

TWELVE STUDIES IN JOHN 1-11

# THE TRUTH IN JESUS

**A Study Guide for Use by  
Individuals or Groups**

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## **The Truth in Jesus by Gracia Rinden**

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## THE TRUTH IN JESUS

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## PREFACE

When we come to inspect a Bible study guide, a question we may ask is, “Why do we need a guide? Is not the Scripture itself enough?”

My answer is this: Yes, of course the Bible is enough. A guide is never meant to take the place of the Bible. Rather the aim or focus of a guide is to help us to see what is in the Scripture and to help us to see the whole picture rather than the individual parts alone. A study guide asks questions and questions always come before answers.

Whether a person is new to Bible study or has been well acquainted with the Bible, I believe everyone can benefit by a review of *why* the Bible is important. Below are four reasons for studying the Scriptures:

1. The Bible is the Word of God or *God’s Word*. To read this book is different than to read any other book because the words are not those of another person, they are the words of God. (See II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:20,21.)
2. The Bible is *all true*. The apostle Paul says in Titus 1:2 that God cannot lie. It is impossible for Him to make a statement that is not absolutely true and reliable. The Bible tells us the truth about ourselves and about God. It tells us the truth about the past as well as the future.
3. The Bible and the words of Jesus will *last forever*. Jesus said in Luke 21:33, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”
4. Reading the Bible will teach us to *know* God. Nothing is more important than this because to truly know God is to have eternal life. In His prayer to the Father, Jesus said, “This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

The Scriptures makes sense out of life. When we see the truth and believe it, our attitudes and actions change. By hearing, believing and obeying what the Bible says we become God’s children and then grow into maturity. (See John 1:12 and I Peter 2:2.)

I am learning that God uses people, circumstances, and methods in an infinite variety of ways. We are all different. God knows this and He doesn’t demand that we be exactly like anyone else. My prayer is that God will use this study guide in the lives of each of you in the way in which He would choose.

— Gracia Rinden

## LESSON 1

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### OUTLINE

- Introduction
- I. The Book — the Gospel of John
  - A. Main Emphasis
  - B. Structural Organization
- II. The Writer — the Apostle John
- III. The Book and Its Writer and You

### OPENER

Describe the feelings you have toward your best friend.

### MEDITATION

The importance and necessity of studying God's word is revealed in Psalm 119:9-11.

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. "*

As we begin to study the Gospel of John, pray that God will give you a seeker's heart.

## INTRODUCTION

When we want to know who someone is, we can find out about them in a number of ways. We can ask other people what they know; we can ask questions of them and listen to their reactions and the experiences they have had with that person.

The best way to find out, however, is to get close to people ourselves. We get to know who people are when we spend time with them to listen and pay attention to what they say and what they do. Over the next 12 weeks we will be spending time with Jesus Christ through reading John's book about Him. When you get close to Jesus you will find that He is different than anyone else who has ever lived. Look at what He did and what He said and the more you look the more you will be impressed.

Throughout His time here on earth, Jesus emphasized that the words He spoke were *true*. He said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know *the truth* and *the truth* will set you free." "I tell you *the truth*, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life. "

The Bible tells us that the truth is in Jesus. (See Ephesians 4:21.) Not only does Jesus speak the truth, He is the truth. He said, "I am the Way, *the truth*, and the Life." Pray in your heart the prayer below as you begin this lesson:

"Thank you Jesus for your Word which is true and lasts forever. Teach me what it means to worship you in spirit and in truth. I ask you to guide me and show yourself to me as I read and study the Gospel of John. Amen."

### I. THE BOOK — THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Four men wrote books in the first century A.D. to tell the story of Jesus Christ. John, the apostle, was one of these. He is not to be confused with John the Baptist.

The Gospel of John is often recommended reading for beginning students of the Bible because of its clarity and also because the information it contains is so basic in our search to know God. We can be thankful for a book like this that even young children can benefit from reading.

Although John is good for beginners to read, one must not assume that the content of this book can be quickly mastered. Volumes have been written about the meaning behind the words in this book. To learn all that there is to know about the content of these twenty-one chapters would take more than one lifetime.

### **A. MAIN EMPHASIS — THE THEME**

John's purpose in writing is to introduce us to Jesus. John was one of the chosen twelve who listened to Jesus and watched Him during the years He was on earth. The things that John witnessed changed his outlook, his goals, and his motivation for living.

The statement stressed above everything else in this book is that Jesus is the Son of God. Over and over again, in many different ways, this one basic thought is repeated: Jesus is the Son of God; believing in Him will give you eternal life.

To carry out this theme, John records what Jesus said and what He did. John says that he isn't writing about everything Jesus did and said (see John 21:25), rather, he has chosen his material selectively to support this basic theme.

1. To see a statement of the theme of the Gospel of John, look up John 20:30, 31. Copy these verses in the space below.

John writes to encourage faith in the hearts of his readers. Because of this, he frequently talks about faith and about *believing*.

If you take a concordance and look up all the times when some form of the word believe is used in these 21 chapters, you will be impressed with the number. The total I found added up to 96 times — this is compared to 10 in Matthew, 16 in Mark, and 9 in Luke.

2. One of the first times that John uses the word believe is in chapter 1, verse 12. Define believing on the basis of this verse.



## **B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

When you examine this account of the life of Jesus you will see that the book follows a certain structure or outline which is as follows:

### 1. Jesus' Public Ministry - John 1:1-11:57

This section begins with John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus and ends with events just preceding the last week of Jesus' life. Seven miracles or signs are included as well as the teaching of Jesus accompanying these signs.

### 2. Jesus' Private Ministry - John 12:1-21:25

This section deals with the last part of Jesus' life. Here we find His instructions to those closest to Him, His teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit, and finally the account of Jesus' death and resurrection.

This particular study of twelve lessons will cover chapters 1 through 11 of the Gospel of John.

Of all the miracles performed by Jesus, John chooses to tell us about only seven of them. The references for these signs are given in the question below:

3. Read each passage and answer these questions: a. What did Jesus *do* (What was the miracle?)  
b. What was *one result* of this miracle?

a. John 2:1-11

b. John 4:46-54

c. John 5:1-18

d. John 6:6-14

e. John 6:16-21

f. John 9:1-41

g. John 11:1-45

## II. THE WRITER — THE APOSTLE JOHN

John the apostle had been a close friend of Jesus during the years immediately prior to Jesus' death. He referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23, 20:2). John was the one of the twelve disciples who sat closest to Jesus on the night of their last meal together. He was the one designated by Jesus from the cross to take care of His mother, and he, along with Peter and James, were at times taken aside by Jesus to see things the other disciples missed (see question 5 below).

4. To get some background information on the author of this book, look up the following passages and write down what you learn about John from these verses:

a. Mark 1:19, 20

b. Mark 3:17

c. Mark 10:35-45

d. Luke 9:51-55

5. The following references describe specific events witnessed by John as one of the inner circle of disciples. As you read each account, try to put yourself in John's place and tell what would have impressed you if you were there.

a. Mark 5:22,23, 35-42

b. Luke 9:28-35

c. Mark 14:32-42

6. What do you think was the reason that Jesus picked just these three men, Peter, James and John, to witness these events?

7. Why do you think John calls himself “the disciple that Jesus loved?” What does this phrase mean to you? (These words are found in John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2 and 21:7-20.)

John was in close contact for three years with a man who was distinctive in that He *never* did anything wrong. We can be sure that John must have, on more than one occasion, sensed a contrast between his own self-centered thoughts and those of Jesus Christ. I wonder if it was this growing realization of his own unworthiness that made Jesus’ love precious to him.

8. Can you identify personally with the thought in the above paragraph? If so, in what way?

### **III. THE BOOK AND THE WRITER AND YOU**

This first lesson in the Gospel of John contains more informational material than the following lessons. The goal in presenting this information is not to give you a lot of facts about this book but rather to encourage you to investigate this historical account for yourself and be enriched by doing so.

Therefore, as a final exercise in this introductory lesson, first take time to quietly read as far and as much as you can in chapters 1 through 11. Take note of any new thoughts that come to you. Secondly, thank God for what He has taught you and for what you will learn in the weeks to come. Finally, keep this question in mind: What have you seen in these chapters that you would like to share next week with your group of friends. (Use the space below to record your observations.)



## LESSON 2

# THE MINISTRY OF JESUS BEGINS

*John 1:1-51*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Jesus is the Creator (John 1:1-18)

II. Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:19-36)

III. Jesus is the Teacher (John 1:37-51)

Conclusion

### OPENER

The world is changing every day. What do you remember about what things were like 10 years ago?

### MEDITATION

*"My heart says to you, Seek his face! Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psalm 27:8).*

God shows Himself to those who truly seek Him. As we begin this study, let us come with open hearts, looking for God to teach us.

Prayer: "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long" (Psalm 25:4-5).

## INTRODUCTION

Before we begin to study this lesson, let us think about God and what He is like. To do this we must turn away from our own selves and the particular problems of this day and turn to things we cannot see but yet are real.

Everything we see with our eyes, all that is around us in our world, is temporal; the house we live in, the clothes we wear, the food in our kitchens, *everything* will last for a certain period of time and then be gone.

This is not true of God. He is eternal. He never changes and what He says and what He *is* lasts forever.

With this thought in mind, look at Isaiah 57:15:

*“For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. ”*

Can you rejoice today that God is so great and yet thinks about individual people? — He thinks of *you*. God is able to refresh your heart and your spirit as you seek to know Him.

Before you study John chapter 1, take a few moments to thank Him that He not only lives in Heaven but will make a difference in your life this day.

### I. JESUS IS THE CREATOR (THE PROLOGUE) - (JOHN 1:1-18)

The apostle John begins his book with these three words: “In the beginning;” the same three words that the Bible begins with in the first book, Genesis. To tell a story we begin at the beginning, and before opening his narrative, John starts where it all began: In the beginning or at creation.

These first eighteen verses of John form an introduction to the rest of the book. Not only is it an introduction but it presents a basic framework around which the following narrative is formed. All of what John *will* present is summarized in these opening paragraphs.

1. What three things does John tell us in verse 1 about the beginning?

2. In the space below, copy verse 14 from your Bible. How does this verse give you insight into what “the Word” refers to?

3. Revelation 19:13 gives a description of Jesus with these words, “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.” Why do you think Jesus was called the Word? (See also Hebrews 1:1,2.)

4. As has been mentioned in Lesson 1, John’s topic in this book is Jesus Christ. Read this prologue or introduction (verses 1- 18) and as you do, make a list of all the information John gives here about Jesus.

5. What statement about Jesus in these verses especially impresses you?

6. What did Jesus create?

7. We see in verse 14 that Jesus came and was “full of grace and truth.” As you think of the meaning of these two qualities, what do you think is significant about combining them to describe Jesus?



John concludes this introduction by saying “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” If someone were to ask you, “How can I know what God is like?” this verse gives a good answer. We know God by looking at Jesus. As we listen to what Jesus says and watch what He does, we learn about God.

## **II. JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD (THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST) - (JOHN 1:19-36)**

Whenever the president of our country enters a room full of people, one particular person is designated to have the responsibility of making this announcement: “Ladies and Gentlemen — The President of the United States.” At these words, everyone in the audience rises to their feet.

This person, the presenter, is a picture of the person in this text called John the Baptist. His mission in life was to announce to those who were listening that God’s Son, the promised Messiah, had come. Your mind should almost hear a drum-roll as John says — “Ladies and Gentlemen, The Lamb of God.”

The coming of John the Baptist had been predicted years earlier by the prophet Malachi. God through this prophet said, “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me” (Malachi 3:1). Jesus Himself told the crowds that this particular prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:7-10).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, 36). The Old Testament has many references to the lamb as a sacrificial victim. (Genesis 22:7, Exodus 12:3-6 and Exodus 29:38-42 are just a few examples.) By making this statement about Jesus John predicted the purpose that would be fulfilled in Jesus’ life and death.

8. Religious leaders from Jerusalem traveled some distance to an area around the Jordan River to see John the Baptist and ask him two questions. What are these two *basic* questions and what answer did John give to each?

9. What description would you give of the character qualities of John the Baptist from reading these verses?

10. List what John the Baptist says about Jesus.

11. In verses 32-34, John the Baptist tells about what had taken place during an earlier contact with Jesus. What had happened? (See also Matthew 3:16.)

The Bible stresses the importance of a person's attitude. In particular, God looks for a person who has the quality of meekness or humility. Notice what He says in Isaiah 66:2, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

If there ever was a man who fit this description of unpretentiousness and loyalty to the word of God, it was this man called John the Baptist. As I think of what he was like and the things he said I wonder how the average person today would respond to him. What do you think of him and of what he said?

John didn't seem to be affected by what people thought of him. What made him that way? Probably the answer lies in the perception John had of the world and of people. John knew that his life had a purpose and he was devoted to the goal of fulfilling that purpose. What people thought of him and how they responded to him personally was not of primary importance.

Jesus says that this habit of getting approval from people as a means of building ourselves up can be a hindrance to true faith if we do this at the expense of seeking for God's approval. Notice His words in John 5:41-44, "I do not accept praise from men, but I know you... How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?"

**III. JESUS IS THE TEACHER (THE FIRST DISCIPLES) - (JOHN 1:37-51)**

After John had introduced Jesus, his own life began to take a new direction. Now people that followed him left him and accompanied Jesus instead. Jesus was now the teacher whereas before John was the one giving instruction. A change had come into his life and John responded in an admirable way.

John knew that the purpose for his life was not to promote himself but rather to encourage others to see and know Jesus. Now his disciples left to follow Jesus and John put aside any feelings of ambition for himself and rejoiced in this new development. He could rejoice in this because this had been his goal all along.

12. Read verses 37-51. List the disciples mentioned and tell what you learn about them here.

13. Who did these men say that Jesus was? What did they call Him?

14. What especially impressed Nathaniel?

15. Notice the way in which Jesus responds to these first disciples. What qualities do you see in Jesus in these verses that indicate He is a good teacher or leader?

## CONCLUSION

Although this chapter's main focus is the person of Jesus Christ, much of what we read here relates to John the Baptist. He is mentioned in all three sections beginning with verse six which says, "There came a man sent from God whose name was John." John the apostle says that God sent this man and that He had a specific purpose in mind for his life.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus and he did this by talking about repentance: the need of people to "make the way straight." John's responsibility was the unpopular but necessary one of telling people about their sin and the need to be willing to change. He pointed to Jesus who came to take care of the problem of sin by offering His life in payment.

As this study comes to a close remember this:

1. *Jesus is the Creator.* He created all things and this includes all people. He created you. One of the marvels of His creation is that each created being is unique. You are unique. No one else on this earth looks like you, thinks exactly as you do or has the same set of abilities, experiences, and opportunities. As God sent John, and had a particular purpose in mind for his existence, so God has a purpose for you. (See Psalm 138:8 and Psalm 57:2.)
2. *Jesus is the Lamb of God:* In this study we have observed the meekness and humility of John the Baptist. In only one place in the New Testament does Jesus comment on His own temperament and that is Matthew 11:29 where He says, "I am gentle and humble in heart." As the gentle and obedient Lamb of God, Jesus quietly gave His life to pay for our sin. It is belief in this accomplished mission of Jesus for us that gives us eternal life.
3. *Jesus is the Teacher.* As we reflect on what we have learned in this lesson on John chapter one, let us make the choice to let Him teach us and come to Him. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:11, 12).



## LESSON 3

# JESUS' PRESENCE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

*John 2:1-25*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. New Wine at a Wedding (John 2:1-12)

II. Cleansing in the Temple (John 2:13-25)

Conclusion

### OPENER

What is the most embarrassing event you remember from a wedding?

### MEDITATION

Since Jesus is God and He never changes, He knows all about each of us. Years ago David, the king of Israel, became aware of this thought and expressed it in these words:

*"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me... You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely... You hem me in — behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain... How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!"(Psalm 139:1, 3-6, 17).*

David was overwhelmed by God's personal interest in him. Today let us remember that God understood not only David's thoughts and personality but He now sees into all other hearts as well, including yours and mine. As we begin this study, pray David's prayer at the end of Psalm 139:

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

## INTRODUCTION

Two things are important to remember in studying this book. First, the Gospel of John differs from the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in *time* of writing. The first three books of the New Testament were probably written between 25 and 35 years following Jesus' death. John was written much later, perhaps as long as 70 years later.

Second, John's writing has a strong emphasis on *believing*. His purpose in writing is to encourage his readers to believe. We will notice a progression in the quality of belief as well as a contrast in the way in which people responded to Him.

1. Read this chapter to yourself in more than one translation if possible. Two specific incidents in the life of Jesus are told here. Briefly tell what happened in each.

2. If these were the only two accounts you had of events in the life of Jesus, what kind of a person would you say Jesus is?

### I. NEW WINE AT A WEDDING (JOHN 2:1-12)

In the last chapter we saw Andrew, John, Simon Peter, Philip, and Andrew make the choice to follow Jesus and become His disciples. They made this choice on the basis of what they heard Jesus say and also because they were impressed by the statements John the Baptist made about Him. The disciples knew intellectually that Jesus was someone special. Now they are given a unique glimpse of the person of Jesus by watching Him perform a miracle at a wedding.

3. What does this miracle show about Jesus?

4. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a prominent figure in this account of the first miracle of Jesus. Read the verses below which depict some of Mary's earlier experiences. What do you learn about her?

a. Luke 1:26-30, 38, 45

b. Luke 2:19, 33-35, 51

5. How does Jesus' answer to Mary show a difference in thinking between Mary and Jesus?

6. If you were to pattern your prayer life after Mary's approach to Jesus, how could your prayers change? (Look up the following verses on the subject of prayer to help you with an answer: Matthew 6:7, 8; Matthew 7:7-11; John 15:7; John 16:23, 24; Hebrews 11:6.)

7. Mary had a particular problem to bring to Jesus. What need in your life would you like to bring to Him?



Read the following verses and in your own words write down some particular encouragement that you find in these verses:

a. Philippians 4:4-6

b. Ephesians 3:20

8. What was the effect of this miracle on the disciples who were with Jesus?

We can be sure that this event was one which John and Mary (who lived with John after Jesus' death) never forgot. One can imagine them thinking of it and discussing it together years afterwards.

At this point we are told that the disciples "put their faith in Him." What was this faith like? Do you think it was all that Jesus desired? — Probably not. Anyone of us will gladly accept into our lives a person who has a supernatural ability to solve our problems. Jesus has the ability to do this, but *more* is involved in being a disciple than seeing miracles and answers to prayer.

The following incident in the life of Jesus and the lives of the disciples illustrates why some will begin to follow and when they learn more, turn around and go away. Jesus knew this and that is why John says what he does about Him in verses 24 and 25.

9. Look at John 2:24, 25. What do these verses mean to you? Try to put these verses into your own words.

## **II. CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (JOHN 2:13-25)**

This incident takes place in Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jews' most important festival, the Passover.

10. What exactly did Jesus do here that caused such a commotion?

11. What do you find interesting about what Jesus said in verse 16? What does this verse tell you about Jesus?

12. As Jesus took this startling action, John says that His disciples remembered a verse from the Old Testament. Look up Psalm 69:9 and copy it in the space below.

13. Why do you think Jesus was so angry?

14. In what way can our own worship and prayer come to be displeasing to God?

15. The Jews questioned Jesus' authority to take the action He did in the temple. Jesus answered this by telling the Jews that His greatest sign would be His own resurrection from the dead (verse 19). In what way would Jesus' death and resurrection give Him the authority to bring cleansing? (See I John 1:7b.)

16. Look up I Corinthians 3:16; 6:16; and II Corinthians 6:16. What application can be made concerning Jesus' cleansing of the temple and His concern for the kind of life we live?

17. The crowd completely misunderstood Jesus' statement in verse 19. The disciples only understood years later. What lesson is there in this for us?

## CONCLUSION

The actions of Jesus were against something that was going on in the temple that He knew was wrong. Most likely He saw the dishonest practices of people there. Instead of being at the temple to worship God, they were using the time for sacrifice as an opportunity to take advantage of sincere people who had come to worship God.

This chapter gives us a glimpse into two incidents in the early ministry of Jesus. The first, Jesus' turning water into wine, depicts a joyful event which people had no trouble accepting because of the great help it was to a family in avoiding embarrassment. We learn in Mary's example some valuable lessons on the subject of prayer.

The story of Jesus' cleansing of the temple resulted in some bewilderment on the part of the onlookers. This story is a good follow-up to the wedding miracle in that it points out the basic purpose of Jesus' coming.

Jesus came for the purpose of dealing with people's physical needs but more importantly He came because of human spiritual need. The human heart is full of sin and Jesus as God could see into the heart. He could see the sin that was there. As the one perfect man, Jesus came to give His life in payment for the sin of each of us.

It does no good to let Jesus come into our lives only to make our world better. Unless we know Him for who He is, the Lamb of God, His purpose for coming is of no effect in our lives.

In both of these incidents, it was Jesus' presence that made a difference. Does Jesus' presence in your life today make a difference? Whether it is the need for daily cleansing of sin or for answers to prayer, we need to let Him enter our lives and make of us something new. We read in II Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

18. What basic lesson do you feel God has been showing you in studying this chapter?



## LESSON 4

# JESUS TEACHES ABOUT NEW BIRTH

*John 3:1-36*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Nicodemus' Visit with Jesus (John 3:1-21)

II. John the Baptist's Final Witness (John 3:22-36)

Conclusion

### OPENER

Describe a time when you were afraid to ask a question. How did you solve your problem?

### MEDITATION

*"The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple " (Psalm 119:130).*

The Bible is the means that God uses to give us insight into His purpose for our lives.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus, teach me today who you are and how you want me to respond to you. Open my mind and my heart and help me to hear your words to me as I read and study this part of your word. Amen. "

## INTRODUCTION

The apostle John begins his book, not with Jesus' birth, but with the beginning of His public ministry. Up to this point we have seen John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus, the choosing of the disciples, and two specific events witnessed by these followers of Jesus: Jesus turning ordinary water into the best wine at a wedding and Jesus cleansing the temple.

We are told that Jesus did other miraculous signs while in Jerusalem for the Passover. The result was that many people believed in Him.

In spite of all the miracles that Jesus performed while on earth, He always had enemies. One group that aggressively opposed Him was a strict sect of Jews called the Pharisees. The man in chapter three who came by night to see Jesus was a member of this group.

Jesus strongly objected to the practices of the Pharisees. In Matthew 23 we are told some of the reasons why Jesus so vehemently denounced them. (You may want to take time to read this chapter.) Jesus describes them as hypocrites, people who would say one thing and do another. The Pharisees often emphasized insignificant details insisting on their observance. They were often proud, arrogant, and lived for the praise and admiration from others. Jesus' feelings about them are summarized in Matthew 23:28: "On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. We need to keep in mind however that not *everything* about every Pharisee was negative. In the case of Nicodemus we see a number of good qualities. Nicodemus came to Jesus with his questions. He was a searcher after truth, and he listened to what Jesus said to him.

### I. NICODEMUS' VISIT WITH JESUS (JOHN 3:1-21)

Like many Jews, Nicodemus was looking for a Messiah who would come to Israel and set up a political kingdom. This kingdom would bring social reform and solve many of their problems for the Jewish people. Jesus surprises Nicodemus by talking about *spiritual transformation not social reform*.

1. Read the interview between Nicodemus and Jesus. Use the space below to record your observations about this conversation.

2. What did Nicodemus' first statement to Jesus (verse 2) indicate about him?

3. Copy below Jesus' reply to Nicodemus (verse 3). How do you think Nicodemus responded to this statement of Jesus?

4. The basic topic of this section is the new birth. Write down all the facts you can find about the new birth in verses 3-14 by completing this sentence: The *new birth* is...

5. How does the wind resemble the experience of being born again?

6. In explaining the new birth to Nicodemus, Jesus referred to a story in the Old Testament (verse 14). He knew that Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, would be familiar with this incident. Read the account for yourself in Numbers 21:4-9 and answer the following questions:

a. What was the Israelites' problem?

b. What did sick people have to do in order to be delivered from death? (How much effort did this require?)

c. What would happen if a person refused the solution God proposed?



7. Now compare this incident in Numbers to the topic of the new birth by answering these parallel questions:

- a. What is our basic problem? (See Romans 3:23; 7:18.)
  
- b. What is the remedy for our problem? (See Hebrews 12:2; John 3:14, 15.)
  
- c. What happens if a person refuses God's invitation?

In verse 5, Jesus says, "No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

By *water*, Jesus seems to be referring to the baptism of John. Nicodemus would have been familiar with this baptism and would have known that John's baptism signified *repentance*. John had said that his mission was to point out people's sin and their need to "make the way straight" for the coming of the Messiah. When a person was baptized by John it was an acknowledgment of their wrongdoing and the desire to be different.

Repentance has never been a popular topic with people. It wasn't popular with the people of Jesus' day, nor is it to people today.

What does repentance mean? One definition is "a change of mind." Another is "sorrow for sin which leads away from sin to faith in Jesus." In Romans 2:4 we read that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance and II Timothy 2:25 refers to God as the one who grants repentance.

A basic theme of Scripture is that salvation is of God. We cannot even repent without Him. When repentance, a necessary condition for the new birth, is experienced in a life it comes because of the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart. This is the reason Jesus says that the new birth is of *water and the Spirit*.

8. John 3:16 is one of the most familiar verses in the Bible. Look at it again and make a list of the separate truths contained in this verse. (Try to find at least five.)

9. How do verses 17-21 further explain what believing in Jesus is all about?

10. The prophet Habakkuk (2:4) says, "the righteous will live by his faith." What further description do the following references give to a faith that saves?

a. Romans 1:16, 17

b. Galatians 3:10, 11

c. Hebrews 10:38, 39

## **II. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S FINAL WITNESS (JOHN 3:22-36)**

In this second section of the chapter, Jesus and His disciples leave Jerusalem for the Judean countryside. At this time the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist coincide. Both are baptizing as people come to them. Now the direction of John's life begins to take a different turn. The attitude and response of John to this new situation contain meaning for our own lives.

11. What do you think was behind the statement of John's disciples in verse 26; what were their motives?

12. Notice John's response in verses 27-30. Summarize what he told his disciples.

13. In what way is John's reply a lesson to us?

14. What do we learn about Jesus from John's statements about Him in verses 31-36?

15. Verse 36 gives another definition of belief. What is it?

## **CONCLUSION**

All of us know when our birthday is. We have been told the exact day when we physically entered into this world. We know this date because it has been told to us.

More important than this, however, is knowing about a different kind of birth. This is what Jesus wanted Nicodemus to see.

We must know whether or not we are born spiritually. Are we alive? Have we experienced a birth in our spirit? Have we been born from above?

Do you know today that if Jesus sat with you in the flesh, as He did with Nicodemus and were to ask you, "Have you been born again?" that you could answer with assurance and conviction?

This chapter gives us wonderful insight into what God desires concerning our relationship with Him. Yet, like all spiritual truth concerning the infinite God, our finite minds can glimpse only the edge of truth. All truth, which comes from God, has some aspect of mystery and this is nowhere more true than in analyzing the topic of the new birth. Jesus compares it to wind. You hear the sound of the wind and you know it is there and yet there is a mystery about it. We can't completely understand what wind is all about, but we do know that there is such a thing and we can know for ourselves if this new life is active in us or not.

Up to this point in the Gospel of John we have been introduced to who Jesus is. If we accept this record by faith we know that Jesus is our creator since there is nothing made that He has not made. We also know that the purpose for His coming was to deal with our sin.

If sin has never been personal to us, if we have never seen that we personally have, not only a tendency toward wrongdoing and thinking, but are actually helpless not to sin, then the new birth has not taken place in our life. Please read this last sentence again. Does it seem radical to you? Do you believe it is true?

If you have never been aware of your own sin, a challenge for you for this week is to sincerely pray this prayer: "Jesus, show me my sin." Pray this prayer and see what happens. Unless you personally experience the new birth you won't see God. This is what Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. "

Do you have assurance that you are born again? If you do, thank Him for it. If you are not sure, this assurance can be yours. God promises in Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. "

16. In the space below write one sentence that describes the way in which you would define your own relationship to God.

## LESSON 5

# JESUS' WORD BRINGS CHANGE

*John 4:1-54*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Jesus Finds the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-8)

II. Jesus Talks to Her about Living Water (John 4:9-26)

III. She Believes and Brings Others (John 4:27-42)

IV. Jesus Heals a Man's Son (John 4:43-54)

Conclusion

### OPENER

Think of a time you were really thirsty. How did you handle that situation?

### MEDITATION

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18).*

The most satisfying experience on earth is to know God. A wonderful thing happens to us when we spend time with Him through thinking about the words of the Bible. As we see Him, His beauty reflects on us and we become like him.

Prayer: "Jesus, today may I see you. I want to know you. Thank you for your love for me. Thank you that you are the one who comes looking for me. Teach me what true worship is all about. Help me to see myself for what I am and for what you can make of me. In your name. Amen."

**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter Jesus encounters two different people: a woman from Samaria and a royal official with a sick son.

1. Read this chapter, and take note of the outline above and also record below anything that particularly impresses you in the two stories.
  
2. If your Bible has a map of Palestine in the time of Christ, look at it to find the provinces of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Locate the cities of Cana, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Sychar. Also notice the location of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River.
  
3. After you look at a map, answer these questions:
  - a. Where was Jesus when He talked to Nicodemus (John 3)?
  
  - b. Where did Jesus go with His disciples to teach and baptize *after* His conversation with Nicodemus?
  
  - c. We read in John 4:1-3 that Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee. About how far did He and His disciples walk to get to Sychar?

### **I. JESUS FINDS THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (JOHN 4:1-8)**

In looking at this story we need to keep in mind the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews hated the Samaritans. Most Jews when traveling from Judea to Galilee would go east of the Jordan, many miles out of their way to avoid contact with any of the people from Samaria.

This strong racial prejudice had its beginning centuries earlier during the time when the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria. The Jews remaining in Samaria intermarried with the Gentile Assyrians and worshipped other gods. (see II Kings 17:24ff.)

For Jesus to choose deliberately to go through Samaria to get to Galilee must have been surprising to the disciples.

4. What do you think was involved in Jesus' decision to return to Galilee (verses 1-3)?

5. From your reading of this chapter, what kind of a person was this woman from Samaria? In what ways was she *different* than Nicodemus?

6. Set the scene for this conversation. *Where* did it take place, what *time* was it, what *characters* are involved?

7. In verse 4 we read that Jesus "had to go through Samaria." Compare this statement with Jesus' words in Luke 19:5 to a tax collector: "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." What do you learn here about Jesus? (See also John 5:17 and John 14:10.)



## II. JESUS TALKS TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN ABOUT LIVING WATER (JOHN 4:9-26)

Water in the Bible is sometimes used in referring to the presence of God in a person's life. In Jeremiah 2:13 God says that the people have forsaken Him, the "spring of living water;" Isaiah gives this promise in 12:3, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation," and in Isaiah 44:3 God says, "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring."

In order for us to appreciate fresh water to drink, we must be *thirsty*. In the same way, God and the gifts He will give us cannot be appreciated until we have a spiritual thirst. The Psalmist in Psalm 42:1 expresses it like this, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. "

Have you ever felt like this? Have you ever wanted to know God, to be personally acquainted with Him? Do you feel that way today? Let us look at the way in which this Samaritan woman came to know God.

8. Notice that Jesus was alone with this person when He talked to her about living water. He began by asking her to do a favor for Him. In what way is it possible for some people's relationship with God to begin with their "*doing something for God?*"

How does God respond to this motive?

9. What about this Samaritan woman indicates that she had been on a search for personal fulfillment?

10. List the qualities of living water by noticing what Jesus said about it in verses 10, 13, and 14. (Try to find at least five characteristics.)

11. What hindered this woman from receiving the gift of living water (see verses 15-18)? Why do you think Jesus brought up the subject of her husband?

12. When Jesus demonstrates His knowledge of the most intimate details of this woman's life, she concludes that He is a prophet and wants to discuss the topic of worship. In your own words, describe the information Jesus gives in verses 21-24 about true worship.

13. Compare Jesus' description of true worship with what He said about false worship in Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:6-8. How could an awareness of the contrast between true and false worship make a difference in the way you approach God?

14. Do you think this woman had been seeking, in her heart, to know God? Why or why not?

15. The woman at the well referred to Jesus as a man (verse 9), then as a prophet (verse 19). What statement did Jesus Himself make to her concerning His identity (verses 25, 26)?

**III. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN BELIEVES AND BRINGS OTHERS TO JESUS (JOHN 4:27-42)**

The disciples returned to Jesus with food and found Him speaking to a woman. They reacted with surprise but asked Him no questions about what had taken place.

16. How do we know that the woman at the well experienced a real change in her heart?

17. In verses 31-38 Jesus has a discussion with His disciples about food. What do you think Jesus is seeking to teach them?

18. We are told that Jesus stayed for two more days in Samaria and others came to believe. What caused them to believe? (See also John 6:63.)

19. The people of Samaria were influenced by what the woman told them about Jesus. Who in your life has been influential in introducing you to Jesus? Is there one specific person for whom you would like to thank God?

**IV. JESUS HEALS A MAN'S SON—AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE FAITH (JOHN 4:43-54)**

This miracle is the second sign in the Gospel of John and took place in the same city where Jesus turned water into wine. Just as the *words* of Jesus brought a change to the people of Samaria, the *word* of Jesus, believed by this man, brought healing to his son. This incident gives us a good illustration of the kind of faith God looks for.

20. Describe in your own words the way in which this miracle took place.

21. What qualities do you admire in this royal official?

22. Look at Romans 6:16, 17 and I Peter 1:2. What relationship does *faith* have to *obedience*.

## **CONCLUSION**

After hearing the words of Jesus, the people from Samaria said, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Jesus didn't come to this world simply to be a great example to us and to live a good life. He came to be our Savior. In His conversation with a religious Jew, Jesus said that God loved the world and sent His Son to save everyone who believes. The events of John 4 reveal that Jesus came to save both those who thought that they were already good and those like the Samaritan woman who knew that they weren't.

Faith is taking Jesus at His word and acting on what He has told us. God promises that we will be blessed as we believe that what He has told us is true.

23. What to you has been the most important thing you have learned or seen in John 4?



## LESSON 6

# JESUS REVEALS HIS AUTHORITY

*John 5:1-47*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. The Words of Jesus Bring Healing (John 5:1-15)

II. Jesus Tells about Himself and His Father (John 5:16-30)

III. Jesus Gives Witnesses to Prove that He is the Son of God (John 5:31-47)

Conclusion

### OPENER

What would you do if you had a “magic wand?”

### MEDITATION

As God’s child, you are loved by Him and precious in His sight. Allow Him to bless and encourage you through the two benedictions (or blessings) given below:

*“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (II Thessalonians 2:16, 17).*

*“May the God of peace... equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen ” (Hebrews 13:20,21).*

Meditate on these verses for a few moments. Then write out your own prayer in the space below.



4. What technique did Jesus use to heal this man (verses 6-9)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. The words of Jesus brought about the healing. What does this tell us about the authority and power of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Look up the following references and tell what you learn in them about the authority of Jesus:
  - a. Matthew 28:18
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Philippians 2:9, 10
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. I Peter 3:22
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What criticism did Jesus receive after this miracle was performed? What evaluation do you make of this?



8. Why do you think Jesus came a second time to find the man who had been healed (verses 13-15)?

Notice that in this story Jesus didn't come to this location and make a loud command which immediately brought healing to every person who was ill or in pain.

Illness can be the result of our own personal sin or disobedience to God; or it can be present simply because we are a part of this fallen world which is characterized by imperfection and disease.

This chapter shows us that Jesus not only can bring physical healing (which is only temporary at best since all of us will someday die), but He gives to any who believe in Him something even better than physical healing. Jesus gives spiritual healing which leads to a life that is eternal and goes on forever.

In the following verses Jesus tells His audience more about Himself and about the spiritual healing He brings.

## **II. JESUS TELLS ABOUT HIMSELF AND HIS FATHER (JOHN 5:16-30)**

Can you identify with the following experience? With anticipation you have planned to do some favor or give a certain gift to a person you know. You do this out of love for that person and with a desire to bring them pleasure.

After you have carried out your plans, you learn that not only was the gift not appreciated or acknowledged, but your action provoked misunderstanding on the part of someone else who observed your generosity. How would you react?

The above illustration relates to the situation in which Jesus found Himself after He had healed the man at the pool. We aren't told exactly what the man's own response to Jesus was after his healing. We do know, however, that Jesus' actions precipitated intense anger on the part of the Jews.

Jesus' response was to focus on His own relationship to His Father and on the work that He had been given to do.

9. Jesus' enemies never forgave Him for two things. What are they (verse 18)?

10. Verses 19-27 describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. As you read, list what you find about each of the topics below:

*What the Father Does:*

*What the Son Does:*

11. What kind of death is Jesus talking about in verse 25?

12. What two things are required for a person to have eternal life and "cross over from death to life" (verse 24)?

13. In verse 30, Jesus says, "I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." How can we apply this statement to our own attitudes? (See II Corinthians 5:6-10, 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6, and Romans 15:1-3.)

14. In what way do you see Jesus express His authority in this section (verses 19-30)?

### III. JESUS GIVES WITNESSES TO PROVE THAT HE IS THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 5:31-47)

In a certain sense, Jesus was on trial as He stood before these Jews and talked to them. These were the religious people of the day and yet they were looking at the wrong thing. They did not see that the Father was working to change hearts and bring new life.

Do we need to pray, "Lord, show *me* what the Father is doing" (verses 17, 19-21)? Are we ever in danger of missing the point and "majoring in minors" as these religious men were doing? Describe some possible ways.

15. In what way can we be guilty of making the same mistake in judgment as these Jews did after Jesus performed this miracle of healing?

16. Read verses 31-47. Jesus lists His witnesses to prove He is the Son of God. Find these *four* witnesses in verses 33, 36, 37, 39 and write them below.

17. How did the Jews err in the way in which they studied Scriptures (verses 39, 40)?

18. How do you think it is possible to study the Bible and yet not find eternal life?

19. Because He is God, Jesus saw into the hearts of these men. He diagnosed the cause of their unbelief and in His customary way of speaking the truth He told them what was wrong. List the things that are involved in *unbelief* by reading verses 37-47 and completing this sentence in as many ways as you can:

A person who does not possess saving faith...

(example) 1. Doesn't hear God's voice (v. 37b)

20. In verses 45-47 Jesus gives the Jews one final witness that pointed to who He was. Who was this other witness?

21. Read Deuteronomy 18:15-20. What do you find interesting in these verses? In what way do they point to Jesus?

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus, in this chapter, made a lame man well, but He Himself was subject to painful misunderstanding. He experienced what it was like to be, not only unaccepted, but bitterly hated by “good” religious people.

In facing this opposition, Jesus spoke the truth. He did not apologize for His actions or try to change them to fit the desires of unbelieving people. He was conscious of who He was and of the mission that had been given Him to accomplish during the years He was on earth.

Jesus took time to explain His actions even to His enemies. The reason He did this was because He wanted them to be saved (verse 34).

22. After studying this chapter, think about what you have learned. What one lesson do you feel God wants you to act upon?

## LESSON 7

# JESUS GIVES TRUE SATISFACTION - THE BREAD

*John 6:1-71*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Jesus Provides Food for a Crowd (John 6:1-15)

II. The Disciples' Stormy Crossing (John 6:16-21)

III. The Next Day — Jesus' Discourse on the Bread of Life (John 6:22-71)

Conclusion

### OPENER

Discuss the best meal that you've ever eaten.

### MEDITATION

In the last lesson we saw Jesus demonstrating the authority He had been given as the Son of God. Jesus, the only one who never changes has the same kind of authority today. Think of this in connection with these two promises of Jesus:

*"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life "* (John 4:14).

*"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty"* (John 6:35).

Prayer: "I confess Jesus, that so many times I have looked to something else and not to you to give me satisfaction. Please forgive me. Help me today to come to you, to listen to what you want me to hear and to experience the complete rest that you promise. Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this account of the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus' discourse on the purpose for His life, we see large crowds of people following Him. Notice the contrast between this and the mass exodus at the end of this chapter. John says in verse 66, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him," and Jesus asks the twelve, "You do not want to leave too, do you?"

The ability Jesus demonstrated in providing plenty of food for this great crowd of people was miraculous. What was it that caused all these people to change their minds about Him?

### I. JESUS PROVIDES FOOD FOR A CROWD (JOHN 6:1-15)

In this story we see a picture of Jesus as the perfect host. He not only graciously receives unexpected visitors, but He sees to it that all of His guests are properly provided for.

1. Read this entire chapter keeping in mind the outline above. Write down your initial observations.

2. This miracle is the only one recorded by all four gospels. Probably more people were touched by this event than by any other in the early ministry of Jesus. About how many people would you estimate were on this hillside with Jesus? (See also Matthew 14:21.)

3. Why had these people come? How are people today often like this crowd?

4. Think about Jesus' actions in verses 5-15. What do you learn about Him from observing the way in which He responded to this particular need?

5. What overall lesson do you think this miracle was meant to convey?

## **II. THE DISCIPLES' STORMY CROSSING (JOHN 6:16-21)**

Jesus had earlier asked Philip a question in order to test him (verse 6). After the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, the disciples are further tested by an experience they have on the Sea of Galilee.

6. Read again verses 16-21. Compare these verses with the parallel account of this story in Mark 6:45-52. In your own words briefly describe what happened that evening.

7. What do you think Jesus was trying to teach the disciples through this incident?

8. Has there been a time in your life when God has used stormy circumstances to get your attention or to test your faith in Him? What has the experience of being tested done for you?



**III. THE NEXT DAY — JESUS’ DISCOURSE ON THE BREAD OF LIFE (JOHN 6:22-71)**

We know that the Jews were looking for a messiah who would be their leader and take care of them. When they saw Jesus’ miraculous deeds, many believed that the time had come. They wanted a king and they intended to take steps to put Jesus in that position (see verse 15). Because of this, they searched for Jesus and found Him on the other side of the lake.

The day before, Jesus had created fish and bread for thousands of people; now He uses what He has done as an object lesson to point out basic principles of saving faith.

9. The people asked three questions (verses 25-34). Read these verses and find the three questions and Jesus’ reply to each.

*Question*

*Jesus’ Answer*

10. In verse 34, what is the request the people ask of Jesus and why do you think they asked it?

11. List what Jesus says about the living bread in verses 35-40 and 48-51.

12. Jesus looked at these people and made this statement about them: “You have seen me and still you do not believe” (verse 36). Explain how Jesus could make this same statement concerning our relationship to Him?

13. In verse 37-57, Jesus makes numerous references to the Father. What can you know about God from the statements Jesus makes here?

14. List what is involved in true faith by reading verses 37-51 and completing this sentence in as many ways as you can: A person who possesses saving faith...  
(example) 1. Comes to Jesus (verse 37)

15. Jesus, in referring to Himself as the Bread of Life, describes many blessings that come to the one who believes. Which verse in this section especially encourages you? Copy that verse below.

16. What two objections did the Jews have to Jesus' words? (See verses 41-42 and verse 52.)

17. How do you explain their failure to understand what Jesus was talking about?

18. What are the reasons people today misunderstand Jesus' words or the Scriptures?

19. Why are the words Jesus speaks important (see verses 63, 68)?

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life." Why did He use these words to describe Himself?

When we eat physical bread we take it inside ourselves, we are nourished and in digesting that bread it becomes a part of us. When we by faith take Jesus into our lives, a change takes place within us. We find that the spiritual hunger for fulfillment is uniquely satisfied. We have grown tired of the "empty calories" that the world has been feeding us and we find that *only Jesus satisfies*.

Because we are not in Heaven yet and are living in a fallen world we are the particular prey of our enemy Satan. We need often to be reminded to come to Jesus and allow Him to feed us through His Word. Jesus says, "the one who feeds on me will live because of me." What a privilege that we have this Word available to us each day for study.

In this sixth chapter of John we have Jesus' wonderful promise of complete acceptance of anyone who comes to Him and the assurance that we won't be disappointed by what He gives us.

20. How have you been fed today through the words of Jesus in the book of John? What difference will this make in your thoughts or your actions?

## LESSON 8

# OPPOSITION INCREASES IN JERUSALEM

*John 7:1-52*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Before the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1-13)

II. The Middle of the Feast (John 7:14-36)

III. The Last Day of the Feast (John 7:37-52)

Conclusion

### OPENER

Where would you like to go for a vacation if you could go anywhere in the world?

### MEDITATION

Earlier in His ministry Jesus spoke privately to a woman from Samaria. He told her about living water that He could give to anyone who asked for it.

In the chapter we are about to study, Jesus publicly gives an invitation to come to Him. He says, *"If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."* John tells us in the next verse (verse 39) that Jesus was referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit which would be given to all who believe.

When we believe, the Holy Spirit is within us. The writers of the New Testament never mentioned a desire to have Jesus back with them in the flesh. Why didn't they? Because after Jesus had returned to Heaven, and Pentecost had taken place, believers had Jesus *within* them through the gift of the Holy Spirit. They didn't ask to see Jesus again because they knew that having the Spirit was so much better.

Before reading John 7, take time to meditate on God's goodness to you. Thank Him for His written word, for Jesus, God's word in flesh, and for the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you as you spend time studying the Scripture.

## INTRODUCTION

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of three Jewish pilgrimage feasts which all males were required to attend (see Exodus 34:18, 22-24). This feast, the third, was also known as the Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Booths. It was to take place in the seventh month, after the harvest had been gathered in. Families were to gather together in booths for seven days to celebrate. This was to be an occasion of great joy and a time for all Jews to remember what God had done and thank Him. (See also Leviticus 23:39-44.)

Instructions regarding this feast had been given to the Israelites through Moses. As time went on, certain ceremonies came to be added by the Jews to this celebration. The most well-known was called the festival of the drawing of water. At one point in the seven days, a golden pitcher was filled with water from the Pool at Siloam. This pitcher was brought to the priest who poured out this water into a basin. The people watched and shouted with joy as they saw the water being poured out. Could it be that at the time this water was poured out, Jesus stood up and made His proclamation about the living water?

The great theme of the Feast of Tabernacles was that of rejoicing. If the Jews had understood all that Jesus' presence in Jerusalem meant, they would have rejoiced.

1. Read this entire chapter and record in the space below any verse that especially impresses you.

### I. BEFORE THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (JOHN 7:1-13)

2. How do you explain the fact that Jesus told His brothers that He was not going to Jerusalem and yet later did go?

3. John tells us in verse 5 that the advice of Jesus' brothers indicated their lack of faith in Him. What didn't they understand about Jesus?

4. In answering His brothers, Jesus said, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right." What does His reply teach about the difference between the brothers' view of time and Jesus'?

5. Read Proverbs 16:9, Psalm 31:15, and Psalm 139:16. In what way is there a difference between the believer's outlook on his time and that of the person without faith?

6. Is there someone in your life, someone among your acquaintances that you feel lives with this sense of the daily presence of God? How has their example influenced you?

7. Jesus was conscious of the hatred directed toward Him. What did He see as the reason the world hated Him (verse 7)?

8. What do you learn from each of the following passages about the response of the world toward a disciple of Jesus?

a. Matthew 10:24, 34-37

b. I John 3:12, 13

c. Luke 6:26

9. Two opinions of Jesus are expressed in verses 12 and 13. What are they? What could each of these statements indicate about a person holding this view of Jesus?

## **II. THE MIDDLE OF THE FEAST (JOHN 7:14-36)**

Intensity of hatred toward Jesus had greatly increased since Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem. Jesus knew that the chief priests and Pharisees intended to stop what He was doing by killing Him. In spite of what He knew, however, Jesus chose to go to this dangerous place to take part in celebrating the feast.

How blind these people were to their own wrong-doing. What hypocrisy there was in their motives. They were angry with Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath and referred to God as His Father. Yet they were plotting to commit a murder.

Notice the perfect confidence that Jesus demonstrates in this difficult situation.

10. Read these verses again and opposite each group mentioned below, list what they had to say about Jesus:

a. The Jews (verse 15)

b. The crowd (verse 20)

c. Some of the people (verse 25)

11. Jesus spoke out against two laws of which the Jews were guilty. What were they (verse 19 and verse 24)?

12. Try to imagine yourself as one of the people in Jerusalem listening to what Jesus had to say. Make a list of the various truths Jesus was teaching.

13. What do you learn from verse 17 about one reason for a person's failure to grasp spiritual truth? Has this ever been true of you?



While teaching at the feast, Jesus had boldly proclaimed the relationship He had to His Father (see verses 28 and 29). A twofold result followed. Some tried unsuccessfully to seize Him; others “put their faith in Him.” Some resented the authority of Jesus; others bowed in submission.

When people are confronted with who Jesus really is, they make a choice. The actions they take indicate the decision they have made.

### **III. THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST (JOHN 7:37-52)**

In speaking of the Jews who intended to arrest Him, Jesus said that they would look and be unable to find Him. That time was yet in the future. Now at this special time with all these people assembled, Jesus gave an invitation.

14. What is there to indicate that Jesus made an effort to be heard as He spoke these words on the “last and greatest day of the Feast” (verse 37)?

15. What do you think Jesus meant by talking about thirst as a condition for coming to Him? How does one become spiritually thirsty?

16. Jesus promised that if a person believed in Him, “streams of living water would flow from within him” (verse 38). In what way have you experienced this in your own life?

17. We are told that Jesus’ statement here was prophetic in that He was referring to the Holy Spirit which would later be given to anyone who believed. Today we live in a time when the Holy Spirit is available to us. Read John 14:16, 17, 26. What is the Holy Spirit’s work?

Because Jesus, not any group or person, determined the time when He would be taken, the temple guards were unsuccessful in carrying out their orders (see verses 30 and 44). The guards came back to the Jewish leaders to tell them what had happened.

18. These guards had also heard Jesus' teaching. What effect did it have on them?

19. In general, it was the common people who believed. The religious leaders were suspicious. Why do you think this was the case? In what ways can this be true today?

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, we see a picture of Jesus walking in obedience to the will of His Father. As always He was conscious of the Father's presence with Him in the things He said and did.

Despite opposition from unbelieving family and fellow countrymen, Jesus continued to teach the truth. The result was that some came to trust Him, but others turned away.

20. What difference will Jesus' teaching and His actions in this chapter make in your life? What important lesson is most helpful to you in this part of Scripture?



## LESSON 9

# JESUS TEACHES ABOUT TRUE FREEDOM

*John 8:1-59*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Jesus Responds to a Case of Adultery (John 8:1-11) (Freedom from Punishment of Sin)

II. Jesus Debates with the Jews (John 8:12-47)

A. Freedom from Walking in Darkness - v. 12-20

B. Freedom from Death - v. 21-30

C. Freedom from Guilt - v. 31-38

D. Freedom from Satan's Domination - v. 39-47

III. The Jews Continue to Reject Him (John 8:48-59)

Conclusion

### OPENER

What does freedom mean to you?

### MEDITATION

Jesus always spoke the truth. In this chapter He describes Himself as *"a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God"* (verse 40). Later in verse 46 Jesus says, *"If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?"*

Can we just now think of Jesus as speaking these words to us? If He tells us the truth, why don't we believe Him? Before beginning this study, take a few moments to think about this question; then pray the prayer below:

*"Jesus, you have told me that you always speak the truth. I do believe what you say, but I need your help in seeing where I need to trust in you more completely. Thank you for your word and for the Holy Spirit. Teach me to know you, the one who is the truth and who can give true freedom. Amen."*

## INTRODUCTION

After the Feast of Tabernacles was over, we are told that “each went to his own home” (John 7:53), but “Jesus went to the Mount of Olives” (John 8:1). This was a favorite place of retreat for Jesus; He went there often to be alone and to pray. It was here that He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:37-41), and it was here that He agonized in prayer the night before He died (Matthew 26).

Early in the morning, at dawn, Jesus returned to the temple and began to teach. It wasn't long before He was interrupted, Jewish religious leaders came to challenge Jesus trying to trip Him up. In the midst of this opposition, Jesus spoke words of comfort about who He was to anyone who would listen and believe.

1. Read this entire chapter. Read it aloud if possible. Use the space below to record your own observations or applications.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The outline at the beginning of this lesson lists five areas in which Jesus gives freedom. Find one verse in each section that supports each statement.
  - a. Freedom from punishment for sin (v. 1-11)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Freedom from walking in darkness (v. 12-20)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Freedom from death (v. 21-30)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Freedom from guilt (v. 31-38)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - e. Freedom from Satan's domination (v. 39-47)

3. A key verse in John 8 is verse 36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Think about what this means, try to rephrase it in your own words.

### **I. JESUS RESPONDS TO A CASE OF ADULTERY (JOHN 8:1-11)**

4. Try to imagine yourself in the woman's place as she had this encounter with Jesus. What words would you use to describe her emotions?

Notice the difficult position Jesus is in by being forced to deal with this situation. The Jews knew that His answer, either way, could get Him into trouble. If He said, "Don't stone her," He would be contradicting a clear statement of Moses. If He made the judgment to stone her, He would be disobeying a Roman law which forbade this.

5. Are you curious about what Jesus was doing as He bent down to make marks in the dirt? What do you think He might have been writing?

6. In verse 7 Jesus said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Has awareness of your own sin ever kept you from being critical of someone else? What specific example comes to mind?

7. Do you think that Jesus' words in verse 7 mean that we should never speak out against the sin of others? When is speaking out against sin appropriate?

## II. JESUS DEBATES WITH THE JEWS (JOHN 8:12-47)

### *John 8:12-20*

8. What does Jesus promise in verse 12? What are the *conditions* for this promise?

What do you think it means to follow Jesus?

9. Is the goal of your life to do what you wrote as your answer to the question? In what way?

10. The first accusation that the Pharisees made against Jesus was that since He was speaking on His own behalf, His words could not be relied on for accuracy. Put in your own words the answer Jesus gives to this accusation (verse 14-18).

**John 8:21-30**

11. Jesus' aim in His teaching was to point to Himself so that His hearers would begin to understand who He was and put their faith in Him. List all that you learn about Jesus from studying verses 21-30.

12. How would you describe the attitude or response to Jesus on the part of those who heard Him that day in the temple?

13. Jesus, in verse 24, gives a strong warning. Copy that verse in the space below.

**John 8:31-38**

14. Because some of the Jews indicated a desire to put their faith in Him, Jesus went on in His teaching to describe what it really meant to be a disciple of His. He said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples" (verse 31 RSV). What does this statement of Jesus mean to you? (See also John 15:5-8.)



15. Jesus said that the result of continuing in His word would be knowing the truth and then being set free. Have you experienced this? What truth has set *you* free recently?

16. The Jews were confused when Jesus talked about being set free. They immediately thought of physical slavery while Jesus was referring to something different. What further teaching did Jesus give about true freedom in verses 34-38?

***John 8:39-47***

17. The Jews looked to Abraham as their spiritual father and therefore they thought of him when Jesus said, "You do what you have heard from your father" (verse 38). What did these Jews do that proved they were not true sons of Abraham (verses 39-41)?

According to Galatians 3:7, who *are* the true sons of Abraham?

18. Jesus was always aware of the real source of the opposition He faced. How does he describe Satan in verses 44-47?

### III. THE JEWS CONTINUE TO REJECT JESUS (JOHN 8:48-59)

This chapter begins with the Pharisees and teachers of the law threatening to stone a woman who had been caught in adultery; as the chapter concludes, the Jews pick up stones to attempt to kill Jesus. All of their reasoning had failed and their unbelief and hatred led them to resort to violence. Throughout this chapter we see a contrast between truth as presented by Jesus and the lies that dominated the actions of Jesus' enemies.

19. Read verses 48-59 and notice the way in which Jesus' words are a summary of what He has stated earlier in this discussion. List in the space below the claims that Jesus makes about Himself.

### CONCLUSION

People experience many different kinds of bondage. Even in a free country, many live in bondage to worry, to guilt, to fear, or to bitterness. We may fear the opinions of others, or we may anguish over disappointments in people or circumstances, and this, too, can be a type of imprisonment.

Just as a prisoner in a jail cannot be free until someone else takes a key and opens up the lock on the door, so spiritually we need someone outside of ourselves to bring us freedom. When we are "locked up" spiritually, we can complain and rattle the bars on our cage all we want, but it is useless. The only hope is help from the outside.

Jesus is able to free us. Whatever our bondage is spiritually, He is the only one who can bring release. He is able to change our circumstances or to change *us* so that we are set free from whatever kind of bondage we face.

20. In what specific area of your life have you experienced being set free by Jesus? Where do you sense bondage and the need for deliverance?



## LESSON 10

# A BLIND MAN SEES

*John 9:1-41*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. The Healing (John 9:1-12)

II. The Opposition (John 9:13-34)

III. The Comfort (John 9:35-41)

Conclusion

### OPENER

How would you describe a color to someone who is blind?

### MEDITATION

In a letter, John the apostle wrote these words, *"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin"* (I John 1:5-7).

As you consider these words from I John, use the space below to write out a prayer thanking God for what He has given you, asking Him to enable you in your study of John, chapter 9.

## INTRODUCTION

In order for the Bible to make sense, we must start with the attitude that the words we read and study are for *us*. It has been written for you and for me as individual people (see Romans 15:4).

The Bible is filled with examples of people who, in the midst of difficult circumstances, learned that the words of God could be trusted. These people were actual individuals. We could mention Noah, or Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Esther, Ruth, Jonah, Hannah, Mary, Peter, or Paul as well as countless others. In each life story can be found some unique opportunity to demonstrate the power of God as these people trusted in Him.

We remember from the time we began this study that the theme of this book centers around the thought that *believing* in Jesus as the Son of God results in eternal life. We find this same theme repeated throughout the Bible. Paul, in Romans 1:17 says, "In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is *by faith from first to last*, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" [Italics mine].

In John 9, Jesus comes to a man with a physical deformity that had determined the course of his life since his birth. We aren't told this man's name, but in learning about his experience with Jesus we see true faith in action.

1. Read this chapter to yourself and as you do so, write your own observations and applications in the space below.

### I. THE HEALING (JOHN 9:1-12)

Jesus, still in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles, has been teaching in the temple and answering the accusations made against him by Jewish leaders. In His teaching, Jesus had claimed to be the "light of the world," spoke of His Father and challenged His hearers to know true freedom by accepting the truth of His words. He promised that whoever would keep His word would never see death. The man Jesus found, a blind beggar near the temple, probably had been listening to the teaching of Jesus.

2. Read Jesus' claim in John 8:12. In what way was this healing an object lesson for Jesus' earlier teaching?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you think this person was a believer when Jesus found him? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Compare this healing of a blind person with the healings described in Matthew 9:27-30 and Mark 10:46-52. What differences do you see?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. John tells us that Jesus made some mud, put it on the man's eyes, and told him to go to the pool of Siloam to wash himself (verses 6, 7). Why do you think Jesus used this particular method to heal this man?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. The man Jesus found had been hampered with a physical handicap for many years. What reason for affliction does Jesus allude to in verse 3?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What *benefits* of affliction have you seen in your life or in the life of someone you know?

8. Read II Corinthians 4:4-6 and describe spiritual sight and blindness. (What is the cause, what is the result of each?)

9. What was necessary for this man to receive his sight? How is this a lesson to us (See Romans 1:5; Jeremiah 7:23; and Acts 5:29)?

After the man was able to see, he became the object of much discussion. His acquaintances asked the man what had happened, and when he told them, they asked him where Jesus was. The man didn't know. Perhaps the reason he didn't know was that he had only *heard* Jesus, he hadn't seen Him. He didn't know what He looked like.

## **II. THE OPPOSITION (JOHN 9:13-34)**

A great change had come into the life of this man. Through an act of creation, Jesus had given him a priceless gift, the ability to see.

As is so often the case, the removal of one major problem or handicap led to a new set of challenges.

10. What were the problems now facing this man? List or describe his difficulties in verses 13-34.

11. When asked to express his opinion of Jesus, the man said, "He is a prophet" (verse 17). According to Deuteronomy 18:18, 22, what characterized a true prophet?

Notice the *progression* of this man's faith in his description of Jesus. In verse 11 he calls Jesus a man, in verse 17 a prophet, and in verse 38 he calls him Lord. Our view of Jesus often indicates the kind of relationship we have with Him.

12. To continue their investigation, the Pharisees interview the man's parents. What do you think of their reply to questions about their son?

13. Intellectual arguments prevented the Pharisees from accepting the truth and believing in Jesus. What did they feel they needed to understand in order to believe?

How is it possible to believe without understanding everything?

14. What did the Pharisees do to the healed man (verses 28 and 34)? How would you describe his response to the treatment he received?

15. This man knew what God had done for him and that knowledge gave him boldness in the face of persecution. How can this be true for us?



16. The Lord, in Romans 8:35-37, gives this promise to a child of God, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." We know that the Christian life does involve hardship. Look up II Timothy 3:12 and copy this verse in the space below. How do Christians experience this verse today? How do you?

17. What else do you learn about persecution and affliction in the following verses:

a. John 15:20, 21

b. I Peter 4:12-14

c. Romans 5:3-5

d. James 1:2-4

18. Read John 9:30-33 again and put in your own words this man's answer to the unbelieving Jews.

How does verse 31 encourage you to take prayer more seriously?

### III. THE COMFORT (JOHN 9:35-41)

19. Why do you think Jesus came to find this man? What does His action here teach you about Jesus?

20. What did this communion with Jesus do for the man who had been born blind?

21. Why did Jesus say the Jews were guilty (verse 41)?

22. Do you agree with this statement of G. Campbell Morgan: "What happened that day was not that organized religion excommunicated a man. It was that a man in fellowship with Jesus excommunicated organized religion" (*The Gospel According to John*, p. 170)?

**CONCLUSION**

The power of God was displayed in this man's life as he was given the gift of sight. The even greater gift to him, however, was new vision to see who Jesus was. With eyes of faith he saw Jesus as the Son of God and worshipped Him.

The secret to walking by faith is to keep our eyes on Jesus. The writer in Hebrews 12:1-3 says, "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ... Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. "

Following Jesus means to obey Him. We must obey when the result is a blessing; we must obey when the result is persecution.

23. What basic lessons do you feel God has been teaching you in studying this chapter?

## LESSON 11

# JESUS IS THE TRUE SHEPHERD

*John 10:1-42*

### OUTLINE

Introduction

I. Jesus Describes His Relationship to Those Who Believe (John 10:1-21)

II. Jesus Talks to the Jews about their Unbelief (John 10:22-42)

Conclusion

### OPENER

Describe the best teacher you ever had.

### MEDITATION

Take a few moments to focus your mind on the Lord's personal care for His people by reading Psalm 23. Think about what these words mean and use them to help you worship as you come into His presence.

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

## INTRODUCTION

In John 8 Jesus declared that He was the light of the world. Soon after making this statement, He found a man who was born blind and healed him. We noticed the progression of faith in the healed man as he first describes Jesus as a man (9:11), then as a prophet (9:17), and then as Lord (9:38).

Believing in Jesus is to have the eyes of our hearts opened. True faith involves worship. It means that we trust Him, we know that what He says is true, and we come to rely more and more on Jesus *alone* for the needs in our life.

Jesus' promise is that anyone who follows Him will not walk in darkness. After healing our blindness, which is caused by sin and our refusal to acknowledge Him, Jesus lets us know that He will be with us to protect us and guide us. First He heals us spiritually, then He becomes the shepherd that leads us.

In John 10 we find Jesus' teaching about His care for those who trust Him. These words were intended for the disciples, the healed man, and for others who had come to believe on Him. They also are meant for those of us today who want to follow Him.

1. Read through John 10 and look for a key verse. Write it in the space below.

### I. JESUS DESCRIBES HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE (JOHN 10:1-21)

When a newborn baby joins a family, years of care are needed to enable growth. In the same way, the spiritual life that Jesus creates within us requires nurturing if it is to grow to maturity. This is what Jesus had in mind when He taught the people using this allegory about the shepherd and the sheep.

The particular situation Jesus was referring to was familiar to His hearers. In and around Jerusalem shepherds could be seen, each caring for their particular flock of sheep. These sheep were completely dependent on the shepherd who owned them and took care of them. In the evening, the sheep were led into a pen or sheepfold. This enclosure also held sheep belonging to other flocks. A watchman was assigned to guard the door until the shepherd came to claim his own sheep in the morning.



5. Jesus wants the sheep (the true believers) to be aware of danger but also to know what He does in caring for them. Complete the following sentence in as many ways as you can by studying verses 1-16:

As the good and true shepherd, Jesus...

6. As you think about Jesus' work in the life of the believer, in what areas *do you* sense a need to know Him more completely?

7. Jesus teaches that He is the shepherd of the sheep but also points to Himself as the way into the sheepfold. In verse 7 He says, "I am the gate for the sheep." In your own words describe what you think Jesus meant by this statement.

8. If we think of the sheepfold as the place of membership in God's family, what other gates or doors do people try to use to get in?

9. We can also look at this picture of the shepherd and his sheep from the viewpoint of the sheep. Sheep represent true believers. How does Jesus describe His sheep in this section?

After these words of Jesus, we are told that Jesus again became the object of controversy. Many accused Him of being demon-possessed or raving mad, unworthy of being taken seriously. Modern words to describe such a person would be mentally ill, psychotic, paranoid, or deviant. What are some situations where believers today are given such labels?

## **II. JESUS TALKS TO THE JEWS ABOUT THEIR UNBELIEF (JOHN 10:22-42)**

Someone has said that the greatest sin is that of unbelief. The Jews in Jesus' day were guilty of this sin and it caused them to miss out on all that Jesus came to give to them. We need to take this as a warning for ourselves and ask: Is there any area in my life in which I am deliberately choosing not to believe?

The occasion of this incident was the Feast of Dedication. This feast was instituted long after the time of Moses. It commemorated the rededication of the Temple after the symbols of idolatry had been removed by Judas Maccabeus in 168 B.C.

This conversation of Jesus with the Jews probably took place about two or three months after Jesus' earlier discourse on the good shepherd.

10. What do you think of the question the Jews brought to Jesus (verse 24)? How would you describe the kind of attitude they had as they gathered around Him?

11. Jesus saw clearly the purpose for the miracles He performed: They were the proof of who He was. What does Jesus say about the miracles in verses 25, 32, and 38?

12. What impresses you about Jesus' conduct toward these Jews as they come to question Him?



13. Jesus said to these Jews, “You do not believe because you are not my sheep” (verse 26). In what sense does a person have to choose to follow the shepherd before he knows what it is all about (see Psalm 111:10, I Corinthians 1:18, II Corinthians 4:4)?

14. In this section and in the earlier discourses, Jesus makes the statement that His sheep *listen to His voice*. What does this mean to you?

15. List the privileges or blessings in being a part of Jesus’ flock (verses 27-29).

16. What do you think Jesus meant in verses 34-36?

17. Which verses in this chapter tell you that Jesus was not a victim of circumstances, that He was always in control of what happened to Him?

## CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with Jesus' warning against thieves and robbers who desire to come into a company of believers and bring them harm. As the Good Shepherd who came to give His life for the sheep, He was concerned about what could happen to them after He left.

Jesus recognized people's need for someone to lead them. In Matthew 9:36, 37 it is written, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion...because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said...The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord...to send out workers into his harvest field."

We can be thankful for Christian leaders who are true shepherds, who follow Jesus themselves and care for the sheep as they themselves are fed and nourished through fellowship with the Chief Shepherd (see I Peter 5:2-4). We are to thank God for such leaders and we are to support and encourage them.

Jesus is concerned that His sheep draw close to Him. They need to spend time with Him so that they learn to recognize His voice.

We are safe as we listen to the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him.

18. What false teaching have you recently been made aware of? Where does false teaching originate?

19. Maturity is the goal God has in mind for us. He wants us to mature so that we can "shepherd" other sheep. *Who* in your life has shepherded you? Has God given you someone to shepherd? What has this experience done for you?

20. Write here one blessing that has come to you from studying John 10.



## LESSON 12

# **BELIEVING IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH**

*John 11:1-57*

### **OUTLINE**

Introduction

I. The Message to Jesus (John 11:1-16)

II. The Meeting with Martha and Mary (John 11:17-37)

III. The Miracle - Lazarus is Raised (John 11:38-44)

IV. The Murder Plot (John 11:45-57)

Conclusion

### **OPENER**

How would you change the world to make it better, if you had enough power?

### **MEDITATION**

*"Our Savior, Christ Jesus ... has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10).*

Jesus said in John 11:25, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*

No other person has ever been worthy of making such a claim as this one. Think about what this promise of Jesus means to you and then use the space below to write out a brief prayer before beginning this study

## INTRODUCTION

In earlier studies we have noted that the Gospel of John tells about seven miracles performed by Jesus. John calls these miracles signs. Up to this point, we have seen Jesus turn water into wine at a wedding (John 2), heal the son of a royal official (John 4), and a man who had been lame for thirty-eight years (John 5), supply food to a multitude in the desert (John 6), walk on water (John 6), and give sight to a man who had been born blind (John 8). By what He did and by what He said, Jesus revealed His power as well as His love for the world. People around Him responded in one of two ways: either they came to worship Him as the Son of God or they tried to do what they could to destroy Him.

John 11 contains the last of the seven signs. Some have referred to it as the culminating miracle; the one the others point to. In raising Lazarus, Jesus displayed His power over our last enemy which is death (see I Corinthians 15:26). In one sense, this victory over death has been accomplished, in another sense, we wait for a future fulfillment.

1. Read this entire chapter and as you do so, list below each person or group involved in the action and also how each responded to Jesus:

*Person or persons*

*Response*

2. Find one practical application from each of the four sections in the outline? Write one sentence about each: The Message, The Meeting, The Miracle, The Murder Plot.

1.

2.

3.

4.

## **I. THE MESSAGE TO JESUS (JOHN 11:1-16)**

Life consists of a series of separations. We leave our parents, children grow up and leave home, sons and daughters marry or move to another city, friends for one reason or another are no longer close. The ultimate separation in this life results from the physical death of someone we love. While other separations may be temporary, this one is permanent.

Why is there death in this world? The Bible gives us an answer in Romans 5:12, "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin ... death came to all men, because all sinned." Death is the ultimate result of the sin of our fallen world.

3. It was the threat of death that brought the call for help to Jesus. Read the last paragraph in John 10 along with the beginning verses in John 11. Where was Jesus when the message came, why was He there, and what was happening?

4. Describe the relationship between Jesus and the two sisters and brother. What do you learn in this about the person of Jesus?

5. We are told in verse 6 that Jesus deliberately stayed where He was two more days after He had received the message about Lazarus' illness. Why did He do this?

6. Have you ever felt that there was a specific reason for God's delay in answering some prayer of yours? What do you see as the reason? What did the delay teach you?

7. Read the following verses about waiting. What does each verse teach about this subject?

a. Psalm 27:14

b. Psalm 37:7

c. Isaiah 30:18

d. Isaiah 64:4

e. Psalm 25:3

8. How do you explain Jesus' words in verses 9 and 10 (Compare with John 9:4 and John 12:35)?

## **II. THE MEETING WITH MARTHA AND MARY (JOHN 11:17-37)**

9. In what ways was this miracle different than the raising of Jarius' daughter (Luke 8:40-56) and the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17)?

10. First Jesus talked with Martha, then with Mary. Only a part of their conversation was recorded yet we can see a difference in the way they responded to Jesus. Think about each meeting. What differences and what similarities do you see?

11. We read in verse 33 that Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit and troubled” as He approached the place where His friend had been buried. How would you explain what is meant by this?

12. Jesus knows that He will bring life and healing and yet He sympathizes; the verse says, “Jesus wept.” Why do you think these details are included (see also Isaiah 63:9, Hebrews 2:18 and Romans 12:15)?

13. What two remarks did the Jewish comforters make about Jesus (verses 36 and 37)?

### **III. THE MIRACLE — LAZARUS IS RAISED (JOHN 11:38-44)**

The writer in Ecclesiastes 8:6 says, “For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter.”

Notice that Jesus is not in a hurry to perform this miracle. We never see in Him the pressure of deadlines but rather a calm deliberateness as He carries out each detail of His Father’s plan.

14. Try to use your imagination to see this event through Martha’s eyes. How would you describe her feelings and reactions as she heard Jesus pray and then call loudly for Lazarus? Do you think she expected her brother to appear? Why or why not?



Read Ephesians 3:20. What application does this verse have to the experience of Martha?

15. What impresses you about the way Jesus goes about this work of bringing Lazarus from the dead?

16. Jesus was also dead and rose again. How was His death and resurrection different from that of Lazarus?

#### **IV. THE MURDER PLOT (JOHN 11:45-57)**

17. What were the results of the miracle:

- a. On the Jews (verse 45)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. On the chief priests and the Pharisees (verses 47- 53)?

18. What double meaning was there in the speech of Caiaphas the high priest (verses 49-53)?

## CONCLUSION

Just as believing in Jesus involves a deliberate choosing to believe, so the lack of faith and trust on the part of the Jews was a definite choice that they made and continued to make. Despite the growing evidence that Jesus was truly God's Son, these Jews refused to believe in Him. Their attitude seemed to be: "No matter what you say or do we *will not believe*."

Are people today like this? Are we in any way like this? Do we refuse to believe despite whatever evidence is given to us? What is needed in order to bring us to the place where we believe?

The whole world is divided into two distinct categories: those who believe in Jesus and have life; those who do not believe and therefore do not have life. There are people who are spiritually living; there are people who are spiritually dead. They may look alive, they may move about and talk, but spiritually they are dead. The greatest miracle that can be performed by Jesus is that of making a dead person live.

Just as Jesus called Lazarus by name and Lazarus responded, so those who today are dead need to listen to Jesus' call to them. His promise to such a one is, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

If you have never personally received Jesus into your heart or life or, if you want to be sure this crucial issue is settled for you, you are invited to pray the following prayer:

**Jesus, you came to give life; a life that goes beyond this life and reaches into eternity. I don't understand all that this means, but I am beginning to see that you must be who you claimed to be. You spoke only the truth and you can see right now into my heart. You know the sin that is there. Please forgive my stubbornness, my refusal to believe all that you have told me. I want to receive the new life you offer. I ask that you forgive my sin; make me a new person. Let me experience the power of your life within me. I accept by faith that what you say is true, and I want to deliberately choose to follow you. Teach me to hear your voice. Thank you for what you have done for me. Amen.**

You may continue your study of the Gospel of John with *The Life in Jesus*, a study guide based on John 12-21 available through Faith & Fellowship Press. 1-800-332-9232.

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