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

Judas came with "the cohort" and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. A Roman cohort was a military unit that, at full strength, numbered several hundred soldiers. We do not know how many actually came that night, but it was a large, armed force. The officers were the temple police, under the authority of the Jewish leaders.

They brought lanterns, torches, and weapons. Passover was held at the full moon, so it was not completely dark. Maybe they expected to have to search the garden for a man who would run and hide. They did not need to. The Light of the World (8:12) was about to walk right up to them.

18:4 *Therefore Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, having gone out, said to them, "Whom are you seeking?"*

Jesus knew everything that was going to happen to Him. Instead of waiting to be found, He went out to meet them and asked, "Whom are you seeking?" This is the action of someone completely in control. Jesus had said earlier, "No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down from Myself" (10:18). Here we see it happen.

18:5 *They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus says to them, "I am **He**." And Judas also, who was delivering Him up, was standing with them.*

They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." He replied, "I am He." In Greek, His answer is simply *ego eimi*, "I am." These are the same words Jesus used in 8:58, "before Abraham came into being, I am," when the crowd picked up stones to kill Him for claiming to be God. God revealed Himself to Moses with this name in Exodus 3:14.

John adds a small but painful detail: Judas was standing with them. The man who had eaten with Jesus a few hours earlier now stood with His enemies.

18:6 *Therefore when He said to them, "I am **He**," they went backward and fell to the ground.*

When Jesus said "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. Armed soldiers and officers were knocked flat by two Greek words. Only John records this. It was a brief display of Jesus' divine power and authority. He could have walked away. He could have called on more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). Instead, He let them get back up and take Him. This shows us that Jesus was not arrested because He was weak. He was arrested because He was willing.

18:7 *Therefore He questioned them again, "Whom are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."*

Jesus asked again, "Whom are you seeking?" They gave the same answer, "Jesus the Nazarene." I imagine they said it with a lot less confidence the second time.

18:8 *Jesus answered, "I told you that I am **He**. Therefore if you are seeking Me, allow these to go away,"*

Jesus repeated that He was the One they wanted, and then He gave an order: "allow these to go away." Even while being arrested, He was protecting His disciples. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (10:11), and here He stands between the wolves and His flock.

18:9 *So that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Those whom You have given Me, I lost not one of them."*

John tells us this fulfilled what Jesus had said: "Those whom You have given Me, I lost not one of them." Jesus said something like this in 6:39 and in His prayer just hours earlier (17:12). Jesus kept His disciples physically safe that night. Many see this as a picture of how He keeps their souls. Christians who differ on eternal security agree that no outside power can take His sheep from Him (10:28-29).

18:10 *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. Now the slave's name was Malchus.*

Peter was not going to let Jesus go without a fight. He drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his right ear. Only John gives us the names: it was Simon Peter, and the slave was

Malchus. John knew the high priest's household (18:15), which may be why he knew the slave's name. Luke, the physician, tells us that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him (Luke 22:51).

Peter meant well. He had promised to lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), and here he was ready to fight a whole cohort. But his zeal was misdirected. He was fighting the wrong battle with the wrong weapon.

18:11 *Therefore Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"*

Jesus told Peter to put his sword away. "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" In the Old Testament, a cup is often a picture of God's judgment against sin (Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). In the garden, Jesus had prayed for this cup to pass from Him if possible (Matthew 26:39). Now He has accepted it fully. It would be wrong for Peter to try to stop what the Father had planned. The cross was not something that happened to Jesus by accident. It was a cup the Father gave Him, and He chose to drink it for us.

18:12 *Then the cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews seized Jesus and bound Him,*

The cohort, its commander, and the Jewish officers arrested Jesus and tied Him up. Think about that. The One who holds the whole universe together (Colossians 1:17) allowed Himself to be bound with ropes by men He had created.

18:13 *And led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.*

They took Jesus to Annas first. Annas had served as high priest years earlier, until the Romans removed him from office. Several of his sons later held the office, and now his son-in-law Caiaphas was high priest. Many Jews still respected Annas as the real power behind the priesthood. So the first hearing took place before him, an informal questioning before the official trial.

John says Caiaphas was high priest "that year," meaning that momentous year when Jesus was crucified.

18:14 *Now Caiaphas was the **one** who gave counsel to the Jews that it is profitable for one man to perish on behalf of the people.*

John reminds us who Caiaphas was. He was the one who had told the council that it was better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish (11:49-52). He meant it as cold political calculation: get rid of Jesus before He causes trouble with Rome. But John tells us that God used his words as a prophecy. Jesus really would die on behalf of the people, as a substitute, and not for that nation only but for all God's children scattered abroad.

18:15 *Now Simon Peter was following Jesus, and another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest;*

Peter followed Jesus, and so did "the other disciple" who was known to the high priest. John never names himself in his Gospel. Many believe, and I agree, that this other disciple was John himself. Because he was known to the high priest, he was able to go into the courtyard with Jesus.

At least Peter and John did not run as far as the others. They followed, even if it was at a distance.

18:16 *But Peter was standing at the door outside. Therefore the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.*

Peter stood outside at the door. The other disciple went out, spoke to the woman keeping the door, and brought Peter in. John's good intentions put Peter in a place where he would soon be tested beyond what he was ready for.

18:17 *Therefore the servant girl, the doorkeeper, says to Peter, "You are not also **one** of the disciples of this man, are you?" He says, "I am not."*

The slave-girl at the door asked Peter a question that, in the Greek, expected the answer "no": "You are not also one of the disciples of this man, are you?" Peter took the easy way out: "I am not."

This is the same Peter who, a few hours earlier, swore he would lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), and who just drew a sword against an armed cohort. Now he cannot stand up to the question of a servant girl. Most of us know how this feels. It is often easier to be brave in a big moment than to stand firm when a quiet question catches us off guard.

18:18 *Now the slaves and the officers were standing **there**, having made a fire of coals, because it was cold, and they were warming themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself.*

It was a cold night, so the slaves and officers built a charcoal fire, and Peter stood with them warming himself. He was standing with the very people who had arrested his Lord.

The Greek word for "fire of coals" appears only twice in the New Testament: here and in 21:9. Here, by a charcoal fire, Peter denied Jesus three times. In chapter 21, by another charcoal fire on the beach, the risen Jesus would ask Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" and restore him. God has a way of meeting us back at the place of our failure.

18:19 *Then the high priest questioned Jesus concerning His disciples and concerning His teaching.*

Meanwhile, inside, Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. He was probably trying to find something he could use as an accusation, either of starting a secret movement or teaching something dangerous.

18:20 *Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews always come together, and in secret I spoke nothing.*

Jesus answered that He had always spoken openly. He taught in the synagogues and the temple, where all the Jews gathered. He had nothing to hide. There was no secret teaching for an inner circle that differed from what He said in public.

That is a good test for any religious group today. Be careful of any teacher who says, "The real truth is only for those of us on the inside." The truth of Jesus was spoken openly to everyone.

18:21 *Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; look, these know what I said."*

"Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard." Under Jewish law, a case was supposed to be built on the testimony of witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), not on forcing the accused to testify against himself. Jesus was pointing out that this hearing was improper. If they had a real case, they should bring their witnesses.

18:22 *And when He had said these things, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a slap, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like this?"*

One of the officers standing nearby slapped Jesus across the face. "Do You answer the high priest like this?" The first blow had been struck. It would not be the last.

18:23 *Jesus answered him, "If I spoke wrongly, testify concerning the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"*

Jesus did not strike back, but He did not stay silent either. "If I spoke wrongly, testify concerning the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" This is not weakness. It is calm, righteous dignity. Jesus asked for justice. He showed us that turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39) does not mean we can never speak up about wrong. It means we do not take revenge.

18:24 *Therefore Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.*

Annas sent Jesus, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest. John does not give us the details of the trial before Caiaphas and the council. Matthew and Mark describe it: false witnesses, the high priest's demand, and Jesus' confession that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65).

18:25 *Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also **one** of His disciples, are you?" He denied **it** and said, "I am not."*

John takes us back outside to Peter, still standing by the fire. Others asked him the same kind of question: "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" Again Peter denied it: "I am not."

Notice the contrast John has set up. Inside, Jesus says "I am" and stands firm. Outside, Peter says "I am not" and falls.

18:26 *One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative **of the one** whose ear Peter cut off, says, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"*

Then one of the high priest's slaves spoke up, and this one was a relative of Malchus, the man whose ear Peter had cut off. "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" This was the hardest question yet, because this man had been there.

18:27 *Therefore Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.*

Peter denied it a third time, and immediately a rooster crowed. Jesus had told him exactly this would happen: "the rooster will certainly not crow until you have denied Me three times" (13:38). Luke adds that the Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62).

John does not add any comment here. He simply leaves Peter's failure out in the open. But the story does not end here. Peter would be forgiven and restored (21:15-19), and later he would preach boldly in Jerusalem and finally give his life for Jesus. If you have ever failed the Lord, take heart. Peter's story shows us that failure does not have to be final.

18:28 *Then they lead Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium; now it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium, so that they might not be defiled, but so that they might eat the Passover.*

Early in the morning, they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, the headquarters of the Roman governor in Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders would not go inside. Entering a Gentile's house would make them ceremonially unclean, and they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.

The irony is heavy. These men were careful not to be defiled by stepping into a Roman building, while they were arranging the murder of an innocent man. Jesus warned about this kind of religion, which strains out a gnat and swallows a camel (Matthew 23:24).

You may notice that Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe the Last Supper as a Passover meal, while here the leaders have not yet eaten "the Passover." Bible students explain this in different ways. Some believe "the Passover" here means the meals and sacrifices of the whole week-long feast that followed. Others believe different groups followed different calendars. Either way, John also wants us to notice that Jesus, the Lamb of God (1:29), was being put to death at Passover time.

18:29 *Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"*

Pilate went out to them. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, who ruled there for about ten years. He asked a reasonable legal question: "What accusation do you bring against this man?" Every proper trial starts with a charge.

18:30 *They answered and said to him, "If this **man** were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."*

They did not give him a straight answer. "If this man were not an evildoer," they replied, "we would not have delivered Him up to you." In other words, "Trust us, He's guilty." They had no charge that would hold up in a Roman court, so they tried to get Pilate to simply take their word for it.

18:31 *Therefore Pilate said to them, "You take Him, and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,"*

Pilate told them to judge Him by their own law. But they answered, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." This is what they really wanted. They did not want a trial. They wanted an execution, and under Roman rule, only the Romans could carry out the death penalty.

18:32 *So that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He was about to die.*

John tells us this fulfilled Jesus' own words about the kind of death He would die. Jesus had said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (12:32). If the Jewish leaders had carried out the execution themselves, the usual method would have been stoning. Because Jesus was handed over to the Romans, He would be crucified, lifted up on a cross, exactly as He said. Even the political details were in God's hands.

18:33 *Therefore Pilate entered into the Praetorium again, and called Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"*

Pilate went back inside, called Jesus, and asked Him directly: "Are You the King of the Jews?" This must have been the charge the leaders finally gave him, because Luke tells us they accused Jesus of saying He was Christ, a King (Luke 23:2). To a Roman governor, anyone claiming to be a king was a possible rebel against Caesar.

18:34 *Jesus answered him, "Are you saying this from yourself, or did others say **it** to you concerning Me?"*

Jesus answered with a question. Was Pilate asking this on his own, or because others told him? In other words, "What do you mean by 'king'? Are you asking whether I'm a political rebel, or are you asking who I really am?" The answer depends on what kind of king Pilate had in mind.

18:35 *Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what did You do?"*

Pilate was offended at the idea that he might care about Jewish matters. "I am not a Jew, am I?" he answered. Then he pointed out that it was Jesus' own nation and His own chief priests who had handed Him over, and he asked what Jesus had done.

It is a sad statement. Jesus came to His own, and His own did not receive Him (1:11).

18:36 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My officers would be fighting, so that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."*

Jesus explained the kind of king He is: "My kingdom is not of this world." His kingdom does not come from this world or work the way earthly kingdoms do. If it did, His servants would be fighting. Peter tried that in the garden, and Jesus stopped him.

This does not mean Christ's kingdom has nothing to do with the earth. It means His kingdom's source and authority come from heaven, not from armies or politics. As I covered in my Revelation study, the day is coming when "the kingdoms of the world have become those of our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15), and He will reign on the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6). But that kingdom will be established by Him, not by His followers taking up swords.

18:37 *Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I may testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*

"So You are a king?" Pilate said. Jesus answered plainly that He is. Then He told Pilate why He came: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I may testify to the truth."

Notice the two phrases. "I have been born" speaks of His birth as a man. "I have come into the world" speaks of where He came from, before He was born. Jesus' life did not begin in Bethlehem.

"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Jesus turned the trial around. Pilate thought he was judging Jesus, but Jesus was inviting Pilate to hear the truth. This echoes the Good Shepherd: "My sheep hear My voice" (10:27).

18:38 *Pilate says to Him, "What is truth?" And having said this, he went out again to the Jews, and says to them, "I find no cause in Him.*

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. We do not know if he said it with a sneer, with frustration, or with real longing. Either way, he did not wait for an answer. He walked out on the very One who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6). The Truth was standing right in front of him.

Many people today ask Pilate's question, and many give Pilate's response: they ask, then walk away before the answer comes.

Pilate went out and declared, "I find no cause in Him." This is the first of three times Pilate says it (19:4, 6). The Roman judge found Jesus innocent. The Lamb of God was without blemish.

18:39 *But you have a custom that I release one to you at the Passover; do you wish therefore **that** I release to you the King of the Jews?"*

Pilate tried to find a way out. There was a custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover. He offered to release "the King of the Jews," maybe hoping the crowd would choose Jesus, or maybe mocking the leaders with the title.

18:40 *Then they all cried out again, saying, "Not this one, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.*

"Not this one, but Barabbas!" they shouted. John adds the plain detail: "Now Barabbas was a robber." Mark tells us he had taken part in an uprising and had committed murder (Mark 15:7). The name Barabbas means "son of the father."

Here is the gospel in a picture. A guilty man, a murderer, goes free, and the innocent Son of the Father takes his place. That is exactly what Jesus did for every one of us. We are Barabbas. We deserved the cross, and Jesus died in our place.

Chapter 18 Summary

After His prayer, Jesus crosses the Kidron Valley to a garden where He often met with His disciples. Judas arrives with a Roman cohort and temple officers. Jesus steps forward and says "I am He," and the whole crowd falls to the ground. He lets them arrest Him, but only after insisting that His disciples go free. Peter strikes Malchus with a sword, but Jesus rebukes him and accepts the cup the Father has given Him. Jesus is taken first to Annas, where He answers truthfully and is struck by an officer, then sent bound to Caiaphas. Meanwhile, Peter stands by a charcoal fire and denies three times that he knows Jesus, and a rooster crows just as Jesus said it would. In the morning, the leaders take Jesus to Pilate, but refuse to enter the Praetorium to avoid defilement. They want Rome to execute Him. Jesus tells Pilate that His kingdom is not of this world and that He came to testify to the truth. Pilate asks "What is truth?", declares Jesus not guilty, and offers to release Him. The crowd demands Barabbas, a robber, instead.

The Trials of Jesus

Putting the four Gospels together, Jesus went through six hearings between His arrest and His crucifixion. Three were before Jewish authorities and three were before Roman authorities:

- Before Annas, the former high priest, at night (John 18:12-14, 19-24).
- Before Caiaphas and the council, at night (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65).
- Before the council at daybreak, to make the verdict official (Matthew 27:1; Luke 22:66-71).
- Before Pilate, the Roman governor (John 18:28-38; Luke 23:1-5).
- Before Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the feast (Luke 23:6-12).
- Before Pilate again, who gave in to the crowd (Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16).

In every hearing, no true charge could be proven. The Jewish leaders had to bring in false witnesses (Mark 14:55-59), and Pilate declared three times that he found no guilt in Him. Jesus was condemned not because He was guilty, but because He was willing to die for those who are.

Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. Have you ever been let down by a close friend? How did it affect you?

2. How do we know Jesus was in control of His own arrest? (18:4-8)

3. What happened when Jesus said "I am He," and why is that significant? (18:5-6)

4. What does Jesus' concern for His disciples in the garden show about Him? (18:8-9)

5. Why do you think Peter was willing to fight in the garden but then denied Jesus by the fire? (18:10, 17)

6. How did the Jewish leaders show they cared more about ceremony than about justice? (18:28)

7. What kind of kingdom did Jesus say He has? (18:36)

8. How would you answer Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (18:38; 14:6)

9. In what way are we like Barabbas? (18:40)

10. Where are you most tempted to deny Jesus, by your words or your silence? What does Peter's story teach you about failure and forgiveness?

Chapter 19: The Crucifixion

Scripture: The King on the Cross

19:1-7 Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and flogged ***Him***. And the soldiers, having woven a crown of thorns, put ***it*** on His head, and threw a purple robe around Him; and they were saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were giving Him slaps. Therefore Pilate went outside again and says to them, "Look, I am bringing Him out to you, so that you may know that I find no cause in Him." Therefore Jesus went outside, wearing the thorny crown and the purple robe. And he says to them, "Look, the man!" Therefore when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate says to them, "You take Him and crucify ***Him***; for I find no cause in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God."

19:8-16 Therefore when Pilate heard this word, he was more afraid, and he entered into the Praetorium again and says to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Therefore Pilate says to Him, "Do You not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to crucify You, and I have authority to release You?" Jesus answered, "You would have no authority against Me at all, unless it had been given to you from above; because of this, the one who delivers Me up to you has greater sin." From this Pilate was seeking to release Him; but the Jews were crying out, saying, "If you release this ***man***, you are not a friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." Therefore Pilate, having heard this word, brought Jesus outside, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called ***the*** Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was ***the*** Preparation of the Passover, and ***it was*** about the sixth hour. And he says to the Jews, "Look, your King!" But they cried out, "Take ***Him*** away, take ***Him*** away, crucify Him!" Pilate says to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar." Then therefore he delivered Him up to them so that He might be crucified. Now they took Jesus and led ***Him*** away.

19:17-22 And bearing His cross, He went out to the ***place*** called Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, on this side and on that side, and Jesus in the middle. And Pilate also wrote a title and put ***it*** on the cross. And it was written, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." Therefore many of the Jews read this title, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

19:23-30 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole. Therefore they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots for it ***to see*** whose it will be," so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says, "They divided My garments among themselves, and for My clothing they cast a lot." Therefore the soldiers indeed did these things. But by the cross of Jesus were standing His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary the Magdalene. Therefore Jesus, having seen ***His*** mother, and

the disciple whom He was loving standing by, says to His mother, "Woman, look, your son!" Then He says to the disciple, "Look, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own ***home***. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things have now been finished, so that the Scripture might be accomplished, says, "I am thirsty." Therefore a vessel full of sour wine was set ***there***; and they, having filled a sponge with sour wine and having put ***it*** around hyssop, brought ***it*** to His mouth. Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It has been finished." And having bowed ***His*** head, He delivered up the spirit.

19:31-37 Therefore the Jews, since it was ***the*** Preparation, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a great ***one***), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and ***that*** they might be taken away. Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But having come to Jesus, when they saw Him already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And the ***one*** who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and that one knows that he says true ***things***, so that you may believe. For these things took place so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "A bone of His will not be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on ***Him*** whom they pierced."

19:38-42 Now after these things Joseph from Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but concealed because of the fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave permission. Therefore he came and took away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, the ***one*** who at the first had come to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, approximately 75 pounds (about a hundred litras). Therefore they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, even as it is ***the*** custom among the Jews to prepare for burial. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore there, because of the Preparation of the Jews, since the tomb was near, they laid Jesus.

Chapter 19 Preview

This is the chapter the whole Gospel has been building toward. Back in chapter 2, Jesus told His mother, "My hour has not yet come." In chapter 12 He said, "The hour has come that the Son of Man may be glorified." Here, that hour arrives. Jesus is beaten, mocked, sentenced, and nailed to a Roman cross outside Jerusalem.

As you read, notice who is really in control. Pilate thinks he holds the power. The chief priests think they have won. The soldiers think they are just doing a day's work. But John shows us, again and again, that every detail is fulfilling Scripture written hundreds of years earlier. Jesus is not a victim caught in a political trap. He is the Lamb of God laying down His life, and when it is done He says so: "It has been finished."

Chapter 19 Study

19:1 *Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and flogged **Him**.*

Pilate had already said he found no guilt in Jesus (18:38). So why scourge Him? It seems Pilate hoped a brutal beating would satisfy the crowd so he could let Jesus go. Roman scourging was a terrible punishment. The whip had several leather straps, often weighted with pieces of bone or metal, and it tore the skin of the back. Men sometimes died from it before they ever reached a cross.

Isaiah wrote that the Servant of the Lord would be "pierced for our transgressions" and that "by His wound there was healing for us" (Isaiah 53:5). Every stripe on His back was for you and me.

19:2-3 *And the soldiers, having woven a crown of thorns, put **it** on His head, and threw a purple robe around Him; and they were saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were giving Him slaps.*

The soldiers turned their cruelty into a game. A crown of thorns mocked the idea of a king's crown. The purple robe mocked royal clothing, since purple was the color of kings and very expensive. Then they lined up to bow and slap Him.

Think about who they were mocking. This is the Word who was with God in the beginning, the One through whom all things were made (1:1-3). The hands that made the thorn bush were struck by the men He created. And He took it in silence.

19:4-5 *Therefore Pilate went outside again and says to them, "Look, I am bringing Him out to you, so that you may know that I find no cause in Him." Therefore Jesus went outside, wearing the thorny crown and the purple robe. And he says to them, "Look, the man!"*

Pilate brought Jesus out, bloody and wearing the mock crown and robe, and said, *"Look, the man!"* I believe Pilate meant something like, "Look at Him. Does this beaten man look like a threat to anyone?" He was trying to win pity from the crowd.

But Pilate said more than he knew. Jesus is *the* Man, the one true and perfect human being, the second Adam (Romans 5:12-19). He is fully God and fully man. In this moment the world was looking at its Creator, and it did not recognize Him (1:10).

19:6 *Therefore when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate says to them, "You take Him and crucify **Him**; for I find no cause in Him."*

The chief priests and officers were not moved at all. They led the cry, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate, frustrated, told them to crucify Jesus themselves. He knew they could not do that legally (18:31). For the third time he says he finds no guilt in Jesus (18:38; 19:4, 6). The Roman governor himself declared Jesus innocent, and still he did not set Him free.

19:7 *The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself Son of God."*

Now the real charge comes out. It was never about Jesus being a political rebel. The leaders said He "made Himself Son of God." They were pointing to the law against blasphemy, which carried the death penalty (Leviticus 24:16).

Here is the key: they understood exactly what Jesus was claiming. He was not claiming to be a good teacher or one more prophet. He claimed to be equal with God (5:18; 10:30-33). If that claim was false, He was a blasphemer. If it was true, they were condemning their own God. There is no middle ground.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 24:16 (alluded to)

19:8-9 *Therefore when Pilate heard this word, he was more afraid, and he entered into the Praetorium again and says to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.*

The words "Son of God" frightened Pilate. Romans were superstitious and believed in sons of the gods. Pilate had already received a warning from his wife about this "righteous man" (Matthew 27:19). Now he took Jesus back inside the Praetorium, the governor's headquarters, and asked, "Where are You from?"

He was not asking for a hometown. He wanted to know if Jesus was more than a man. Jesus gave him no answer. He had already told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world (18:36), and Pilate had brushed off the truth (18:38). This also fulfilled Isaiah's word that the Servant would be silent before His accusers, "like a ewe that before her shearers is mute" (Isaiah 53:7).

19:10 *Therefore Pilate says to Him, "Do You not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to crucify You, and I have authority to release You?"*

Pilate fell back on the one thing he thought he had: power. "Do You not know that I have authority to crucify You, and I have authority to release You?" This is how the world thinks. Whoever holds the keys, the money, or the soldiers is in charge.

19:11 *Jesus answered, "You would have no authority against Me at all, unless it had been given to you from above; because of this, the one who delivers Me up to you has greater sin."*

Jesus answered by setting Pilate straight. Pilate's authority was real, but it was borrowed. It had been "given to you from above." God rules over every ruler (Romans 13:1; Daniel 4:17). Nothing was happening to Jesus that the Father had not allowed.

Jesus also said, "because of this, the one who delivers Me up to you has greater sin." This most likely points to Caiaphas, the high priest, who led the plot and handed Jesus over (11:49-53; 18:24, 28), though some apply it to Judas. Notice what this teaches: Pilate was still guilty, but the one who knew the Scriptures and rejected the Messiah anyway carried the greater guilt. The more light we have been given, the more we are accountable for.

19:12 *From this Pilate was seeking to release Him; but the Jews were crying out, saying, "If you release this **man**, you are not a friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."*

Pilate kept trying to release Jesus, so the leaders played their last card: politics. "If you release this man, you are not a friend of Caesar." "Friend of Caesar" was a title of honor for loyal officials. They were threatening to report Pilate to Rome for letting a so-called king go free. Pilate's career meant more to him than justice. That threat settled it.

19:13 *Therefore Pilate, having heard this word, brought Jesus outside, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called **the** Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha.*

Pilate took his seat on the judgment seat, the official place where a Roman governor gave his verdict. John gives us both names for the spot: Lithostrotos in Greek, which means "pavement," and Gabbatha in Hebrew (the everyday Aramaic of the people). These details tell us John was writing as an eyewitness about real places and a real event.

19:14 *Now it was **the** Preparation of the Passover, and **it was** about the sixth hour. And he says to the Jews, "Look, your King!"*

John tells us it was "the Preparation of the Passover," about the sixth hour. Many believe this means Jesus was sentenced on the very day the Passover lambs were being prepared. Others take it as the Friday of Passover week (see 18:28). Either way, He was condemned at Passover time. John the Baptist had called Him "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29), and Paul later wrote, "also our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:7). God's timing is never an accident.

Bible students have long asked how John's "sixth hour" fits with Mark 15:25, which says Jesus was crucified at the third hour. Some believe John counted the hours from midnight, which would put this around six in the morning (if John counted that way throughout, the times in 1:39, 4:6 and 4:52 would also shift). Others believe both writers were rounding to the nearest block of the day, since people then did not keep time to the minute. Either way, the Gospels agree on the main facts: Jesus was condemned in the morning and died that afternoon, on the day before the Sabbath.

Pilate then said, "Look, your King!" He may have meant it as an insult to the leaders. But again he spoke the truth without knowing it.

19:15 *But they cried out, "Take **Him** away, take **Him** away, crucify Him!" Pilate says to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar."*

"Take Him away, take Him away, crucify Him!" And when Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your King?" the chief priests answered, "We have no king except Caesar."

For centuries Israel had confessed that the Lord was their King (Judges 8:23; 1 Samuel 8:7). Now the chief priests, the very men who led worship in God's temple, publicly chose a pagan emperor over their Messiah. When we reject Jesus, we always end up bowing to some other king.

19:16 *Then therefore he delivered Him up to them so that He might be crucified. Now they took Jesus and led **Him** away.*

Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. He went down in history as the man who knew Jesus was innocent and condemned Him anyway. To this day millions of Christians recite in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Pilate tried to stay neutral, and found out you cannot.

19:17 *And bearing His cross, He went out to the **place** called Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha,*

Jesus went out "bearing His cross." Condemned men carried their crossbeam to the place of execution. The other Gospels tell us that along the way Simon of Cyrene was made to carry it (Mark 15:21), most likely because Jesus was too weak after the scourging. John focuses on the start of the walk: Jesus carried His own cross.

The place was called the Place of a Skull, Golgotha in Hebrew. (The name "Calvary" comes from the Latin word for skull.) It was outside the city walls, just as the sin offering in the Old Testament was burned outside the camp (Leviticus 16:27; Hebrews 13:11-12).

19:18 *Where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, on this side and on that side, and Jesus in the middle.*

John does not describe the crucifixion in detail. His first readers did not need it described; they had seen crosses along Roman roads. It was the most shameful and painful death the Romans had. The victim was nailed or tied to the cross and left to die slowly, often over many hours.

Jesus was placed between two criminals. Isaiah had written of the Servant, "with transgressors He was numbered" (Isaiah 53:12). The sinless One died in the middle of sinners, right where He came to rescue us.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:12 (fulfilled)

19:19-20 *And Pilate also wrote a title and put **it** on the cross. And it was written, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." Therefore many of the Jews read this title, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, in Latin.*

It was Roman practice to post the crime of the condemned man. Pilate wrote, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews," and put it on the cross in three languages: Hebrew (the language of the Jews), Latin (the language of Rome's government), and Greek (the common language of the eastern empire). Golgotha was near the city, and Jerusalem was packed with Passover pilgrims, so many people read it.

Without meaning to, Pilate preached a short sermon to the whole world, in every language that mattered in that place. Jesus is the King, and He is King over all people.

19:21-22 *Therefore the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."*

The chief priests hated the sign. They wanted it changed to say that Jesus only *claimed* to be King. For once, Pilate would not budge: "What I have written I have written." Maybe this was his way of getting back at them for forcing his hand. Whatever his reason, God kept the truth nailed above His Son's head.

19:23-24 *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was seamless, woven from the top throughout the whole. Therefore they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots for it* ***to see*** *whose it will be," so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says, "They divided My garments among themselves, and for My clothing they cast a lot." Therefore the soldiers indeed did these things.*

The soldiers who carried out the execution got the victim's clothes. They split His outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier. His tunic, the garment worn next to the skin, was woven in one piece without a seam, so rather than tear it they cast lots for it.

John tells us this happened "so that the Scripture might be fulfilled." He quotes Psalm 22:18, written by David about a thousand years earlier. Psalm 22 opens with the words Jesus cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46), and it describes pierced hands and feet, mocking crowds, and divided clothing. Those soldiers had never read Psalm 22. They were just gambling. But they did exactly what God said would be done.

Old Testament links: Psalm 22:18 (quoted)

19:25 *But by the cross of Jesus were standing His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary the Magdalene.*

"Therefore the soldiers indeed did these things." Then John turns from the soldiers to the faithful few standing by the cross. The disciples had scattered (16:32), but these women stayed: His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Readers are not sure if this is three women or four. I lean toward four, with "His mother's sister" being a separate woman, possibly Salome, the mother of James and John (compare Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:56), but the text does not say for certain.

It took real courage to stand near a Roman cross with soldiers all around. Love kept these women there when fear sent others away.

19:26-27 *Therefore Jesus, having seen* ***His*** *mother, and the disciple whom He was loving standing by, says to His mother, "Woman, look, your son!" Then He says to the disciple, "Look, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own* ***home****.*

Even while dying, Jesus took care of His mother. He saw her standing with "the disciple whom He was loving," which is how John refers to himself in this Gospel, and He gave them to each other:

"Woman, look, your son," and "Look, your mother!" Calling her "Woman" was not rude. It was a respectful form of address in that day (Jesus used it in 2:4 as well).

Why would Jesus hand His mother to John instead of to His own brothers? At this point His brothers did not yet believe in Him (7:5). Mary needed to be cared for by someone who shared her faith. From that hour John took her into his own home. Here is a simple lesson for every one of us: caring for our parents is part of following Christ (Exodus 20:12; 1 Timothy 5:4, 8).

19:28 *After this, Jesus, knowing that all things have now been finished, so that the Scripture might be accomplished, says, "I am thirsty."*

"Knowing that all things have now been finished." Jesus was fully aware through every moment of the cross. He knew what had been done and what was left. To fulfill Scripture, He said, "I am thirsty." This points to Psalm 69:21, where the suffering righteous one is given vinegar, or sour wine, for his thirst, and to Psalm 22:15, "my tongue is made to cling to my jaws."

Think about this. The One who offered living water to the woman at the well (4:10-14) and promised that whoever comes to Him will never thirst (6:35) now thirsts Himself. He took our thirst so we could drink freely.

Old Testament links: Psalm 69:21 (fulfilled)

19:29 *Therefore a vessel full of sour wine was set **there**; and they, having filled a sponge with sour wine and having put **it** around hyssop, brought **it** to His mouth.*

Sour wine was a cheap, vinegary wine that soldiers and workers drank. Someone soaked a sponge in it, put it on a branch of hyssop, and lifted it to His mouth. Hyssop is worth noticing. It was the plant the Israelites used to put the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts in Egypt (Exodus 12:22). Once again John quietly shows us that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb.

19:30 *Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It has been finished." And having bowed **His** head, He delivered up the spirit.*

"It has been finished." In Greek this is one word, *tetelestai*, which means "it has been completed" or "it has been brought to its end." It was not the cry of a defeated man saying, "I'm finished." It was the shout of a winner saying, "It is done."

What was finished? The work the Father had given Him to do (4:34; 17:4). The payment for sin was made in full. Nothing more needs to be added to it, not by us, not by any priest, not by any good works. Hebrews 10:12-14 says that He offered "one sacrifice for sins for all time" and then sat down at the right hand of God. When you trust in Christ, your debt is paid.

Then "having bowed His head, He delivered up the spirit." No one took His life from Him. He laid it down on His own initiative, just as He said He would (10:17-18). He died when His work was done, not one moment before.

19:31 *Therefore the Jews, since it was **the** Preparation, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a great **one**), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and **that** they might be taken away.*

The Jewish leaders did not want bodies left hanging on the Sabbath, especially because "the day of that Sabbath was a great one," the Sabbath that fell during the Passover feast. The Law said a hanged body should not remain overnight (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). So they asked Pilate to have the legs broken. A crucified man had to push up with his legs to breathe. Breaking the legs made that impossible, and death came quickly.

Notice the irony. These men were careful about religious rules on the very day they demanded the death of the Son of God.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 21:23 (alluded to)

19:32-33 *Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But having come to Jesus, when they saw Him already dead, they did not break His legs;*

The soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals. But when they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they did not break His legs. These were Roman soldiers who saw death every day. They knew a dead man when they saw one. Jesus did not faint or swoon on the cross, as some skeptics have claimed. He died.

19:34 *But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.*

To make sure, one soldier drove a spear into His side, and blood and water came out. Doctors who have studied this passage have offered different medical explanations for the flow of blood and water, and I will not pretend to settle that here. What matters is that John saw it, and it proves Jesus was truly dead.

Some Christians also see a picture here, with the water pointing to cleansing and the blood pointing to forgiveness (1 John 5:6-8). That may be, but John's main point is plain: the Son of God really died, and He died for us.

19:35 *And the **one** who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and that one knows that he says true **things**, so that you may believe.*

John steps into the story here as a witness under oath. "The one who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true." He was there. He saw it. And he tells us why he wrote it down: "so that you may believe." This is the same purpose John gives for the whole book (20:31). The Gospel of John is not a collection of legends. It is eyewitness testimony, written so that you would believe.

19:36-37 *For these things took place so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "A bone of His will not be broken." And again another Scripture says, "They will look on **Him** whom they pierced."*

John points to two more Scriptures fulfilled at the cross. First, "A bone of His will not be broken." The Passover lamb was not to have any of its bones broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12), and Psalm 34:20 says of the righteous man, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken." The soldiers broke the legs of the men beside Him, but not His.

Second, "They will look on Him whom they pierced," from Zechariah 12:10. The soldier's spear fulfilled that word. And John was not done with it. Years later, in Revelation 1:7, he wrote that when Jesus comes with the clouds, "every eye will see Him, and those who pierced Him." The One who was pierced on the cross is the One who is coming again.

Zechariah goes on to say that the house of David and Jerusalem "will mourn over Him like a mourning over the only son." Some teachers believe the whole verse was fulfilled at the cross or is being fulfilled in the church, but I read it plainly: the piercing happened at the cross, and Israel's looking to Him and mourning is still future, when the nation turns to Jesus at His return at the end of the Tribulation.

Old Testament links: Psalm 34:20 (quoted); Numbers 9:12 (quoted); Zechariah 12:10 (quoted); Exodus 12:46 (quoted)

19:38 *Now after these things Joseph from Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but concealed because of the fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave permission. Therefore he came and took away the body of Jesus.*

Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man and a member of the council (Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:43). He had been a secret disciple "because of the fear of the Jews." But now, when the cause looked completely lost, he stepped forward. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. That took courage. It tied his name to a condemned man and put his standing on the council at risk.

Sometimes the cross does what nothing else could. It brought Joseph out into the open.

19:39 *And Nicodemus also came, the **one** who at the first had come to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, approximately 75 pounds (about a hundred litras).*

Nicodemus came too, the man who first came to Jesus at night (3:1-2) and later spoke up for Him before the council (7:50-51). He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds, which was a hundred Roman pounds (litras). That was an enormous amount, the kind of burial given to a king.

Both of these men had been afraid. Both came forward at the cross. If you have been a quiet, secret believer, let these two men encourage you. It is not too late to stand up for Jesus.

19:40 *Therefore they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, even as it is **the** custom among the Jews to prepare for burial.*

They wrapped the body in strips of linen with the spices, following Jewish burial custom. The Jews did not embalm their dead the way the Egyptians did. The spices covered the smell and

showed love and honor for the One who had died. These two men handled the body of their Lord with great care.

19:41-42 *Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore there, because of the Preparation of the Jews, since the tomb was near, they laid Jesus.*

Near the place of crucifixion there was a garden with a new tomb, cut in the rock, where no one had ever been laid. Matthew 27:60 tells us it was Joseph's own tomb. This fulfilled Isaiah 53:9, which says the Servant would be "with a rich man in His deaths." Because the Sabbath was about to begin at sundown, they laid Jesus in the nearby tomb.

John mentions a garden. The story of sin began in a garden, in Eden, and here the story of our rescue reaches its turning point in a garden. The tomb was new and empty, and very soon it would be empty again.

Chapter 19 Summary

Pilate had Jesus scourged and the soldiers mocked Him with a crown of thorns and a purple robe. Three times Pilate declared Him innocent, but when the leaders accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God and threatened Pilate's friendship with Caesar, Pilate gave in and handed Him over. The chief priests declared, "We have no king except Caesar." Jesus carried His cross to Golgotha and was crucified between two criminals under a sign that read, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." The soldiers gambled for His tunic, Jesus entrusted His mother to John, and after receiving sour wine He cried, "It has been finished," and gave up His spirit. His legs were not broken, but His side was pierced, fulfilling Scripture. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried Him in a new tomb in a garden. Through every detail John shows that Jesus is the Passover Lamb, dying by choice and fulfilling God's Word.

Scripture Fulfilled at the Cross

John points out again and again that the events of the crucifixion happened "so that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Here are the ones in this chapter. The last three are not quoted by John, but they are prophecies the cross fulfilled.

Divided garments (19:23-24): Psalm 22:18. The soldiers cast lots for His clothing.

Thirst and sour wine (19:28-29): Psalm 69:21 and Psalm 22:15.

No bone broken (19:33, 36): Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and Psalm 34:20. Jesus is the Passover Lamb.

Pierced (19:34, 37): Zechariah 12:10. See also Revelation 1:7.

Silent before His accusers (19:9): Isaiah 53:7.

Numbered with the transgressors (19:18): Isaiah 53:12.

Buried with a rich man (19:38-42): Isaiah 53:9.

Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. When have you watched someone suffer for something they did not do? How did it make you feel?

2. Why do you think Pilate had Jesus scourged, even though he said he found no guilt in Him? (19:1, 4)

3. What was the real charge the Jewish leaders brought against Jesus? (19:7)

4. What did Jesus teach Pilate about where his authority came from? (19:11)

5. What does the chief priests' answer, "We have no king except Caesar," tell you about their hearts? (19:15)

6. How many Old Testament Scriptures can you find fulfilled in this chapter? (19:24, 28, 36-37)

7. What does Jesus' care for His mother teach you about your own family? (19:26-27)

8. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It has been finished"? What does that mean for you? (19:30)

9. What changed for Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus at the cross? (19:38-39)

10. Is there any area of your life where you have been a "secret" follower of Jesus? What would it look like to stand up for Him openly?

Chapter 20: The Empty Tomb

Scripture: He Is Risen

20:1-10 Now on the first ***day*** of the week Mary the Magdalene comes early to the tomb, it still being dark, and she sees the stone taken away from the tomb. Therefore she runs and comes to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus was loving dearly, and says to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." Therefore Peter went out, and the other disciple, and they were coming to the tomb. Now the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead more quickly than Peter and came first to the tomb; and having stooped down, he sees the linen cloths lying ***there***; however, he did not enter. Then Simon Peter comes, following him, and he entered into the tomb; and he sees the linen cloths lying ***there***, and the face cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in one place by itself. Then therefore the other disciple also, who had come first to the tomb, entered, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet know the Scripture, that He must rise out from ***the*** dead. Therefore the disciples went away again to their own ***homes***.

20:11-18 But Mary was standing at the tomb outside, weeping. Therefore as she was weeping, she stooped down ***and looked*** into the tomb, and she sees two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they say to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She says to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." And having said these things, she turned backward, and she sees Jesus standing ***there***, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus says to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, thinking that He was the gardener, says to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him off, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus says to her, "Mary!" She, having turned, says to Him, "Rabbouni!" which is to say, "Teacher!" Jesus says to her, "Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and ***to*** My God and your God.'" Mary the Magdalene comes, announcing to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and ***that*** He had said these things to her.

20:19-23 Therefore, it being evening on that day, the first ***day*** of the week, and the doors having been shut where the disciples were assembled because of the fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, "Peace to you." And having said this, He showed them His hands and side. Therefore the disciples rejoiced, having seen the Lord. Therefore Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you; even as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And having said this, He breathed on ***them***, and says to them, "Receive ***the*** Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain ***the sins*** of any, they have been retained."

20:24-29 But Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. Therefore the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will certainly not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus comes, the doors having been shut, and He stood in the midst and said, "Peace to you." Then He says to Thomas, "Bring your finger here,

and see My hands; and bring your hand, and put ***it*** into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus says to him, "Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed ***are*** those who have not seen and have believed."

20:30-31 Therefore Jesus indeed also did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Chapter 20 Preview

Everything in the Christian faith hangs on this chapter. If Jesus stayed in the grave, then, as Paul put it, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). But the tomb was empty. Jesus rose from the dead, bodily, on the third day, just as He said He would (2:19-22).

John walks us through that first Easter Sunday through the eyes of real people: Mary Magdalene, weeping at the tomb; Peter and John, running to see for themselves; the frightened disciples behind locked doors; and Thomas, who refused to believe until he saw. Each one meets the risen Lord in a different way. The chapter ends with John telling us plainly why he wrote this whole book: so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Chapter 20 Study

20:1 *Now on the first **day** of the week Mary the Magdalene comes early to the tomb, it still being dark, and she sees the stone taken away from the tomb.*

"The first day of the week" is Sunday. Jesus was buried on Friday before sundown, lay in the tomb through the Sabbath, and rose early on Sunday. This is why Christians from the earliest days have gathered for worship on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10).

Mary Magdalene came while it was still dark. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2), and she loved Him deeply. She stood at the cross (19:25), and now she was first at the tomb. She found the large stone that sealed the entrance already rolled away. The other Gospels tell us other women came with her (Mark 16:1), but John keeps his focus on Mary.

20:2 *Therefore she runs and comes to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus was loving dearly, and says to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."*

Mary did not think, "He is risen!" Her first thought was that someone had stolen the body. She ran to Peter and to "the other disciple whom Jesus was loving dearly," which is John himself. "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb," she said, "and we do not know where they have laid Him." The "we" fits with the other Gospels, which tell us she was not alone.

Here is something worth noticing. Nobody was expecting a resurrection. The disciples did not make up this story because they wanted it to be true. They were grieving, confused, and hiding. Only the facts changed their minds.

20:3-4 *Therefore Peter went out, and the other disciple, and they were coming to the tomb. Now the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead more quickly than Peter and came first to the tomb;*

Peter and John took off running. John, most likely the younger man, outran Peter and got there first. Isn't it just like an eyewitness to include a detail like that? It adds nothing to the doctrine of the resurrection, but it is exactly the kind of thing a man remembers sixty years later: "I beat Peter to the tomb."

20:5 *And having stooped down, he sees the linen cloths lying **there**; however, he did not enter.*

John stooped down and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go inside. Maybe he was stunned. Maybe he hesitated out of respect, or because touching a grave made a Jew ceremonially unclean (Numbers 19:16). The text does not tell us why.

20:6-7 *Then Simon Peter comes, following him, and he entered into the tomb; and he sees the linen cloths lying **there**, and the face cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in one place by itself.*

Peter, true to form, went straight in. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the other wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

Why does John give us these details? Because grave robbers do not take the time to unwrap a body and leave the cloths neatly behind. Linen strips soaked in about seventy-five pounds of spices (19:39) would have stuck to the body. A thief would have taken the body, wrappings and all. The cloths lying there, with the face-cloth set apart, told the story: no one had stolen Jesus. He had left them behind.

20:8 *Then therefore the other disciple also, who had come first to the tomb, entered, and he saw and believed.*

Then John went in, "and he saw and believed." He did not see Jesus yet. He saw the empty tomb and the grave clothes, and he put it together. Jesus was alive. John is the first person in this Gospel to believe in the resurrection, and he believed based on the evidence in front of him.

20:9 *For they did not yet know the Scripture, that He must rise out from **the** dead.*

"For they did not yet know the Scripture, that He must rise out from the dead." The Old Testament had spoken of it (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:10-12), and Jesus had told them many times (Mark 8:31; John 2:19-22). But they had not understood. Only after the resurrection did the pieces fall into place (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46).

This should encourage us. The disciples did not understand everything at once, and neither do we. God is patient with slow learners.

Old Testament links: Psalm 16:10 (alluded to)

20:10 *Therefore the disciples went away again to their own **homes**.*

The two disciples went back home. John believed, but he did not yet know what to do with what he believed. That is often where faith starts. The full picture would come soon.

20:11 *But Mary was standing at the tomb outside, weeping. Therefore as she was weeping, she stooped down **and looked** into the tomb,*

Mary had come back to the tomb, and she stayed after the men left. She stood outside weeping. She still believed the body had been taken, and now she did not even have a grave to visit. She stooped and looked inside.

There is a lesson in her staying. Mary did not understand, but she did not leave. Sometimes faithfulness simply means staying close to Jesus, even when you are confused and hurting.

20:12 *And she sees two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.*

She saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the feet. Some have pointed out that this picture is like the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant, with a cherub at each end (Exodus 25:17-22), the place where the blood of atonement was sprinkled. John does not say this, so I hold it loosely, but it is a beautiful thought: the place where Jesus lay had become the meeting place of God's mercy.

20:13 *And they say to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She says to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."*

The angels asked, "Woman, why are you weeping?" They knew there was no reason to weep. The best news in the history of the world was sitting right in front of her. But Mary, so wrapped up in her grief, gave the same answer she gave Peter and John: "They have taken away my Lord." She did not even seem startled by the angels. Grief can make us blind to what God is doing right in front of us.

20:14 *And having said these things, she turned backward, and she sees Jesus standing **there**, and she did not know that it was Jesus.*

Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know it was Jesus. Why not? Her eyes were full of tears, it was early in the morning, and she certainly was not expecting to see Him alive. Other people also failed to recognize Him at first after the resurrection (Luke 24:16; John 21:4). His resurrected body was real and physical, but it seems it was also changed in some way.

20:15 *Jesus says to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, thinking that He was the gardener, says to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him off, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."*

Jesus asked her the same question as the angels, and added, "Whom are you seeking?" She thought He was the gardener. That makes sense, since the tomb was in a garden (19:41). She begged Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him off, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him." She was ready to carry a grown man's body by herself. That is love.

20:16 *Jesus says to her, "Mary!" She, having turned, says to Him, "Rabbouni!" which is to say, "Teacher!"*

Then Jesus said one word: *"Mary!"* And she knew Him instantly. She turned and said, *"Rabbouni!"* which means "Teacher" (a warmer, more personal form of "Rabbi").

Jesus said in 10:3 that the Good Shepherd "calls his own sheep by name," and they know His voice. Here we see it happen. The risen Lord knows your name too. Many people have had a moment like Mary's, when the Jesus they had heard about suddenly became the Jesus who knew them personally.

20:17 *Jesus says to her, "Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and **to** My God and your God.'"*

"Do not touch Me." The word means to take hold of or cling to. Mary had grabbed hold of Him, and she did not want to let go. She had lost Him once. Jesus was not rejecting her. He was telling her that things were different now. He had not yet ascended to the Father, and He would not stay with them in the same way He had before. Soon He would return to the Father and send the Holy Spirit, and then He would be with all His people everywhere (14:16-18; 16:7).

Then Jesus gave her a job: "Go to My brothers and say to them." For the first time in John's Gospel, Jesus calls His disciples "brothers." Because of the cross, His Father is now their Father. But notice that He says, "My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God," not "our Father." He is the Son of God by nature. We become children of God by adoption, through faith in Him (1:12; Romans 8:15). The relationship is real, but it is not the same.

20:18 *Mary the Magdalene comes, announcing to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and **that** He had said these things to her.*

Mary Magdalene became the first person to announce the resurrection. She told the disciples "that she had seen the Lord." In that culture a woman's testimony did not carry much weight. If someone were making up this story, they would not have chosen a woman, once demon-possessed, as the first witness. The Gospels record it because that is what happened. Jesus honored Mary's faithful love by appearing to her first.

20:19 *Therefore, it being evening on that day, the first **day** of the week, and the doors having been shut where the disciples were assembled because of the fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, "Peace to you."*

That same Sunday evening, the disciples were together behind shut doors "because of the fear of the Jews." They had seen what happened to their Master and expected they might be next. Then Jesus came and stood in their midst. The doors were locked, but that did not stop Him.

His first words were, "Peace to you." This was the normal Hebrew greeting, *shalom*, but on this night it meant far more. These men had abandoned Him. Peter had denied Him three times. Jesus did not come with a rebuke. He came with peace. He had promised them, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you" (14:27). Now He delivered on that promise.

20:20 *And having said this, He showed them His hands and side. Therefore the disciples rejoiced, having seen the Lord.*

Jesus showed them His hands and His side, the marks of the nails and the spear. He was not a ghost or a vision. It was the same Jesus, in the same body that had been crucified, now raised and glorified. Luke tells us He even ate fish in front of them to prove it (Luke 24:39-43).

"The disciples rejoiced, having seen the Lord." Jesus told them in 16:20-22 that their grief would be turned into joy, and that no one would take their joy away. That night it came true.

20:21 *Therefore Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you; even as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

Again Jesus said, "Peace to you," and then He gave them their mission: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Peace is not just for us to keep. It is something we carry to others. Jesus was sent by the Father to bring the truth and to save the lost. Now His followers are sent into the world with the same message (17:18). If you belong to Christ, you have been sent too, to your family, your workplace, and your neighborhood.

20:22 *And having said this, He breathed on **them**, and says to them, "Receive **the** Holy Spirit.*

Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This calls to mind Genesis 2:7, where God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" and Adam became a living being. Here the risen Lord breathes new life into His people. A new creation has begun.

Christians have asked how this fits with the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit came in power fifty days later. Some see this as only a promise or a symbol of what was coming. Others see it as the full giving of the Spirit, with Pentecost as a later outpouring of power. I believe Jesus gave the disciples the Holy Spirit in a real way that night, as a first gift and foretaste, and that the full outpouring of power for their mission came at Pentecost, just as Jesus said it would (Acts 1:8). Either way, the work of the Spirit in His church starts with Jesus Himself.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:7 (alluded to)

20:23 *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain **the sins** of any, they have been retained."*

"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." This verse has been badly misused, so let's read it carefully.

Only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7). Jesus was not giving the disciples a personal power to forgive or hold back forgiveness as they pleased. He had just sent them out with His message (20:21) and given them His Spirit (20:22). When they preach the gospel and a person repents and believes, they can say with full authority, "Your sins are forgiven," because God has already forgiven them. When a person rejects the gospel, they can say just as plainly that the person's sins remain. The Greek wording points this way: in the second half of the verse, "they have been retained" is in a tense that means the matter has already been settled in heaven. The disciples declare what God has done; they do not decide it. This authority belongs to the whole church as it carries the gospel, not to a special class of priests.

20:24 *But Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

Thomas, one of the twelve, was not there that Sunday night. John tells us he was called Didymus, which means "twin" in Greek. We do not know why Thomas was missing, but we know what it cost him: he missed seeing the risen Lord with the others. There is a warning here about staying away from the gathering of believers (Hebrews 10:25).

20:25 *Therefore the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will certainly not believe."*

The other disciples kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas would not believe it without proof he could touch: the nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side.

We often call him "doubting Thomas," and that is a little unfair. The other disciples did not believe Mary either until they saw Jesus themselves (Luke 24:11). Thomas was honest about his doubt. He was also brave; he was the one who said, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" (11:16). Thomas wanted the truth, and Jesus did not turn him away.

20:26 *And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus comes, the doors having been shut, and He stood in the midst and said, "Peace to you."*

Eight days later, the next Sunday, the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. Again the doors were shut. Again Jesus came, stood in their midst, and said, "Peace to you." The risen Lord met with His people on the first day of the week, two Sundays in a row.

20:27 *Then He says to Thomas, "Bring your finger here, and see My hands; and bring your hand, and put **it** into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."*

Jesus went straight to Thomas and offered him exactly what he had asked for: "Bring your finger here, and see My hands; and bring your hand, and put it into My side." Jesus had not been in the room when Thomas made his demand, but He knew every word. He knows our doubts too.

Then He said, "Do not be unbelieving, but believing." Jesus does not scold honest seekers. He meets them where they are and calls them to faith.

20:28 *And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*

Thomas answered, *"My Lord and my God!"* The Bible does not say he ever touched the wounds. Seeing Jesus was enough.

This is the high point of the whole Gospel of John. John began his book by saying, "the Word was God" (1:1). Now he ends it with a disciple looking at the risen Jesus and calling Him God. Thomas, the doubter, gives the clearest confession of Jesus' deity in all the Gospels. And Jesus accepted it. A good man or a prophet would have corrected him immediately (Acts 14:11-15; Revelation 19:10). Jesus did not, because it was true. Jesus Christ is Lord, and He is God.

20:29 *Jesus says to him, "Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed **are** those who have not seen and have believed."*

"Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Jesus was speaking about you and me. We were not in that room. We have not touched His hands. But we have the testimony of those who were there, written down for us. Peter wrote to believers like us: "not having seen Him, you love" (1 Peter 1:8). Jesus pronounced a special blessing on everyone who believes without seeing. If you have trusted Christ based on His Word, that blessing is yours.

20:30-31 *Therefore Jesus indeed also did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

These two verses are John's purpose statement for the whole book. Jesus did many other signs that John did not include. John chose the signs he wrote down for one reason: "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Look at the three parts. First, *what* to believe: that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, God's promised Anointed One) and the Son of God. Second, *how*: by believing. The word "believe" appears all through this Gospel, far more than in any of the others. It means more than agreeing with facts. It means trusting Him, relying on Him, putting your full weight on Him. Third, *the result*: life in His name, eternal life that starts now and never ends (3:16; 5:24; 17:3).

So I will ask you plainly, the way John asks his readers: Do you believe? Not just that Jesus lived, but that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He died and rose again for you? If you do, you have life in His name.

Chapter 20 Summary

Early on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene found the stone rolled away and ran to tell Peter and John. The two disciples ran to the tomb and found the linen wrappings lying in place and the face-cloth rolled up by itself. John saw and believed. Mary stayed at the tomb weeping, saw two angels, and then met Jesus, whom she mistook for the gardener until He called her by name. He sent her to tell His brothers, and she became the first to announce "that she had seen the Lord." That evening Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors, showed them His hands and side, gave them peace, sent them on His mission, breathed on them the Holy Spirit, and gave them authority to declare forgiveness through the gospel. Eight days later He appeared again, and Thomas, who had refused to believe, confessed, "My Lord and my God!" John closes by telling us he wrote these signs so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name.

Evidence for the Resurrection in John 20

The empty tomb (20:1-2): Even the leaders' story that the disciples stole the body admitted the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:11-15). The only question was why.

The grave clothes (20:5-7): The wrappings were left behind and the face-cloth rolled up by itself. Thieves would not have done that.

Unexpected witnesses (20:11-18): A woman was the first to see the risen Lord, something unlikely to be invented in a day that gave little weight to a woman's testimony.

Skeptical disciples (20:19-25): The disciples were hiding in fear and did not expect a resurrection. Thomas refused to believe without proof.

A physical body (20:20, 27): Jesus showed them the wounds in His hands and side. He was not a ghost or a vision.

Changed lives: Frightened men behind locked doors became bold witnesses (Acts 4:18-20), and many of them later gave their lives for this message.

Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. What is the best news you have ever received? How did you react?

2. What did Mary Magdalene first think had happened when she saw the stone rolled away? (20:1-2)

3. What did Peter and John see inside the tomb, and why does it matter? (20:5-8)

4. How did Mary finally recognize Jesus? What does that tell you about how He knows you? (20:16)

5. What were Jesus' first words to the frightened disciples, and why do you think He chose them? (20:19-21)

6. What mission did Jesus give His disciples, and how does it apply to you? (20:21)

7. What do you think Jesus meant when He gave the disciples authority to forgive or retain sins? (20:23)

8. What did Thomas demand before he would believe, and how did Jesus respond? (20:25-27)

9. What does Thomas's confession, "My Lord and my God!" teach us about who Jesus is? (20:28)

10. John says he wrote his Gospel "so that you may believe." Where are you in that journey right now? (20:31)

Chapter 21: Breakfast by the Sea (Epilogue)

Scripture: Jesus Restores Peter

21:1-14 After these things Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and He revealed ***Himself*** in this way. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus, and Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, and the ***sons*** of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. Simon Peter says to them, "I am going to fish." They say to him, "We also are coming with you." They went out and immediately went up into the boat; and in that night they caught nothing. Now when morning had already come, Jesus stood on the shore; however, the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Therefore Jesus says to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find ***some***." Therefore they cast, and they were no longer able to haul it in because of the multitude of the fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus was loving says to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Therefore Simon Peter, having heard that it was the Lord, tied on the outer garment, for he was naked, and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but approximately 300 feet (two hundred cubits) away, dragging the net of fish. Therefore when they got out onto the land, they see a fire of coals lying ***there***, and fish lying on ***it***, and bread. Jesus says to them, "Bring ***some*** of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net onto the land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus says to them, "Come, have breakfast." But none of the disciples was daring to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Therefore Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives ***it*** to them, and the fish likewise. This ***was*** now a third ***time*** Jesus was revealed to His disciples, having been raised out from ***the*** dead.

21:15-19 Therefore when they had had breakfast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Simon ***son*** of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You dearly." He says to him, "Feed My lambs." He says to him again, a second time, "Simon ***son*** of Jonah, do you love Me?" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You dearly." He says to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He says to him the third time, "Simon ***son*** of Jonah, do you love Me dearly?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me dearly?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You dearly." Jesus says to him, "Feed My sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you were dressing yourself and walking where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and bring ***you*** where you do not want." Now this He said, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And having said this, He says to him, "Follow Me."

21:20-25 Peter, having turned around, sees the disciple whom Jesus was loving following, who also had reclined at the supper on His chest and said, "Lord, who is the one who is delivering You up?" Having seen him, Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, and what ***about*** this one?" Jesus says to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what ***is that*** to you? You follow Me." Therefore this saying went out among the brothers, that that disciple does not die; and Jesus did not say to him that he does not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what ***is that*** to you?" This is the disciple who is testifying concerning these things and who wrote these things; and we know that his

testimony is true. And there are also many other things, as many as Jesus did, which, if they were written one by one, I suppose not even the world itself would have room for the books being written. Amen.

Chapter 21 Preview

At the end of chapter 20, John told us why he wrote his book, and it sounds like he is finished. But there is one more chapter. It works like an epilogue, a closing section that ties up loose ends and looks ahead.

The biggest loose end is Peter. The last time we saw Peter by a fire, he was denying Jesus three times (18:15-27). Now, by another fire on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus serves him breakfast and asks him three times, "Do you love Me?" Jesus forgives Peter, gives him his life's work, and tells him how his life will end. Then John clears up a rumor about himself and signs off with a statement that he saw these things and his testimony is true.

If you have ever failed the Lord and wondered if He could still use you, this chapter is for you.

Chapter 21 Study

21:1 *After these things Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and He revealed **Himself** in this way.*

"After these things" means some time after the appearances in Jerusalem. The disciples had gone back north to Galilee, as Jesus had told them to (Matthew 28:7, 10). The Sea of Tiberias is another name for the Sea of Galilee, named after the city of Tiberias on its western shore, which Herod Antipas built in honor of the emperor Tiberius.

John says Jesus "revealed Himself," which means He showed Himself or made Himself known. The risen Jesus was not always visibly with them. He appeared to them at different times over forty days (Acts 1:3).

21:2 *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus, and Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, and the **sons** of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples.*

Seven disciples were together: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two others who are not named. Thomas is here. The doubter of chapter 20 is now in the fellowship. Nathanael has not been mentioned since chapter 1, when Jesus promised he would see "greater things" (1:50). He was about to see some.

21:3 *Simon Peter says to them, "I am going to fish." They say to him, "We also are coming with you." They went out and immediately went up into the boat; and in that night they caught nothing.*

"I am going to fish." Peter was a fisherman before Jesus called him. Some readers think Peter was quitting and going back to his old life. Others think he was simply waiting for Jesus' next instructions and needed to eat and earn a living in the meantime. The text does not tell us his

heart, and I do not want to read too much into it. What we do know is that the other six went with him. Peter was still a leader.

They fished all night and caught nothing. Night was the usual time to fish on the Sea of Galilee. These were experienced men in familiar water, and still their nets came up empty. Without Him, we can do nothing (15:5).

21:4 *Now when morning had already come, Jesus stood on the shore; however, the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.*

At daybreak Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know it was Him. They were around a hundred yards out (21:8), it was early morning, and they were not looking for Him. As with Mary at the tomb (20:14), Jesus was right there before they recognized Him.

21:5 *Therefore Jesus says to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No."*

"Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" The word He used for "children" was a friendly, familiar word, something like "lads" or "boys." The question was worded so that the answer was obviously no. And they had to admit it: "No." Sometimes the Lord asks us questions to get us to admit we have come up empty on our own.

21:6 *And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find* ***some****." Therefore they cast, and they were no longer able to haul it in because of the multitude of the fish.*

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." Why would professional fishermen take advice from a stranger on the shore? Maybe they were tired enough to try anything. They obeyed, and the net was so full they could not haul it in.

This should have sounded familiar. Luke 5:1-11 tells of another night when Peter caught nothing, and Jesus told him to let down the nets, and the catch was so large the nets began to break. That was the day Jesus first called Peter to follow Him and become a fisher of men. Now, after Peter's failure, Jesus repeats the miracle. It is as if He is saying, "Let's start over, Peter."

21:7 *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus was loving says to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Therefore Simon Peter, having heard that it was the Lord, tied on the outer garment, for he was naked, and cast himself into the sea.*

John recognized Him first: "It is the Lord." John was the one who saw the grave clothes and believed (20:8). Peter was the one who acted first. As soon as he heard it was Jesus, he put his outer garment on (he had stripped down to work) and threw himself into the sea to get to Jesus as fast as he could.

I love this about Peter. He had denied the Lord three times, but he did not hide from Him. He swam straight to Him. If you have failed Jesus, do not run from Him. Run to Him.

21:8 *But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but approximately 300 feet (two hundred cubits) away, dragging the net of fish.*

The others came in the little boat, dragging the heavy net. John notes they were about one hundred yards from land (in the Greek, two hundred cubits). These are the kinds of small details an eyewitness remembers.

21:9 *Therefore when they got out onto the land, they see a fire of coals lying **there**, and fish lying on **it**, and bread.*

When they got to shore, they found a charcoal fire already burning, with fish cooking on it, and bread. Jesus had made breakfast for them before they arrived.

The only other place in the New Testament that mentions a charcoal fire is John 18:18, the fire in the high priest's courtyard where Peter warmed himself and denied Jesus. I do not think that is an accident. The smell of that fire must have brought back painful memories for Peter. Jesus was about to heal those memories in the same kind of setting where Peter fell.

21:10-11 *Jesus says to them, "Bring **some** of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net onto the land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

Jesus asked them to bring some of the fish they had just caught. Jesus already had fish on the fire. He did not need theirs. But He invited them to bring what they had, even though He was the One who gave it to them in the first place. That is how the Lord works with us. He gives us everything, and then He lets us share in His work.

Peter climbed into the boat and dragged the net to shore by himself. It held 153 large fish, and the net did not tear. Over the centuries people have tried to find a hidden meaning in the number 153, and they have come up with all kinds of theories. I take it plainly. Fishermen count their catch, and John remembered the number because it was such a huge haul. The unbroken net is a reminder that what Jesus provides, He also preserves.

21:12 *Jesus says to them, "Come, have breakfast." But none of the disciples was daring to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.*

"Come, have breakfast." This is one of the most tender invitations in the Bible. The risen Lord of glory, the One who was with God in the beginning, cooked breakfast for a group of tired fishermen and invited them to eat.

None of them dared to ask, "Who are You?" They knew it was the Lord. There seems to have been something about His appearance that was different, yet they had no doubt it was Him.

21:13 *Therefore Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives **it** to them, and the fish likewise.*

Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish too. The disciples had seen Him do this before, when He fed the five thousand by this same sea (6:11). He is still the Bread of Life (6:35), and He still feeds His people with His own hands.

21:14 *This **was** now a third **time** Jesus was revealed to His disciples, having been raised out from **the** dead.*

John tells us this was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples as a group after He was raised. The first was on Easter evening (20:19), the second eight days later with Thomas (20:26), and now this one by the sea. He also appeared to individuals, such as Mary Magdalene (20:14), and Paul later lists other appearances, including one to more than five hundred people at once (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). The resurrection was not seen by one or two people in a corner. It was seen many times, by many people.

21:15 *Therefore when they had had breakfast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Simon **son** of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You dearly." He says to him, "Feed My lambs."*

After breakfast Jesus turned to Peter. He calls him "Simon son of Jonah," not "Peter." That was the name Peter had when Jesus first met him (1:42). It may have been a gentle reminder of where Peter came from and how far he had fallen.

"Do you love Me more than these?" Bible students disagree on what "these" refers to. It could mean the boats and nets, Peter's old life. It could mean the other disciples, as in "Do you love Me more than these men do?" I lean toward the second. On the night of the Last Supper Peter had boasted that even if everyone else fell away, he never would (Matthew 26:33). Jesus was asking, "Do you still think you love Me more than the others?"

Peter answered humbly, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You dearly." Notice he did not compare himself to anyone this time. He just appealed to what Jesus knew. Jesus replied, "Feed My lambs." Peter would care for the youngest and weakest of God's people.

21:16 *He says to him again, a second time, "Simon **son** of Jonah, do you love Me?" He says to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You dearly." He says to him, "Shepherd My sheep."*

Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me?" This time He dropped "more than these." Peter gave the same answer, and Jesus gave him a new charge: "Shepherd My sheep." To shepherd means to lead, guard, and feed. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (10:11), and He was making Peter an under-shepherd of His flock. Peter never forgot it. Years later he wrote to church elders, telling them to "shepherd the flock of God" and pointing them to Jesus as "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

21:17 *He says to him the third time, "Simon **son** of Jonah, do you love Me dearly?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me dearly?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You dearly." Jesus says to him, "Feed My sheep.*

Then Jesus asked a third time, and Peter was grieved. Why did it hurt so much? Because Peter had denied Jesus three times, and now three times Jesus asked him to confess his love. Peter got the point. This time he answered, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You dearly." Peter could no longer trust his own boasting. All he could do was trust that Jesus saw his heart.

Here is something you may hear in Bible studies. In Greek, Jesus' first two questions use the word *agapao*, and Peter answers with *phileo*. The third time, Jesus uses *phileo*. Some teach that *agapao* is the higher, self-giving love, and *phileo* is the love of friendship, so Jesus was coming down to Peter's level. Others point out that John often uses these two words to mean the same thing (compare 3:35 and 5:20, where both words describe the Father's love for the Son). I believe the main point is not the change of words but the number three. Jesus gave Peter a confession for every denial, and then gave him a job. That is complete restoration. If there is any extra meaning in the word change, it only shows how gently Jesus came to Peter. The translation in this study keeps the difference visible: "love" for *agapao* and "love dearly" for *phileo*.

And Jesus said again, "Feed My sheep." Peter's failure did not disqualify him. Jesus restored him and put him to work.

21:18 *Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you were dressing yourself and walking where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and bring **you** where you do not want."*

"Truly, truly" signals that what follows is serious and certain. When Peter was young, he dressed himself and went where he wanted. When he was old, he would "stretch out" his hands, someone else would dress him, and he would be taken where he did not want to go. "Stretch out your hands" was a phrase people used for crucifixion. Jesus was telling Peter how he would die.

21:19 *Now this He said, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And having said this, He says to him, "Follow Me."*

John explains that Jesus said this, "signifying by what death he would glorify God." By the time John wrote this, Peter had already died. Early church tradition says Peter was crucified in Rome during the persecution under the emperor Nero. A later tradition adds that he asked to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die the same way as his Lord. We cannot confirm that detail, but the early church was clear that Peter died a martyr. Peter himself knew his death was coming (2 Peter 1:14).

Then Jesus said, "Follow Me!" Those were the first words Jesus ever said to many of His disciples (1:43; Mark 1:17). After everything Peter had been through, Jesus brought him right back to the beginning. Following Jesus is not a one-time decision. It is something we do every day until He calls us home.

21:20-21 *Peter, having turned around, sees the disciple whom Jesus was loving following, who also had reclined at the supper on His chest and said, "Lord, who is the one who is delivering You up?" Having seen him, Peter says to Jesus, "Lord, and what **about** this one?"*

Peter turned and saw John following them, "the disciple whom Jesus was loving," the one who leaned back on Jesus at the Last Supper and asked who would betray Him (13:23-25). Peter asked, "Lord, and what about this one?"

That is such a human question. Jesus had just told Peter he would die a hard death, and Peter's first thought was, "What about him? What happens to John?" We all do this. We compare our road to someone else's road.

21:22 *Jesus says to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what **is that** to you? You follow Me."*

Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." In other words, "That is My business, not yours. Your job is to follow Me." God has a different plan for each of His servants. Some die young, and some live long. Some suffer in ways others never do. Our job is not to compare. Our job is to follow.

Notice also the words "until I come." Jesus spoke plainly about His return. He is coming again in person: first for His church, as He promised in 14:3, and then to the earth in power and glory, as John later saw in Revelation 19:11-16.

21:23 *Therefore this saying went out among the brothers, that that disciple does not die; and Jesus did not say to him that he does not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what **is that** to you?"*

A rumor spread among the believers that John would not die before Jesus returned. John corrects it carefully. Jesus did not say John would not die. He only said, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" It was a "what if," not a promise.

John lived to an old age, and he wrote Revelation near the end of his life, but he did die. This verse teaches us a good lesson for studying prophecy: read what the text actually says, not what people assume it says. Rumors about the end times spread quickly, and they are often wrong. As I wrote in my study on Revelation, no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36).

21:24 *This is the disciple who is testifying concerning these things and who wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.*

"This is the disciple who is testifying concerning these things and who wrote these things." Here John identifies himself as the author of the book, the beloved disciple who was there for all of it. "We know that his testimony is true" may be the voice of the believers or elders around John who knew him, adding their confirmation. Either way, the point is plain: this Gospel is the eyewitness testimony of someone who walked with Jesus.

21:25 *And there are also many other things, as many as Jesus did, which, if they were written one by one, I suppose not even the world itself would have room for the books being written. Amen.*

John ends with a wonderful exaggeration to make a point. If everything Jesus did were written down, John supposes the world itself could not hold the books. John gave us only a small selection, chosen with care so that we would believe (20:31). There is far more to Jesus than any book can hold. We will spend eternity getting to know Him.

Chapter 21 Summary

Seven of the disciples went fishing on the Sea of Galilee and caught nothing all night. At dawn Jesus stood on the shore and told them to cast the net on the right side, and they caught 153 large fish. John recognized the Lord, and Peter jumped into the sea to reach Him. Jesus had a charcoal fire going with fish and bread, and He invited them to breakfast. Afterward Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" matching Peter's three denials, and three times gave him the charge to tend and shepherd His sheep. Jesus told Peter he would one day glorify God by his death, and called him again to "Follow Me!" When Peter asked about John, Jesus told him not to compare but to follow. John corrected the rumor that he would not die, identified himself as the eyewitness author of the book, and closed by saying the world could not contain all the books that could be written about what Jesus did.

I have let people down and wondered if the friendship could be fixed. Some were fixed, and others drifted. Jesus restored Peter by the fire. Not every relationship comes back, but He never stops restoring those who come to Him.

Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. Have you ever let someone down and wondered if the friendship could be fixed? What happened?

2. What happened when the disciples fished on their own, and what happened when they obeyed Jesus? (21:3-6)

3. How did John and Peter each respond when they realized it was the Lord? What does that tell you about each man? (21:7)

4. Why do you think John mentions the charcoal fire? (21:9; 18:18)

5. Why did Jesus ask Peter three times if he loved Him? (21:15-17)

6. What job did Jesus give Peter each time? What does that tell you about how Jesus treats people who have failed? (21:15-17)

7. What did Jesus reveal about Peter's future? (21:18-19)

8. What was Jesus' answer when Peter asked about John? How does that apply to the way you compare yourself to others? (21:21-22)

9. What rumor did John correct, and what lesson does that teach about reading Scripture carefully? (21:23)

10. Is there a failure in your past that you have not brought to Jesus? What would it look like to let Him restore you and put you back to work?

Conclusion

We have now walked through all twenty-one chapters of the Gospel of John, from "In the beginning was the Word" to breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As I said in the Introduction, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly and let it say what it says. When we do that with John, one picture comes through clearly: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and He came so that we could have life in His name.

I hope this study has done what I set out for it to do: bring you closer to our Creator, help you grow in your Christian walk, and encourage you to keep reading the Gospel of John, and the whole of God's Word, with others.

John closes his book by telling us that if everything Jesus did were written down, the world itself could not contain the books (John 21:25). John did not write everything. He wrote enough. He wrote enough for you to know who Jesus is and to make a choice about Him. Every person in this Gospel had to make that choice. Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the man born blind, Martha, Pilate, Thomas, and Peter all stood face to face with Jesus and had to decide what to do with Him. You and I have to decide too.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God, that You died on the cross for my sins and rose again. You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross to provide me this opportunity to be atoned and forgiven. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

Old and New Testament Links in John

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
1:1	Genesis 1:1	alluded to
1:21	Deuteronomy 18:15	alluded to
1:21	Malachi 4:5	alluded to
1:23	Isaiah 40:3	quoted
1:25	Deuteronomy 18:15	alluded to
1:29	Isaiah 53:7	alluded to
1:51	Genesis 28:12	alluded to
2:17	Psalm 69:9	quoted
3:5	Ezekiel 36:25-27	alluded to
3:13	Proverbs 30:4	alluded to
3:14-15	Numbers 21:8-9	pictured
4:5-6	Joshua 24:32	alluded to
4:5-6	Genesis 33:19	alluded to
4:10	Jeremiah 2:13	alluded to
5:27	Daniel 7:13-14	alluded to
5:28-29	Daniel 12:2	alluded to
6:14	Deuteronomy 18:18	alluded to
6:30-31	Nehemiah 9:15	quoted
6:30-31	Psalm 78:24	quoted
6:30-31	Exodus 16:4	alluded to
6:32-33	Exodus 16:4	pictured
6:45	Isaiah 54:13	quoted
6:48-50	Exodus 16:35	alluded to
7:22-23	Leviticus 12:3	alluded to
7:22-23	Genesis 17:10	alluded to
7:24	Deuteronomy 16:18	alluded to
7:37	Isaiah 55:1	alluded to
7:38	Isaiah 44:3	alluded to
7:38	Ezekiel 47:1	alluded to
7:38	Zechariah 14:8	alluded to
7:41-42	Micah 5:2	alluded to
7:41-42	Psalm 132:11	alluded to
7:50-51	Deuteronomy 1:17	alluded to
8:4-5	Leviticus 20:10	alluded to
8:4-5	Deuteronomy 22:22-24	alluded to
8:17-18	Deuteronomy 17:6	alluded to
8:58	Exodus 3:14	alluded to
10:34-36	Psalm 82:6	quoted
12:7-8	Deuteronomy 15:11	alluded to
12:12-13	Psalm 118:26	quoted

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
12:12-13	Psalm 118:25	alluded to
12:14-15	Zechariah 9:9	quoted
12:34	Psalm 89:36	alluded to
12:38	Isaiah 53:1	quoted
12:39-40	Isaiah 6:9-10	quoted
12:41	Isaiah 6:1	alluded to
12:41	Isaiah 6:2	alluded to
13:18	Psalm 41:9	quoted
13:19	Isaiah 43:10	alluded to
15:25	Psalm 35:19	quoted
15:25	Psalm 69:4	quoted
16:32	Zechariah 13:7	alluded to
17:17	Psalm 119:160	alluded to
19:7	Leviticus 24:16	alluded to
19:18	Isaiah 53:12	fulfilled
19:23-24	Psalm 22:18	quoted
19:28	Psalm 69:21	fulfilled
19:31	Deuteronomy 21:23	alluded to
19:36-37	Psalm 34:20	quoted
19:36-37	Numbers 9:12	quoted
19:36-37	Zechariah 12:10	quoted
19:36-37	Exodus 12:46	quoted
20:9	Psalm 16:10	alluded to
20:22	Genesis 2:7	alluded to

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For Further Study

These well-known commentaries on the Gospel of John are a good next step for anyone who wants to go deeper. I do not necessarily agree with every view in them.

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